

Our Man in the Maritimes: “Down East” with the Public Archives of Canada, 1872-1932

by DONALD MACLEOD

In 1943 in a paper entitled “Archives and Historical Research in the Maritimes,” D.C. Harvey, Provincial Archivist of Nova Scotia, remarked that “historical tourists” rather than “historical students” dominated the writing of the Maritimes’ history. “I do not think,” he argued, “that we in the Maritime Provinces need do much more research on the Indian or Acadian periods, or even on the Pre-Loyalist periods. They have been well worked over, all the pertinent facts about them ... garnered, and both our historical museums and our historical journalists have presented the tragedy and romance of these periods fully.” What was needed, he contended, was a historiographical maturing, exemplified, he thought modestly, by his work on the history of thought in the nineteenth-century Maritimes.¹ As early as 1925, the Halifax *Morning Chronicle* had complained that regional self-understanding remained stunted for want of research on the economic underpinnings of the Maritimes and important features of modern social change.² Only in the 1940s had serious historical research on social, economic, and cultural developments begun to appear.³

But then archival acquisition policies had given little encouragement to the historian interested in industrial transformations, the social history of the post-Loyalist periods, or modern movements of socio-political change. Archival collection had been little informed by such indigenous forces of modernization and social change as the Maritime Rights movement, industrial unrest in the factories and coal fields of Nova Scotia, the burgeoning cooperative movement, and home-grown Progressive thought, as exemplified in Nova Scotia in the establishment of North America’s first publicly financed system of technical education.⁴ Tendencies in what remained an amateur’s historiography pursued by gentlemen scholars, patterns in practices for tracking down historical material, and the prevailing mind sets of archivists produced an implicit, mostly unarticulated

1 D.C. Harvey, “Archives and Historical Research in the Maritimes,” *Dalhousie Review* 23 (1943-44), p. 196.

2 Public Archives of Canada, Records of the Public Archives of Canada, RG 37, vol. 19, clipping, Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, 5 Dec. 1925. (Hereafter all references to the Records of the Public Archives of Canada will be cited as RG 37, followed by the appropriate volume and item citation.)

3 Harvey, “Archives and Historical Research in the Maritimes,” p. 197.

4 Donald Macleod, “Miners, Mining Men and Mining Reform: Changing the Technology of Nova Scotian Gold Mines and Collieries, 1858 to 1910,” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1982), p. 583.

acquisitions “policy” that resulted in the reinforcement of existent popular images of the past. Archives held a mirror up to the Maritimes’ past much tarnished by romaniticism, ancestor worship, antiquarianism, and a fascination with stock events in early colonial geo-politics. To be sure, such attitudes of the archivist of the 1890s are understandable: even the most professional Canadian historians were writing solidly in the Kingsfordian mould. Nor, of course, can archivists be faulted for not having the mentality, resources, and hindsight of the present-day archivist. Yet it is clear that much more might have been expected from Maritime “archiving” by the mid-1910s — by which time Shortt and Doughty’s *Canada and its Provinces* had been published, with its long chapters on the arts, economic history, and labour developments, and the Public Archives of Canada’s agent in Ontario was busy rounding up material for a “Hydro Electric history” and pamphlets dealing with labour conditions, industrial progress, the scientific observations of Canadian naturalists, and late nineteenth-century political issues. Such forward-looking archival policies did not, however, penetrate the Maritimes. Overall, the needs of local historians there dominated archival collecting. And, virtually by default, it was the Public Archives of Canada that dominated the acquisition of archival material, for only in Nova Scotia was there an established provincial archives — limited as it was to holdings of some eight hundred boxes and folio volumes, its active acquisition generally dormant after 1885, and its collections since 1891 controlled by a part-time archivist.⁵ Elsewhere in the Maritimes, archival materials were acquired only haphazardly by the New Brunswick Museum, whose holdings centered largely on Loyalist records, and by legislative libraries.⁶

Ironically, only in East Coast reactions to the Public Archives of Canada’s work in collecting Maritime materials did the contemporary political scene impinge on archival acquisition. With the appointment of W.C. Milner as the Public Archives of Canada’s Maritime agent in 1912, and the opening of Maritime branch offices of the PAC, came mounting expressions of regionalist discontent, fired by Milner’s almost single-minded pursuit of records of clearly and near exclusively local historical interest. Centered in provincial historical societies, the constant bellicose bickering against Ottawa’s interference could only lend encouragement to the eventual development of full-fledged provincial archival repositories in the Maritimes.

I

With the establishment of the Archives Branch within the federal Department of Agriculture in 1872 under Douglas Brymner, former editor of *The Presbyterian* and associate editor of the Montreal *Daily Herald*, Dominion interest in Maritime acquisitions developed almost immediately.⁷ In that year Brymner toured the major cities of Canada. Stopping in Fredericton, he discovered “numerous documents ... lying in the greatest confusion in the Province Building” and in Halifax visited the

5 RG 37, vol. 20; vol. 17, clipping, Halifax *Morning Chronicle*, c. 1914; John Hall Archer, “A Study of Archival Institutions in Canada,” (Ph.D. thesis, Queen’s University, 1969), pp. 156, 158; C.B. Fergusson, “The Public Archives of Nova Scotia,” *Acadiensis* 2 (Autumn 1972), p. 75; Joseph Pimmsoll Edwards, *The Public Records of Nova Scotia: Their History and Present Condition* (Halifax, 1920), p. 15.

6 Archer, “Archival Institutions in Canada,” p. 275.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

office of the Keeper of the Records, where he found the records “well kept and in good order,” but stored on wooden shelves in a room totally lacking in fire protection. In Halifax, as well, he found a veritable bonanza in the records of the British War office: some 400,000 documents from the years 1779 to 1870 touching on such standard topics in British colonial history as Indian affairs, the Loyalist migration, and the War of 1812. In an initiative later much resented in Maritime historical circles, Brymner entered into negotiations with the British War Office that resulted a year later in the transfer of the records relating to Canadian — and Maritime — affairs to the Archives in Ottawa.⁸

Other acquisitions followed. Though initially careful to draw distinctions between documents “that are undoubtedly properly in [provincial] custody,” such as land records, and those “over which a question may be raised,” Brymner’s attitudes were to undergo change.⁹ In his annual *Report on Canadian Archives* for 1882 Brymner acknowledged the arguments for provincial custody of those records used in “special” rather than “general” historical research, but argued that the danger fire posed to documents in unprotected provincial buildings was an overriding concern.¹⁰ Privately, Brymner was less circumspect. In a letter to Jonas Howe of the New Brunswick Historical Society (NBHS) in 1885, Brymner declared that the Archives Branch had been established “for the purpose of bringing into one collection the scattered papers relating to the history of events in *all* the Provinces” and making available collections “which may embrace *everything* connected with *any* historical event.” Imbued with the idea of amassing *complete* and *comprehensive* collections — “brought together and arranged systematically” — Brymner argued that “if each individual society jealously keeps hold of the fragments of history,” each of these “partial collections” would remain for all practical purposes unusable. Howe, who had been eager to have Saint John documents stay in Saint John, was misguided. The “settlement of St. John was only a small part of a great movement;” and since records relating to settlement elsewhere were unlikely to find their way to Saint John, the record would remain permanently impaired.¹¹

Yet, overall, Brymner’s ambitions outweighed his resources. Lacking staff and funds, Brymner could make only a “beginning” in developing the Archives into a “Dominion” institution — saving it from degeneration “into a merely local collection of documents.” In 1886 he instituted modest acquisitions of printed journals, departmental reports, and sessional papers from the various provinces, concentrating first on the earliest materials, then obtaining more or less regular annual transfers of publications.¹² In London, copyists had already begun systematic transcriptions of documents relating to Canada. In 1888 Brymner announced his decision to have British records of Nova Scotian colonial affairs copied. Characteristically beginning with the earliest papers, Archives Branch employees began calendaring, then transcribing Maritime records in the Public Records Office in London, the British Museum, and other British repositories.

8 Canada, *Report on Canadian Archives* (hereafter *RCA*), 1872, pp. 172-73; *RCA*, 1873, p. xx; RG 37, vol. 55, Arthur Barnstead to Arthur Doughty, December 1920.

9 *RCA*, 1872, p. 171.

10 *RCA*, 1882, pp. 3-6.

11 *RG 37*, vol. 181, Douglas Brymner to Jonas Howe, 2 March 1885. Emphasis added.

12 *RCA*, 1889, p. xiv; *RG 37*, vol. 111, William Crockett to Brymner, 25 August 1886; A.G. Blair to Brymner, 25 November 1886.

Though tediously slow work, by 1892 the Archives' copyists had begun to make transcriptions of records from the 1820s.¹³

In the Maritimes themselves, however, collecting was much less active. Brymner could call on occasional assistance, such as the offer made by Charles Robb of the Geological Survey of Canada to obtain the papers of his late brother, James (among which were judicial papers relating to the New Brunswick boundary question).¹⁴ Several local historians, including Archdeacon W.O. Raymond of Saint John, donated their time as go-betweens in purchases of private manuscripts.¹⁵ In 1885 F. de N. Brecken of Charlottetown temporarily took on the task of acting as an informal Archives' agent in Prince Edward Island.¹⁶

Yet the collecting that was done remained attenuated — limited as it was already by the predominant concern shared by both Brymner and popular history for records that were *old* and related to such predictable subjects as British forts and British military figures.¹⁷ Brymner's pleas to Jonas Howe that he hand over a valuable collection of New Brunswick militia muster rolls characteristically fell on deaf ears.¹⁸ Moreover, donations of print and manuscript material generally only dribbled in, as few as two or three a year — a mix of local histories, provincial government reports, genealogical compilations, and curiously, (for a number of years) the annual reports on the Saint John sewer and water works.¹⁹

II

The Archives' Maritimes acquisitions programme took on new life after the death of Brymner in 1902 and the appointment of Arthur G. Doughty, Joint Librarian of the Quebec Legislative Library, as Dominion Archivist in 1904. As Ian E. Wilson has observed, Doughty's acquisitive talents were enormous, now "cloaked in the panoply of legend" in archivists' oral traditions.²⁰ In 1905, in the knowledge that there was "a vast amount" of documentation hidden in Maritime attics and basements from "historical students," Doughty engaged Dr. James Hannay, a founder of the New Brunswick Historical Society, author of chronicles of the Acadians and the War of 1812, and a respected historian in the narrative tradition, to make an "item by item" inventory of materials held in public and private hands. It was "fairly complete" within two years.²¹ Of equal importance, Hannay's efforts,

13 *RCA*, 1889, p. xiv; *RCA*, 1894, p. v; *RCA*, 1897, p. vi.

14 RG 37, vol. 104, Charles Robb to J.B. Hurlbert, 15 June 1873.

15 RG 37, vol. 129, W.O. Raymond to Brymner, 20 September 1900.

16 RG 37, vol. 109, F. de N. Brecken to Brymner, 1 June 1885.

17 RG 37, vol. 105, Col. McKinlay to Brymner, March 1883; vol. 125, A. McMechan to Brymner, 6 June 1898; vol. 127, Arnold Doone to Brymner, 13 March 1899; vol. 179, Brymner to McKinlay, 3 March 1885; vol. 183, Brymner to Thos. B. Akins, 22 August 1889; vol. 185, Joseph Marmette to John B. Baxter, 5 December 1892.

18 RG 37, vol 17, W.C. Milner to Doughty, 27 March 1914; vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 3 May 1920; vol. 181, Brymner to Howe, 12 February 1885.

19 *RCA*, 1888, p. xxii; *RCA*, 1890, p. xlv; *RCA*, 1896, p. xxxi; *RCA*, 1900, p. xxxv; *RCA*, 1904, p. vii.

20 Archer, "Archival Institutions in Canada," pp. 85, 88; Ian E. Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty: The Cultural Roles of the Public Archives of Canada, 1904-1935," (M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1973), pp., 95-96.

21 Kenneth N. Windsor, "Historical Writing in Canada to 1920," in Carl F. Klinck, ed., *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (Toronto, 1965), p. 222; Canada, *Report of the Minister of Agriculture*, 1906, p. xiii; *Ibid.*, 1907, p. lvi; Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," p. 106.

lasting until at least 1908, also included the actual collection (on a small scale) of archival materials: legislative papers, the diary of an early governor, and the laboriously copied epitaphs from Saint John cemeteries.²²

In 1907, moreover, Doughty saw to the establishment of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. Though an advisory body, the Commission held a broad mandate. Its members were charged not only with suggesting acquisition practices and developing translation policies for Archives' publications, but also with seeking out the materials "for local history across the country" and considering the steps required to preserve these. While the Commission at first included no East Coast members, its composition was expanded in 1912 to include two Anglican archdeacons from the Maritimes: W.O. Raymond of Saint John, a prolific contributor to publications of the NBHS, and W.J. Armitage of Halifax, President of the Nova Scotia Historical Society (NSHS). Both offered useful contacts with polite society — a logical source of good manuscript materials.²³

The most influential changes in the Archives' acquisition strategy in the Maritimes came, however, with Doughty's appointment of W.C. Milner as regional agent in 1912 and the opening of branch offices in Halifax and Saint John within the year, an expansion that coincided with the transformation that year of the Archives Branch in the Department of Agriculture into the independent Public Archives of Canada.²⁴ Earlier, in 1907, the Historical Manuscripts Commission had argued for the hiring of a "trained investigator" charged with seeking out donations of papers and determining which documentary sources should be copied and preserved by the Archives. Especially given Hannay's previous activities, there would be a few complications in appointing Milner and placing the office of regional agent on a permanent footing.²⁵

Milner — promoter-manager earlier of the Joggins Railway, a lawyer, a writer of popular science and local history, and former journalist-owner of the Sackville *Post* — was a man of zeal. Aged sixty-six when appointed, Milner nonetheless threw himself into his work with a vigour verging on fanaticism. Something of his sense of **urgency was expressed in pleas addressed to Robert Borden that same year (1912)** for immediate and massive outlays for archival acquisitions: "\$50,000 expended now," he wrote, "would probably be more effective than a million in ten years' time." If the "national spirit" of Canada developed anywhere as rapidly as it had across the border, he could "imagine the indignation of future students of history when they come to learn of the treasures lost during the past generations."²⁶

Almost immediately, in what would be a favoured *modus operandi*, Milner began systematic tours, region by region, of the towns and villages of the Maritimes

22 RG 37, vol. 189. Doughty to Dr. James Hannay, 18 August, 2 October, 1 December 1908.

23 Archer, "Archival Institutions in Canada," p. 91; Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," pp. 61, 93; RG 37, vol. 114, W.J. Armitage to Doughty, 4 September 1911; vol. 129, Raymond to Brymner, 20 September 1900. By 1928 Raymond had produced ten papers for the Society, including "Story of Old Fort Frederick at Saint John," "Loyalists in Arms," and "Bears in New Brunswick in the Olden Times."

24 Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," p. 108.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

26 Archer, "Archival Institutions in Canada," p. 107; Henry Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time* (Toronto, 1912), p. 37; RG 37, vol. 17, Memorandum for the Right Honourable the Premier about Historical Documents, W.C. Milner, 26 April 1913.

searching for “old truck:” church records, parish records, municipal records, family papers, and so on.²⁷ Fruitful trips to provincial capitals often accompanied his travels through the counties. During a visit to Charlottetown in July 1912, for example, Milner managed to acquire the records of both houses of the province’s early legislature.²⁸ Two years later, in 1914, copyists were hired to make transcripts of documents and gather in Milner’s earlier discoveries.²⁹

Milner and his Ottawa employers used a variety of techniques to uncover and acquire records. Networks of contacts were religiously exploited. An evening in October 1913 spent by William Smith, assistant to the Dominion Archivist, at the home of James Caldwell, formerly of Nova Scotia and a cousin of Robert Borden, netted a substantial list of possible manuscript donors in Wolfville and a letter of introduction for Milner.³⁰ Milner, similarly, possessed his own contacts, such as Dr. G. Cutten, President of Acadia College — a man much interested in historical manuscripts.³¹ In fact, Milner later claimed credit for having persuaded Acadia’s Board of Governors to establish “an efficient and up-to-date historical department” and to undertake a block investment of some \$10,000 on manuscripts and “old books” for the college’s library. A leave of absence granted by Doughty enabled Milner to set up an office in the Acadia College Library.³² Later, the library became a source the Archives could call on for loans of such materials as church histories, old diaries, genealogical compilations, and minutes of the Baptist Association for copying purposes.³³

As well, the Historical Manuscripts Commission lived up to at least some of its promise. On one occasion, for example, W.O. Raymond served as a vital go-between in the delicate negotiations surrounding the purchase of Joseph Lawrence’s survey notes and reports on the New Brunswick boundary question — negotiations made all the more difficult by the eagerness of “American relic hunters” to snare the collection.³⁴ Often the death of prominent figures brought swift approaches to the family, sometimes seemingly while the corpse was not yet cold. “We are sorry to hear of the bereavement you have lately received,” wrote G. Lanctot of the Archives to J.W.J. Smith in October 1926. “The death of Lady Smith,” he continued, “recalls the memory of Sir Albert, leader of the party which so vigorously opposed Confederation.” It also recalled the thought that the Smith family might have retained some interesting old letters or documents that the Archives might now see.³⁵

27 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 21 June, 4 July 1912; vol. 18, Milner to William Smith, 21 July 1916; Milner to Norman Fee, 18 January 1917; vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 25 April 1922.

28 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 31 July 1912.

29 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 11 April 1914; vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 22 December 1915; vol. 332, Milner to Smith, 1 May 1916.

30 RG 37, vol. 17, [Smith] to Milner, 30 October 1913.

31 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 8 September 1915; Acadia University, *General Calendar*, 1913, p. 11.

32 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to H.P. Biggar, 28 May 1923.

33 RG 37, vol. 19, “Wanted by the Archives from Acadia College Library,” 1921.

34 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 25 November 1912, 3 May 1913; Report of W.C. Milner, 28 January 1913. This accession and an accession of the private papers of Joseph Howe were Milner’s first two major acquisitions. Wilson, “Shortt and Doughty,” p. 108.

35 RG 37, vol. 203, G. Lanctot to J.W.J. Smith, 29 October 1926.

It was a comparatively easy matter to persuade newspaper owners to hand over extensive “fyles” of old papers. Care of the papers thus fell on the Archives, on which the owner could draw, when necessary, for material from an old back issue.³⁶ Acquisitions of manuscript material were often more difficult. In some cases carefully saved duplicate copies of printed material might be traded for manuscript records.³⁷ In other instances, circumstances called for more advanced ingenuity. For example, to elicit donations of parish records from the Maritimes’ Anglican clergy, Milner in 1913 mailed every parish a specially edited compilation of the letters of Charles Inglis, first bishop of Nova Scotia. Included were deftly worded form-letters advertising the Archives’ interests.³⁸ To woo the family of Sir Charles Tupper, reluctant after his death to release his papers, Milner wrote a sycophantic biography of Tupper organized in short installments, which was mailed to Tupper’s home town of Amherst, to be run in serial form in the local newspapers.³⁹

Milner also enlisted the aid of newspapers in aiming at less specific targets. By 1924 Milner estimated that he had written over three hundred articles on local history for Maritime magazines and newspapers and influenced many to write glowing editorials on the Archives’ acquisitions and cultural contributions. Typical were such headlines as “Records of the First Settlers are Uncovered; Now Safe in Archives Office.”⁴⁰ Milner was a man of decidedly political instincts — in 1914 sitting on a committee charged, in the wake of organized Acadian agitation, with writing a revisionist account of the Acadian expulsion; in the early twenties deeply embroiled in in-fighting, as a member, within the Dominion Historic Sites and Monuments Board. Characteristically, Milner rarely missed opportunities to enhance the Archives’ profile on public occasions. Address after address to municipal councils, boards of trade, college commencements, and teachers conventions preached the good news of the Archives’ work.⁴¹

More importantly, Milner early on acquired the support of provincial premiers and cabinet ministers in acquiring legislative papers, municipal documents, and court records, often by having special orders-in-council passed.⁴² Milner’s position was not cast in granite. The anger of the Prince Edward Island legislature’s acting librarian on discovering that much of his material was now to go to the Archives indeed caused Milner some uncomfortable moments.⁴³ It was testimony, nonetheless, to Milner’s quickly established influence with provincial governments that in September 1912, on discovering material rightfully belonging with the New Brunswick legislative records within the private collections of a local judge, Milner very nearly persuaded the provincial cabinet to take court action.⁴⁴ That same year,

36 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 23 September 1912.

37 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 11 December 1913, vol. 196, Doughty to Barnstead, 31 October 1919.

38 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to “Rev. and Dear Sir,” 11 June 1913.

39 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 24 November 1915.

40 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to A.B. Copp, 24 March 1924; clipping, *Halifax Evening Echo*, 17 May 1924.

41 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 29 May 1913; vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 14 September 1914, 4 March 1916; vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 8 January 1921; Milner to A.B. Copp, 24 March 1924.

42 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 13 September 1913; [Wm. Smith] to Milner, 27 November 1913; Milner to Wm. Smith, 24 June 1914; vol. 55, New Brunswick Order-in-Council, 6 November 1912.

43 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 30 August 1912.

44 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 4 September 1912; Doughty to Milner, 1 April 1912.

in fact, responsibility for drafting the New Brunswick order-in-council authorizing transfer of land records to the Archives was given to Milner and Archdeacon Raymond (acting in consultation with the Provincial Secretary).⁴⁵ Moreover, in 1914 Nova Scotia passed important legislation that vested ownership of local government records in provincial hands and authorized the acquisition of those that had strayed into private holdings — thus streamlining transfers to the Archives.⁴⁶

Milner mobilized a number of arguments, such as those used in support of the Nova Scotian bill, for the acquisition of local records by the Dominion. The Public Archives, “not being a depository of relics or curiosities,” would not require originals, but would make copies, returning the originals “on demand.” The Archives would be happy to be relieved of the responsibility for collecting local records if only the provinces would build fire-proof repositories and hire officials “to collect, classify, arrange, catalogue and index records.” But, as things stood, protection of the records demanded that the federal archives act. Finally, precisely because the Public Archives of Canada was national “in scope and work,” it was operating “all over the world” to collect early records of the provinces. Even if local documents acquired in the provinces stayed there, it would be impossible for the Maritime historian to write a “final historic account” of peoples and events without using the holdings of the federal archives.⁴⁷

By no means was Milner’s work trouble free. Repeatedly until two years before his retirement in 1924, Milner complained that his salary, \$1,200 per annum in 1912, was producing slow bankruptcy — with debts of \$350 in the first winter alone, largely because of travelling expenses. Told by Robert Borden to supplement his salary with a little “outside work,” Milner raged, somewhat self-righteously, that this would inevitably mean his doing nothing to justify his wages. While there were “plenty of loafers already eating government pap,” he declared, he was “not in the bone business.”⁴⁸ As late as 1921, Milner was still classified as a temporary clerk, with no right to a pension.⁴⁹

Moreover, Milner’s relations with his office staff, hired primarily to copy documents, suffered frequently from his crotchety fractiousness. Harriet Albro, for example, quit after having had her salary reduced for alleged lateness during Milner’s absences after discovering that Milner had been secretly questioning “the janitor and the elevator man” as to her morning hours.⁵⁰ Patronage concerns, predominately those of Robert Borden, dominated hiring. Telephoned by Doughty one night at midnight to be told that Borden wished Milner to have another assistant, Milner complained that “I will soon be able to form a battalion and go off

45 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 12 November 1912.

46 RG 37, vol. 17, clipping, Halifax *Morning Herald*, 5 May 1914; vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 23 November 1914; Wilson, “Shortt and Doughty,” p. 142.

47 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to C.T. Daniels, 30 May 1913.

48 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Wm. Smith, 5 June 1913; vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 7 August 1914; and Milner to Fee, 18 January 1918; vol. 19, Milner to A.B. Copp, 24 March 1924.

49 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 1 November 1921.

50 RG 37, vol. 18, Harriet Albro to Doughty, 31 October 1916. Milner had earlier complained that “Miss Albro has lately ... blossomed out into a lady of fashion,” who kept late hours and “has taken apartment rooms and set up a salon on a small scale and gives afternoon teas.” (Milner to Doughty, 18 December 1915.)

to the wars."⁵¹ Another political appointee — Mrs. Bernice Starr, from a prominent family of Halifax engineers friendly with Borden — proved to have “pull” that made her almost impossible to remove even after office relations deteriorated alarmingly over personality conflicts and her repeated demands for time off. “Her tongue runs like a dozen mill clappers,” Milner complained, but there was little he could do.⁵²

Accommodations for the branch offices were another problem. In Halifax in 1914, for instance, Milner was relegated to the temporarily empty “smoking room” of the Legislative Council, over which he exercised no control.⁵³ Conditions in 1915 forced Doughty to issue an order authorizing Mrs. Starr to take manuscript materials home in order to work.⁵⁴ In 1919 controversy broke out in the local Halifax press over the relative contributions of the Public Archives and the Canadian Red Cross “to the Empire.” Milner, given room in the Dartmouth customs house, had encountered the Red Cross already in occupation: a ladies’ “sewing circle” consisting of four or five women who met once or twice a week ostensibly, Milner said, to make linen for “tuberculosis patients.” Milner successfully dislodged the group, but only at grave cost to his public image.⁵⁵

As well, the Archives’ Maritime work on occasion went askew. In 1919 the Archives’ Acadian specialist, Placide Gaudet, was sent to the Maritimes to give a series of talks. They turned out to be little more than innocent rambblings. “He is no platform speaker and his personal appearance is such that none cares to get close to him,” Milner wrote Doughty, begging him not to repeat the experiment.⁵⁶ A year later Milner was plunged into trouble after publishing a series of articles on the Lieutenant-Governors of New Brunswick in which he identified himself as the Archives’ agent. One was a scathing attack on the Honourable Josiah Wood, still living. Wood was less than pleased, and Milner was soon to learn from Doughty that an employee of the Archives was not, “like a member of a University staff,” free to express himself openly on all and any matters of moment. Wood’s administration was a “pandemonium of thieving and rascality beyond all precedent in this or any other province,” protested an unrepentant Milner.⁵⁷

III

Of more permanent significance, however, were Milner’s largely unstated, but nonetheless set notions as to what types of historical material deserved attention. While Milner’s personal research interests included anomalies — such as continuing fascination with early slavery in the Maritimes, and a passing interest in the “engineering character” of the Baie Verte Canal — antiquarian local history was his

51 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Wm. Smith, 18 April 1916.

52 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 9 and 14 January, 19 June 1915.

53 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 5 October 1914.

54 RG 37, vol. 18, Doughty to Milner, 18 January 1915.

55 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 5 December 1919; clipping, Dartmouth *Patriot*, 20 December 1919.

56 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 3 July 1919.

57 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 26 April, 9 May 1920; vol. 198, Doughty to Milner, 12 May 1920.

chief love.⁵⁸ So, too, in collecting were his affections restricted, claimed primarily by certain types of records: papers that were *old* and that related to the Acadians, the Loyalists, “distinguished names,” old forts, the British military, and so on.⁵⁹ To be sure, there were exceptions to the rule: a history of the Nova Scotian iron and steel industry acquired because the author was virtually the “father” of the industry; the ship building and lumber export records of a firm active from 1790 to 1860 and sought by Milner because of threatened destruction of the papers; and the Macleod Collection, purchased because it contained notebooks dealing with nature study, descriptive geology, and bird life in particular.⁶⁰ Although records lacking the patina of age were ordinarily ignored, Milner on one occasion defended the acquisition of contemporary records. “While newspaper files may be of no especial value at present,” he argued, “they will hereafter, as they are recording local events that will be history in time.”⁶¹ Moreover, while the pattern for manuscript collecting generally held true for books and pamphlets as well, here also there were anomalies: pamphlets acquired on undersea telegraph cables and the fisheries question, reports on agricultural practices, but no materials, notably, on social questions of the day.⁶² Overall, Milner’s collection practices remained constant. Typical was his comment that “nine-tenths” of the work of collecting was “in the country towns about where Parish, Church, Civic and Municipal Records are kept, and where family documents can be hunted up.”⁶³

Certainly, the tendencies in acquisitions were not determined solely by Milner’s own particular tastes. Indeed, the same general patterns continued to hold true after his retirement.⁶⁴ Milner did not work in vacuum. For one thing, he was constantly seeking Doughty’s approval, and Doughty did not always confine himself to being a passive recipient of Milner’s discoveries. Initiatives regarding a search for the papers of the various Fathers of Confederation came from Doughty, as did repeated requests to acquire prints, posters, paintings — on one occasion a plaster bust of General Wolfe.⁶⁵ Moreover, the tastes possessed by Maritime collectors naturally had an influence on what kinds of records could be obtained in the private arena, and these records were heavily larded with material relating to township history, the

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- 58 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 7 July 1913; Milner to Wm. Smith, 9 February 1914; vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 14 May 1919; vol. 19, Milner to Wm. Smith, 23 May 1922; vol. 194, Doughty to Milner, 10 June 1915; vol. 333, Milner to Doughty, 3 May 1919.
- 59 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 21 May 1913; vol. 18, [Milner] to Doughty, 15 March 1915; Milner to Wm. Smith, 30 July 1917; Milner to Doughty, 12 June 1920; vol. 19, Milner to Copp, 24 March 1924; vol. 196, Doughty to Neil McDonald, 11 March 1918; vol. 332, Milner to Wm. Smith, 1 May 1925.
- 60 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 10 October 1912, 18 May 1913; vol. 18, Milner to Wm. Smith, 18 February 1919.
- 61 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 5 April 1913.
- 62 RG 37, vol. 28, “List of Publications or Records Forwarded to Headquarters,” 10 August 1914; vol. 19, “List of Books and Pamphlets Sent Down from Ottawa for the Saint John Office,” 1926.
- 63 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Fee, 18 January 1917.
- 64 RG 37, vol. 19, A.M. Kinnear to Wm. Smith, 3 March 1926; “Report of the Saint John Office of the Dominion Archives from July to February,” [1926]; vol. 20, “Report of the Saint John Branch of the Dominion Archives, 1928 to 1929;” “Report of the Halifax Branch, Public Archives of Canada, for the Year 1929 to 1930.”
- 65 RG 37, vol. 18, [Wm. Smith] to Milner, 27 July 1914; [Doughty] to Milner, 21 March 1917; vol. 19, J.D. Logan to Doughty, 8 July 1926; vol. 196, Wm. Smith to Milner, 2 August 1917; vol. 202, Doughty to Dr. J.C. Webster, 15 October 1925.

history of churches, to local notables of the past, and so on.⁶⁶ On occasion, politics was a factor. In April the year after the Archives published the papers of Charles Inglis, Milner announced that he now intended “to balance matters with the other denominations” by seeking after Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist records (Roman Catholic records were not mentioned).⁶⁷ Then, in 1914, a copyist was sent through the “French Counties” in New Brunswick to collect parish registers. “It will have one good effect,” Milner remarked sourly: “The French will not be able to complain that they have been overlooked.”⁶⁸

It is clear, as well, that contemporary research interests helped give direction to collecting. With few exceptions, the users of Maritime archival materials were little interested in social, economic, or analytic history in general, but rather, in genealogy and romantic retrospectives. There had been little change in historical styles from those of the nineteenth century, when county histories, “suffused by the warm glow of celebration and nostalgia” and often little more than collected genealogies, had dominated writing.⁶⁹ Certainly, Milner was much taken with the idea of making the Archives “a local institution” by accommodating himself to local interests — at one point, for example, proposing for that very reason that the Archives finance the publication of inscriptions from a Halifax cemetery at the cost of some \$150.⁷⁰

And any taxonomy of the interests exhibited by enquiries received from Maritime researchers could be all but completed by a listing of such subjects as Indian place names, ship tonnages, land grants, the vital statistics of early settlers, old forts, and privateering stories.⁷¹ One could search in vain for an interest in post-Confederation politics, intellectual change, or social developments — even such obvious phenomena as the growth of charitable institutions.⁷² Newspaper articles described the purpose of the Archives as being “to preserve all material touching on the history of the early settlers [and] family records, county and provincial documents, church and township works.” The emphasis was clearly on those records that could serve antiquarian ends.⁷³

Yet it is obvious that Milner embraced these same views, and to a significant degree. A set of issues of the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* was, to Milner, valuable mostly because of the many biographies the magazine had printed.⁷⁴ The muster rolls of the Saint John Loyalists were priceless because they “embraced the most valuable piece of history in the Eastern Provinces ... the commencement of things

66 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 28 June 1921, 23 July 1923.

67 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 5 April 1913.

68 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 11 April 1914.

69 M. Brook Taylor, “Nova Scotia’s Nineteenth-Century County Histories,” *Acadiensis* 10 (Spring 1981), pp. 61, 65-66.

70 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 31 October 1913.

71 RG 37, vol. 19, “List of Enquiries for Information,” 1926; A.M. Kinnear to Doughty, 23 September 1926; vol. 20, “List of Enquiries at the Saint John Branch of the Dominion Archives, 1929-30;” vol. 19, Wm. Smith to E.J. Studen, 21 November 1923; vol. 206, J.F.K. to Robert Almon, 14 March 1932; vol. 207, Doughty to Beverly L. Comb, 8 October 1932; Doughty to Dr. J.C. Webster, 10 April 1933.

72 For a sampling of locally published historical articles, see New Brunswick Historical Society, *Index to Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society* (n.p., 1968).

73 RG 37, vol. 17, clipping, *Middleton Outlook*, 21 September 1912.

74 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 11 December 1913.

here."⁷⁵ Land records from Shelbourne were something of a prize because "the surveying and allotting locations were done with military exactness" and provided a firm "starting point" for histories of Loyalist families.⁷⁶ New Brunswick land petitions formed "the basis of the history of every parish in the Province."⁷⁷ The Charles Inglis papers were a major find, covering, as they did, "important historical epochs": the Revolutionary War, the Loyalist emigration, and the settlement of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.⁷⁸ Old township books were characterized by Milner as being "the basis and foundation of the communities that they record."⁷⁹

IV

This very fascination with local records combined rapidly with Milner's combative personality and manifest willingness to discount the feelings of Maritime historians to plunge the Archives' work into controversy. Within weeks of his appointment, Milner was complaining that there was an "undercurrent" within the Nova Scotia Historical Society "running with the Archdeacon [Armitage] and Piers against our operation." Milner was quite unsympathetic to the Society's fears for the loss of records to Ottawa. He had been tipped off privately by the Nova Scotian Attorney General, "heartily glad to be rid of the responsibility for records," to attempts by Armitage and Piers (Nova Scotia's provincial archivist) to lobby for a moratorium on transfers of papers to Ottawa. The NSHS he dismissed as being "too crude and too weak to be entrusted with important local records."⁸⁰ A few months later, Milner wrote Doughty to report on recent deliberations of the NSHS. He had attended the Society's meeting the night before; he had promised that a photostat machine would be acquired for the Archives' Halifax office to reproduce documents, had asserted that the Archives was not necessarily interested in keeping originals and might even present the NSHS with documents purchased for copying, and had warned that without the Archives valuable documents would be snapped up by American collectors. Piers had been unimpressed, Milner reported, declaring forthrightly that he would rather see local records disappear into the holdings of the Massachusetts or New England Historical Societies than to Ottawa.⁸¹

A year later matters had still not improved. "In certain circles — especially historic," Milner wrote, "the old provincial — or anti-confederate — or anti-Ottawa feeling still burns brightly." "With perhaps two exceptions," he continued, "every Nova Scotian writer of history is opposed to the Dominion Archives' attempts to acquire documents."⁸² "It is now time for the N.S. Hist. Society to declare whether it is for peace or war," he had announced the April before.⁸³ But war did not come until some three years later.

75 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 23 March 1914.

76 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 29 September 1913.

77 RG 37, vol. 114, W.J. Armitage to Doughty, 14 September 1911.

78 W.C. Milner, "Conditions of Public Records in the Maritime Provinces," Canadian Historical Association, *Annual Report*, (1929), p. 43.

79 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 25 April 1922.

80 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 25 November 1912.

81 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 2 April 1913.

82 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 27 March 1914.

83 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 2 April 1913.

In the meantime, Milner was busy heading off conflict in New Brunswick. In the spring of 1914, a contract with the provincial government released on loan a large collection of New Brunswick land memorials into the hands of the Archives, and the Saint John office began the long task of indexing and abstracting the papers. This work, Milner said, would “do more than a little to recommend the Archives as a useful institution to the studious portion of our people down here.”⁸⁴ In 1914 Milner began dickering for the acquisition of the New Brunswick muster rolls, turned over earlier by Jonas Howe to the custody of the New Brunswick Historical Society. While the NBHS was loathe to part with the rolls, Milner felt that progress might be made if the Archives purchased the interest Howe’s wife, now widowed, retained in the papers. The Society’s claims to the rolls might then be partially undercut.⁸⁵ Delicate negotiations followed in 1915 which resulted in a loan of the rolls to the Archives for indexing, and in 1916, during which agreement was reached with the Society’s executive to release custody for \$500 — \$300 to be paid to Mrs. Howe. Finally, in December 1919, money and the muster rolls changed hands, though not without an attempt by the Society to finesse the Archives into acknowledging NBHS ownership of the rolls.⁸⁶

In 1915 Milner had also found himself facing stiff opposition from the Anglican church wardens and rectors of New Brunswick, opposed to the planned removal of old parish records to the Anglican cathedral in Fredericton, preparatory to their being shipped to Ottawa. Copies were to remain in New Brunswick, but acceptance of the scheme by the Anglican synod was followed by a successful attempt by several members of the church’s executive committee (employed, Milner complained, “in the legal line”) to block the plan. To head off the opposition, Raymond struck a special subcommittee to investigate the legalities of the Archives’ acquisition, and Milner repaired to Saint John to begin busy lobbying of church officers. Several months later, Raymond’s committee reported favourably on the Archives’ case and a much relieved Milner was able to report that another body of valuable records had been removed from “the danger zone.”⁸⁷ In July 1916 Milner made further strides when, in a major diplomatic coup, agreement was reached between Milner and the NBHS for storage of the society’s historical collections in the Archives’ Saint John offices. This, Milner declared, would reduce frictions and make the Archives’ offices “the Head Quarters for historical work in the province.”⁸⁸ Yet attempts in December to reach the same deal with the NSHS met adamant opposition from “Armitage, Piers, etc.”⁸⁹

Indeed, matters were just about to boil over. Early in 1916 Milner had begun negotiations for the transfer to the Archives of pre-Confederation Vice-Admiralty Court records housed in Halifax. The matter was taken up at a meeting of the Halifax city council, then at a meeting of the NSHS at which members made “violent

84 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Wm. Smith, 24 June 1914; vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 7 August 1914; Bernice Starr to Doughty, 8 September 1914; vol. 19, clipping, Saint John *Telegraph*, 14 May 1923.

85 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Wm. Smith, 17 March 1914; Milner to Doughty, 23 March 1914; Raymond to anon., 30 July 1913.

86 RG 37, vol. 18, “Report of W.C. Milner,” 15 March 1915; Milner to Doughty, 23 March 1916; 3 May 1920; vol. 333, Milner to Doughty, 17 December 1919.

87 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 9 February, 15 March 1915; 23 March 1916; vol. 331, Raymond to Doughty, 10 November 1915.

88 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 21 July 1916.

89 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 29 December 1916.

speeches" against transfer of the records to Ottawa. Asked by Milner to intercede, Nova Scotian Premier George Murray denied jurisdiction in a letter to the federal Minister of Justice, Charles J. Doherty. Thereupon, Doherty directed his department's agent in Halifax to release the records to the Archives — only to have Judge Drysdale of the Canadian Court of Vice-Admiralty in Halifax issue a counter-manding order. It was only after a federal order-in-council was passed on 15 August 1916 that the thirty-seven boxes were finally handed over.⁹⁰

But the battle was not over. "If these papers had been removed within a week after you had obtained possession of them," Doughty chided Milner later, "people would have forgotten about them.... When once a thing is removed it is soon forgotten and although the owners may feel sore they will know very well that it is useless to keep up the fight."⁹¹ Armitage had not given up. Several weeks after the transfer of custody, Armitage wrote the Halifax *Evening Echo* charging, Milner reported, that a "sacred compact" between Armitage on the one side and Doughty and Milner on the other had been broken by the transaction. Another meeting of the NSHS followed, with little result, then angry letters written by Armitage to Borden. Personal differences between Milner and Armitage reached new lows. After a particularly hot exchange between the two, Armitage — still a member of the Historical Manuscripts Commission — wrote Milner demanding an apology for his "impertinent" behaviour.⁹² Relations worsened still further. In May of the following year, Doughty received a remarkable letter from Milner. One day in the October before, Milner wrote, he had received a call from one Mrs. Naftals, from whom he rented a garage. A man and a woman had called on her, demanding to see the contents of boxes Milner had piled in the garage. They had asked that their names not be revealed to Milner. Mrs. Naftals had let them in, but had not allowed them to open the boxes. She had then phoned Milner, who was mystified. "I did not for a moment imagine," he wrote, "that an Archdeacon of the Anglican Church would himself or by agent be pimping around a backyard in search of evidence to make up a case against me in the Department."⁹³

He learned more a few months later. In October Armitage had written a letter to Doughty scathingly critical of Milner. Milner was an assiduous collector, he said, but had antagonized many people. "He advertises his supposed triumphs over local people," Armitage said, "as if he were a prize-fighter who has gained a victory," and "[right now] swaggers around as if he has routed all his adversaries." This was comparatively tame criticism. Armitage went on to inform Doughty that he had been told by a "public official" (presumably one of Mrs. Naftal's visitors) that boxes containing the much fought over Vice-Admiralty Court records had been discovered in Milner's garage. Forty-six boxes had been in the shed two weeks before, only twenty-six a week later: "a grave charge" upon the honesty of Milner, Armitage declared.⁹⁴ Doughty was not inclined to pursue the allegations, and all might have been quiet but for a visit to Ottawa by Milner the next April during which he was accidentally handed a file containing Armitage's letter. Milner, furious at the

90 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Wm. Smith, 29 June, 14 August 1916; P.C. 1928, 15 August 1916.

91 RG 37, vol. 195, Doughty to Milner, 4 December 1916.

92 RG 37, vol. 18, Armitage to Milner, 27 September 1916; Milner to Doughty, 19 October 1916; Milner to Armitage, 29 October 1916; vol. 195, Doughty to Armitage, 20 October 1916.

93 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 5 May 1917.

94 RG 37, vol. 18, Armitage to Doughty, 24 October 1916.

discovery, launched a malicious libel suit against Armitage. A bitter correspondence followed -- Milner seeking a copy of the letter for legal purposes, Armitage enraged that Milner should have been allowed to see the letter. In Ottawa, cooler heads prevailed. Doughty refused Milner a copy of the letter on grounds of confidentiality. While this left Milner fuming that "no man's position or reputation is worth a cent, for he is at the mercy of any vindictive rascal who may ... [wish] to torpedo him," soft, but firm words from Doughty silenced him.⁹⁵

Yet the damage had been done, resentments remaining on both sides. In the fall of 1918, the Archives helped sponsor a "War Trophies Fair" at the Halifax Armouries. This included some "old-time" scenes of historical parts of Nova Scotia. While attendance at the show was gratifying, the public response was marred by rumours in the press that the pictures were soon to be spirited away to Ottawa.⁹⁶ Meetings of the NSHS followed in May at which it was demanded that photographs of the material, at least, be left in Halifax (though it was clear to Milner, who thought the whole business mere harassment, that no photographic technique existed that could even remotely capture the paintings).⁹⁷ Feelings of grievance persisted. Three years later, in January 1921, Piers and allies again raised the issue. This time, according to Milner, the NSHS waxed even more preposterous, charging that the Archives had issued an order forbidding visitors to the War Trophies Fair to make lists of the Nova Scotian paintings.⁹⁸

Moreover, even Nova Scotian provincial authorities, now acting within the changed climate of regional consciousness and protest created by the burgeoning Maritime Rights movement, could no longer be relied upon to cooperate with the Archives. Some years earlier, one Lord Seymour had illegally donated some British War Office records under his care to the NSHS. In 1919, then more forcefully in 1920, the Archives requested Deputy Provincial Secretary Barnstead's assistance in having the records transferred to the Archives, where they rightfully belonged.⁹⁹ The controversy dragged on into 1922 with no action by the government. By now it was clear that delaying tactics being employed by Barnstead were not, despite his pleas of innocence, intended to help the Archives, but rather the NSHS. In July Milner turned down an offer by Barnstead to go before the Executive Council with Piers to debate the control of Lord Seymour's War Office records. There was no option left but to contact the War Office over the ownership of the documents: a risky appeal to an outside agency.¹⁰⁰ In early July Doughty — despite additional reservations as to what his intentions would mean for relations with the province — asked the War Office for a ruling. The papers were the Archives'. Once again, ill will was created.¹⁰¹

95 RG 37, vol. 18, Armitage to Doughty, 4 May 1917; Milner to Doughty, 5 May 1917; Doughty to J.J. Hunt, 10 May 1917; Milner to Doughty, 10 May 1917; Armitage to Doughty, [May] 1917; Doughty to Milner, 28 September 1917.

96 RG 37, vol. 18, clipping, Halifax *Morning Herald*, 24 October 1917; Milner to Doughty, 25 October 1917.

97 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Doughty, 3 and 6 May 1918.

98 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 19 January 1921.

99 RG 37, vol. 55, Arthur Barnstead to Doughty, 1 December 1920; vol 197, Doughty to Barnstead, 21 November 1919.

100 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 10 February 1921; 22 May, 13 July 1922.

101 RG 27, vol. 200, Doughty to Barnstead, July 1922; Doughty to Milner, 21 July 1922.

Moreover, matters were worsening in New Brunswick as well. In 1919, the well-known Acadian historian, Dr. W.F. Ganong, began pressing the New Brunswick government to demand return of the New Brunswick land memorials lent years before to the Archives. Milner reacted badly, writing Ganong an angry letter that inferred that Ganong's agitations for repatriation of the records ranked with "the insane desire of individuals to hold onto documents of a public character for the purpose of exhibiting them as curios." Amazingly, in the same letter, he also suggested that Ganong, whose influence was considerable, help persuade the New Brunswick government that it was now time to start assuming control of old court records through legislation — preparatory to smoother transfer to the Archives.¹⁰²

It was decidedly not the time, nor was Ganong a potential ally. And a year and a half later when a friendly Attorney General raised anew the idea of legislation, Milner's fractiousness once more produced trouble. Shortly before the bill could be passed, the Clerk of Peace for the County of York undertook to make a bonfire out of ninety years of the county Court of Session minutes, "thus destroying all chances of making a history of that county forever," Milner raged. Furious at the loss, Milner wrote Premier W.E. Forster vowing melodramatically to hound him virtually to the grave over the destruction. "The scandal will live," he declared, "increase with the years, and stand as a black mark against your administration."¹⁰³ A week later, E.S. Carter, secretary to the Premier and a man Milner termed a "former owner of a red-light paper in St. John," replied. Milner was no longer to have access to the province's public documents, even for purposes of consultation. A copy of the letter was going to Doughty. No legislation would be passed.¹⁰⁴

It was clear that relations were becoming intolerable. Yet a resolution passed in 1920 by the NSHS suggested one way out of the impasse. It recommended that the branch offices of the Archives become themselves "small functioning archives."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, as early as 1913 Milner had argued successfully that certain types of records, such as New Brunswick's Executive Council minutes, should be culled and arranged in the Maritimes: he and his staff possessed "a better knowledge of local history" than archivists in Ottawa.¹⁰⁶ The practice had also been developing on an *ad hoc* basis of making original documents and copies available for special consultation at the two branch offices. And Milner had announced that it was Archives' "policy" to begin providing more such services in the future. Doughty in fact suggested in 1915 that a "permanent office" be established in Halifax "to give information to students of history."¹⁰⁷ Yet, while Milner had applauded Doughty's proposal, the NSHS's 1920 resolution sparked Milner's suspicions that this was a subtle ploy intended to lead to a permanent end to transfers of *any* documents to Ottawa. For two years he persistently resisted any change in the branch offices' status. Only in October 1922 he relented, admitting that it had been a mistake to have had so many "local and personal records" shipped to Ottawa. There they were a nuisance, whereas at Saint

102 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to E.S. Carter, 25 March 1920; Milner to Doughty, 29 March 1920; Milner to Ganong, 8 November 1920.

103 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 3 March 1922; Milner to [W.E. Foster], 3 April 1922; Milner to Doughty, 13 April 1922.

104 RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 18 April 1922; vol. 55, Carter to Milner, 10 April 1922.

105 Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," pp. 148-49.

106 RG 37, vol. 17, Milner to Doughty, 23 May 1913.

107 RG 37, vol. 18, Milner to Judge Savary, 1915; Milner to Doughty, 8 June 1915.

John and Halifax they would have assisted sedentary local historians and rested safe in the modern fire-proof vaults the Archives now possessed.¹⁰⁸ Soon thereafter the Saint John and Halifax offices were opened to the public as branch archives.

By no means were the Archives' troubles over. Reports from the branch offices yearly told of an increasing clientele of professors, lawyers, historians, "leading antiquarians," and others.¹⁰⁹ But the financial support from Ottawa was minimal. Only one assistant per office was provided, and space and equipment were inadequate. While original records or photostat copies could be sent down from Ottawa, only the bare bones of a reference service could be **provided**.¹¹⁰

Moreover, in December 1924, Milner resigned at the age of seventy-eight. He was replaced by John D. Logan, a graduate of Harvard with a doctorate in literature who had been teaching at Dalhousie College.¹¹¹ Almost from the first, it was apparent that Logan had wandering eyes, viewing his post as only a temporary sojourn. As early as August 1926, Logan was threatening to resign in favour of an academic post unless his salary was increased precipitously to some \$3,500. A plan instituted by Logan in the summer of 1927 to present locally a series of lectures on history, literature, and bibliography was little more than an attempt by Logan to keep his hand in academe. A short sabbatical in Wisconsin to lecture and research stretched into months, leaving the work of the branch offices to be directed by mail.¹¹² In December 1927, Logan announced his resignation.¹¹³ Over a year passed before a replacement was found in the somewhat obscure figure of Alvin MacDonald.¹¹⁴

As well, Logan had had his political problems. He had been somewhat more sensitive to local opinion than Milner, arguing, for example, that all pamphlet material acquired by donation should stay in the Maritimes — whether or not its subject matter was Maritime. To do otherwise would be to discourage gifts of old books, pamphlets "or other Canadian rarissimae."¹¹⁵ In 1925, however, the Saint John office was closed temporarily for lack of staff. This caused public consternation and fears that more Maritime documents than ever before would be shipped off to Ottawa, an action the Saint John *Telegraph Journal* said called for "vigorous protest."¹¹⁶ It did not help matters that Milner, now teaching at Acadia College, had fallen out with Logan over the latter's refusal to hand over some manuscript material left in the Halifax office that Milner felt was rightfully his and over Milner's hostility to any changes in the office policy he had previously established.¹¹⁷ Milner would not let well enough alone, admitting to Logan that he had written letters to the press

108 Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," p. 149; RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Doughty, 17 October 1922.

109 RG 37, vol. 19, "Report of the Halifax Office," 1925; vol. 20, "Report of the Dominion Archives, Saint John Branch, March 1926 to March 1927;" "Report of the Maritime Branches of the Public Archives of Canada for the Year 1927-28."

110 Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," p. 147.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 150; RG 37, vol. 19, Doughty to Kinnear, 13 February 1925; Milner to H.P. Biggar, 21 May 1925; vol. 20, unidentified clipping attached to Kinnear to Doughty, 21 December 1927.

112 RG 37, vol. 20, J.D. Logan to Doughty, 16 February, 26 March, 8 May, 15 July 1927.

113 RG 37, vol. 20, clipping attached to Kinnear to Doughty, 21 December 1927.

114 RG 37, vol. 20, Milner to Doughty, 1 February 1929.

115 RG 37, vol. 19, Logan to Wm. Smith, 16 March 1926. See also Logan to Doughty, 24 July 1925.

116 RG 37, vol. 19, clipping, Saint John *Telegraph Journal*, n.d.; Logan to the Editor, Saint John *Telegraph Journal*, 14 May 1925.

117 RG 37, vol. 19, Logan to Doughty, 11 May 1925.

“inciting” the public to believe that the Saint John office would indeed be closed permanently.¹¹⁸ The conflict between Logan and Milner worsened after the closing of the Saint John office brought demands from the New Brunswick Department of Lands and Mines that the New Brunswick land memorials now be returned. Logan complied. Learning some time later of the decision, Milner was furious, writing Doughty that “nothing for years has so disgusted and exasperated me” as to discover that the Archives had given in to what Milner felt were shaky legal claims on the part of the New Brunswick government. It was a “gross reflection on my administration,” Milner raged. His anger persisted. Milner, Logan told Doughty in March 1927, “is bound to have revenge upon us for returning the land grants papers.” Logan had recently been meeting pressures from “certain St. John citizens and politicians” intent on seeing the Saint John office exploited for patronage purposes. Allying himself with the “patronage gang” Milner, Logan reported, had redoubled his attacks on the Archives — this time for its refusal to appoint a separate archivist for New Brunswick.¹¹⁹ By themselves these attacks might have meant little. Yet, as Logan had acknowledged only the year before, the “disrepute and disfavour” the Archives had fallen into under Milner’s regime had little diminished.¹²⁰

There had been some suggestions earlier to upgrade the Archives’ activities on the East Coast. In 1922 Milner had mooted proposals to build a full-scale Archives building in the Maritimes.¹²¹ Two years later the idea became somewhat more serious when Dr. J.C. Webster of Shediac began campaigning for a building, arguing at meetings in Moncton, Saint John, and Halifax for formation of committees to press Ottawa to begin construction. As Milner noted, however, Webster had managed to leave the impression in each city that it was to be the one favoured by the building. Sectional rivalries would never allow one city to be so selected without severe repercussions.¹²² This was the same argument Milner employed four years later to counter another attempt by Doughty to revive the proposal.¹²³

V

Yet new developments were soon to radically change the Archives’ place in the historical life of the Maritimes. In January 1928 J.C. Webster, now director of the New Brunswick Museum, announced plans for a new museum building, at the same time pledging cooperation with Doughty, who in May 1929 was elected to the executive committee of the museum. In 1929, acts of the provincial legislature made the New Brunswick Museum the official records custodian for the province, and

118 RG 37, vol. 19, Logan to Doughty, 5 October 1925; vol. 202, Doughty to Milner, 25 July 1925.

119 RG 37, vol. 20, Kinnear to Doughty, 6 January 1927; Milner to Doughty, 22 March 1927; Logan to Doughty, 28 March 1927; vol. 55, J.E. Hetherington to Dominion Archives, 13 February 1925; W.J. McMullan to Doughty, 2 May 1925.

120 RG 37, vol. 19, Logan to Doughty, 20 May 1926. See also Vera Daye to Logan, 12 February 1926.

121 RG 37, vol. 200, Doughty to Milner, 29 October 1922.

122 Wilson, “Shortt and Doughty,” pp. 149-50; RG 37, vol. 19, Milner to Wm. Smith, 30 July 1924.

123 RG 37, vol. 20, Milner to Doughty, 1 August 1928. Doughty had broached the subject in May 1926 to J. Plimsoll Edwards, of the NSHS, of the provinces and federal government “getting together” to build a regional archives building. RG 37, vol. 202, Doughty to J. Plimsoll Edwards, 26 May 1926. There were proposals, as well, for Prince Edward Island worthy of mention. In 1927 a committee of the PEI government called for the establishment of a branch of the Public Archives of Canada on the island — a proposal that was never acted upon.

work was begun on the new building.¹²⁴ In Nova Scotia as well, in that same year, Premier Edgar N. Rhodes succeeded in persuading W.H. Chase of Wolfville to advance the money to build a provincial archives building in **Halifax**.¹²⁵ Doughty by this point was only too happy to see the problem of Maritime acquisitions taken off his hands by the erection of safe provincial repositories. He may in fact have been a prime mover behind the scenes in initiating the delicate process that persuaded Rhodes that a mature provincial archives was now necessary, a process that ended in erection of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia building.¹²⁶ Indeed, Doughty took part in the design of its facilities at Rhodes' request and lent the expert advice of Norman Fee, an Archives' employee, in inventorying Nova Scotian records and planning the Nova Scotian archives' budget and operations.¹²⁷

Even Milner may have at first been pleased. In 1929 he published a paper in the Canadian Historical Association *Annual Report* on the "Condition of Public Records in the Maritime Provinces." In it he argued that federal and provincial governments should "unite" — though exactly how he did not say — in applying a hence increased "efficiency and economy" in the saving of old records. As the Maritimes were settled from New England, there was naturally a "family relationship" that existed "between the two countries" that found expression within New England historical societies in a hunger for "ancient records and relics" from the Maritime provinces. As a result, Milner wrote, "Quite a business has existed between the old farm houses in the Maritimes and these customers in the old colonies." Not only had provincial governments done little to halt this commerce, but also little to conserve documents. In one instance, Milner reported, the Archives had found a collection of township books in a cow stable: "The cows were encouraged to ruminate on local history."¹²⁸

He would be less happy later. Initially, Doughty thought that the Public Archives of Canada would occupy offices in the provincial archives' building in Halifax.¹²⁹ Yet, with erection of the new repositories in Halifax and Saint John and the Dominion government eager to make economies in the face of the deepening Depression, cut-backs in federal operations began almost immediately. In September 1931 Doughty instructed MacDonald to give a "Chronicle of Louisburg" to the Nova Scotian archives "as it is not desirable any longer to make collections in opposition to the provincial government." A distinct new policy for both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had been set.¹³⁰ Several months later Doughty announced that the Secretary of State had ordered the closing of the PAC's Saint John and Halifax offices.¹³¹ The new provincial archivist of Nova Scotia, D.C.

124 Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," p. 152; RG 37, vol. 201, Doughty to W.M. MacIntosh, 22 May 1929; vol. 204, Doughty to Webster, 3 August 1929.

125 Archer, "Archival Institutions in Canada," p. 159.

126 Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," p. 152.

127 RG 37, vol. 19, Fee to Doughty, 5 November 1930; vol. 55, Edgar N. Rhodes to Doughty, 1 March 1925; vol. 58, Minutes of Meeting of Board of Trustees of Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 13 November 1930.

128 Milner, "Condition of Public Records in the Maritime Provinces," pp. 41, 44-46.

129 RG 37, vol. 204, Doughty to Rhodes, 13 February 1929; and Doughty to J.W. Fuller, 5 October 1929.

130 RG 37, vol. 206, Doughty to A.F. Macdonald, 10 September 1931.

131 RG 37, vol. 20, Doughty to Kinnear, 5 November 1931; Doughty to Macdonald, 5 November 1931; vol. 206, Doughty to Vera Daye, 20 January 1932.

Harvey, protested vigorously (sharing few of his predecessor's antagonisms towards the Public Archives of Canada).¹³² But the die was cast. All historical materials still legally belonging to the provincial governments were ordered returned and, a little over a month after the announcement of the closing, the doors to the two offices were locked forever.¹³³

Thus ended a busy, yet sometimes inglorious period in the history of the Public Archives of Canada. From now on, the constitutional division of powers between the federal government and the provinces would be reflected, more or less, in a division of responsibilities in archival collecting. The heat generated by the work of Milner had thrown into bold relief the dangers of doing otherwise. The infatuation of both sides for forts, family history, and antiquarian nostalgia had effectively confounded the Public Archives of Canada's ambitions for centralizing the collection of Canada's — and the Maritimes' — historical record.

132 RG 37, vol. 20, Doughty to D.C. Harvey, 30 November 1931.

133 RG 37, vol. 20, Doughty to Macdonald, 5 November 1931; vol. 206, Doughty to Harvey, 15 January 1932; Doughty to Vera Daye, 27 January 1932.