

the Reverend Mitchell Sadler: “Endeared to All”



Introduction

Mitchell Sadler frequently signed his name and was recorded in church and civil records as “Mitchel”. I failed to standardize the spelling in UP TO RAWDON and so he is found under both spellings. The family surname was rendered Sadlar, Saddler, Saddlier and Sadlier in various registrations. A handsome, cabinet sized studio card in the Veale family album of Carolyn Goddard ¹ was identified as “Mitchell Siddler”. Carolyn believes it was there because of the family’s friendship with Mitchell Sadler, at Rawdon, in earlier days; you will find the Veales on page 878 of Part Two of UP TO RAWDON. An extensive search has been made to find an identified image of Mitchell Sadler to compare the portrait without success. The photo dates from between 1890 and 1892, when J. G. Parks, the Montreal photographer, used 2264 Ste-Catherine, as his studio and Mitchell Sadler also lived and worked in that city. Sadler was the only person from Montreal who had a known connection to the Kingston, Ontario, Veale family, at that time. The facts we have support that the portrait is Mitchell Sadler; our search continues to prove its authenticity.

Daniel Parkinson

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¹ Carolyn Goddard cgoddard@telusplanet.net Red Deer, Alberta has shared the photograph and many hours of research in the preparation of this biography. We have had the generous assistance of these researchers who have spent years studying French Protestantism in Quebec: René Péron, Jacques Gagné, Richard Loughheed, Jean-Louis Lalonde (author of *Des loups dans la bergerie-Les protestants de langue française au Québec*, which quotes the work of Dominique Vogt-Raguy *Les communautés protestantes francophones au Québec -1834-1925*). Jean-Louis Lalonde advised me concerning this October 2021 revision. His work on Mitchell Sadler is published, with biographies of other ministers and leaders of Franco Protestantism in Quebec, at <http://www.shpfqbiographies.sitew.ca/>.

Biography

Mitchell Sadler arrived at Rawdon Township from Ireland, with his parents John Sadler and Alice Mason, in 1825; he was about nine. But where was he born? We have two family sources that do not agree with which county. His second daughter, Mary Sadler Stackford, at her 1868, New Hampshire marriage registered both parents as born at Latrim [sic Leitrim], Ireland. Herbert D. Swift, a grandson of his eldest daughter Alice Sadler Swift, believed they were from County Roscommon. However, he also recorded that Alice Mason was from County Leitrim. See (UP TO RAWDON p. 536). It seems that their home may have been the area where the county of Roscommon touches the borders of the counties of Sligo and Leitrim. There are doubtful, unsourced claims on Ancestry that Mitchell was from Sligo.

Mitchell spent his early life farming at Rawdon but with a yearning to preach. He married Maria Mason 3 April 1836, at *Christ Church Anglican*, Rawdon (Anglican Archives not in Drouin Index). She was his first cousin. The complexities of the family relationships are examined in Part One of UP TO RAWDON.²

I believe Mitchell Sadler was converted to Methodism after the burial of his third daughter Catherine, at Rawdon's *Christ Church Anglican*, 3 July 1842. A second daughter was named Catherine and baptized in the Methodist Church,³ 9 January 1844, as were the rest of his growing family (see footnote 2). His eldest daughter, Alice, a minor was married to Thomas Swift at Christ Church, 12 November 1850. However, in the Rawdon Census (February 1852) Mitchell Sadler, his family and Thomas and Alice Swift were all recorded as Wesleyan Methodist. Alice, very young when married, was then attending school. It may or may not be relevant to Sadler's choice of church but his father, John Sadler had had struggles with Church of England authorities (UP TO RAWDON pages 120-121 and footnote 40 page 551). Despite this, John and Mitchell Sadler were always strong church supporters and their names often appear as witnesses at *Christ Church Anglican*, Rawdon and later in the Methodist Church that was built by the Rawdon Methodist community in 1846.

Many young men left Rawdon to become clergy. Mitchell persisted on his farm until he was fifty-seven, when he set out to be a minister for the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Canada, a goal that he achieved in 1884, when he was received in full connection to the church and ordained for special purposes. "He has labored very efficiently for fifteen years [as a local preacher in the French work] and his usefulness will be greatly promoted being ordained. ... All testified to Mr. Sadler's excellent character and ability." It was made clear that this would not entitle him to a claim on the superannuation fund. [3rd Day Proceedings of the Montreal Methodist Conference, Montreal Herald, 2 June 1884.] However, on retirement in 1897, his service was recognized financially.

Mitchell Sadler was active in his community and like all males over sixteen, he served in the militia. Listed on the muster as a private in 1839, he served as an Ensign in 1847, with promotion to Lieutenant in 1855 and as Captain in 1861. Mitchell and Maria Sadler still farmed at Rawdon in 1871 with their six

² Details are in UP TO RAWDON, Part One, pages 535-561 (MASON, SADLER, HAMILTON, POWELL, BRIDGES AND ARMSTRONG: Associated Families at Rawdon. The information on the twelve children of Mitchell and Maria was corrected and updated, June 2021 and is at <https://uptorawdon.com/> under Text Updates, pages 544-545.

³ In 1838, a *Wesleyville Methodist Mission* circuit was established with a register which included Rawdon, until about 1853, when Rawdon had its own register. There are references to a Wesleyville church until the 1860s after which it was, apparently, called the *New Glasgow Methodist Church*. See UP TO RAWDON page 443, footnote one, to learn where Wesleyville was southwest of Rawdon.

unmarried children on one of the Sadler properties; Maria's brother Thomas Mason, 65, a widower (who in 1861 had his own farm on 6th Range, Lot 4) was living with them. Mitchell Sadler had been granted two lots – 6/ N 15 in 1832, when he was 16 and 6 / N 11 in 1876 (the Letters Patent were issued after he left Rawdon). It adjoined his father's land at 7 / 11 which is where the Sadlers are found to be living on the 1861 Statistical Census. Some of his farm property was sold 15 May 1874 to Johnston Hamilton, a Rawdon neighbour (Ancestry: notary Léonard- L. Desaulniers).

From 1873, Mitchell Sadler worked in Montreal with the Wesleyan Methodists (Vogt-Raguy, pages 658 - 660). Lovell's Montreal Directory 1873-74 reports a machinist named Mitchell Saddler [sic], on Duke Street. Mitchell being a somewhat unique first name, it seems fair to assume this is our man and that he needed employment while studying – he had a family to support.

Michel [sic] Sadler is listed as a missionary in Lovell's Montreal Directory for 1874 -1875. In 1876, he was one of a dozen men employed by La Société Missionnaire Méthodiste as active missionaries in Quebec. Mitchell Sadler was in charge of L'école de Canaan and its fourteen pupils (Vogt-Raguy, pages 658 - 660). The school was at Roxton Pond, in Shefford County, where there were Methodist and Baptist missions to the French.

Did Mitchell Sadler receive formal theological instruction and training for missionary work? A brief newspaper obituary stated that he received his "early education" at Pointe-aux-Trembles. The L'Institut français évangélique de la Pointe aux Trembles was active between 1844 and 1846 but he was at Rawdon then. I agree with Jean-Louis Lalonde, who wrote in a letter to me that Sadler did not have theological training. He learned through private study and on the street as a "colporteur", a pedlar for the Bible Society.

He would have attended school in Ireland, as a small child; he was nine when he emigrated. He probably had some schooling at Rawdon where progressive Irish families, like John Sadler's, supported children's education. The Schoolhouse at the Forks of the Red River had opened in 1826 at Lot 22 on the Second Range, which was the year the family were located a few miles from there, at Rawdon Township Lot 11 of Seventh Range. The Eveleigh family at Sixth Range, lots 21 and 22, hosted Anglican services and one son, Joseph, at one time was considered for the position of teacher at the schoolhouse and may have had a school in their home. One can only speculate about these early days. If one looks at his church registers, one sees that, unlike many of the clergy, he wrote in a clear, rounded and entirely legible hand.

But where did he learn to speak French? Rawdon in its earliest days was primarily an English-speaking community and there were no Québécois settlers near the Sadlers in early years. He must have become fluent to perform as a missionary to the French working class. In fact, he translated articles into French. He wrote, 22 December 1887, to M. O'Connor editor of *The Converted Catholic* published by Christ's Mission, New York (1888, vol 5, no 3, pages 68-69). "Thank you very much for sending me your valuable publication. ... I translate many of its articles and read them to my congregation to their great delight. I know you will be glad to learn that the evangelization of the French Canadians is progressing favorably in Montreal. I have a good congregation and fifty communicants, and our numbers are constantly increasing. They would be much larger if the people after being converted did not emigrate to the United States to avoid the persecutions that are sure to follow all who leave the Church of Rome."

From 1876 to 1880, Mitchell Sadler was settled in downtown Montreal and lived for several years on Chatham Street in St. Antoine Ward, Montreal. He began missionary work in the French communities there and in nearby St-Henri, Sainte-Cunégonde and Pointe-Saint-Charles. He helped the unemployed to find work, collected clothes for the needy and on Sundays preached sermons in three locations. Other Rawdon people, found their way to these areas in search of city jobs and attended the English services in the churches that Sadler and his family were associated with. To orient yourself, remember that Atwater Street, runs south from the mountain to the St. Lawrence River and both links and separates these districts of modern Montreal.

In 1875 his younger son James William Creighton Sadler (18) died at Montreal and his elder son John Henry Sadler (not yet 25) in 1877. They are buried, side by side in Mount Royal Cemetery but without a marker, in a Methodist ministers' plot. The deaths of his only sons would have been a difficult test for Mitchell Sadler as he prepared for the ministry. He was identified in 1882 as a peddler (colporteur) in the above-named areas, including what came to be known as little Burgundy. I believe that he was selling / distributing Bibles and Methodist tracts door to door. His obituary mentions that he "spent several years in the employ of the Bible Society". He was recorded to be a committee member of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society from 1885-86 and until 1895-96.

From 1877 through 1883 Mitchell Sadler was associated with the *First French Methodist Church* under Rev. Louis Beaudry at many locations in central Montreal. In 1882-1883, it was recorded that Sadler held weekly services at 167 Chatham Street.⁴ He lived, when a missionary, at 169 Chatham Street (and later at #165) as reported in Lovell's Montreal Directories from 1880 to 1884 and in the 1881 Montreal Census. This area was a hot bed of evangelical Protestant outreach to French speaking Roman Catholics. Also, on Chatham Street was - *Église anglicane du Rédempteur* and its Mission Sabrevois school and a bit further south at Canning Street was *Église presbytérienne du Sauveur*. Nearby, at de Coursol and Canning Streets, by 1890 was *West-End St. Joseph Street Methodist Church* attended by those who spoke English.

"The Montreal Daily Witness" mentions that he collected clothing for distribution and solicited charitable donations from English speaking parishes. In 1883, Mitchell Sadler was quoted: "I found work for the unemployed in the railways, factories and foundries of Montreal thanks to the support of the gentlemen who run these establishments."⁵ In a report to the Methodist Board of Missions in Toronto concerning French Methodist missions, the Reverend Mr. Sadler who was working in St. Henri and Pointe St-Charles was stated to be "worn out" (Montreal Gazette, 2 October 1882).

In 1884, according to Mitchell Sadler's obituary ("Montreal Weekly Witness", 19 September 1905): that after "he decided to enter the Methodist ministry ... his efforts were directed to Montreal, where he was received in full connection in 1884". Accepted then as a Methodist minister, he became the first pastor of the second French mission called the *Montreal West End French Methodist Church*. It may have

⁴ Church services were recorded at 167 Chatham Street in 1882-1883. The names and precise locations of churches can seem hazy and variable in the records. *Eglise Methodiste Française* moved to Craig and St. Elizabeth Street from Old Montreal in 1863 and closed in 1924. It was also called *First French Methodist*. See photograph at https://imtl.org/edifices/Eglise_Methodiste_Francaise.php

⁵ Jean Louis Lalonde *Des loups dans la bergerie, Les protestants de langue française au Québec, 1534-2000*, Montréal, Fides, 2002. pages 134 & 160 (translated)

initially used space in the English-speaking *West End / St. Joseph Street Methodist Church* already established at 2546 Notre Dame Street at Seigneurs Street but no records confirm a location. Sadler represented *Montreal West End French* at the Montreal Wesleyan Methodist Conference in Kingston, Ontario (Montreal Gazette, 29 May 1885). Ultimately, his service in French missionary work in central Montreal districts led to the establishment of the Delisle Street church in 1899, as will be seen.

“The Morning Chronicle and Commercial and Shipping Gazette”, 13 June 1884, listed Mitchell Sadler, pastor of *Montreal West French Mission* as did the “Montreal Daily Witness” newspaper on 6 June 1888. He was first designated as the Reverend Sadler in Lovell’s Montreal Directory for 1884 and 1885. He signed church registers of *West-End French Methodist* and “First French Methodist” between 1884 and October of 1897 baptizing several of his grandchildren, at this time. Sadler had his name on the front page of nine registers as the lead minister of the “West End French Methodist”, other ministers also used these registers for baptisms, burials and marriages.

The first place we find him designated formally as the Reverend Sadler is in Lovell’s Montreal Directory for 1884 and 1885. He signed church registers of “West-End French Methodist” and “First French Methodist” in that way between 1884 and October of 1897 baptizing several of his grandchildren, at this time. He had his name on the front page of nine registers as the lead minister of the “West End French Methodist”, other ministers also used these registers for baptisms, burials and marriages.

The *West End French Methodist Mission* held a Christmas Tree Festival on 24 December 1887 thanks to the kindness of three named “ladies” and others who provided gifts and refreshments including charitable gentlemen who furnished the tree “and useful articles of clothing”. The pastor, the Reverend M. Sadler, “gave a telling address and was supported by Messers Jacquet and Pleau. The children sang beautifully and their happy smiling faces let the donors understand that it is more blessed to give than to receive. After the doxology, Sadler gave the benediction and the happy crowd dispersed.” (Montreal Daily Witness, 18 January 1888 and the Witness reported a similar event 29 December 1890.)

In 1889, la Société Missionnaire Méthodiste, to continue their mission, either purchased or rented space in an 1888 brick building, from an *Olivet Baptist Mission* group who continued to hold services there at Winstanley Hall, 142 Delisle Street, through to 1899 (Lovell’s Montreal Directory). The Methodists named their space *Salle Évangélique* at 142 ½ Delisle Street. Sadler relocated his *West End French Mission* here and was assisted by Léocadie Morin, a woman evangelist. The Société Missionnaire Méthodiste in 1890 joined with La Société de Temperance as a way to attract Roman Catholics to their faith. The building housed their school which was attended by seventy children at a Sunday School and at a day school. When Sadler began his retirement at 77, in 1893, he was still a pastor at *Montreal West French Mission/ Église Évangélique* using the school’s address. In 1895, its community consistently revolved around 50 members not including children.

The West End Methodist Church was constructed in 1890 at de Coursol and Canning Streets. In 1914, a fire ravaged the building on Christmas day, it was rebuilt without the imposing spire and front window. This building became the home of *West End Methodist / St. Joseph Street* from 1890 until 1925. Later, it was the Negro Community Centre until the building was demolished in 2014. Mitchell Sadler’s separate French ministry, as already stated, may have been housed at 2546 Notre Dame Street with the West End Methodist Church. This connection ended with the construction of West End French Methodist in 1899, nearby in St-Henri.

Mitchell Sadler was in touch with Rawdon family and friends at West End French when they moved to or visited Montreal. Sometimes, he returned to Rawdon and in 1889, he baptized two of his Mason nephews – one given the name Wesley and the other's name included Sadler, perhaps showing support of his work. It was at this point, we believe, that Sadler no longer a missionary plodding door to door but a prominent churchman had his photograph taken uptown at J. G. Parks Studio at 2264 Ste-Catherine Street. The photo recognized his accomplishments and would have been wanted by church and family. It is a wonder that we have not found another copy in church or other archives.

In 1892-93 the *Montreal West French Mission* evolved into a full-fledged church with its own location at 142 ½ Delisle Street. The Reverend Mitchell Sadler was its first pastor.

Another Montreal Wesleyan Conference was held in Kingston, in 1894. The Reverend Mitchell Sadler was one of eight names on the ballot for president of the Conference; he was not the successful candidate but it was a recognition of his years of work. Possibly, he gave his portrait to the Veale family then although, it is not clear that he actually attended the meeting (*Ottawa Citizen*, 2 June 1894).

In the years, 1898 and 1899: Mitchell Sadler moved to London, Ontario (Lalonde, from Vogt-Raguy). Possibly, he had a plan to retire there because a London West Voter List names him as a property owner in 1898. It turned out to be only an extended visit with his family that lived there. Eleanor Greene, his widowed youngest daughter, who in 1891 lived with the Sadlers in St-Antoine, had in 1881 lived on a farm, at East Riding, London Township, with her late husband, Thomas Greene, a clothier, his parents and a brother. The Sadlers' eldest granddaughter Sophia Swift married that brother (Robert Greene who was a year younger than Thomas Greene); Sophia and Thomas Greene had five children. Also living at London was Margaret Douglas, another married daughter.

Two major events happened in Mitchell Sadler's life in 1899. The death and burial of Mary [sic] Mason, his wife of sixty-three years was recorded as 12 and 14 July 1899 at *West End French Methodist* (transcribed by Ancestry as Ladler). He had only recently returned to his Montreal neighborhood as a retiree. His daughter Eleanor and her son lived there with the widowed Sadler in 1901. Eleanor remarried on 15 October 1902, as a resident of London. Her husband, Herman Connor, was an Ottawa manufacturer but was born near Rawdon at St-Felix-de-Ramsay, where her sister Jane Stephens lived.

Also in 1899, in a triumph for Mitchell Sadler's work, a new church was approved to be built solely for the *West End French Methodist* at 369 Delisle, at the corner of Delisle and Atwater. It remained a Methodist Church until 1917 when it became the *Union Congregational Church*, which had begun 1907 on Mountain Street. With the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925, it was known as *Union United Church*, a centre of the black community of Montreal with a notable history of service and worship <https://www.unionunitedchurchmtl.ca/history.htm>.

The funeral he conducted on 14 September 1899 was probably his last professional connection with his *West-End French Methodist* parish but it was not in the new church building that was about to be built.

On 24 August 1904, Mitchell Sadler was 88 and was with his family at Granby, Quebec to baptize his nineteen-month-old great granddaughter Alice Sadler Ruth McDonald [sic] (see page 873 of Part Two).

It appears that, after Eleanor's marriage, her father accompanied her to her new home with her husband Herman Connor. The *Ottawa Citizen* (14 September 1905) reported his death on 12 September in the home of his son-in-law, H. Connor of Hintonburg; the body was transported by train to Montreal.

He and his wife, Maria Mason, are buried at Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal (near each other in sections G3 906 Y and Z, sadly there are no markers). Of their twelve children only three are known to have survived their parents: Margaret Sadler Douglas (Mrs. Samuel Andrews); Eleanor Sadler Green (Mrs. Herman Connor), both of Hintonburg, Carleton County, Ontario and Jane Sadler Stevens (widow of the late Alexander Stevens) of St-Felix-de-Valois, QC.

Mitchell Sadler was "a man of peculiarly sweet temper and sunny disposition, which endeared him to all. Though feeble in body and often suffering much, he maintained full possession of his mental faculties until the last hour." Ottawa Citizen, 4 September 1905.

Daniel Parkinson

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