

# OLD-TIME STUFF

## LE BRETON FLATS STORIES AS TOLD BY MR. JOHN FOTHERINGHAM; SOME HITHERTO UNTOLD FACTS

### INCIDENT OF THE STREET WHICH PLANNED, BUT DIDN'T MATERIALIZE

**Lett Street Was Formerly Called Cathcart Street, But Name Changed in the Early Eighties, As There Were Two Cathcart Streets. Re Old No. 1 Fire Station. Some Residents of Seventies. Duke Street Was Mud Hole. The Great Fire of 1870.**

Mr. John Fotheringham, Echo Drive, comes of one of Ottawa's old families. Mr. Fotheringham's boyhood and young manhood days were spent on the Chaudiere. Mr. Fotheringham, who is a son of John Fotheringham, pioneer stone cutter, was born on Duke street, in the first house north of Pooley's, on the west side of Queen street west. The house in which Mr. Fotheringham was born stands today just as his father built it in 1842. It is a strange fact that the Fotheringham house (frame), the waterworks press house off Duke street, the old frame fire station in rear of Queen street west, and Couillard's hotel (all close together) were the only buildings which escaped the flames of the great fire of 1900.

Mr. J. T. Fotheringham today gives the O.T.S. readers reminiscences of the Chaudiere. Mr. Fotheringham is widely known in Ottawa and his stories (some of them elsewhere on this page) will be read with interest by many. Mr. Fotheringham's stories are mostly quite new to O.T.S. readers and will add to the sum of O.T.S. information.

According to the story told by Mr. Fotheringham, the original LeBreton sub-division plan called for a street which was to start at the north end of Pooley's bridge and run westward parallel with what was then the "gully," to Broad street. At the time the LeBreton plan was drawn, there was no waterworks system and therefore no aqueduct as at present. Had the proposed street been put through it would have virtually followed the line of the Canadian National spur line, which now runs from Broad street across Queen west and back of Duke street into Booth's lumber yards.

#### Thought It a Corner Lot.

When John Fotheringham bought his lot overlooking the old gully, he thought he was buying a corner lot, but it appears that the LeBreton plan was never registered.

### STARTED A HOUSE ON SUPPOSED STREET

John Fotheringham Received the Surprise of His Life

One day in the sixties Mr. John Fotheringham was surprised to find a gang of men starting a foundation south of his house on land which he believed to be city property and a street. Mr. Fotheringham was naturally very much perturbed, as the operations, if persisted in, would close up all his side windows and shut out the "ancient light," so to speak.

He discovered that the excavator was a well known citizen of means (name suppressed). He discovered further that this citizen had bought a lot of the Chaudiere property from the LeBreton estate.

When Mr. Fotheringham protested against the closing of the supposed street next his house, the citizen told him that there was no plan showing any street next "the gully." When he investigated at the registry office he found that the plan from which he had bought had not been registered.

### HULL ALMOST CEASED TO BE, 1808; DISASTROUS FIRE WAS EXPERIENCED

Philemon Wright Was So Badly Hit Financially That He Was Tempted to Throw Up the Sponge, But Stayed and by 1812 Was Back to Pre-fire Status. War of 1812 Helped a lot. Got Big Prices for his Wheat Crop. Was Remarkable Man.

In the year 1808, the village of Hull, or Wright settlement as it was then known, nearly ceased to be.

The new village, begun in 1800, was visited by a fire that proved almost disastrous to Philemon Wright, its founder. Mr. Wright was so badly hit financially that he almost threw up the sponge. The disaster is thus told of in Mr. Wright's words:

"Unfortunately for me, on the 8th of May, 1808, my mills were burnt, and not my mills only, but a large quantity of boards and planks which were preparing for the Quebec market. I had not a single piece of board for my use without either chopping it with an axe or obtaining it from a distance of over 80 miles, except what was on my buildings. This loss was most severely felt, and came very near destroying the settlement. There was no insurance effected on the mills, and this loss, indeed, made me almost despair of ever recovering it, or doing any further good upon the settlement; and I was about to quit it, but my sons advised me not to despair." It should be mentioned that these were mostly new mills, built partly in the place of three old ones (including the hemp-mill) which were accidentally burnt shortly after the hemp-mill was erected. Mr. Wright continues: "It was also a loss to the whole settlement, as the greater part of our corn was in the mill, and burnt, with the exception of seven bushels of flour, which was taken therefrom the night previous; and to see the distress occasioned by this accident was most affecting. The square timber lying afloat was saved, and with it I came to Quebec, and returning as soon as possible, commenced a new saw-mill—setting all hands to work I could obtain, and finishing the mill in 60 days; after doing which, I commenced a grist-mill, which was also finished in the fall of that year. During this period we were obliged to obtain provisions from Montreal."

#### But Stuck At It.

But Mr. Wright was made of stern stuff and stuck at it and by 1812 had a home back to where he had been.

**REMARKABLE MAN.**

Mr. Wright, a writer in an Ottawa paper in 1870 said:

"Up to 1824 this really remarkable man had, in 24 years, cleared 3,000 acres of land, and in that year was the owner of 4 large farms—made annually 1,100 tons of hay, had 756 acres in grain and roots, with stock and pasture in proportion, while his buildings were valued at £18,257; and the sum total of his farms, stock, and buildings at £57,068 15s. But he had done more than this. He had opened roads for a distance of 120 miles through the lower townships, along the river shore to Montreal, and had built the Village of Wright (now 1870) the town of Hull, pleasantly situated, south-east angle of the township, containing a handsome church with a steeple 120 feet high, a comfortable hotel, and several other public edifices. In 1828 the population consisted entirely of Americans, and amounted to 1,066."

"Hull then had three schools,

two tanneries, 12 lime-kilns, four sawmills, 2 distilleries, and other manufactures to correspond.

Now (1870) the population is

chiefly French Canadian—although the ruling spirits are

Americans or their descendants—and consists of about 5,000: there being 1,000 houses, large steam factories, and all the trades necessary for a thriving community. Mr. Wright is buried in a little cemetery on the Aylen Road, westward of the town which he founded; having died full of years and honors, leaving behind him the happy memory of fame unsullied, and a name imperishable."

**Feared Fire Here.**

Had a fire started in Ottawa during that wind, Ottawa would have been in a bad way.

**The smoke was so thick and the**

### RENTS WERE LOW ON SPARKS ST. BACK THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

#### STORE 20 BY 99 OF THREE FLATS WAS HAD AT FIFTY-FIVE DOLLARS

**Sample Case of John T. and George Fotheringham and An Interesting Reminiscence of the Late William Mackey, Lumberman, and a Moral as to the Value of a Good Name in a Business Deal.**

Rents are not as cheap on Sparks street today as they used to be in 1892. If goods cost more today than they used to thirty-five years ago, it is partly because the merchants have to pay more rent than they (or their predecessors) did thirty-five years ago.

This is an old time stuff rent story, and with it goes the moral (thrown in) that often the possession of a good reputation is as valuable as the possession of bright red rubies.

In 1892 John T. Fotheringham and his brother, George Fotheringham, sons of John Fotheringham, Chaudiere pioneer and well known builder, kept a stationery store at 208 Sparks street, near the corner of Bank street. The store was small and had been outgrown by their business. They decided to seek larger premises.

At 182 Sparks street there was at the time a vacant store which had been occupied a while previous by the then defunct Ottawa Temperance Coffee House, which, by the way, was the pioneer quick lunch effort in Ottawa and was the idea of the late Richard Wicksteed, of honored memory.

#### Building of Dimensions.

The building was owned then by the late William Mackey of former lumber fame. The store on which the Fotheringham brothers, then young men, had set their ambitions was 20 feet wide, 99 feet deep and three storeys and basement in size. It was what might be termed a building of considerable dimensions.

#### Albert Street Before the Fire.

William Mackey, the owner, lived then in a large stone house on Albert street, just west of Division street. Up to the time of the great fire of 1900 there were on Albert street, between Division street and Rochester street, a number of these large stone houses, all set about 60 or 75 feet back from the street and decorated in the front by wonderful wide spreading elms. Albert street in that district was then the home of many of Ottawa's rich and influential citizens.

One evening the two Fotheringham boys hid themselves down to this fine district to see Mr. Mackey.

The late Mr. Mackey, as those who knew him can testify, was a man of few words and quick decisions.

Mr. John T. Fotheringham was spokesman and told of their desire to rent the Mackey store.

#### Gave a Prompt Refusal.

"What do you want to put in it?" snapped Mr. Mackey. "A stationery store," replied J. T. F.

"You can't have it."

"Because it wouldn't pay there. Anyway, you wouldn't pay the rent I ask." This with a tone of finality.

"Well, we wouldn't have come here," retorted J. T. F., "if we didn't think we could make it go. We are in business on Sparks street now and our store is too small. That is why we want yours."

Up to this time the applicants had not told their names.

"You say you are in business now," said Mr. Mackey. "What are your names?"

#### All Difference in World.

"Fotheringham," said G. B. F.

"Fotheringham, Fotheringham," said Mr. Mackey reflectively. "Are you anything to John Fotheringham of the Flats?"

"His sons," said J. T. F.

"You can have it," said Mr. Mackey. "Now we will talk business."

#### Wanted \$55 Per Month.

It developed that Mr. Mackey wanted \$55 per month for his big store. The Fotheringhams had only been paying \$55 where they were. They decided promptly that they could pay the difference and an agreement was made, and later the Fotheringham sign went up over No. 182.

#### Rents Went Up Later.

The Fotheringhams (later Fotheringham and Popham) stayed at 182 till 1910. Between 1892 and 1910 the rent had been gradually climbing. In 1910, after the death of Mr. Mackey, the estate remodeled the block (old Titus block) and put in offices above the ground floor over all the stores. By 1910 the Fotheringham rent had grown to \$200 per month. Under the proposed new arrangement the rent of the store was to remain at \$200 per month, but the upstairs flats were to be cut off. F. and P. moved.

Today stores in the vicinity of the old F. and P. store are paying as much as \$350 and over per month. Some stores on other parts of Sparks street are known to be paying over six hundred dollars per month.

Of course the population of Ottawa is bigger (120,000, against 43,000 in 1892 and 86,000 in 1910) and more business is being done. If such were not the case there would not be as many merchants as there are on Sparks street.

so hot everywhere in Ottawa that the people could hardly breathe.

#### Afraid to Leave.

Many Ottawa people would have left Ottawa and gone east but they were afraid, first, of having their property pillaged if they left, and, second, of losing their way on the smoke-covered roads east of the city or south. So they stayed, and eventually the rain came and the air cleared.

#### Wild While Lasted.

But it was a wild time for Ottawa while it lasted. Nothing like it was ever known before, and has never been known since.

When the fire was at its worst nearly all the stores closed their doors and the clerks were allowed to go home and look after their families.

Other stories as related by Mr. Fotheringham will be found elsewhere on this page.

This district was largely settled by

### LONE FRENCHMAN OF "LACHUTE ROAD"

#### Made Good with English Speaking Neighbors. Popular.

One of the most interesting settlements in Argenteuil county is that of Geneva, or the "Lachute Road" as it is better known. This district was opened by one Gustavus Hooker, who was a son of one of the heroes of the American Revolution on the side of the Continental. However, Gustavus Hooker made an excellent Canadian and a good settler. Mr. Hooker lived till 1870 and died highly esteemed by his neighbors.

This district was largely settled by

#### Happy New Year

#### THE OLD TIME STUFF

Wishes all of its Readers

The greatest possible amount of happiness and well-being

#### IN THE COMING YEAR

For almost five years the Old Time Stuff family have enjoyed together weekly excursions into the past. These excursions have been both pleasant and instructive. It is the earnest prayer of the editor that all the O. T. S. readers may be spared to enjoy another year of life, and that that year may be fraught with comfort and happiness.

And if the editor likewise is spared, it will be his aim to provide during 1828, "stuff" which will be quite as interesting (perhaps more so) as any which has already been printed.

The Citizen's proprietors and staff and the editor of the Old Time Stuff join in these New Year's Greetings.

GEORGE H. WILSON,  
Editor O. T. S.

### REMINISCENCES OF THE OTTAWA OF EARLIER DAYS.

Personages, Scenes and Incidents Recalled for Evening Citizen Readers

COMPILED BY GEORGE H. WILSON.

### FITZROY IN 1878

A writer in the year 1878 had the following to say about the township of Fitzroy:

"This is the most north-westerly portion of the County of Carleton, and is bounded on the northwest by the River Ottawa, on the northeast by Turboton, and on the southwest by Huntley, and on the south by the County of Lanark.

It presents a great diversity of soil and surface—ranging in the one case from the most level to the roughest and most broken, and in other, from that of little value or almost utterly worthless to a species of superior excellence.

It contains 55,014 acres of land—being almost the exact size of Huntley, but it has over 4,000 acres more of improved land within its limits, and the valuation of its real estate is almost double, or \$744,522 by the last assessment (which was made \$102,279 by the "equalization" system of the County Council).

It is the seventh township in extent, the fourth in value, and the fourth in population—the number of the latter being last officially returned as 3,425, of whom 614 are ratepayers.

Albert Street Before the Fire.

It is 1828 Mr. Thompson appears to have been a very superior sort of man.

In 1828 Mr. Thompson raised a small frame barn, and there were not men enough in the township at the time to do the necessary lifting, so he went into the neighborhood of his old home in South Gower, and brought out 15 or 20 hands to the "raising" which thereupon went off most successfully. This appears to have been the first frame building erected in North Gower.

Mr. Thompson lived till the late seventies and attained the fine old age of 96 years.

### FIRST FRAME BARN IN NORTH GOWER WAS "RAISED" IN THE YEAR 1827

Settler Named Thompson Had to Go to South Gower Township to Find Enough Men to "Raise" It, As North Gower Was Only Sparsely Settled. This Settler Had Trip to Canada on First Steam Vessel from the Clyde River. North Gower Stuff.

Among the first settlers of North Gower township was a Mr. Thompson who came to the township in 1826. He had been in Canada since 1817. He had been in the township prior to 1826, having lived in South Gower and had made some improvements on his land in North Gower prior to settling. This Mr. Thompson appears to have been a very superior sort of man.

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**Building in Style.**

A few years after his settlement in North Gower this Mr. Thompson paid a visit to his old home in Scotland and had the interesting experience of returning to Canada on the first steam vessel ever built on the Clyde. This vessel was making its trials of considerable importance in the community. He kept the first public-house in the township and built one of the first boats on the Rideau—one the "Bytown." Mr. Beaman was drowned at Becket's Landing on the Rideau, in 1832.