

PATRICIAN LIBERAL

The Public and Private Life of Sir Henri-Gustave
Joly de Lotbinière, 1829–1908

Patrician Liberal examines the life and career of a neglected figure in Canadian history, Sir Henri-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière. This book provides a detailed account of Joly's political career as Quebec premier, Cabinet minister in the Laurier government, and lieutenant-governor of British Columbia, as well as his public role as a French-speaking Protestant promoter of national unity, a leading spokesperson for the Canadian forest conservation movement, a Quebec seigneur, and father to a large and devoted family.

Joly's life serves as a prism through which author J.I. Little elucidates important themes in Quebec and Canadian society, economy, politics, and culture during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. As Little reveals, Joly's story is particularly fascinating for how closely the conflicting forces in his life – religious, cultural, and social – mirrored those of a Canadian society straining to forge a cohesive and distinctive national identity.

J.I. LITTLE is a professor in the Department of History at Simon Fraser University, author of *Loyalties in Conflict: A Canadian Borderland in War and Rebellion, 1812–1840*, and co-author of *An Illustrated History of Quebec: Tradition and Modernity*.

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*The Public and Private Life
of Sir Henri-Gustave Joly
de Lotbinière, 1829–1908*

J. I. LITTLE

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*To the memory of my grandmother, Edith Taylor McCrea,
seigneur's daughter and lumberman's wife*

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Preface

Given that I have spent most of my career as a social historian examining such themes as colonization, religion, institutional reform, and political culture at a regional level, this biography of a prominent national figure represents a rather sharp shift in focus on my part. I am of the generation who, as Geoff Eley writes in his semi-autobiographical *A Crooked Line*, dismissed the writing of individual biographies as old-fashioned and trivializing, replaced by “the pursuit of structural or broadly contextualized materialist analysis.” But the subsequent rise of cultural history, with its turn to subjectivity, has led to a resurgence of interest in biography, though with the goal – as Eley also notes – of revisiting individual lives “as complex texts in which the same large questions that inspired the social historians were embedded.”¹ Inspired by microhistorian Giovanni Levi’s insight that scale does not have its own independent existence,² I was drawn to the challenge of examining the generalized and the abstract through the lens of the personal and the particular. In searching for a subject, I was fortunate to discover the personal papers of a historically neglected and complex figure, Henri-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière, whose extensive correspondence had not previously been exploited, despite being available in the national archives of Quebec as well as Canada.

Having grown up in a small, partially English-speaking community to the immediate south of Lotbinière, and having come of age in the Trudeau era, I was intrigued by Joly because of his biculturalism and Canadian nationalism. It was my interest in environmental history, however, that initially drew me to him as a subject because of his role as a pioneer conservationist. A favourable bias towards one’s subject may be an occupational hazard of the biographer, but my main goal has

been less to gain a place for Joly de Lotbinière in the nation's pantheon of great men than to interpret what his life and career revealed about Quebec and Canadian society, economy, politics, and culture during the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

This study therefore falls somewhere between biography, defined by Jill Lepore as "largely founded on a belief in the singularity and significance of an individual's life and his contribution to history," and microhistory, which Lepore states "is founded upon almost the opposite assumption: however singular a person's life may be, the value of examining it lies not in its uniqueness, but in its exemplariness, in how that individual's life serves as an allegory for broader issues affecting the culture as a whole."³ But this statement echoes the common misconception that, in being concerned about larger historical questions, microhistory must necessarily approach the local as a case study, or the individual as a representative figure. Rather, as Michael Gardiner states, microhistory emphasizes 'the role of social contradictions in generating social change.'⁴ Thus, Joly's ideology was a product of his birth into Quebec's old Catholic seigneurial elite, on his mother's side, as well as his upbringing in the commercial and liberal Paris of his father's Protestant family. Therefore, his role as father, businessman, and public figure can only be understood as a product of those very different social and cultural influences. Perhaps the best label for this study is what Alice Kessler-Harris refers to as anti-biography. In her words, "Rather than offering history as background, or introducing it in order to locate an individual in time," the anti-biography asks "how the individual life helps us to make sense of a piece of the historical process."⁵ In paying considerable attention to Joly's private life, for example, my goal is not only to understand him as an individual but also to explore how the private informed the public, as well as vice versa.⁶

Although this book is a life story that follows a chronological narrative line, each chapter does have a distinct thematic focus. In addition to investigating Joly's public role as long-term leader of the provincial Liberals and short-term premier of Quebec, bicultural promoter of national unity, leading spokesman for the Canadian forest conservation movement, reform-oriented member of the Laurier government in Ottawa, and influential lieutenant governor of British Columbia, this study examines his family relations as well as his role as seigneur and lumber producer. Focussing on a single individual has enabled me to trace the common thread that connects these disparate themes,

beginning with the evolution and role of social class and the relationship between the private and the public, the personal and the political.

Particular attention is paid to how Joly reconciled the conflicting forces that he was subjected to personally and that strained society as a whole, for he embodied the cultural duality of Canada as well as the tension between land-based aristocratic values and urban bourgeois ones. This tension contributed to the mutual estrangement of Joly's parents and to the early death in India of his reckless younger brother, but Joly himself was able to benefit from his somewhat unique position by keeping a foot in both the traditional rural and the modern urban worlds, as well as the French-Canadian and English-Canadian ones. He was not only a French-speaking Protestant, but also a Canadian who had grown up in Paris and a social conservative who was also a political liberal. From a psychological perspective, it seems clear that Joly's somewhat unstable social and cultural identity goes a long way towards explaining his search for security as well as his protective impulse, as manifested in his attachment to family and dedication to provincial rights, national unity, efficient honest government, and the conservation of natural resources for future generations.

Liberal as these goals were, they also reflected Joly's patrician sense of noblesse oblige, and it was his gentlemanly deportment and skills in diplomacy as well as his family pedigree that made him such a respected figure in a young country that was still in the early stages of forging a cohesive and distinctive national identity. In fact, there are basic similarities between Joly's political ideology and the Red Toryism that was identified in the 1960s as distinctively Canadian, for that political ideology (which has since been overwhelmed by "neo-conservatism") favoured traditional values and institutions, the decentralization of state power, small business, and volunteerism to solve social problems such as poverty. Gad Horowitz, applying Louis Hartz's fragment thesis, claimed that Red Toryism resulted from the impact of the Tory Loyalist "touch" on the dominant bourgeois liberal ideology. The example of Joly suggests that Red Toryism was not necessarily as exclusive to English Canada as Horowitz and others have assumed.⁷ The fact remains, however, that Joly would never consider joining a Conservative Party that he associated with unprincipled profligacy, intolerance, and corruption. Joly's Protestantism, his attachment to family, and his distaste for political cronyism also placed strict limits on his public career, so that today he is a largely forgotten historical figure in a country that remains sharply divided along linguistic lines.

A word on usage: In the interest of brevity as well as accuracy, I generally refer to Joly de Lotbinière simply as Joly, for he did not formally adopt the longer name until 1888. Units of measurement are sometimes left in their original imperial measurement form, especially when referring to ratios such as crop yields, but I have included a short list of conversions. The word *sic* is used to mark grammatical errors and non-standard spellings within direct quotations only when they might otherwise be viewed as my own typographical or spelling errors. Finally, I have translated the longer and more difficult French quotes, but also included the originals in the text.

Acknowledgments

This study is based largely on the voluminous Joly de Lotbinière collection of confidential correspondence and other material, one that fills fourteen microfilm reels, nine of which are Henri-Gustave's own records.¹ A number of people have made my task not only possible but also enjoyable. Mylène Richard and Hélène Leclerc of le Domaine Joly de Lotbinière welcomed me twice to this fascinating historic site and provided access to its photographic archives as well as invaluable information on the family. I am also grateful to them for their comments on the first chapter. Sean Wilkinson was my excellent research assistant, and Brian Young applied his critical pen to the introduction, forcing me to clarify my interpretation of a man who defies easy categorization. He was also kind enough to allow me to read his forthcoming book on Quebec's patrician Taschereau and McCord families. Bob McDonald critiqued the chapters on Ottawa and British Columbia, and I drew on the expertise of Benoît Grenier and Donald Fyson for information on the seigneurial and legal systems, respectively. Nicolas Kenny provided advice on the translations, Nikki Strong-Boag was a sympathetic and insightful reader of the entire manuscript, and I benefited greatly from the very careful critical analysis of the three anonymous assessors. Needless to say, none of these individuals can be held responsible for my interpretation of their comments. I also drew on the cheerful assistance of Pierre-Louis Lapointe and others at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Nancy Blake and Sonny Wong of the Simon Fraser University Library's interlibrary loans department, and Stephen DeMuth of the university's Instructional Media Centre, who produced the map of Lotbinière. Len Husband of the University of Toronto Press was, yet again, a source of level-headed encouragement,

and Emily Johnston and David Zielonka guided me through the editing process. Many thanks to all concerned. Research for this book was funded by a Standard Research Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and I am particularly grateful for the two-semester research leave stipend, which greatly expedited the entire process. Publication was made possible by a subsidy from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences through its Awards to Scholarly Publications Program. Finally, as always, my greatest debt is to my wife, Andrea, who provides the support, love, and connection with our community that adds a semblance of balance to my life.

Conversion Standards

£1 currency or 1 Louis d'or = 24 francs or livres ancien cours or livres
tournois of 20 sols

1 sol = 12 deniers

1 denier = 1 penny

£1 cy = 20 shillings; 1 s. = 12 pence

1 league = 5.56 kilometres

1 arpent = 0.4 hectares

1 square arpent = 0.84 acres

1 hectare = 2.47 acres

1 minot = 1.07 imperial bushels = 39 litres

1 square mile = 2.59 square kilometres

1 cubic foot = 0.03 cubic meters

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Canadian Genealogical Line

Louis-Théandré Chartier de Lotbinière (1612–after 1680)
René-Lous Chartier de Lotbinière (1641–1709)
Eustache Chartier de Lotbinière (1688–1749)
Michel Chartier de Lotbinière (1723–98)
Michel-Eustache-Gaspard-Alain Chartier de Lotbinière (1748–1822)
Julie-Christine Chartier de Lotbinière (1810–87) m Gaspard-Pierre-
Gustave Joly (1798–1865)

Joly Offspring

Henri-Gustave (1829–1908) m Margaretha Josepha (Lucy) Gowen
Amélie-Ursule (1831–1922) m Henry George Savage
Edmond de Lotbinière (1832–57)
Julie-Charlotte (1835–35)
Arthur (1838–38?)

Offspring of Henri-Gustave and Lucy

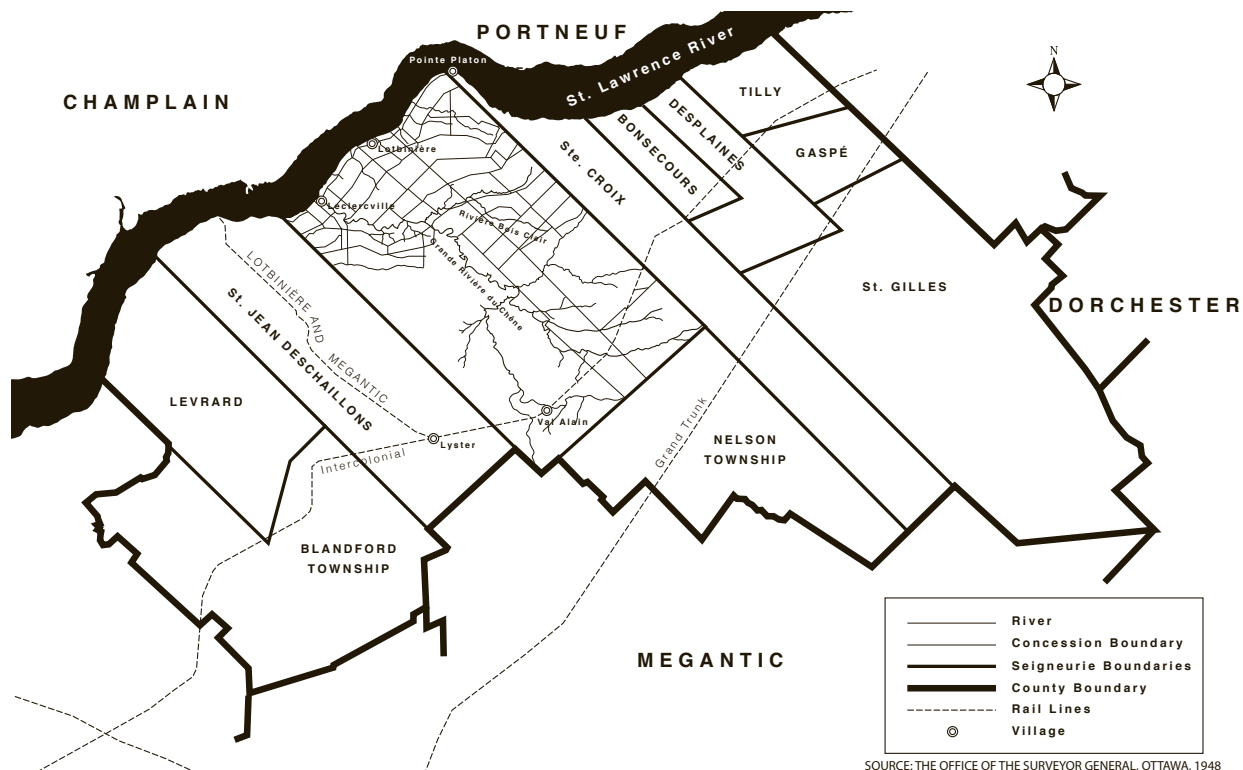
Julia Josepha (1858–1942) m St George Boswell
Edmond Gustave (1859–1911) m Lucy Geils Campbell
Louisa-Maud (1861–62)
Alain Chartier (1862–1944) m Marion Helen Campbell
Margaretha Anna (1864–1949) m Herbert Colborne Nanton
Matilda Florence (1867–1903) m Henry Smith Greenwood
Henri Gustave (1868–1960) m Mildred Louisa Grenfell

Ethel Blanche (1872–1935) m Dudley Acland Mills

John Livesey (1872–75)

Ernest Edgar (1874–75)

Justine de Lotbinière (1875–78)



SOURCE: THE OFFICE OF THE SURVEYOR GENERAL, OTTAWA, 1948

LOTBINIÈRE COUNTY

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Introduction

Early in 1908, the year of Quebec City's extravagant tercentenary celebration,¹ the municipal council announced that it would rename Haldimand Street, within the walls of the old city, in Sir Henri-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière's honour. Rather ironically, given that he had dedicated much of his life to resolving conflicts between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians, this announcement resulted in a controversy along those same lines, for it was greeted with protest by the city's English-speaking elite. Although the *Daily Telegraph* agreed that "the name of 'De Lotbiniere' is illustrious in the history of Canada and of Quebec, and none has worn it with more honor and distinction to himself and the Ancient Capital, as well as to the country at large, than Sir Henri," it argued that Joly himself would be opposed to the removal of "so useful a reminder of such a distinguished figure in our annals as Governor Haldimand." Better to replace one of the names chosen from the "almost exhausted" calendar of saints, which strangers found so confusing, or a more generic name such as Garden Street or Rampart Street, thereby not offending any "susceptibilities."² A member of the long-established Literary and Historical Society agreed, adding the additional argument that Haldimand Street was not suitable because of its small size: "Surely the name de Lotbiniere deserves a nobler prominence."³ Another local newspaper suggested that Haldimand's name was suitable to "the narrow and less frequented street in the old Upper Town eloquent of the past," but the name Lotbinière should be given to one of the more modern streets, "say near the building of that Legislature of which he was so long a distinguished member."⁴ This advice – which nicely illustrated the tension in Joly's life between tradition and modernity – was heeded, for Haldimand Street has survived in Old

Quebec, and the name Lotbinière is to be found on the street fronting the provincial legislature.

Such an honour may seem somewhat surprising, given that Joly had quit the legislature in protest twenty-three years earlier and that his premiership had been brief and controversial. But even if Joly was not in the first rank of importance as a Canadian or Quebec politician, he did serve as provincial party leader for sixteen years, he managed to govern effectively if briefly during a particularly difficult period of Quebec's history, and he was rewarded with a knighthood for his efforts to ease tensions between French and English Canada during the critical years following the Riel crisis. He was also Canada's most prominent forest conservation advocate, a capable reform-oriented member of the Laurier administration, and undoubtedly the most influential lieutenant governor British Columbia has ever had. Very few Canadians could boast such a varied and useful career, yet unlike Quebec contemporaries such as Israël Tarte, Hector-Louis Langevin, Adolphe Chapleau, Godfroy Langlois, Honoré Mercier, Louis-Antoine Dessaulles, and Wilfrid Laurier, Joly has not previously been the subject of a book-length biography. In the introductory remarks to his excellent monograph on the first ten years of Quebec's provincial governance, Marcel Hamelin (author of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* article on Joly) does not even include Joly among the political figures who deserve further study.⁵ Perhaps not surprisingly, then, Joly is completely ignored in Yvan Lamonde's lengthy volume on the social history of ideas in pre-twentieth-century Quebec.⁶

One probable reason that Quebec historians have not paid more attention to Joly is that he was a Canadian nationalist, first and foremost, going so far as to break publicly with his Liberal colleagues over their political exploitation of Riel's execution in 1885. Furthermore, he became more sympathetic to British imperialism as he grew older, and he and his family became too assimilated into the English-speaking world to fit comfortably into what Jocelyn Letourneau refers to as Quebec's grand narrative.⁷ The fact that Joly was a descendant of New France's office-holding and seigneurial elite may be yet another reason that he has not received more attention, for Quebec historians of the post-Quiet Revolution generation have been fixated on the rise of modernity.⁸ Fernande Roy's seminal study argues that the influence of Church-inspired conservatism was quite limited even in pre-1960 Quebec and that the prevailing ideology was liberalism, the ultimate goal of which was the defence of private property.⁹ Although he was a

Protestant who promoted a number of progressive reforms, as we shall see, Joly did not fit this mould because his liberalism was compromised by his paternalism and his social conservatism.

Though failing to identify liberalism as an ideology, Marcel Hamelin made essentially the same point as Roy when he wrote that, in contrast to the provincial press, “des préoccupations idéologiques n’apparaissent que rarement chez la majorité des hommes politiques québécois.”¹⁰ But a younger generation of historians has begun to present a more sophisticated interpretation of political ideology in the province. Éric Bédard has recently argued convincingly that the prominent French-speaking reform politicians of the post-Rebellion era were essentially anti-republican and anti-American conservatives who believed that the Catholic Church played a crucial role in sustaining the social order and whose liberalism was centred not on the individual but on the national community.¹¹ Although Hamelin claims that *agriculturisme* was rarely mentioned in the Legislative Assembly after Confederation, it cannot be denied that provincial governments funded colonization roads, subsidized colonization societies, and promoted railway construction in the name of expanding the agricultural frontier. Even though the main aim of the colonization movement was not to resist Quebec’s industrialization and urbanization as historians once assumed, but to stem the flow of French-Canadian families to the factory towns of southern New England, it was inspired by the Catholic Church in a visionary expansionist campaign that idealized rural life.¹² The Church’s influence was such that, as Brian Young has shown, the codifiers of Quebec’s civil code in 1866 felt compelled to recognize its dominant status as well as buttress patriarchal power in relation to marriage and the family. More recently, Bruce Curtis has demonstrated that the same conservative ruralist impulse influenced Joseph-Charles Taché’s design in 1871 of the first scientific census for the new national state.¹³

Roy would be correct in replying that in none of these cases did conservative nationalism challenge the fundamental liberal ethos of individual property rights or free enterprise,¹⁴ an ethos that Joly certainly shared. But as Arno Mayer has argued for pre-1914 Europe in general, and Eugen Weber for rural France in particular, central values of the Ancien Régime persisted well into the industrial era.¹⁵ Wealth and prestige may not have been as tied to noble status and land ownership in Quebec as they were in much of Europe, but there was no successful revolution in Quebec, and not all members of the seigneurial class became impoverished and inconsequential after the Conquest, as historians

such as Alfred Dubuc and Fernand Ouellet have implied.¹⁶ Members of the Canadian nobility sold thirty-three seigneuries between 1782 and 1840,¹⁷ but the fact remains that Joly was far from the only member of the landed elite to play an important role in Quebec politics and society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Daniel Salée has pointed out, “generations of Taschereaus, Massons, and Casgrains provided more than their share of Ministers, high-ranking civil servants, magistrates, lieutenant-governors, and bishops.”¹⁸

Young’s recent research supports Salée, for Young argues that the patrician elite maintained a particularly strong influence in the Quebec City area as it became increasingly eclipsed by Montreal. In his words, “their social instincts were shaped by seigniorial privilege, inherited landed wealth, position in Anglican or Roman Catholic hierarchies, local status (as opposed to international recognition) and forms of power filtered through honours, profession, militia, or voluntary associations.”¹⁹ A relevant term might be the one Cameron Nish borrowed from Molière’s satirical play to describe the elite of New France, namely *bourgeois-gentilhomme*.²⁰ Although Nish attempted, somewhat unsuccessfully, to demonstrate that members of the seigneurial class were fundamentally bourgeois, the fact is that what Young refers to as “feudal vestiges” survived well into the Victorian and Edwardian eras.²¹

The degree to which Joly was perceived to be a gentleman in the traditional sense is illustrated by the description penned by Senator Laurent-Olivier David for the *Courrier de Montréal* in 1875:

Good build and a kind face, noble and distinguished deportment, curly-haired, graying, thick moustache, looks like a serviceman on leave. A pleasant and gifted speaker, an elegant, easy, polished original and caustic orator, quick-witted; knows how to skilfully let fly remarks, always careful not to offend an adversary. A quick, curious, and highly cultured mind, prefers useful and practical things to grand concepts and profound theories. A strict and upright conscience, free of prejudices and weaknesses, resisting the seduction and trickery of politics. Wealthy, very wealthy and proportionately charitable, always ready to give to the destitute and all good causes.

To complete his portrayal of Joly as a landed aristocrat, David added that he was “more content on his vast estates, among his many workers with their calloused hands and tanned faces, than in chic drawing rooms or the Chamber of Deputies.”²²

Linked to the theme of social class, a central thread in the ensuing chapters is ideology, or what Bédard refers to more loosely as “un certain rapport du monde,”²³ but this is not primarily an intellectual history. As Patrice Dutil notes in the introduction to his biography of one of Joly’s Liberal colleagues, Godfroy Langlois, “‘ideology’ cannot be firmly grasped unless the politics that express it, or fail to express it, are understood.” Dutil adds, “Political intrigues show us how ideologies really work.”²⁴ Political history is a central theme of this study, but ideology is also more than politics, particularly for a man such as Joly, for whom home, family, and religion were at least as important as public life. European political historians have shifted their attention towards the small scale and the “private,” rejecting the history of the state as an abstract entity on the grounds that it is “a story of empty appearances” that exaggerates the state’s monopoly over power.²⁵ Canadian historians are still obsessed by the rise of the modern state, but they are at least beginning to write political biographies that transcend the divide between the public and the private. A pioneering example is Young’s revisionist study of George-Étienne Cartier in which politics takes a back seat to the subject’s business and personal life.²⁶ As an upstanding family man (in contrast to Cartier), Joly was less patently ambitious and more dedicated to public life out of a paternalistic sense of duty. Giorgi Chittolini notes that in the world of private relations can be found “a complex web of regulation and discipline” operating quite independently of the world of formal power,²⁷ but it does not follow that Joly’s public face was much different from his private one. Our title refers to Joly’s public and private *life* rather than *lives*, not because the private was public as in today’s invasive popular culture, but because the two spheres formed a seamless web as far as Joly was concerned, even if he was careful not to take advantage of his public life for private ends. In short, our examination of his private life – including his role as seigneur and businessman – sheds light on his public life, as well as vice versa.

The fact that Joly was the product of two quite different worlds – patrician Catholic Quebec on his mother’s side and bourgeois Protestant France (in a somewhat paradoxical reversal of the old world and the new) on that of his father – meant that he experienced in a particularly acute sense the conflicting pressures exerted by the transition from pre-industrial to industrial society. But that tension should not be exaggerated, for (to translate a French saying) Joly appears always to have felt comfortable in his own skin. Richard Bushman’s study of refinement in the republican United States is instructive in this respect,

for he finds that after the turn of the nineteenth century, the culture of gentility – as reflected in popular manners, housing styles, garden landscapes, and so on – began exercising increasing influence over much of the population. To explain this apparent paradox, Bushman suggests that “capitalism and gentility were allies in forming the modern economy” because “a capitalist economy requires both frantic getting and energetic spending.”²⁸ Joly was actually quite parsimonious, as we shall see, but this did not prevent him from conforming to the image of a landed gentleman.

Nor does Joly appear to have been greatly conflicted by the fact that he was immersed in two distinct linguistic cultures, as someone raised in a French-speaking environment but with English-speaking relatives on his mother’s side, as well as an English-speaking wife. In fact, his dual religious heritage was more significant than his linguistic background at a time when marriages between Catholics and Protestants were rare and the country was torn by sectarian conflicts, but Joly reconciled that dichotomy in his own mind by adhering to a moderate Anglicanism. Joly’s duality both helped and hindered his political career. It ensured support from Quebec’s influential Anglo-Protestant bourgeoisie, but also a degree of mistrust by the province’s French-speaking majority, for whom Catholicism was an intrinsic part of their cultural identity. As a Canadian nationalist who sympathized with the British imperial connection, Joly was a more logical candidate for the House of Commons than for the provincial Assembly, yet (aside from the brief era of the dual mandate after Confederation) he resisted running at the federal level until late in life. Influential though he was, Joly was too proud, too ethical, and too lacking in the common touch to become a political force of the first rank, and he willingly stepped aside for the more flamboyant Honoré Mercier as leader of the provincial Liberals. He was also content to play the role of efficient administrator in the Laurier government and behind-the-scenes diplomat in Victoria.

Supporters of the biographical approach have traditionally stressed the importance of individual agency and contingency in history,²⁹ and this volume does aim to present Joly as a living and active human being rather than an object of abstract forces, but a study of his political career also serves the broader purpose of shedding light on the tensions within Confederation and how they were accommodated, though never resolved. This is not a case study of a representative figure, then, but neither is it focused on the achievements of a particular individual.

On a more strictly ideological level, Joly's life helps us to appreciate in relatively concrete terms the tensions and contradictions within Canada's increasingly dominant liberal value system, or what Ian McKay refers to as this country's prevailing liberal order.³⁰ Joly certainly valued individual liberty, economic progress, and private property (the three key features of the liberal order), but the fact that he clung to the land and to the aristocratic ethos that was part of his family heritage reveals how strongly he believed in the preservation of the traditional social order as well as the social obligations that came with being a patrician. Canadian historians have generally associated paternalism in the public arena with the pre-Rebellion era and with authoritarian Tories such as Upper Canada's Governor Sir Francis Bond Head, but the winning of responsible government meant that initiatives such as penal reform and aboriginal relocation (two of Bond Head's pet projects) became more closely associated with the expanding powers of the modern state.³¹ From this perspective, paternalism and liberalism were not as mutually exclusive as has been assumed.

Not only has Canada had a strong Red Tory tradition, as already noted, but Daniel Samson also has pointed to Nova Scotia's influential agricultural reformer John Young, a disciple of Scotland's Sir John Sinclair, as a man whose conservative radicalism "looked backward as much as forward, invoking the Tory myth of stability, elite emulation, and a harmonious order, while at the same time urging innovation and 'enterprise.'" ³² Thus, it was not particularly difficult for Joly to reconcile his defence of the Catholic Church's official status in Quebec with his advocacy of more state support for public schools, or his economic liberalism with his promotion of greater state involvement in forest conservation. From his perspective, the state should be a protector of the public good, and what Elsbeth Heaman refers to as conservative rights,³³ as well as a guardian of individual property rights. Joly's rather paternalistic liberalism, then, was broader than what the definition offered by Roy and McKay encompasses,³⁴ and it clearly resonated with many Canadians during a period when the certainties of the pre-industrial world were being turned upside down.

In [chapter 1](#) we briefly examine Joly's deep patrician roots in New France and Lower Canada, beginning with Louis-Théandre Chartier de Lotbinière, who arrived in Canada in 1651. The five generations of Chartiers de Lotbinière were all highly ranked public officials, and it was the second of them, René-Louis, who was granted the seigneurie that would remain in the family's hands until the mid-twentieth century.

But the seigneurie's land was poorly drained, and it served largely as a source of social status rather than as an economic or political power base until Henri-Gustave's parents became the first seigneurs to live on it. The first chapter closes with an examination of how the Swiss-born Pierre-Gustave Joly developed a thriving lumber business on the seigneurie of Lotbinière despite his troubled relationship with the *censitaires* who became the suppliers of logs for his sawmills.

Chapter 2 focuses on Henri-Gustave's close relations with his wife, Margaretta Josepha Gowen, and their children, most of whom did not become integrated into Quebec society, despite their education in local French-language institutions and their family links with Quebec City's English-speaking bourgeoisie. Rather, several sons and daughters became tied to the British military, through profession or marriage, in a neat symbiosis between the traditions of the Ancien Régime elite and the opportunities provided by the modern British Empire. Of the seven offspring who survived to maturity, only the eldest daughter and eldest son would remain in Quebec, with the latter following in his father's footsteps as his law partner and junior business associate, though never managing to emerge from his shadow. The dominant theme of this chapter is paternalism, a word with class as well as gender connotations, and the theme reappears repeatedly in the chapters on Joly's public career.

In **chapter 3** we examine the impact of the "abolition" of seigneurial tenure in 1854, a topic that has remained largely unexplored by Quebec's historians. Our rather paradoxical finding is that this legislation actually entrenched the Joly family more firmly in their Lotbinière property. Henri-Gustave was identified as a seigneur throughout his life, and the fact that he was no longer obliged to grant lots to *censitaires* after 1854 ensured that he would have a secure supply of raw material for his lumber business, as well as a dependent labour force. By continuing the careful forest management of his father, Henri-Gustave was able to support his family in some comfort while effectively practicing what we now refer to as sustained-yield forestry. Local farmers' reliance on winter logging on the seigneurie's forest reserve may not have contributed to Pierre-Gustave Joly's popularity, but it certainly helped to ensure that his son, Henri-Gustave, would have a dependable power base for his political career. This constituency was crucial because, as a Paris-educated Protestant, Henri-Gustave could never completely overcome his outsider status in French-speaking Quebec, nor did he become entirely assimilated into the English-speaking

business community, despite marrying into it and playing a prominent role in the Anglican Church.

[Chapter 4](#) examines Joly's opposition to Confederation, his role as leader of the provincial Liberals, and his consistent opposition to fiscal profligacy and political corruption, as well as his support for mildly reformist social policies. [Chapter 5](#) reviews the one aspect of Joly's life that has received detailed attention from historians, his role as provincial premier between March 1878 and October 1879. This was a period of economic crisis when Joly's organizational skills earned him widespread respect, but his economizing policies proved to be no match for Conservative obstructionism and bribery. As a political reformer, Joly practiced a paternalism of a different order than that of old Tories such as Governor Bond Head, who countenanced corruption and violence as a means to an end,³⁵ and these two political chapters underscore Joly's insistence that government operate within its means, and without becoming beholden to wealthy party funders. This insistence served both as an asset and as a handicap to his public career.

In [chapter 6](#) we examine how – having resigned from provincial politics as a result of the Riel crisis in 1885 – Joly eventually returned to the public stage in a somewhat futile attempt to repair relations between English and French Canada, thereby earning a knighthood in 1895. The other focus of his attention during this decade or so was the forest conservation movement, for which he became Canada's leading spokesman, as we see in [chapter 7](#). Once again, rather than causing him to vacillate between two apparently contradictory value systems, Joly's paternalism and his belief in liberal reform tended to complement each other in initiatives such as Arbour Day and his insistence that wood lots be preserved, fire regulations be enforced, and the export of pulpwood from Canada be banned.

The same balancing act is examined in [chapter 8](#), which focuses on Joly's role as minister of internal revenue in the Laurier government between 1896 and 1900. A diligent and effective administrator, Joly never fully accepted the broker-based patronage system that replaced the old patron-client relationship after the institutionalization of the party system in the 1840s.³⁶ As a patrician paternalist, he fought off his Liberal colleagues' demands that employees of his department who were suspected to be Conservative supporters be replaced with the party faithful. But he also contributed to the state formation project that is generally assumed to have replaced the paternalist system of government, by instituting a greater degree of uniformity in the country's

weights and measures system. While intensifying the government's campaign against the illicit production of alcohol, however, Joly was too sensitive to the Catholic Church's stance to become an advocate of prohibition.

Finally, in [chapter 9](#) we turn to the public role that perhaps best suited Joly's patrician status and diplomatic temperament, namely that of lieutenant governor of British Columbia. This was no sinecure, especially for a man of Joly's advanced years, for he was largely responsible for introducing the party system that stabilized governance in the fractious west coast province. In short, the example of Sir Henri-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière suggests that the new urban and industrial order of the Victorian and Edwardian eras did not sweep away the social, economic, and political influence of the old patrician elite as easily or as quickly as historians of Quebec and Canada have tended to assume and that the paternalist ethos was not necessarily incompatible with liberal reform.³⁷

Blood and Soil

Henri-Gustave Joly's passport, issued in 1873, identified him as a "born British subject," five feet eleven inches in height, with blue eyes, grey hair, pale complexion, and straight nose.¹ The fact that he had actually been born in his father's mother country of France reflects how thoroughly Joly had come to identify himself with the British empire by the 1870s. Contemporaries described his appearance and demeanour as that of the archetypal aristocrat. Thus, the French-born journalist and essayist Auguste Achintre wrote in 1871 that Joly reminded him of the portraits one found in galleries of eighteenth-century gentlemen, portraits that evoked "*un parfum d'aristocratie bon ton*" and reflected "*tout ce que l'âge passé avait de mœurs charmantes et d'habitudes délicates.*"² With his handlebar moustache and long thick sideburns, Joly had the "*allure svelte d'un officier de cavalerie,*" to quote the conservative Quebec historian Robert Rumilly.³ Quite conscious of his distinguished heritage, Joly was strongly attached to the seigneurie that signified his patrician status. Although he and his wife kept a house and later an apartment in Quebec City, where he had a law practice (becoming a Queen's Councillor in 1878)⁴ and where he sat in the legislature for many years, they and their children lived in Lotbinière during the summer months. Joly also continued to maintain a strong interest in the management of his landed estate while living in Ottawa and Victoria.

Given that family lineage has traditionally been traced through the male line, it may seem anomalous that Joly's public image was largely based on his maternal inheritance, but his father was a foreigner, and it was his mother who had inherited the seigneurie of Lotbinière. Joly's was not a case of deep ancestral connection to the land and its people, however, for his parents were the first seigneurs to live in Lotbinière,

and he himself spent his youth attending school and university in Paris. But the family did have a multigenerational link to Lotbinière, which had been granted to Joly's great-great-great-grandfather, and the role of seigneur did confer social status even after the outdated land tenure system technically ceased to exist in 1854. Surprisingly little research has been done on the impact of this reform at the local community level, but we shall see that in the case of Lotbinière the former seigneur continued to exercise as much influence and power as ever.

The Chartier de Lotbinière Legacy

Historians of New France long denied that the nobility dominated the colony as it did the mother country, but they now recognize that the feudal system was deeply entrenched in Canada.⁵ Recent research has revealed that a minimum of 239 nobles spent at least some time in New France, the vast majority as military officers from the middle or minor nobility, and that they developed as a distinctive social class.⁶ The Chartiers de Lotbinière were not military nobility but they were related through marriage to some of France's greatest families – the Chateaubriands, La Rochefoucaults, and Polignacs – and they established themselves early as important office holders in Canada.⁷ Louis-Théandre Chartier de Lotbinière, the first member of the family to sail to New France, was the son of the famous René-Pierre Chartier, doctor in ordinary to Louis XIII and the ladies of the court, as well as professor of surgery at the Collège Royal. Louis-Théandre arrived in Canada in 1651, the same year that his relative by marriage, Jean de Lauson, became governor. The kinship ensured Chartier de Lotbinière's appointment as attorney in the colony's first properly constituted court, the Seneschal's Court. He later became the court's lieutenant general for civil and criminal affairs, then the colony's attorney general, and finally, lieutenant general of the newly established Provost's Court.⁸

Chartier de Lotbinière's son, René-Louis, was appointed deputy attorney general to the Sovereign Council at the young age of twenty-eight; he then was appointed councillor for life in 1675 but resigned to take over his father's higher-paid position in the Provost's Court two years later. He would hold this position for the next twenty-six years. Promoted to lieutenant colonel of the Quebec militia in 1673, de Lotbinière accompanied Governor La Barre as commanding officer of the regiment that failed in its expedition against the Iroquois in 1684. Six years later, he led the defence of Quebec against the siege by Phips.

His appointment as chief councillor in 1703 made him the fourth most important person in the colony after the governor, the intendant, and the bishop, and he served in the intendant's place during the latter's absences.⁹

René-Louis Chartier de Lotbinière was still a young man when he received the seignury that was named in honour of his family in 1672. With the seignury measuring two and a quarter leagues (12.5 kilometres) along the south shore of the St Lawrence, by two leagues (11.1 kilometres) deep, Lotbinière's eastern edge lay approximately sixty-five kilometres to the west of Quebec City. The north shore of the St Lawrence was being settled more quickly because much of the south shore was vulnerable to overland Iroquois attack and was not easily accessible from the river due to its high cliffs. Behind these elevations, Lotbinière generally consisted of low-lying swampy land drained by small rivers that were suitable in a few places for mill sites and for timber drives during the spring floods.¹⁰ (See map at the front of this book.) As a result, much of the seignury was never settled, and the chief source of income for the seigneurs would eventually be its forests, not rents from the censitaires who were dependent originally on the fishery and later on winter logging to supplement their agricultural activities.

Despite René-Louis Chartier de Lotbinière's failure to attract the settlers officially required, an additional grant in 1685 and a purchase in 1686 expanded his seignury by one and a quarter leagues (7.0 kilometres) to the west. Four leagues in depth (22.2 kilometres) were added by Governor Frontenac in 1693, thereby tripling the original size of the seignury, though this additional land would be held as a 433-square-kilometre timber reserve. These boundaries would remain fixed thereafter, making Lotbinière one of the few fiefs to survive in one piece and in the hands of the same family until the seigneurial system was abolished in 1854.¹¹ The local residents would, thereafter, continue for many years to pay annual rents to the former seigneurs, and Lotbinière would remain in Joly de Lotbinière family possession until it was expropriated by the province in 1967.

By the time René-Louis Chartier de Lotbinière died in 1709, a chapel and gristmill had been constructed, but there were still only twenty-one censitaires, attracted largely by the offshore abundance of fish and eels.¹² René-Louis's third son, Eustache, would in 1713 acquire his siblings' shares of the property. Although he was only twenty years old when his father died, Eustache was being groomed to assume the

important posts of his father and grandfather. He was already an ensign in the colonial regular troops, and he would be named to the Superior Council a year later, in 1710.¹³

The seigneurie finally became an official parish known as Saint-Louis in 1722, and its first curé (parish priest) arrived two years later when there were fifty-one censitaires, all but nine of whom were located on lots fronting the St Lawrence. Forty arpents (sixteen hectares) of the domaine, which was the land reserved for the seigneur's own use,¹⁴ were under cultivation at this time, but the manor house was not resided in by the seigneur, who was preoccupied by the colony's fur trade as well as his role in the Superior Council. De Lotbinière, whose wife died in 1723, leaving five children under the age of eleven, was ordained as canon and archdeacon only three years later. Becoming vicar general to Bishop Saint-Vallier soon afterward, he forbade the parishioners of Lotbinière to sing songs or circulate defamatory libels against each other on pain of being refused the sacraments, but his attention was focused more on his continuing role in the Superior Council as well as administration of the diocese during the long absences of the successive bishops.¹⁵

Because de Lotbinière's two older sons also became priests, it was his youngest son, Michel, who inherited the seigneurie at the age of twenty-six in 1749. Having married the daughter of the king's engineer, Chaussegros de Léry, Michel Chartier de Lotbinière broke with the family tradition of winning fame on the bench by going to France to study military engineering. Upon his return in 1753 he helped his father-in-law to repair the fortifications of Quebec and two years later he was placed in charge of building Fort Carillon at the south end of Lake Champlain. De Lotbinière failed to receive further promotions, but he worked on Quebec's defence works prior to its capitulation in 1759, and he was ordered to fortify Ile aux Noix the following year in a vain attempt to stop the British advance from the south.¹⁶ Over a century later, Colonel Thomas Bland Strange, the commanding officer of the Quebec Citadel, would refer to this service at a banquet in honour of his friend, Henri-Gustave Joly, whose French-Canadian identity was then under attack by political opponents:

Mais, qu'est-ce qu'être Canadien-français? ... Est-ce que vous avez oublié que ses nobles ancêtres ont servi leur patrie dans les conseils de l'État et sur les champs de bataille pendant des centaines d'années? Est-ce que vous ne vous rappelez pas que dans ses veines coule le noble sang

des sieurs de Lotbinière et de Vaudreuil? que c'est au talent de M. de e.g.Lotbinière, ingénieur-militaire de France, que l'on doit le plan des fortifications du champ de bataille qui nous a valu la glorieuse victoire de Carillon?¹⁷

(But what is it to be a French Canadian? ... Have you forgotten that for hundreds of years his noble ancestors served their country in the councils of state and on the fields of battle? Do you not remember that in his veins runs the noble blood of the sieurs de Lotbinière and Vaudreuil? That it is to the talent of M. de Lotbinière, military engineer of France, that is owed the plan for the battle-field fortifications that won you the glorious victory of Carillon?)

Meanwhile, the seignury lay neglected both before and after the British Conquest. According to a census taken in 1762, Lotbinière had a population of approximately 400 persons, or seventy-nine families, a rather small increase from the fifty-one censitaire families in 1724.¹⁸ Exiled to France as a result of the defeat on the Plains of Abraham, Michel Chartier de Lotbinière chose, after failing to revive his military career,¹⁹ to return to the colony. He had purchased five seigneuries, including three from his cousin Marquis de Vaudreuil, the former governor who had already granted him another seignury southwest of Lake Champlain in 1758. Unable to convince the British government to recognize his rights to the two seigneuries that were located south of the border with New York, de Lotbinière sailed back to France in 1776. There he lobbied to have that country enter the war on the side of the rebelling American colonies. After the war, the Americans refused to recognize his land claims, but the French government provided him with an annual pension of £1,200 and conferred the title of marquis on him in 1784. The ever-restless de Lotbinière moved back to Canada in 1790 and then to New York in 1796, where he died in a yellow fever epidemic two years later.²⁰

Meanwhile, his son, Michel-Eustache-Gaspard-Alain, proved to be much more successful in currying favour with the colonial authorities, for he rushed to the defence of the colony when the American War of Independence broke out in 1776.²¹ His role in the war ended after he was taken prisoner at St-Jean-sur-Richelieu and held for eleven months in Pennsylvania, where he became seriously ill, but his loyalty earned him the rank of captain and a half-pay salary for the rest of his life.²² Keeping a safe distance from his father, Gaspard-Alain continued

after the war to be favoured by Governor Carleton, who became Lord Dorchester. De Lotbinière became a justice of the peace in 1785 and, after protesting vigorously in 1791 and 1793 against the suppression of the French language in the newly established Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada, he was elected that assembly's speaker in 1794. A year later he was appointed to the Legislative Council, which placed him in position to be granted 12,961 acres (5,184 hectares) of freehold township land outside the bounds of the seigneuries. He became a lieutenant colonel of the militia in 1794 and a colonel in 1803, and he would command two battalions during the War of 1812.²³ Gaspard-Alain Chartier de Lotbinière therefore fails to support the assumption of Robert Larin and Yves Drolet that the Canadian nobility declined in numbers because they were unable to preserve a distinction based on military service.²⁴

It had appeared that there would be no direct heirs, but de Lotbinière's wife died in 1799, and four years later, at the age of fifty-four, he married the much younger Mary Charlotte Munro, daughter of the Loyalist speaker of Upper Canada's Legislative Council. John Munro had been a colonel and justice of the peace in New York, and according to family legend, his wife rode hundreds of miles with one of the children across enemy lines in order to carry dispatches that were sewn into the lining of her clothing.²⁵ Of the six offspring of Gaspard-Alain Chartier de Lotbinière and Mary Charlotte Munro, only three daughters would reach maturity.²⁶

Gaspard-Alain Chartier de Lotbinière's will sheds light on his values and preoccupations as a member of the landed nobility in the post-Conquest era. In 1798, the year before his first wife died, he had been described as a scandalous lecher whose residence served as a miniature bordello,²⁷ but he now asked that a monument be erected in the chapel where he was to be buried, simply stating that he had been a good son, a good husband, and a good father and that he had loved his country and served his king with zeal. The inheritance would be divided equally among his three daughters and their younger siblings, should any be born before his death, with provision made for their mother, whose marriage to him had specified separation of goods. His wife was to serve as the tutor of their daughters, but only as long as she remained a widow, and the executors were to have the right to inspect the children's education. They were to take particular care should one or more sons be born before the aging de Lotbinière died because "*une faiblesse sur l'éducation de mes garçons feroit leur malheur et engloiteroit ma famille dans l'obscurité la plus vile.*" Given that he did not expect to