

Arthur Silver Morton and his Role in the Founding of the Saskatchewan Archives Board

by JOAN CHAMP

The division of the Saskatchewan Archives between the Board office at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and the Board office in Regina is a situation unique in Canada. The existence of two repositories for public and private documents in this province—one in the provincial capital and one on the Saskatoon campus of the provincial university—has afforded greater access to original sources. Greater accessibility has in turn stimulated research and facilitated the publication of an impressive number of works on the history of western Canada. This exceptional archival system is the result of the work of Arthur Silver Morton, the western Canadian scholar best known for his monumental work, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (1938).

A.S. Morton was in fact a leading figure in the early Saskatchewan heritage movement from 1914, when he arrived to teach history at the University of Saskatchewan at age forty-four, until his death in 1945. Born in Trinidad on 16 May 1870 to Canadian missionaries of Scottish Presbyterian descent and educated at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, Morton began his career as head of the Department of History and Librarian at the Saskatoon campus just at the outbreak of World War I. Throughout the war years he gave many extension lectures for the university around the province, and his interest in the history of the West was quickened. His travels for university extension made him particularly aware of the urgent need to acquire and preserve material relating to Saskatchewan's heritage before it was lost. From that time forward his energies were directed toward the acquisition and preservation of the textual and artifactual remains of the province's past. His concern for document preservation prompted him to create several local and provincial historical societies which functioned primarily as agencies for the collection of historical materials. Morton was also an enthusiastic explorer of historic sites, and discovered the remains of many fur trading posts in Saskatchewan. His most important and lasting contribution to Saskatchewan heritage, however, was the creation of the province's first archival institution for the preservation of government records.

The Historical Public Records Office (HPRO) set up at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon by Morton in 1937 was the precursor of the present-day Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), established in March 1945, two months after

Morton's death. The division of the HPRO between Regina and Saskatoon resulted from Morton's conviction that the university—and especially the History Department—had a much greater interest in government archives than did the government departments which had generated them. A public records office on campus would, Morton believed, provide scholars with a “laboratory of research,”¹ and the documents preserved there would be “. . .by far the most important source for all branches of history. . .”² In addition, Morton firmly believed that the members of his profession would benefit from involvement in archival organization. Historians, he asserted, had a broader role to play in archives beyond the simple use of the records contained within their walls. Archivists must be historians, Morton once had stated: “The historian who is studying and writing the history of the province and who knows what material is wanting and where gaps exist in our knowledge, is the best guide for the collecting of the material. . .”³ The enormous amount of energy that Morton put into the creation, organization and care of Saskatchewan's early archives testifies to his conviction that historians had a wider role to play in society beyond teaching, researching and writing.⁴

Morton was not the first person interested in the establishment of an archives in Saskatchewan; initial efforts to preserve inactive government records in the province, however, had met with little success. An ordinance creating the Department of the Territorial Secretary in 1897 stated that the Secretary was to keep the archives of the North-West Territories.⁵ This provision was carried over into later Acts governing the Provincial Secretary's Department after the creation of the province in 1905; this department, however, never became a comprehensive government archives.⁶ At the University of Saskatchewan, Professor E.H. Oliver began to collect documents relating to the history of the province shortly after he joined the institution in 1909. The following year, Oliver held discussions with Walter Scott, Premier of Saskatchewan from 1905 to 1916, concerning the preservation of publications and records relating to the history of the province in an archival setting. Oliver suggested that both the Legislative Library and the university library should be involved in the acquisition and preservation of archival material.⁷ University of Saskatchewan President Walter Murray backed up Oliver's efforts with a letter to Scott early in 1911, proposing that the government appoint a commission to examine the question of establishing a provincial archives.⁸ A motion was actually made in the legislature that year calling for “. . .early action. . .to collect and preserve historical and other documents relating to the early development of Saskatchewan.”⁹ While the House unanimously agreed that this was a desirable goal, the motion was not acted upon at that time. The Saskatchewan government was busy building for the future during the “boom” years between 1900 and 1913;¹⁰ preserving the past was not a high priority.

During World War I, provision was finally made for an archives branch of the Legislative Library, and William Trant of Regina was appointed Assistant Librarian and Archivist. Ill-health apparently prevented Trant from accomplishing much in the way of acquisition and preservation, and after his death in 1924 the position of archivist was allowed to lapse.¹¹ In the meantime, the vaults of the Legislature were overflowing with inactive government records that had been accumulating since 1905. Relief for this problem was often found in the fires of the powerhouse located nearby.¹² The first statute to deal directly with the retention or disposal of old government records—the *Preservation of Public Documents Act* of 1920—was used primarily to facilitate the

destruction of inactive government records clogging the vaults. This Act remained in effect until 1945. While it was a necessary beginning, the main result of the Act was to allow the legal destruction of large quantities of records by Order in Council. A total of seventy-eight orders were issued for the disposal of records, while only two authorized the transfer of documents to “the archives of the province.”¹³ Unfortunately, no proper repository existed to receive inactive, though permanently valuable records. Lacking such an office, government departments tended to be negligent in their handling of inactive records. Thus, much valuable material was lost.

Morton’s commitment to the preservation of the public records was a continuation of his earlier heritage activities. Morton had actively collected material of a general historical nature over the years for the University of Saskatchewan library in his effort to lay the foundations for the study of western Canadian history. He had spent many summers throughout the 1920s at the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa researching the history of the fur trade in the West; this experience further strengthened his belief in the value of primary source material for historical study. He became concerned, however, with the preservation of strictly government records when control of western lands and natural resources was transferred from federal to provincial jurisdiction in 1930. As part of the transfer agreement, a portion of the defunct Department of Interior records relating to land administration was turned over to the three western provinces.¹⁴ The acquisition of these documents, Morton stated in a letter to a provincial Department of Natural Resources official, “. . . raises in a very immediate and pressing way the question of putting the Provincial Archives on a sound and efficient basis under an Archivist.”¹⁵ Morton felt that *all* public records should be carefully preserved, “. . . for we cannot know today what is valuable and what is not. The future only can settle that.”¹⁶

Across Canada, agitation for the preservation of public records was growing, spearheaded by various members of the Canadian historical profession, including Morton’s brother-in-law, George Brown, editor of the *Canadian Historical Review*. Brown had written articles in the September 1934 and March 1935 issues of the journal calling for the more conscientious preservation of archival material across Canada.¹⁷ Brown sent letters to the premiers and archivists of all the provinces, enclosing copies of his articles. He wrote Morton in the fall of 1934, stating, “If there is anything further which the *Review* could do to promote the interests of the provincial archives, we should be only too pleased to co-operate with you.”¹⁸ While attending a Canadian Historical Association meeting in Ottawa in the spring of 1936, Morton was persuaded by a group of fellow history professors to make a personal appeal to the government of Saskatchewan on the need for a provincial archives. On 14 September 1936, Morton addressed his plea for the preservation of inactive government records to J.W. Estey, Minister of Education from 1934 to 1944. Morton outlined the value of archival institutions to the government, to scholars and to the general public:

We may take it as certain that future generations will charge us with betraying our trust if we cast away the material without which the history of the Province, of the administration of its several departments, and of the development of its several regions and interests cannot be written. I speak, therefore, not only for the historians of the Dominion but for the citizenship yet to be of [Saskatchewan], when I put in the plea that careful consideration be given to the preservation of the archival material of the Province.¹⁹

The provincial government was receptive to Morton's appeal. Both Estey and Premier W.J. Patterson had recently been frustrated in their attempts to obtain background documents for speeches they were preparing.²⁰ Thus, when Estey brought up the question of a provincial archives before the cabinet, he received a favourable response. In February 1937, Morton received word from Estey that the government was taking his representations regarding the preservation of public records into consideration. Furthermore, Estey stated that the Patterson administration would be glad to grant Morton—a respected historian with a reputation as a prominent figure in the provincial heritage movement—permission to consult with officials of government departments, as well as make available for his perusal any documents that he desired.²¹

Throughout this period, Morton had kept University president Walter Murray informed of his communications with provincial government officials. Murray had a keen interest in all areas of heritage preservation, and realized the need for an archival institution in the province. He became actively involved in the lobby for a provincial archives during the winter of 1936-37. He discussed the matter with Estey on several occasions, and was responsible for bringing up the matter before the university's Board of Governors at that time.²² As the Liberal administration could not find the money to set up a provincial archives, Murray proposed—after consulting with Morton and Estey—the creation of the HPRO at the university, and the appointment of Morton as provincial archivist.²³ In April 1937 the Board of Governors offered to house inactive government records of archival value in a room in the basement of Saskatchewan Hall at the University of Saskatchewan, and to name Morton "Keeper of the Public Records."²⁴ As part of the arrangement, Morton's retirement date was extended to 1940, at which time he was to receive a salary of \$50.00 per month in addition to his pension. In the interim, he continued to teach, although he was relieved of routine administrative duties in the History Department.²⁵ In this way, Morton was able to devote his energies to the preservation of documents bearing on the history of Saskatchewan and, in the process, lay the groundwork for the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Morton's new appointment meant significant scholarly advantages for the University of Saskatchewan. The university gained an on-site research facility which allowed scholars greater access to original documents. The provincial government also benefited from its cooperative archival relationship with the university. The need for a proper repository for inactive records was obvious, yet it would have been difficult for the Patterson administration to justify spending money on archives during the financial crisis of the 1930s. The university's offer to provide a facility and an archivist, and to cover the operating costs involved, was welcomed by the government. It avoided possible political confrontation in the provincial legislature, and the appointment of the archivist was removed from the political arena.

The archival system which Morton set up in Saskatchewan was modelled on that of the English Public Record Office. Morton believed that it was important to make a distinction between government archives and archives containing general historical material such as the papers of private individuals and newspapers. For this reason, he chose to use the term "public records office" and to avoid the term "archives" which, he said, "...has been used so loosely, so broadly, that actually in the Public Archives in Ottawa you will come on General Wolfe's baby boots."²⁶ The HPRO—concerned only with the preservation of inactive government records—was created as a subdivision of the provincial archives. The inactive records transferred to the campus office remained

the property of the provincial government and were thus regarded as authentic for legal purposes.²⁷ Other “more or less unauthenticated material,” Morton stated, would be collected and preserved by the university and parliamentary libraries and by the various historical societies.²⁸

In the spring of 1937, Morton made an exploratory visit to the Parliament Buildings in Regina in order to appraise the volume of inactive records stored there. Later that summer he travelled to London to familiarize himself with the British archival methods and meet with Sir Hilary Jenkinson, Deputy Keeper of the Public Records and author of a recently published manual on archives administration.²⁹ In December, an informal committee was formed in Regina to advise on the preservation of public records and to oversee the selection of those of permanent value for transfer to Saskatoon. The members of this committee were J.W. Estey, who served as chairman, S.J. Latta, Commissioner of Publications, Library and Archives, J.W. McLeod, Clerk of the Executive Council, Daniel Morrison of the Parliamentary Library, and Morton. In 1942, Morton’s colleague, Professor George Simpson, was added to the committee. Morton’s role as Keeper of the Public Records was to assist in the selection of documents and to organize and prepare suitable calendars for them.³⁰ This committee—never constituted on a statutory basis—received its only official recognition through the passage of an Order-in-Council on 31 January 1938, authorizing the transfer of a group of documents relating to Territorial times from the vault of the Executive Council to the HPRO in Saskatoon.

With the transfer of this first set of North-West Territories documents in 1938, Morton set to work. He soon discovered that, while the material contained the minutes, acts, orders and proclamations of the Territorial Council, all of the correspondence between the territorial government and the federal government had disappeared. To remedy this situation, Morton took steps while in Ottawa to procure copies of the missing correspondence. In 1939 he arranged to have the 1870 to 1888 files from the old Department of the Interior sent to the Federal Building in Saskatoon, where he borrowed and made copies of them. Morton did not complete this project until the fall of 1942, when he also spent time at the Public Archives in Ottawa, obtaining copies of confidential correspondence between the lieutenant-governors of the North-West Territories and the prime ministers of Canada. The bulk of this material consisted of important letters between Lieutenant-Governor Edgar Dewdney and Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald relating to the Rebellion of 1885.

Morton’s goal in establishing the HPRO on the University of Saskatchewan campus had always been to preserve and make accessible material for local scholars studying the history of the Canadian West. In the fall of 1941, Morton’s vision for the office expanded considerably—thanks largely to the visit of a Mr. Marshall of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. Marshall was touring prairie universities enquiring into the resources available for the study of regional problems common to both the United States and Canada. The American foundation was prepared to offer financial support for the development of projects, such as archives, which would facilitate prairie studies.³¹ Morton was greatly encouraged by this offer of support. He was particularly hopeful that a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation would go towards securing “respectable and safe quarters” for his rapidly growing office.³² He realized that the material he had collected over the years had great potential for scholarly research, yet without a proper archival facility—including adequate storage space and a comfortable reading room—

use of the documents would be limited. A new structure would, Morton believed, elevate the status of the HPRO to that of *the* centre of research for prairie studies in western Canada.

Morton outlined his plans to turn the HPRO into a leading research facility in a 1941 memorandum entitled, "Looking Toward a Centre for the Study of the History of the Prairie West." In this memo, sent to President Thomson and members of the Committee on Public Records, he suggested that, while much valuable material had been gathered by the archives, "American research students would probably be more interested in the documents of our farmers."³³ With this in mind, Morton opened discussions with representatives of the United Farmers and other similar farm organizations to see whether they would be willing to transfer their archives to the HPRO. He received permission to continue canvassing these organizations at a meeting of the Committee on Public Records on 3 September 1942. Morton was fully aware that the addition of material obtained from these groups would involve the broadening of the HPRO's mandate, ". . . authorizing it to receive not only the Government Archives," as he put it, "but the archives of companies incorporated by the Act of the Government and Assembly."³⁴ He was confident, however, that the expansion of the office's mandate to include these records would strengthen the university's position and go a long way towards securing financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation.³⁵

Early in 1943 the Committee on Public Records announced its intention to acquire the inactive records of corporations.³⁶ The first such documents shipped to the HPRO in December 1943 were those of the Saskatchewan Cooperative Elevator Company, a farmer-controlled enterprise incorporated in 1911 and purchased by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in 1926.³⁷ Morton's plan to attract funding from the Rockefeller Foundation bore fruit in 1943, when the foundation granted the University of Saskatchewan \$15,000 in support of Morton's valuable work to collect and preserve the history of the prairies.³⁸ Unfortunately for Morton, this money was not put towards a new facility; most of it was used to catalogue the vast holding of material acquired by him over the years.

Developments in Ottawa during World War II increased Morton's optimism regarding the future status of the HPRO as the centre for the study of western Canadian history. The files of the former Dominion Lands Branch of the Department of the Interior had not been among the archival records shipped to the western provinces after the natural resources transfer agreement in 1930. These files were stored on three floors of the Vimy Building in Ottawa, and were taking up space urgently needed for the war effort.³⁹ This sub-group consisted of millions of separate files created for each quarter-section of land homesteaded in the western provinces.⁴⁰ Case files relating to the patenting of land contained a considerable amount of information about the homesteader, including the patent application, correspondence between the Department of the Interior and the applicant, citizenship records, wills and related data. In 1942 an Order-in-Council was issued, based on a report from the Department of Mines and Resources (now responsible for the old land records), which gave the department authority to offer the records to the three western provinces.⁴¹ In the event that the provinces would not accept the files, the Department was authorized ". . . to destroy those that appear of no value. . . and retain intact in the Department or turn over to the Dominion Archivist what is expected will be a relatively small balance."⁴²

In 1943, Morton was contacted by Dr. Gustave Lanctôt, Dominion Archivist, and asked to give his opinion regarding the archival value of the Dominion Land files.

Lanctôt knew that Morton was familiar with the old Department of the Interior records as a result of his effort to reconstruct the lost correspondence files of the governing council of the North-West Territories. He informed Morton that the response of the western provinces to the offer of the land files was “rather indifferent.”⁴³ Morton replied that he was not surprised at this response. “The individual Departments of Natural Resources in the Prairie Provinces,” wrote Morton, “have nothing to do with the past. It is all the present and future with them.”⁴⁴ The only institution in the West that would be interested in caring for these records, Morton told Lanctôt, was his office at the University of Saskatchewan. Morton went on to assess the value of the land files for historical research:

A very considerable proportion would be pure routine and would have little or no historical value save as indicating the party or parties who took the land. But a smaller proportion would involve correspondence such as I saw with people who, from some trouble or another had not been able to make good the terms of their contracts. This correspondence would, in many cases, give an insight into questions of economics, . . . agricultural conditions, and history, or would expose matters which would come under the vaguer denominations of sociology. . . . As it would be very difficult to separate the valuable items out from those exemplifying mere routine without much study, it would appear to be wise to save them all—to keep the chaff for the sake of the wheat.⁴⁵

Morton had not previously considered the transfer of the homestead records to the HPRO. While working on the project to copy the missing territorial government correspondence in 1940 he had reported that “. . . it is not part of my duty to gather the immense body of documents that deal with the direct administration of the North West Territories, lands, woods, resources, etc., by the Department of the Interior, however valuable these may be.”⁴⁶ It was his view that the HPRO must consist only of documents relating to the administration of the North-West Territories and the Province of Saskatchewan; its acquisitions policy did not include purely dominion documents.⁴⁷ Fear of the imminent destruction of the land files, however, led Morton to take steps to secure storage space for the entire holding at the university. His motives for wishing to acquire and preserve these records were not entirely disinterested, however; he realized that the possession of the homestead documents would, in his words, “. . . make the Historical Public Records Office the leading institution of the West for historical research.”⁴⁸

Morton wanted, and indeed expected, to obtain all the land files stored in the Vimy Building. He was convinced, he told Simpson, that when Lanctôt spoke of the Dominion Land files “. . . he means everything and not just the files of the Patents. There must be no mistake here.”⁴⁹ Morton was primarily interested in the general correspondence files relating to government policy in the North-West Territories. The homestead files, Morton believed, had only limited value for historical research, as they often revealed only information about individual homesteaders and not about broader issues of government policy *vis-a-vis* the West. He advised Lanctôt that should the land files be transferred to him, he would be willing to prepare copies of finding aids for the other provinces. Clearly, Morton envisioned the HPRO as a centrally located research facility serving the entire western region.

Morton's hopes to receive the entire holding were dashed at the end of 1943, however, when he learned that the Alberta government, while refusing to accept its share of the land files, objected to Alberta documents being transferred to Saskatchewan.⁵⁰ Morton was also notified by Lanctôt that Manitoba now wanted its own files.⁵¹ Lanctôt went on to advise Morton that, thanks to their joint intervention, the documents no longer faced the danger of destruction. "...[W]e have succeeded in weathering the storm," Lanctôt wrote, "[and we are] not pressed by an urgent necessity as before."⁵² Thus, the Department of Mines and Resources in Ottawa was able to undertake a more careful assessment of the land files and work out a clear policy for their disposal.

In the early months of 1944, Morton travelled to Ottawa at the request of the Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources, Dr. Camsell, to examine the land files more closely and make recommendations on their archival value and ultimate disposal. He spent ten days familiarizing himself with typical homestead files. In his report outlining his findings and recommendations, Morton first renewed his appeal to have the general correspondence files come to Saskatchewan. He then turned his attention to the bulk of the sub-group—the homestead files. He recommended that while "... a large portion of [this material] is formal. . . repetition of the usual formula," the homestead files should not be destroyed.⁵³ Morton's reasons for making this recommendation reveal the interesting choices facing archivists as they acquire material for later generations of researchers.

The main reason for keeping the homestead files, Morton argued, was to protect the provincial governments from future claims against them. The documents should be preserved, he said, "...in the interest of the Government itself."⁵⁴ Documents in these files would also be useful in answering enquiries concerning proof of age or naturalization. Historians studying agricultural, economic or sociological problems in the West would find practical information in the files—especially in those of homesteaders who had failed to meet their patent obligations. The documents would be of great assistance, Morton went on, in the study of settlement patterns and the history of settlement on the prairies. "Of course," Morton concluded, "it is impossible to anticipate the ways in which such a mass of material would prove of use to the different types of historians. . ."⁵⁵ Indeed, Morton could not have anticipated that the homestead files now housed by the SAB has become one of the most frequently used holdings in the provincial archives. Yet by suggesting a wide range of possible uses for the land records, Morton played a key role in guaranteeing that they were preserved and thereby made available to researchers.

Officials of the Department of Mines and Resources asked Morton to consult with the appropriate parties in the other western provinces regarding possible arrangements for the transfer of land records. Morton was instrumental—as a result of his meetings with university and government representatives in Alberta and Manitoba—in getting the respective governments to make provisions for the organization and care of their public records. The outcome of his trip to Alberta, for example, was the appointment of a committee to look into the establishment of a public records office in that province, although it was still uncertain whether Alberta would accept its files from the federal government.⁵⁶ In the conclusion of his report to University of Saskatchewan president J.S. Thomson, Morton warned, "While Saskatchewan has been leading the West in this matter, should Manitoba and Alberta establish Departments of Public Records at the close of the war, they may well overshadow us unless we plan to provide for the future."⁵⁷ No further action on this matter was taken for several years. Negotiations with Alberta

and the clerical work involved in sorting out the files of each province held up the transfer of the documents to Saskatchewan until the end of 1956, when approximately 200,000 homestead files in 3,800 document boxes were finally shipped to the SAB.⁵⁸

The pending transfer of the Dominion Land files pointed up the urgent need for a more adequate archival facility at the University of Saskatchewan. There was a serious obstacle, however, preventing the acquisition of such a facility. The joint archival enterprise between the university and the government, with its many advantages, had one major disadvantage: it was a completely informal arrangement. The HPRO had no legislative authority on which to base its existence. There was no board supervising the office or the implementation of its archival policy. The inadequacy of this situation became increasingly clear as the archives holdings grew. Morton's energetic efforts to acquire archival materials relating to Saskatchewan found the HPRO bursting at the seams and in desperate need of a larger facility, within four years of its creation. Originally situated in the basement of Saskatchewan Hall, the HPRO had moved to a larger location in the School for the Deaf (just off campus) in the fall of 1942, in order to accommodate the records of farm organizations. Morton estimated that the land records would require approximately 3,000 linear feet of shelving, and he attempted to secure temporary storage space for them until proper quarters could be constructed.⁵⁹ President Thomson advised Morton that while the Board of Governors generally supported the present plan to make the university a repository for provincial government records, they were somewhat concerned about the possible financial obligations which they might incur by accepting the large number of land files from Ottawa.⁶⁰ While the university's Board of Governors had agreed to finance the operating costs of the HPRO in the late 1930s, they were unwilling to seek funding from the provincial government for a new archival facility in the early 1940s, when the university was facing more pressing problems, such as the education of veterans and obtaining money for scientific research and medical education.⁶¹

Morton realized that if a proper facility for his office was to be built, the informal arrangement between the university and the government would have to be put on a statutory basis. The election of a new provincial government in the spring of 1944 led to more uncertainties regarding the future of the HPRO. The Committee on Public Records was reduced to two members—Morton and Simpson—with the loss of the members from the defeated Liberal administration. It was also not immediately clear whether the Commonwealth Co-operative Federation (CCF) administration would be committed to the preservation of public documents. As it turned out, there was no cause for concern. The new government proved to be receptive to Morton's appeal for support. When T.C. Douglas became premier of the province, he found that "only empty cabinets" had been left behind by Patterson's Liberal administration.⁶² All of the correspondence had been removed from the Premier's office and from other departments as well. This situation prompted the government to consider very seriously a public records policy for the province.⁶³

Late in 1944, Morton called for an archives Act to formalize the existing situation. The CCF administration heeded Morton's call. J.H. Sturdy, Minister of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation, was appointed as liaison member of the Committee on Public Records. Morton advised Sturdy of the urgent need for archives legislation, and sent him a detailed description of the current system, as well as copies of archives legislation from other provinces.⁶⁴ Early in January 1945, Sturdy informed Morton that the

government intended to introduce an archives bill at the coming session. Morton was delighted; unfortunately, he did not live to see the passage of the *Archives Act* that spring. After Morton died on 26 January 1945, Simpson wrote to Sturdy and conveyed to him Morton's gratitude for the government's interest in developing an archival policy. "To him," Simpson wrote, "it was a sort of crowning to his life's ambition that provincial historical studies should be placed on a sound and permanent basis."⁶⁵

The *Archives Act* assented to on 30 March 1945 formalized the scheme of cooperation between the University of Saskatchewan and the provincial government.⁶⁶ The responsibilities of the two parties were clearly defined. A board of five was created, with two members to be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and two to be appointed by the Board of Governors of the university. The fifth member was to be the Legislative Librarian, while the Provincial Archivist—also to be appointed by the Board of Governors—was designated Secretary of the Archives Board. Provision was made for annual payments to the university for the maintenance of the Saskatchewan Archives by the government. Contrary to Morton's rigid definition of a "public records office," the institution became known as the Archives of Saskatchewan, and its acquisitions policy was broadened to include all types of printed material bearing on the history of Saskatchewan.

There was some debate in the Legislature concerning the location of the archives office on the Saskatoon campus. Opposition leader Patterson contended that public records were the property of the province and should remain directly under the control and administration of the provincial government.⁶⁷ Sturdy argued, as Morton had, that maximum use of historical documents could be made at the educational centre where they would be most accessible to students.⁶⁸ An Archives office memorandum later confirmed this assertion:

The existence of this office [at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon]. . . increases the amount of research in the economic, social, and political background of present day Saskatchewan to an extent to which would not be possible if archival facilities were confined to Regina; this result is of benefit to the government and is also a significant contribution to the cultural life of the province.⁶⁹

In fact, according to one eminent scholar, the large volume of historical research done on Saskatchewan in comparison to its two neighbouring provinces can be attributed to the division of the provincial archives between the university and the Legislative Library inspired by Morton. "Ease of access to a large selection of well-catalogued public and private records," declares political scientist David Smith, "accounts in large part for the province's publishing record."⁷⁰

Morton's work to preserve the public records of Saskatchewan in an archival setting was thus enormously influential. The existence of the HPRO—later the Archives of Saskatchewan—at the University of Saskatchewan proved to be a powerful stimulant for research, historical and otherwise, in the province. The large number of documents held by the archives has facilitated the broadening of the range of western Canadian studies.⁷¹ New fields of investigation such as social and cultural history have illuminated previously neglected aspects of western Canada's past. Morton anticipated these historiographical changes—changes which he knew would require a solid body of well-organized source material. In 1943 Morton wrote to Premier Patterson thanking him

for supporting the preservation of Saskatchewan's heritage. In that letter, Morton predicted the expansion of prairie scholarship—an expansion which his archival work had helped to foster:

I believe that the writing up of our political history is coming to a close. We cannot keep on forever discussing Responsible Government! Already books have been appearing on the problems of more recent settlement which throw light on the necessities of today. Then too, volumes are being written on the various lines of industry—the lumber industry, the dairy industry and the like. . . It shows the way. . . the wind is blowing.⁷²

Notes

- 1 Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton to Prof. A.R.M. Lower, 24 February 1944.
- 2 SAB, Office Records, A.1, Morton to Prof. M.H. Long, 5 February 1942.
- 3 University Archives (UA), Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to Major Barnett, 8 January 1930.
- 4 Morton believed that historians should be trained in the principles of archival organization. In the early 1940s, he proposed a scholarship scheme for junior members of history staffs to conduct archival research at the University of Saskatchewan, and at the same time organize their source material. SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Rockefeller Foundation and the Historical Public Records Office," 1 September 1943; UA, Morton Papers, II.32, A.S. Morton, "Looking Toward a Centre for the Study of the History of the Prairie West," October 1941.
- 5 *First Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board*, 1945-46, p. 14.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 7 *Second Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board*, 1946-47, pp. 29-30, copy, Walter Murray to Walter Scott, 19 January 1911.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Regina Leader*, 1 February 1911, p. 1.
- 10 Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto, 1987), pp. 275; 283.
- 11 *First Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board*, 1945-46, p. 14; SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Historical Public Records Office, 31 October 1944."
- 12 SAB, Office Records, A.18, A.S. Morton, "The Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," 23 May 1944.
- 13 *First Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board*, 1945-46, p. 15.
- 14 Doug Bocking, "The Records Go West: Department of Interior Records in the Saskatchewan Archives," *Archivaria* 25 (Winter 1987-88), p. 107.
- 15 UA, Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to Barnett, 8 January 1930.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Brown, George, "A Practical Plea," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 15 (1934), pp. 245-47; Brown, George, "The Archives in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 16 (1935), pp. 1-19.
- 18 UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, George Brown to Morton, 6 October 1934.
- 19 SAB, Office Records, A.1, Morton to Estey, 14 Sept. 1936.
- 20 *Ibid.*, Morton to Prof. M.H. Long, 5 Feb. 1942.
- 21 UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, Estey to Morton, 2 Feb. 1937.
- 22 SAB, Office Records, A.1, "Minutes of the Committee on the Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," 13 Jan. 1938.
- 23 Murray had a personal motive for promoting a provincial archives: he was anxious to secure a comfortable retirement plan for his old friend Morton. Morton was due to retire from teaching in 1938; however, he wished to continue his research activities as long as he was able. Financial constraints made it unlikely that Morton could support this work on his pension alone. During the 1930s, faculty salaries at the universities had been significantly reduced owing to adverse economic conditions. Morton's salary had been cut by twenty-five per cent, and this factor, combined with the expenses that he had incurred during his travels back and forth to Ottawa and London to conduct his research, had left him with very little savings for retirement. Michael Hayden, *Seeking a Balance: The University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1982* (Vancouver, 1983), pp. 161-2; UA, Morton Papers, I.12, Morton to George Brown, 22 Apr. 1937.
- 24 UA, Board of Governors Minutes, 10 April 1937 and 17 April 1937.

- 25 Ibid.
- 26 SAB, Office Records, A.18, A.S. Morton, "The Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," 23 May 1944, p. 2.
- 27 Ibid., p. 2.
- 28 SAB, Office Records, A.1, Morton to Prof. M.H. Long, 5 Feb. 1942.
- 29 Sir Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archives Administration* (London, 1937).
- 30 SAB, Office Records, A.1, "Minutes of the Committee of the Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," 13 Jan. 1938.
- 31 SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Rockefeller Foundation and the Historical Public Records Office," 1 Sept. 1942.
- 32 UA, Morton Papers, 11.32, A.S. Morton, "Looking Toward a Centre for the Study of the History of the Prairie West," Oct., 1941, p. 4.
- 33 Ibid., p. 2.
- 34 SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Rockefeller Foundation and the Historical Public Records Office," 1 Sept. 1942.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 SAB, Office Records, A.1, press release, 6 Feb. 1943.
- 37 Morton also arranged to acquire the archives of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, although this plan had to be deferred in the fall of 1944 due to the pressing need for the transfer of provincial government records. T.C. Douglas, premier of the recently-elected CCF administration, visited Morton at his office and informed him that the Department of Natural Resources was pressed for space and wanted the HPRO to take over their inactive documents. "Valuable as is the material of the Grain Growers' Association," Morton wrote to committee member George Simpson, "it would appear to be our first duty to care for the Public Records of the Province and we should make it our chief aim to help the Departments in Regina solve their archival problems." SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re Historical Public Records Office, 31 October 1944."
- 38 Regina *Leader-Post*, 14 Sept. 1943, p. 4.
- 39 SAB, Office Records, A.18, G. Lanctôt to Morton, 26 Oct. 1943.
- 40 Lanctôt originally estimated that there were 40,000,000 files. Ibid. This estimate was later revised to approximately 3,000,000 files. SAB, Office Records, A.18, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Documents of the Defunct Dominion Department of the Interior," 27 Jan. 1944.
- 41 SAB, Office Records, A.18, Copy of P.C. 10772, 26 Nov. 1942.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 SAB, Office Records, A.18, Lanctôt to Morton, 5 Oct. 1943.
- 44 SAB, Office Records, A.18, Morton to Lanctôt, 16 Oct. 1943.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Report of the Historical Public Records Office of the Province of Saskatchewan, 1939-40," n.d.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 SAB Office Records, A.1, Minutes of the Committee on Public Records, 7 Dec. 1943.
- 49 SAB, Office Records, A.18, Morton to Simpson, 19 Nov. 1943.
- 50 SAB, Office Records, A.18, Prof. G.E. Britnell to Simpson, 27 Nov. 1943.
- 51 SAB, Office Records, A.18, Lanctôt to Morton, 16 Dec. 1943.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 SAB, Office Records, A.18, "Report by A.S. Morton on his Visits to Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Edmonton re the Disposal of the Documents of the Old Department of the Interior," n.d., p. 3.
- 54 Ibid., p. 4.
- 55 Ibid., p. 5.
- 56 Ibid., p. 9.
- 57 Ibid., p. 10.
- 58 SAB, Office Records, A.18, "Report on the Servicing of Homestead Inquiries and the Need and Possibility of Making an Alphabetical Index," Fall, 1958. With the receipt of the homestead files, the SAB undertook, for the first time, to service inquiries from the general public. Within one month after the arrival of these files, an archives employee reported that "... it appears that we can expect a fairly steady stream of [homestead] inquiries. ..." A report written in the fall of 1958 stated, "Since the homestead files for Saskatchewan were transferred to this office. ... there have been over 700 inquiries for information from the files." By 1960, most of the inquiries at the Saskatoon office had to do with the homestead records. The phenomenal growth of interest in genealogy and local history in recent decades further increased the

- demands placed on the reference service of the SAB. The chief source of information for this type of research is the extensive holdings of land records saved from destruction and transferred to Saskatchewan thanks in part to the efforts of A.S. Morton. *Ninth Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1958-60*, p. 13; SAB, Office Records, A. 18, E. Eager to L.H. Thomas, 18 January 1957; *Ibid.*, "Report on the Servicing of Homestead Inquiries and the Need and Possibility of Making an Alphabetical Index," Fall, 1958; *Sixteenth Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1972-74*, pp. 12-14.
- 59 SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Possible Development of the Historical Public Records Office of the Province of Saskatchewan at the University, Saskatoon,: n.d.
- 60 SAB, Office Records, A.18, Thomson to Morton, 20 December 1943. Thomson also wondered about the advisability of storing the documents on campus. "...[T]here is not a great deal of space left around the University, and there does not seem to be much sense in bringing documents merely to have them stored," he wrote to Morton. "They should be made available for reference and study and this requires some kind of accommodation in which they will become accessible." SAB, Office Records, Thomson to Morton, 30 December 1943.
- 61 Michael Hayden, *Seeking a Balance*, p. 195.
- 62 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, 25 July 1944.
- 63 SAB, Office Records, A.S. Morton, "Report of A.S. Morton's Visit to Regina of 8, 9, 10 January 1945," n.d.
- 64 "On the whole," Morton asserted, "the other Provinces have neglected their archives grossly, and have not much to teach us, except, possibly, in their legislation." SAB, Office Records, A.1, Morton to Sturdy, 26 December 1944; SAB, a.2, A.S. Morton, "Memorandum. The Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," n.d.
- 65 SAB, Office Records, A.2, Simpson to Sturdy, 31 Jan. 1945.
- 66 SAB, Office Records, A.2. Copy, Bill No. 49, Assented to 30 March 1945.
- 67 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, 22 March 1945.
- 68 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, 17 March 1945.
- 69 SAB, Office Records, A.2, "Work Program; Archives," n.d.
- 70 David Smith, "Celebrations and History on the Prairies," *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 17 (Autumn 1982), p. 46.
- 71 Shortly after the founding of the HPRO, studies were undertaken by faculty and students in the College of Education regarding the history of the school system of the North-West Territories. Vernon C. Fowke, author of *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* (Toronto, 1957), used the records of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company for his research during the 1940s. Recent works have proven the scholarly value of the homestead records transferred to the Archives of Saskatchewan in the 1950s. Researchers investigating ethnic and group settlement and the history of settlement have added much to our understanding of western Canadian history. As well, the homestead records hold enormous potential for scholars employing quantitative research techniques. SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Report of the Historical Public Records Office, 1939-40"; UA, Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to Col. Styles, 29 Nov. 1943; Diane Payment, *Batoche, 1870-1910* (Winnipeg, 1983).
- 72 UA, Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to W.J. Patterson, 29 Nov. 1943.