



History – Colonization

The lumber industry and agricultural land settlement were closely linked to the history of Lower Témiscamingue. In fact, agriculture owes its beginnings and development to the lumbering industry as loggers moved into the forest of Témiscamingue as early as 1850 to cut trees and clear land which settlers began occupying in 1880. The existence of logging camps provided an excellent market for settlers to sell their farm products.

Economic conditions

The land settlement movement in Témiscamingue began in 1884. The organization of this movement was made possible because of economic considerations. Among some of these considerations was the expansion of the forestry sector in Témiscamingue and transformation of the agricultural sector in the old regions of Quebec. These transformations were characterized mostly by the automation of agricultural operations and the out-migration of youth to the cities of Québec, but mostly to cities in the Northeastern United States. The economic crises that fluctuated from 1870 to 1890 also had an effect. All these elements brought about a lot of mobility on the part of the French-Canadians to the United States, to Western Canada and to other regions of Quebec offering land settlement. Quebec church leaders were quite concerned about the fate of families emigrating to the United States. They felt they were at risk of losing their religion and language because they were getting to know English-speaking protestants. To prevent this exodus to the United States, church leaders proposed that French-Canadians settle on lands in the province of Quebec and maintain their traditions, that is farm work and compliance with Roman Catholic traditions.



The Silverland

The logging industry was beneficial for land settlement

In order for a land settlement project to be successful in a region, its economic activity had to be strong enough to attract people and keep them there. It was simply not enough to want to save a people's traditions — jobs and long term economic viability were needed. This is why the presence of lumber companies and logging camps became a basic condition for land settlement in Témiscamingue. These sites provided jobs and market opportunities for the farmers' farm products. In addition, the land use pattern was determined by the relocation of cutting areas. The lumber companies cut the trees of commercial sizes always moving up northwards.

The gaps they left behind were used for pioneer settlements as farmlands were already deforested. Forest fires also helped pioneer settlements as they destroyed sections of trees in a township. In the 1870s, a forest fire in Dumahel Township greatly helped the pioneers in their work to remove stumps and roots.



Logging camps belonging to Riordon Pulp in Latulipe

Promoting the territory

With the economic conditions in place, a developer and organizer was required to start up the pioneer settlement movement, so the Missionary Oblates of Saint-Claude became involved. Two public figures emerged: Brother Joseph Moffet and Father Charles-Alfred-Marie Paradis.

Brother Moffet

Brother Moffet was living at the mission since 1872 and took charge of the farm work where he cultivated pieces of land at the Pointe à la Barbe and at Tête-du-lac. In 1874, Brother Moffet was convinced of the health of the land in the Baie-d'en-Haut sector (Ville-Marie today). Going against the will of his superior (Father Pian),

he decided to clear a parcel of land. In 1879, he sowed the first wheat grains on Témiscamingue soil at Baie-Kelly located on the Quebec side of Lake Témiscamingue a few miles from Fort-Témiscamingue. For Brother Moffet, the distance between the Saint-Claude Mission and his farm was too long, so he built himself a small home (called Maison du Colon today). Originally, it was used as a home for himself and the farm workers.



(Brother Moffet standing on his farmland)

Father Charles-Alfred-Marie Paradis

From the beginning, Father Charles-Alfred-Marie Paradis, O.M.I. began to consider the possibilities of pioneer settlements. He travelled the region with Brother Moffet and wrote a report on the agricultural and development potential of the Témiscamingue region. In 1884, Father Paradis submitted his report to the members of his religious community in Ottawa. The Missionary Oblates and a few lay persons from Ottawa interested in the development of Témiscamingue came together and created the *Société de colonisation du Témiscamingue* (SCLT). During the time between the publication of his report and the founding of the SCLT, Father Paradis organized visits to the region and brought in pioneering families to Témiscamingue. In 1883, the family of Thomas Beaulieu and his wife Geneviève Deroy were the first to arrive and settle in the Duhamel Township. Other pioneers followed suit in 1884 and 1885. These pioneering families were just the beginning of a long list of many.



A sled that would brake trails on the snow covered tracks



Dock at Ville-Marie



Passengers on the Meteor

Lake Témiscamingue Colonization Society

The Lake Témiscamingue Colonization Society played an important role in bringing people to the region while pursuing the following goals: improve road access to Lake Témiscamingue, promote the occupancy of the townships of Duhamel and Guigues, and survey lots in other townships. In 1886, it operated a man-made railway transportation system and steamboat along the rapids between Mattawa and Lake Témiscamingue. The railway was a narrow-gauge 13-kilometre long rail track and consisted of tramcars pulled by horses and a steam locomotive that travelled on the log around the Long Sault rapids. In 1888, there were 61 kilometres of railway along the rapids in addition to the 15 kilometres of track between Long Sault and Lake Kipawa. The *Compagnie de navigation et de chemin de fer du lac Témiscamingue* ordered the construction of a steamboat for the transportation of passengers and merchandise. The *Minerve* began to navigate in 1887 and offered regular transportation from Long Sault to Baie-des-Pères. At the end of its first season of navigation, it ran aground damaging its wooden wheels. The Colonization Society sold the steamboat to Alex Lumsden who modified it to meet the growing demand for the transportation of passengers and merchandise. It was renamed the *Meteor*. In 1886, a first group of pioneers arrived in Témiscamingue with the president of the Colonization Society. These pioneers settled on lots belonging to the Oblates in Baie-des-Pères. This is how the first community in the region was born. Ville-Marie, also called Baie-des-Pères had its first businesses, a dock, a sawmill, a flour mill, a post office and many pioneering families.

The journey to get to Témiscamingue

Eventually, many pioneers travelled to Témiscamingue. The families had a long journey to undertake, leaving their hometown on a train to go to Montreal and then pursuing their route on to Ottawa, Pembroke, Mattawa and arriving at the foot of Lake Témiscamingue where a steamboat, either the *Météor* or the *Témiscamingue*, would transport them to one of the docks in Fabre, Ville-Marie or Notre-Dame-du-Nord, depending on their destination. These boats would take on board families arriving by railway at Long Sault, and then later on, at Haileybury.



Establishment of new parishes

Between 1886 and 1894, the settlements were confined to the first ranges of Duhamel and Guigues townships, but they rapidly extended beyond these limits. The population of Témiscamingue went from 222 inhabitants in 1885 to close to one thousand in 1890. In 1921, it had reached 10,500. New parishes were created over the years: Guigues, Notre-Dame-du-Nord, Fabre, Lorrainville, Béarn, Laverlochère, Fugèreville, Latulipe and Guérin. Angliers was the last parish to be created in 1924 during this spontaneous period of pioneer settlement.

Gordon and Vautrin Plans

The 1929 economic crisis shook the whole world and brought about a second wave of pioneer settlement. To cut back on unemployment in cities, the Government introduced pioneer settlement plans. The Federal Government's Gordon Plan brought 2,664 inhabitants from 1932 to 1934 and the provincial government's Vautrin Plan attracted 4,286 pioneers to Témiscamingue from 1935 to 1937.

Most of the development from those crisis programs occurred in Abitibi and helped to create many villages there, but they also helped to create the following villages in Témiscamingue: Moffet (1931), Roulier and Pie Ville (1932), Rémigny (1935) and Laforce (1938). A large gold discovery was made in Eastern Témiscamingue in 1936. Three small villages were set up close to the mine. In 1942, the Belleterre Quebec Mines decided to group these hamlets to create the city of Belleterre. It is the youngest community in Témiscamingue.



View of Fugèreville a few years after its foundation