



The Bromley Sheaf

Bromley Historical Society Newsletter

Issue 3, 2026

President's Remarks

I think everyone must have some pet peeves. I have a whole list. The order of priority changes from time to time. For example, currently at the top of my list are people who think that roads with no posted speed limits mean they can drive at any speed they want. Usually far too fast. But that's a peeve for another time.

One item that is always on my list is people who choose not to vote in municipal, provincial, or federal elections but who don't seem to have any problem complaining about what their politicians are doing or not doing. So, they don't choose to vote. Choosing not to vote is their right ... although they've apparently forgotten that old standard rule of thumb that, if you don't vote, you are trusting your neighbours to make the decisions for you and that your support AUTOMATICALLY goes with whoever wins. Choosing not to vote is their right ... but I think, along with it, they give up their moral right to complain. And the comment that really drives me up the wall? The response to the question "Why don't you vote?" that has me biting my tongue (hard)? "It won't make any difference. Nothing will ever change." Argh!!

Sorry for the rant.

Much of this newsletter is about politics. Not the dry statistics about who won what election and by how much ... but the stories of people. People who have chosen to step up and serve their community or their province or their county. And people who, in good conscience, have chosen to vote in those elections, time after time after time.

And what, exactly, is politics? There are many definitions but the one that sticks with me is from an Introduction to Political Science class I took during my college days in Quebec: Politics is the work of individuals who have been chosen to share in the governance of a community or region, in which decisions are made for the common good.

Pat Van Gelder

The Upper Ottawa Valley and Its Parliamentary Representation, 1841 to 2025

By Sean Conway

The Bromley Historical Society will soon be sponsoring two public lectures focusing on two local families which have played an out-sized role in the political life of Renfrew County over many years. On Sunday August 16th, John Yakabuski will present his reflections on the many long years he and his father Paul J. Yakabuski represented the county of Renfrew in the Ontario Legislature. Six weeks later on Sunday October 4th, Julie Maloney of Ottawa will offer remarks on the political and professional lives of the Maloney family of Eganville, a family that has served in both the Parliament of Canada and at Queen's Park.

In preparation for these two public lectures, the Bromley Historical Society has asked me to provide a background article on the general pattern of parliamentary representation here in the Upper Valley since before Confederation in 1867.

Part 1

A characteristic of the Valley political tradition was the extent to which certain families seemed to produce candidates. Part of this pattern is explained, I believe, by the role that the lumber economy played in the region. Take, for example, John Egan of Aylmer Quebec and the family business/political connection he launched. After Egan died in 1857, part of his lumber business was taken up by his long-time clerk James Bonfield of Eganville. Bonfield, a Liberal, served two terms in the Ontario legislature between 1875 and 1883 after which time, his Renfrew South provincial seat fell to his son-in-law Dr. John F. Dowling who represented that constituency for most of the following decade.

As it happened, James Bonfield had a second 'medical' son-in-law, Dr. Martin James Maloney of Eganville who became a very prominent Conservative in the first half of the 20th century, contesting seven federal elections between 1911 and 1940 and winning three, the contests of 1925, 1926 and 1930. Dr. Maloney had two sons who followed the family path into politics. Son James A. Maloney won a provincial by-election in Renfrew South following the death of Jim Dempsey in 1956 and served as a very colourful Minister of Mines in the Ontario governments of Premiers Frost and Robarts until his untimely death in October 1961. Son Arthur Maloney was elected as a Progressive Conservative with John Diefenbaker in the federal election of June 1957 for the Toronto riding of Parkdale and went on to serve two terms in the federal Parliament.

Another family with more than one member elected were the Campbells of Eganville and Douglas. Robert Campbell Sr., who had been an agent for John Egan, was elected

federally as a Liberal in the riding of Renfrew South in the general election of 1882 and re-elected in the general election of February 1887.



Robert Campbell Senior

Robert Campbell Sr. died very shortly after his re-election in 1887 and was succeeded by John T. Ferguson of Admaston. Robert Campbell Jr. followed his late father into politics, only in his case it was provincial politics where the junior Campbell won two provincial contests in the 1890s before resigning his seat to make way for a prominent Irish-Catholic Ottawa lawyer, Francis Latchford, to take the seat and enter the provincial cabinet in 1899.

Multiple members of prominent Pembroke lumber families entering the political arena: the Whites, the Dunlops, the Murrays, and the Mackies, all of Pembroke. Another interesting case involves Norman Reid of Westmeath and his son-in-law Dr. John C. Bradley of Pembroke. Norman Reid was elected provincially for one term as the Liberal MPP for Renfrew North in 1908 after which he did not seek re-election provincially. But Norman Reid's most famous and challenging political campaign was as the anti-conscription Laurier Liberal candidate in Renfrew North in the notorious 'wartime' election of December 1917. Reid was defeated in that campaign by Col. Herbert Mackie running on the Conservative Unionist ticket whose victory in that campaign owed much to the heavily manipulated soldiers' vote. In June 1934, Reid's son-in-law Dr. John C. Bradley, then the mayor of Pembroke, won the first of two consecutive terms as the Liberal MPP for Renfrew North supporting the premiership of Mitchell F. Hepburn.

The father and son team of Paul J. Yakabuski and John of Barry's Bay represented Renfrew County provincially as Progressive Conservatives for a total of nearly 46 years between 1963 and 2025. Two of the most popular men ever to represent the Valley at Queen's Park, the Yakabuskis were the first members of the large Polish community in Renfrew County to hold office at either the provincial or federal level. Both father and

son were known for their folksy and colourful style, a style that made them unbeatable on the hustings.

Tom Murray, a Barry's Bay lumberman and his grandson Sean Conway also hailed from the west Renfrew village of Barry's Bay and together represented the county for a total of 44 years as Liberals. There is in the Murray family lore a story about how a young Tom Murray in the early days of his lumber business was found to be inadvertently cutting timber on a crown limit that he thought was properly his but was actually part of the sprawling Booth limits in the Barry's Bay/Madawaska area.



Thomas Murray, MPP

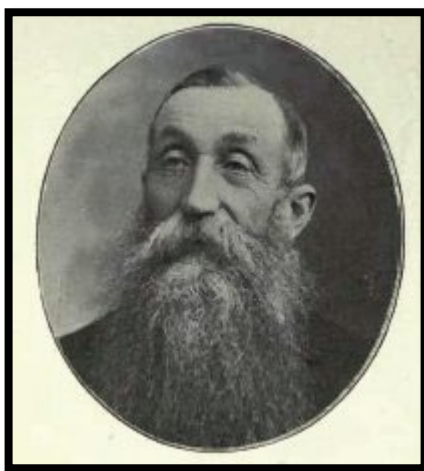
When J.R. Booth learned of this transgression sometime in 1911 or 1912, he demanded to see young Tom Murray in his Ottawa office for an explanation of such a trespass. After a tense conversation, Booth was convinced that it had all been an honest mistake and surprisingly offered the contested timber limit to Tom Murray on very beneficial terms. That unexpectedly generous offer by J.R. Booth helped launch the Murray Bros. lumber company on its way to being a major lumber business for over 110 years in the Madawaska Valley.

A final word about another characteristic of Valley politicians over the years. The area seemed to produce an above average number of colourful characters who made their way to parliaments, both national and provincial. Among the most colourful characters was a rough-hewn lumberman from Renfrew named James Shannon Dempsey who served for over ten years at Queen's Park where he was remembered for bringing some of the salty language of 'the lumber shanty' onto the floor of the legislature. His successor as the Conservative MPP for Renfrew South was James A. Maloney, a very well-known lawyer who brought his very powerful and effective forensic skills to Queen's Park.

Another county representative was 'little Johnny Carty' from Brudenell who was a 'giant killer' in the 1919 Ontario general election when he surprisingly defeated the well-established Ontario Minister of Finance Tom McGarry of Renfrew. The diminutive Carty served for two terms, 1919-1926, as the United Farmer's representative and found

many and colourful ways to drive home the needs of Ottawa Valley farmers to the power brokers at Queen's Park.

The remarkable Aaron Abel Wright, Liberal M.P. for Renfrew South between 1900 and 1908, was a well-recognized educator and innovator whose interests ranged from education to running a very successful dry good business in Renfrew.

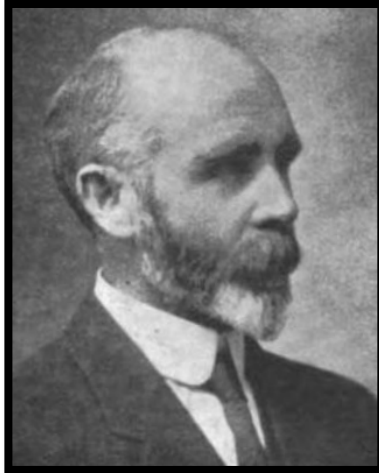


Aaron Abel Wright, MP

When that business was destroyed by fire, he promptly turned his attention to building a very modern creamery in Renfrew and managed to have the Governor-General of the day, Lord Aberdeen, officially open it and thereby give Renfrew a new name, "The Creamery Town".

But perhaps best of all the 'colourful and independent characters' who served in political office over the years was an Irish-born Quaker Isaac Ellis Pedlow. He ran only once for the House of Commons and that was as an anti-conscription Laurier Liberal candidate in Renfrew South in the wartime election of December 1917.

I.E. Pedlow, as he was commonly known, shocked many when he defeated the Unionist candidate and entered Parliament as one of only eight non-Unionist MPs from Ontario. After his one four-year term in the House of Commons ended, Pedlow decided not to seek re-election in 1921. He went back to his business and in 1929, at nearly 70 years of age, he enrolled as an undergraduate at Queen's University where he apparently was a very popular if somewhat 'advanced' undergraduate



Issac Ellis Pedlow MP

In summary then, the politics and the corresponding parliamentary representation from the Upper Ottawa Valley over the years strongly reflected local economic conditions, giving rise to a cluster of families with links to the lumber business, which will be explored in Part 2. This link produced a disproportionate number of candidates for political office. These candidates, once elected, generally took a very strong advocacy position for the home industry. Because the home industry would have been seen as 'unusual' to the rest of the province, these elected officials had to often resort to strong and muscular language to convey the distinctive nature of their world to make sure that whoever was in government understood the unique regional culture.

This latter point helps explain why the region produced what seemed like a large number of colourful and sometimes very independent voices, notwithstanding the fact that some of these MPs and MPPs were members of the very government they were very vigorously holding to account.

Works Cited:

Richard Reid editor. The Upper Ottawa Valley to 1855: A Collection of Documents. Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1990

Clyde Kennedy. The Upper Ottawa Valley: A Glimpse of History. Pembroke: Renfrew County Council, 1970

Marilyn Miller. Straight Lines in Curved Space: Colonization Roads in Eastern Ontario. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, 1978

Ed McKenna. The History of the Big Gibson Area in Renfrew County. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation. 1976

Michael S. Cross, The Shiners' War: Social Violence in the Ottawa Valley in the 1830s, an article in The Canadian Historical Review, March 1973.

The Sawdust Gene: A History of the Murray Brothers Lumber Company, 1902 - 2002. Published privately in 2002.

The Canadian Parliamentary Guide for biographical information for anyone who served in either the federal parliament or in provincial legislatures.



Renfrew Politics: A Family Tradition

On Sunday, August 16, 2026, the Bromley Historical Society welcomes John Yakabuski, former Member of Ontario's Provincial Parliament, to speak on the political careers of his father, Paul Yakabuski, and himself. The talk, which is free to the public, will take place at 2:00 pm, in the Old Town Hall, 498 Micksburg Road, Osceola, Ontario.

The Yakabuski family, originally from the Kashub region of Poland, settled in Barry's Bay. After serving overseas in the Second World War, Paul returned to his hometown to work in the family's hardware store business. First elected to the Ontario legislature in 1963 as a Progressive Conservative MPP, he served until his death in 1987. During his time in office, he was the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources.



His son, John, followed the family tradition in both the hardware business and politics. He was first elected as a Progressive Conservative in 2003. He served as the Minister of Transportation, and then of Natural Resources and Forestry. Subsequently, he was appointed Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier of Ontario. He retired from politics in September 2025.



Together, father and son represented Renfrew County for almost half a century. Come and hear about an insider's view on political life, his family's political tradition, and their role in the history of Renfrew County and Ontario.



TOWNSHIP OF BROMLEY

by James Robertson

There are several towns and districts in the United Kingdom named Bromley – Wikipedia lists seven. The township in Renfrew County, however, is named for another place. In *Places in Ontario: Their Name Origins and History* (Belleville: Mika Publishing Company, 1977), Nick and Helena Mika state: “The Township of Bromley was named for Governor-General Sir Charles Bagot’s home, known as Bagot’s Bromley, in Staffordshire, England. The township was first opened up for settlement in 1843. Until then it had been part of Ross Township.” (pp. 275-276)

The authority given for this statement is *Notes on the History of Renfrew County for the Centennial 1961*, compiled by Mrs. Carl Price and Clyde C. Kennedy (published by the Renfrew County Council, 1961). It stated: “Bromley was separately constituted in 1843 and took its name from Bagot’s Bromley, chief residence of the Bagot family in Stafford County, England.” (p. 99) This book also states that Bagot and Blythfield townships were named after the popular Governor of the time, Sir Charles Bagot.

This derivation of the name Bromley is confirmed by Alan Rayburn, author of *Geographical Names of Renfrew County, Ontario* (September 1989), which is a comprehensive and magisterial listing of place names. He states: “Blithfield Township, which is united with Bagot for municipal purposes, is named for Bagot’s home, Blithfield Hall, which is near the English communities of Abbots Bromley, Bagots Bromley and Admaston. These places are in Staffordshire, revealing the origins of Admaston Township, Bromley Township and Stafford Township.” (p. 30)

[NOTE: According to Wikipedia, Sir Charles Bagot was a British politician, diplomat and colonial administrator. He served as ambassador to the United States, Russia and the Netherlands. He served as the second Governor General of the Province of Canada from 1841 to 1843. He is chiefly remembered for his role in creating the residential school system for Indigenous children, his contributions to the “undefeated” border between Canada and the United States, and for fostering more cooperative and police relations between English and French. That he was instrumental in creating the foundational document for the creation of the Indian residential school system is today a source of controversy. Bagot Street, a main thoroughfare in downtown Kingston, is named for him.]

BROMLEY LINE

Alan Rayburn, in his *Geographical Names of Renfrew County, Ontario* (September 1989), includes Bromley Line among a list of populated places named for local people: “Bromley Line, a road name in Westmeath Township, was a post office from 1885 to 1922, with John Bromley as its postmaster.” (p. 20)

BROMLEY FAMILY

Families and individuals with the name “Bromley” are found in various records throughout Renfrew County. It is not known when the first person with this name arrived in the county. Similarly, it is not known whether all can be traced to a common ancestor, or whether there were one or more unrelated families with the same name.

Some examples:

- John Bromley, who was the postmaster in Westmeath (see above)
- In *Founding Families of Bagot, Blythfield and Brougham* (Juniper Books Limited, 1993), Carol Bennett lists as one of the early families that of James Bromley (c.1807-1891). He came from London and settled in Bagot Township. Two of his sons moved to Admaston Township.
- One of James Bromley’s sons, Alfred, is recorded as having married Margaret, a daughter of Hugh Flood (c.1807-1872), a Scot who settled at Hurd’s Lake, Admaston Township. (*Founding Families of Admaston, Horton and Renfrew Village*, Heritage Renfrew, edited by Carol Bennett, Juniper Books Limited, 1992).
- In *Cobden Then and Now 1849-1999*, Centennial Issue (Wallace Publications, 1999) George A. Wallace lists “Joe Bromley” in “Cobden and Area Veterans of

World War I.” (p. 64). He also lists a “Gerald Bromley” in connection with World War II in 1944.

- In *Genealogical Extracts from the Eganville Leader*, there are various listings for people with the name “Bromley.” In the 1902-1913 volume, a daughter was born to Michael Bromley at Bromley (presumably the community by that name on the Barr Line) in 1905; Dr. John Bromley of Pembroke was married in 1906; Mrs. Frederick Bromley of Admaston died in 1906; and Mrs. John Bromley of Pembroke died in 1907. In the 1922-1927 volume, reference is made to the 1927 funeral in Pembroke of Mrs. P.J. Hennessy, the former May Bromley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Bromley of Westmeath.



Reeves of Bromley Township

For over 165 years of township history, family names long associated with Bromley have responded to the call to govern it.

1861-62 M. Mulligan
1863-64 R. Smith
1865 W. O'Toole
1866-68 M. Mulligan
1869 J. McLaren
1870-73 M. Mulligan
1874-87 J. Donner
1888-94 J. Breen
1895-98 B. Leacy
1899-1901 E.J. Dooner
1902-09 T. Gorman
1910-13 T. Barr
1914-22 M. Breen
1923-25 J. McLaren
1926-29 T.P. Egan
1930-42 S. McLaren
1943-46 R. Angus
1947-48 L. McGregor
1949-57 T. M. Neville
1958-65 O. Smith
1966-74 H. Gallagher
1975- 99 C. McBride

A handful of these went on to give their time as **Wardens of Renfrew County**. In this capacity they brought executive leadership, legislative guidance, and administrative oversight to the region.

1863 R.R. Smith
1885-87 J. Dooner
1937 S. McLaren
1965 O. Smith
1983 C. McBride

Similarly, members of these families guided the township by assuming responsibilities for its administrative and financial matters. (Note: early minute books are missing.)

Clerk-Treasures of Bromley Township

1876-82 A. McLaren
1883-86 I. Grenier
1887-88 W. Leacy
1894-96 P. Hart
1897 P. Hart & Mr. Patterson
1898-1901 P. Hart
1904-08 J. Donner
Oct. 1908-22 J. D. Walsh
1923 J. Shannon & H. Foley
1926-25 Hugh Foley
1926-June' 62 J.D. Walsh
June 1962-71 Ray Forrest
1972-85 M. Rice & L. Rice
Oct. 1972-99 L. Rice

With thanks to Joyce McBride, who compiled these lists into a booklet Bromley Township's Political History.



Preserving our Township's Past History

The BHS has accepted with gratitude the addition of three beautiful and well-loved church pews from the United Church in Douglas to be used for seating in the Old Town Hall in Osceola. Amanda Todd and Dan Peters from the Douglas Trading Post donated one bench to the BHS. Church members and community members combined to donate two more: Dave & Delores Lemkay, Brian & Ellen Stokes and Brian & Lorraine Hamilton. Missing from photo are donors Stephanie English, Nancy & Steve Schultz

and Cairine & Garnet Bruce. Accepting the donations is President Patricia Van Gelder (second left).

You will see and use these beautiful benches at their new home at Old Town Hall in Osceola when John Yakabuski Kirby speaks on Renfrew Politics: A Family Tradition on Sunday, August 16 at 2:00 pm.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

UPCOMING 2026 TALKS

Sunday, August 16
2pm

Renfrew Politics: A Family Tradition
John Yakabuski
Old Town Hall
498 Micksburg Road
Osceola

Sunday, September 13
2pm

Celebrating the Eganville Leader
Gerald & Ron Tracey & Guests
Old Town Hall
498 Micksburg Road
Osceola

Sunday, October 4
2pm

Dr. Martin Maloney – Personal & Political
Julie Maloney & Sean Conway
Old Town Hall
498 Micksburg Road
Osceola

Sunday, November 22
2pm

Women @ War
Former Chief Wendy Jocko
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 550
43A Main Street
Cobden

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JOIN US!

Become a member of the BROMLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Renew your annual membership – Individual \$15.00 or Family \$20.00.

- **Send your cheque along with your name, street address and e-mail coordinates to: Bromley Historical Society, 34 Gypsy Lane, Cobden, Ontario K0J 1K0. Our email address is bromleyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com**
- **Charitable donations receive a tax receipt.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ **E-mail Address:** _____

I wish to join as: Individual \$15.00 _____ Family \$20.00 _____

I wish to donate: \$_____.

Yes, I would like to volunteer. My interests are: