

City founder came with little m

Young U.S. citizen started career by v

This border city linking Canada and the United States was founded by a young U.S. citizen who came to Niagara with little but the clothes on his back.

He rose quickly in the community to become the multi-millionaire founder of today's city.

Samuel Zimmerman began his career in this area working on the second Welland Canal linking Lakes Erie and Ontario.

By the mid-1850s he had become a respected entrepreneur, with large real estate holdings in both Clifton (now the Centre and Elgin (near the lower bridge).

DRIVING FORCE

He was the driving force behind extending the railway across the border to the U.S. and was responsible for the first suspension railroad bridge across the Niagara.

Samuel Zimmerman died in a railway accident near Hamilton when a train derailed on a bridge over the Desjardins Canal.

It was five days before his 42nd birthday on a railway he had been instrumental in extending to Niagara and the U.S.

Before his death the young entrepreneur was a leading citizen in both Clifton and Elgin. In 1856 the two small villages amalgamated to form the Town of Clifton, the nucleus of the modern city of Niagara Falls.

Zimmerman had incorporated his own bank, the Zimmerman Bank, in 1855 and was issuing his own bank notes. They were in one, three and five dollar denominations and signed by Zimmerman himself.

He was the major landholder in the town and by the age of 38 had been declared a millionaire.

ENGINEERING ATTRACTION

His double-deck suspension bridge over the Niagara River was an engineering feat that was almost as much a tourist draw as the falls themselves.

When Zimmerman died in 1857 he was in the mids of carrying out plans for a huge mansion at Clifton. He had four lodges (one at each entrance to his estate) and the stables built. The stables were later incorporated into the present Park Motor Hotel.

The foundation for the mansion itself had been laid when Zimmerman was killed.

His plans called for a 52-acre estate overlooking the American Falls. Landscaped grounds with ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers and fountains were a feature of the grounds.

One fountain, near the entrance to today's Queen Victoria Park, was said to cost \$25,000. The grounds were illuminated during the summer with lanterns.

EMPIRE TOPPLES

The Zimmerman empire began to fall slowly apart after his unexpected death. The Zimmerman bank was eventually taken over by a Chicago group of financiers, who refused to redeem their banknotes and the bank's charter was repealed in 1863.

Progress in the new town of Clifton was slowed by the death of its founder and benefactor.

The Zimmerman bank, located at Bridge Street and Clifton Avenue, was a combined bank, post office and customs house for Clifton. The site is now occupied by the federal customs building.

Zimmerman had also owned two steamers, the Zimmerman and the Pearlless, the Clifton House, a luxurious hotel on the site of the present Oakes Garden Theatre and railway car building shops in Niagara-on-the-Lake. All were sold after his death.

The day of Zimmerman's burial was declared a holiday in Clifton. His body was buried on the grounds on his uncompleted estate. In 1861 it was moved to the St. Davids Methodist Church cemetery and re-interred beside his first wife's grave.



SAMUEL ZIMMERMAN

... became multi-millionaire