

# R. E. Gosnell, E. O. S. Scholefield and the Founding of the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1894-1919

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The writing of the history of Canadian archives has largely fixed on the early establishment and success of the Public Archives of Canada. Canada's national archives was established in 1872 in response to an appeal from the Quebec Literary and Historical Society for "facilities of access to public records, documents and official papers in manuscript illustrative of the history and progress of society in Canada." In time, the initiative of the Public Archives of Canada came to represent what one of that institution's historians called "the cultural equivalent of the economic programmes of the National Policy."<sup>1</sup> Archival materials were collected from any and all sources in order to allow historians to reveal to Canadians their common heritage and purpose. In the era before the flowering of university history departments, the Public Archives of Ottawa acted as a focal point for the fostering of historical studies. As the cadre of academic historians grew, the resources of the Public Archives were called upon to write histories dominated by national themes and nationalist concerns.<sup>2</sup>

It is often assumed that Canada's provincial archives merely copied the Ottawa program on a provincial scale. Except for a doctoral thesis<sup>3</sup> surveying the growth of federal and provincial archives and a few articles<sup>4</sup> examining the recent development of modern means of public records management, little is known about the impetus for and aims of early provincial archives. On the surface, federal and provincial archives share a broad mandate in their respective spheres. A Canadian tradition of combining a public record office with a repository for all manner of

<sup>1</sup> Ian E. Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty: the Cultural Role of the Public Archives of Canada, 1904-1935," *The Canadian Archivist* 2 (1973): 5, 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 26-30.

<sup>3</sup> John H. Archer, "A Study of Archival Institutions in Canada." PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 1969.

<sup>4</sup> See articles by Barbara Craig, Jay Atherton and Marion Beyea in *Archivaria* 8 (Summer 1979).

materials of historical value from private sources is now well established at the Public Archives of Canada and in the provincial and territorial archives. To shed a little light on the provincial scene, this paper will examine the establishment and early development of the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, in particular the ideas and contributions of the first two archivists, R. E. Gosnell and E. O. S. Scholefield, who before the First World War moulded the Archives Department within the structure of the Legislative Library.

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The linking of the Pacific with the rest of Canada by rail in 1885 has traditionally marked the end of British Columbia's pioneer era. In that era, pockets of European settlement were created and linked together. Land was cleared for agriculture, towns grew up, roads were constructed, bridges erected and ferries and harbours built. A crude industrial infrastructure grew around the staples of mining, fishing and lumbering. Before 1885, the institutional manifestation of the cultural life of the community was scant. Travelling troops of actors and musicians played in theatres in larger centres like Victoria, Nanaimo, New Westminster and Barkerville. Libraries were rare, being either personal, such as that of Amor De Cosmos, or supported by Mechanics Literary Institutes, such as those founded in the 1860s in Victoria, Nanaimo and Camerontown.<sup>5</sup> No indigenous institutions of higher learning existed to provide a focus to intellectual and cultural life, though school and sometimes church buildings hosted amateur musical, literary or theatrical events. What galleries existed were private operations given over to Victorian fascination with the photograph.

The colonial and provincial governments could find few resources to support even rudimentary cultural and intellectual endeavours. Though a library had existed to serve the legislature since colonial days, it lived only during the session and survived only in the small collection of reference books spasmodically brought together over the years by whoever was given sessional responsibility to be librarian.<sup>6</sup> The one other tangible evidence of government support of cultural activity, aside from the intermittent grants to Mechanics Institutes, was the program of the

<sup>5</sup> John Forsyth, "The Library Movement in British Columbia," *Washington Historical Quarterly* (October 1926), pp. 32-40, and Madge Wolfenden, "Books and Libraries in Fur Trading and Colonial Days," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* XI (3) (July 1947): 162-84.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfenden, "Books and Libraries," pp. 162-63.

Provincial Museum to collect the artifacts of Indian history and specimens illustrative of the province's natural history. The museums program began in 1886 in response to a petition from a number of Victoria's elite who were concerned about the export of ethnological objects and the inadequate understanding of British Columbia natural history.<sup>7</sup> Neither the library nor the museum had a permanent home in the early days. Both poached space in the legislative precinct in Victoria.

The library was raised from the doldrums in 1893 when Premier Theodore Davie chose R. E. Gosnell to be first permanent legislative librarian. In a fateful arrangement, Gosnell doubled as Davie's private secretary. The following year, an act was passed giving authority for an annual expenditure for the library. The act also provided for the creation of a Bureau of Statistical and Historical Information which, among other duties, would have responsibility to "collect and compile data relating to the history of the Province."<sup>8</sup> The bureau looks very much like a Gosnell creation. At least, it provided all the authority he seemed to need to launch an archival program.

Gosnell was a journalist if he was anything. Though he had left school at the age of 16, he was a school teacher in Ontario for eighteen months as a young man and then editor of the Port Hope *Times* for two years and the Chatham *Planet* for five years. At the age of 28, he came to Vancouver in 1888 to work on the *News Advertiser*, where he was city editor until 1890. He briefly tried his hand at the real estate business before taking an appointment as commissioner of the British Columbia Exhibit Association to superintend the exhibition of British Columbia products at the Toronto Fair and elsewhere in Canada. He then became census commissioner for New Westminster district for the 1891 census.<sup>9</sup> In 1893, he received his first in a long series of provincial posts as British Columbia representative on the Dominion Committee on Canadian History, a group of educationalists set up to select history textbooks for schools that would be, it was reported in the local press, "a power operating to unify the public spirit and patriotism of Canadians and avoid the ills of provincialism."<sup>10</sup>

Gosnell's historical interests began in Chatham, where he joined in literary and artistic life through the Macaulay Club, a debating and

<sup>7</sup> The petition is printed in British Columbia, *Report of the Provincial Museum for the Year 1928* (Victoria, 1929).

<sup>8</sup> British Columbia, *Statutes, 1894*, ch. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Vancouver *World*, 15 April 1890, p. 1, and 14 August 1890, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Victoria *Colonist*, 26 August 1893, p. 7.

theatrical society which also had a not very successful program of local historical research. Casting back on the early activities of the club, Gosnell recollected that "the interest in historical work which had been aroused in Chatham induced me to make a special effort in what was practically a virgin field" in British Columbia.<sup>11</sup> Virgin field indeed. Years later he also recalled how he began his studies as librarian by cleaning up "with a pitch fork and wheelbarrow" the mass of "news-papers and Blue Books . . . thrown into an outside passage and heaped up there for years." In the pile, he found the "original journals of Vancouver Island legislature, indited in the hand of the Hon. J. S. Helmcken." When Gosnell showed the journals to Helmcken, the good doctor "almost wept." It was an episode sure to inspire a man already disposed to gather the raw material for history. He immediately began to nose about the Provincial Secretary's department, which was charged with keeping the government's valuable records. He soon found a room stuffed with "the flotsam and jetsam of official and other records," all disarranged and covered in soot which wafted from a faulty chimney.<sup>12</sup> Here was more leaven for his rising zeal to do something to preserve the government's early records.

In hiring Gosnell in 1893, Davie no doubt had in mind the opportunity that the construction of new legislative buildings would afford for properly housing the library. Soon after arriving in Victoria, Gosnell made an effort to intrude the library's needs into the planning for the building which was already under way. He approached the architect, F. M. Rattenbury, who arranged a meeting for him with W. S. Gore, the deputy minister of works in charge of the construction. During the meeting Gosnell mentioned the need for a secure place for the old records of the government, to which Gore replied, Gosnell recalled much later, "What in the world do you want those for?"<sup>13</sup>

Gore's snubbing him did not deter Gosnell from forging ahead with ambitious plans for the library, which, as he conceived it, would do more than simply serve the reference needs of the Legislative Assembly. In an early report, he advocated creation of "a special department relating to British Columbia, its official records, the history of earliest times and

<sup>11</sup> R. E. Gosnell, *With the compliments of R. E. Gosnell, who was requested to furnish the Macaulay Club with a copy of his Address at the last Annual Banquet . . .* (Ottawa, 1920), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Gosnell's lengthy reminiscence is printed in the *Colonist*, 15 February 1925, p. 9, and repeated in a similar fashion on 14 May 1929, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Colonist*, 15 September 1922, p. 4.

subsequent settlement, its progress and development, etc., comprising newspaper files, old books and pamphlets, and all other literature of Provincial interest." He believed that the library should be a repository for both printed and unprinted records to serve the needs of the Legislature, the civil service and "the Province at large." By June 1894, he had mounted an advertising campaign in newspapers appealing for "reminiscences of pioneer settlement . . . old letters, journals, files of newspapers, books, pamphlets, reports, charts, maps, photographs, sketches and so on."<sup>14</sup> Proceeding by means of "begging, borrowing or stealing"<sup>15</sup> what resources he could, Gosnell began accumulating newspapers, books, pamphlets and copies of manuscripts. He bought De Cosmos' library for ninety-two dollars at auction after De Cosmos died. Alexander Begg donated some two thousand pamphlets, and Gosnell contributed about one thousand from his own collection. In early 1896 he acquired a first batch of copies of manuscripts bearing on the history of British Columbia. The books and pamphlets formed the core of the Northwest Collection which is now in the library of the Provincial Archives. The manuscripts and Helmcken's minutes of the Vancouver Island House of Assembly established the foundation of the Provincial Archives collection of private manuscripts and government records.<sup>16</sup>

From this point on, it is difficult to piece together Gosnell's archival activities, for it is an irony that among the *fonds* preserved in the provincial archives virtually no records of the Legislative Library exist from the Gosnell period of the 1890s. One memorandum<sup>17</sup> written for the executive council and signed by Gosnell has survived. It deals with archives, and was probably written in late March or early April 1898 but is not dated. Because of its rare nature this memorandum deserves close attention for it reveals in as much detail as we are ever likely to know the tenor of Gosnell's early thinking and plans of an archival kind.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in "Report on the State of the Library and Archives, December 1934," MS. C/D/30.8/L16. *Provincial Archives of British Columbia* (hereafter PABC), pp. 2-3. The report was written by Dr. W. K. Lamb, who was Provincial Archivist in 1934. An example of the advertisement is in *The Inland Sentinel*, 1 June 1894, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Colonist*, 15 September 1922, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> "Report . . . December 1934," p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> The memorandum now rests with a body of miscellaneous records of the Provincial Archives which have accumulated outside the archives' own filing system. It is possible that the memorandum was removed from records of the executive council or from the library's records years ago. "Memo for the Executive," File 8, Box 2, GR 975, PABC.

Seizing the occasion of the occupation of the new legislative building, Gosnell sought and apparently got approval for provision of a room to receive pre-confederation records, which would "be properly indexed and classified as in other Provinces." It is not clear what knowledge Gosnell had of the experience of other provinces. Nova Scotia appointed T. B. Akins archivist in 1857, but he acted more as an historian than an archivist and never succeeded in making a proper home for Nova Scotia public records before his death in 1891. The Nova Scotia Historical Society, established in 1878, had as one of its objects the collecting of reminiscences and private manuscripts. Quebec gave archival duties, mainly related to genealogical activity, to the deputy registrar in the Provincial Secretary's department in 1868. Ontario did not have an archivist until 1903, and the other provinces not until later. In the late nineteenth century, the systematic organization of archives in Canada, and indeed in the United States as well, was either non-existent or, as in Ottawa, in a confused state dominated by historical notions of chronology and library systems of item cataloguing and indexing.

Gosnell had his own notion that the archives of the colonial period could be classified according to each of the three creating governments — Vancouver Island, 1849-1866, British Columbia, 1858-1866, and what he called "the United Colony," 1866-1871 — but neither in 1898 nor later does he seem to have had any notion of using original filing systems to locate records. Whatever his plans were, we have evidence, which we shall come to, that Gosnell had rather more affinity for chaos than systematic organization. He did, however, see the need to transfer inactive records from departments on a regular basis. This he erroneously thought was being done after twenty-five years in the government in Ottawa. Subsequent experience suggests that his proposal, farsighted as it was, found little sympathy or understanding in the bureaucracy. For years, government records would arrive at the archives in no co-ordinated manner, often on the whim of some government official turned historian who would discretely select records from a larger body because of their bearing on an important historical event, place, person or theme. Almost always the records were from the colonial era. Sometimes the archivist went into the field to select the records, but there seems to have been little rhyme or reason to this activity.

Gosnell himself made a notable coup in late 1897. In his investigation of the location of valuable government records, he discovered that the despatches of the governors of the colonies were housed with the Lieutenant-Governor at Cary Castle. Gosnell made an appeal to Lieutenant-

Governor Edgar Dewdney to have the despatches transferred to his care. At first Dewdney refused. Upon readying himself to leave office, he changed his mind when he learned his successor was to be Senator T. R. McInnes, whom he disliked, and so he had his secretary pack the despatches off to the librarian.<sup>18</sup> Cary Castle burned to the ground in May 1899.

In his memorandum, Gosnell also revealed that he had communicated with the Dominion Archivist, Douglas Brymner, whom he invited to visit Victoria to examine provincial records. "What I wish to suggest," he wrote Brymner, "is that a small appropriation equivalent to what might be voted by the province, from your department might be made, and the Dominion could have duplicates of all important state papers and an index at the same time."<sup>19</sup> Here Gosnell may have been trying to play both ends against the middle by convincing either side of the other's willingness to put up money. If so, it half worked. A month after first writing Brymner, Gosnell could report to Ottawa his success in having an appropriation of \$600 placed in the supplementary estimates for the fiscal year July 1898-June 1899. He asked Brymner to contribute a like amount.<sup>20</sup>

At this time Gosnell apparently had the idea to appoint as archivist "Johnny" Norris, news editor of the *Colonist*, but the deputy minister of finance and the editor of the *Colonist* signed a note to the minister in charge of the library protesting against the plan as "extravagant nonsense."<sup>21</sup> Norris was not hired, but, over opposition protests, the \$600 for "indexing archives" was voted, the first ever formal approval of expenditure for the purposes of archives. All Gosnell's earlier archival activities had been on the wing. Alma Russell, a trained librarian whom Gosnell had hired in December 1897, and Margaret Jenkins were paid for three months from this vote, probably for work in the library rather than in the archives because all Gosnell's schemes came crashing down in early August 1898, when he was abruptly fired.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Colonist*, 15 September 1922, p. 4, and 14 May 1929, p. 4; British Columbia, *In the Supreme Court. Between the Attorney-General of British Columbia and Theodore Ludgate and the Attorney-General of Canada. Certified Copy of Proceedings.* (Victoria, 1905), pp. 130-31, gives Dewdney's testimony of the episode.

<sup>19</sup> Gosnell to Brymner, 18 March 1897, Letterbook, vol. 124, RG 37, *Public Archives of Canada (PAC)*.

<sup>20</sup> Gosnell to Brymner, 28 April 1897, *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Colonist*, 15 September 1922, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*; *Vancouver Province*, 5 April 1928, p. 9; British Columbia, *Public Accounts, 1898-99*, vote 288; and *Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 1896*, p. 100.

As near as can be determined, this is what happened. The arrangement whereby Gosnell was officially paid as librarian but not as secretary to the Premier, who was now J. H. Turner, blew up in the poor librarian's face. That summer, Turner's administration was defeated at the polls. The new Premier, Charles Semlin, wanted his own man, C. B. Sword, for his secretary, but had no vote to pay him with other than the librarian's. Semlin simply abolished the position of chief librarian, which he justified on the grounds of necessary fiscal retrenchment, and used the vote to pay Sword. Russell and Jenkins were soon dismissed, leaving the young Scholefield in charge of the library. A pall of parsimony temporarily descended, and library and archives had a first taste of how vulnerable they were to the political urge to economize.<sup>23</sup>

Gosnell received another blow later in 1898 when his wife died, leaving him to care for a young daughter. Whether the crisis of losing his job and his wife in the space of four months started him on his lifelong struggle with dipsomania, or whether he already had a history of drinking, it is difficult to tell. We have W. N. Sage's testimony that alcohol made him a wreck of a man by the 1920s.<sup>24</sup> His frequent and abrupt disappearance from one job and reappearance in another are probably explained by his drinking, as is his rather shadowy life altogether. He certainly became bitter about his dismissal, which he came to regard as a personal tragedy.<sup>25</sup> The wonder of it all is that he kept the favour of his political friends. He had a talent as a publicist, was an amiable — some said "lovable" — companion, and a modest man.<sup>26</sup> These qualities and his unparalleled knowledge of British Columbia affairs and recent history would again recommend him to the government.

Gosnell always thought he had been dismissed on unjustifiable political grounds. Except that he had worked on the 1890 campaign of F. L. Carter-Cotton, editor of the *News Advertiser* and, in a nice twist, Semlin's finance minister, he protested that he took no part in politics. Though this may be true, he was associated with the conservative-leaning faction represented by the Davie and Turner administrations. Later he did become involved directly in politics. While in the political wilder-

<sup>23</sup> *Province*, 6 May 1928, p. 10, and 5 April 1928, p. 4, in article by B. R. Atkins.

<sup>24</sup> W. N. Sage, "Some Early Historians of British Columbia," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* XXI (1957-58): 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Province*, 6 May 1928, p. 10 (Magazine Section), letter from Gosnell; *Colonist*, 29 October 1898, p. 4, reprinting Gosnell's letter to the *Montreal Gazette*.

<sup>26</sup> *Colonist*, 7 August 1931, p. 4 (editorial), and 8 August 1931, p. 5, letter from J. A. Turner, son of J. H. Turner.



ness after his dismissal in 1898, Gosnell returned to journalism as editor of the *Greenwood Miner*, and acted as a political organizer for the nascent Conservative party in the Boundary district.<sup>27</sup> Then, riding the coat-tails of his political friends, he returned to government service in the summer of 1900 as secretary to Premier James Dunsmuir. Again he had a regular civil service job, this time as head of a formally constituted Bureau of Information, which derived from the provision in the Library Act for a statistical and historical office.

In the period of Gosnell's banishment, Scholefield picked up the threads in the library. In his report for the year 1899-1900, he complained that the collection he inherited was in a chaotic condition, but in all the confusion he kept the archival faith by pressing the government to provide a safe place for both the records Gosnell had collected and valuable records still in the departments. His report also lists thirty-three maps received from the surveyor George M. Dawson.<sup>28</sup> At this stage, then, the archival collecting policy of the library included government records, private manuscripts, newspapers (which were being bound annually), maps and the books and pamphlets in the Northwest History Collection. Like Gosnell, Scholefield treated the legislative reference books as something separate from the historical collection.

Upon Gosnell's return, Scholefield received a remarkable letter from the new Provincial Secretary, J. D. Prentice, telling him that the Premier's secretary and the head of the Bureau of Information would also carry the title "associate librarian." "You and your staff," Prentice instructed Scholefield, "are expected to give Mr. Gosnell all the assistance in your power." Though Scholefield's status was to remain the same, he was asked to consult regularly with Gosnell, "whose service in establishing the library entitles him to some measure of supervision."<sup>29</sup> It is difficult to imagine Prentice devising such an equivocal scheme on his own without some help from Gosnell, who immediately set about collecting early Hudson's Bay Company records from local sources.<sup>30</sup> The arrangement certainly had the potential for trouble. Strangely, Scholefield never betrayed any animosity towards Gosnell so far as can be

<sup>27</sup> Gosnell to W. J. Bowser, 24 October 1899, W. J. Bowser Papers [regarding the Conservative party leadership campaign], Add. MSS. 228, *PABC*.

<sup>28</sup> British Columbia, *Report of the Library of the Legislative Assembly, 1899-1900*, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Prentice to Scholefield, 11 October 1900, File 1, Box 1, Add. MSS. 491, *PABC*.

<sup>30</sup> *Colonist*, 27 February 1902, p. 5, prints the report of the Bureau of Information in which Gosnell mentions H.B.C. records.

determined, but somehow Gosnell developed “an intense feeling” against his erstwhile assistant.<sup>31</sup>

At this time, the archives were kept in a room in the basement of the legislative buildings — not a satisfactory place, Scholefield persisted in telling the government. “These papers are in manuscript,” he reported in 1903, “and in only a few cases have been printed, and, therefore, they are of great value, not only historically but practically.”<sup>32</sup> Where Scholefield’s persistence failed to move the government, Gosnell’s talent as a publicist and his political connections did, but not before another hiatus in the tandem relationship of the two men.

In June 1904, Gosnell again left government service to be editor of the *Victoria Colonist*, where he stayed until the fall of 1906. While at the *Colonist*, he published *A History of British Columbia*. It was not Gosnell at his best. A long, anonymous review in the *Victoria Times* upbraided the author for his many inaccuracies (he had Ottawa declaring Victoria the capital in 1877, for instance) and concluded that “the chronicle cannot be of any service to a future historian.”<sup>33</sup> Gosnell, who was not backward about defending himself in the papers, made no defence of his book. Indeed, he described his effort as “a narrative, a succession of narratives, that a journalist . . . might contribute to a magazine.” He also revealed his own attitude towards the historian’s use of archives.

Facts, statistics, official documents — in fact, the entire category of archivist lore, however indisputable its origins or authenticity — can in themselves convey only a very imperfect impression of what they relate to unless we can reincarnate in the narrative, of which they are the anatomical framework, the spirit, the motif, the mental attitude, the mainsprings of thought, the *primum mobile*, the human element of time and action.<sup>34</sup>

Here we see the individualism that Allan Smith has identified in early British Columbia historians,<sup>35</sup> as well as a rather mature appreciation of the place archives play in the writing of history.

Amid the chaos of his life, Gosnell held fast to his love of archives and history. Early in 1908, the government announced its intention to appro-

<sup>31</sup> T. C. Elliott to F. W. Howay, 15 February 1915, Howay Papers, *University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections Division* (UBCL).

<sup>32</sup> British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Legislative Library*, 1902-1903.

<sup>33</sup> *Times*, 30 June 1906, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> R. E. Gosnell, *A History of British Columbia* (Vancouver, 1906), p. iv.

<sup>35</sup> Allan Smith, “The Writing of British Columbia History,” *BC Studies* 45 (Spring 1980): 73-80.

prorate money expressly for archives. The scheme, which had a familiar ring to it, would feature copying records in Ottawa, assembling private records, and sharing of costs between Ottawa and Victoria.<sup>36</sup> Gosnell was back again. His leverage to open the door this time was the hundredth anniversary of Simon Fraser's journey to the Pacific. To celebrate the anniversary, Gosnell convinced the government to mount an exhibit of historical books, pamphlets, photographs, paintings and other documents in honour of British Columbia's pioneers. Once the money was voted, Gosnell was appointed Provincial Archivist in June 1908. A draft of a memorandum for the executive council recommending his appointment suggests that as yet the government contemplated a limited tenure for the archivist to coincide with the centenary year.<sup>37</sup>

Even before his appointment, Gosnell began collecting photographs and portraits of pioneers for the exhibition scheduled for the Provincial Exhibition grounds at New Westminster in the fall. He made a trip to the interior in May and at the end of June went to Seattle to consult with Professor Edmund S. Meany of the University of Washington and C. B. Bagley, a prominent private collector of Northwest Americana, to discover the extent of their holdings and copy documents for the British Columbia archives.<sup>38</sup> He also began to set up a plan for organizing the archives. He planned to file documents in steel boxes under lock in the basement of the legislative buildings. Public access would be denied except on approval of the Provincial Secretary, in whose department the archives was placed. At this time, the Library was in the Attorney-General's department. Gosnell intended to record, number and classify accessions, but neither a full account nor any evidence, such as an accession book, of his scheme has survived. He told the Dominion Archivist he was making index cards with a précis of each document and would supply copies of his cards to Ottawa. He again appealed for funds from the Public Archives, but Brymner's successor as archivist, Arthur Doughty, was only interested in acquiring copies of British Columbia documents. All Gosnell's grand dominion-provincial schemes fell on deaf ears, probably because they were hopelessly complicated and impractical. In another vein, his work for the centenary exhibit prompted him to seek approval for "an historical art gallery" to house the photographs and portraits then being collected. Historical photographs and art works were

<sup>36</sup> *Colonist*, 7 January 1908, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> "Memorandum for the Lieutenant Governor in Council" (draft), 16 June 1908, File 8, Box 2, GR 975, *PABC*.

<sup>38</sup> *Colonist*, 27 June 1908, p. 6.

then added to the other forms of record that were accumulating in the basement of the building. In time, sketches, drawings, watercolours and paintings would be added by Scholefield and other archivists.<sup>39</sup>

The exhibit was a great success. It travelled to Vancouver and Victoria from New Westminster. The total cost of the exhibit and Gosnell's archival work for the year was \$7,453.57, which was more than twice the total appropriation for the library in the same year.<sup>40</sup>

Gosnell also started a program to have documents copied in England. In July 1908, he received copies of British foreign office records relating to the Oregon question through the office of J. H. Turner, who became British Columbia's agent-general in London in 1901.<sup>41</sup> From time to time, Turner engaged Winnifred Mayes to copy records in British government offices and at the Public Record Office.<sup>42</sup> Later, Mayes took a job as copyist for the Public Archives of Canada, and was succeeded by her sister, Alice Mayes, who toiled for over twenty years on a more or less regular basis making copies of records or hunting down particular documents on special assignment.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to his work for the exhibit and the archives, Gosnell wrote a series of historical articles that appeared in several papers. He often used the articles to publicize the archives. In one, entitled "A Plea for the Old-Timer,"<sup>44</sup> he revealed his concern to remember the pioneer "in science, or art, or literature, or politics, or religion, or in the more prosaic every-day hard work of just making a living and home in a new country." He saw the centenary exhibit as a kind of hero worship keeping alive "the spirit of progress."

So the movement in a local way to celebrate at intervals past deeds and to preserve relics and mementos of the province is one of the legitimate and wholesome ways of inciting to further effort and maintaining the steady balance of community.

He appealed for preservation of archival materials and "old utensils, implements, relics of all kinds . . . not out of mere curiosity, but lest we

<sup>39</sup> *Colonist*, 30 July 1908, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> *British Columbia Public Accounts*, 1908-1909, p. 164.

<sup>41</sup> *Colonist*, 30 July 1908, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Provincial Archivist to Provincial Secretary, 5 June 1916, File 6, Box 2, GR 975, *PABC*.

<sup>43</sup> Alice Mayes File, Provincial Archives Correspondence, *PABC*. This body of correspondence begins in about 1910 or 1911. Letters are filed by the name of the sender. The correspondence has not yet been accessioned and described in *PABC* catalogues.

<sup>44</sup> *Times*, 1 August 1908.

forget the beginning of our estate, how our country was fashioned and who fashioned it." Here we have the impetus for the collection of pioneer artifacts, many of them preserved for their association with explorers, fur traders or early settlers, which the archives acquired and displayed over the years until a special division for such objects was established in the Provincial Museum.

The Simon Fraser centenary fixed attention on the exploration, fur trade and early settlement eras. The need to identify and preserve the disappearing record of pioneers became a primary concern of the archives. Time and again in the years to come, in editorials about the Provincial Archives, writers seized on the importance of capturing the memory of the people who built the foundations of present-day prosperity. The establishment of the archives in fact celebrated British Columbians' growing confidence in their future by honouring the pathfinders, settlers, missionaries, entrepreneurs and government officials who made the province an outpost of the British Empire on the west coast of North America. In the economic boom times before the First World War, British Columbians and their government were in a mood to be generous to their forebears.

Before the generosity poured forth, Gosnell made another abrupt exit. In June 1909, he took an appointment as secretary to the Timber and Forestry Commission the government set up to study the forest industry. The archives program was suspended for a year. There was no vote for archives for the fiscal year July 1909 to June 1910. Gosnell did not see out the commission's work. Using funds advanced to set up the commission's offices, he went on a binge, or so the story goes, and disappeared.<sup>45</sup> Not all his movements over the next five years are clear. Premier McBride employed him to work on the province's case for "better terms" in 1912 and 1913, and he worked on contract on a piecework basis copying records for Arthur Doughty. In September 1914 McBride took him in again as his secretary, which he remained until the defeat of the Bowser government in late 1916. He spent most of the rest of his life in obscurity in Ottawa, only returning to British Columbia to die at his daughter's home in 1931. His evident enthusiasm and sensitivity for archives work were swallowed in the chaos alcohol made of his life. Late in his life, he was always pleased whenever his early contribution was recognized. Despite his shortcomings, he had a right to be pleased.

<sup>45</sup> Rupert Schieder, "Martin Allerdale Grainger: Woodsman of the West," *Forest History* 11 (3) (October 1967): 9.

After the fallow year, Scholefield was appointed to succeed Gosnell on 1 July 1910. Ethelbert Olaf Stuart Scholefield was born on the Isle of Wight in 1875. In 1887 his father, an Anglican clergyman, emigrated to New Westminster, and later took St. Paul's parish in Esquimalt. Scholefield attended private schools in New Westminster and Victoria, and graduated from Victoria High School. In 1893 he obtained a job as page in the Legislative Assembly before Gosnell took him on as his assistant. By 1910 he had over fifteen years in the library, the last ten officially as chief librarian. He had a sunny disposition and a talent for making himself useful on government ceremonial occasions, which helped accumulate a capital of goodwill towards the library and archives. Alma Russell recalled that "during the session of the Legislature, he availed himself of every possible opportunity to converse with the members, who soon formed the habit of sitting in the Librarian's office, as a change from sitting in the Legislative Chamber."<sup>46</sup>

Until he found his stride after 1910, Scholefield strained at the limitations of his post. He longed for big city life where, he thought, "there would be a greater opportunity to succeed and make a name" than in a small place like Victoria. He asked an English uncle to help him find a post in the colonial service.<sup>47</sup> These youthful yearnings passed. In 1907 he married Lillie May Corbould, a daughter of old family friends in New Westminster. They had four sons in short order.

Scholefield moved in the best circles of Victorian society. Despite his chronic complaints about his salary, he patronized a London tailor and the best shops in Victoria, a gardener kept the grounds of his house, and he was well connected with Victoria's social and sporting elite. He was a member of the Union Club, played golf at the Victoria Golf Club and tennis at the Victoria Tennis Club, and hunted pheasant with visiting dignitaries.

The exact reason the government chose to continue the archives program after the year's lapse is obscure. Of course, Scholefield evinced interest in the work, and he may have persuaded Provincial Secretary H. E. Young to carry it on. Scholefield also had a valuable ally in Judge F. W. Howay. Howay had been a classmate of Premier McBride at Dalhousie law school. He kept himself informed of Scholefield's early plans,

<sup>46</sup> *Colonist*, 27 December 1919 (obituary); Alma Russell, "Ethelbert Olaf Stuart Scholefield," MS. reminiscence, Add. MSS. 1240, *PABC*.

<sup>47</sup> Scholefield to Walter Scholefield, 16 September 1902, Private Letterbook, vol. 1, GR 146, *PABC*. Letters here reveal his associations.

of which he entirely approved.<sup>48</sup> But Howay does not seem to have taken an active role in supporting Scholefield's efforts. A self-confessed bibliomaniac, he tended to use Scholefield as a special kind of bookseller who would pass on rare items to him. Though their names would appear together on the four-volume *British Columbia From the Earliest Times to the Present*, published by the S. J. Clarke Company in 1914, each man wrote his section in apparent isolation of the other, except that Scholefield fed Howay sources from the library and archives. Howay's interest in the history of gold mining and the Cariboo, about which he regularly gave illustrated lectures using photographs in part supplied by the archives, stimulated Scholefield to make the Cariboo a special field for collecting. Both men were also avid students of the era of maritime exploration of the Pacific Northwest, which was a major focus of their book and sometimes of manuscript collecting for the archives. Whether through Howay or otherwise, McBride became quite interested in British Columbia political history. Dr. Young, who took his medical training at McGill, also took more than a purely administrative interest in the library and archives. On more than one occasion Scholefield gave Young credit for the advances the library and archives were able to make.

For his part, Scholefield took to his new duties with martial enthusiasm. He was ready to march off and have "all likely places . . . ransacked for documents relating to the fur trade and colonial days." He also envisaged a large scheme to acquire "all records relating to the Colonial period in the public departments and various offices throughout the province." He vowed to keep up the copying of British records and extend it to Spanish and Hudson's Bay Company records overseas. "The work fascinates me," he told Howay. "I am making the collection of books and documents relating to our province, and the study of its history, my life work."<sup>49</sup>

It is no surprise that he found the archives "in a lamentably chaotic condition."<sup>50</sup> He set about making an inventory, which he published in his first report as Provincial Archivist in February 1911. The inventory reveals that Gosnell had added a considerable number of letterbooks, journals, letters and other government documents to his manuscript collection. The government records constitute the cream of the executive record of colonial government. The manuscripts were almost all of fur-

<sup>48</sup> Howay to Scholefield, 2 October 1911, Howay File, Provincial Archives Correspondence, *PABC*.

<sup>49</sup> Scholefield to Howay, 24 August 1910, Howay Papers, *UBCL*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

trade figures. In his report Scholefield discussed the nature of archives materials in a way similar to that of Gosnell. History could not be written without the “backbone” of “official” records, but “unofficial” records, letters, diaries and the like provided “varied and rich sidelights on men and events.” Both were necessary “if close adherence to truth is desired,” he thought.<sup>51</sup>

In the less than ten years that Scholefield was Provincial Archivist, he made good on most of his plans for the archives department of the library. He extended the archives tentacles to remote government offices, notably in the Cariboo, where he acquired a large body of court and mining records of gold rush days from the Richfield courthouse in 1911. He loved nothing better than “bowling along the old Cariboo Road in a sixty horse power motor, stopping o’ nights at wayside houses” to chat and sniff out the records that he believed might still reside in houses occupied by families of the original builders.<sup>52</sup> The Cariboo gold rush took its place beside the exploration and fur-trade periods as subjects for archival collecting. Other areas were by comparison virtually ignored.

Scholefield was particularly pleased to receive permission to copy Hudson’s Bay Company records in the Company’s archives in London. In 1916, after years of trying, he finally overcame the secretive sensibilities of the Company, which he attributed primarily to the legacy of obstinacy left by Lord Strathcona. He told Winnifred Mayes to tread warily so that by degrees the company would open more records for copying.<sup>53</sup> By contrast Scholefield’s Spanish ambitions came to naught. The same can largely be said of his desire to collect reminiscences. He did take notes of conversations he had on one of his Cariboo trips, and he kept a diary that reveals he was very ill on one trip. He was not a large or strong man. This and his fastidious dress earned him the nickname “The Duke” among Cariboo friends like the Cornwalls.<sup>54</sup>

In the years before the war, Scholefield was almost constantly on the move for the library or archives, particularly the archives. He visited

<sup>51</sup> British Columbia, *Report of the Provincial Archivist, 1910*, pp. 11-19.

<sup>52</sup> Scholefield to Kenneth Scholefield, 18 October 1912, Letterbook, vol. 2, GR 146, *PABC*.

<sup>53</sup> Scholefield to Mayes, 18 December 1915, Provincial Archives Correspondence, Winnifred Mayes File, *PABC*; Scholefield to Rev. H. B. Gray, 4 May 1912, Letterbook, vol. 2, GR 146, *PABC*; Scholefield to Provincial Secretary, 5 June 1916, File b, Box 2, GR 975, *PABC*.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Mrs. Madge Hamilton, June 1981. Mrs. Hamilton, nee Wolfenden, joined the staff of the Legislative Library in June 1914. Scholefield’s notes and diary are in Add. MSS. 491, *PABC*.



Washington, Oregon and California and got to know the historically minded community in those states, especially Bagley in Seattle, who acted as his agent, Dr. Teggart at the Academy of Pacific Coast History at Berkeley, who was curator of the Bancroft collection, and T. C. Elliott from Walla Walla, who felt Scholefield's "interest and vigor" would soon make Victoria "the Mecca for us all."<sup>55</sup> In large part, Bagley agreed to be an agent for the Provincial Archives because little was being done in Washington state, which must have tickled Scholefield and Howay, for they enjoyed dishing the Americans with an acquisition and dreamed of Victoria attracting an international reputation.<sup>56</sup> In 1913 Scholefield visited New York, New England and Ottawa. In the capital he conferred with Doughty and had an evening with Adam Shortt. The cost of this particular grand junket raised the auditor's eyebrows, but Scholefield sailed along quite unconcerned about expenses, as we shall see.<sup>57</sup>

Scholefield clearly revelled in the business of chasing down books and manuscripts for the Northwest Collection and the archives. Alma Russell remembers how he "literally danced and pranced around the premises" when Gosnell reported his first manuscript acquisition, the journal of John Stuart, a companion of Simon Fraser.<sup>58</sup> When he was not personally spending his time following up clues, he had agents in the field combing record offices, private libraries, bookstores and manuscript dealers in England and the United States. For instance, his "confidential agent" in London traced the journal of Captain Hanna of the *Sea Otter* to the library of Lord McCartney, who had been British Ambassador in China in the 1790s. He also tracked down Frederick Dally in London, and purchased a large body of his photographs taken in the 1860s. Closer to home, he acquired Justice Archer Martin's library of Northwest Americana for a sum in excess of \$12,000, outside his normal vote, of course. The sale financed Martin's trip to the Delhi Durbar in 1911.<sup>59</sup>

It was not uncommon for Scholefield to overspend his budget. When he died, it was discovered he had rung up accounts with booksellers and agents far beyond the capacity of the library and archives to pay. Like any English gentleman, and in the way he handled his own account with

<sup>55</sup> T. C. Elliott to F. W. Howay, 4 June 1911, Howay Papers, *UBCL*.

<sup>56</sup> Scholefield to Howay, 30 April 1914, Howay Papers, *UBCL*.

<sup>57</sup> Scholefield to Shortt, 11 August 1913, Letterbook, vol. 2, GR 146, *PABC*; Auditor-General to Scholefield, 15 October 1913, GR 975.

<sup>58</sup> Alma Russell, "R. Edward Gosnell," MS Reminiscence, Add. MSS. 1240, *PABC*.

<sup>59</sup> Scholefield to Howay, 7 November 1915 and 7 February 1916, Howay Papers, *UBCL*; "Report . . . December 1934"; interview with Hamilton.

his London tailor,<sup>60</sup> he seems merely to have paid enough to keep creditors from taking drastic action.

Not that the library and archives were starved for funds. On the contrary, the combined budget grew dramatically during Scholefield's tenure. In 1907-08, the total expenditure of the library, exclusive of salaries, was slightly over \$2,000. In the five years from 1911 to 1915, the total for the combined library and archives was just under \$150,000, reaching a peak of over \$34,000 in 1912-13, more than \$15,000 of which was devoted to "collecting archives," as the special vote for archives was called. By comparison, the Provincial Museum had an appropriation, exclusive of salaries, of under \$5,000 a year in the same period. In the whole of Douglas Brymner's period at the Public Archives of Canada, the budget never rose over \$12,000 and averaged much less.<sup>61</sup> On a per capita basis, the Legislative Library leaped far ahead of the annual expenditure of its provincial counterparts, and no provincial archives could claim such handsome sums as Scholefield had at his disposal in the fulsome days before the wartime downturn in the economy. On top of all this expenditure, one must consider that the archives did not have to find money for its Memoir Series from its own budget until after 1918. The cost was absorbed by the King's Printer. The Memoirs were designed to make the most interesting of the archives' holdings available to a wide reading public. Four memoirs were published during Scholefield's time: C. F. Newcombe's monograph on Captain Vancouver's circumnavigation of Vancouver Island, which refuted an American claim to prior encirclement and hence to ownership; the minutes (1856-1859) of the Vancouver Island Legislative Council; the minutes (1856-1858) and correspondence book (1856-1859) of the Vancouver Island House of Assembly.

Staff also increased. Salaries in 1907-08 were about \$2,500 for the library and rose to over \$11,000 a year for the period 1914-1917. Staffing of the archives was quite irregular. Though Scholefield wanted to hire an "expert cataloguer" and thought he had succeeded when he found H. B. French, MA, he never established a permanent staff to organize and index the collection.

During his short tenure, French examined and reported to Scholefield on a body of government records in the archives. Following Scholefield's instructions, he set about classifying them by subject and tying them in

<sup>60</sup> Scholefield to his tailor, 27 March 1905, Letterbook, vol. 1, GR 146, *PABC*.

<sup>61</sup> Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty," p. 6.

bundles. One bundle he labelled "Cariboo Road, 1862-1868," comprising correspondence and agreements between the contractors and various government officials, and another he labelled "Opinions," comprising opinions of the Attorney-General, 1859-1871, on innumerable legal tangles. Much of this early work brought little real order to the records and frequently obliterated forever what original filing order there was, as was done later in the 1920s in the creation of so-called "Colonial Correspondence," being an artificial series of letters inward to several colonial government departments. On one score, according to French, Scholefield had a clear vision. Nothing was to be destroyed.<sup>62</sup> Eventually French moved on to another government job, and a succession of copyists, indexers and clerks did odd jobs for short periods of time, but Scholefield did not lay out, and certainly did not implement, a complete plan for organizing the collection. There is no evidence he knew what he was getting into, and in any event his own interests lay elsewhere in the sphere of acquisition. It was left to his successor to put Alma Russell in charge of devising a system for the archives. It was she and her assistant Muriel Cree who devised the "Colonial Correspondence" series.

The continued state of disorganization encouraged Scholefield to keep the archives closed to the public. From time to time researchers such as T. C. Elliott, William J. Trimble, a student of Frederick J. Turner and author of *The Mining Advance into the Inland Empire*, and Judge Howay were given carte blanche,<sup>63</sup> but general access was not allowed until after Scholefield died. Trimble had to dig up the colonial gold commissioner's reports and correspondence he wanted in the Provincial Secretary's department. Scholars writing from afar were more likely to be disappointed. In 1913 J. Franklin Jameson, historian at the Carnegie Institution, leader in the movement to preserve American archives and later head of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, wounded Scholefield by spreading quite legitimate complaints that Scholefield had not been able to tell him what he had in the archives. Scholefield moaned to a friend that his only aim was to serve the scholar, but in fact he could not do it.<sup>64</sup>

All the expenditure of money was not exactly gratuitous love of history. Just as Gosnell's early efforts were aided by the construction of the

<sup>62</sup> French to Scholefield, 4 March 1913, attaching "A list of papers most likely to prove of interest," French Papers, E/O/F87, *PABC*.

<sup>63</sup> Elliott to Howay, 4 June 1911, Howay Papers, *UBCL*.

<sup>64</sup> Scholefield to Jameson, 30 January 1913 and Scholefield to C. W. Smith, 17 February 1913, Letterbook, vol. 2, GR 146, *PABC*.

new building in the 1890s, so Scholefield's plans profited from the government's decision to build a new wing on the building for the library and archives shortly after Scholefield became archivist. A new and much larger home had to be filled with people, books and archives. Once the decision was made, Scholefield fell into a passionate struggle to get the attention of Rattenbury, who was again supervising architect, over the plans for the new wing. Scholefield wanted to devote the upper of three floors for the Northwest History Collection (in the west wing), maps (south wing) and archives (east wing), but, strangely, he told Rattenbury that "the whole of this floor may serve as an exhibition hall." He may have been manoeuvring to impress upon the architect the manifold needs of the archives for space. If so, he failed miserably. Scholefield wanted to build "a scholastic retreat for the student, the scholar and the historian — not erect, as one of our local papers has expressed it, 'a magnificent focal feature,' " which is just what Rattenbury planned, particularly in his wasteful design of a grand entrance hall three stories high as the centrepiece of the library. The soaring entrance hall greatly reduced the space on the floor earmarked for the archives. By struggling for months, Scholefield got Rattenbury to change small things in deference to practicality, but the architect kept his grand entrance hall.<sup>65</sup> Their tussle over design aside, the two men joined to guide the cornerstone into place at a ceremony which was lent a certain grandeur by the presence of the Governor-General, the Duke of Connaught. All in all, the librarian could be happy with the promise of much larger, if not entirely appropriate, space for the library and archives.

While he was struggling with Rattenbury in the summer of 1911, Scholefield was also deeply involved in the first of several writing assignments that were sorely to try him, as well as his collaborators and publishers. Whereas Gosnell took a journalist's interest in the archives that he collected, Scholefield had greater ambitions, which to a large extent were his undoing. Beginning in 1910 with his acceptance of a contract to write a history of British Columbia for an organization calling itself the British Columbia Historical Association, he accepted a number of projects that he had great difficulty completing. The British Columbia Historical Association was constituted merely to sell subscriptions for a limited-edition history of the province. Along the lines of similar ventures mounted by firms in the United States, the history would contain a

<sup>65</sup> Scholefield to Rattenbury, 21 June and 8 July 1911, Scholefield to Howay, 2 August 1911, Scholefield to Robie Reid, 26 July 1911, Letterbook, vol. 2, GR 146, PABC.

special section of biographical sketches of prominent citizens of the day on what might be described as a fee-for-halo basis. Scholefield arranged to have Gosnell write the later chapters, and he himself did the pre-confederation section. The association soon came to regret its choice of Scholefield. When early on in the project's history it was suggested that Scholefield intrude mention of the names of forebears of subscribers into his narrative, he took it as an affront to his integrity and flatly refused, as he put it, "merely to tickle the vanity of living descendants of such persons." Having made promises to its subscribers, the association expected Scholefield to work with despatch. This he could not do. He promised his manuscript by the fall of 1910. Over three years and many excuses later, he turned his manuscript over to Gosnell for editing in order to ward off a suit the Vancouver promoters of the book were threatening in their exasperation at his dilatoriness. So little did Scholefield appreciate the publisher's concern in his dreams of scholarly history that he complained about not seeing the edited version.<sup>66</sup>

In the meantime in February 1912 Scholefield undertook another contract with the S. J. Clarke Company of Chicago to collaborate with Howay on a similar project, this time without the bugbear of subscription. S. J. Clarke obviously had more experience with troublesome authors than the British Columbia Historical Association, for Scholefield was soon given editorial help in the person of one W. L. Kershaw of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, who managed to hurry his author kicking and screaming into print in under half the time it took the Vancouver promoters.<sup>67</sup> A third project that Scholefield had on the go in 1910-1913, a chapter for Adam Shortt in the *Canada and its Provinces* series, was again passed on to the experienced journalist, Gosnell, this time before it was begun.<sup>68</sup>

Friends like T. C. Elliott hoped that Scholefield's troubles with his writing assignments would convince him to concentrate on his real métier, archives, but even failing health did not prevent him from overcommitting himself. He accepted a crushing burden of work. In time, his duties as librarian, archivist, historian, lecturer, master of government ceremonies and sometime secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor sapped his

<sup>66</sup> Scholefield to BCHA, 11 February 1910 and 22 March 1911; Scholefield to Pierre Duryee, 18 December 1913, Letterbook, vol. 2, GR 146, *PABC*.

<sup>67</sup> Scholefield to Howay, 2 February 1912, Scholefield to M. M. Clarke, 1 April 1913 and Scholefield to Kershaw, 1 August 1913, Letterbook, vol. 2, GR 146, *PABC*.

<sup>68</sup> Scholefield to Duryee, 19 October 1910, and Scholefield to Gosnell, 4 August 1913, Letterbook, vol. 2, GR 146, *PABC*.

strength, and led to a series of debilitating illnesses. He first fell ill in the spring of 1912, when he had to stay home, flat on his back in a darkened room, to recuperate. The last, lengthy bout left him in hospital completely paralyzed. He died on Christmas Day 1919.<sup>69</sup>

Scholefield's death drew the curtain down on the archives' first act. In the era before the proliferation of public and university libraries, the Legislative Library expanded its horizons far beyond the usual scope of such an institution. Whereas in Ottawa there existed a separate parliamentary library and dominion archives and no national library or gallery, Gosnell and Scholefield made an institution combining the elements of all four on a provincial scale.<sup>70</sup> They themselves tended not to make fine distinctions between the different forms in which information came or, in the circumstances, to hesitate to acquire a document because it might belong elsewhere. Such thoughts simply did not occur to them. Official records, whether printed or unprinted, manuscripts, maps, photographs, paintings and other art, newspapers, books, pamphlets and ephemera of all sorts flowed into the library and archives to fulfil a mandate conceived and executed by Gosnell and Scholefield without much reference to their masters, who seemed content to tolerate the grand schemes and free spending with good grace. That the archives played so prominent a part in the design is attributable to Gosnell's early interests and political connections and Scholefield's energetic pursuit of the sketchy program he inherited. The archives might well have been discontinued, as was threatened by the Provincial Secretary, J. D. Maclean, in 1918,<sup>71</sup> were it not for its sheltered place in the library and its very early success in acquiring valuable records.

The first two archivists also wisely spent a good deal of time publicizing the archives. Gosnell inspired many pieces in the newspapers through his connections in the journalistic world. Scholefield tirelessly spoke on the lecture circuit, where he often used lantern slides for illustration. In one year he gave thirty-one such speeches. All this activity represented a kind of insurance policy in case the generous patronage of men like McBride and Young ran dry in the flux of political life, though that was

<sup>69</sup> The letterbooks in GR 146, PABC, are sprinkled with references to his illnesses, which he usually described as influenza. Alma Russell says he had pernicious anemia. Add. MSS. 1240, PABC.

<sup>70</sup> Scholefield to L. Burpee, 17 February 1911, Letterbook; vol. 2, GR 146, PABC, where Scholefield says he was "trying to make the library under my control Provincial in scope, not merely a collection of reference works. . . ."

<sup>71</sup> Scholefield to Provincial Secretary, 7 February 1918, File 6, Box 2, GR 975, PABC.

hardly the publicity's only or even main purpose. Yet, at the start, there was no sympathetic constituency, as with the Mechanics' Institutes in Nova Scotia,<sup>72</sup> no historical society, as with the Public Archives of Canada, no private initiative, as with the Provincial Museum, prodding the government to action or insisting it continue to support an archives. Not that the archives was without allies. The band of zealous supporters was small, but not without weight: Howay and his friend Robie Reid, a Vancouver lawyer and amateur historian; the irascible Judge Archer Martin; John T. Walbran, the historian of coastal place names; G. M. Sproat, a great friend of Scholefield; C. F. Newcombe, who helped Gosnell with the centenary exhibit; F. W. Anderson, the MLA who saw that Scholefield was honoured after his death with the planting of a copper beech tree on the grounds beside the library and that his widow got a pension; as well as many others who had come to know and appreciate the archives. But mostly there were R. E. Gosnell and E. O. S. Scholefield. For Gosnell, collecting archives became essentially an honouring of people, a remembering of origins, a preserving of pioneer virtues. For Scholefield, it was a matter of pride to build an unparalleled haven for scholars, and a great game of detective work to boot.

Despite the broad scope of their efforts to preserve historically valuable documents, Gosnell and Scholefield early on saw an administrative as well as historical role for archives. Gosnell was particularly pleased to see the legal value of archives demonstrated in the so-called Deadman's Island case, a dispute that arose at the turn of the century between the governments of British Columbia and Canada over ownership of an island in Burrard Inlet adjacent to Stanley Park in Vancouver. The essential issue of the case was whether or not the island constituted a military reserve in colonial times and was therefore by the terms of union with Canada a Dominion reserve. During the course of court action, which ran to several appeals through to a Privy Council decision in the 1930s, the Lieutenant-Governors' despatches that Gosnell had taken in from Cary Castle became the subject of testimony and scrutiny. At one point, Scholefield was called as an expert witness. Many documents, including maps vital to the resolution of the case, were sought in provincial and Dominion record offices and archives. In his judgment on appeal in the Supreme Court in British Columbia, Chief Justice Gordon Hunter summed up the results of all the searching:

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Cobb Harvey, "The Age of Faith in Nova Scotia," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society of Canada*, vol. XL, Series III (May 1946), p. 15.

To a large extent, the case of the Dominion was in the hands of its adversary, resting as it does on documentary evidence, now in possession of the latter, and on the other documents which, it is alleged were once in its possession, but are now not to be found.<sup>73</sup>

In other words, the provincial government could find its records pertinent to the case, but the dominion government could not, a fact which did not escape Gosnell or Scholefield, one can be sure. This illustration of the legal value of archives in defence of the government in court as well as the not infrequent departmental call for records transferred to the archives convinced Scholefield, as he told Howay in 1918, that "not only in connection with cases in court, but on many other counts, the practical value of the work of the Archives has been demonstrated."<sup>74</sup>

Though Scholefield might perceive the practical value of archives, convincing the government to vote money and adopt the necessary thoroughgoing procedures for archives was quite another matter. Quite another momentum had been established. When no historical society or other agency presented itself to preserve manuscripts, reminiscences and other historically valuable documents in private hands, as in contrast happened in the United States, the archives perforce took on the dual role of record office for the government and manuscript repository. The historical library, which, if anything, preceded archives in Gosnell's mind, the gallery and the collections of photographs and maps were natural extensions of a thrust to preserve a rounded picture of the past. But a particular, remote past dominated. Driven by a sense that rare and valuable documents would soon be lost, Gosnell and Scholefield convinced the government of the prime need to rescue early records, particularly those of the pre-confederation era. Such motivation left more recent records out of the equation. The sense of rescuing and preserving origins held sway for years to come. Where the government's records were concerned, circumstance easily overcame dimly perceived principles. Archives were equated with ancient. The collective vision became fixed on the remote glimmerings of a society now coming to feel itself established. Perhaps, given the time and place, the need to perceive and commune with origins was especially pressing. It was certainly easier to honour pioneers with bits and pieces of their record rescued from here and there

<sup>73</sup> *Certified Copy of Proceedings*, p. 431. Hunter upheld the trial judge's decision in favour of the province (plaintiff), but his two fellow judges, M. W. Tyrwhitt Drake and Paulus Aemelius Irving, who from corroborative evidence conjured the existence of a map showing the island as part of a military reserve, decided for the dominion (defendant).

<sup>74</sup> Scholefield to Howay, 22 February 1918, Howay Papers, *UBCL*.



than to devise a regularized means of proper care for the government's records right at hand.

In a way it was nation building on a provincial scale — nothing so grand as a cultural equivalent of a provincial policy, but a species of the same thing. A primitive historical dimension, a searching for origins and antecedents submerged the issue of proper care of government archives in British Columbia, just as it did, one suspects in Ottawa, where not even a royal commission in 1912 could bring the dominion government to treat its historical records in anything approaching a systematic way. Apparently, governments could see archives as the means of cultural and political validation more easily than they could see archives as a requirement of efficient administration.