

A tale of three brothers

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Above, from left: Sidney Oland (seated), George Bauld Oland (standing), George W.C. Oland (seated), and Geoffrey Oland (standing).

The Halifax Explosion in 1917 set a lot of things in motion for the Oland family.

George W.C. Oland immediately diversified his assets by purchasing the Red Ball Brewery in Saint John, and handed the reins over to his eldest son George Bauld.

George Bauld was a traditional businessman. He took over management of the brewery at the conclusion of the Great War – during which time he had served as a Major with the 14th Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery.

George W.C.'s middle son Sidney remained in Nova Scotia to rebuild the family's Halifax operations.

Sidney was an outgoing, flamboyant businessperson who had also served during the war, commanding the 66th Canadian Field Artillery, and seeing action in France and Germany. After the war he joined the Canadian Army Militia, and helped launch the Nova Scotia division of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires.

Sidney led a high-profile life – living for a time with his wife in Havana, Cuba, then moving to Hollywood, California (where he played a bit role in the movie *All Quiet on the Western Front*) – before moving back to Halifax to take his place in the family business.

In 1928, George W.C.'s youngest son Geoffrey took over management at the Red Ball Brewery, allowing George Bauld to take the leadership role at his father's newest acquisition – the James Ready Brewery, which was soon renamed as New Brunswick Breweries.

1928 was also the year George W.C. purchased the Alexander Keith's Brewery in Halifax – which was added to Sidney's portfolio of responsibilities.

In 1933, George W.C. died, and his estate – with the exception of the breweries – was divided up amongst those in the family who were not involved in the brewing business. George, Sidney and Geoffrey, on the other hand, inherited the breweries they were running.

Trouble was, it wasn't an equal division. Each brewery was very different from the other.

Sidney became the owner of the S. Oland and Sons Brewery on Young Street, the Keith's Brewery on Water Street in Halifax, and a 21.8% share of New Brunswick Breweries. He enjoyed 80% of the market share in Nova Scotia.

George Bauld became the owner of the remaining share of New Brunswick Breweries – a much smaller business.

Geoffrey assumed ownership of Red Ball – an even smaller venture.

The brothers were a competitive bunch. However some of their competitive spirit may have been fuelled by the fact that they weren't on an even playing field.

George Bauld spent the 1930's building his market share throughout the Maritimes by introducing new products, including Moosehead Pale Ale in 1933, and Ten-Penny Old Stock Ale in 1934. In 1947 he also changed New Brunswick Breweries' name to Moosehead Breweries – a move that made selling outside the province an easier task.



Above: employees posing with a New Brunswick Breweries delivery truck, advertising Moosehead Pale Ale.

Geoffrey sold the Red Ball Brewery to Sidney in 1958 – placing George and Sidney into direct competition in New Brunswick. The purchase was a risky one for Sidney – Red Ball was in financial distress, and faced an uphill battle against Moosehead's local market share.

Geoffrey died in 1958.

In the early 1960s Philip Oland (George Bauld's second son, who was by this time Managing Director of Moosehead) decided to build a new brewery in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia – a decision designed to shore up more of the Maritime market share. With more product available and new product launches hitting the market, Moosehead's share of the Maritime market rose to nearly 45%.



Above: Moosehead Breweries' Dartmouth plant.

In response, just a few years later, Sidney opened a new brewery – replacing the aged Red Ball facility – on Saint John's west side. The plant was less than a kilometre from the Moosehead Brewery on Main Street.

In 1971, faced with declining profits and the threat of competition from central Canada, Sidney's sons – Bruce, Don and Victor – decided to sell his Nova Scotia holdings to Labatt. His grandson (also named Sidney) joined the Ontario company in the 1970s, and assumed the role of President in the 1980s – helming Labatt through a prosperous time in their history. He even oversaw the introduction of the twist-off cap – a move that instantly boosted market share for the company, and forced other Canadian breweries to scramble to implement the same technology.

At the same time the New Brunswick Olands bought back their Nova Scotian relatives' stake in their company – finally owning Moosehead Breweries outright.

George Bauld died in 1973, and his son P.W. Oland succeeded him as the third generation Oland making beer in New Brunswick.

Sidney died in 1977, and his funeral was a huge event in Halifax – complete with military honours – closing the book on the Oland family’s Nova Scotian chapter on the brewing business.

Source: Moosehead <http://www.mooseheadbeeracademy.com/tale-three-brothers/>