

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

**Board of Trustees of the Public
Archives of Nova Scotia
Progress Report**

For the period of fifteen months ended
31st December, 1931.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE LEGISLATURE



HALIFAX, N. S.
MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND MINES
KING'S PRINTER
1932

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES

PROGRESS REPORT.

For the period of 15 months ended December 31, 1931

To His Honour

The Honourable Walter Harold Covert,
Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia.

May it Please Your Honour:—

I have the honour to submit herewith a report of the Provincial Archivist to the Board of Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, covering the period of fifteen months ended December 31, 1931, together with a statement of receipts and expenditures for that period.

Respectfully submitted,

G. S. HARRINGTON,
Premier.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF NOVA SCOTIA.

His Honour The Honourable W. H. Covert, K. C.,
Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia.

The Honourable Joseph A. Chisholm,
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia.

Colonel The Honourable Gordon S. Harrington,
Premier.

A. Sterling MacMillan, Esquire,
Leader of the Opposition.

Carleton W. Stanley, M. A. (Oxon)
President of Dalhousie University.

Murdoch D. Morrison, M. D.
President of the Nova Scotia Historical Society.

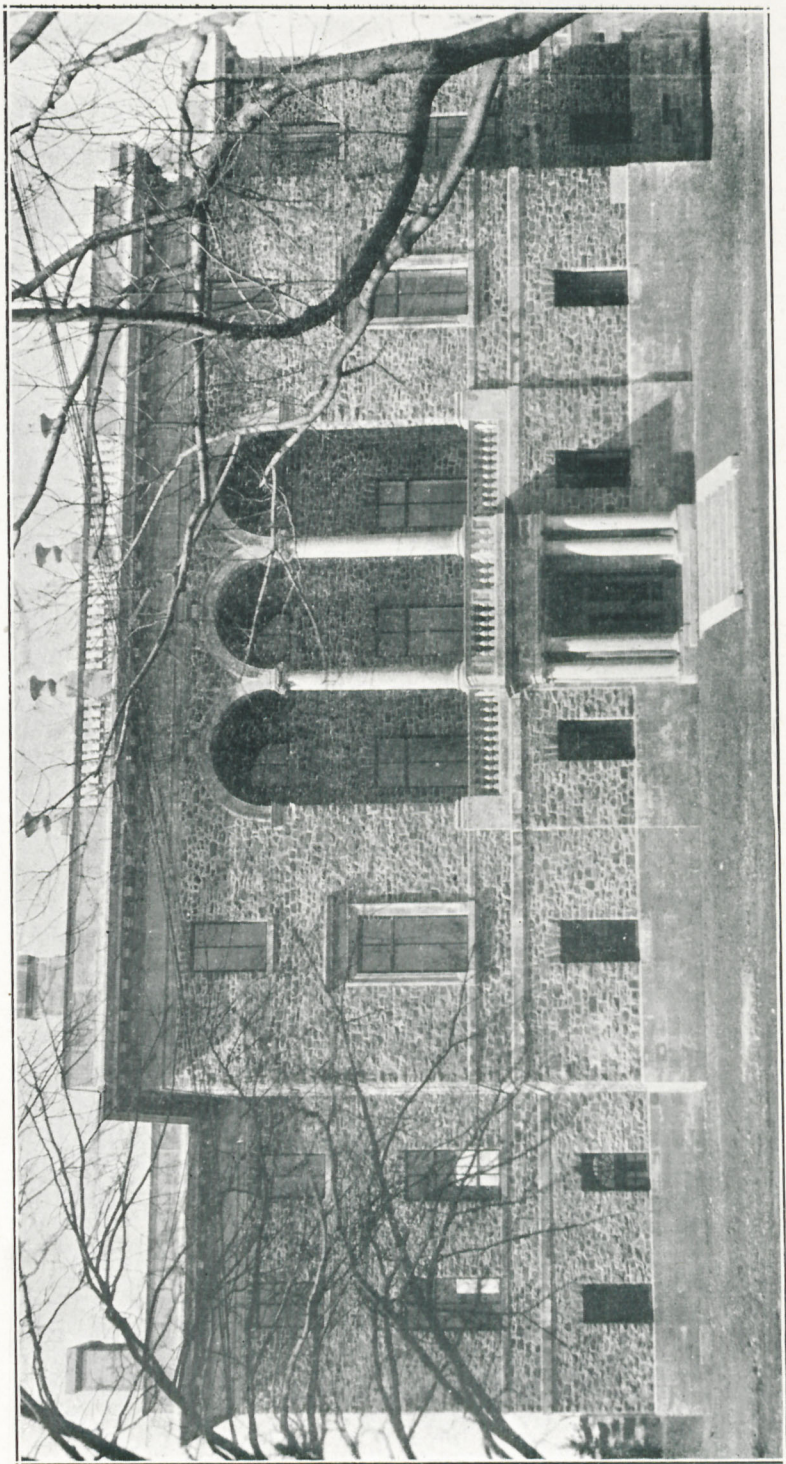
William H. Chase, Esquire,
of Wolfville, Kings County, N. S.

John Clarence Webster, Esq., M. D., D. Sc., LL. D., F. R. C. P. E.,
F. R. S. E., F. R. S. C., of Shediac, N. B.

Arthur George Doughty, Esquire, C. M. G., F. R. S. C., M. A.,
D. Litt., Dominion Archivist, Ottawa.

Professor D. C. Harvey, M. A., F. R. S. C.,
Archivist.

Miss Eileen Odevaine,
Secretary.



NOVA SCOTIA PUBLIC ARCHIVES BUILDING
HALIFAX, N. S.

Public Archives of Nova Scotia

Progress Report.

To The Board of Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia:
Gentlemen:

It is with reluctance that I attempt to submit a report on the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, because anything that can be said at this time must still deal more largely with what we hope to do than with what has actually been done. It is true that much necessary spade work has been done; but, as this has been after the manner of removing debris before commencing to erect a new structure, the impatient bystander must still look at the architect's plans in order to visualize the new institution.

When Hon. Joseph Howe, seconded by Hon. J. W. Johnston, moved for the appointment of a Records Commissioner, in 1857, the House of Assembly agreed to the resolution and undertook to bear the expense; but they did not anticipate that Mr. T. B. Akins, the first Commissioner of Records, would require thirty years of an industrious life to collect, arrange, and reduce to order the pre-confederation political history of Nova Scotia. In fact at the end of the first year they authorized him to continue his labors with a view to bringing them to a close during 1859; and, when 1860 had dawned, and the work was still only begun, they suspended his activities for a time, not realizing the magnitude of the task.

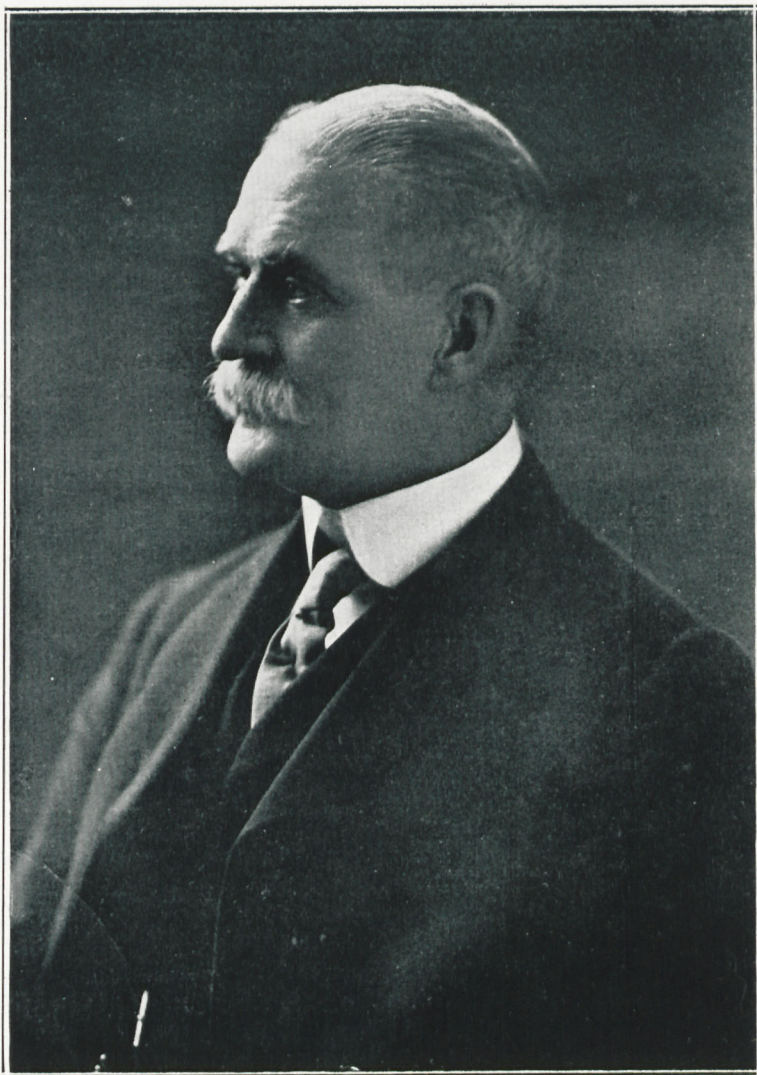
In other words, only those who are intimately acquainted with the nature, condition, and relative values of historical records can appreciate the problem of reducing to decency and order a hundred and fifty boxes of dirty, dispersed, miscellaneous documents, 4000 miscellaneous volumes of books and pamphlets, bound and unbound, and 1000 volumes of newspapers, while at the same time being called upon to furnish and equip a building, select a staff, procure documents, books and pictures without funds, pilot visitors through the building, answer minute inquiries, give publicity to unopened warehouses, conduct a class in historical methods, inspire students to historical effort, and arbitrate between contending villages and factions as to the exact sites of historical events and the relative justice of inscriptions proposed by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board.

It is, however, precisely under these conditions that I have worked during the past five months in a frantic endeavour to provide more than the architect's plans for your inspection at this second Annual Meeting.

Of the architect's plans I approve. As I understand them they conjure up spirits of the past and project them into future generations to revive the ancient spirit of Nova Scotia in the life of this Dominion. They contemplate a complete collection of historical documents relating to Nova Scotia and the utilization of these documents for training research students and supplying these students when trained, with the raw material for their finished products, which ultimately should issue in a complete, well-written inspiring history of Nova Scotia. As the spade work of Akins made possible Murdoch's history of early Nova Scotia, so the fuller organization of our archives today should make possible a more complete historical interpretation of our past life endeavour and achievement, while aiding in our general cultural development; or, as this Board put it on March 14, 1929, "this institution will encourage a study of the history of the Province, develop a national spirit, and serve the cause of education in many ways."

This is a splendid vision and its realization has undoubtedly been brought within the range of possibility through the donation of this building by Mr. Chase; but though ghosts may prefer an empty building the ancestral spirits which we wish to recall can be attracted hither only by devoted and congenial offspring, working industriously amongst well lined manuscript stacks and bookcases, under expert guidance; and these bookcases and manuscript stacks can be filled intelligently only after careful investigation of the available material upon some recognized principle of orderly arrangement.

To help realize this vision I arrived in Halifax on August 2nd and commenced work on August 3rd. The first month was spent in exploration and discovery, without guide and without compass. Having neither catalogue nor calendar, I went over the Akins Collection volume by volume, trying to understand his system. I found that his departure from the strictly chronological method of arrangement, particularly in view of the fact that his collection was bound in permanent form, would be a handicap to us for all time, unless we could make a calendar on a chronological plan, with cross-references to the various volumes, in which he had concealed, for all practical purposes, the various enclosures and illustrative documents that from time to time accompanied official procedure and official correspondence. Since I have had access to the Akins Library, I have found several catalogues that explain but do not justify his methods, which seem to have been vitiated by the necessity of reporting progress and binding up a year's work, regardless of other documents that would



WILLIAM H. CHASE, Esq.
DONOR OF PUBLIC ARCHIVES BUILDING

turn up later, find themselves out of date and be classified as supplemental or additional supplemental.

Likewise, I found that the boxes which Mr. Akins had filled did not always contain what they were supposed to contain, having been reduced to disorder in the interval since his death. Further, from the documents in these boxes he had made selections for binding, and this means more inconvenience and confusion than if the various series had been packed in the boxes and left intact.

In other boxes, apart from the Akins Collection, I found that miscellaneous documents had been piled upon miscellaneous papers, strings had been left untied, rubber bands had been dissolved, and endorsements had faded away; so that there was no means even of guessing at the contents of the documents without reading them one by one.

After glancing through the 800 bound volumes of civil and military papers and picking samples from the various boxes, I decided upon a system, and proceeded to organize to that end. The system is simple. It is merely the application of the chronological method to all series of papers public and private, leaving to the research students the task of finding within specific years, documents bearing upon their subjects. Thus, all papers dealing with the granting of lands will be found under the year of the grant; and papers dealing with agriculture, customs and excise, education, post-office, etc., will be reduced to similar order, great care being taken to keep enclosures with the main documents.

It is obvious that this will save the time of the research student; and it should be equally obvious that it will require much time and patience on the part of the cleaners and filers who have been engaged temporarily to this end; and as the files accumulate the work of cataloging and calendaring must proceed; but this involves expert labor in addition to patience; for the one who makes a calendar must know the value of documents; must be able to reduce a page to a sentence; and must be able to recognize significant documents and decide what should be published in whole or in part. That is why I am recommending that provision be made in next year's estimates for a calendarer, who must be something of an historian and aware of historical methods.

For cleaning and filing three temporary helpers have been engaged, their appointments to terminate at the discretion of the Archivist, even though all the filing may not have been finished. I made this recommendation because the work itself is a leap in the dark, none of the helpers have any technical knowledge, and I may wish to engage for certain sets of papers, like the legal papers, someone who would feel more at home in that atmosphere.

The problem of securing a fit and proper person to prepare a calendar is for the future; and, when the estimate for such a position has been approved, an effort will be made to interest the sort of person who, trained for a position in history and fresh from

graduate work, would be willing to spend, say, five years, in working over the documents on file and making a synopsis of them. He would also be the natural custodian of the manuscript room and would be able to facilitate the work of research students from his own familiarity with the whereabouts of particular documents.

So, too, with the bindery. A bindery and binder are an absolute necessity. Many of our newspapers, books, pamphlets and manuscripts are unbound or badly in need of re-binding. If used in their present condition, they will be ruinous alike to used and user: texts will be torn, the clothing of the student will be smeared with dirt, and the desks and floors will be littered with dust and scraps of leather. Therefore, alike for preservation, comfort and sanitation, provision of immediate binding facilities is imperatively demanded.

Further, it is desirable that an effort be made to interest a binder who will have the artist's pride in his work, rather than the mere commercial instinct of profit. I do not mean by this that we need or can afford elaborate and expensive binding, but we do need a binder who will share the work of building against time, and will put his heart into the problem of guarding against defective workmanship, in this era of haste.

In Mr. Joseph Jessop, who assumed responsibility for the care of the building on September 4, 1930, Miss Eileen Odevaine, who carried on as assistant Archivist from January 12, 1931, and Miss Sheila Stewart, who became librarian on October 16, 1931, we are fortunate in having three employees who have identified themselves thoroughly with the aims of this institution and have cheerfully exerted themselves to their fullest capacity in building up a tradition of courtesy and usefulness; and it is my hope that the same spirit may be infused into all our permanent staff.

Until December 19, 1931, when the office of the Nova Scotia Branch of the Public Archives of Canada was discontinued, I have had the advice and assistance of Mr. A. F. Macdonald and Miss Muriel Kinnear; and on this occasion I wish to express my appreciation of their kindness and cooperation.

Of the cooperation of Dr. A. G. Doughty and Mr. Norman Fee, I need not speak. From both you have received much assistance in the formative stages of this institution; and to Mr. Fee you have tendered your thanks on receipt of his reports, estimates and advice. I merely wish to add that the beginnings which had been made in furnishing and equipping the Archives Building under their guidance have been of great assistance to me, as have also the various vacations I spent with them while using their invaluable records.

Before Mr. Fee left Halifax, last February, he was able to report that the files of the Acadian Recorder had been received and that much raw material had been transferred from Govern-

ment House, the Provincial Museum, and the Province Building to the ground floor of the Public Archives; and that the bound volumes of the Akins Collection, together with some other miscellaneous material, had been cleaned and put on the shelves.

Since the date of that report, the chief accessions, apart from individual contributions of pictures, books and documents which were acknowledged and accessioned at the time, consist of: The files of the **Morning Chronicle** which include incomplete collections of several other contemporary newspapers; the **Pearson Collection of Novascotians** and other early newspapers, all of which were transferred from Dalhousie; the **Liverpool Transcript** presented by Miss Sadie Allen; **33 boxes of records** from the Court House and the municipality of Halifax; the **MacMechan Shipping Collection** of photographs, models and half-models, transferred from Dalhousie; and **The Akins Library**.

During the same period there have been cleaned and put on the shelves 1057 volumes of civil, military and naval papers, 500 volumes of legal and municipal records, and 762 portfolio volumes of loose manuscripts, which have been cleaned, sorted and arranged in chronological order, each after its kind.

In addition, the Akins Library of 3300 volumes and some 1200 odd volumes of books and pamphlets, bound and unbound, have been cleaned and placed in bookcases. Likewise, 894 volumes of newspapers have been cleaned, arranged by sets on shelving in chronological order.

Each donation or loan of newspapers has been kept intact but all are being listed for our purposes so as to show at a glance the contents of our collection and to facilitate the use by research students of what is destined to prove the most complete collection of early Nova Scotia papers in existence.

The MacMechan Collection has been cleaned and hung on the west wall of the main show-room or placed in the Bay, where it appears to good advantage, and has attracted many visitors, including several former master mariners, who have here renewed their youth and again in imagination sailed the Seven Seas.

In the matter of furnishing and equipment, the needs of the offices have been met, tables and chairs have been placed in the student room on the third floor, new manuscript stacks have been installed, new bookcases and partitions have been ordered, and a temporary wooden walk has been laid from the driveway to the front door; but there still remains the problem of a permanent approach to the front door, and the installation of blinds in the show-room and offices to protect the exhibits and documents.

A secondary show-room was fitted up on the occasion of Lord Cornwallis's visit, and named the Cornwallis Room, because it contains the portraits of Hon. Edward Cornwallis and his brothers, the oaken table which the former used as a council table, on board

the Beaufort transport, and a number of pictures illustrating the founding and growth of Halifax. Advantage was taken of Lord Cornwallis's visit to get the family coat of arms and this donation of his has been framed for exhibition in this room.

In an effort to make the Archives known to the general public, visitors have been welcomed both as individuals and in groups, and guided around the building. These visitors have come from all parts of the Province and some from other parts of Canada and from the United States. There have also been exploratory visits made by a number of people who propose to do research work next summer.

At the same time I have written several articles for the public press and have lectured to various clubs on the aims and work of the Archives.

A number of inquiries have been answered to the satisfaction of the persons concerned; but this has raised the problem as to how far the Archivist can cater to this sort of work, rather than confine his efforts to encouraging the use of materials in the building. If an enquiry bureau is to be established it will involve the entire time and labor of a member of the staff, and also considerable expense. Perhaps some person who is specially interested in genealogy will endow such a department. If not, I am much concerned as to the proper course to pursue.

Throughout the session, I have been conducting a seminary for advanced students of history in Dalhousie on historical research applied to the early history of Nova Scotia, in which we have been discovering and using freely our documents, both in developing new fields and checking up the work of our historians. I have also been directing the work of an M. A. student who is preparing a thesis on The United Empire Loyalists in the Maritime Provinces.

For the Sites and Monuments Board of Canada of which I was made a member immediately after I became Archivist, I have had to carry on a voluminous correspondence about the proposed marking of certain historic sites. In several instances I have inherited a controversy which has added to the correspondence and diminished the achievement. In the interest of the work I have visited Bridgetown, Annapolis, Beausejour and Louisbourg and have several future engagements when the weather permits.

These things small and large have been accomplished during the year. In the odd breathing spaces of office hours, I have been reading along certain specific lines; and, in the restless hours of broken slumber, I have been thinking about the most fitting publication that should be issued first with the imprimatur of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia; and I have decided to recommend:

(1) That, as the Akins Library will not be added to and must be kept intact, a descriptive catalogue of this library, with

particular attention to rare pamphlets and books, be prepared and published, to which might be added a complete list of our newspapers.

(2) That a complete collection of documents bearing upon the early settlement of Nova Scotia from the founding of Halifax to the arrival of the Loyalists, be prepared for publication. This will involve making selections from minutes of Council, Journals of Assembly, official correspondence, census statistics, township records, etc.; but would be of great interest to more than Nova Scotia and would be the foundation of a social and economic history. Such a collection could be published privately as a commercial venture; but I think that it would be better to have it published by the Public Archives of Nova Scotia as a justification of its aims; and by the time this has been finished new periods will have taken form for subsequent volumes that could alternate with such calendars as the future may bring forth.

(3) That provision be made for copying such documents as are necessary to complete our collection whether these can be found in Ottawa, Boston, New York or London.

(4) That provision be made not only for the purchase of rare pictures, documents and books, but for building up a good working library of historical literature bearing upon the history of Nova Scotia from the earliest times, which will involve the British Colonial period from the foundation of Virginia to the American Revolution. In addition the library must contain all contemporary authorities on Canadian and Colonial Development.

These are the main recommendations that occur to me at the moment. They are all necessary to efficient work, if ever our dream of a school of historical research, in which I am especially interested, is to be fulfilled. They have to be provided for above and beyond the ordinary routine expenses inherent in the very nature and existence of this institution.

A statement of receipts and expenditure from Sept. 30, 1930, to December 31st, 1931, will be found below.

In conclusion I wish to thank you for your cheerful acquiescence to date in all my proposals.

Yours respectfully,

D. C. HARVEY,

Archivist.

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES

Sept. 30th, 1930—Dec. 31st, 1931.

RECEIPTS.

Government of Nova Scotia	\$26,666.00
Rent, Halifax Branch of Public Archives of Canada	1,140.00
	<hr/>
	\$27,806.00

EXPENDITURES.

Archives Building Account	\$ 891.62
Furnishing and Equipment	9,779.49
Maintenance of Building	668.19
Office Sundries	210.11
Salaries	5,287.67
Temporary Salaries	725.00
Transfer and Express	73.66
Travelling Expenses and Incidentals	1,765.90
Archival Material	99.50
	<hr/>
	\$19,501.14
Bank Balance	8,304.86
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	\$27,806.00

OUTSTANDING ACCOUNTS.

Steel Equipment Company \$2,400.00
 due March, 1932.
 (partitions and bookcases)