

**OUR LIBRARY: A
MONOGRAPH;
PP. 29-73**

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Our Library: A Monograph; pp. 29-73 by Frederick C. Würtele

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FREDERICK C. WÜRTELE

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Cover

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TRANSACTIONS OF THE LITERARY AND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF QUEBEC—
N. S. NO. 19—1889].

OUR LIBRARY

A MONOGRAPH

BY

FREDERICK C. WÜRTELE

LIBRARIAN



QUEBEC

PRINTED AT THE "MORNING CHRONICLE" OFFICE

1889

B 8577. 1.10



*Ed. Library found
with H. Kerstites'
Compliments*

OUR LIBRARY.

READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 1888,

—BY—

FREDERICK C. WÜRTELE,

LIBRARIAN.

54066

In this paper I propose giving the history of our Library, rendered doubly interesting from its having absorbed two other libraries, whose vicissitudes I will also notice.

The Literary and Historical Society of Quebec was founded January 6th, 1824, by the influence and generous liberality of the Earl of Dalhousie, Governor General of British North America.

The purposes of the Society were thus declared in a circular to the public of Quebec: "To discover and rescue from the unsparing hand of time the records which yet remain of the earliest history of Canada. To preserve while in our power, such documents as may be found amid the dust of yet unexplored depositories, and which may prove important to general history and to the particular history of this province." The numerous historical records published by the Society prove that the purposes above set forth have always been the chief aim of each successive Council.

In 1827 a similar society, called the "Society for promoting literature, science, arts and historical researches in Canada," was formed chiefly by French-Canadian gentlemen; but under the auspices of Sir James Kempt, the Governor General, who was patron of both societies, a union was brought about on June 4th, 1829, and the name

of the older society was retained. This increase of members and also funds, together with a liberal grant of £250 from the Provincial Government in 1830, enabled the Library to be started, as well as the Museum, and a set of philosophical apparatus was purchased. The Society was incorporated by Act of Parliament, dated October 5th, 1831.

The meetings, at which papers were read, were, by invitation of the Governor General, held at the Castle St. Lewis, and it is probable that the Society had rooms in the Old Château till they were required by His Excellency after the Castle was destroyed by fire January 23rd, 1834; when by permission of the Government, apartments for the Library, now consisting of 360 volumes, were granted in the Union Hotel, at the corner of Fort Street, built in 1805, and then used for Government offices. This building, subsequently called St. George's Hotel, is now occupied and owned by Mr. D. Morgan. The corner stone was laid with great ceremony August 14th, 1805.

Subsequently, by the same permission, more suitable rooms* were obtained in the Parliament Buildings, to which the Library was moved.

The library had steadily increased both by purchases and donations of valuable works on all subjects, when in 1853 the Librarian reported 4,000 volumes on the shelves. Here the Society sustained its first calamity, when, at 3 o'clock a.m., of February 1st, 1854, the Parliament Buildings were destroyed by fire and the whole Museum was burnt; fortunately, almost all the valuable manuscripts relating to the history of Canada were saved, together with a large portion of the Library, but the Society's minute books and private records were lost. The residue was placed in rooms rented in Mr. George Henderson's house, at the south-west corner of St. Ursule and St. Lewis streets, now the residence of Senator P. Pelletier.

* These rooms were occupied by the Society in 1841, but the exact date of moving in there is not on record.

The Government came to the Society's assistance with a grant of £250, which enabled the Library to make a fresh start. As these rooms were not very suitable they were vacated and the Society, in April, 1858, removed the 2,500 volumes it possessed to others in the Union or St. George's Hotel, and occupied them for one year; when, the Government requiring them, new quarters had to be found.

In June, 1859, the removal was made to the upper flat of the "Banque d'Épargne" buildings in St. John street. The Society remained there until 1862, when more eligible rooms were found in the Masonic Hall, St. Lewis street, but, while it was under discussion, the removal was decided for them in an abrupt and disastrous manner, for, at 10 o'clock, p.m., of October 25th, 1862, the buildings were burnt, and out of 4,000 volumes only 700 were saved, along with the manuscripts, but the Museum was totally destroyed.

An agreement, dated November 1st, was entered into with Morrin College, which occupied the Masonic Hall, and the remnants of the Society's belongings were gathered together and placed in rooms in that building. The agreement was for three years, subject to renewal at its expiration, by which the Society got free accommodation for its Library, Museum and Assistant-Secretary, but had to lay out annually the sum of £30 in books to be selected by the Governors of the College, said books to become the property of the College should the agreement not be renewed; also that their Governors, Professors and students would have free use of the Library and Museum, subject to rules made by a Joint Committee. Separate catalogues of the books and specimens belonging to each institution were to be kept.

In 1864 a printed catalogue of the Library was issued and the number of volumes therein were 1,115.

In 1865 the agreement expired, but as the College au-

thorities had only renewed their lease for one year, things were left in *statu quo*. In 1866 the College purchased the old Jail, corner of St. Anne street and Stanislaus Hill, and fitted it up. In June, 1868, the Society removed to the fine rooms they now occupy in that building, when a new agreement was entered into on March 5th, 1868, for 10 years, to date from 1st May, for the annual rental of \$120 with the following conditions:—"Should the Society receive at any time, during the lease, a grant from the Legislature of not less than \$400 per annum, the annual rent would then be \$200 instead of the former sum during the continuation of the grant. Also, that the Governors, Professors and students of Morrin College would have free use of the Library and Museum, the same as the associate members of the Society." In 1866 a considerable accession was made to the Library by the purchase of the whole of the books belonging to the Quebec Library Association for the sum of \$500, which increased the number of volumes to 8,500.

Having related the vicissitudes of the Library to this point, we will leave it for a space and now take up the history of the Library thus purchased.

On January 7th, 1779, this advertisement appeared in the *Quebec Gazette*:—

"A subscription has been commenced for establishing a public library for the city and district of Quebec. It has met with the approbation of His Excellency the Governor and of the Bishop, and it is hoped that the institution, so particularly useful in this country, will be generally encouraged. A list of those who have already subscribed is lodged at the Secretary's Office, where those who chuse it, may have an opportunity to add their names. The subscribers are requested to attend at the Bishop's Palace, at 12 o'clock, the 15th instant, in order to chuse trustees for the Library."

The meeting was held, and the following notice occurs in the issue of the *Quebec Gazette*, of January 19th:—

“ Messrs. Gravé, Mabane, Baby, Fargues and Monk hav-
“ ing, at the meeting of the subscribers for the publick
“ library, which was holden at the Bishop’s Palace (pur-
“ suant to the notice in the *Quebec Gazette*, for that purpose
“ given) on the 15th instant, been elected by ballot Trustees
“ for two years,—Messrs. Robert Lester and Arthur David-
“ son appointed Treasurer and Secretary; and several gen-
“ tlemen of the District of Montreal having expressed their
“ wishes that the plan should be extended to the Province
“ at large: The public is hereby acquainted, that a sub-
“ scription is now opened at the office of Edward William
“ Gray, Esquire, at Montreal, on the following terms, viz :
“ £5 on subscribing and the annual sum of £2 afterwards.
“ The books will be lent out to the subscribers according to
“ regulations which are forming by the Trustees; and the
“ public may be assured that particular attention will be
“ given that no books contrary to religion or good morals,
“ will be permitted. Those who have any books, for which
“ they have no immediate use, are requested to send a cata-
“ logue thereof, with the prices, edition and condition of
“ them to Mr. Davidson, at the Secretary’s Office, at Que-
“ bec; that is (if approved) the Trustees may inspect and
“ purchase them for the use of the Library. The sub-
“ scribers in the District of Montreal are requested to pay
“ their subscription money to Mr. Gray, and those in the
“ District of Quebec to Mr. Lester, the Treasurer; both
“ which gentlemen are likewise authorized to receive dona-
“ tions from such persons as are desirous of encouraging so
“ useful an institution.

“ By order of the Trustees,

“ A. DAVIDSON,

“ Secretary.”

As short sketches of the several gentlemen from time to
time mentioned in this paper may be interesting, they will
be given as they occur.

The Bishop at whose palace these meetings were held was the seventh Bishop of Quebec, Mgr. Jean Olivier Briand, a native of the parish of Plerin, in the diocese of St. Brieuc, in Brittany, France. He arrived at Quebec 17th August, 1741, as Secretary to Mgr de Pontbriand, at whose death he was chosen to be bishop of Quebec, 11th September, 1764. He went that year to England, to obtain the sanction of the King, and subsequently received his appointment by bull of Pope Clément XIII, dated 21st January, 1766, and was consecrated 16th March, at Paris, in the Chapel of Ste. Marie de Mercy, in the parish of Surenne, by Mgr Charles Gilbert Demry de Termont, Bishop of Blois, who was authorized by Mgr Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, to perform the ceremony. He returned to England, and sailing for Quebec arrived there 28th June that year, installing himself in his seat in the Seminary Chapel, temporarily used as Cathedral. In September, 1770, he chose for Coadjutor Rev. Louis Philippe Mariancheau D'Esglis, and made his solemn entry into the Cathedral on 16th March, 1774. On 20th November, 1784, he resigned his office and retired to the Seminary, where he died 25th June, 1794, aged 79 years and 5 months, and was buried on the 27th, in the Choir of the Cathedral, under the steps which lead to the Sanctuary at equal distance from the two side doors.

Rev. Henri François Gravé de la Rive arrived in Quebec, 26th July, 1754, and became Vicar General and Superior of the Seminary of Quebec. He died at the Hôtel-Dieu 4th February, 1802, at the age of 71 years and eight months, and was buried in the Seminary Chapel.

Adam Mabane, born in Edinburgh, in 1734, studied Medicine at the University and took his degree of M.D. As it was difficult to establish a good practice in his native place, he obtained the appointment of Assistant Surgeon on a man-of-war. This life on board ship did not suit him,