

d'inspiration pour les services d'archives dans le développement de projets d'exposition adaptés aux conditions actuelles de diffusion et à des ressources limitées.

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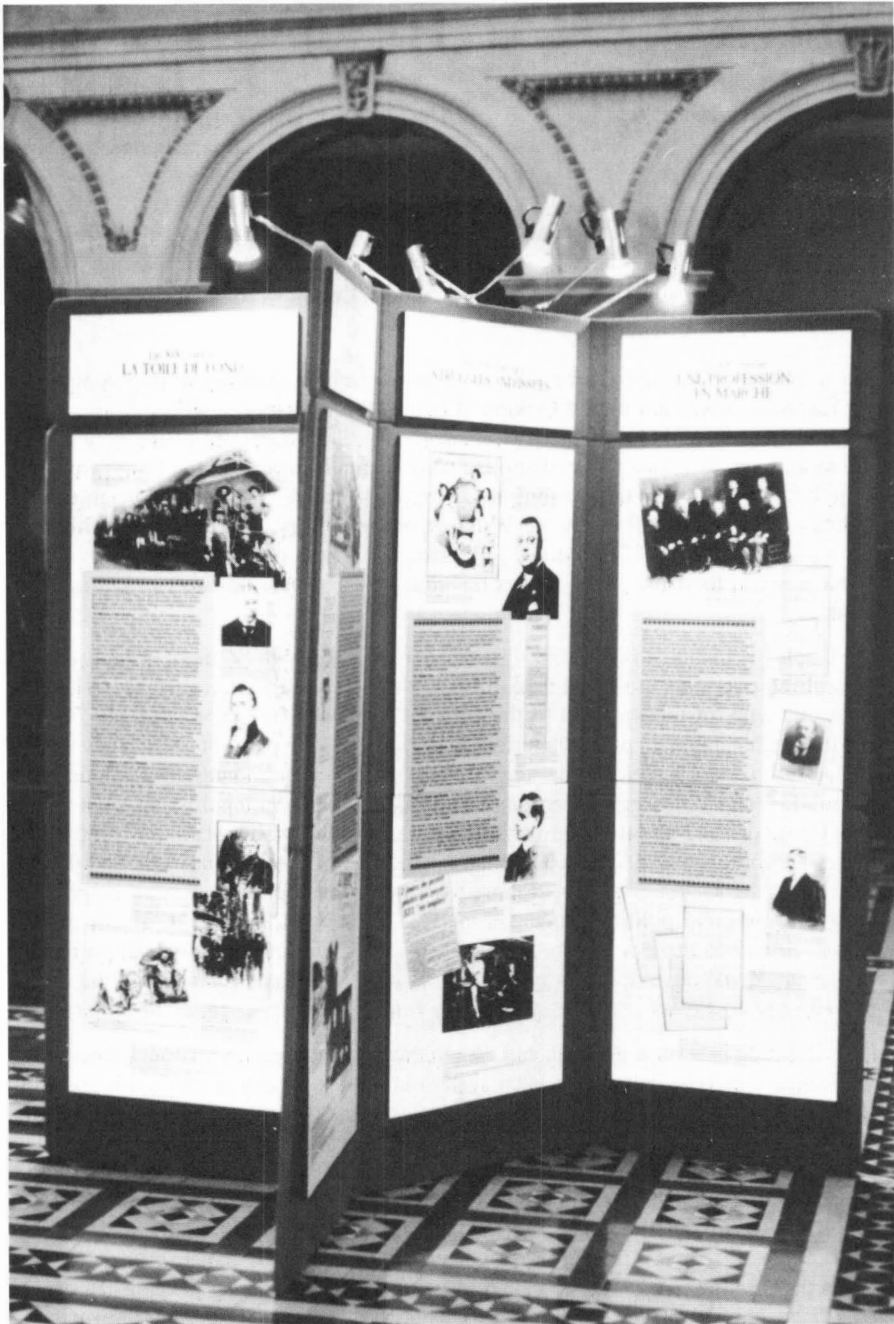
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Dieu et mon Droit: The French Fact and the Law in Ontario, 1760-1990. THE LAW SOCIETY OF UPPER CANADA ARCHIVES. Mounted at the Essex County Court House, 13 May - 5 June 1992, and at the Windsor Public Library, Main Branch, 10 June - 26 June 1992. No catalogue.

It was a unique opportunity to be able to view the same exhibition in two venues. In many respects, it was not unlike looking at two different displays. While in the Essex County Court House in May, *Dieu et mon Droit* occupied a dark, out-of-the-way corner in the modern court-house foyer. Captions were difficult to read in the light provided, and the initial response to the exhibition was rather negative. In the much brighter surroundings of the second floor of the Windsor Main Library, however, the exhibition took on a whole new look. Examined in this venue, it was much more pleasing to the eye; yet many of its faults could neither be hidden by darkness nor overlooked in good lighting.

The display is mounted on four six-faced panels, set two high, without header panels. The resulting two units are fitted back-to-back to give a total of ten surfaces. The display begins with an introduction to the concept, followed by "The Origins," which describes the development of the Ontario legal system and the place of French law within it. "The 19th Century: Setting the Stage" looks at the Franco-Ontarian community in that period. "The 20th Century: Struggles and Issues" details legal issues such as the School Crisis of 1912 and the guardianship of the Dionne quintuplets in the 1930s, and provides photographs of prominent French lawyers in Ontario. "The 20th Century: A Profession in the Making" gives yet more prominent francophone lawyers, judges and those who went on to political careers. Finally, "Dieu et Mon Droit: L'avenir du fait français" describes the availability of legal services in French, legal education in that language, bilingual developments in the Law Society of Upper Canada and the effect of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* upon francophone legal rights in Ontario.

The exhibition is at once pleasing and disappointing. It represents an honest attempt to place Franco-Ontarians within the legal system in an historical context; yet it goes too far in including aspects of that community's social history, and not far enough in its legal history. In the opening panel, for example, too much attention is given to the arrival of the Loyalists — including the obligatory C.W. Jefferys print of the Loyalists drawing lots for land — and not enough to either French law prior to 1791 or the impact of the common law on existing French settlements. Considering the existing settlements, moreover, a couple of maps would have been very useful. In the early panels especially, one showing these settlements while a second in later segments showing present-day designated bilingual areas of the province would have given the viewer important information.



Dieu et mon Droit *Exhibition*. Courtesy Elise Brunet. Law Society of Upper Canada Archives.

In the section dealing with the nineteenth century, photographs show Franco-Ontarians in stereotypical roles, such as lumberjacks and haymowers. Did these occupations make a difference in their interaction with the legal system in Ontario? Are we looking at social history, or the history of French fact in Ontario's legal system? The selection of photographs of individuals was for the most part commendable but there were some details missing. François Caron, for example, is noted as being a police magistrate in the 1860s. While this is accurate, it does not inform the viewer that Caron was in fact Windsor's first police magistrate. Paul Martin is noted as being legal counsel for the Dionnes — what is not stated is that he himself came from a francophone family in the Ottawa Valley. That information could have made a real difference in the final section, considering the variety of very important government offices and portfolios held by this francophone lawyer.

Nevertheless, what makes the exhibition work as well as it does is the professionalism of its curators, for one has a very clear impression that the Law Society of Upper Canada is energetically trying to document the French fact in Ontario's legal system. The photographs are good reproductions, the captions are short, clear and direct, and where there is text, it is well-written. The problems of change of venue are experienced by most travelling exhibitions, and could only be overcome by additional lighting or perhaps installation by the staff of the Law Society of Upper Canada Archives themselves. These options are simply not open to most small archives; LSUC gets full marks for at least moving the exhibition out and around the province. It was a most worthwhile undertaking.

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