

The Archives of the Archdiocese of Kingston

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A young Scottish priest, the Reverend Alexander MacDonell, and his poor flock came out to this land at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the wild and far-flung region of Upper Canada for which he had responsibility as a Vicar General of the Diocese of Quebec, he found only two churches and three priests. He strove diligently to establish new churches, obtain priests from Ireland and Scotland, and establish schools and schoolmasters in all parts of the province. He was accustomed to travelling about two thousand miles a year by any means available. This he continued to do until he was well into his seventies. Many times he crossed the Atlantic for the purpose of recruiting new settlers, clergy and financial support for his territory.

In 1819, Alexander MacDonell was consecrated a bishop and in 1826 became the first bishop of the first diocese established in the British Empire since the time of the Reformation. It was as bishop of Kingston that he returned to the British Isles for the last time. In a memorial written by him, he states that he left behind him seventy-seven churches and over one hundred priests. Bishop MacDonell died in Scotland in January of 1840.

Fortunately, a large amount of historical material from these early years has been preserved in the form of letters, bills, receipts, various documents, both civil and ecclesiastical, as well as a number of letter books, pictures, books, a few pieces of furniture and other memorabilia.

From the time of bishop James Cleary, in the 1880's, many attempts have been made to have a comprehensive and authoritative history of the diocese written but none of these attempts met with noteworthy success. Aside from the time involved and the magnitude of the project, one notable drawback has always been the fact that the archives of the Archdiocese had never been catalogued. Most of the material had been loosely grouped and stuffed into envelopes. The entire collection was stored in a steel filing cabinet in the vault off the Archbishop's office on the second floor of the Archbishop's residence.

In the summer of 1968, the author served as a Deacon in the Cathedral parish. Part of the time was to be spent in the work on the archives in response to a request from Queen's University for access to the material for research purposes. That summer, most of the approximately 3,300 books in

the library on the fourth floor of the Archbishop's residence were catalogued.

After the ordination of the author in May of 1969, the appointment as archivist was made official. Work was begun to unfold and sort through the letters and other documents preparatory to cataloguing. The Dominion Archives in Ottawa have asked to microfilm the collection when it will be ready.

The material in the archives consists of the following

I. CORRESPONDENCE: Here are to be found letters, bills, receipts, documents, both civil and ecclesiastical, circular letters, pastoral letters, sermons, etc. We are extremely fortunate that a large amount of personal correspondence of the first four bishops of Kingston has been preserved. We have a fair amount of material relating to Bishop MacDonell's dealings with the Colonial Office of the British Government in bringing out settlers to Canada and providing for them once they arrived here. There is material on the various internal troubles that plagued every bishop up to our own time. Also there is a good selection of material relating to the relations between the Church and the newly emerging nation of Canada as is to be seen in the file of the correspondence between Sir John A. Macdonald and Bishop Horan.

II. LETTER BOOKS: The Letter Books contain hand-written duplicates of all outgoing correspondence of the Bishops of Kingston up to the end of the reign of Bishop O'Brien in 1879.

III. SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: Grouped here would be the material relating to the various religious orders, Regiopolis College, various other institutions, the Separate School Question, etc.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS : In this will be grouped the rather extensive picture collection, blueprints, bound newspapers plus reference to furniture and other memorabilia.

V. THE LIBRARY: In addition to the three thousands volume collection, the Library also contains books of special interest kept in the vault, ledgers, account books, etc.

THE CATALOGUE: Cataloguing the archives has been done by a system of letters and numbers. The material has first been grouped into units comprised of the administration of each bishop. Thus we have the following units:

A. THE MOST REVEREND ALEXANDER MACDONELL (1760?-1840); Vicar General of Quebec for Upper Canada (1807); Titular Bishop of Rhesina and Auxiliary to Quebec (1819); first Bishop of Kingston (1826-1840). The

material covers the years c. 1800 to 1839.

B. THE MOST REVEREND REMIGIUS GAULIN (1787-1857); Titular Bishop of Tobraca and Co-adjutor to the Bishop of Kingston (1833-1840); second Bishop of Kingston (1840-1857); the material relates only to those years 1840-1843 at which time Bishop Phelan became Apostolic Administrator and *de facto* Bishop due to the poor health of Bishop Gaulin.

C. THE MOST REVEREND PATRICK PHELAN (1795-1857); Titular Bishop of Carrhae and Co-Adjutor to the Bishop of Kingston (1843); Apostolic Administrator of Kingston (1843-1857); third Bishop of Kingston (8 May-6 June 1857); the material covers the years 1843-1857.

D. THE MOST REVEREND JOHN EDWARD HORAN (1817-1875); Titular Bishop of Chrysopolis (1874-1875); fourth Bishop of Kingston (1858-1874); the material covers the years from 1858 to 1874 though there is little material to be found between 1870 and 1874.

E. THE MOST REVEREND JOHN O'BRIEN (1832-1879); fifth Bishop of Kingston (1875-1879). Because of the relatively short reign of Bishop O'Brien there is very little material relating to this period.

F. THE MOST REVEREND JAMES VINCENT CLEARY (1828-1898); sixth Bishop of Kingston (1880-1889); first Archbishop of Kingston (1889-1898). The material covers the years of his reign but becomes very sparse after 1892.

G. THE MOST REVEREND CHARLES HUGH GAUTHIER (1843-1922); second Archbishop of Kingston (1899-1910); second Archbishop of Ottawa (1910-1922); the material covers the period from 1898 to 1910.

H. THE MOST REVEREND MICHAEL JOSEPH SPRATT (1854-1938); third Archbishop of Kingston (1911-1938). The material covers the period from 1911 to 1928 at which time Archbishop O'Brien became the Co-Adjutor and Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese due to the poor health of the Archbishop Spratt.

I. THE MOST REVEREND MICHAEL JOSEPH O'BRIEN (1874-1943); Bishop of Peterborough (1913-1929); Titular of Amorio; Co-Adjutor to the Archbishop of Kingston and Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese (1929-1938); fourth Archbishop of Kingston (1938-1943). The material covers the years 1929-1943.

J. THE MOST REVEREND JOSEPH ANTHONY O'SULLIVAN (1886-1972); Bishop of Charlottetown (1931-1944); fifth Archbishop of Kingston (1944-1966); Titular Archbishop of Maraguaia (1966-1972). The material covers the period from 1944 to 1966.

K. THE MOST REVEREND JOSEPH LAWRENCE WILHELM (1909); Auxiliary Bishop of Calgary (1963-1966); sixth Archbishop of Kingston (1967-).

The CORRESPONDENCE (I) is further subdivided within each unit in the following manner:

C. Correspondence to and from various individuals, parishes, organizations, departments, etc. This is further catalogued by the authors of the letters being arranged in alphabetical order and the letters of each author arranged chronologically.

BD Business and Commercial documents which include bills, receipts, promissory notes, etc. These are grouped under various headings and arranged in chronological order.

CD. Civil Documents which relate to the relationship between church and state, legal matters, etc. Where applicable, these are grouped under various headings, e.g., wills, powers of attorney, etc., and arranged chronologically.

CL. Circular Letters including pastoral addresses, etc. These are grouped according to place of origin and arranged chronologically.

ED. Ecclesiastical Documents: Diocesan. These would include petitions, establishment of parishes, statistics on parishes, etc. These, too, would be grouped under various headings such as Parish Records, Clergy, etc., and arranged chronologically.

ER. Ecclesiastical Documents: Roman. These would include documents addressed to Rome from Canada as well as documents originating in Rome and arranged chronologically.

S. Sermons. There are only small numbers of sermons that have survived and most of these are undated.

The Correspondence has been placed in legal-size file folders and filed in vertical transfer cases. The Archives is located in a fireproof vault off the office of the Archbishop on the second floor of the residence at 279 Johnson Street.

At the present moment, only the correspondence has been catalogued and

that only from 1800 to 1898. The cut-off date in use at the present time is a period of sixty years because of the nature of some of the material as well as the fact that living persons would be involved. In actual fact, the period of restriction begins at the end of Archbishop Gauthier's reign in 1910. Those wishing access to the Archives are asked to contact the archivist beforehand, and present some proof of scholarly intent. Due to the historical value of this collection, access is somewhat limited until cataloguing is completed and the whole collection is microfilmed.