



TRENT UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES NEWS

Number 7, September 2003

Of all national assets archives are the most precious; they are the gift of one generation to another and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization.

Arthur G. Doughty, Dominion Archivist
The Canadian Archives and its Activities
Ottawa, 1924.

Thomas H.B. Symons, Chairman of the Commission on Canadian Studies from 1972 to 1984, drew upon Arthur G. Doughty's famous quote (above) to introduce a chapter on Archives in the Commission's landmark publication, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada: Ottawa, 1975. Vol.II, p.69). Stating that "no single subject, as Sir Arthur Doughty's words remind us, is of greater importance to the future of Canadian studies than the state of our country's archives (ibid)," the report addressed the idea of Canadian uni-

versities assuming a record-keeping role in the preservation of Canada's evidential past.

Symons played a pivotal role in bringing about new directions and unprecedented vigor to Canadian Studies in Canada and abroad. Canadian archivists, in particular, responded with enthusiasm to the Commission report and set about revitalizing the entire Canadian archival system. Within a very short time, the Association of Canadian Archivists was founded, and the first issue of Canadian archives journal, *Archivaria*, was published.

President Thomas H.B. Symons, ca. 1964



Photo credit: Gerald Campbell

The Commission's vision of a national archival system assigns to the universities a pivotal role as local agents for the diffusion programme and as catalysts in the development of the archival resources of their respective regions. Archival programmes are another important area of Canadian studies through which the universities of Canada should serve their own communities and assist them to gain that measure of self-knowledge essential for healthy development.

To Know Ourselves. Vol.II, p.82

If archives were ever regarded as quiet scholarly enclaves, such an image would be shattered by a visit to the reference room of any Canadian archives today. These are bustling places, with researchers of all interests, of all backgrounds and at every level of research experience gaining insight from the records of our past.

Canadian Archives: Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Ottawa, 1980), p.5

President Symons Seeks Historic Papers for Trent

Prior to Thomas H. B. Symons' role as Chairman of the Commission on Canadian Studies and its subsequent impact on Canadian Archives, it is apparent that he was actively pursuing donations of documents of historical significance for the newly established Trent University. As Trent's founding president, Symons wrote a letter to a local newspaper (see excerpt) asking the public to consider donating their collections of family papers to Trent. The community responded and the University acquired several important archival collections, some of which include the *Pengelley family fonds*, the *Helen Marryat fonds*, the *Captain Charles Rubidge fonds*, and the *Katharine E. Wallis fonds*. In addition, Symons personally arranged to have the *Perkins-Bull Collection* of engravings deposited at Trent on permanent loan. These papers will serve students of Canadian culture for generations to come.

[Letter to *Peterborough Examiner*, ca. 1964]

Seeking historic papers

Sir: It is the hope of the Faculty and Board of Trent University that the University will become a centre for Canadian Studies.... Trent University is willing and prepared to undertake to gather together and to preserve, under the care of its Library, such historic papers and documents as may become available to it—perhaps in particular, although certainly not exclusively, the papers and documents pertaining to the history and culture of this area of the country...

....If Trent is to become a significant centre for Canadian Studies, as is hoped, it is essential that the University should become a repository of many documents, early papers, collections of family correspondence, diaries, minute books, et cetera, which illustrate and illuminate the history of this community and nation.

*Yours sincerely,
T.H.B. Symons
President and Vice-Chancellor*

The Pengelley family fonds

20 July, 1966

....

*Dear Miss Pengelley,
Mr. Wilfred F. Huycke has told me of your thoughtfulness in proposing to bequeath to Trent University a number of interesting articles inherited from your father which may be described as the "Brock relics" which include and consist of all diaries, maps, letters, sketches, albums... and especially the miniature palette and paint box of Harriet Catherine Brock, daughter of Daniel Delisle Brock, Governor of the Isle of Guernsey and niece of Sir Isaac Brock, who married your grandfather, Captain Robert Lamport Pengelley, R.N....*

*Yours sincerely,
[signed]
T.H.B. Symons,
President and Vice-Chancellor*

Harriet Catherine Brock Pengelley
(ca. 1812-1836)



Photo taken from a miniature painting

Our web address: <http://www.trentu.ca/library/archives>

Helen Marryat fonds

Helen Fowlds Marryat
1889-1965

Trent University Press Release
12 February 1966

[excerpt]

.... *The items which have come to Trent from Mrs. Marryat's estate are rich in local historical content. They include extensive files of Hastings' newspapers; books and papers relating to the Trent Valley; documents and papers relating to Hastings and to the Fowlds family, of which Mrs. Marryat was a member; a collection of her own manuscripts and clippings files, and early maps and pictures of the area. Amongst the pictures are a number of very attractive paintings and sketches of the region done by the Reverend M.A. Farrar in the 1860's and 1870's....*



Captain Charles Rubidge, 1787-1873

Captain Charles Rubidge fonds



30 June, 1964.

....

Dear Miss Battersby,

Thank you for your kindness in calling at the University yesterday and in bringing with you the mementos of Captain Rubidge. We are delighted to have these items associated with the distinguished Peterborough pioneer in whose honour we have named our first building....

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

T.H.B. Symons,

President and Vice-Chancellor

Trent University Press Release
26 February 1965

[excerpt]

.... *The collected papers of Katherine E. Wallis, the internationally-known Canadian artist, have been presented to Trent University by her nephew, Colonel Hugh M. Wallis... The papers include letters, photographs, diaries, sketchbooks, poetry, newspaper clippings, accounts, an unpublished autobiography, and other materials in nine bound volumes.... President Symons noted that Katherine Wallis had been born in Peterborough and that it was fitting that her papers should return here.*

Katherine E. Wallis fonds



Katherine Wallis (1860-1957), with self-sculpture

The Perkins Bull Collection

12 April, 1964

*Dear Jack [Martin],
There is in the Bull Collection quite a group of 18th & 19th Century engravings etc—most of which portray British or Canadian statesmen, or scenes of interest to the social historian. I wonder if the Trent University Library might care to have these on indefinite loan?*

....

*Sincerely,
Tom [Symons]*



Trent University Press Release
10 June 1964

Trent University has been given an extensive collection of three hundred historical pictures and maps, it was announced today by the President and Vice-Chancellor, T.H.B. Symons....

The Collection includes:

- 1. Pictures and cartoons concerning Canadian public figures, events and scenes.*
- 2. Historical maps relating to Canadian history.*

....

Professor Symons' interest in Canadian history and culture, and in higher education, influenced the development, direction, or policies of several organizations, projects, and journals, such as the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM), Journal of Canadian Studies, Association for Canadian Studies, Association of Commonwealth Universities, National Library of Canada, and National Archives of Canada.

Newsletter Editor: Jodi Aoki

Hours of Operation:

Monday to Friday - 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Please make an appointment to ensure access. We are located on the first floor of Bata Library.

TRENT UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES THOMAS J. BATA LIBRARY PETERBOROUGH, ON CANADA K9J 7B8

Telephone: (705)748-1011x1413 fax: (705)748-1126 email: archives@trentu.ca

Visit our web site: <http://www.trentu.ca/library/archives>