

Calgary Herald
Sept. 24 /37.

Looking Backward

TODAY IN CANADIAN HISTORY

TWO hundred and ninety years ago today, on September 24, 1647, Father Vimont, the great leader of missions in New France, laid the corner stone of the church of Notre Dame at Quebec, more familiarly known as the Basilica. Thus was begun an edifice which withstood three sieges of the city, though damaged in all three bombardments and escaped destruction by the many fires of oldtime Quebec, only to fall a prey to flames in December, 1922. Its successor is magnificent, but it lacks the history of the ancient church, wherein so many important religious and political events took place. Father Vimont had five years before accompanied Maisonneuve at the founding of Montreal and there predicted the wonderful growth of the French in Canada.

Louis Joseph Papineau, the reformer of Lower Canada, died on September 24, 1870 at his seignior's Montebello, on the Ottawa river, nine years after William Lyon Mackenzie. Papineau took refuge from the law after 1837, first in the United States and then in France; but, unlike Mackenzie, did not become an incendiary trying to provoke attacks upon Canada. Indeed, he was accused by many critics of having abandoned his people and not striving to aid them from without, which probably accounts for the fact that after his return in 1845, and he was back in the assembly (1847-54) he, like Mackenzie, found that, although their eloquence was still in evidence, their influence had passed. And so it was that Papineau, also like Mackenzie, became a bitter fighter against all policies but his own.

● King, Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie (MG
26 J 7 volume 23) William Lyon Mackenzie
- re: articles - Western newspapers
● n.d., 1909-1948

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