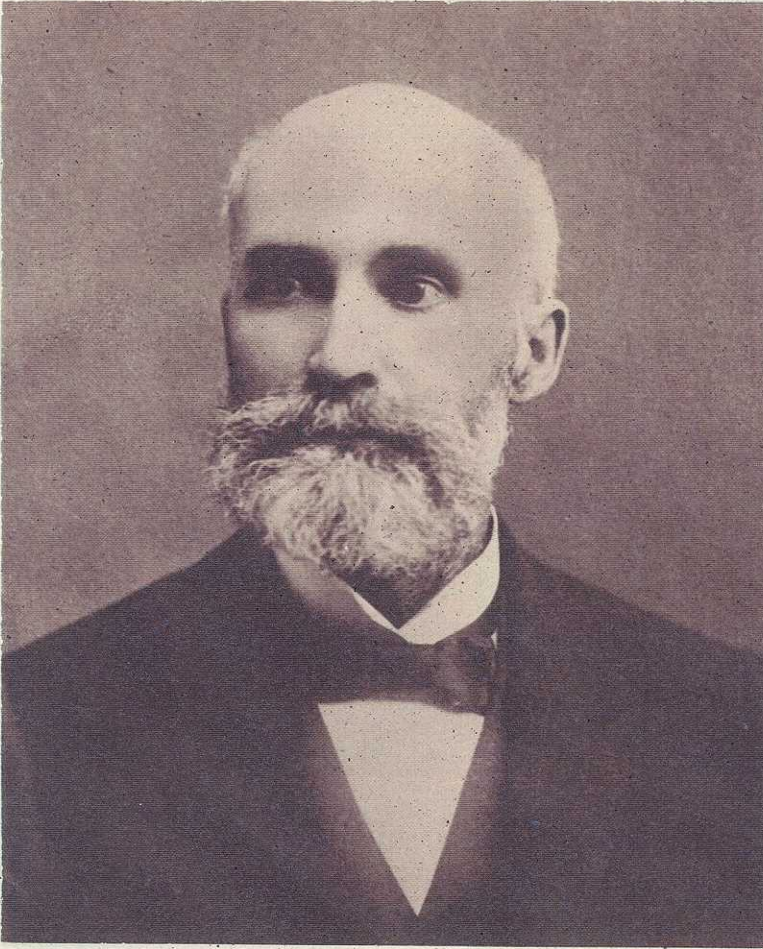


MAYOR CHARLES VAIL



He was Sarnia's first 'Green' Mayor.

A century before the environmental movement began, Mayor Charles Vail was taking concrete steps to battle pollution.

Vail, a doctor who was elected the Municipality's 17th Chief Magistrate in 1887, presided over the Council that passed a bylaw compelling every property owner in Town to make connections to the Municipality's sewer.

Under his leadership Council also spent a small fortune - by 19th century standards at least - to install sewers. On Christina Street alone the bill came to \$6,000.00

There was widespread opposition to the plan from what The Observer called "sewer soreheads", but Mayor Vail won out in the end, convincing Council his plans were essential in order to protect the public from disease.

Vail, who lived at 198 George Street, was also in office when

preliminary excavation work began on the original St. Clair River Railroad Tunnel. The project, which was hailed as one of the wonders of the world, virtually wiped out local unemployment.

Mayor Vail was also successful in convincing Council that he should not have to preside over police court. A politician had too many conflicts to be an effective Chief Magistrate, he said.

He noted that during his first four months in office he had tried 40 cases and sent 35 people to jail.

During his one year at the helm Council also lowered taxes slightly, despite the costly sewer program.

In fact, when he retired The Observer noted, "the state of taxation at present is lower than it has been in many years".

The newspaper, which was often savagely critical of 19th century politicians, was kind to Mayor Vail, saying "his administration has been marked by good works and a clean record. The public business was carefully, faithfully and honestly transacted. Harmony of action and a businesslike way of disposing of all questions that came up marked the Council procedure during the year".

Vail died on August 22, 1899, at age 64.