



JOHN PATERSON (1805-1856)

PRESIDENT OF DUNDAS TOWN COUNCIL, 1848



MAYORS OF DUNDAS

A volunteer project of the Dundas Museum & Archives

**JOHN PATERSON
(1805-1856)**

MANUFACTURER

PRESIDENT of DUNDAS TOWN COUNCIL, 1848

John Paterson was born on the 5th of April 1805, at Blantyre Works, near Glasgow, to Peter Paterson and Jean Frazer.

In 1819 the Paterson family emigrated to Canada, and settled in York, where two years later Peter Paterson established a hardware business. As early as 1823, John and his brother, Peter were employed in the family business.

Around the same time a young man named **John Lesslie** had also emigrated from Scotland and settled York, with a friend, **William Lyon Mackenzie**. These two men also took up business, selling books and drugs in York, and eventually made their way to Dundas to engage in business enterprises. John Lesslie's family eventually joined him and settled in Dundas.

In 1823 John Paterson was granted a lot on the waterfront of **Coote's Paradise** and by 1829 he had opened a hardware store there. In the small town, Paterson was almost certainly acquainted with fellow Scots, Lesslie and Mackenzie.

The Canada Company was incorporated in 1824 by Royal Charter to handle land grants to Intelligent, albeit poor emigrants who were considered desirable colonizers. One early colonizer was John Galt, the novelist after whom Galt is named.

We regret to state that Sir Alan MacNab was on Monday last seized with a sudden and dangerous attack of Gout - but are happy to add that he is now convalescent.

Dundas Warder, April 16, 1847

**PROCLAMATION - Gore District
Dundas Warder April 16, 1847**

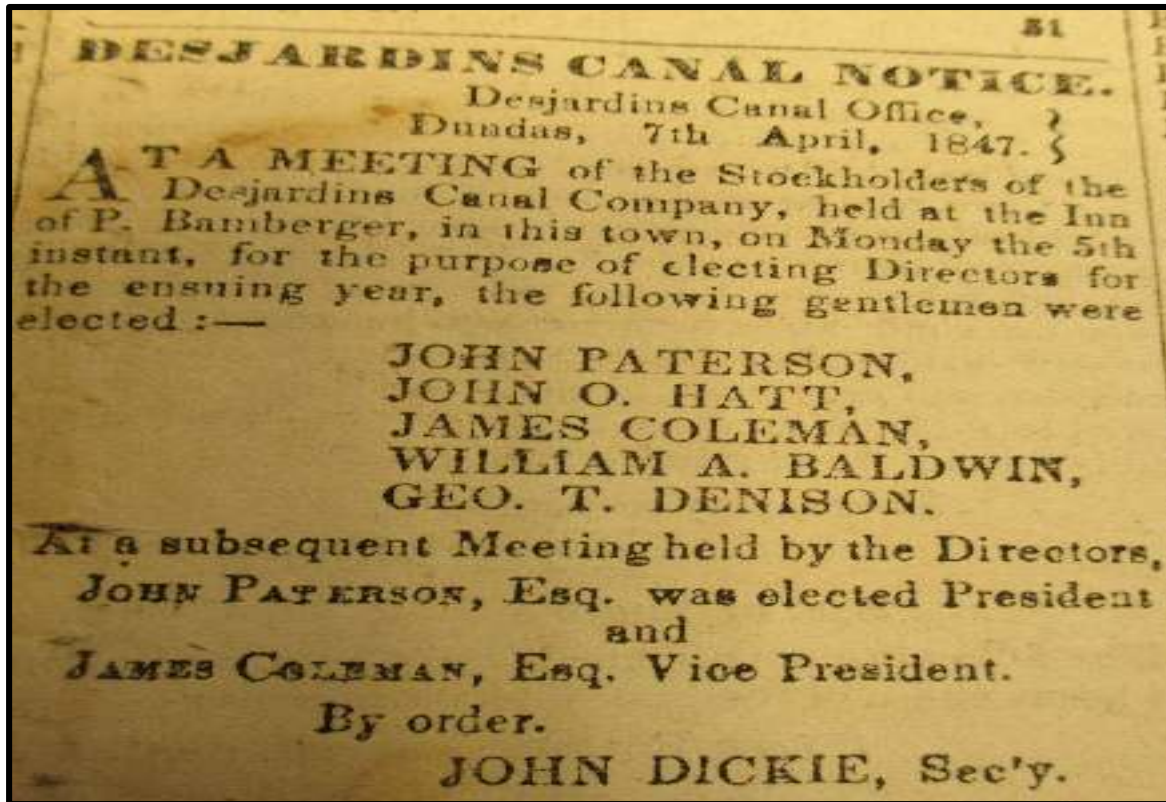
Whereas representation hath been made to us, Samuel Clark, Warden of the District....that Mad Dogs are running at large, thereby endangering the lives and welfare and destroying the Cattle of her Majesty's liege subjects.....to enforce the keeping Collars on Dogs with the owners' names thereonAny Dog found running at large after the Sixth day of April until the Sixth day of May shall be destroyed....many Cattle having already been bitten and destroyed.

The Weather

The present is one of the latest seasons on record in these parts. The fields are still covered with snow, in many places to a depth of several feet; and the swamps are still frozen up. The ice in the bay and the harbor (sic) is yet as sound as a rock, and, heavy teams are crossing it in all directions - some with wheels.

Dundas Warder, April 16, 1847


By 1829 John Paterson was busy with his own store which sold hardware and general merchandise. It was a rival to Lesslie and Sons and he was in business until 1831. This was the year in which John wed Grace Lesslie, a sister of John, James, and William Lesslie.



Dundas Warder & Halton County General Advertiser 1847

In 1830 Paterson began to build a brewery on the South Quay of Spencer Creek and soon operated a glue factory there as well. In the **1835 Assessment Roll** Paterson is described as owning one dwelling house - 1 storey; 2 acres of cultivated land; 1-2 (acres) kept for reserve; five males over the age of 16 were living at his house as well as three females over 16 for a total of eight persons.

With business partner, Walter Gorham, John Paterson established the **Dundas Woollen Factory** in 1845. He bought out his partner the following year and renamed it the **Elgin Woollen Mills**.



**ELGIN WOOLLEN MILLS,
DUNDAS.**

THE subscriber solicits an inspection of his extensive and well assorted stock of
Home Manufactured Cloths, Flannels and Blankets,
 suited to the season, being confident that for quality of material and superiority of finish, they will be found unsurpassed by any Fabricks of the kind ever produced in this country.

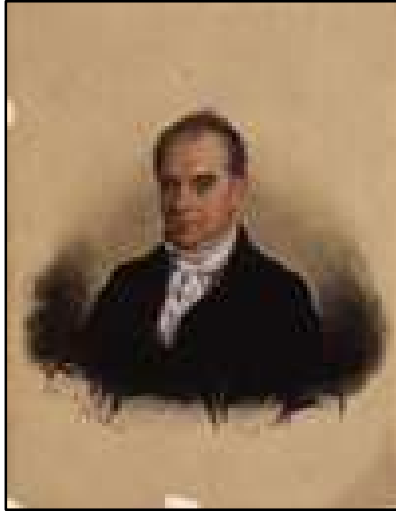
As it is the Subscriber's anxious desire to promote *Home Manufacture*, by producing an article better suited to the country than any that can be imported, he hopes to merit the support of the Canadian public.

☞ Wholesale purchasers supplied on liberal terms.

JOHN PATERSON.
 Elgin Mills, Dundas, Nov., 1847. 84-f

At the **Great Exhibition in London, England in 1851**, woolen products from Dundas received praise for their quality. Other manufactured items sent from Canada included axes and coopers' tools made in Dundas. Considering that about 13,000 items from around the world were competing for recognition, this was indeed noteworthy.

The Examiner, October 28, 1846
 In the article of blankets Upper Canada can, as regards to price outstrip the English manufacturers altogether and in quality can fully equal the best importations. There were some exhibited of very superior quality; the selling price of which is \$5. While English blankets of equal quality cannot be sold here for less than L5.3.4.



Robert Baldwin

Baldwin lived the rhetoric of his times: he was a gentleman, morally courageous, utterly genuine in his willingness to sacrifice his interests to those of the institutions he revered – the constitution, the law, the church, property, and the family. His political opinions were essentially Whiggish, which meant a commitment to popular government and individual rights, and an adherence to the values of a landholding class and a social structure rooted in the family and traditional forms of mutual obligation.

His affection for things British took second place to his Canadian nationalism. In March 1846, during a debate on the militia, he insisted it was capable of defending the province without British help: “We want no foreign bayonets here. . . . He loved the Mother Country, but he loved the soil on which he lived better.”

On taking office in 1848, Baldwin insisted Britain must grant a general amnesty for the rebels of 1837–38. His clemency, however did not extend to William Lyon Mackenzie, whom he considered a traitor.

Mackenzie had to wait for the general amnesty. His demands for compensation for parliamentary salary and committee expenses owed him from 1837 were dismissed contemptuously by Baldwin, who had a special hostility for Mackenzie the smasher. Baldwin effectively drove him from the party and made him a dangerous, indeed a lethal, enemy.

The Municipal Corporations Act, supported by Baldwin, provided the efficient system of local government reformers had been crying for since Durham had emphasized the need in his report. The act replaced the unwieldy districts with counties and allowed for incorporation of villages, towns, and cities, with each receiving an elected council (as did the townships). The act has been seen by some historians as a grand extension of democracy and as Baldwin’s creation. By providing elected councils, it gave the municipalities a measure of independence from provincial control.

Dictionary of Canadian Biography

Dundas Warder, April 16, 1846

On this date, there was a lengthy description of a dinner held at Boggis's Hotel attended by guest of honour, Robert Baldwin M. P. P., "*the most gifted son of the Country. The weather was a shocking wet day with rain and cold, the roads were filled with holes and mud and nearly impassable but there were not five short of one hundred men present. The assembly sat down to a dinner that was all that the most fastidious taste could desire...The room was brilliantly lighted and tastefully decorated. Over the chairman's seat was displayed a splendid Blue Silk Banner having thereon inscribed in silver letters:*

DURHAM'S RESPONSIBILITY !!!"

"The Chair was filled by John Paterson Esq. J.P. The Honourable Robert Baldwin addressed the crowd, stopping frequently for cheers and toasts to his The Honourable Robert Baldwin addressed the crowd, stopping frequently for cheers and toasts to his good health."



Dundas Museum & Archives

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE.—Lecture on Monday evening next, by the Rev. Andrew Bell. Subject—"Geology of Canada."

Dundas Warder, 1848

"NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

"Paris, Feb. 26."

"GENTLEMEN,—The nation has just destroyed the treaties of 1815. The old soldier of Waterloo the last brother of Napoleon, re-enters from that moment the bosom of the great family. The time of the dynasties has passed from France! The law of proscription which weighed on me has fallen with the last of the Bourbons. I demand that the Government of the Republic shall issue a decree declaring that my absence was an insult to France, and has disappeared, with all that was imposed upon us by foreign powers. Accept, &c.

"JEROME BONAPARTE.

Dundas Warder, April 1848

PROSPECTUS

OF THE
DUNDAS BUILDING SOCIETY.

INCORPORATED BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT.

SHARES—£50 EACH.

Monthly Subscription, 5s. per Share.—

Entrance Fee, 2s. 6d. per Share.—

Transfer Fee, 1s. 3d. per Share.

DIRECTORS.

Messrs. ROBERT HOLT,	Dundas,
JAMES COLEMAN,	"
JOHN WAGSTAFF,	"
THOMAS MCKENZIE,	"
JOHN GARTSHORE,	"
SAMUEL OVERFIELD,	"
WILLIAM DIXON,	"
DUNCAN CALDER,	"
JOHN PATERSON,	"
JOHN M. THORNTON,	"
G. B. ROSSEAUX,	Ancaster,
JOHN MILLER,	Nelson,
WILLIAM ROBINSON,	Dumfries.

ROBERT SPENCE, *Secy & Treasurer,*
SAMUEL DUFFIELD, *Solicitor,*
BANK OF B. N. AMERICA, *Bankers.*

Dundas Warder, Friday April 7, 1847

Desjardins Canal

On Monday last the annual meeting of Stockholders...declared duly elected Directors for the ensuing year:

John Paterson, James Coleman, William Dixon, John Gamble and Benjamin Overfield, Esquires. At a subsequent meeting of the Board Mr. Paterson was elected President and Mr. Coleman Vice President.

Another of Paterson's interests was the **Desjardins Canal Company**.

Since 1826 he had been promoting the construction of the canal linking Dundas to Burlington Bay and thus, Lake Ontario. In that year, six Dundas men - Peter Desjardins, Edward, William and John Lesslie, and Peter and John Paterson - as well as four others applied to the Government for a charter to build a canal.

The charter was granted on January 30, 1826 - provided that the cost did not exceed 10,000 pounds.

In 1832 Paterson mortgaged his own property as security for the completion of the Canal and a loan of 15,000 pounds was arranged with the Government.

Progress on the construction of the canal had been lagging (once, because someone had stolen the contractor's wheelbarrow) and businessmen were frustrated!

The affairs of the company were suspect. At issue was the 5000-pound loan towards completion of the Canal which Alan MacNab had redirected towards the company's debts.

Consequently in 1833 Paterson circulated a petition which resulted in a provincial investigation into the affairs of the company and its President, **Alan MacNab**, whom Paterson then replaced as President the following year.

Dundas Warder

We are pleased to learn that immediate steps are being taken to improve navigation of the Canal. NOR IS THIS ALL. The Directors are determined to have the Canal completed!

The first Town Council in Dundas was elected on April 23, 1848, although the town was incorporated in 1847.

According to T. Roy Woodhouse's "History of the Town of Dundas" (*Volume 3, pages 30-31*) the date of the first election for the Town Council had been held on the first Monday in September 1847 at Bamberger's Inn. However, citizens, not yet having obtained a true copy of the Act had requested that the election be delayed until October.

This resulted in widespread dissatisfaction with the election results: many of the town's prominent citizens were unable to cast a vote due to where they lived or because they had not yet taken the oath of allegiance to the Queen. (Some had been born in the United States.)

The incorrect date of the election was used to nullify the results. After the second election Councilors chose **John Paterson** as **President**. In 1850 the title was changed to Mayor.

Dundas required a Town Hall and a market house. Until now all meetings were held in one of the numerous inns. Local inhabitants voted on several locations for the town hall. One of the choices included land which would be donated by Ben and Sam Overfield - a triangular piece of land across the road from their home on Main Street at Hatt know as Hay Scale Square. This location received 190 votes.

Funds were borrowed from the Canal Company to allow the Town to begin construction of the Town Hall and market. Most of the money was directed to this purpose, but **500 pounds** were held back by Paterson and he issued, instead, his own bond to the Town. There is no information as to why Paterson retained the funds.

Dundas Warder February 9, 1849

Town Council

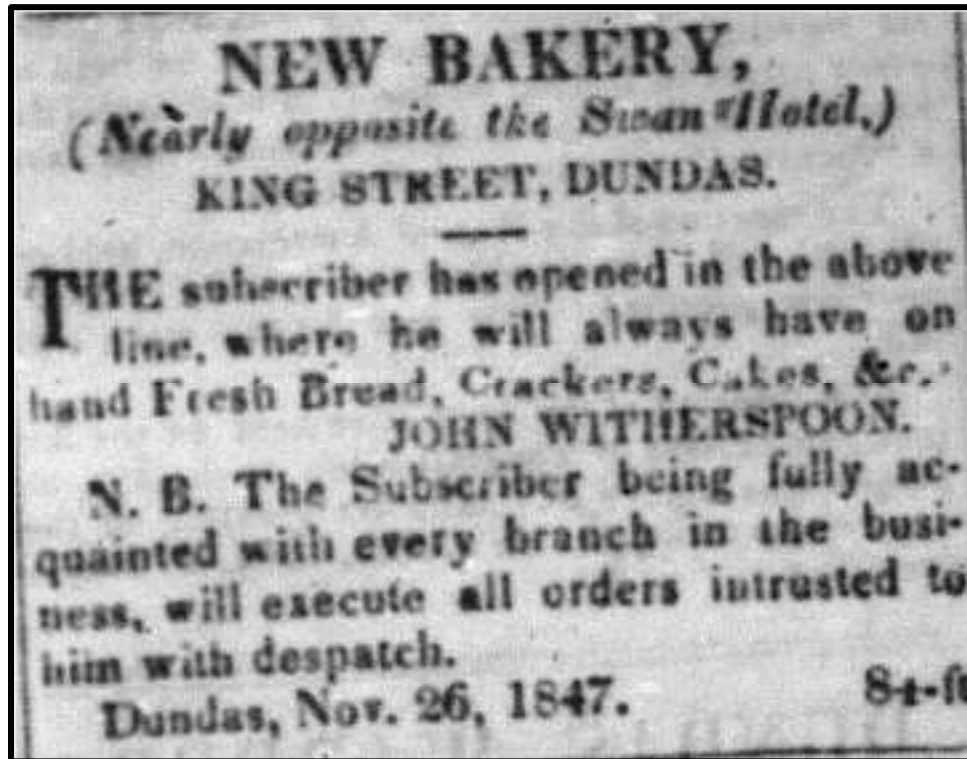
On Tuesday, this body met - members all present.

A document was read by the Clerk: It was an assignment between J. Coleman and J. Paterson of a mortgage held by...Coleman on the Town property; and by the terms of which it appears that only 1000 pounds have been paid by Mr. Paterson (to the Town) while he holds a mortgage over the Town for 1500 pounds. The difference - 500 pounds - is said to be secured to the Town by a bond from Mr. Paterson.

Where the bond is nobody knows. Further the document has not been recorded. Councilors demanded the papers. The whole from beginning to end was a shameful, underhand

transaction done on the part of the President and two Councilors. It is now clear that the same man in his capacity as President...conveyed the town property to himself. Surely further comment is useless.

Councilors then initiated legal proceedings against Paterson over the missing 500 pounds. The outcome of the case is obscure, but Paterson was not re-elected to either the Board of the Canal Company or the Town Council in 1849.



Dundas Warder April 16, 1848

*Dundas Warder and Halton County General Advertiser
Dundas, Canada West*

Friday morning, November 9, 1849

*Reform Association. - Would some
kind friend inform us what progress
has been made towards the
formation of a Reform Association
in this town?*

During his years as a prominent businessman Paterson was active in the life of the community. In 1829, he had been part of a committee which helped organize the **Dundas Union Sabbath School**. In 1831 he had been elected Secretary of the newly founded **Dundas Free Church**. He had worked endlessly to promote business at the Head-of-the-Lake and had chaired a public meeting in Dundas to affirm loyalty to the Crown after the rebellion in 1837. He also was a supporter of the Reform movement in Dundas and greeted Robert Baldwin when he arrived in Town in 1846.

In 1848, Town Council, under **President John Paterson** established a Fire Department, with the first fire hall constructed behind John Lesslie's store at Main and York Streets.

John Paterson died on November 16, 1856, aged 52, leaving behind no heirs. Grace Lesslie Paterson lived for another thirty years, passing away in 1886, aged 81 years. Both the first Mayor and his wife were interred in Grove Cemetery.



Paterson Monument Grove Cemetery 2016



SACRED TO THE
MEMORY OF
GRACE LESSLIE,
WIFE OF JOHN
PATERSON

JOHN PATERSON

PRESIDENT

1848

DUNDAS TIMELINE

1834 Paterson replaces Alan MacNab as President of the Desjardins Canal Company

1837 Desjardins Canal completed

1845 Dundas Woollen Mills established in partnership with Walter Gorham

1846 Lord Durham's Act implemented electoral reform and self- government

1847 Incorporation of the Town of Dundas

1848 Paterson elected by other Councilors as President of the Town Council

WORLD TIMELINE

1846 US & Mexico fight over California

1847 The Bronte sisters publish *Wuthering Heights & Jane Eyre*

1847 Ether first used for surgery in Boston

1847 Women in US hold convention & demand the vote

1849 Edgar Allan Poe, 40, dies of alcoholism in Baltimore

1849 Cholera first linked to the water supply in London

1849 Frenchman, Armand Fizeau measures the speed of light - 186,000 miles/second

SOURCES

Dundas Warder and Halton County General Advertiser 1847-1849

Dundas Museum & Archives files

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