

“The Famous Township of Hull”: Image and Aspirations of a Pioneer Quebec Community*

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Visions of an agricultural utopia were common amongst early settlers of Canada. The Hull settlement, commenced by New Englanders in 1800 on the north shore of the Ottawa River, was a utopian colony with a difference. It is perhaps not generally realized that Hull was founded with the usual utopian objectives of agricultural settlement, but that these aims were abandoned by the residents so they could make a living. Pragmatic involvement in the timber trade quickly raised a new commercial venture to an important position. As farming became ancillary to timber and the residents became part of the Atlantic economy, the expressed ideal of a self-sufficient agrarian community, though not easily abandoned, became more remote. The timber trade was for long viewed as an expedient and timber as a secondary product, though it had very rapidly become a staple.

The Hull settlers, though not enthusiastically, adapted readily to the new circumstances. As both land and forest attracted newcomers to the area in ever greater numbers in the 1820s, the pre-eminence of the Hull settlement and its leaders was challenged, and general authority came close to total breakdown during the Shiners' War of the 1830s.¹ The image of the Ottawa Valley as a frontier area of lawlessness and violence, defiant of authority, a crude, uncultured and socially unsettled region, derives from the position of the Valley as a commercial timber frontier during this later period. But the willingness of the old settlers' leaders to initiate and participate in the timber trade, however reluctantly, enabled them to retain a major role in the new Ottawa Valley society which emerged from the commercial vortex — a society in which agriculture was secondary but in which wealth and power were still within the reach of the man of enterprise.

The post-Napoleonic gentry settlers of March Township, on the south shore of the Ottawa, had a utopian vision, too, but their aim was the recreation of an aristocratic society. They also came to support the timber

* This paper was originally prepared for a seminar in social history at Carleton University. The cartographical expertise of C. Earl of the Department of Geography made the maps appear respectable.

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¹ Michael S. Cross, "The Shiners' War: Social Violence in the Ottawa Valley in the 1830s," *The Canadian Historical Review*, LIV (March, 1973).

trade but unlike the Hull settlers they themselves did not participate in it. They supported the trade only when it became necessary for the maintenance of their ruling position.² Hull's involvement with timber was economically motivated, and the preferred agricultural way of life was ultimately valued less than the visions of economic prosperity that underlay it. The distinction resolves into that between the gentleman and the "man of enterprise", but this in no way diminishes Hull's first measure of fame as an unusually successful agricultural community. Its later image reflected its new economic interest, but represented a considerable loss of prestige and respectability in the eyes of all concerned.

Initially the Hull settlement was neither a timber, nor a purely agricultural, frontier. Its founder, Philemon Wright, intended Hull to become a settlement of "independent farmers", and to this end he strove to establish all of the businesses and services ancillary to a farming community. This fact is important, because it indicates the sense of permanence which was a part of Hull from its beginning, and accounts for both the ambitions of the little colony and the success which it achieved. The settlement's social structure was rooted in a small and cohesive group settlement, but the community quickly became dependent upon the family firm which evolved from and replaced the founding group of leader and associates. In effect Hull became a company town, although one involved in a diversity of economic enterprises rather than in intensive exploitation of a single resource. The entire community came to share its founder's aspirations for extending the economic success and fame of the settlement. When this aim was achieved in the prosperous closing years of the Napoleonic Wars, the community's aspirations became directed to the acquisition of the institutions and symbols of the cultural and social status which were felt to be appropriate to a community of its stature. Between 1819 and 1824 churches, schools, moral and benevolent societies, libraries, and agricultural societies were established. The character and image of the Hull settlement were determined by Philemon Wright, and his followers eagerly made his aspirations their own.

The rising tide of post-war immigration brought to the area people of a very different social background who had not shared in Hull's past dreams and had little interest in its aspirations. Among these new arrivals were the men who were to cause the timber troubles of the 1830s, men for whom the ideal of a settled agricultural life held less attraction than did the towering forests of the Ottawa Valley. The progressive image of Hull, the tiny outpost of civilization in the wilderness, was overwhelmed by this influx of outside forces, and the peaceful and settled agricultural image of the Valley was overshadowed by that of the transient and exploitative timber frontier.

Thus the history of the Ottawa Valley before the mid-1820s was not merely the prelude to what followed. The "famous township of Hull"³

² Michael S. Cross, "The Age of Gentility: The Formation of an Aristocracy in the Ottawa Valley," Canadian Historical Association: *Historical Papers* (1967), pp. 112-113.

³ John MACTAGGART, *Three Years in Canada* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), Vol. 2, p. 264.

enjoyed a widespread and not entirely undeserved reputation in the earlier period as an exceptionally successful and progressive pioneer community. This paper will explore in greater detail the Hull settlement's early economic enterprises and ambitions and the extent of its cultural aspirations and achievement, with a view to illuminating both the basis of its early reputation and its successful adaptation to change engendered from within and without.

I

From the beginning, the Township of Hull was conceived of as a group settlement. The initial migration from Massachusetts in March 1800 was but one of many responses to Governor Alured Clarke's proclamation of 1792, which threw the lands of Lower Canada open to such American settlers as were willing to declare allegiance to the British Crown.⁴ These migrations took the typical form in British North America of group settlements consisting of "leader and associates". Most failed, often due as much to the red tape which stretched from Quebec through the "waste lands of the Crown" to the United States, as to the difficulty of the task. Wright's settlement, on the other hand, was one of the most successful.⁵

What manner of men were the first settlers of Hull? By no means were they all young men, and their economic circumstances varied considerably. Some brought substantial capital, others little. A few young men came, probably as a result of the scarcity of available land in New England; others were well-established individuals who sold out and moved north so that their sons might have better opportunities when they came of age. Almost their only common characteristics were their New England heritage — most were either born in New England or were the sons of New England residents who had moved to the northern frontier states — and a past which included participation in the Revolutionary War on the side of the American colonies. This second factor was to prove to be less important than critics of American immigration feared.

Philemon Wright himself came of old New England stock. He was born in Massachusetts in 1760 of a family which had been resident in the town of Woburn near Boston since its foundation in 1640, and he had lived there until he moved to Canada. Little is known of Wright before the late 1790s. He had served two years in the revolutionary armies during the War of Independence, and had left the army at age 17, already a sergeant.⁶ He brought to Canada a certificate from his old commanding

⁴ *Quebec Gazette*, February 9, 1792.

⁵ The details of the initial settlement and of the acquisition of title to Hull are described in Hon. Justice Francis LATCHFORD, "Philemon Wright and the Settlement of Hull," *Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa Transactions*, VIII (1922). The materials in the PAC upon which the article is based are no longer arranged in township files and are thus difficult to locate, but the key documents may be found on reel C-2570, RG1L3L, Vols. 207-208, under the name of Philemon Wright.

⁶ Wright's genealogy is outlined in Patrick M.O. EVANS, *The Wrights: A Genealogical Study of the First Settlers in Canada's National Capital Region* (Ottawa, National Capital Commission, revised edition, 1978), and biographical details of Wright and his direct ancestors are given in Frederick EILERS, *Philemon Wright and Abigail Wyman: Their Genealogy* (1957).

officer, Hon. Loammi Baldwin (originator of the Baldwin apple), stating that Wright was "born of reputable parents" and that he was "brought up a farmer, & has made good improvements in agriculture, and always appeared to me to manage his business with propriety." The Selectmen of Woburn echoed this opinion and added that he "may be Justly Classed among the Principal Farmers in this Town; and esteem him to be a man of property".⁷ Given the scarcity of land in Massachusetts at the time, the Wrights seem indeed to have been "men of property". In 1789 Wright's father, Thomas, deed him 45 acres of land in Woburn, and in 1793 he deeded 18 acres of farmland to his elder son, Thomas Jr., along with a piece of "mining land" adjoining the property transferred to Philemon. At this time Thomas Sr. still retained other properties for himself. Philemon lived in his father's house after the old man died, but soon after moving to Hull he sold 65 acres in Woburn to a neighbour for \$2,300.⁸ But above all Philemon was, in the words of Loammi Baldwin, "a Man of enterprize & well calculated not only to conduct the affairs of a farm but to bring forward & promote the settlement of an Infant Country & cultivate new lands."⁹

When Philemon came to Canada in 1800 he was thirty-nine years of age and had been married eighteen years. He brought his wife and six children with him.¹⁰ The core of the first group of settlers consisted of four other families and thirty-three labouring men,¹¹ unmarried farmers from different parts of Massachusetts. Three of the families were related to Wright. One was that of his 49-year-old brother Thomas, who had seven children; two others were those of his wife's brothers-in-law John Allen of Hubbardston, Massachusetts, with four children, and Samuel Choate, also with four children. Choate was no frontiersman but, like Wright, he was an enterprising type. His oath of allegiance is annotated: "N.B. this man is a celebrated architect and workman & was one of those who erected the great Bridge across the Liffey in Ireland, and the five most extensive Bridges in America."¹² The Choates soon returned to the United States. It is known that five families came but the fifth has heretofore been unidentified. It was probably that of London Oxford, a free Negro who had married in Woburn. He probably brought his family with him when he came in 1800, for he had children born in Hull before the family left the area sometime after 1809.¹³

⁷ PAC, Lower Canada land papers, RG1L3L, Vol. 208, reel C-2570, pp. 97221, 97223. The second document is dated at Woburn, January 8, 1798 and signed by selectmen Abijah Thompson and Daniel Wyman.

⁸ PAC, Wright Papers, MG24 D8, Vol. 125, pp. 66537-8; EVANS, *The Wrights* (1978 edn.), pp. 26A, 28A, 29A; Grant CARR-HARRIS, *The History and Genealogy of the Carr-Harris Family* (typescript, 1966), p. 130.

⁹ L.C. land, C-2570, p. 97221.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97160. One child died in Woburn and two more were born in Hull.

¹¹ Wright Papers, Vol. 126, p. 66568.

¹² L.C. land, C-2570, p. 97171.

¹³ Wright Papers, Vol. 126, p. 66568 and Vol. 125, p. 66346; Edward F. JOHNSON, ed., "Woburn Records of Births, Deaths, & Marriages from 1640 to 1873: Part III. Marriages," *Annual Report of the Woburn City Government for the Year 1890* (Boston: Winship, Daniels & Co., 1891), p. 198; Aylmer Heritage Association, Taylor Papers, "Births 1800 to 1820".

Few of the unmarried men remained. Most stayed for the first year and, as employees of Wright, aided in the clearing and in planting the first crop. They then collected their pay and returned home. Only Harvey Parker and Daniel Wyman seem to have remained with any intention of settling permanently, although others stayed on a few more years as labourers.¹⁴

These settlers were soon joined by several other families, all of whom immigrated independently. Most of these families came originally from New England, but had moved frequently from place to place in the northern frontier states for about thirty years before moving to Hull. Although they came from a frontier background, few of the heads of these families were the young, wandering outcasts of Turnerian legend. Samuel Benedict, a fifty-seven year old hotel keeper of Randolph, Vermont, on the main route between Canada and Boston, sold his house and three hundred acres of land for \$3,000 and came to Hull in 1801, bringing with him some of his married and unmarried children.¹⁵ Fifty-five year old Nathaniel Chamberlin's story followed much the same pattern as Benedict's. Nathaniel and five of his brothers had fought in the Revolutionary army and his father, Richard had been a minuteman and one of the "most staid and substantial citizens" of Newbury, Vermont. In 1794 Nathaniel was one of seven men who subscribed \$100 each to build a bridge over the Connecticut River on "the best and oldest road for passing between the states to the north and Canada." He died soon after his arrival in Hull in 1801, leaving a large family there and an estate to be settled back in Newbury.¹⁶ Luther Colton, whose father, Eli, had served as a rebel soldier at Ticonderoga, was born in western Massachusetts in 1777, but moved with his parents to New York State as a young man. There he married the daughter of a former British soldier and moved north to Montreal. After a year there he came to Hull where, from 1802, he worked as a joiner. He died in 1828 on his way to visit his brothers near Niagara Falls.¹⁷

Other families moved north from the Rideau settlement, where they had lived since arriving from the northern states in the 1790s. Among these were the families of fifty-one-old Dudley Moore, who came from Augusta in 1801, and his ninety-nine year old father, Jedediah,¹⁸ Truman Waller, 43, from Marlborough Township and formerly of Granville, New

¹⁴ See, for example, L.C. land, C-2570, p. 97206.

¹⁵ PAC, Wright Papers, MG25, Vol. 55, No. 219, transcript of information on the Benedict family compiled from various published and manuscript sources by Rev. Alvin Martyn Smith, So. Pasadena, California.

¹⁶ Eunice Miena BARBER, *The Wright-Chamberlin Genealogy* (1914), p. 274; Frederic Palmer WELLS, *History of Newbury, Vermont, from the discovery of the Coös country to the present time* (St. Johnsbury, Vt.: The Caledonian Company, 1902), pp. 309, 509. Information also received from Arthur M. Campbell of Ottawa, a descendant, and P.M.O. Evans.

¹⁷ George Woolworth COLTON, *A Genealogical Record of the Descendants of Quartermaster George Colton* (Philadelphia, 1912), pp. 75, 164; the newspaper *Kingston Chronicle*, Sat., October 4, 1828; Wright Papers, pp. 66680-81. I am grateful to Mrs. E.H. Relyea for the newspaper reference.

¹⁸ Information from Marion Headrick of Ottawa. See also Wright Papers, Vol. 129, p. 67872.

York,¹⁹ and Gideon Olmstead, aged thirty-five, with his wife and children, some born in Vermont, some in New York State, and some in Marlborough Township on the Rideau, where he had settled around 1797.²⁰ Nathan Merrifield, a native of Shutesbury, Connecticut, and the son of a Revolutionary soldier, had spent much of his boyhood in Arlington, Vermont, then moved to Brockville in 1802 and to Hull the following year; his wife was a member of Montague Township's Stafford family.²¹ James McConnel and his much younger brother William arrived in 1801. They were from Nova Scotia and possibly had been hired by the Wrights in Quebec.²²

The new arrivals quickly became part of the group and acquired an interest in what Mrs. Thomas Wright called "the common cause".²³ When the grants of land to Philemon Wright and his associates were issued on 3 January 1806, the nine associates were Harvey Parker, Daniel Wyman, and Wright's sons Philemon and Tiberius, of the first settlers, and Edmond and Ephraim Chamberlin, Luther Colton, James McConnell, and Isaac Remic of the later arrivals.²⁴

The population of Hull seems to have been remarkably permanent in these early years. While statistical information is sporadic, we do have a militia return of 1808 listing males eighteen years of age and over and a census of heads of families for 1825.²⁵ Of the fifty-seven men listed in the 1808 return, the families of 31 (54 percent) were still in Hull in 1825; 25 (44 percent) were still there in 1852. Fifty-nine per cent of the 108 heads of families in 1825 were still in the township in 1852. The figures contrast markedly with Gagan's later Peel County figures, where, for example, a 60 percent departure rate was observed from Toronto Gore Township in the 1860s alone.²⁶ If we could exclude the unmarried employees of Philemon Wright, the most mobile group in Hull township, from the 1808

¹⁹ Thad. W.H. LEAVITT, *History of Leeds and Grenville* (Belleville: Mika Silk Screening Limited, 1972), p. 133; United Church Archives, Toronto, Methodist Church in Hull, L. Canada, Baptismal Register, 1826-1843, Micro. D.3.5.86.

²⁰ *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Vermont* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), p. 42 (under Pittsford, Rutland Co.); LEAVITT, *Leeds and Grenville*, p. 133. The tombstone of Gideon's son, Abram Olmstead, at Merivale Cemetery, Nepean Township, records his birthplace as New York State. See also R.M. GORSSLINE, "Sarah Olmstead," *Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa Transactions*, XI (1954), pp. 17-19.

²¹ Information from Mrs. Joan McKay of Ottawa. See also *Heads of Families ... Vermont*, p. 15; LEAVITT, *Leeds and Grenville*, p. 133.

²² PAC, Census of Hull Township, 1851-52, pp. 7-9, 31.

²³ Wright Papers, Vol. 2, p. 179, Mary Wright to Mr. Dunning, Hull, June 24, 1802.

²⁴ *List of Lands Granted by the Crown in the Province of Quebec From 1763 to 31st December 1890* (Quebec: Charles-François Langlois, 1891), Vol. II, pp. 724-5. Remic's name drops out of the records quite early, but is preserved to this day in the name of a set of rapids in the Ottawa River between the cities of Hull and Ottawa.

²⁵ Wright Papers, Vol. 129, pp. 67872-3 and PAC, reel C-218, p. 1298 respectively.

²⁶ J. David WOOD, "The settlers and the land: pioneer experience in The Home District," *Families*, Vol. XIV, No. 4 (Fall, 1975), p. 117. For full information on Toronto Gore see David GAGAN and Herbert MAYS, "Historical Demography and Canadian Social History: Families and Land in Peel County, Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review*, LIV (March, 1973).

enumeration, the percentage of actual settlers who remained would be even higher in the early period. Spatial mobility may have increased once the initial isolation of a frontier community had been broken, but in the earliest years, at least in Hull, families tended to stay.

Wright intended that Hull should become a settlement of "independent farmers." There is no evidence to suggest that he was attracted to the Ottawa Valley by its huge stands of timber. This conception is based upon a misinterpretation of the account of the settlement which Wright gave to the House of Assembly in 1824. In it he stated repeatedly that he came to Canada in order to provide for his large family and that he was attracted by the Ottawa River's "fertile banks". He mentioned timber in recounting his visit to the area in October 1799 in this context:²⁷

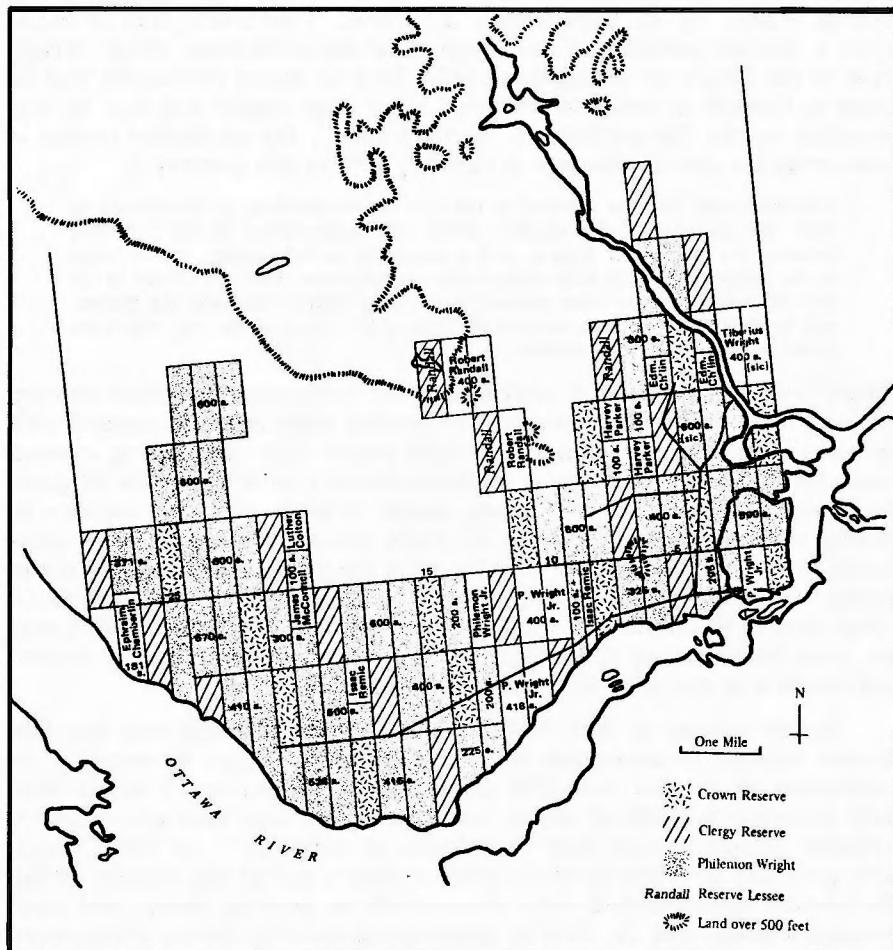
I should think that we climbed to the top of one hundred or more trees to view the situation of the country which we accomplished in the following manner; we cut smaller trees in such a manner as to fall slanting, and to lodge in the branches of those large ones, which we ascended, until we arrived at the top. By this means we were enabled to view the country and also the timber, and by the timber we were enabled to judge of the nature of the soil, which we found to answer our expectations.

Wright's first activities after arriving in 1800 were concerned with clearing the land and erecting habitations. The settlers were much impressed with the area's agricultural potential. Wright stated that "the spring opened much earlier than I ever saw it in Massachusetts, which gave us all great encouragement, all the men being much pleased with the country in finding vegetation come forward so much easier than they were accustomed to see it." He said that the frost left the ground much earlier in the spring than was the case in their former home, and that crops were much better than in the States, "and all without the help of manure; which was the more surprising to those who had been accustomed to go to Boston and obtain it at the price of three dollars per load".

In late autumn of 1802 Wright made it known to those with him that anyone wishing to commence a farm of his own "might be supplied on application to me, on the most advantageous terms; and I would lend them a certain quantity of wheat, and other seed, until they could raise a sufficient quantity upon their own farms to repay me". In 1802 Wright built grist and sawmills to serve local purposes and at the request of the government experimented very successfully in growing hemp, and constructed a hemp mill. In 1804 he commenced building shops, which were to form the nucleus of a village. Prior to this time Wright had been "obliged to go to Montreal for every little article in iron work, or other things which I stood in need of". He built a blacksmith shop with four forges and bellows driven by water power, a shoemaker's shop, tailor shop, and bakehouses. He also commenced a tannery and had a bark grinding machine sent in from New York.

²⁷ Philemon WRIGHT, "Account of the First Settlement of the Township of Hull," *Journals of the House of Assembly of Lower Canada*, Vol. XXXIII (1823-24), Appendix R.
²⁸ *Ibid.*

Map 1. — HULL TOWNSHIP LAND OWNERSHIP IN 1808



Sources: Land grants; Wright Land Book (Wright Papers. Vol. 113); list of clergy reserve leases (Vol. 126, p. 66668); Bouchette (1815) map at p. 250; National Map Collection, H3/330 Hull 1801: Taylor Papers, Statement of work on roads 1801-20; Evans (1978) p. 82.

By 1806 Wright had, he said, expended \$20,000 and needed "an export market to cover my imports."²⁸ That summer he took the first timber raft over the dangerous rapids on the north side of the Island of Montreal to Quebec. Although this journey could be made more cheaply than one to Montreal, there was as yet little demand, and Wright had difficulty selling his raft.²⁹

In 1808 Wright "commenced the lumber business, drawing and procuring timber" for his mills and sawing them into planks and boards. He stated explicitly that he did this because only one quarter of the men he employed on the farms were needed in the winter, but if he discharged them "it would have been impossible for me to have obtained men in the spring, whom I most wanted them, as the distance from any settlement was so great". This long continued to be a powerful reason for engaging in the uncertain timber trade — the men could either sit around in the village all winter and be expenses or earn their pay cutting and squaring logs.

In 1813, a low year in timber, Wright's investments in agriculture stood him well, for he sold three thousand bushels of wheat for \$9,000, "three dollars per bushel being at that time the common price, on account of the war". This was "the most advantageous undertaking I ever engaged in since I commenced the settlement". Wright made a profit of \$7,000, which he invested in building extensive barns and sheds and a distillery. In 1814 he reorganized his farm and built six more barns.³⁰ It was in this year, too, that the timber market opened up and allowed tremendous profits. He extended his timber operations to take advantage of the changing conditions. In December of 1814 the extensive family enterprises were set up as a company under the name P. Wright & Sons.³¹

Wright wanted his settlement to be a self-sustaining agricultural community, exporting grain and timber and importing as little as possible, with Wright's enterprises providing for its own needs by producing the iron and leather goods, clothing, liquor, and food which the settlement required. To Wright, farming was the highest human good:

I conceive that Agriculture is a pursuit of Innocence & peace, its very first object is to Cloth the naked and feed the Hungry, even its most selfish & Interested parts are yet found to result in the augmentation of the sum total of General good and beautiful... Where its influence has extended neither the extrem of poverty nor the want of employment are at all felt or known. Poverty is the fruitful parent of many vices but it hides its hideous form where the hand of Industrie reigns fostered and prep'd by the creative powers of Agriculture.³²

Philemon did not enjoy the lumber trade; "lumber always unsartain" was a frequent lament.³³

²⁸ Courtney C.J. BOND and John W. HUGHSON, *Hurling Down the Pine* (Old Chelsea, Quebec: The Historical Society of the Gatineau, 1964), p. 5.

²⁹ WRIGHT, "Account of First Settlement."

³¹ BOND AND HUGHSON, *Hurling Down the Pine*, p. 9.

³² Wright Papers, Vol. 7, p. 2208, Philemon Wright to Ruggles Wright, Quebec, February 3, 1821.

³³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 1425, Philemon Wright to P. Wright & Sons, Quebec, October 9, 1819.

The sooner we can wean ourselves from the lumber business and follow Agriculture It will be for the best to all concerned. I conceive It is high times for us amid the present dulness of the times to look around us and particularly to Agriculture and to husband and improve our own internal sources of subsistence — it is a truth which could be engraved on all our thoughts That, That country must always be poor which buys its bread from a distance.³⁴

But the opportunity of a windfall profit attracted him to the timber trade and ensured its position as a very important department of his operations. Nevertheless a settled pastoral life was always his aim and scientific farming always his greatest interest.

Wright was able to both impose his ideals upon his followers and to enthuse them with his visionary schemes because he dominated the community; Hull was a company town. Wright had been the township leader at the time of the initial settlement. He claimed to have spent \$20,000 in the first six years in Canada. He was also the man to whom his nine associates had ceded most of their 1,200 acre grants, giving him ownership of almost the entire front of the township. The extent of Wright's enterprises is indicated by several statistical returns. In 1817 or 1818 his Hull enterprises employed 63 men; another 55 were at the time "in the Lumbering department on the River". The 68 or so other families employed only fifteen labourers.³⁵ In 1820 P. Wright & Sons employed 164 men and 11 women; the other eighty-odd families employed 119 men and 23 women. The firm employed 58 percent of the labouring men in the township. It owned between a third and a half of the oxen, cows, bulls and "seed hoggs", over half of the swine and all 45 goats. Of the cleared land 56 percent was owned by the firm, and thanks to their careful husbandry and more scientific methods their yield per acre of all crops except peas exceeded that of the other inhabitants by several percent. The company owned 56 percent of the mowing land and 49 percent of the pasture, as well as four of the five mills, ten of the twenty-five frame houses and both stone houses. Thirty-six percent of the mouths in the township were stated "to be fill'd on the produce of the Ground belonging to P. Wright & Sons".³⁶ Columbia Falls village, called Wright's town by many and now the City of Hull, Quebec, was in this period entirely owned by the firm of P. Wright & Sons. By 1824 it contained Wright's tannery, a stone blacksmith shop with water-driven bellows, a "mansion house" and outbuildings, a stone store, saw and grist mills, barns and sheds, a lime kiln, a gun house, a school house, the Columbia Hotel — three stories high in front and erected in 1820 at a cost of £2,200 — and a stone dam, "the finest Piece of Stone work in North America, as is supposed by many," built to convey water to the new saw and grist mills erected the same year at a cost of £1,600. Employed in the village were seven masons, six carpenters, four blacksmiths and an equal number of shoemakers, two millers, two tanners and curriers, four teamsters, a baker, a saddler, and two clerks. The total value of Columbia Falls farm

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 2175, Philemon Wright to Ruggles Wright, January 20, 1821.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 124, p. 66320. The date is not indicated and is therefore only an approximation.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 124, pp. 66324-7.

and Village in 1824 was stated to be £23,457. In addition, Wright's “Gate-noe [Gatineau] Farm” boasted, in addition to its eight hundred acres of cleared land, a distillery valued at £2,000 and another saw mill.³⁷

Wright's dominance was not solely economic. Since 1806 he had been one of the two justices of the peace, Gideon Olmstead being the other.³⁸ Ruggles Wright received a similar appointment in 1821.³⁹ That same year Wright, Sr., Gideon Olmstead, and Ephraim Chamberlin were appointed Commissioners for the erection of free schools.⁴⁰ In 1819 Ruggles Wright became postmaster⁴¹ and Philemon was made land agent in 1821.⁴² Since 1817 Wright Sr. had been a Commissioner for Internal Communications for the County of York,⁴³ and he had been captain of militia since 1808. The militia officers appointed in 1822 were Wright's sons Tiberius (Captain) and Ruggles (Lieutenant) and his sons-in-law Thomas Brigham and James Finlayson Taylor (Lieutenants).⁴⁴ In addition to these government appointments Philemon Wright occupied high offices in many of the institutions which came to be established in Hull, sometimes through his role as founder of the institutions and sometimes acclaimed by the vote of the members or by township meetings.

The inhabitants of the district relied upon Wright for seasonal employment, as a source of all varieties of goods, as a buyer for their own produce, as their political spokesman, and in a general sense as their unquestioned leader. “Mr. Wright, as the head of the township, has been indefatigable in promoting the increase and prosperity of this infant settlement,” wrote Surveyor-General Bouchette in 1815. “In viewing the progress already made, the greatest encomiums will be called forth for the manner in which, by his own example and encouragement, he had so essentially promoted it.”⁴⁵ John Mactaggart, writing later, when Wright's influence was beginning to wane, noted even then the general approval of Wright's leadership: “He has also a kind heart ... No one is more the father of his people than he; when he has been from home at any time,

³⁷ *Journals of the House of Assembly of Lower Canada*, Vol. XXXIII (1823-24), Appendix R. Hull's street plan still betrays its New England origins: Wright laid out his first buildings on either side of a green which still exists. Aylmer, founded some thirty years later by Wright's nephew, Charles Symmes, is centred on a square and still has a New England atmosphere. Green villages are common in American settlements in the Eastern Townships. Anson A. GARD, *The Pioneers of the Upper Ottawa and the Humors of the Valley* (Ottawa: The Emerson Press, 1906), Part IV, p. 82; EVANS, *The Wrights* (1978), p. 30; R. Cole HARRIS and John WARKENTIN, *Canada Before Confederation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 95.

³⁸ PAC, General Index of the Registrar General, RG68, p. 634. In 1820 two others were appointed, Hereldus Estabrook and Edmund Chamberlin. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 626.

⁴¹ Lucien BRAULT, *Hull 1800-1950* (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1950), p.127.

⁴² Wright Papers, Vol. 7, p. 2206, Philemon Wright to Ruggles Wright, Quebec, February 3, 1821.

⁴³ Aylmer Heritage Association, Taylor Papers, p. 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁵ Joseph BOUCHETTE, *A Topographical Description of the Province of Lower Canada* (London, 1815), pp. 251-2.

on his coming back guns are fired, bells rung, and flags waved.”⁴⁶ In the earliest years of the settlement an almost communal spirit reigned, but it was firmly believed that the objectives of the “common cause” could only be realized through the unceasing exertions of all concerned. When the house and wordly possessions of one Asa Townsend were destroyed by fire in 1805, the residents of the township joined together to “freely give to the above unfortinint famoly... some article or work” but it was understood that this was done “in order to Releve there distresed situation and enCorredge and prompt them to there former industry”.⁴⁷ While a sense of common destiny remained, it soon became apparent that the paternalism of Philemon Wright was more important than the fruits of the early spirit of comradeship.

What was the basis of Wright’s paternalism? Bouchette, after describing “the well known merits of Mr. Wright,” added that it was “but just to state, that the liberality of His Majesty’s Goverment towards that individual has been unbounded”. He noted that land grants totalling 21,145 acres “quite adequately” compensated Wright for “his assiduity and successful endeavours to promote the settlements in that section of the Province” and pointed out that “in so doing he was at the same time very essentially and certainly very equitably benefitting himself”.⁴⁸ But not all of Wright’s endeavours brought him a profit. He undertook the carriage of mail to Hull even though the government predicted that the service would not pay.⁴⁹ Petitioning in 1821 for land for four of his younger children, Wright urged, “your Memorialist does not request the grant of the Ballance of this order from Motives of monopoly but farther to evince his anxiety to forward the immediate settlement of the waste Lands under your Excellencys Government.”⁵⁰ This claim to high motives is implausible, but the key to Wright’s attitude is to be found in a maxim quoted in one of his letters: “Self love and social are the same.”⁵¹ His aspirations for the colony which he had nurtured from its infancy were based upon a dream, which was realized, of making the name of Hull one that would be known and admired far and wide for its industriousness, its economic success, and its internal harmony. In realizing these desires Wright fostered his own fame and success. When he took his grandson on a tour of Montreal in 1819 the two attracted considerable attention: “I had time to take him to the Court hous & all other plases of Note or Curiosity play hous &c &c and was Much Made of as Being P-Wright the 3 & born a Canadian”.⁵²

⁴⁶ MACTAGGART, *Three Years in Canada*, Vol. 1, pp. 268-9.

⁴⁷ Wright Papers, Vol. 1, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Joseph BOUCHETTE, *General Report of an Official Tour Through the New Settlements of the Province of Lower-Canada* (Quebec: Thomas Cary & Co., 1825), p. 45.

⁴⁹ Joseph BOUCHETTE, *General Report of an Official Tour Through the New Settlements of the Province of Lower Canada* (Quebec: Thomas Cary & Co., 1825), p. 45.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66713, Petition of Philemon Wright, Quebec, January 29, 1821.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 2208, Philemon Wright to Ruggles Wright, Quebec, February 3, 1821.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 1207, Philemon Wright to P. Wright & Sons, Montreal, March 12, 1819.

Wright "became a great favourite at the court of his Governors" and was enough of a well-known personality for an impressionist of the day to "produce him on the stage" in Quebec "in the character of Obadiah Quincy Bunker, from Boston".⁵³ Hull and Philemon Wright were inseparable, both in conception and in practice, and Wright himself could not see how the interests of the two could possibly diverge.

The Hull settlement was motivated by Philemon Wright's continuing dream of Hull becoming the agricultural paradise of Canada. He wrote home from Quebec in 1813:

my we live to See the lorrels of the Township of Hull spred its wings from North to South & East to West in it Agreculturul fame. Now is the time for Every man to make his forten in farming when Every thing is fetching doubel to any part of the States & agrecultural groth. drove on my good fellowers for farming and mak your fortens for Now is the time.⁵⁴

Wright's dreams were well-known, and came to be extended to the entire district. A political opponent, who appears from the document itself to have been a pragmatically-minded and well-educated French Canadian, circulated this paragraph when Wright ran unsuccessfully for election to the Assembly in 1819:

He speaks to you with emphasis of new roads, of establishments beyong the mountains, of travellers passing in crowds through the village of St. Eustache to enrich its Innkeepers and its merchants; to hear him speak one would suppose the County of York was about to become a Kingdom, and the Village of Rivière du Chene one of the first cities in the universe! But, my friends, believe me, Mr. Wr--- is no more able to do all these fine things, than you yourselves are able to take the mo (Ms. torn) between your teeth.⁵⁵

In 1829 Wright's mind was still in the future: "Talk of schemes of the wildest enterprise, and he is then in his glory; and if he can get any one to meet his views, how happy he is!"⁵⁶

The vision was infectious, and it came to be shared by many both within and without the settlement due to the colony's material success and to the appeal of its wild splendour. The newspaper account of the Earl of Dalhousie's visit to the township in 1820 devoted considerable space both to the grandeur of the Chaudière Falls and to Wright's agricultural achievements:

His lordship ascended to the top of the Cataract in defiance of danger... reaching the great fall of 44 feet, down which most of the water of the majestic Ottawa falls with a tremendous noise, continually sending up clouds of mist which fall on the wandering observers and solute them to the skin... his lordship felt the pleasure of a contemplative philosopher, and said it was the most romantic scene he ever saw. After two hours walk over the craggy rocks, his Lordship and company took horse and proceeded to view the improvements of Mr. Wright, which may be divided into five divisions: the Establishment on

⁵³ MACTAGGART, *Three Years in Canada*, Vol. 1, pp. 267-9.

⁵⁴ Wright Papers, Vol. 2, p. 289, Philemon Wright to wife and children, Quebec, September 18, 1813.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 131, p. 68583, "To the Electors of the County of York." The reference is to the old Lower Canadian County of York, which included Hull.

⁵⁶ MACTAGGART, *Three Years in Canada*, Vol. 1, p. 264.

the falls where a great number of mechanical businesses is carried on, and employers from 60 to 80 men; the Columbia, Gattino, Britannia and the farm on the Gattino falls — which together consists nearly of 3000 acres of land under improvement and a stock of 420 head of cattle with the whole of which his Lordship expressed himself highly pleased, and passed many encomiums [sic] on the indefatigable exertions which must have been made by Mr. Wright.⁵⁷

Note that the "timber department" is not even mentioned.

Stories of the "famous township of Hull"⁵⁸ impressed outsiders, whether heard from the lips of the Wrights themselves or from others. While in England in 1816, Wright's son Ruggles discussed farming methods with a substantial English agriculturalist and wrote home, "You may Expect a letter the firs opertunity from him he his much plesed with the Idear of awer not paizing aney taxes and the seutuation of your undertaking to astablish that settlement in fact I thought that he had an idea of pay you a visset."⁵⁹ And there were visitors. In 1818 two gentlemen named Baslan toured Columbia Farm and expressed themselves marvelously impressed with the livestock.⁶⁰ Charles Campbell of Quebec wrote to Philemon Junior that the Wright farms were "the most extensive in Canada; no: not to be equalled in the U. States, nor often to be met with in England".⁶¹

The vision and the success were not confined to the Wrights and their guests alone. The firm's storekeeper, Peter Miner, wrote to Wright in 1813: "Sir I am surprised that people will live in quebec, in that Dambnable stinking hole, in preference to Comming to here, where we Can have every Curiosity, fine are, and a healthy Cuntry." Here anyone could have a farm "of the best kind, and equal in buty to any Gentlemans seat on the north river in the State of New York."⁶²

We learn a bit more about the feelings and aspirations of the employees from a letter written by Joseph Holt to his brother Enoch in the United States about how he and his other brothers were progressing:

Fry has bought a farm of Mr. Richard Chamberlin Near Mr. Wrights and has agreed to pay him two thousand Dollars for the farm one thousand to be paid this fall; & Mother is to be paid in three years with Interest we all feel our selves contented for the present I have moved in the New Store... and I think I shall stay with them some time if they use me as well as they have dun. I Get Good wages My work is not heard & they use the hole family Likewise I have a Good horse Sadle & Bridle Eny time when I want to Wride & Moses the same.⁶³

⁵⁷ *Quebec Gazette*, September 25, 1820, p. 2.

⁵⁸ MACTAGGART, *Three Years in Canada*, Vol. 1, p. 264.

⁵⁹ Wright Papers, Vol. 3, p. 539, Ruggles Wright to Philemon Wright, Liverpool, February 16, 1816.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 1086, Ruggles Wright to Philemon Wright, Hull, November 6, 1818.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 1539, Charles Campbell to Philemon Wright Jr., Quebec, December 21, 1819.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 269, Peter Miner to Philemon Wright, Hull, July 27, 1813.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 461, Joseph Holt to Enoch Holt, Hull, August 8, 1815. The family were children of Frye Holt, Sr., a Revolutionary soldier, and Mary (Poor) of Pembroke, N.H., both of whom moved to Hull in their old age. Mr. Holt was a descendant of the

As early as 1815 Surveyor-General Bouchette wrote that the thirty or so families in Hull had their farms "in a very respectable state of cultivation and progressive improvement"; ten years later he could write that "the people seem universally to enjoy a degree of ease and comfort seldom met with in a dawning colony".⁶⁴

II

The period 1819-1824 saw the culmination of Hull's dreams. It was a brief period in which surrounding areas began to receive a sprinkling of settlers, with Hull and more particularly the firm of P. Wright & Sons coming to dominate the Upper Ottawa. It was an era, too, in which the short-lived economic boom of 1814-15 and the ensuing period of expansion and relative comfort created a craving among all the settlers to achieve a cultural status in proportion to their economic success and fame. It was the period in which Hull saw most of its early institutions formed, and a period in which the surrounding countryside from Hawkesbury to the upper reaches of the Ottawa, and from Oxford township on the Rideau to the trappers on the Gatineau River, came to rely upon the Wrights for support and assistance.

The position of eminence which Hull Township had achieved under Wright's leadership brought about the desire to develop a cultural and social life in keeping with the economic dominance and the prosperous, successful image of the settlement. The frontier had not, as S.D. Clark asserts generally of Americans, left these settlers without a cultural identity or collective interest.⁶⁵ Embodying these interests in viable institutions proved difficult, but these endeavours met with more success than was the case in most pioneer communities. This concern was first expressed in the field of education. In 1802 Daniel Wyman, one of the settlers of 1800, taught the children for three months,⁶⁶ but little was accomplished regarding formal education until 22 January 1807 when the inhabitants petitioned the Governor for a school master and subscribed to construct a school house.⁶⁷ In November 1808 Robert Chambers of the government-sponsored Royal Institute was sent to the township and began teaching in a house near the Gatineau erected by Philemon Wright.⁶⁸ In sending Mr. Chambers the government appears to have been motivated as much by hopes that he would "inculcate into the minds of his Pupils, Principals

Holt and Frye families of Andover, Mass. The families of two more distant Holt relatives also lived in Hull. See Daniel S. DURRIE, *A Genealogical History of the Holt Family in the United States* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1864), pp. 42, 90-91, and Rev. N.F. CARTER and Hon. T.L. FOWLER, *History of Pembroke, N.H. 1730-1895* (Concord, N.H.: Republican Press Assn., 1895), pp. 125, 149.

⁶⁴ BOUCHETTE, *A Topographical Description*, p. 251; *General Report*, p. 46.

⁶⁵ S.D. CLARK, *The Social Development of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942), p. 90.

⁶⁶ Wright Papers, Vol. 82, p. 21.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 128, pp. 67826-7.

⁶⁸ PAC, Lower Canada land, reel C-2562, RG1L3L, Vol. 179, pp. 86956-9, Petition to Sir James Craig, June 25, 1808.

Map 2. — HULL TOWNSHIP LAND OWNERSHIP AND LAND OCCUPATION, 1824



Additional Sources: «Statement of... the new Settlement in Hull... Sep. 25, 1823», Wright Papers p. 14574; Locations to 15 May 1824 and to Apr. 1827 (L.C. Land, and C-2527 pp. 43754-6); and Bouchette (1825) for delineation of roads. Additional reserves were laid out in blacks in R. X. - XII in 1827. (C-2527 pp. 43771-4).

of Loyalty to the best of Kings" as that he would teach the children to read and write. Chambers only remained until 1810.⁶⁹ There was a teacher in Hull in 1812, and we know that in 1813 Andrew Ryel, a Wright employee, taught for four months and that Peter Miner, the storekeeper, taught in the next year before moving to the Rideau settlement.⁷⁰

But these ventures met with only limited success. On 20 January 1817, the public school house was "Sold at auction for the benefit of the Inhabitants."⁷¹ While the reason is unclear, it is certain that the free school had failed to reach all segments of the population. When Wright's niece Barbara Allen and Miriam and Eleanor Green were married in 1820 all three signed the register with crosses.⁷² Wright's daughter, Christiana, was sent to a private school in Quebec City.⁷³ A paying school was operating in 1819 but only ten families, most of them relatives of the Wrights, are listed on the school bill.⁷⁴ In 1820 concern was again felt and a meeting of the inhabitants petitioned for a second school house to accommodate the children of the eastern part of the township.⁷⁵ It came into operation soon after and education, for a time, became somewhat more accessible.

The only other cultural institution established before 1820 was the Hull Masonic Lodge, established in 1813 at the urging of Peter Miner and Gideon Olmstead, who had been journeying to St. Andrews for meetings.⁷⁶ Miner proposed Wright as Master and Philemon read Miner's petition at a meeting of the Grand Lodge of the order.⁷⁷ Unlike the schools, the Lodge seems to have progressed steadily and to have provided Hull with its first meaningful social institution. On 17 December 1817, "14 Masons went down to the Meeting house" and listened to Wright's business acquaintance Samuel Downes deliver an oration on Saint John.⁷⁸ Saint John's day, celebrated annually under Masonic auspices, was the social event of the frontier year. In 1822 James F. Taylor⁷⁹ noted in his diary:

⁶⁹ Wright Papers, Vol. 129, p. 67876; PAC, "General Index of the Registrar General", RG68. Chambers' son and namesake, born in Hull during his father's short term there, became Mayor of the City of Quebec; see his obituary in *The Dominion Annual Register* for 1886, p. 263.

⁷⁰ Wright Papers, Vol. 84, p. 1; Vol. 82, pp. 50, 137.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 128, p. 67829.

⁷² PAC, parish register of the Church of England at St. Andrews East, Co. Argenteuil, transcript, reel C-2905, pp. 85-86.

⁷³ Wright Papers, Vol. 3, pp. 785-6, Samuel Downes to Philemon Wright, Quebec, September 14, 1816.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 128, p. 67608.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 128, pp. 67829-32.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 296-7, P. Miner to Philemon Wright, Hull, September 19, 1813.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 274-7, P. Miner to Philemon Wright, St. Andrews, August 17, 1813.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 77.

⁷⁹ James Finlayson Taylor (1796-1868) from Glasgow, Scotland, was hired by Wright as a blacksmith but his penmanship earned him the additional role of bookkeeper. He was secretary of many of Hull's institutions and was appointed Registrar of the County of Ottawa in 1833. After a boisterous youth he became intensely religious, belonging first to the Congregational Church and then to the Methodist. John L. GOURLAY, *History of the Ottawa Valley* (Ottawa, 1896), pp. 182-183.

this day being the anniversary of St. John the Evangelist the Masonic fraternity in this place celebrated it in a public manner the Revd brother Meech delivered a very appropriate address after which we sat down to a sumptuous dinner prepared by Mrs. Wright Senr the evening was spent in harmony and good fellowship till about Seven oClock when we dismissed and each went his own way home some with their sweethearts some with their wives and others by themselves.⁸⁰

The next day he added: "Mr. Hill Mr. Gavern Mr. Vaughan were here this evening from Richmond they came down on a pleasure party to finish the frolic of celebrating the anniversary of St. John."⁸¹ The lodge's success was probably due to the strength it found within the settlement; the members were not forced to rely upon specially trained persons from without. The isolation of the settlement deterred many individuals, such as clergymen and school teachers, from remaining. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Masonic Lodge provided much of the fellowship and sense of participation which in other places was provided by the evangelical churches.

In Hull churches were slow to appear, and religious feelings among the settlers were weakened by the long absence of religious institutions and ministers. In 1804 Philemon Wright was critical of Richard Chamberlin because he had opened the sawmill at the Chaudière on a Sunday. But by 1812 Wright himself was quite prepared to pay people for working on the Sabbath, and in 1817 we find him out with a work crew laying out the new road into Eardley on the day of rest.⁸² Although he was frequently diverted by practical matters, Philemon retained his Christian beliefs. Sometimes when away from home he attended church in Montreal,⁸³ and when his daughter, Mrs. James F. Taylor, lay dying he wrote from Quebec, "Give my best Complenens to Mary if living & tell her that him that Gave has an undouped Rite to take to himself & let us all be prepared to meet that Sollem day that we all must."⁸⁴

Wright's wife remained most devout and opened her home to the few clergymen who found their way to Hull in the early years, but James F. Taylor noted in his diary in 1823 that Ruggles Wright shared neither his mother's religious fervour nor her strong moral convictions.⁸⁵ In 1822 he commented upon the spiritual state of the community in general:

Religion has not become the one thing needful in this place but rather the opposite extreme. Very few appear to be careful for their souls and certainly it is melancholy to see people so careless and even openly profane on the Sabbath day.⁸⁶

Organized religion in Hull was a comparatively late development. The first clergyman to reach Hull, so far as is known, was Daniel Pickett, a Methodist circuit rider who had left itinerancy in 1809 — later sources

⁸⁰ Aylmer Heritage Association, Taylor diary, December 27, 1822.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Sat., December 28, 1822.

⁸² Wright Papers, Vol. 82, p. 129; Vol. 84, p. 46; Vol. 1, p. 66.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 25, 30a.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 1477, Philemon Wright to P. Wright & Sons, October 30, 1819.

⁸⁵ Taylor diary, January 1, 1823.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, November 10, 1822.

suggest that he may have been expelled — and came to the Ottawa Valley in 1811 to engage in what he called "the irksome business of Lumber" in order to clear his debts. When his secular pursuits brought him to Hull he expressed to Philemon Wright a desire that he might be "rendered a blessing to your family & Neighbours and to your own Soul also". He realized that he could not devote his full energies to the task, and noted that "should it not please God So to honor me yet my incessant Cry to God shall be that you may all be Saved". Wright's wife, Abigail, was eager to see a clergyman again and welcomed him to the family home, where he was "treated with great Civility and Respect". A few weeks after Pickett's arrival Abigail asked him to write a letter for her to her husband. In it she noted her desire to "secure a habitation eternal in the Heavens" and to be "Crusified to the World and to have it Crusified to me that I may glory only in the Cross of Christ for we know that the end of all Sublunary things are at hand".⁸⁷

An official representative of the Methodists, whose circuit riding methods and system of classes and lay preachers was so suited to serving isolated settlements, did not reach Hull until the Rev. Israel Chambelayne "decided to reconnoitre and report" in June 1816. He preached an evening sermon, which was heard "with avidity and tears," but this was only an exploratory journey and it was not repeated.⁸⁸ The Rev. Rinaldo Evert, who came to Nepean via the Rideau around 1820 and was the first Methodist clergyman to preach in that township, preached in Ira Honeywell's home there, after which young Rice Honeywell took him across the river to preach in Hull. This, too, was only an "occasional visit".⁸⁹ In 1823 regular preaching appointments were finally established on the south side of the Ottawa River by the Rev. Ezra Healy of the Rideau Circuit, who also preached at "Mr. McConnell's, in Hull". The following year twenty members were reported from the "Grand River" (the Ottawa) among the 342 on the large circuit.⁹⁰ Some Hull members were no doubt included in this number, for it was probably in 1823 that six or seven Hull residents established the first Methodist society there. Two of the six were Charles Hurdman, late of Co. Cavan, Ireland, and John Burrows,

⁸⁷ Wright Papers, Vol. 2, pp. 202-203, Daniel Pickett to Philemon Wright, Hull, June 19, 1811; pp. 204-207, Abigail Wright to Philemon Wright, Hull, June 27, 1811. Daniel Pickett (1771-1854) a native of Connecticut and a convert from Anglicanism, was received on trial by the Methodist Church in 1800 and was stationed on the Ottawa Circuit in 1800 and again in 1803. He may have met Wright at that time, but it is unlikely that his ministry brought him as far upriver as the infant Hull settlement at that early date. After leaving Hull he attempted unsuccessfully to establish a sect of his own, which he termed the Provincial Methodists. In 1834 he was one of the five clergymen who organized the schismatic Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada. Rev. John CARROLL, *Case and His Co-Temporaries* (Toronto: Samuel Rose, 1867-77), Vol. I, pp. 15, 19, 26-27, 32, 325-6; Vol. III, pp. 447-8; Rev. George H. CORNISH, *Cyclopaedia of Methodism in Canada* (Toronto: Methodist Book and Publishing Establishment, 1862), pp. 67-68; death notice and obituary, *Canada Christian Advocate*, July 26, 1854, p. 2; September 6, 1854, p. 2.

⁸⁸ CARROLL, *Case and His Co-Temporaries*, Vol. II, pp. 17-18.

⁸⁹ H. BELDEN & Co., *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Carleton* (Toronto, 1879), p. xxxv.

⁹⁰ CARROLL, *Case and His Co-Temporaries*, Vol. II, pp. 480, 482.

late of Plymouth, England.⁹¹ The earliest and most prominent members of the Methodist body in Hull seem not to have been Americans. James F. Taylor and the two men just noted were British emigrants and McConnell was from Nova Scotia. The two class leaders in the early years were Taylor and William Dodd, a school teacher from Davenport (Devonport?), England.⁹² Entries in the Hull Circuit baptismal register for 1826-1843 reveal that the majority of the families connected with the church in the 1820s were, however, American, reflecting the composition of the township's whole population.⁹³

The Hull Circuit was not set off from the Rideau until 4 September 1826. The new circuit encompassed the south bank of the Ottawa as well as the north and it was renamed the Richmond Circuit the following year, perhaps to reflect the movement's growing strength among the Irish settlers of that area.⁹⁴ In 1828 the first noteworthy revival occurred in Hull when twelve people were converted at a love feast held at James McConnell's.⁹⁵ Even so, Methodists accounted for only 4½ percent of the township's population in 1831.⁹⁶

Two churches had actually been established in Hull by the time the Methodists achieved this very modest success. Services in the "English form" were first held in the township in 1817, for Philemon Wright noted in his journal that on Wednesday, 1 January of that year there was an "Exesise preformed" in the school house "a grabol [agreeable] to the holy Cathilick orders the first preformed Sinse the Sitilmen Comensed." Similar services were held on several succeeding Sundays.⁹⁷ It is not known who presided over these meetings, although settlers are said to have assembled in the school house for some years to hear sermons delivered by the school master or even by Philemon Wright himself.⁹⁸

Late in 1819 six of Wright's employees whose contracts were due to expire asked his clerk, James F. Taylor, "to Rite for Mr. Abbet to Come and Sallanniz the Bonds of Mattrimoney Between them and there intendeds". As a result, Rev. Joseph Abbott of the Anglican Church at St. Andrews East, Argenteuil County, spent over ten days in Hull in January 1820, where he performed several baptisms and marriages.⁹⁹ Rev. Abbott

⁹¹ Their obituaries appeared in the *Christian Guardian* on January 5, 1848 and October 4, 1848 respectively.

⁹² Obituary, *Christian Guardian*, April 19, 1848, p. 106.

⁹³ United Church Archives, Toronto, Micro. D.3.5.86; Methodist Church in Hull, L. Canada, Baptismal Register, 1826-1843, and Micro. D.3.5.87; Quarterly Board/Official Board Minutes, 1827-1953.

⁹⁴ CARROLL, *Case and His Co-Temporaries*, Vol. III, p. 207.

⁹⁵ Taylor diary, March 9, 1828.

⁹⁶ 101 individuals of 2254. Wright Papers, Vol. 124, p. 66328-30. The 1831 statistics are undependable, as neither the total of individuals enumerated in age categories (2060) nor the total number listed by religion (2636) equal the stated number of inhabitants (2254). But the Methodists were clearly a minute element at that time.

⁹⁷ Wright Papers, Vol. 1, pp. 24, 25, 37.

⁹⁸ BRAULT, *Hull 1800-1950*, p. 203.

⁹⁹ Wright Papers, Vol. 5, p. 1491, attached to letter of Ruggles Wright to Philemon Wright, Hull, November 1, 1819; PAC, St. Andrews East Anglican register, reel C-2905, pp. 84-86.

was not unknown to the people of Hull, but whether he had visited the community previously is uncertain.

The first church to become associated with the settlement has long been said to have been the Congregational, the ancestral church of the American settlers.¹⁰⁰ However, it is likely that neither of the first two resident Congregational ministers served in the area until after the Rev. Thaddeus Osgood, a Sunday School promoter, visited the area in late 1819 or early 1820.¹⁰¹ The first two ministers stayed only a short time, the first leaving because of "a lack of congeniality between him and the people" and the second because his talent was too great for a tiny settlement.¹⁰² Early in 1822 the third minister, the Rev. Asa Meech, arrived.

Meech had formerly been the minister of the church at Canterbury, Connecticut. His strict Calvinism in the early years restricted the membership of his Hull congregation, and the smallness of the settlement made it imperative that he turn to farming to support his family, thus interfering with his ministerial duties.¹⁰³ Contact with the American Presbyterian Church in Montreal and the cooperation between the latter denomination and the Congregationalists in promoting Calvinism in Canada may have been responsible for an apparent change in Meech's doctrine which James F. Taylor, who had in the meantime become a Methodist, noted critically in his diary. After hearing Meech preach upon the text "God so loved the world" he commented, "How strange that the Person who being so well acquainted with the Decrees of the Almighty as to define the number of the Elect should on another occasion open the door so wide that all that will may come. Surely there must be inconsistency in some of this."¹⁰⁴

Although Meech was energetic and genuinely wished to advance the gospel, other elements of his character were probably somewhat to blame for his church's diminishing success. A contemporary noted that he was "highly esteemed in Hull" and Thaddeus Osgood indicated that he was "thought to be a pious man",¹⁰⁵ but he was not universally respected. Taylor tells us that "the tongue of scandal (was) set in motion" when Meech brought to Hull in 1822 a young bride 21 years his junior, just six months after his second wife and three children had drowned in the spring

¹⁰⁰ GOURLAY, *History of the Ottawa Valley*, pp. 216-217.

¹⁰¹ Wright Papers, Vol. 6, p. 1585, Thomas Brigham to Philemon Wright, Hull, January 24, 1820. Osgood, a native of Massachusetts, came to Canada in 1807 and promoted education amongst isolated settlers and Indians. Between 1819-20 and 1823 he made several visits to Hull, and he kept in touch with Philemon Wright by letter for a few years longer. W.P.J. MILLAR, "The Remarkable Rev. Thaddeus Osgood: A Study in the Evangelical Spirit in the Canadas," *Histoire sociale — Social History*, X (1977), pp. 59-76; J. Donald WILSON, "'No Blanket to be Worn in School': The Education of Indians in Early Nineteenth-Century Ontario," *Histoire sociale — Social History*, VII (1974), pp. 299-300. Letters of Osgood to Wright: Wright Papers, Vol. 9, pp. 2998, 3019, 3021-23; Vol. 12, p. 4113; Vol. 15, p. 5380.

¹⁰² GOURLAY, *History of the Ottawa Valley*, p. 217.

¹⁰³ Rev. C. Glenn LUCAS, "Presbyterianism in Carleton County to 1867" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1972), pp. 213-215.

¹⁰⁴ Taylor diary, December 2, 1827.

¹⁰⁵ Rev. Joseph Christmas, 1828, quoted in LUCAS, "Presbyterianism," p. 215; Wright Papers, Vol. 9, p. 2998, Osgoode to Wright, Montreal, August 3, 1822.

run-off in Brewery Creek. He did not appear to some to be "a patern of Morality and Self Denial".¹⁰⁶ It might be noted here that by his three wives Meech had twenty-one children. Philemon Wright stated that his family converted to Anglicanism because Meech had stirred up dissension amongst the settlers after the Wrights had attempted to collect a debt owed by the minister's son. At the time of this argument Wright asserted that Meech had left the United States because of a universal disrespect for him there.¹⁰⁷ While details are probably not obtainable, the American version of the story is that Meech left the church in Canterbury because "a feeling of personal opposition arose, which rendered his removal expedient".¹⁰⁸

It is certainly true that denominational attachments were never strong in the early period. In 1820 Wright wrote to the Governor suggesting the acceptability of a minister of any denomination,¹⁰⁹ and when the meeting convened on 13 January 1823 to discuss the construction of an Anglican church, the meeting opened with a prayer by Asa Meech. Eight days later, Rev. Osgood, during one of his visits to the community, presented the Congregational adherents with a Covenant that was adopted by seven people and formally organized the Hull Congregational Church. In spite of Wright's central involvement in the construction of the Anglican church, Congregationalists met in his home and his wife was one of the signers of the Covenant.¹¹⁰

It is significant that the same people were active in turn in each of Hull's churches. There were six signers of the Congregational Covenant in 1823 apart from Rev. Meech. Three of these, James F. Taylor, John Burrows, and John Allen, soon joined the Methodists, the first two at least becoming quite prominent in that body. Thomas Buck, a friend of Taylor and his associate in several religious and educational ventures, was a churchwarden of the Anglican church a few years later. The two remaining signers of the Covenant were Mrs. Estabrook, wife of the Sunday School superintendent, and Mrs. Philemon Wright, always a pious woman. The Estabrooks moved to the American midwest, but the Wrights' conversion to Anglicanism had already been noted, and John Burrows directed the construction of the Anglican church in 1823-1824. Only Taylor is said to have developed his interest in religion on the frontier, but the circumstances of his conversion are unknown. Burrows had been converted to Methodism in England and is said to have read the scriptures to settlers in his home before clergymen settled in Hull. There seems, therefore, to have been a core of religious individuals in Hull who worked to give the community a degree of spiritual awareness, and who formed the cornerstones of all Hull's churches. Two of these were women, and

¹⁰⁶ Taylor diary, November 13, 1822; Miss M.A. MEECH, "Asa Meech," paper given to the Historical Society of the Gatineau, March 10, 1964, and printed by that organization, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ PAC, reel M-235, Philemon Wright to Andrew Stewart, June 2, 1829.

¹⁰⁸ Bradford KINGMAN, *History of Brockton, Plymouth County, Massachusetts, 1656-1894* (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1895), p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ BRAULT, *Hull 1800-1950*, p. 203.

¹¹⁰ Taylor diary, January 13, 20, and 23, 1823.

some were immigrants who brought their piety with them. Fringe sects were especially active in Hull only in the late 1830s and 1840s when the Baptists had a church in the Chelsea area, when the Anglican minister Burwell became an adherent of the Irvingites and won converts for the Catholic Apostolics in the area, and when Mormon missionaries attracted a few families away, eventually to reach Salt Lake City. In the early decades of settlement the churches in Hull struggled to maintain their existence, only slowly gaining support from adherents apart from the resolute stalwarts who had been active from the beginning. The heyday of enthusiastic religion was yet to come.¹¹¹

In the early period church attendance remained small. In spite of "having on its side all the countenance and patronage of Government" the Anglican priest, Ansley, officiated to "about 30 or fewer stated hearers".¹¹² Rev. Meech similarly complained frequently of "this Benighted Region,"¹¹³ and Taylor commented after an evening conference meeting, "very little was said people by some cause are very backward in talking on religious subjects."¹¹⁴

What can be said of the state of religion in Hull? There is no doubt that the isolation of the settlement and the prolonged absence of religious contacts weakened, although by no means obliterated, religious sentiments. It also created a situation in which denominational attachments long remained fluid. The move to institutionalize both the Anglican and Congregational churches in 1823 symbolizes this culminating period of Hull's cultural aspirations as a centre of civilization in the wilderness. The frontier had not destroyed these settlers' cultural identity or left them without a collective interest. They thus were not attracted by the society-building role of Methodism with its essentially lower class counter-culture. Methodism achieved its modest success in Hull only as the Congregational church faltered. Difficulties in securing funds locally or from the missionary societies have already been noted, and the dissension that erupted between Wright and Meech may well have been one of the "other circumstances" besides age which led the latter to retire from the ministry in 1829 at the age of fifty-four.¹¹⁵ The Congregational-Presbyterian Church

¹¹¹ Rev. Edward Geoffrey MAY and Walter H. MILLEN, *The History of the Parish of Hull, Que.* (Ottawa: The Dadson-Merrill Press Ltd., 1923), p. 76; Taylor diary, January 22, 1823. On Burrows: obituary, *Christian Guardian*, October 4, 1848 and material in the hands of the Historical Society of Ottawa; Dr. H. T. Douglas, "John Burrows Honey, An Early Resident of Bytown", *Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa Transactions*, XI (1954), pp. 24-26. On some of the smaller sects see Gourlay, *History of the Ottawa Valley*, pp. 214-219; Brault, *Hull 1800-1950*, p. 209. On the Mormons: David Moore's journal, partial transcript courtesy of Mrs. Marion Headrick of Ottawa.

¹¹² Rev. Joseph Christmas, 1828, quoted in Lucas, "Presbyterianism," p. 214.

¹¹³ American Home Missionary Society correspondence, United Church Archives, Toronto, Meech to Peters, June 1829.

¹¹⁴ Taylor diary, February 23, 1823.

¹¹⁵ American Home Missionary Society correspondence, Meech to Peters, September 2, 1829. Meech died in 1849. His gravestone in the ill-kept Protestant cemetery at Old Chelsea bears the inscription

I would not live always, I ask not to stay

Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way,

A fitting commentary on the vagaries of his life.

in Hull struggled on until about 1838, one of the last references to it being a complain that if the current minister, Philetos Montague, were not replaced "the congregation would cease to exist".¹¹⁶ While the Methodists gained strength from this denomination's troubles and dissensions, James F. Taylor being one of the first to leave, other brethren became convinced of their need for a saving grace after the cholera epidemic of 1832.¹¹⁷

The erection of St. James Anglican Church, a fine stone building, in 1832, with the aid of the Bishop was a high point in the achievement of the desire to make Hull a centre of civilized life. A church of the establishment, supported by the governmental and ecclesiastical hierarchies, with its own minister, established Hull as the religious centre of the region and ended its reliance upon ministers and justices far down the river for the solemnization of marriages. Subscriptions for the church's construction came from all quarters, even from Congregationalists like Hereldus Estabrook. But support for the church was not as strong as the support for building it. It was a status symbol. John Burrows wrote: "this building will add to the respectability of Hull... there is not a new settlement in North American where so much money and labour has been laid out in the erection of places of worship."¹¹⁸

Some of the other institutions established in Hull in the period 1819 to 1824 enjoyed only a precarious and brief existence, reflecting the fact that Hull's aspirations had reached their height at the very time when the financial base of its success was beginning to decline in the face of a world depression, and as new elements were emerging to undermine their realization. A Moral Society was formed in January 1820 to promote the Sunday School founded by the energetic Rev. Osgood, to start a library, and to obtain a minister of the Gospel. James F. Taylor and Thomas Brigham served on the Society's committee, and Philemon Wright, then absent from Hull, was unanimously chosen President. Brigham wrote him enthusiastically that the society had about sixty members: "It appears to me there never was a time when the people of the town was so united as at the present time I believe [sic] the society has not one opposer." Rev. Osgood sent several boxes of books for the library, and P. Wright & Sons purchased over £19 worth in Montreal in 1822.¹¹⁹ Apparently the Moral Society did not last long, for in November 1822 James F. Taylor and his friend, Thomas Buck, established a Benevolent Society to support the Sunday School. The "principal part both men and women" present at a "very thinly attended" Sunday church service were reported to have signed the Constitution of the new organization on November 24.¹²⁰

While Taylor's interests related to the religious education of the colony, Philemon Wright was more concerned for the advancement of a

¹¹⁶ LUCAS, "Presbyterianism," p. 219-220.

¹¹⁷ Obituary of Samuel GRIMES, *Christian Guardian*, November 1, 1854.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in BOND and HUGHSON, *Hurling Down the Pine*, p. 16.

¹¹⁹ Wright Papers, Vol. 6, pp. 1585-6, Thomas Brigham to Philemon Wright, Hull, January 24, 1820; *Ibid.*, pp. 68877-9.

¹²⁰ Taylor diary, November 10 & 24, 1822.

more practical field of knowledge. In 1821 he wrote from Quebec that "My Idea of forming an Experimental Agricultural Society seems to please everyone". He was voted an honorary member of the Quebec society and was invited to help judge the prize hogs at its fair held that month.¹²¹ On 27 June 1821 the Ottawa Agricultural and Domestic Manufactory Society was formed with Wright as president, his son Philemon Jr. as first vice president and Gideon Olmstead as second vice president. Governor Dalhousie, a great advocate of agricultural societies, consented to become the Society's patron. The Society's aims were stated to be "the improvement in the practical part of farming and Domestic manufactory" through the holding of fairs, awarding of prizes, and organization of an agricultural library. Following the minutes of several meetings, the record of the Society ends abruptly. Another attempt was soon made to promote the improvement of agriculture, for in 1824 the Columbia Experimental Agricultural Society was formed, with much the same aims as the previous organization, and petitioned Dalhousie for permission to hold a fair.¹²² There is no record of this association's fate, but presumably it enjoyed only a short existence.

What can we say of this early period, the period in which the American settlers of Hull, under Philemon Wright's leadership and guidance, achieved economic success, aspired to cultural and social status, and became the dominating community in the Ottawa Valley? The region was still largely forest and the settlements were still scattered. Even in 1831 the county of York's population was small.¹²³ In geographic terms the area was a frontier, but the Hull settlement was trying, with a good degree of success, to convince the world that it was not an economic and cultural backwater.

In Hull much was imported, and the frontier did not overwhelm the settlers. They made adaptations to suit their new environment, but to a great extent the isolation of the frontier allowed them to develop as they wished to develop, unhindered by external irritations. Hull was initially a group settlement; therefore individualism was not the predominating force. The settlers coped with their difficulties together. Later, when many were established on their own farms, they still depended economically on the firm of P. Wright & Sons and on the Wright family for political and social leadership. This is not to say that the people became subservient or developed authoritarian personalities, for industry and self-help were a major part of their credo. If asked to account for any given settler's success all would have referred to this factor. But the individual was a part of a whole; the advance of the individual advanced the community. The cultural aspirations of the colony, too, indicate the extent of the settlers' collective consciousness. If the ideals of industry

¹²¹ Wright Papers, Vol. 6, pp. 1559-60, Philemon Wright to wife and children, Quebec, January 5, 1820. The contents of the letter suggest that it dates from 1821 and that Wright made a slip of the pen, it being just after New Year's.

¹²² *Ibid.*, Vol. 113, pp. 1-14; Vol. 124, pp. 66332-6.

¹²³ Indeed, half of its residents lived in the Township of Hull (2254 of 4786). Wright Papers, Vol. 124, pp. 66328-30.

and self-help and the spirit of community among these Americans so far from their native country were imported so, too, was Wright's leadership. He was in charge even before the first settlers left Massachusetts, and he continued to dominate every aspect of life in the community until the day of his death. Wright was an autocrat, but his visions, as we have seen, were infectious, and the settlers were willing to follow his lead. There were a few outbreaks of individual self-interest amongst the residents in this period but there was no real challenge to Wright's authority.¹²⁴

Hull's early settlers did make adjustments to the Canadian environment. Almost all of them were Americans, yet their activities bound them to the government in Quebec and to the greater metropolitan forces in London. Their dependence upon the administration for the granting and protection of land titles, the provision of school teachers, and appointments to offices, and upon Britain for the support of the timber trade through tariffs and favourable regulations, made the former rebel soldiers a part of the system. Officials in Quebec were cultivated, petitions addressed, Governors invited to visit. When business contacts in Quebec suggested that Wright run for the Assembly in 1819 as a supporter of the Governor in order to ensure the continuance of current timber regulations, there was no doubt an element of selfishness in Wright's willing response. But it is doubtful that his attitude was entirely one of "casual cynicism".¹²⁵ Philemon Wright had become truly conservative, and his own position of authority in Hull no doubt gave him a certain sympathy for the Governor's position. Wright felt, as has been indicated, that his interests coincided almost entirely with those of the country at large. In 1820 he no doubt believed that he represented the true interests of the constituency.

Yet, if working within the system did not achieve the desired results, Wright was willing to skirt the law. Examples can be cited from his timber dealings, and Wright himself was aware of "the irresponsibility inherent in the trade" when he described farming as a pursuit of innocence and peace. But "timber immorality" is not the whole story in this instance, though Wright himself may have preferred to think that it was. Wright the timberer and Wright the country squire were not two distinct personalities.¹²⁶ The legality of his activities in other spheres was not unquestioned. In 1829 there were complaints about his dealings with the settlers

¹²⁴ For disagreements over land in Eardley, ownership of millstones, and a controversy over Wright's daughter Nabby, see Wright Papers, pp. 66682-8, 69407-8, and 768, 779 & 69457 respectively. The later challenges to Wright's authority by British immigrants were foreshadowed in 1817 when three new employees attempted to break their contracts and leave the settlement. Wright had two of them jailed in Montreal as an example. Wright Papers, Vol. 1, Journal, pp. 25-26, 34; Vol. 4, p. 859, Samuel Downes to P. Wright, Hull, February 17, 1817; Vol. 132, pp. 69473-6, evidence of Francis Link; Bruce S. ELLIOTT, "Ruggles Wright and the 'Fine Grand English Farmers,'" unpublished paper, Historical Society of the Gatineau, 1976.

¹²⁵ Michael S. Cross, "The Dark Druidical Groves: The Lumber Community and the Commercial Frontier in British North America, to 1854" (unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1968), p. 239.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 240, 243.

as land agent, although he was able to explain his way out of this embarrassing situation by blaming the discontent upon the alleged machinations of Asa Meech.¹²⁷ Officialdom was not unaware of defects in Wright's character. The Earl of Dalhousie, a Governor popular with the American settlers of Hull, once noted: "Philemon is a strange character, of shrewd sense, deep cunning and Yankee manners — he is a compound of qualities that at the same moment recommend and show him a person that must be constantly suspected of a desire to cheat."¹²⁸

Even before Wright entered upon the timber trade his reputation was not unblemished. Shortly after he arrived in Hull his former partner, Jonathan Fassett, accused him of stealing the warrant of survey for the township from his portmanteau. The fact that Fassett wrote to Quebec authorities from an American gaol where he had been imprisoned for debt was probably sufficient to ensure that his complaint was not taken seriously. Clearly he was in no position to press his claim.¹²⁹ Philemon was less than diligent in fulfilling his financial obligations, for just as he attempted to exempt some property from valuation as part of the firm's assets in 1822,¹³⁰ so he had neglected to pay all his back taxes and an outstanding debt to Loammi Baldwin before leaving Massachusetts.¹³¹

A remarkable document has recently come to light which suggests the lengths to which Wright was willing to go if he felt that his ends justified the means. In this document, dated a year before his death in 1839, Wright confessed that he had wronged the children of his son, Philemon Jr., who died in 1821:

After his death, I being under the impression that in justice I had a share in all his ... properties, and having been partners in all the land transactions, but fearing trouble from his widow, and from his children, at my own request and investigations, there was a document made in the shape of a transfer, of all the above named lots of land.... But that document was never executed, in fact as it appears to have been, during the lifetime of my late son Philemon Wright.¹³²

Wright was assailed by pangs of conscience in his last illness. He finally achieved the idyllic life of agriculture he had long desired by retiring to a farm upriver in Onslow. There he attempted not only to right the wrong he had done to his own grandchildren, but welcomed the ministrations of a clergyman of whom his sons disapproved.¹³³

Despite Wright's deathbed remorse and his earlier willingness to blame his misdeeds on the uncertainty of the timber trade, his questionable activities did not derive solely from the influence of this commercial

¹²⁷ BRAULT, *Hull 1800-1950*, p. 39-40.

¹²⁸ N. MACDONALD, *Canada 1763-1841: Immigration and Settlement* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), p. 481.

¹²⁹ LATCHFORD, "Philemon Wright," p. 9.

¹³⁰ Taylor diary, November 27, 1822.

¹³¹ Wright Papers, Vol. 2, p. 425, Joseph Wyman to Capt. Philemon Wright, Woburn, February 27, 1815; *Ibid.*, pp. 69412-6.

¹³² Dated April 16, 1838. EVANS, *The Wrights*, p. 82.

¹³³ BOND and HUGHSON, *Huring Down the Pine*, pp. 24, 26.

enterprise which was but one of his many concerns and never his major interest, however much a source of profit and an incentive to further corruption it was. Wright's dubious ethics, like his autocratic behaviour and his visionary dreams, derived in the first instance from his own attitudes and convictions. He had founded Hull and he still owned the village. Had it not been for him the area would yet have been a "howling wilderness". Wright had dreams for Hull, and who could know better how the area should develop than he who had guided it and devoted all of his resources to it from the beginning? Wright's attitude was summed up by his son-in-law Thomas Brigham, who knew him well and who understood his business and has aspirations better than most: "he always conceived his situation like a small kingdom and it would never be removed."¹³⁴ Wright's attitudes were not born in the Canadian wilderness. The Massachusetts "man of enterprize" always possessed a will as strong as his aspirations were great. The frontier merely gave both a place to grow.

Thus it was not the timber industry that was responsible for Wright's questionable dealings. Nor was it the timber industry which brought about the violence and disorder of the 1830s. In the early period, Wright's timber department had always been peaceful. This circumstance cannot be ascribed solely to the "family atmosphere" of Hull.¹³⁵ The raftsmen hired for a few months at a time can hardly be expected to have developed a sympathy for its ideals in a few short months in the bush under one of Wright's American employees. Contemporaries credited the orderliness to the fact that the shantymen were docile, hard-working French Canadians. John Mactaggart, Clerk of Works for the Rideau Canal in 1826, contrasted the "Canadians" to the poor immigrant Irish:

If I had any work to perform in Canada of my own, I would not employ any Irish, were it not for mere charity. The native French Canadians are much better labourers, as they understand the nature of the country, can bear the extremes of the climate much better, keep strong and healthy, and always do their work in a masterly and peaceable manner; where the Irish are always growling and quarrelling, and never contented with their wages The Canadians are every way superior labourers in their own country, and repay their masters much better.¹³⁶

It is clear from Wright correspondence that disorder in the Valley, both within the timber trade and in the community at large, began with the immigration of increasing numbers of poor Irishmen. These migrant Irish labourers came from a much different social background and occupied a low economic position with little prospect of advancement. They had no interest in the advancement of the Hull settlement and its ideals. Brigham wrote in 1825:

I mention the situation of Andrew Baty the shoemaker has conducted himself in such a manner than we cannot live with him in the shop he gets drunk fights and quarrels to often for your advantage.... The wagon Maker went the Last boat got drunk so often that he could not work and his wits are equal to his Labor....

¹³⁴ Wright Papers, Vol. 15, p. 5426, Thomas Brigham to P. Wright & Sons, Quebec, October 17, 1826.

¹³⁵ CROSS, "Druidical Groves," p. 241.

¹³⁶ MACTAGGART, *Three Years in Canada*, Vol. 2, p. 249.

If ever a place needed purging this does drunken Irish shoemakers stone
 Masons and Carpenters will not neat [net] a profit to their employers.¹³⁷

Though American labourers sued for overdue wages, the Irish preferred to fight for them. The population of Hull Township doubled between 1828 and 1831¹³⁸ and there was no chance of equally rapid assimilation. The poor Irish and unprincipled timber operators like Peter Aylen were the disruptive elements.¹³⁹

The extent of the change was dramatic. The image of the "famous township of Hull", the wilderness outpost of civilization and scientific agriculture, often brought forth as the very model of a successful settlement, was supplanted by the image of the timber frontier — lawless, violent, and exploitative. As I have indicated, it is a mistake to see the first twenty-five years of the Valley's history as merely the prelude to the timber frontier of the 1830s. Philemon Wright, the "big and blustery ... rugged old pioneer never lost his rough edges",¹⁴⁰ but his cultural aspirations and by extension those of his settlement were ambitious and, to a degree, they were achieved. The error which results from viewing the early period as a prelude is the tendency to study the Hull settlement merely as the birthplace of the Ottawa Valley timber trade. It is more accurate, and essential to an understanding of the period, to consider the first settlers on their own terms, to study their aspirations and activities, to realize that they were led into the timber trade by the opportunity to make a windfall profit, and to see that the later conditions of disorder prevailing in the Ottawa Valley were forced upon them from without.

The character of the pioneer period of the Ottawa Valley, then, was largely imported from the United States and adapted politically to fit its new British environment. The disorder of the later period of the timber frontier was largely brought in and imposed on the earlier settlement by post-war immigration, as the violence of Ireland's resentful population exploded in the Ottawa Valley, where the repressive hand of British justice had not yet become firmly entrenched. But their early pragmatic ventures into the timber trade allowed the first Hull settlers to adapt to the new commercial frontier as the dearth of truly good farmland — land previously viewed with such enthusiasm — became apparent and timber became all-important to their well-being. This economic involvement allowed the Wrights to retain their power, although in a more localized sphere. This does not negate the fact of Hull's early and, at the time, well-known progressive image as a remarkably successful agricultural settlement, no matter how tenuous the economic foundations of this enterprise were to prove. It merely indicates the adaptability of these early American settlers. Success was their aim, and they allowed nothing to stand in their way for long.

¹³⁷ Wright Papers, Vol. 13, p. 4750, Thomas Brigham to Philemon Wright, Hull, October 31, 1825.

¹³⁸ 1066 to 2254; BOUCHETTE, *A Topographical Dictionary of the Province of Lower Canada* (London: Longman, Read, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1832), under heading "Hull."

¹³⁹ On Aylen see *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX, pp. 13-14; also CROSS, "The Shiners' War," p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ CROSS, "Druidical Groves," p. 241.