

Name: Hatheway, George Luther (Hon.)

Riding: York, County of

Party: Liberal

Date Elected: GE 18 Jun. 1850. GE Jun. 1854. GE 4 Jun. 1861. BY-EL 15 Aug. 1861. GE 2 Mar. 1865. BY-EL 17 Apr. 1865 (By ACCL). GE Jun. 1870. BY-EL 10 Mar. 1871 (By ACCL).

Positions Held: Appointed to Executive Council as Chief Commissioner of Public Works, 25 Jul. 1861 - Jan. 1865. Appointed Chief Commissioner of Public Works, 21 Sept. 1865 - 14 Apr. 1866. Appointed Chief Commissioner of Public Works, May 1870 - 22 Feb. 1871. Appointed Premier, 22 Feb. 1871 - 5 Jul. 1872. Appointed Provincial Secretary, 22 Feb. 1871 - 5 Jul. 1872.

Cabinet Shuffle:

Retired: Died in office.

Defeated: GE 13 Jun. 1856. GE 8 May 1857.

Died: Died at the age of 59 on 5 Jul. 1872 at the Queen Hotel, Fredericton, NB. Buried in the Family Lot, Nashwaak, NB.

Notes: Born on 4 Aug. 1813 at Musquash, Sunbury County, NB. Of Colonial English-Loyalist descent. After attending school in Saint John, Hatheway settled on a farm in York County and engaged in agricultural activities. He also engaged in extensive lumbering and held a number of county appointments including being a Justice of the Peace, and a Justice of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas.

Hatheway is doubtlessly among the most colourful politicians of New Brunswick's past. According to his contemporary, James Hannay: "Hatheway could do things with perfect impunity that would utterly ruin a politician in these days. I have seen him in the midst of his husting speech on nomination day dispatch a messenger...to a tavern for a tumbler of brandy, which he would forthwith proceed to drink with great relish in full view...of the electors." His consumption of three or four glasses over the course of a speech only seemed to increase his popularity with the common citizen.

For all his faults, Hatheway stood in striking contrast to the slick city lawyers who dominated politics. Hatheway, as a farmer, spoke the language of rural New Brunswickers and enjoyed immense popularity. Loud and boisterous, yet warm-hearted, Hatheway was a giant in stature and girth, as well as a dominating personage. It is often said that he was a born politician.

Hatheway was first elected to the Legislature in 1850 as a reformer and a supporter of responsible government. In 1861 he joined Samuel L. Tilley's Executive Council as Chief Commissioner of Public Works. He remained fiercely independent-minded, as historian W.S. MacNutt notes, "displaying the independence and eccentricities that had always made stable party government so difficult to achieve in New Brunswick." Hatheway strongly objected to the terms of Tilley's Confederation scheme. When Tilley could not ensure that the Intercolonial Railway would be built through the Saint John River Valley, Hatheway resigned from government in protest. Standing as an anti-Confederate candidate in the 1865 general election, Hatheway was among the most effective at campaigning against Tilley. Illustrating his style on the hustings is one bitterly playful couplet he employed as a campaign slogan: "Mr. Tilley will you stop your puffing and blowing / And tell us which way the railway is going!"

Despite his personal opinion that Hatheway was "destitute of principle as well as of education," Lieutenant Governor Arthur Hamilton Gordon, asked Hatheway to form the anti-Confederate administration. Hatheway declined and asked simply to resume his public works portfolio in the Albert J. Smith (q.v.) government. The administration would last less than a year.

At the 1866 general election, Hatheway again stood as an anti-Confederate candidate, but as election day loomed

it became clear to Hatheway that his side could not win the election. Just before polling day, Hatheway withdrew and placed his support behind the pro-Confederation candidate. It was a brazen about-face, the second in as many years, and Hatheway was roundly criticized for betraying his former colleagues. He was called a traitor and a coward in equal measure. Yet, in spite of this, Hatheway's political career survived relatively unscathed.

In 1870 he was re-elected to the Legislature and again assumed the public works portfolio. The Premier of the day, George Edwin King (q.v.), was not a strong leader and could not keep his government together. Within eight months, Hatheway had maneuvered King out of office and assumed the premiership. While King had been the architect of the Common Schools Act, it was Hatheway who was able to assemble the political coalition necessary to pass the hotly debated social legislation. After winning a by-election on the issue, Hatheway proclaimed the act, which called for free non-denominational schools, and it went into effect in Jan. 1872.

As Premier, Hatheway also sought to achieve better terms for New Brunswick with Ottawa. He was the first post-Confederation Premier who was not a lawyer by occupation. Despite only serving seventeen months as Premier, by all accounts, Hatheway might have remained in that position had he not died in office. On 25 Jun. 1872, he injured his left hand while jumping from a moving train. He suffered blood poisoning and died a few days later.

In memoriam James Hannay wrote of Hatheway: "He was not a model politician. His views of public life and the responsibilities attaching to it were not high, yet there was something attractive in his personality, and when he died there were sincere regrets from many who had neither admired nor loved him when he was in his health and vigour." Historian W.A. Spray agrees that since his death, Hatheway's reputation as a "loud-mouthed demagogue" has been overtaken by genuine respect for his record of social, educational and governmental reform during his political career.

For more information see also: "Dictionary of Canadian Biography", Volume X (Ref 920.071 D554); "Premiers of New Brunswick" (971.5 D754 NB Coll.); "The development of the theory and practice of education in New Brunswick, 1784-1900" (370.9715 M169 NB Coll.); "New Brunswick, A History, 1784-1867" (971.5 M169 NB Coll.); James Hannay, "The Premiers of New Brunswick since Confederation," Canadian Magazine, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Jul. 1897); and the New Brunswick Pamphlet Collection.

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