

## Collecting Local History: The Bate Brothers of Bytown & Ottawa

Most collectors appreciate attributions that come with acquisitions, especially if they turn out to be true! Digging deeper into the history surrounding antiques provides even greater satisfaction. These two stoneware crocks are a fascinating link to Ottawa's history.



The cobalt blue decoration on the **Bate & Co.** jug suggests it was made at a Hart pottery in up-state New York, USA.

The **C.T. Bate** decoration is consistent with those coming from the Farrar or Gillespie pottery in St. John, Quebec. The C.T. Bate crock is the only one that the author of this article has seen.



Brothers **Charles Thornton, (C.T.) Bate**, and **Henry Newell Bate**, settled in Bytown in 1854, having come from St. Catharines, Ontario, where the family owned a brewery called Taylor & Bate. Henry brought his new bride Catherine Cameron from Buckingham, Quebec, with him. They were to have 14 children.

Charles and Henry soon established **C.T. Bate & Company**, importers and wholesalers of groceries, wines, liquors, teas and numerous other provisions. Charles ran the wholesale business from a stone warehouse on the west bank of the Rideau Canal in downtown Ottawa, about where the National Arts Centre is today. The warehouse burned down in 1867, but was quickly rebuilt on the same site.

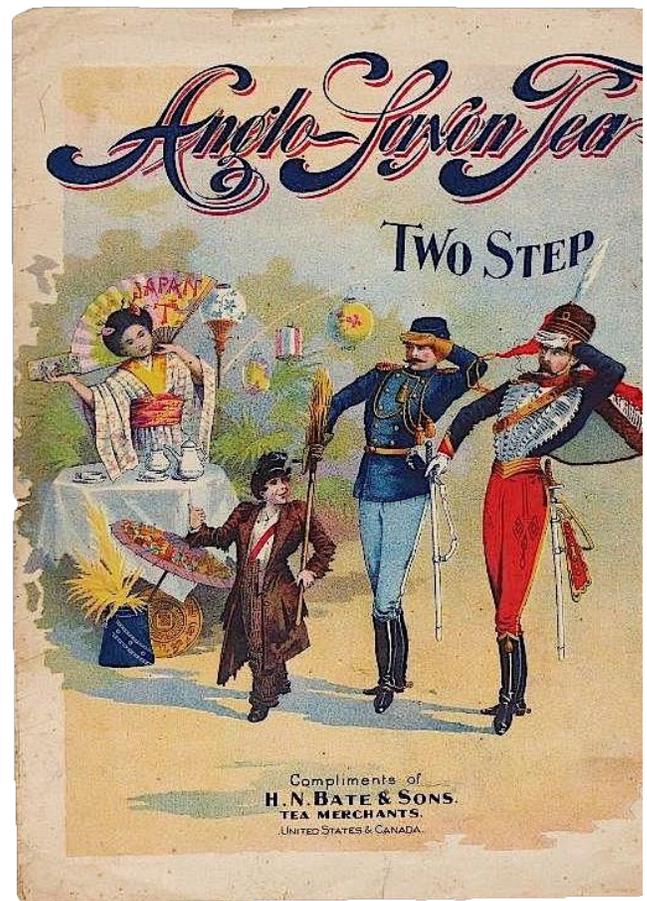
Within five years they also opened a popular retail outlet on the ground floor of **The Bate Building** at 52 Sparks Street, near Metcalfe Street, in Ottawa. It survives today at 109 - 111 Sparks as a Federal Heritage Building. It has been reported that the Sparks Street store also functioned as a social hub where “everyone who was anyone was sure to be found, shopping of secondary importance compared with the exchange of gossip.” (1)



## The Original Business Becomes Two

By 1869, the original business had been split into two - **C.T. Bate & Co.**, importer and wholesaler, and **Bate & Co.**, a retail operation. C.T. continued to run the wholesale business. Henry was joined, at some time, by his half-brother Newell, at the Sparks Street retail location. Both companies were very successful and became official suppliers to Governors General.

In 1898, the Bates introduced their **Anglo-Saxon brand** including its tea. Associated advertising ranged from sheet music called **The Anglo-Saxon Teas Two Step**, a copy of which I have in my collection, to sponsorship of the Anglo-Saxon Hockey Club. Many years later that franchise was the basis for the recruitment of the "Silver Seven" hockey team which would go on to win the Stanley Cup.



## More About Charles Thorton Bate

**Charles Thorton Bate** held many additional positions in both the private and public sectors. He was a founding director of The Bank of Ottawa (The Lumberman's Bank), president of the Ottawa Electric Light Company, and director of the Great North-West Railway Company, which became part of the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) in 1957.

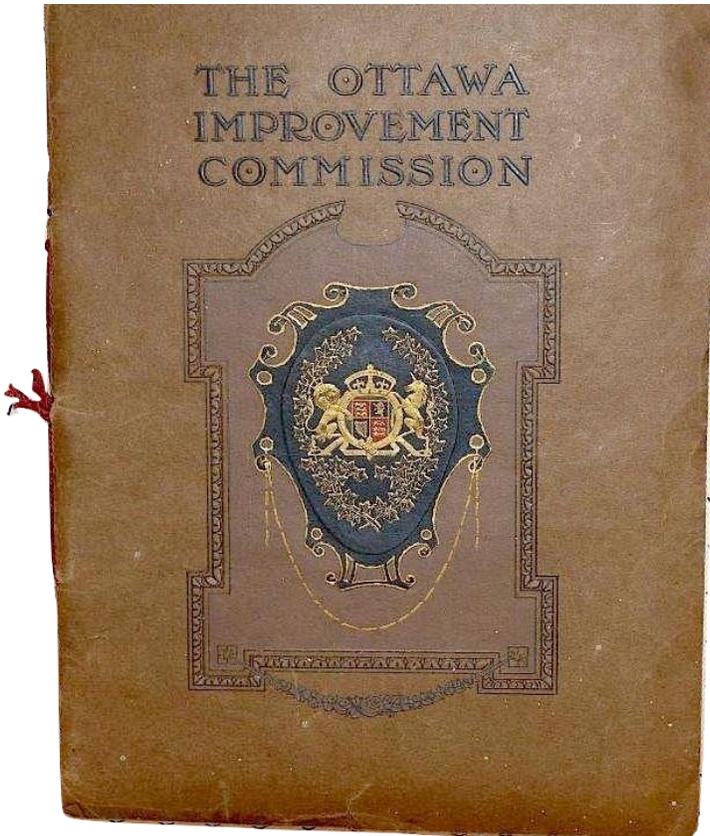
C. T. Bate served three unpaid terms as an Ottawa alderman for Wellington Ward in the years immediately following the confederation of Canada, and he became Mayor of Ottawa in 1884-85.

## More About Henry Newell Bate

Like his brother C.T. Bate, **Henry Newell Bate** had many other interests including real estate and civic development. He and partners built the **Dominion Hotel in Carlsbad Springs, Ontario**, where those unwell could go to "take the waters." He financed Ottawa's new **All Saints Anglican Church** that opened in 1900. It soon became known as "All Bates." When asked what the legend over the door "February A.D. 1900" meant, a small boy responded "All Done in February 1900!"



But probably Henry Bate's greatest contribution to today's Ottawa stemmed from his being appointed in 1899, by Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier as the first Chair of the **Ottawa Improvement Commission (OIC)**, forerunner to today's National Capital Commission. It was another unpaid position, unless you count the naming of Bate Island, in 1907, located under a bridge that links the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, and, his knighthood in 1910. Henry Bate was still Chair of the OIC when an early 40-page report was published in 1912-13. This report includes many photos of the improvements to Ottawa attributed to the Ottawa Improvement Commission.



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Ironically, when the descendants of the family sought to have the lease for the canal warehouse property renewed in 1927, the OIC's successor, the Federal Development Commission refused, having decided to expropriate the property for an extension of the Rideau Canal Driveway.

Note (1). A much more elaborate description of the roles played by Charles and Henry Bate, and their successors, in Ottawa's early years, can be found in a 3-volume booklet called **The Bate Brothers of Ottawa** by Ian Browness and Cynthia Coristine, available from the Ottawa Historical Society, an important resource for this article. <http://hsottawa.ncf.ca/> (See pamphlets numbered 91, 92, 93)

**Written by JSC – Member of the Bytown Antique & Bottle Club**

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