

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

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THE HON. JOHN HALL KELLY

1879-1941

Some highlights of the background and the career of a remarkable Gaspesian whose name and influence extended far beyond his place of birth in St. Godefroi, Bonaventure County.

KEN ANNETT

WELDON HALL

1873-1941

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MEMBER
MONDAY, MARCH 18, 1941

MEMORIAL
SERIES



...his service. In his own words, he was a member of the Irish race and an even greater and better friend in the welfare of his fellow men.

HON. JOHN HALL KELLY1879-1941MEMORIAL
TRIBUTE

HOUSE OF COMMONS, OTTAWA

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 1941

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF CANADA'S FIRST HIGH
COMMISSIONER TO EIRE - THE LATE JOHN HALL KELLY

Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King (Prime Minister):

I have today received the following cable from Premier
de Valera of Eire:

"I wish to express my sincere sympathy with you and the Canadian government on the death of Mr. Hall Kelly, your distinguished representative in Dublin. He has endeared himself to all who knew him by his personal qualities and by his zeal and devotion in fostering close and cordial relations between Canada and Ireland".

I am sure that honourable members of this House will have learned with deep regret of the passing of Canada's first High Commissioner to Eire. The career of Mr. John Hall Kelly is a record of industry, charity, and devotion to the public interest. With few early advantages, Mr. Kelly gained for himself a high place in his chosen profession of Law and success in the businesses in which he was engaged. As a member of the legislature of the Province of Québec, as an appointed member of the legislative council, and as a minister without portfolio in the government of Québec, he gave to his native province long and unselfish service. In him were joined the traditional eloquence of the Irish race and an ever present and kindly interest in the welfare of his fellow men.

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MEMORIAL
 TRIBUTE
 (ctd)

Since his arrival in Dublin, Mr. Kelly quietly and effectively worked for Canadian-Irish good will. His reports to the government have been of much value and it has been a great satisfaction to myself and my colleagues to note how warmly he has been welcomed by the people of Eire. The tribute which has been paid by Premier de Valera to his personal qualities, his zeal and his devotion is, itself, an indication of the loss which both countries have suffered by Mr. Kelley's passing.

Hon. R.B. Hanson (Leader of the Opposition)

I desire to associate myself with the words of the Prime Minister with respect to the sudden, I might say the shockingly sudden, death of Mr. John Hall Kelly. I knew Mr. John Hall Kelly for more than thirty years and had somewhat intimate relations with him extending over that period. I learned to value highly the many good qualities which he possessed, not the least of them being his fine Irish sense of humour.

Thus did the leaders of the Canadian Government of the time honour a son of Bonaventure County whose remarkable career in Law, Government, Business and Diplomacy was a source of pride and satisfaction to people of the vast District of Gaspé.

This article in the Gaspé of Yesterday series can only sketch the highlights of his life story. A definitive biography of this distinguished son of Gaspesia would be a welcome contribution to the historical record of the District.

FAMILY

BACKGROUND

John Hall Kelly, son of Mancer James and Sarah Bridget Hall Kelly was born at the community of St.Godefroi, Bonaventure County, on the shore of Bay Chaleur, on September 1st.,1879.

On his paternal side the Kelly family had been associated with the management of the GASPE FISHING AND COAL MINING CO. at Pabos. Robert Warren Kelly had been a resident at Pabos, together with Charles Kelly, Superintendent of the above company but had moved to New Carlisle prior to 1848. There he had established a printing plant and had published the GASPÉ GAZETTE and the GASPÉ MAGAZINE, pioneer Gaspesian publications. A son of Robert Warren Kelly, Thomas Rees Kelly, J.P. was a merchant of New Carlisle. He died prematurely c.1864 leaving his widow, Angelique Day Kelly and children, Mancer James, Maria Louisa, William Augustus, Drucella and Kate Eliza. In 1867 the Widow Angelique Day Kelly remarried with Thomas Pye, artist and author of New Carlisle. Mancer Kelly grew up to become Inspector of Weights and Measures and a Crown Land Agent.

On his maternal side the mother of John Hall Kelly, Sarah Bridget Hall, daughter of John and Mary Jane Chatterton Hall, descended from pioneer, Loyalist families of New Carlisle. The history of the Hall family has been ably traced and recorded by Mrs. Irene Hall, Ken Hall and Don Hall. The first Hall, James, was in New Carlisle before 1787. As to the Chatterton family, the late A.D.Flowers documented the Loyalist background in his book, LOYALISTS OF BAY CHALEUR.

The Gaspesian lineage of John Hall Kelly was thus impeccable.

CAREER

CHOICE

After primary education in Gaspesian schools, John Hall Kelly was a student at the College de Levis and at St.Joseph's College, Memramcook, N.B. prior to entering upon the study of Law at Laval University, Québec. At Laval he won his Licentiate-in-Law with great distinction and was admitted to the Québec Bar in 1903. Though he had tempting offers of partnership in leading metropolitan Law firms, he chose to return to his native Gaspesia and establish

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his Law practice there from his office on the main street of the shire-town of New Carlisle. Time has been kind to the tree-shaded main street of the old Loyalist town of New Carlisle. It remains remarkable unchanged since the young lawyer, John Hall Kelly, began practice there some four score years ago.

GROWING

REPUTATION

It is recounted that John Hall Kelley established a high profile and reputation as a formidable lawyer early in his career by his successful defence of two Gaspesian brothers accused of murder. However, it was in the realm of corporation law that his legal career evolved. Representing influential clients who were members of Gaspesia's famed salmon fishing clubs he carried cases through the Courts of Canada to the Privy Council of England. His services were retained to represent a number of large American firms with holdings and business interests in Québec. The Bank of Toronto, the Bank National and the Québec and Oriental Railway were among his clients.

As keen in business as he was in Law, John Hall Kelly was the Founder and President of the Bonaventure and Gaspé Telephone Co. the pioneer telephone service in Gaspesia. He served as President of the NEW RICHMOND MINING CO.; THE NORTH AMERICAN MINING CO.; GASPÉ MINES; MATAPEDIA MINES and PASPEBIAC MINES.

POLITICAL

ARENA

The year 1904 was a particularly eventful one for John Hall Kelly. On February 10th of that year he married Marie Adele Dionne, daughter Leonidas Dionne, K.C. of Québec and his wife Maria Lamontagne. That summer he contested his first provincial election and was elected as the Member of the Québec Legislative Assembly for the County of Bonaventure. The confidence of the electors in this twenty-five year old lawyer would not be misplaced.

As a Member of the Québec Legislature John Hall Kelly proceeded to promote the interests not only of Bonaventure but of the entire District of Gaspé. He had an important part in the establishing of a sulphite pulp mill at Chandler and in promoting mining in Gaspesia. During his first term he found the time to write and publish, in 1907, THE SETTLER IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC. This may have given him personal satisfaction as the great-grandson of Robert Warren Kelly.

The electors of Bonaventure returned him as their Member in the elections of 1908 and 1912. Then, on April 25th, 1914, he was honoured by appointment to the Legislative Council (then the counterpart for Québec of the Senate for Ottawa) as the Member of the Legislative Council for Grandville.

LAW

PRACTICE

His many, demanding roles in government and business led John Hall Kelly to confide much of his legal practice at his New Carlisle office to his partner, Dominique Levesque. For years the firm was known as KELLY AND LEVESQUE. To this firm came the young lawyer, John Sheehan, now retired as Judge Sheeham, former President of the Municipal Commission of Québec, who has shared his recollections of both John Hall Kelly and of Dominique Levesque, whose son, René, would become Premier of Québec .

TIME

AND TIDE

Three years after his appointment to the Legislative Council John Hall Kelly's wife, Marie Adèle Dionne, died. Eleven years later the widower remarried with Eleanor Louise Parmelee, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George William Parmelee of Québec. When in New Carlisle the Hon. John Hall and Mrs. Kelly occupied the fine home that he built on the slope behind the present Court House with a splendid view out over Bay Chaleur .

In 1935 the Hon. John Hall Kelly was called to serve as a Minister Without Portfolio in the Québec Cabinet. Four years later, on his appointment by the Canadian Government as High Commissioner in Eire

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he resigned his seat in the Québec Legislative Council that he had held for no less than twenty-five years to take up his new duties in Dublin, Ireland.

VALE

There in Dublin, on March 10th., 1941, the Hon. John Hall Kelly died. He was buried in Dublin's Gasnevin Cemetery and was honoured in his passing by the eloquent tributes of the President of Eire and the Prime Minister of Canada. He rests far from his native Gaspesia but in the hallowed land of his Irish ancestors.
