

Adam Beck

Adam Beck was born on June 20th, 1857 in the town of Baden, Ontario which was founded by his father Jacob B. Beck. At the age of 14, Adam began working in his father's iron foundry. After the foundry folded, Adam and his brother William went to Galt and opened a lumber veneering and cigar box manufacturing firm.

In 1884, the business moved to London, Ontario and eventually branches opened in Montreal, Toronto, and Hamilton.

In 1898, Adam ventured into politics where he ran unsuccessfully as a Conservative. Four years later in 1902 he was elected mayor of London and London's member of provincial parliament. He was mayor for 3 years and except for 1919-1923 was London's MLA until his death.

In 1905, he was appointed as a minister without portfolio and in 1906, he introduced the bill creating the Hydro-Electric Power Commission.

He resigned from the commission in 1914 when Sir James P. Whitney attempted to put the \$200 million plus Hydro Commission under the control of the cabinet. Beck did, however, manage to maintain the commission's public ownership.

Beck became a colonel in the Canadian militia in 1912 and served during WW1 as director of remounts, supervising the purchase of horses for the army.

Adam Beck married Lillian Ottoway in September 1898. In 1904, their daughter Marion, was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Marion eventually recovered but the Becks still decided to establish the Queen Alexandra Sanatorium in Byron to ensure the finest available facilities for the treatment of tuberculosis patients. Lillian Beck oversaw 'Rose Day' in which thousands of roses were sold to raise funds for the sanatorium. In 1909, Adam was elected president of the newly established London Health Association, and in 1914 Lillian became president of the London Red Cross Society.

Both Becks were enthusiastic equestrians and participated in numerous shows in Canada, United States, and England. Adam Beck was elected director of the National Horse Show Association of America, as well as the International Horse Show, London, 1911. He was master of the fox hounds at London Hunt Club from 1897-1922, and promoted the London Jockey Club and the London Hunt Club.

In 1909 Adam and Lillian Beck were presented at court and Adam Beck became Sir Adam Beck.

Adam Beck became renowned for his efforts to bring hydro-electric power from Niagara Falls to the cities of Ontario. He was opposed to the high rates charged by various electric companies. Adam Beck was often called 'the poor man's friend' for his efforts to provide cheap electricity and help the sick and destitute.

A monument was erected in his honour in 1938; the Queenston-Chippewa Power Development, which is the largest single Hydro-electric development in the world.

Adam Beck remained chairman of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission until his death on August 15, 1925, four years after Lady Lillian's death.

An Illustrated History of London, Canada; Frederick A. Armstrong p 138-139