

Former Dundas MPP called 'Abe Lincoln'

by Ian Bowering

Andrew Broder, known as the 'Abe Lincoln' of Canada for his height, and drollness, was born in Franklin Centre, Huntingdon County, Quebec, of Irish parents.

At the age of 17, he engaged in agricultural work near Boston, where he was able to save enough money to go to Malone Academy. Four years later, like many young Canadians, he returned home to help repel the Fenians. In 1868, Broder moved to Winchester to open a store and operate a farm. Here he married Caroline Summers. After a short interval he moved his family to a farm near Morrisburg and entered politics.

In the provincial election of 1875, Broder unseated the two-term incumbent S.S. Cook, only to be denied his seat due to election irregularities. He was subsequently vindicated, and returned in a re-election. While sitting as Conservative MPP for Dundas, until retiring in 1886, he was the first representative to advocate the operation of a 'travelling dairy' and promoted farm land drainage legislation.

After leaving politics, Broder was replaced by a former opponent, Dr. T.F. Chamberlain. Born in Leeds County, Chamberlain was a dentist before graduating as a doctor from Queen's in 1859. Upon graduation he came to Morrisburg where he was active with the local militia, as a Mason, as Dundas County coroner, as a druggist, and as a member of the Board of Education. In 1873 he was elected to the municipal council, and served as reeve and warden of the United Counties, for a number of years.

While being elected Liberal MPP for Dundas in 1886, the victory was shortlived, as the result was set aside, once again for 'irregularities'. On the rematch, his opponent, the future Premier of Ontario, J.P. Whitney won.

Chamberlain then withdrew from politics, and undoubtedly called in his political markers, to become Inspector of Asylums and Prisons for Ontario in 1889.

'Andy' Broder in the meantime, took a political plum and acted as Customs Officer for the Port of Morrisburg, from 1892 until 1896. Finding this occupation somewhat restrictive, Broder left the office to his son Fred, and re-entered politics, this time in the federal arena. He sat as member for Dundas from 1896. Before his death in 1918, he attained Privy Council status. The government marked his passing by acquiring Doran's Island, once Austin Doran's original 99-year lease expired. Removing the cottages, the island was turned into a federal park and renamed Broder Island.

Before the coming of the Seaway, Broder Island graced with fine beaches, was the scene of many community picnics, and camps for such groups as Canadian Girls in Training.

This, according to the records would have suite the unassuming, but popular Andy Broder, perfectly.