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RECORD COMMISSION.

The second report of Thomas B. Akins, appointed by his excellency the lieutenant-governor, on the 29th day of May, 1857, to be commissioner of public records under a resolution passed in the house of assembly on the 30th day of April in the same year, as follows:—“That his excellency be respectfully requested to cause the ancient records and documents illustrative of the history and progress of society in this province to be examined, preserved and arranged, either for reference or publication, as the legislature may hereafter determine, and that the house will provide for the same.”

To his excellency the right honorable the EARL OF MULGRAVE, lieutenant-governor and commander in chief in and over her majesty's province of Nova Scotia and its dependencies, &c., &c., &c.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Soon after the prorogation of the legislature in May last, I resumed my labors in accordance with the resolution of the assembly on the record commission, passed on 22nd day of April last.

A large mass of papers separated and assorted in boxes last year, for future examination, were taken up. The examination of and selections from these papers, with the documents appertaining to both branches of the legislature contained in the closets of the speaker's room and the small council chamber, together with the Downing street correspondence from 1800 to 1834, constituted the chief part of the work of the past year.

I have been enabled with the help afforded by one permanent assistant, to examine and select from these documents the contents of sixty-nine folio volumes. These volumes have been all set up and bound, and sixteen of them have been copiously catalogued. In selecting the contents of these sixty-nine volumes, upwards of 20,000 documents of various descriptions have passed through my hands, from which about eleven thousand have been selected to be bound up into volumes, the remainder have been placed in boxes, with a view to their being eventually catalogued in bundles and put in a condition for future reference—a labor which could not be accomplished this year. Those, however, in the archives of the assembly, though very numerous, were found in such a state of arrangement as to have very much facilitated the work of selection. Their arrangement has not been interfered with—the bundles having been returned to their respective places after the papers selected had been removed.

The labors of the previous year had brought the investigation down to about the year 1785. As it appeared to be the wish of the legislature to expedite these researches as much as possible, chiefly with a view to curtailing expense, I have, (not without considerable exertion) brought down my selections from the period above mentioned to the year 1834; after which date all papers have been classed as modern, and, with few exceptions, not within the scope of my inquiry.

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I may also mention as part of what has been done during the present year, the arrangement of several thousand marriage license bonds, taken at the secretary's office on the issuing of marriage licenses, extending over a period of about eighty years. No register of marriages having been kept in the secretary's office, these bonds are the only record of the license having been issued, and as such may be of considerable importance. The collection and arrangement of these papers, in consequence of their great numbers and scattered condition, have caused much trouble and labor.

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Keeping in view the directions of government and those of the assembly in regard to strict economy, I have employed but one permanent clerk during the year that has passed. The assiduity and diligence afforded by this gentleman, together with the occasional help of two others, as the work became pressing, has enabled me to accomplish much at a comparatively trifling expense.

The confused state of a great part of the public papers, and the difficulties attending on their being brought together with the frequent delays inevitable in obtaining access to some when required, precluded the possibility of bringing the work to a completion during the present year.

My desire to press forward the commission to a close, may be estimated by what I have actually accomplished, and I am happy to inform your excellency that the heaviest part of the duty has been got through, and that which remains, consists principally in completing catalogues and indexes to the papers selected.

The work remaining to be done, is as follows :—

First —The papers connected with the census of the province, taken at various periods, between 1765 and 1851. Many of these valuable documents which tend to exhibit the progress of the country have been lost, and others, particularly those of 1817, and 1828, partially destroyed by damp, having been for years lying in the cellar of the province building. They have now been carefully collected and arranged, but time did not permit of their being bound up and catalogued. With respect to these papers, I feel desirous that further searches should be made for the missing portions, in order to complete the series as far as possible.

Second —Three or four boxes containing papers connected with the granting of crown lands in this and the neighboring provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island at an early period—consisting of petitions, warrants of survey, plans, drafts of grants, &c. These papers being very valuable, and likely to be the subjects of future reference, require to be made up properly in bundles, and a catalogue of the contents of each box prepared, to render them accessible.

Third.—The papers belonging to the secretary's office, from which selections have been made—contained in several large boxes. They have reference chiefly to local subjects, and should also be arranged in bundles in order of time and catalogued.

Fourth.—The ancient criminal records from 1749 to 1775 are among the papers which have fallen into my hands. They were scattered about the province building, but have been gathered up and placed in boxes, and deposited in the law library. These with the papers of the court of error, marriages and divorce, escheats and forfeitures of land, and the proceedings under order of governor and council for the sale of intestate estates, all require to be looked after, being in a state which almost preclude reference. There does not appear to have been any minute book kept of the proceedings of those courts which consisted of the governor and council, and the original papers effect the titles of property to a very considerable extent, and require immediate attention.

Fifth.—A box containing the records of the Island of Cape Breton, from 1785 to the period of the annexation, were sent up from Sydney, under the order of government, and placed in my hands in November last. I have given a partial examination, but time did not permit of my examining them closely, and arranging them this year.

In accordance with the resolution of the legislature, I have drawn up a list of the documents required to complete our files, which are expected to be procured from the state paper office in London, which your excellency has transmitted to England. No doubt a considerable accession to our archives can be obtained from this source, including several ancient surveys and plans of the town of Halifax, not to be found in the province. I have also to mention that in the pursuance of the same resolution, the books found missing from the public offices have been advertised for, and a copy of the advertisement will be found hereto annexed.

The necessity for the publication of a portion of our historical papers has been constantly forced upon my attention as the work of the commission progressed. The

resolution of the assembly embodied in the report of the committee on the record commission last session, suggests that "when the work is completed, the whole should be examined by a committee, who should decide whether the whole or any part of the arranged documents should be published." The selections required are now complete, and with a view to this object, in order that your excellency and the legislature may be better enabled to judge of the propriety of a partial publication, I have caused extracts to be made from the books and papers in possession of government on one subject, that of the removal of the Acadian French from this country in 1755,—a subject which has of late occupied the attention of writers both in England and America, and on which much has lately appeared in condemnation of the course pursued by the government of that day. The papers extracted, throw some additional light on this interesting subject, which has now become matter of American history, and for the credit of the province, all papers that may in any way discover the motives, views and conduct of those engaged at that period in the settlement of the country, and which may tend to contradict or explain partial statements, or put in a new light, transactions hitherto considered harsh and cruel, should be given to the public. The foregoing with a few other papers of historical interest connected with the conquest of this continent from the French, and the Indian hostilities, with several important documents in a partial state of decay, are all I should feel justified in taking the liberty of suggesting for publication at present. They all could be contained within the compass of an ordinary sized octavo volume, and would be a specimen of what might be hereafter done.

THOMAS B. AKINS,
Commissioner of public records.

Halifax, February 8th, 1859.

A LIST OF BOOKS COMPLETED BETWEEN 1ST MAY, 1858, AND JANUARY 26TH, 1859.

Despatches from the secretaries of state to the governors of Nova Scotia, from 1800 to 1833, inclusive, occupying ten volumes folio :—

1st volume,	from 1800 to 1806.	
2nd ditto	1807 to 1810.	
3rd ditto	1811 to 1814.	
4th ditto	1815 to 1820.	
5th ditto	1821 to 1823.	
6th ditto	1824 to 1826.	
7th ditto	1827 to 1829.	
8th ditto	1830,	
9th ditto	1831 to 1832.	
10th ditto	1832 to 1833.	
11th ditto	Index to the above.	11 volumes.

Papers selected from the archives of her majesty's legislative council, in five volumes folio :—

1st volume,	from 1760 to 1790.	
2nd ditto	1791 to 1809.	
3rd ditto	1809 to 1815.	
4th ditto	1816 to 1822.	
5th ditto	1823 to 1829.	5 "

Papers selected from the archives of the house of assembly, consisting of nine volumes folio :—

1st volume,	from 1758 to 1737.
2nd ditto	1788 to 1800.
3rd ditto	1801 to 1809.

4th volume, from 1810 to 1814.
 5th ditto 1815 to 1818.
 6th ditto 1819 to 1822.
 7th ditto 1823 to 1825.
 8th ditto 1826 to 1827.
 9th ditto 1828 to 1831.

9 volumes.

Papers relating to the town of Halifax, contained in three volumes folio :—

1st volume, from 1754 to 1828.

2nd ditto 1817 to 1836.

3rd ditto 1836 to 1839, including papers of the Shuben-
 cadie canal.

3 “

Papers relating to the island of Cape Breton since its annexation to this province in 1820 to this province, with a few papers of a previous date, contained in five folio volumes :—

1st volume, from 1786 to 1823.

2nd ditto 1824 to 1827.

3rd ditto 1828 to 1829.

4th ditto 1830 to 1833.

5th ditto 1833 to 1835.

5 “

Papers relating to churches of England and Scotland, church and school lands, &c., in 2 folio vols.,

2 “

Papers relating to and connected with the several Negro emigrations and settlements :—1 volume in folio, in addition to the three made up last year,

1 “

Royal instructions to governors—3 vols. folio :—

1st volume, from 1729, Annapolis government, to 1756 at Halifax.

2nd ditto 1756 to 1790.

3rd ditto Modern.

3 “

Papers relating to Sable Island, contained in two folio volumes,

2 “

School papers, returns, &c., 1 folio,

1 “

The English estimates relating to the province of Nova Scotia, from 1749, 1 folio.

1 “

Papers connected with prosecutions, treasons and seditions, from 1749 to 1786, 1 vol. folio.

1 “

Modern papers relating to crown lands in Nova Scotia, 1 vol. folio.

1 “

Correspondence, consisting of letters from the governors of other colonies to those of Nova Scotia, modern, 1 vol. folio.

1 “

Correspondence with the United States of America, modern, 1 vol. folio.

1 “

Copies of ancient acts of parliament sent out in sheets from the board of trade previous to 1799, bound up in 1 folio vol.

1 “

Miscellaneous papers of the province of Nova Scotia, bound up in 19 folio vols., entitled Colonial manuscripts. The two first volumes of this series were set up last year—those of the present year commence at vol. 3 :—

Vol. 3rd, from 1751 to 1791.

4th, 1783 to 1787.

5th, 1788 to 1806.

6th, 1807 to 1811.

7th, 1812 to 1814.

8th, 1814 to 1816.

9th, 1817 to 1819.

10th, 1820 to 1821.

11th, 1821 to 1822.

12th, 1823 to 1824.

Vol. 13th, from 1825 to 1826.	
14th, 1826 to 1827.	
15th, 1827 to 1828.	
16th, 1828 to 1830.	
17th, 1829 to 1830.	
18th, 1831.	
19th, 1832 to 1834.	

19 volumes.
2 “

Catalogues prepared, 2 volumes folio,

Chest No. 1.—Containing original grants of land charters, commissions, pardons under the great seal, a number of deeds and other original documents—of which full catalogues have been prepared.

Chest No. 2.—Containing the original commission to governors, rolls of state oaths; portfolio containing Indian treaties, and other documents on parchment, made up last year; also addresses to governors and other original documents—of which a full catalogue has been prepared.

Box No. .—Containing ancient books of the general court, the first books of the court of admiralty in 1750, government lottery books, and the original account books of the treasurers of the province to 1785—all catalogued.

These catalogues occupy 1 volume folio,

1 “

—
70 “

Books set up and bound during the previous year.

6 folio volumes of despatches from the board of trade to the governors, from 1748 to 1799, including index,

6

Other colonial manuscripts on various subjects,

14—20 “

Total number of bound volumes including volumes of catalogues completed from the commencement of the work in May, 1857, to Jan'y, 1859, 90 volumes.

27 of these volumes have been copiously catalogued, as also the contents of 3 large boxes containing parchments, &c., the documents not bound up into volumes.

There are upwards of 48 volumes which require full catalogues or indexes, and 15 others of which concise lists of their contents should be made.

PUBLIC RECORDS MISSING.

The following books and records have for some years disappeared from the public offices, and the legislature last session, in adopting the report of the committee on the record commission, directed the same to be publicly advertised :

1. The original register of the settlers who came with governor Cornwallis in 1749, lately among the records of the admiralty court, supposed to have been taken from the late Mr. Scott Tremain's office during his illness.

2. An old French registry of marriages, &c., at Annapolis previous to 1748.

3. A book containing the proceedings of the society for promoting the gospel at Halifax, about 1760.

4. The original letter book of Governor Cornwallis, 1740 to 1763.

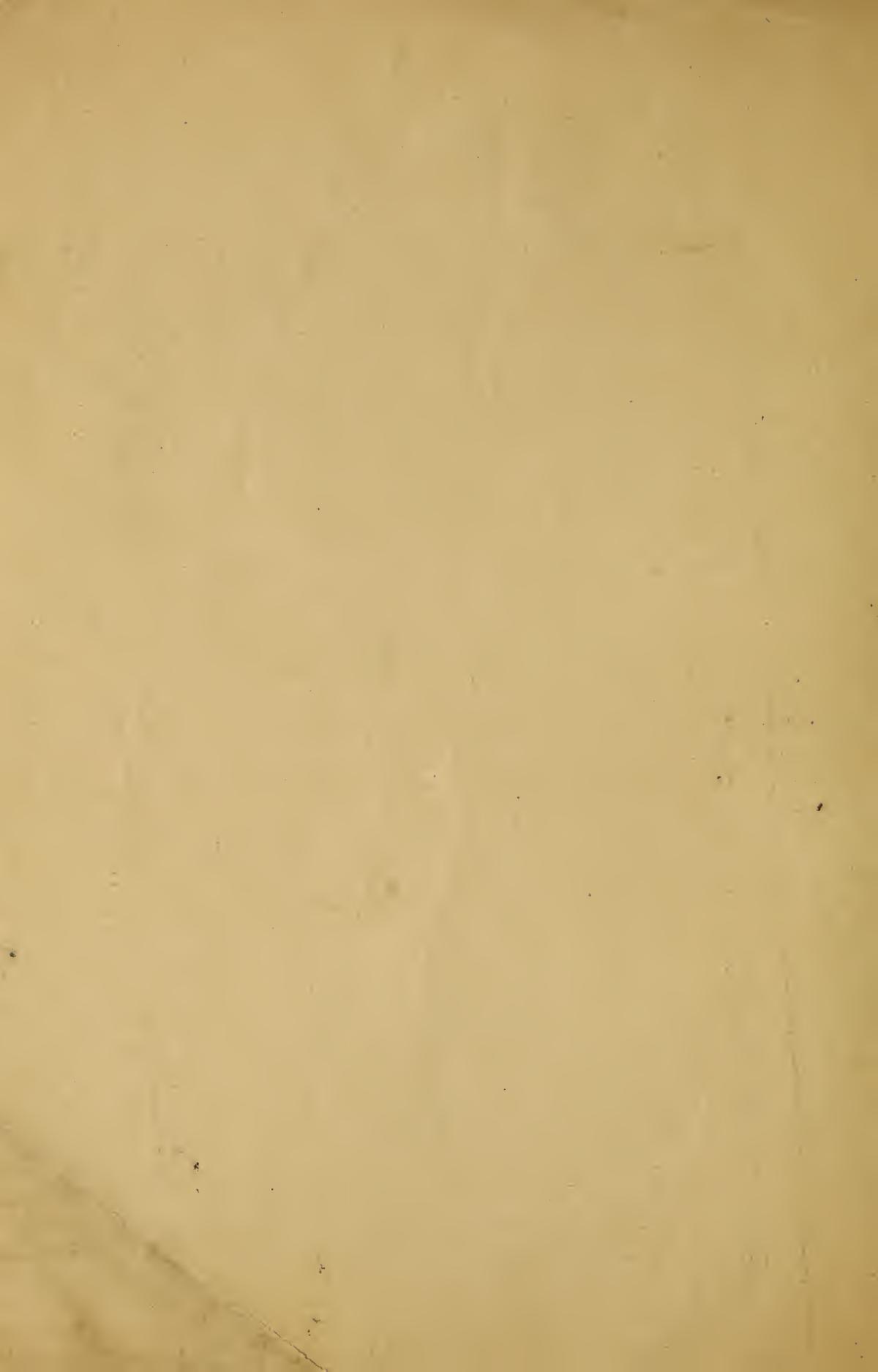
5. Original letter book of Governors Hopson and Lawrence.

6. Original letters from General Wolf to governor and others at Halifax during the siege of Quebec.

7. Council books at Annapolis from 1720 to 1718.

8. Manuscript accounts of late Titus Smith's tour through this province about the year 1801.

Any information which may lead to the recovery of the foregoing will be thankfully received at the secretary's office, and be handsomely rewarded.



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Record Commission

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