

First Atlantic Cable.

In preparing this paper the intention was to confine the subjects to those only that had a bearing on the material advancement of Ottawa, or were likely to be of personal interest to its citizens. There was, however, one general Act passed in the year 1874, in the enacting of which the writer took a prominent part, and which five years later he saved from being repealed in a manner unique in the history of legislation, the record of which ought to be preserved, and may prove interesting reading especially at the present time, when public attention is being called to the importance of a state owned Atlantic cable.

Up till the year 1874 the Anglo-American Cable Co. enjoyed a practical monopoly of telegraphic communication between Europe and the Continent of America. In that year the McKenzie administration decided that the time had arrived for competition. An Act was therefore introduced, permitting Cable Companies to be chartered by the Governor in Council, and providing rules to be observed on the landing of cables on the shores of Canada.

As the Government had a large following in the Commons no opposition was offered to the measure in that Chamber. The writer had charge of the Bill in the Senate where the Liberals were in a minority. The passage of the Bill in the Upper Chamber was bitterly contested, and as private interests were affected it was sent to a special committee. Among those who appeared before that body was Cyrus Field, one of the pioneers in the cable enterprise. He pleaded earnestly for a continuance of the Company's exclusive privileges. He described the many costly failures and reverses his associates and himself had met with before the final triumph, adding with tears in his eyes that on one occasion he had to pledge the contents of his family picture gallery to raise funds at a time when all confidence in the venture was gone. Notwithstanding the opposition, the Bill was carried by a majority of seven.