



# Baie-D'Urfé

## History and Heritage - Part 1

### A Town is Born

The Town Charter was granted in March 1911 and the first council sat on July 10, 1911. There was no need for an election. Baie-D'Urfé's first Mayor, **Vivian de Vere Dowker**, and his Town councillors were all acclaimed.

At the first meeting, Mr. **James Morgan**, one of the Town founders, donated a lakefront property for the construction of a Town Hall, the development of a park for the enjoyment of all residents, and the creation of a road which was named after him. Mr. William Lyall also donated lakefront property in front of his house. In October 1912, Mr. Morgan generously donated the white-frame farmhouse for conversion to a Town Hall. Mr. **Edward Maxwell**, famous architect and Town Councillor, volunteered to design and supervise the renovations. In 1914, the charming and distinctive Town Hall that we know today was born.



A new Town was developing. Services were established and by-laws adopted regarding building, zoning and financing. A twenty-five year water contract was signed with the *Vaudreuil Springs Syndicate*. The water was gravity fed and piped in wood containers similar to barrels. The system was however subject to frequent breakdowns and poor service. When the contract expired, the residents were obliged to bore wells. Since 1967, every residence is connected to a main water treatment plant in Pointe-Claire.

### The Beginnings of Baie-D'Urfé

In 1663, the Sulpician Order acquired the Seigneurie of the Island of Montreal, assuming responsibility for civil management as well as religious and educational needs. The Order granted tracts of land westward both for reasons of settlement and protection. The Parish of Lachine was created in 1676, and then later our Parish of St-Louis. Pointe St-Louis, now Caron Point, was chosen as the focal point and site of the new church. In 1685, the Bishop of Quebec toured the new Parish accompanied by Jean de la Londe, first settler and churchwarden. François Saturnin Lascaris d'Urfé, of noble French lineage, was appointed priest to the parish.



Danger was ever present at this outpost set along the water's edge and surrounded by virgin forest. In the fall of 1687, eight men were killed in stealthy Iroquois raids. One of them was Jean de la Londe. Shortly after, the register and the civil administration of the Parish were reincorporated with those of Lachine, and the Abbé d'Urfé returned to France. When the St-Louis register was reopened in 1703, a church site was chosen closer to the protection of Fort Senneville and the rapids. Mr. de Breslay, parish priest, later renamed the parish Ste-Anne.

In the peace time of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, settlers were able to convert the land from wilderness to farmstead. As families grew, the land was subdivided for future generations. Most settlers were loggers and fishermen. Many were also involved in the fur trade. Others were artisans, blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, harness makers, and masons.

Although farms fronted on the river, which represented the main system of transportation at the time, a 1706 edict obliged all seigneurs and their tenants to open and maintain a road linking one farm to the next. This narrow road winding along the lake's edge, was built around old trees and the water. It is only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that it was given its current configuration, which we now know in Baie-D'Urfé as chemin Lakeshore.

Due to its proximity to the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, two of the main waterways to the interior of the continent, the region has always been witness to the history and development of the country. With the work of the voyageurs and the major fur trading companies, followed by the expanding timber trade, passenger and other transportation services, our two rivers truly became the highway of commerce.

The first Ste-Anne locks were constructed in 1843. The Grand Trunk railway (later CN) started servicing the area in 1855, dissecting farms but also bringing work and prosperity. The Canadian Pacific followed in the 1890s, on a parallel line to the CN. Numerous trains made daily trips to and from

the area, making it very accessible. The Baie-D'Urfé train station was then known as Bayview station.

This was a period of great prosperity in Montreal and wealthy merchants sought country homes and hobby farms. Gradually, they bought up waterfront properties and the old family farms were split up and taken over as a new community grew.

In 1902, some local historically-inclined residents petitioned for the station name to be changed to Baie d'Urfé. When the incorporation of our Town was discussed in 1910, the name was easy to choose.

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## History and Heritage

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