



Coppell, Texas to Coppell, Ontario ici Nord de l'Ontario



Residents and natives of Coppell, Ontario, introduced Philip Laberge and his wife from Coppell, USA, to their village.

PHOTO : RADIO-CANADA / JIMMY CHABOT

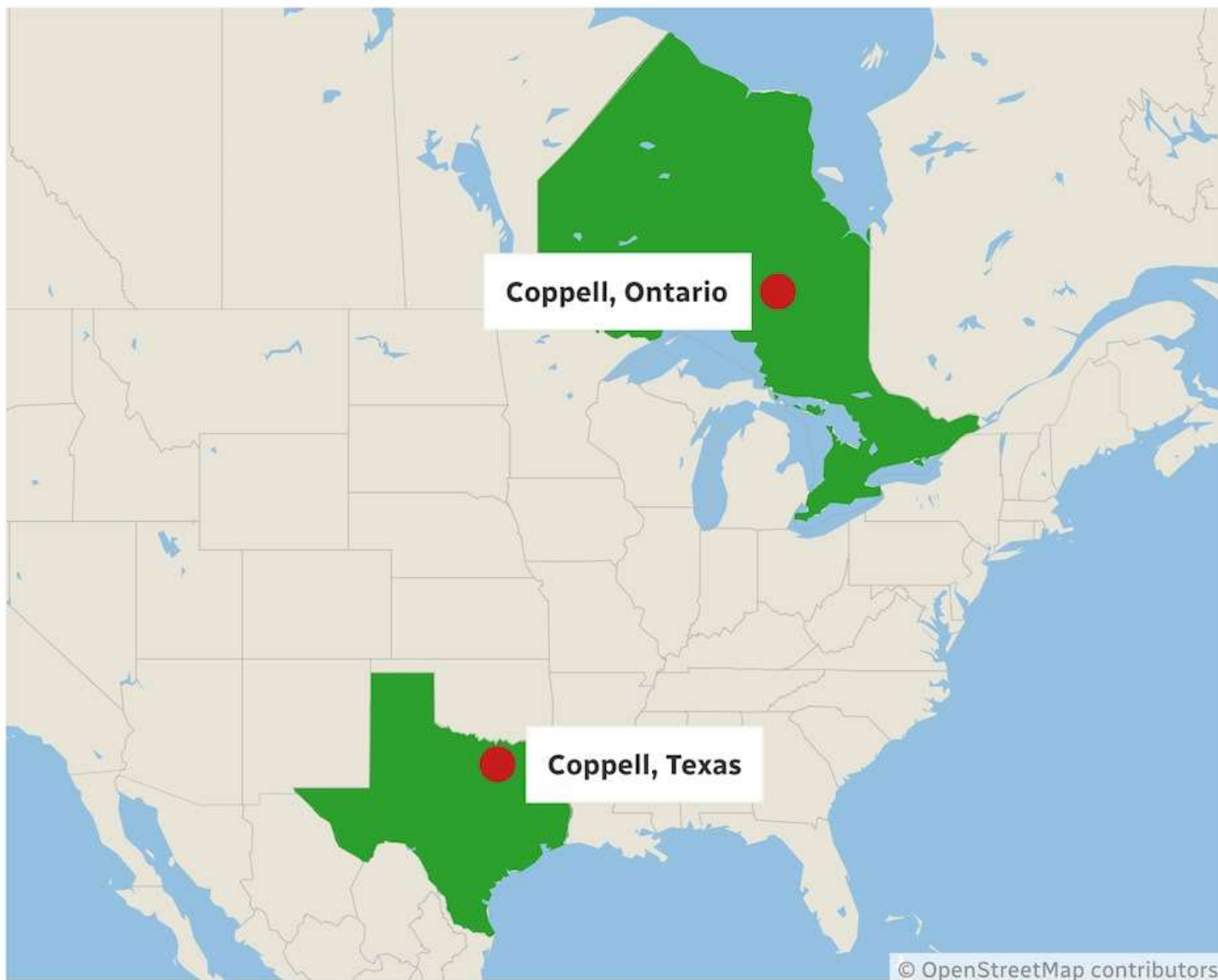


Jimmy Chabot

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Philip Laberge and his wife, residents of Coppell, Texas, travelled to Coppell, Northern Ontario, to hear the stories of residents and to show their research on the connection between the two communities.

About fifteen people connected directly or indirectly to Coppell, Ontario, showed their village to this American couple who made a six-day drive to travel from Texas.



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Twenty-five hours drive separate the two Coppells.

PHOTO : RADIO-CANADA / CAM GAUTHIER

On the main artery, Gérard Payeur greets the Americans with the following sentence: « This is the old village of Coppel. »

« Churches have closed, schools have closed. There was a convent, it closed. Once it closes, the world leaves. They moved to the nearest town, which was Hearst », says Gerard's sister, Lucille, a native of Coppel, Ont.

Lise Payeur still lives there and was proud « to present the little we have left in Coppel. For the rest of us, it's memories ».

Shared history

Philip Laberge is very involved in the Coppell, Texas Historical Society.

« A few years ago, our president found out that there was another Coppell in Ontario. He told me: "I tried to contact them, but they only speak French and I have not made any progress," » says this resident of the United States, whose ancestors come from Quebec.



Philip Laberge with the Consul General of Canada in Dallas in front of Coppell City Hall.

PHOTO : FACEBOOK: CONSULATE GENERAL OF CANADA IN DALLAS

He then embarked on a long research project by calling people in the area of Hearst, the largest city nearby.

« That's when I realized that our two cities got their name from the Coppell family. The Coppells were wealthy railroad investors in New York », he says.

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- A book for the centennial of Hearst

In Texas, the town takes its name from George Coppell, who had a depot in his name near a railroad track in what was once Gibbs. The name was changed to Coppell in 1890.

Twenty-two years later, Coppell, Ontario, was founded, named in honour of George's son, Herbert Coppell.

The latter helped finance the Algoma Central Railway between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst, and the third stop before the Hearst terminus was named Coppell.

Opposing trajectories in recent decades

« It fascinates me to see that two [communities] 3000,<> kilometres apart share the same name and are associated with the same family », said Philip Laberge, still amazed by his discovery.



In 2017, Philip Laberge produced this document for the Coppell, Texas Historical Society, chronicling the similarities with Coppell, Ontario.

PHOTO : RADIO-CANADA / JIMMY CHABOT

This history buff also noticed another similarity: they are, initially, « two small [communities] on a railway ».

« It wasn't until the 1960s, when the population [of the two communities was about 600 respectively], that they had an opposite demographic curve, » he says. « One skyrocketed rapidly and the other fell. »

Coppell in Texas now has a population of 42,221, an increase that can be explained by the construction of Dallas International Airport seven minutes away.

Coppell, Ont., collapsed after the train stopped stopping there, he said.

Coppell, Ontario, is quietly fading, but the memories of yesteryear have resurfaced during the visit of the American couple.

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