

THE ROBLINS OF MANITOBA

At the time of the American War of Independence in 1776, the Roblins were farmers at Smith's Clove, Orange County, New York. Some of them were Loyalists and served in the King's army. During the Revolution when the Roblin's homestead was raided, Elizabeth Miller Roblin dared to swear allegiance to King George III. She suffered no harm but her husband Philip, was badly wounded in this fracas. As a result the Roblins along with other United Empire Loyalists moved in 1783 to the Bay of Quinte district, first landing at the place that is now Adolphustown, Ontario. Here, the tombstones of several of the early Roblins and others have been set into a U.E.L. pioneer's memorial wall.

Since the early 1800's, five Roblins have been politicians. John, Elizabeth and Philip's son, was elected three times as a Reformer to the Upper Canada legislature. In the next generation, a second John Roblin was a member of the Parliament of Upper Canada. In 1854-61, David Roblin was a two-term member of the parliament of the united Canada. Rodmond Palen Roblin ("R.P.") was a colourful and dominant figure in Manitoba politics for thirty years and the premier from 1900-15. His grandson Duff Roblin is a dynamic and distinguished Manitoban, who has served his province as its premier from 1958-67, and his country as a senator 1978-92.



Sir Rodman P.
Roblin

"R.P." was born in Ontario in 1853 and came to Manitoba with his wife, Adelaide De Mille to farm near Carman. He entered the provincial legislature as a Liberal in 1888. As a conservative he became Premier of Manitoba first in 1900. Roblin governed through a period of dramatic social and economic changes due to the rapid population growth in the province at that time. New public services in the form of schools, hospitals, educational and commercial facilities, Crown corporations, good roads, municipal buildings, railways and the extension of boundaries of the province, north of the sixtieth parallel were all part of the government's achievements.

However, the Roblin Conservatives were reluctant to lead on social issues. "R.P." was strongly opposed to women's suffrage and publicly feuded with Nellie McClung over this issue. His government employed patronage to an unprecedented extent, resulting in accusations of corruption and the forced resignation of the Roblin government over the "Legislature Scandal" connected with the construction of the new Manitoba Legislature building. The subsequent Royal Commission found no fault with Roblin himself, but he retired with a mixed legacy.

Dufferin Roblin, grandson of "R. P." and son of Charles Dufferin Roblin and Sophie Murdoch, was born in Winnipeg in 1917. He was educated in Winnipeg and at the University of Chicago. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force when World War II broke out, became a Pilot Officer and spent the next six years in uniform. As a Squadron Leader, Roblin and his crew were posted to Harrogate, England to the R.C.A.F. Liaison Section. In 1944 he became a Wing Commander with the 83 Group, a mixed unit of British and Canadian pilots who provided support for the D-Day invasion and subsequent battles on the continent. On the anniversary of D-Day in June 2004, Duff Roblin represented Manitoba and spoke on behalf of the Normandy campaign veterans at Beny-sur-Mer and then attended the Juno Beach celebrations on June 5, 2004.

After World War II, Roblin entered the Manitoba legislature in 1950 as an Independent backbencher in opposition to the Coalition Government. By 1954 he was leader of the Opposition and then became Conservative premier from 1958-67. Roblin's government had a major impact on

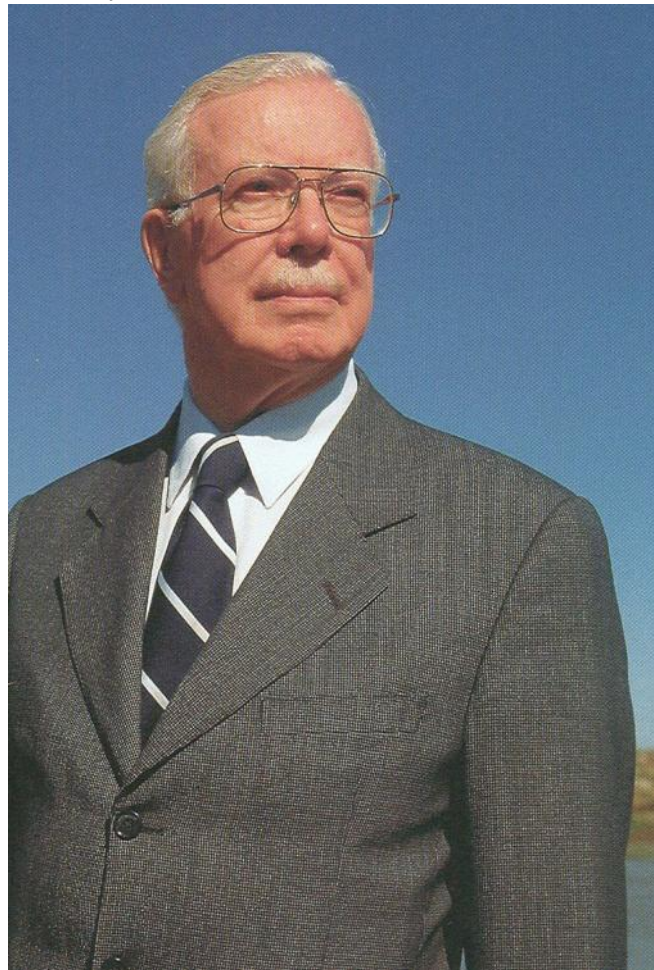


Duff Roblin

the development of the province during those years. Sweeping changes in the areas of education, welfare, hydro and roads were also instituted. However, the building of “Duff’s Ditch”, the forty-kilometer long floodway, east of the Red River remains Roblin’s most famous achievement. It was designed to protect the City of Winnipeg from high water in the flat Red River Valley. Since its completion it has been used eighteen times. When the “flood of the century” came in 1997, the city was able to withstand the onslaught of water from the south and west because “Duff’s Ditch” was there and it worked.

Duff married Mary McKay on 30 August, 1958. He is a Privy Councillor, Companion of the Order of Manitoba and holds honorary degrees from McGill University, the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg.

The Town of Roblin in Manitoba and Roblin Boulevard in Winnipeg bear the family name.



Duff Roblin

Sources: Speaking for Myself – Duff Roblin UE, GC, PC, DM, LLD, DCL
The Government of Sir Rodmond Roblin - Time Links -1998
Winnipeg Free Press – 2 Jun. 2004

