

Now, however, a systematic effort is being made to recover these basic evidences of title, and there have been some surprising "finds." But the services of the Archives to the people of Canada from this point of view, as well as from the point of view of history and national inspiration, are as yet only in their beginnings.

The practical, too, was the chief motive of other more or less systematic efforts to preserve our national records, down to comparatively recent date. Interest in the subject was spasmodic. The safety of the records was one of the stipulations made in the terms on which Canada was ceded to the British Crown. They were mentioned in no less than three articles signed by General Amherst at the capitulation of Montreal. At one stage in the war, indeed, the French Government sought to provide for the safe-keeping of important papers by transferring them to Paris, but the effort in one instance was effective in quite another manner than that intended. The vessel carrying the records, of 1758 was captured by the British, and the Canadian public documents of that year were stored in the Admiralty building in Ireland.

The first systematic effort after the cession to arrange and protect the records was made by Lord Dorchester in 1787. At the instance of the Governor two committees were appointed, one at Quebec and the other at Montreal, and an examination in detail was made of the records in these cities and at Three Rivers. The work of these committees occupied three years. A catalogue of the records was made and seven hundred copies were printed for distribution. While the examination was in progress two separate memorials were presented to the committees for the erection of a "fireproof" building for the safe-keeping of the archives, but in each case the matter was left over for action later, as it had been

by the French authorities when Intendant Hocquart made his urgent appeal. For a time the records were kept in the private residence of Mr. P. Am. DeBonne, keeper of the records, but later sufficient attention was paid to the warnings to have them transferred to the vaults of the palace of the Bishop of Quebec.

The mere question of the safety of the records on which the whole civil organisation of the country rested, could not long retain the attention of the authorities, however. After the inauguration of the new order of events under the Constitutional Act, politics rapidly became the absorbing occupation of the Governors and of the executive generally. The archives were forgotten in the turmoil of the battles between the Assemblies and the Governors, and the next occasion on which thought was taken for them appears to have been after the quieter waters of United Canada had been attained. This time the name attached to the revival of interest in the archives is that of one of the salient figures in our brief history. The fiery French leader, Louis Joseph Papineau, had, after the troubles of '37, gone to the United States and later to France. The Papineau family was not, nevertheless, without its representative in the political life of Canada, his brother, D. B. Papineau, being a member of the second Draper Administration in the middle forties. Family influence doubtless counted for much in those days, but one can understand that there would be commendable motives which would render the Government of the day desirous of finding public and honourable employment for the former "tribune of the people," now defeated and powerless. Be that as it may, it is a fact that the strenuous politician of pre-union days was, while still in France, asked to make certain inquiries as to the early records of the old French colony. The commission was given to Papineau during the term of Baron