

## *Obituary*

### *William George Ormsby, 1921-1987*



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William Ormsby, former Archivist of Ontario, died in St. Catharines, Ontario, in September. Born in Toronto, he volunteered for active service with the Royal Canadian Navy at the outbreak of the Second World War. Rising from the ranks, Bill became an anti-submarine officer aboard the corvettes on convoy duty protecting Allied shipping between Halifax and England.

Following discharge at the war's end, he attended the University of Toronto to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948. In that same year, Bill joined the Manuscript Division of the Public Archives of Canada.

In 1960, Bill earned a Master of Arts degree at Carleton University. His master's thesis was the basis of his book, *The Emergence of the Federal Concept in Canada, 1839-1845* (Toronto, 1969). He was also appointed Head of the Manuscript Division at the Public Archives of Canada in 1960.

Joining the faculty of Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario in 1964, Bill remained there as a professor of Canadian history until his 1978 appointment as Archivist of Ontario. Under his leadership, the Archives of Ontario increased its holdings and expanded its programmes. Between 1978 and 1986, the holdings increased to 100,000 cubic feet from 36,000 cubic feet. Of particular significance was the acquisition of the prized Horwood Collection of architectural drawings. Programmes for the preservation of local school board and hospital records were established along with a programme for local disposition of Registry Office copy books. *A Guide to the Holdings of the Archives of Ontario* was compiled in two volumes and published in 1986.

During his professional life, Bill served as president of the Ontario Historical Society, member of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario, and director of the Ontario Heritage Foundation. He was an editor for the Ontario Series of the Champlain Society and a contributor to the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. He also edited *Crisis in the Canadas 1838-1839: The Grey Journal and Letters* (Toronto, 1964).

An avid book collector, Bill loved to vacation in Italy and at his cottage in the Gatineau Hills purchased while at the Public Archives of Canada.