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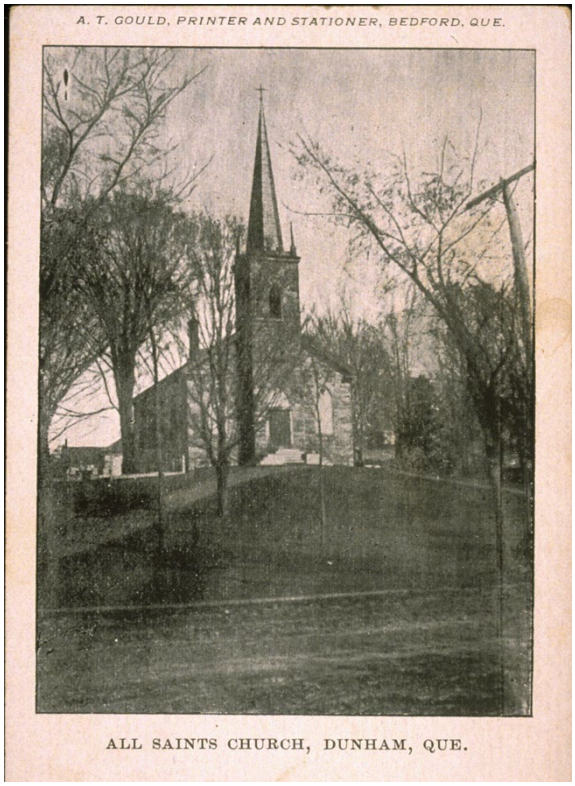
A Peculiar Connection: Ireland, All Saints Anglican Church, and the American Presidency
Une connection particulière: l'Irlande, l'Église Anglicane All Saints, et la présidence Américaine

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All Saints Anglican, A Historical Church



All Saints Anglican Church is a quaint establishment with a very captivating history. The church first opened on the 26th of September 1821 to serve all Protestant denominations, though the current edifice opened in 1849[i]. Dunham became the second recorded Protestant parish in Canada after Montreal[ii]. The attached burial site, All Saints Anglican Cemetery, was consecrated in 1851 by Bishop Fulford[iii].

Reverend Cotton's Tumultuous Career

All Saints' first Rector, Reverend Charles Caleb Cotton, preached in Dunham for 40 years and during this time, stayed at initial settler Andrew Ten Eyck's home for about two years[iv]. One of Ten Eyck's descendants, another Andrew Ten Eyck, was a founder of and fought with the Red Sashes of the Brome-Missisquoi region, also known as the Home Guard, during the Fenian Raids of 1866–1870[v]. At the Ten Eyck home and at various other locations throughout Dunham, Reverend Cotton held services before the church officially opened[vi]. However, All Saints' fascinating history concerning Irish matters goes much further than this.

Rev. Cotton's career was also intertwined with corroborated rumours that the twenty-first President of the United States of America, Chester A. Arthur, was actually born in Canada, and therefore technically—constitutionally—ineligible for his presidency. During his career, in 1821, Rev. Cotton officiated the marriage of Irish-born Reverend William Arthur from County Antrim, and his wife Malvina Stone. Malvina, also known as Maria, was born in Vermont but spent most of her life in Dunham[vii]. Both her parents, George Washington Stone Sr. and Judith Stevens Stone, as well as two of her siblings, Calvin and Almeda Stone, are buried in All Saints Anglican Cemetery. Malvina herself is buried with her husband and children in Albany Rural Cemetery in New York[viii].

The Arthurs, From Derry to Presidency

In 1818, Rev. William Arthur sailed from Derry, Ireland, to Trois-Rivières, Quebec, seeking a job as a teacher and hoping to start a family. He taught for a few years throughout Dunham and its surrounding regions, and the ancestors of one of his scholars, Joseph Baker, are buried in All Saints Anglican Cemetery. The Arthur's even lived in the upper parts of the Baker's household on and off for many years, as they often moved back and forth from Dunham to Vermont. During one of their stays in Dunham, their eldest boy and the future President of the United States, William Chester Alan Arthur, was remembered to have been born and helped named by a Mrs. Stevens, a childhood friend of Mrs. Arthur's—who even helped made Chester's clothes as an infant. Mrs. Stevens, as well as a Mr. L. I. H. Corey and Mrs. Capt. John Chandler from Dunham, are among those who recall Chester's birth in Dunham. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur's second son was born in Fairfield, Vermont, in 1830, though died only a year later. "William" was removed from Chester A. Arthur's name when Mr. and Mrs. Arthur's third son, William Arthur Jr., was born in Hinesburg, VT, USA[ix].



So, many years later, after Chester A. Arthur had been living in the United States for most of his life, he was nominated for the position of Vice-President of the United States, though was unable to provide his birthplace when initially asked. Oddly, he then took a trip to Montreal with a Mercantile Agent, a Mr. Robert Dun, to ensure no documentation existed stating Arthur had been born in Canada. As Arthur and Dun did not find any records of Arthur's Canadian birth, Arthur decided to state his birthplace as Fairfield, Vermont—where his deceased younger brother had been born. These events have been confirmed by multiple people in Quebec, Vermont, and New York, as well as historical research and case studies. No records of Chester A. Arthur's Canadian birth exist, and his lineage can only be traced orally and through memory[x].

This is how the son of an Irish immigrant to Canada became the twenty-first President of the United States, and though Chester A. Arthur's presidency only lasted from 1881–1885, his legacy as an Irish descendant in the White House endures. His case is one of many peculiar cases in Irish migratory history and continues to be a treasure map of clues and connections for Irish and political historians.

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Additional Information:

To locate Dunham and All Saints Anglican Church, and to read more about the Red Sashes, see the Irish Mile™ Interactive Map.

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[i] "History," All Saints Anglican Church (2023): https://allsaintsdunham.org/history/.
[ii] Cyrus Thomas, *Contributions to the History of the Eastern Townships*, (Kinship, 1866), 39.
[iii] All Saints Anglican Church, "History."
[iv] *Ibid*.
[v] Laurent Busseau, "Dunham's Red Sashes: A 'Home' Guard Confronts the IRA: Brome-Missisquoi," Tourisme Brome Missisquoi, 2019: https://tourismebrome-missisquoi.ca/en/blogue/dunhams-red-sashes-a-home-guard-confronts-the-ira/.
[vi] All Saints Anglican Church, "History."
[vii] Arthur P. Hinman, *How a British Subject Became President of the United States* (The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1884): 1–10.
[viii] "Memorials in All Saints Anglican Cemetery," Find a Grave, https://sl1nk.com/m8zq4xd.
[ix] Hinman, *How a British Subject Became President of the United States*.
[x] *Ibid*.

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