



THE FOUNDERS

Jean-Baptiste Rolland and his two sons

The origins of the Rolland family go back to the Conquest of 1760. Sergeant Jean-Pierre Rolland, who at 17 years old is part of the Guienne Regiment, ships out to defend Canada on May 3, 1755. After the Conquest of 1760, he prefers to remain in the country to start a family in Verchères. Each in turn, his children marry and it is from the union between Pierre and Euphrosine Daunay that Jean-Baptiste Rolland is born in 1815. At 17 years old, he will try to make his fortune in Montreal. On April 1, 1832, carrying his small wardrobe and a 25-cent coin in his pocket, he heads to Montreal. After a difficult 3 day walk, he sees the Bonsecours bell-tower shine. By a whim of fate, the house that he went to on Saint-Vincent Street to obtain information is the same one that will house, at a later date, the offices of the maison Rolland. He immediately finds himself working as an apprentice for Ludger Duvernay, printer and publisher of La Minerve newspaper and founder of the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste. The young Rolland will one day become President of this Society and also owner of the newspaper (1879) for several years. It is in 1842, at the age of 27, that he opens the first bookstore in the province, the "Catholic Library of Jean-Baptiste Rolland". In 1874, at the age of 60, with two other associates, he starts the Hochelaga Bank, which is to become the National Bank that we know today. He joins his two sons, Damien and Stanislas, who as early as 1872, aimed to open the fine papers mill. It is at the venerable age of 67 that Jean-Baptiste Rolland starts the "Compagnie de papier Rolland limitée" (Rolland Paper Company Ltd.) with his two sons. The company was officialised during the enactment of a private bill in the Québec parliament on May 1, 1882. Very involved in civic affairs, he is a city councillor for Montreal and, following an invitation from the Prime Minister of Canada, Sir John A. MacDonal, on October 27, 1887, the Journal Le Nord newspaper announces his nomination as Senator to the Upper House, to represent the Milles-Îles riding where the manufacture is located. On March 26, 1888, he succumbed to a brief illness at the age of 73. His funeral was held in Montreal's Notre-Dame church. More than 2,000 persons paid homage to this exceptional man who, through the sweat of his brow, his courage and his integrity, made a mark during his time, in addition to having been at the origin of the industrialization that was taking place in Saint-Jérôme.

Source: Archives of the Rolland Co.
Author: Mario Fauteux





His eldest son, Damien, will be the second President, from 1888 until his death in 1912 at the age of 71. He will also make history in his own way. In addition to serving on the Legislative Council of the Québec parliament, he would be President of the Bank of Hochelaga, Governor of Laval University, Mayor of Hochelaga, not counting many other functions that he occupied with exceptional skill.

It is, however, the youngest son, Stanislas Jean-Baptiste, that was lovingly called S.J.B., who will leave the biggest mark on the Laurentians. He would become one of the most admired French Canadians in the world of finance and industry. In 1882, at the age of 31, his father assigns him the management of the brand new Saint-Jérôme plant. He will play an important role as a municipal councillor, then as Mayor of Saint-Jérôme from 1893 to 1901, President of the School Commission and church warden. It is under his administration as Mayor that a charter for the city of Saint-Jérôme (1895) is drawn, the train station is built (1897), which still exists today and the Chamber of Commerce (1899) is founded. He assisted in the construction of the first iron aqueduct (1899) and the construction of the Cathedral which was inaugurated in 1900. He will also be Director General of the largest Saint-Jean Baptiste celebration Saint-Jérôme has ever had, gathering together over 10,000 people in 1899. He also started up another paper mill in the upper Laurentians in 1902, the location of which eventually inherited the name of Mont-Rolland. He died in 1935 at the age of 84.



It is no mystery that we find Jean-Baptiste Rolland boulevard in Saint-Jérôme, the park with the same name, Rolland Avenue which provides access to the plant, the downtown Rolland Amphitheatre and the Rolland electoral district of Saint-Jérôme (Saint-Lucien quarter).

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