

# Colonial Building Scene Of Many Stirring Events

## Fathers Of Confederation Held First Meeting In 1864

Impressed upon every visitor to Charlottetown is the historic significance of the fine old Georgian building standing in the centre of Queen Square, seat of governmental activities and meeting place of the Legislative Assembly of the Province. It was here—as every visitor knows—that the Confederation Fathers held their first conference in 1864, and the Chamber wherein they met, originally the meeting place of the Legislative Council retains its original furniture, including the massive mahogany table covered with green baize around which the delegates gathered.

Excepting only the Province House of Nova Scotia's capital, this is the oldest legislative building in Canada. From the time of its erection in 1847 it was known as the Colonial Building, and it still retains traces of our early Colonial past. Visitors entering the portico, for example, will note that the flagstones with which the lower hall is paved are worn in a deeply grooved path to the right. This is a relic of the old days of landlordism, when tenants made their regular visits to the Colonial land office with their rents.

### GALA EVENT

The old building has been the scene of many gala events, the most brilliant, perhaps, being the celebrated ball and banquet held there for the entertainment of the visiting Confederation meeting delegates. The Council Chamber was used as a drawing room, where the guests assembled and were welcomed by Lieutenant

Governor Dundas and Mr. Dundas. The ball was held in the Assembly Room, and opened with a set of quadrilles.

According to a contemporary account, the room was "superbly decorated with bunting and evergreens, festooned and richly interwoven with flowers. A large transparency, representing the arms and motto of the Island, was placed over the Speaker's canopy; splendid mirrors were placed round the room and festive life beamed in every quarter." The dancing was kept up till 5 o'clock the next morning.

The Legislative Library was appropriated as a refreshment room, where tea, coffee and cake were served in abundance, while sherry, port, champagne and other beverages were liberally supplied for those who preferred more exhilarating fluids.

### COURT TRIALS

The Court Room below was the place selected for the supper room, to which the party repaired a little after midnight, where a rich repast was abundantly provided. Toasts were given and responded to, in brilliant speeches. From here the delegates took their departure and proceeded on board a steamer which sailed for Halifax.

Reference to the "Court Room" recalls the fact that for a quarter of a century after the Colonial Building was erected in 1847, the Supreme Court held its sittings there. Many noted suits were tried. Among them may be mentioned the Tenant League trials, which were held in January, 1866.

Three members of the League, arrested for interfering with the Sheriff in the discharge of his duty in enforcing the payment of rent, were put upon their trial. They were all found guilty, and Judge Peters, the presiding judge, sentenced them to imprisonment for two years, eighteen months, and one year, respectively, with a fine of fifty pounds in one case, and twenty pounds in the other cases.

Another important hearing, also conducted by Judge Peters, of George Dowie for the murder of John Cullen. The Crown was represented by the Hon. Joseph Hensley, Attorney General, Dennis O'Meara Reddin, Solicitor General, and the Hon. Edward Palmer. The prisoner was defended by Charles Palmer, Malcolm MacLeod and Frederick de St. Croix Brecken.

After a lengthy trial the prisoner was convicted of wilful murder and sentenced to be hanged, on the 30th of March, 1869, on Pownall Square. The sentence was afterwards suspended for one week to give time for a reply from the Home authorities for commutation. This Her Majesty refused and Dowie was executed on the 7th of April in the presence of many hundreds of people. The rope broke and the unfortunate man had to be hanged a second time. This occasioned a great deal of indignation. It was the last public execution ever held in the Province.

### FIRST OFFICES

The first offices in the Colonial Building were occupied by the Lieutenant Governor, the Judge of Probate, the Colonial Treasurer, the Surveyor General, the Collector of Import Duties, the Registrar in Chancery, and the Prothonotary.

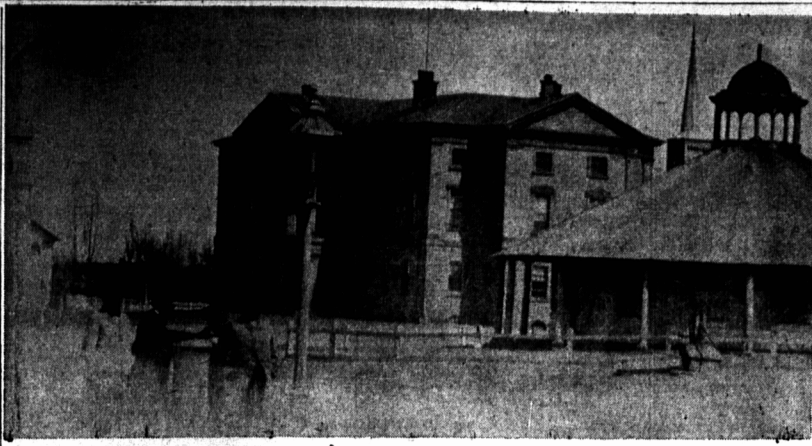
The first sitting of the Supreme Court in the Colonial Building took place at Trinity Term, 1847, with Chief Justice Edward J. Jarvis presiding and a Grand Jury composed of Thomas Treman, foreman, Charles Welsh, James Purdie, C. D. Rankin, John McGill, Albert Gates, William Longworth, L. W. Gaul, John Cox, Martin Doherty, John Davis, Sr., H. W. Lobbray, John Beete, James Reddin, R. B. Stewart, Kenneth MacKenzie, Henry Haszard, John Boyver, Francis Antoine and John Ings.

The Supreme Court was removed in 1878 to the court room in the Post Office building, which was destroyed by fire in 1884.

### MILITARY GUARD

A feature of the Colonial Building in early days was the military guard, posted there "for the protection of the public monies and records." This protection was requested by the Legislature in an address to the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Donald Campbell, dated Feb. 18, 1848. "Should Your Excellency be of the opinion that the same cannot be drawn from the small number of militia at present on this Island," said the petition, "the House of Assembly beg Your Excellency to represent the same to the Imperial Government, in order to obtain an additional number of military, so as to afford an additional security to the public monies, etc. of the Colony."

To this address His Excellency complied. It does not appear how the guard was continued. In an account in an Island newspaper of a very destructive fire which broke out in the establishment of John Scott, Kent Street, on the 26th of November, 1848, it is stated that "the alarm was first given by the sentinel at the Colonial Building." This would be ten months after the application for the guard was made.



Early Photo "Colonial Building" Crawell Studio (Copy)

### "WINGS OF A PENGUIN"

Not everyone was pleased with the Colonial Building when it was constructed. The money was raised by a Land Assessment Act; and the members of the Council, the watchdogs of the proprietors, were anxious to keep down the cost to £10,000, the sum originally voted. But the Assembly found that it would require £2,000 more to execute the original design and made the appropriation accordingly.

Lieutenant Governor Huntley assented to the bill, but sympathized with the Council and explained his opposition to the Colonial Secretary in the following caustic way:

"The effect seems very disproportionate to the expense; the alteration made consists of a portico for the front entrance which is sufficiently in character with the building, and two abutments very ostentatiously called 'wings' and bearing about as much proportion to the body of the building as the wings of a penguin do to the body of the bird; but they are of no comparatively relative use. These wings are intended to serve for side entrances, for which purpose two porticos could have been erected at much less expense and would have been quite as useful."

Huntley at the time (comments Dr. D. C. Harvey in an article on Old Charlottetown) was at loggerheads with the Speaker of the Assembly, Joseph Pope, and

may have allowed his sudden passion for economy to triumph over his aesthetic appreciation; but all citizens of Charlottetown then and since have been pleased that the Assembly executed the original design.

### TOO MUCH ECONOMY

From time to time, however, one notes complaints in the newspapers about the pinchbeck economy exercised in maintaining the building. The following comment, from the Prince Edward Island Magazine of April, 1899, is characteristic:

"Our Provincial Building is, as regards its interior, one of the shabbiest looking places that can be imagined. It is floored with flagstones, of which some are nearly worn through and others broken. It is dusty and sadly in need of paint. The windows let in little light—just enough to show that occasionally the corridors are used as a storehouse for road machines and government Paris Green. A musty political smell pervades all—coming from the vaults where repose the corpses of the Land Office, the Two Thirds Bill, the Gerry-mander, the plans for the Bridge and other decaying curiosities. Upon the staircase, in glass covered cabinets, stuffed owls and other native birds gaze fixedly down. When the Government finally puts aside an appropriation to clean up the building these wide-eyed birds will surely blink with surprise."

One must judge, from this complaint, that the building interiorally looks younger and fresher today than it did a half century or more ago.

## First Town Clock

The first public clock in Charlottetown was located in the tower of the old Roman Catholic Cathedral. Placed there in 1856, "its four black enameled dial plates, golden hands and numbers, were seen from their high position a great distance, while the silvery tone of the bell announced the hours."

It is recorded that in 1874, in addition to the many improvements Charlottetown had recently received, the local Government, at a cost of \$1,700, placed "a very fine illuminated clock in the south-west cupola of the new Law Courts Building, the lighting and extinguishing of which is altogether self-acting. Being furnished with necessary means, at a set hour of the evening the dial plate becomes lit up, remaining so until a certain hour next morning. Its bell, too, is large and weighty, and when striking the various hours of the day, is audible a long way off."

## Glamour And Pomp On Old Barracks Square

The old Barracks Square, where the permanent military forces were quartered during the early and middle parts of the last century, occupied a large expanse of ground extending south from Sydney Street to the water front, now covered by the City Hospital and Sacred Heart Home, and the south end of Rochford Street now running between these two institutions. It was flanked by rows of officers' and men's quarters.

The main entrance to the Barracks was facing about the lower or west end of what is now Connaught Square. On public holidays the square was the scene of great glamour and military pomp. After the removal of the Imperial troops, the old Volunteer Militia held their annual parades here. Visiting naval forces occasionally joined in the manoeuvres and sham battles. In the summer this was the regular place for drill until the present Armouries was erected. In winter the drill was carried on in the upper story of Pope's warehouse, where the Canadian Legion home now stands.

In "Memories of Long Ago" the late Mr. Benjamin Bremner recalls some of the members of the old brigade of Charlottetown Militia which existed long before the establishment of the Volunteer Militia, who turned out regularly for parade on the old Barracks Square when he was a boy. These stalwarts included Major Ben. Davies (father of Sir Louis Davies), Capt. Paul Mabey, Peter Macgowan (for quite a time City Clerk) and Richard Faught.

Mr. Bremner also recalled Lobban's Band, with old Mr. Lobban leading "with an instrument called a 'Serpent'." Then came the newly organized Calbraith's Band, (1862) which was the first to play the then newly-arrived tune, "Dixie Land."

### FIRST HISTORIAN

JOHN STEWART Esq., (a title whom Mr. Stewart is named), son of Chief Justice Peter Stewart, and the Island's first historian (1806). He presided at the first public meeting, June 1825, for the erection of a place of worship for the established Church of Scotland in Charlottetown. His portrait, by Harris, hangs in the Legislative Assembly room. Died 1834, aged 76. —P. E. I. Magazine (Old Cemetery), Vol. 1.

## 1773 First Legislature Convened In Tavern

It has been said that the first meeting of the Legislature of the Province, in 1773, was held in the Cross Keys Tavern in Charlottetown with the Town Constable performing the double functions of sergeant-at-arms and door-keeper.

This high official was lacking in the spirit of reverence for Legislative assemblies, and during the proceedings took occasion to remark in audible tones that "this was a damned queer Parliament."

No doubt there was more truth than courtesy in his remark, but it lost him a day's pay of five good shillings and presumably lightened the provincial expenditure to a like amount.

It is said that the House sat for but two days on the occasion, the members receiving no indemnity, after the British fashion. The entire cost of the session was Eleven Pounds.

The Assembly was limited at

### HEADED EARLY FIRM

LEMUEL CAMBRIDGE, died 1875, at 74; His firm L. & A. Cambridge was the principal one here during the early part of the nineteenth century. The store, later used by the firm of D. Nicholson, tobacconist, formerly stood on the site of Carvell Bros. Lemuel was elected to the Assembly in 1824; was High Sheriff in 1825.—P. E. I. Magazine (Old Cemetery), O & F vol. 1.



Market Building Early 1900's Crawell Studio (Copy)



Corner Queen And Kent Streets 1887 Crawell Studio (Copy)

1855

# CHARLOTTETOWN

## CELEBRATES ITS HUNDRETH BIRTHDAY

This city owes its existence to the agricultural country of which it is the centre, and to the seas on which it rests. Its growth in the past century has been steady though not spectacular, but it has the stability and wholesomeness which reflects its agricultural background.

It can take pride too, that though it is the smallest capital in the confederated Canadian Provinces, it played no small part in the creation of this united nation.

# Perfection

## DAIRY PRODUCTS

We are proud that our dairy products, bearing the name "Charlottetown" on every label, go forth to many parts of Canada and beyond. These butter and milk products are for the most part manufactured in this hundred year old city.

Charlottetown is a community where city and country meet and mingle in happy co-operation. The founder of this Company, had faith in the million acres of fertile soil of which Charlottetown is the capital, and from which this century old city draws its sustenance.

The founders' successors retain that faith, and join heartily in commemorating our beloved city's great anniversary year.

1955

1921

# CENTRAL CREAMERIES LIMITED

SOURCE CHARLOTTETOWN SUMMERSIDE

1955