

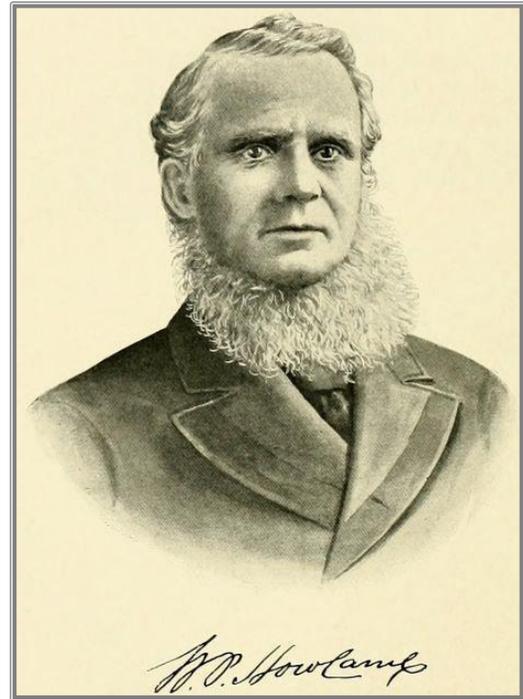
Howland: Our Father of Confederation

(files from Dave Cook and Heritage Mississauga)

Born in 1811 in Pawling, N.Y. of Quaker ancestry, Sir William Pearce Howland arrived in Canada to settle in Cooksville (in historic Mississauga) in 1829. He was employed by Abijah Lewis as a clerk in Lewis' general store. Two years later, William and his brother Peleg purchased the store.

He became a naturalized British citizen in 1841 and soon began to establish himself as an influential businessman. He purchased Cooper's Mill, located west of Toronto in 1844 and expanded the mill by building a larger operation as well as opening a general store.

Sir William established warehouses in Toronto and by 1852 his brothers Peleg and Henry Stark Howland joined with him. The two brothers then moved to Kleinburg to operate a mill and store there. Later Peleg and another brother, Frederick Aiken, joined Sir William to become business partners.



He quickly became active in politics, joined the reform movement and established a very close relationship with George Brown, leader of the Reform Party. For many years Sir William's friends had encouraged him to run for political office and, in 1857, he won a seat in the Legislative Assembly for York West. Two years later, he became active in the Reform Party's finance committee, where he worked alongside Oliver Mowat and William McDougall. When the Reformers took control of the Assembly in 1861, Sir William joined the new government led by John Sandfield Macdonald. He became Finance Minister and later was appointed as Receiver General.

When the government collapsed in 1864, it was succeeded by the Great Coalition. While Sir William was not initially part of the Ministry, he was later made Postmaster General. In the mid 1860's he travelled to Washington to have the Reciprocity Treaty renewed. However, negotiations proved fruitless as the Americans were simply not interested.

December 1866 found Sir William in London where the final negotiations of the British North America Act occurred. He quickly distanced himself from George Brown's Reformers by joining with John A. Mcdonald's Conservatives. On July 1, 1867, Sir William crossed the floor and was named Minister of Revenue in Canada's first Federal Government. Sir William was the only American-born Father of Confederation.

Sir William retired from office the following year and then accepted an appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. He held this post for five years before he returned to private business. He continued to be interested in community affairs until his death January 1, 1907.