

Department of Public Records and Archives of Ontario

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C^{OL.} ALEXANDER FRASER organized the Bureau of Archives for Ontario in 1903 and he is responsible for laying the foundation of the collections which are to-day known as the Department of Public Records and Archives, created, as such, by Act of the Provincial Legislature in 1923. This Department is equally related to all Departments of the Provincial Government but, for practical purposes, functions under the Minister of Education.

The present name covers the material—public and private records. Up to the present, few of the departments of the Provincial Government have transferred their files to us but we are indebted to the Lands and Forests for what we call our Land Papers which deal with the early granting and leasing of land in Upper Canada (now Ontario) and for many of our early maps. The Land Papers, consisting of many thousands, are arranged according to township (the original unit of division of land in Upper Canada) and by concession and lot within the township, not according to names of the settlers. These are simply invaluable in our work and are used constantly.

Recently when the Colonization Roads Branch, dealing with the opening up of Northern Ontario, ceased to function as a separate Branch of Government and was taken over by the Highways Department, all the records of this office, 1857-1936, with full index, were transferred to this Department. These seemed very recent and hardly of archival value but are even now being considered as material for a post-graduate thesis. Thus does time fly and current records become history. Being custodian of government files is a field in which we anticipate great growth in the future.

A recent article in *THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST* on the preservation of county records was most interesting as it touched on a critical situation in this province. While it is very distressing to hear of the destruction of these valuable records by some officials who are apt to look on them merely as scrap paper, we are glad to report that, thanks to the

co-operation and interest of the new County Clerk at Brockville, Ontario, early county records of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengary, covering about one hundred years, were recently turned over to this Department and are being arranged chronologically as the first step in making them available to the public.

Our map collection consists of over 5,000 items, many of the early one having the names of settlers inserted on their lots which, of course, is of great value.

To our custody over a period of nearly fifty years have been entrusted many collections of private papers. These touch all the many subjects which made up the daily lives of various representative citizens and give many interesting pictures of the period in which they lived. For example, the Strachan papers consist of correspondence, documents and ten letter books of John Strachan who came to Upper Canada in 1799, as a teacher, later took orders in the Church of England, and in 1839 was appointed the first bishop of the newly created diocese of Toronto. Being also a member of the Executive Council and later of the Legislative Council, he was active in all public affairs of the province, while his interest in education was rewarded by his appointment as the president of King's College, Toronto, until he founded in 1851 the University of Trinity College, Toronto. The importance of such records cannot be over-estimated when studying the history of Upper Canada. Our private papers are calendared and indexed, are easily available and, we may add, are in great demand.

Miscellaneous Papers cover a multitude of subjects and in this group we can report, among others, such irreplaceable documents as David Thompson's journals and map, the latter one of our most prized possessions: the Articles of Capitulation of Detroit, 1813; many manuscripts of John Galt's poetry, plays and sketches; records of our Mechanics' institutes which preceded the present fine provincial library system; church records, marriage licenses, diaries, &c., &c.

The collection of newspapers is very extensive and one of which we are very proud. The local Upper Canadian ones are naturally consulted most frequently but we also have some American papers. Among these are many odd copies, from 1728 to 1870; while the longer series include a bound copy of the *Boston Chronicle*, 1768; the *New York Albion*, 1822-1868; and *Ballou's Periodical*, Boston, 1854-1856.

Our thousands of pamphlets are arranged chronologically, listed and indexed.

There is one part of our work which is closely associated with the Department of Education. That is the historical exhibit which has been prepared and is kept constantly moving from school to school during the academic year. It consists of about a dozen items, photostat copies

of documents in the Archives. These are covered by cellulose acetate so that they may be read clearly but will not be soiled or torn when handled by the children. This exhibit has been enthusiastically received by the teachers and pupils and it is to be hoped that the service may be expanded before long so that more schools, especially those in the rural districts, may be able to have it.

In view of the close connection between many of the citizens of the United States and Canada, we often have enquiries from "across the line," most of them along genealogical lines. These come from many states of the Union but the majority are from the Middle West and the Pacific Coast where the newer settlements are and to which Canadians have gone over many years.