

# Memorial University's Role in the Establishment of a Provincial Archive for Newfoundland in 1960

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# Memorial University's Role in the Establishment of a Provincial Archive for Newfoundland in 1960

MELVIN BAKER

## HISTORICAL RESEARCH BEFORE 1949

IN 1890 PATRICK BOWERS, the editor of the St. John's *Daily Colonist*, observed that "one of the first questions asked by intelligent tourists visiting our shores in search of information on our habits, customs, and past history is, where are your archives [sic]? Alas, to our discredit and shame," Bowers wrote, "be it said we have no office or bureau to which application can be made for full and complete data of any event or period of importance in Newfoundland."<sup>1</sup> Thirty-seven years later the St. John's *Evening Telegram* similarly lamented that Newfoundland had no archives department where important documents of historical interest could be kept. "It is only necessary to recall that the archives of the world had to be searched," the newspaper noted, in researching the Island's recent case before the British Privy Council as to the ownership of Labrador which was awarded to Newfoundland over Canada.<sup>2</sup>

Until the early 1930s<sup>3</sup>, responsibility for preserving Newfoundland's archival past had fallen for the most part upon the Newfoundland Historical Society<sup>4</sup> and the government's Legislative Library. The former, established in 1905, consisted mainly of prominent St. John's residents interested in preserving and promoting the history and culture of Newfoundland. After 1934 and the establishment of Commission of Government, the holdings of the Legislative Library were disposed of with some of the Newfoundland books and manuscripts being deposited in the recently established Gosling Memorial Library. The "Gosling" was a public library officially opened on January 9, 1936 and named in honour of former St. John's Mayor Gilbert Gosling, a city businessman and

author of the still only history of Labrador. Gosling's own historical research and his association with the Newfoundland Historical Society also showed the value of maintaining a public archive.<sup>5</sup> The Gosling Library preserved manuscripts and diaries but its main emphasis was on local newspapers and books. It was at the Gosling, for instance, that journalist and future Newfoundland premier Joseph Smallwood<sup>6</sup> researched historical material for his popular radio program "The Barrelman" of the late 1930s.<sup>7</sup>

Scholarly historical research on Newfoundland and Labrador before 1949 was generally accomplished using archival sources found in Britain and, to a lesser extent, in Canada at the Public Archives in Ottawa. For example, Daniel Prowse had researched much of his comprehensive history of Newfoundland, published in 1895, in British archival repositories.<sup>8</sup> Gosling's 1910 Labrador history relied upon British archival sources as well as local government records.<sup>9</sup> Early 20th century research followed a similar pattern. Newfoundland political scientist Bert Mayo, in 1948, completed a doctoral dissertation at Oxford University on Canada-Newfoundland relations. Other scholarly research carried on outside Newfoundland includes that of Canadian economic historian Harold Innis, who made Newfoundland a central theme of his detailed 1938 study *The Cod Fisheries*, which looked at the history of the North Atlantic fisheries prior to 1936 and contained several chapters on the Newfoundland fisheries. In 1935 Canadian historian William Morton completed a B. Litt. thesis at Oxford University on Newfoundland in colonial policy, 1775-1793. Another Canadian historian, Gordon Rothney, similarly examined Newfoundland's role in late 18th century imperial policy in a doctoral dissertation completed at the University of London in 1939. In 1941 New Zealander Alexander H. McLintock published his doctoral thesis on Newfoundland society and government between 1783 and 1832. In 1946 political scientist Robert MacKay of Dalhousie University edited a collection of essays on Newfoundland's political, economic, and diplomatic history.<sup>10</sup> It included several essays by historian Allan Fraser of Memorial University College. Fraser's research encompassed considerable archival research in Ottawa and published primary Newfoundland government records in St. John's.<sup>11</sup>

The first publication to take a broad, almost encyclopedic approach to "Newfoundland studies" – "a fuller and more authoritative account of the people, institutions, and conditions of Newfoundland than has hitherto been available" – was the two-volume *The Book of Newfoundland* edited and published in 1937 by Joseph Smallwood and based on local newspaper sources, local institutional records, and oral sources. This collection provided accounts of local society and economy, geography, and natural resources by various authors, whose research was done mainly at the Gosling Library.<sup>12</sup> Its appearance in 1937 coincided with the valuable pamphlet on local folklore, its phrases, expressions, origins and meaning, by Patrick Devine, who also contributed an essay on folklore for

Smallwood's anthology. From 1901 considerable popular research on Newfoundland themes had also appeared in the *Newfoundland Quarterly*, which has been the main periodical forum for such material.<sup>13</sup>

In 1949 Smallwood changed careers when he became premier of the new Canadian province, but his interest in all intellectual things relating to Newfoundland and Labrador never diminished. And at Newfoundland's new university – Memorial University – President Raymond Gushue<sup>14</sup> and several enthusiastic faculty members shared the premier's belief in an active local research program. However, what the province lacked in 1949 was its own archival facilities to collect and care for historical records to facilitate serious local research.<sup>15</sup> To accomplish this goal and to promote historical research in general, Memorial sought outside funding for this archival enterprise with its efforts culminating in the establishment by the Newfoundland Government in 1960 of a Provincial Archives for Newfoundland and providing the research means and facilities for active scholarly study into the province's past.

#### NIMSHI CREWE AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS IN THE EARLY 1950S

An early proposal for a public archival facility for Newfoundland emanated from amateur historian Nimshi Crewe, deputy auditor general from 1936 until his retirement in 1950.<sup>16</sup> Crewe was a friend of Smallwood, sharing with the premier a life-long passion for historical research and antiquarian collecting. The two travelled the outports together looking for furniture and books.<sup>17</sup> It was on one of those trips in 1940 to Harbour Grace that both were struck by the neglect of old court records stored in public buildings.<sup>18</sup> In a memo to Smallwood dated April 24, 1951, Crewe formalized ideas that the two amateur historians had "often discussed since the time when, about 1933, you began to share my own interest in ... Nfld's history, records and souvenirs." He proposed the creation through legislation of a "Newfoundland Historical Records Commission" to locate, acquire, inventory, and preserve historical records, record the inscriptions of all pre-1880 cemetery headstones, collect histories of outport settlements, and publicize local history through publication. The Commission's mandate would be to acquire old account books, diaries, family letters, photographs and the like, archive old court records, photocopy church registers, and preserve historic buildings and furniture. Crewe had discussed his proposal with several prominent individuals with a strong interest in Newfoundland history – book collectors and lawyers Jack Higgins and Robert Furlong, Gosling librarian and president of the Newfoundland Historical Society Harold Newell, journalist Michael Harrington, St. John's city clerk Edward Foran, and Memorial University professor Moses Morgan.<sup>19</sup>

In 1951 Smallwood followed Crewe's suggestions, enacting legislation to set up an advisory board of trustees of public records. Public Records in the act

was defined to "include all books, papers, records, documents, structures, erections, monuments, objects, materials, articles or things of historic, scientific, or traditional interest." Appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Commission would have five members and have responsibility for the general management, regulation, and control of the public records.<sup>20</sup> The following year the act was amended to allow for the selection of a chair from among the members and hence allow for the trustees to hold meetings.<sup>21</sup> The commission's membership consisted of residents long associated with the collection and preservation of Newfoundland books – Crewe, Jack Higgins, Robert Furlong, and Leo English, the curator of the provincial museum and amateur historian. Smallwood observed in the House of Assembly in 1952 that this "board may not shatter the world but within the family of Newfoundland it is important that an active effort be made to gather together and preserve carefully documents, especially original documents bearing on the history of our people, of our former country and present Province, especially our former country because it deals with its actual history."<sup>22</sup>

### MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY IN THE EARLY 1950S

In 1951 Memorial University's Board of Regents commissioned former University of Alberta President Robert Newton to undertake a study of the academic, administrative, and physical requirements of the new university over the next decade or so. In research areas, Newton recommended that field work be undertaken into folklore and linguistics and that it was "not hard to think of other projects in local history, geography, economics, sociology, botany, zoology, and marine biology. A university without research is unthinkable. The important thing is to make a start, however modest, and to keep pace with the development of facilities."<sup>23</sup>

In the mid-1950s the new university consisted of one central building and several smaller adjunct buildings located in the heart of the city at the intersection of Parade Street and Merrymeeting Road and had little room for physical expansion in its immediate area. Memorial was a young university poised for growth in student enrolment, academic programs, and physical expansion and awaiting the promised construction of a new, larger campus to be built on the outskirts of the city on Elizabeth Avenue. The government had acquired land for the new campus in 1951, but for financial reasons construction did not begin until 1959 with the campus opening in 1961.<sup>24</sup>

The number of faculty for the 1949-1950 academic year was 25; Allan Fraser was the sole faculty member in the Department of History, Political Science, and Economics, with the curriculum consisting of two courses on the history of civilization, a political science course on the government of the British Commonwealth, and a general economics course.<sup>25</sup> For the 1950-1951 academic year Fraser was joined by Moses Morgan. The Newfoundland-born Morgan was

a Dalhousie and Oxford-educated scholar who joined the Memorial faculty as a political scientist. Morgan, who taught political science and economics, was a strong advocate of research and his subsequent academic and administrative career at the university until his retirement in 1981 as university president was closely identified with what became formally known in the mid-1970s as the field of Newfoundland Studies.<sup>26</sup> In the early 1950s he was joined by several like-minded scholars. In 1953 E.R. (Ron) Seary joined the English department and soon afterwards commenced research into the toponymy of local place names and, later, the origins and history of family names. Morgan and Seary became influential within the university, the former becoming dean of arts and science in 1958 while Seary was head of the English department from 1954 to 1970. Both men greatly shaped the direction research in the humanities would take at Memorial.

### THE 1953 "LONDON CONFERENCE" AND THE CARNEGIE PROPOSAL, 1954

As noted earlier, academic interest in Newfoundland's history had been pursued by various historians in Britain. By 1952 retired British economic historian Charles Fay had joined their number and in the summer of 1952 visited Newfoundland to research a book on the province's economic history. He returned again the following summer and in late 1953 gave a series of public lectures on Newfoundland economic history. His Memorial lectures served to highlight the university's commitment to local historical research and they were subsequently published for Memorial University by the University of Toronto Press in 1956 as *Life and Labour in Newfoundland*. He also later published a monograph on Newfoundland and the Channel Islands. In his several Newfoundland publications, Fay illustrated various aspects of Newfoundland and Labrador history through the use of excerpted primary documentary sources.<sup>27</sup> Fay's work indicated the diversity of documentation that needed to be collected into a Newfoundland archive.

At the annual Learned Societies conference held in June 1953 in London, Ontario, several academics interested in Newfoundland historical research met to discuss their plans. Moses Morgan explored with Fay, Allan Fraser, Gordon Rothney, and Bert Mayo (of the University of Alberta) potential research ideas in social, economic and political history. It was agreed that each would make his own suggestions to President Gushue. The participants discussed having graduate students in mainland Canada undertake research into aspects of Newfoundland history at McGill University and the University of Toronto and at the University of London in Britain. Morgan rejected this suggestion, for it meant Memorial would have no influence in the direction of such research and it was not subsequently pursued.

Rather, Morgan preferred for Memorial to establish a research team from among its faculty, consisting of at least an historian, an economist, and a political scientist, which would be "encouraged to carry out organized research into Newfoundland history in all its aspects." He later suggested to Gushue that a team be led by a mature, experienced historian, preferably Rothney, "who would be highly suitable for such an appointment." Morgan also envisaged the "publication of a Memorial University of Newfoundland series of monographs embodying the results of the research of this team and later a series of comprehensive books. At a later date post graduate degrees (MA) could be given in these fields when the material for research has been made available at the University or Provincial Archives."<sup>28</sup> Relevant archival material would be collected and brought to St. John's and deposited in the university library in the absence of a provincial archive. Morgan informed Gushue that he had met in Ottawa with the Dominion Archivist, Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, to discuss how the collection process could be done. The Canadian Public Archives offered to give the university copies of Newfoundland records it was presently microfilming in France and Britain, and would microfilm its own records relating to Newfoundland. Finally, Morgan recommended that the university library acquire from within the province both public and private records that would be catalogued for eventual use by a provincial archive.<sup>29</sup>

Besides the publicity associated with the Fay lectures in the fall of 1953, momentum for historical research received a further boost with the appointment of Gordon Rothney to replace Allan Fraser who resigned to run as the Liberal representative for St. John's East to the House of Commons. The previous academic year, 1952-1953, Rothney had taught at Memorial as a temporary replacement for Fraser, who was on leave to study for a doctoral degree in the United States.<sup>30</sup> Rothney re-instituted the study of Newfoundland history at Memorial. From 1943-1944 to 1949-1950 Fraser offered a course on the history of Newfoundland from 1832 to 1939, emphasizing the constitutional development and external relations of Newfoundland. The Newfoundland history course was not included in the university calendar for the 1950-1951 academic year. It was also not offered for 1951-1952, and Fraser's absence from campus for the 1952-1953 year meant that the course was again not available.

In November 1953 Rothney and Morgan provided Gushue with further detail on the proposed research project. The first would see the University sponsor the creation of a provincial archive. One model to be followed was that of Nova Scotia, where the provincial archive was located on the campus of Dalhousie University, but not controlled by that university. In Nova Scotia archivists were recruited from Dalhousie, where they continued to lecture as well. Another was that of the Saskatchewan provincial archive which had been established with the help of the University of Saskatchewan.<sup>31</sup> In Saskatchewan the head of the history department at the university in Saskatoon was also

provincial archivist with the Saskatchewan archive also having a branch office and archivist in Regina, the provincial capital. Rothney proposed that Memorial assume responsibility for creating a provincial archive through the collection and cataloguing of relevant historical documents. The university would have responsibility for managing the archive with the government providing the financial resources for its maintenance.

Second, Rothney wanted Memorial to sponsor research on Newfoundland history by having a search of relevant archival sources undertaken into repositories in England, Ireland, the United States, and France. As part of this work, library staff would compile a bibliography of works published on Newfoundland since 1900 and this listing would prevent duplication of work by the research team in collecting valuable published documents and secondary works. Existing unpublished university theses on Newfoundland would be examined by Memorial's research team and the more suitable ones published by the university. Third, Rothney suggested a plan of research and original publication in Newfoundland history for Memorial in four broad areas: Newfoundland in Anglo-French and Anglo-American relations; the constitutional history of Newfoundland; social and economic history; and the publication of select documents in the history of Newfoundland. He noted that the American Carnegie Corporation might possibly grant funds to help with the proposed research project.<sup>32</sup> Once the University had acquired the necessary historical materials, it was hoped that a comprehensive history of Newfoundland and Labrador could be written.

Gushue, in March 1954, sought the advice of Kaye Lamb on the research proposal. Lamb noted that no philanthropic foundation would be prepared to provide such assistance unless either the University or the provincial government were prepared to meet the expenses of an archivist once the foundation funding ended. Lamb stated that a foundation would be more receptive to a request for financial assistance if the proposal were recommended by the Canadian Social Science Research Council, which helped to promote general scholarly research in Canada.<sup>33</sup> Both Newfoundland and Canada had previously been the recipients, for educational and cultural purposes, of financial assistance from American philanthropic foundations; indeed, Memorial's establishment in 1925 and its operation for a decade afterwards was thanks to aid from the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>34</sup>

Another major concern of Memorial's president was finding financial assistance for faculty travel, given the University's distance from other universities and research repositories and libraries. In January 1954 Gushue approached the Carnegie Corporation for financial aid. Carnegie was interested, with Carnegie's Assistant Director Stephen H. Stackpole proposing a visit to Memorial later in the year to become better acquainted with its activities. Gushue suggested that he visit in May during Convocation, but Stackpole had other



commitments and suggested that they meet in June when the annual meeting of the Learned Societies convened in Winnipeg.<sup>35</sup>

Morgan and Rothney attended the Learned Societies meeting and discussed on Gushue's behalf the proposal for assistance with Stackpole and with Dr. John Robbins, honorary secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Social Science Research Council.<sup>36</sup> Stackpole was supportive of the proposal, but in a subsequent letter to Gushue, expressed reservations about Memorial's long-term commitment to archival work, which would probably require provincial assistance both during the life of the project and afterwards, as it had "implications beyond the interest of the University itself."<sup>37</sup>

Morgan and Rothney prepared the project funding proposal sent in October 1954 to the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Memorial requested, in total, \$65,000 to cover both the cost of the archival project and faculty travel for a five-year period. In January 1955 Carnegie agreed to give Memorial a three-year grant of \$30,000 to undertake to identify what Newfoundland materials existed in American, Canadian, British, and French archival repositories. The grant was also to be used for faculty travel and historical research. The grant would be made in payments of \$10,000 per year, beginning with the 1954-1955 academic year. Memorial also received from Carnegie assistance for faculty travel on the basis of an annual grant of \$4,000 for five years.<sup>38</sup> A condition of the Carnegie grant for historical research was that any archive be turned over to the province for its management and support.

## THE FIRST YEAR, 1955-1956

President Gushue chaired the Historical Research Team (or Committee) which consisted also of historians Murray Young and Gordon Rothney, geographer Harold Goodridge, economist Gordon Goundrey, and Moses Morgan. Young had joined the university in 1954<sup>39</sup> as part of Rothney's plans to expand course offerings in the History Department at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Other subsequent additions to the committee were English professor George Story, economist Parzival Copes, sociologist Don Willmott, and librarians Sadie Organ and Agnes O'Dea. At their first meeting on March 23, 1955, the research team decided to establish two committees: finance consisting of Gushue, Morgan and Rothney; and advisory to assist the research team on the collection of historical documents. Appointees to the advisory committee included prominent Newfoundlanders associated with Newfoundlandia, such as Albert Perlin, Edward Foran, Robert Furlong, William Carew, Jack Higgins, Gerald Doyle, Michael Harrington, and Don Jamieson. Rex Renouf and Oliver Vardy, provincial director of tourist development, were added in 1958. Also included were historians and archivists familiar with Newfoundland historical documents in Canada and Britain – Dominion Archivist Kaye Lamb and British historians Taylor Milne, Sir Lewis Namier, and Gerald Graham (a Canadian-

born historian). In addition, the advisory committee had the assistance of Charles Fay, who roamed through British repositories collecting materials for publication and arranging to have some documents copied and/or microfilmed for Memorial. Within the province the indefatigable Nimshi Crewe, although not a member of the advisory committee, was an invaluable source of information on books, manuscripts, and documents that the university should acquire.

The main problem facing Memorial in the first year of its Carnegie grant was insufficient space to house archival collections on the cramped Parade Street campus. The research team decided at its second meeting on March 25, 1955 that until space became available the emphasis would be on the identification of Newfoundland historical documents both within and outside Newfoundland. Once space was available, an archivist could be appointed. During the summer of 1955, the research team agreed for Young and Goundrey to examine British repositories, for Rothney to examine American repositories, and for Morgan to investigate archives in Nova Scotia.

Reports of the research team's summer activities were presented to the third meeting of the committee, held on November 4, 1955. Goundrey and Young, for instance, reported on their archival findings in Britain and Rothney on his research in American repositories. At this meeting Morgan was appointed vice-chairman to chair meetings in the absence of Gushue (recently appointed to a federal royal commission on the Canadian economy) and it was agreed to approach local librarian Agnes O'Dea<sup>40</sup> to work on the compilation of a bibliography of published materials on Newfoundland and Labrador, which was considered essential to their project. The University library lacked a strong base of Newfoundland books and was dependent on private donations for additions to the collection.<sup>41</sup> O'Dea agreed to take the position of Research Librarian on a half-time basis, commencing January 9, 1956.<sup>42</sup>

As for the appointment of an archivist, no action on the matter had been taken because of the archival space problem, which was ameliorated in 1956 with the availability of a room with a capacity of 900 sq. ft. in a small galvanized steel building known as the South Annex, next to the main university building. The committee instructed Rothney to seek advice from his colleagues in the historical and archival professions on suitable candidates. Morgan, however, wanted the immediate appointment of an archivist through the selection of a Memorial student who would be trained for this purpose, while Rothney preferred the appointment of a trained historian familiar with archival practices. Consequently, in January 1956 Morgan inquired through historian Dr. George Wilson at Dalhousie University as to whether Dr. Daniel C. Harvey, the recently retired Provincial Archivist of Nova Scotia, would be interested in organizing the archive for Memorial. Harvey was unavailable to take on the task for both health and retirement reasons.<sup>43</sup>

After several other inquiries concerning the availability of senior Canadian

historians, Rothney concentrated on acquiring either an archivist or a younger historian to carry out the archival work. In the spring of 1956 Harvey Mitchell was strongly recommended to him by Kaye Lamb and two historians from Winnipeg. Born in Winnipeg, the 30 year-old Harvey was a history graduate of the University of Minnesota and of the University of London. His doctoral dissertation was a study of British policy towards French Royalists in the 1790s and involved research in both British and French national archives. During the 1955-1956 academic year he had lectured at St. John's College, Winnipeg.

### CREATING A NEWFOUNDLAND ARCHIVE

In the period prior to Mitchell's appointment the University had already acquired or had been promised some major collections. From the Public Archives of Canada, for instance, microfilmed copies of the papers of Newfoundland's first prime minister (1855 to 1858), Philip Little, were acquired from original correspondence held by Little's estate in Ireland. Following Mitchell's appointment a concerted acquisitions effort was made. The presence of the university archive encouraged private individuals to make donations of their papers to Memorial. Mitchell had government records stored in Government House, the residence of the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Leonard Outerbridge, brought to the archive, which within a year had to move to a larger room in the South Annex, thereby doubling the archive's physical capacity. These were the letter books of the governors dating from the 18th century and the letter books of the colonial secretary from the 19th century. Other collections were outport customs records, business and organizational records, and microfilmed copies of original records from the Public Archives of Canada. Following Mitchell's appointment, Memorial's collections grew rapidly through the combined efforts of Mitchell, the general faculty at Memorial, and Nimshi Crewe, who constantly informed both Premier Smallwood and the university of valuable historical documents.<sup>44</sup> A complete inventory of Mitchell's acquisitions is contained in the January 1958 issue of the *American Archivist*, where he described the nascent archive. He also prepared two scholarly articles based on the recently acquired historical documents.<sup>45</sup>

In 1958 Mitchell resigned as archivist to accept a Nuffield Fellowship for study in England<sup>46</sup> and William Whiteley replaced him as Archivist. Whiteley was brought to Rothney's attention by Dominion Archivist Kaye Lamb.<sup>47</sup> A history masters' graduate of Queen's University who was working on a doctoral history degree from Cornell University, he completed an archives course in Ottawa provided at Carleton University by the Public Archives before coming to Newfoundland. In co-operation with librarian Agnes O'Dea, Whiteley catalogued existing holdings while pursuing new acquisitions within the province. In May 1959 he visited outports in Trinity and Bonavista Bays and acquired many old courts records which were brought to St. John's, including

those Crewe and Smallwood had noticed in 1940 and which Crewe in November 1958 had urged Smallwood and the university to acquire.<sup>48</sup>

In August 1959, along with Anna Rosenberg, who taught German at Memorial, he examined the records of the Moravian Missions on the Labrador Coast and had shipped to St. John's six cartons of historical records, some of which dated back to 1770. These records were subsequently arranged, first by Rosenberg and later by Hedwig Elizabeth Brueckner (the wife of a Memorial geology professor) and microfilmed by the Public Archives of Canada. The original documents were transferred to a Moravian archive in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.<sup>49</sup> The Newfoundland government also continued to transfer its records to the university archive, including those belonging to the National Convention for 1946-1948. Microfilmed copies of records from other archival repositories continued to be acquired, including copies of the papers of the Labrador medical missionary, Sir Wilfred Grenfell. Papers and ledgers belonging to various businesses and the Newfoundland Board of Trade were also collected.

With the building up of archival collections, the History Department instituted, in 1955, a graduate masters program with Jack Feltham commencing graduate work in September 1955. The first two students to complete theses graduated in 1959: Leslie Harris wrote a thesis on local politics in the 1830s and Jack Feltham a study of the Fishermen's Protective Union between 1908 and 1923. Several other graduates followed over the next few years with theses following the pattern Rothney had envisaged whereby a student would complete a study of a certain period of 19th century Newfoundland history.<sup>50</sup>

Research on Newfoundland society and culture was not restricted to the History Department. Memorial's English Department became active in social and cultural history. Since 1954 Ron Seary had been researching Newfoundland place names and his work resulted in several significant publications over the next decade. In June 1955 Seary outlined to the annual meeting of the Canadian Linguistic Association in Toronto his research proposals into the recording and preservation of material relating to the language and culture of Newfoundland. The first was a survey of the usage of the English language within the province. The spoken language from around the province would be recorded and phonetic transcriptions made of samples of the recordings. This research would provide the material for the preparation of a linguistic atlas of the province and a dictionary of Newfoundland English usage. The second was a survey of Newfoundland place names, their origins and usage.<sup>51</sup> Seary's other research ideas, proposed to President Gushue in March 1955, included the compilation of a dictionary of Newfoundland biography (similar to the English *Dictionary of National Biography*), and the publication of rare or previously unpublished documents relating to local history and culture such as diaries, journals, day-books and letters.<sup>52</sup> In 1954 Seary had been joined in the English Department by

George Story, a 27-year old St. John's resident and a 1954 D.Phil. graduate of Oxford University<sup>53</sup>. Story's work on local usage of the English language culminated in the landmark publication (in collaboration with William Kirwin and John Widdowson) of the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (Toronto 1982).

Further financial assistance was needed to keep the archival program active until the province was ready to assume financial responsibility from the university. In January 1958 the University approached the newly established Canada Council for financial assistance for the archival/historical research project. Memorial requested a grant of at least \$10,000 to continue the project for one year and a minimum of \$30,000 for a three-year period. The grant would pay salaries and purchase microfilmed documents, maps, historical photographs, and equipment. A separate application was sent for assistance of \$3,680 for bibliographical work associated with the project.<sup>54</sup> The Council looked favourably upon Memorial's request; a grant of \$10,000 was approved for 1958 for the archival project and a grant of \$4,000 for 1958 for bibliographical work.<sup>55</sup>

In February 1958 Gushue also approached the Carnegie Foundation to extend its historical research grant by requesting \$20,000 – \$10,000 a year for two years – for continued archival work to maintain the archive until the provincial government was financially able to fund it.<sup>56</sup> Carnegie agreed to a final \$12,000 grant which was to be spent within three years and could be divided between archival and bibliographical use.<sup>57</sup>

## AN ALTERNATE ARCHIVAL ARRANGEMENT: PROVINCIAL CONTROL

Memorial's Carnegie Committee hoped that the archive being created would remain under the control of the university but funded by the government. In September 1956 the committee struck a sub-committee under Rothney's chairmanship to draft an archives act for the province. The proposed legislation presented to government in January 1957 was based on the archival experience of Saskatchewan with which Rothney was most impressed and which he preferred. The proposed bill would establish a "Newfoundland Archives Office" at the university for the collection, classification, and maintenance of all public documents and court records associated with the administration of public affairs in the province. The archives would be supervised by a management board consisting of five members: two appointed by the government, two by the Board of Regents of the University; and the fifth to be the province's legislative librarian. The archive would be directed by a provincial archivist, a university employee appointed by the Board of Regents with the approval of the Newfoundland Archives Board. The Board of Regents would also appoint any other staff for the archive. Besides public records the archive could acquire any private papers touching upon the history of the province.<sup>58</sup> Funding for the public archive would be provided by the Newfoundland government.

Smallwood introduced a new twist into the archival picture with the appointment in August 1958 of Allan Fraser as Provincial Archivist and Director of the Newfoundland Museum, although Fraser yet had no archive to manage (and no public announcement was made of his appointment as provincial archivist). Fraser had been defeated in the June 1957 federal election and worked in New York later in 1957 as associate editor for the *Encyclopedia Americana*.<sup>59</sup> In 1957 he had sought re-instatement to his former teaching position at Memorial, but this was denied because his old position had already been filled with Rothney's appointment and no comparable position in history was available.<sup>60</sup>

At its meeting in October 1958, the Carnegie Committee decided to keep its relations with Fraser on an informal basis, since the government had not yet made Fraser's appointment public nor had it communicated his appointment to the Committee. The following month Myles Murray, Minister of Provincial Affairs, wrote Gushue informing him of Fraser's appointment. Murray noted that "at the present time it is difficult for me to outline the exact nature of the work which Mr. Fraser will be undertaking in the foreseeable future on our behalf because the Government's plans in this connection have not yet been completed and a great deal depends, as you will readily appreciate, on the provision of suitable accommodation and facilities for the Government Archives."<sup>61</sup>

Gushue consulted Rothney and Morgan on the implications of Fraser's appointment. Both felt that the government had misunderstood the university's intentions in setting up an archive at Memorial. Rothney expressed concern that the government appeared to be establishing "Government Archives" distinct from "University Archives" and hoped that every effort would be made to "prevent this concept from developing." Rothney stated that Government Archives had already been established – at the University. "The archives at the University of course," he observed, are

Government Archives, and, wherever they may be housed there should be no other depository for Provincial Government records. They are not the University Archives, but the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland. We should do everything in our power to discourage the creation of a second archives, and to discourage the idea that the present archives are anything but the Provincial Archives which they were always intended to be... The Minister does not seem to be aware that what the University has been doing is to organize archives for the Government for them to take over as soon as the organization was complete, not as a project any longer, but as a running concern.<sup>62</sup>

Morgan's advice to Gushue on November 19 was of a similar nature, stressing that

when we began to consider a project to accumulate here in the City records of Newfoundland History in the original manuscript or any other form, the original plan was to have available a center of Newfoundland studies. I have always looked

upon our efforts as a pioneer attempt in this direction and look forward to the day when the Provincial Government will be persuaded to establish on the University campus a proper Archives building on the model of Nova Scotia.<sup>63</sup>

In early 1959 the government presented the University with a copy of the draft legislation setting up a public archive for the province. Morgan replied for the University. Concerning the composition of the advisory board, Morgan sought input for the University in the appointment of members because of Memorial's strong desire to further develop and promote the archive. Morgan did not favour the combining of a provincial museum and archive under one board, because the former primarily served the public in general and the latter the interests of those interested in historical scholarship. The legislation also did not make specific reference to the position of provincial archivist, whose powers and responsibilities should be specifically defined.<sup>64</sup> In short, the government had given the University's views little consideration in the draft legislation, Morgan informed Gushue.<sup>65</sup>

The government's plan was not what Morgan and Rothney had envisioned; they preferred a public archive affiliated with the University and located in a building to be located on the site of the new university campus to be built by government.<sup>66</sup> Smallwood now saw things differently and wanted an archive established completely independent of Memorial. Passed in the heady debate concerning the activities of the International Woodworkers of America and its loggers' strike in central Newfoundland,<sup>67</sup> Smallwood's legislation provided for the preservation of historic objects, sites and records and the establishment of a government appointed board of trustees of historic objects, sites and records.<sup>68</sup> The board would have responsibility for both a public museum and a public archive.

University officials continued to be disappointed by the government decision. On April 13, 1959 Gushue wrote Myles Murray that

our work under the Carnegie and Canada Council Grants in Archives will come to an end by August of this year. As you know, our intention from the beginning was to organize Newfoundland Archives, undertake as full a collection as possible during the period of the grants and pass the Archives over to Government as the basis for Provincial Archives. We should like to see the Archives in a building on the University campus which we think will be most appropriate and is done in a number of provinces.<sup>69</sup>

The space presently used by the archive was urgently required for classroom space for the forthcoming 1959-1960 academic year and the president asked the government to move the archives from the university to a government building off campus. Although sympathetic to this request, by mid-August the government had decided to call a general election and the space that had been allotted in the Colonial Building for the archives was now needed for government purposes, thereby making an August 31 move impossible.<sup>70</sup> The

archive, thus, remained on campus, with both Fraser and Whiteley working amiably in organizing and cataloguing documents and acquiring new collections. On June 22, 1960 the University officially turned the archive over to the province with Allan Fraser serving as the first provincial archivist as well as director of the Newfoundland Museum. Fraser was subsequently joined on staff at the archive by Nimshi Crewe, who brought to it his considerable knowledge of local book and manuscript collectors.<sup>71</sup> As a later article by Fraser indicates, the University had provided the province with a strong archival collection upon which the provincial archive in the 1960s successfully built.<sup>72</sup>

Memorial's establishment of an archive in the 1950s was critical to its plans for scholarly research on Newfoundland society and culture. Original materials in Newfoundland had to be collected and microfilmed copies of records housed in repositories outside Newfoundland had to be acquired. The distance of Memorial from these repositories demanded that a local archive be established in order for historical research to be undertaken at the graduate degree level. Memorial was fortunate in having a number of determined academics, supported by an enthusiastic and sympathetic president in Raymond Gushue, who formulated a plan of action consisting of document acquisition, preservation and cataloguing, along with the institution of necessary courses and recruitment of staff and students to make the program successful. Ironically, with the university's move to a new campus in 1961 and the subsequent development of such new research programs as folklore<sup>73</sup>, historical geography, and maritime history, a physical and intellectual chasm grew between the provincial archive located at the Colonial Building in the city's centre and the university, a chasm that in the late 1960s and early 1970s led to the creation of several new Newfoundland-studies archives at Memorial.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Daily Colonist* November 17, 1890.

<sup>2</sup>*Evening Telegram* October 18, 1927.

<sup>3</sup>There were few repositories for the reception of private libraries either. In 1927 former premier Robert Bond left Memorial University College his large collection of books, but it was another couple of decades before the College took possession of the collection, which had remained with his nephew, Fraser Bond. The Bond books eventually became part of the general Newfoundland books of Memorial University Library and the original 1927 intention to name the room containing the books the Bond Room had not been carried out. See *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1926-1927*, p. 166, and *Evening Telegram* March 7, 1927, November 6, 1930, January 7, and February 5, 1936 for inadequate library facilities in Newfoundland.

<sup>4</sup>Among those individuals active in reviving the Society were Alexander McNeily, Gilbert Gosling, Daniel Prowse, Maurice Devine, James Rogerson, Martin Furlong, Harry Shortis, Samuel Garland, and James Howley. In its constitution the objects of the Society's role shall be the "collection and preservation of all printed books, manuscripts,



<sup>39</sup>Young resigned from Memorial in 1959 to take a teaching position at the University of New Brunswick.

<sup>40</sup>Born in St. John's, O'Dea (1911-1993) worked as an assistant librarian at the Gosling Memorial Library when it opened in 1934 and subsequently moved to Toronto where she worked in that city's public library system. In 1964 the Memorial University's Newfoundland book collection was established as a separate section of the university's library, becoming known as the Centre for Newfoundland Studies. Her bibliography of Newfoundland books, co-edited in the early 1980s with librarian Anne Alexander, was published in 1986 by the University of Toronto Press. See Ruth Konrad, "O'Dea, Agnes Cecilia", in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. 4, p.151; *MUN Gazette* 5, 33 (1973), pp.4-5; and Hart, "O'Dea", pp.179-181.

<sup>41</sup>MUN, Box PO-33, file "Archives - Historical Research", Harvey Mitchell to Gushue August 28, 1957. Mitchell suggested that Memorial consider the purchase of "prized copies of Newfoundlandiana".

<sup>42</sup>MUN, Box PO-33, file "Archives - Historical Research Committee and Correspondence, 1955", Gushue to O'Dea, January 3, 1956, and O'Dea to Gushue, January 12, 1956.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, Morgan to Wilson, March 20, 1956. On the creation of the provincial archives in Nova Scotia, see Carroll, "Developing", pp. 178-211.

<sup>44</sup>Crewe's private papers at the Provincial Archives document his efforts in the late 1950s in helping the university collect historical documents. See PANL, MG 281, Nimshi Crewe Papers. For example, see Box 1, file 6, Mitchell to Crewe, January 23, 1958.

<sup>45</sup>The articles were Mitchell, "Constitutional Crisis", and "Canada's Negotiations".

<sup>46</sup>Memorial University of Newfoundland, *Report of the President, 1957-1958* (1959), p. 17.

<sup>47</sup>MUN, Box PO-27, file "Foundations, Corporations, etc. - Carnegie Corporation", Gushue to Pifer, June 27, 1958.

<sup>48</sup>PANL, MG 281, Box 1, file 6, Crewe to Smallwood, November 25, 1958.

<sup>49</sup>Whiteley wrote of the Moravian records he collected in two articles: "The Records of the Moravian Mission in Labrador", and "Moravian Missionaries". Whiteley left Memorial in 1960 and after library training at McGill University, worked at university libraries at Queen's, Edmonton, and Simon Fraser. He returned to Memorial in 1969 as a professor in the History Department and subsequently wrote several significant articles on British colonial policy and the Moravian Missionaries in Labrador.

<sup>50</sup>These included Frank Cramm, John Courage, John Feltham, Dickey Glerum-Laurentius, Leslie Harris, Peter Neary, and Elinor Senior.

<sup>51</sup>In 1974 Story and William Kirwin observed that in the 1950s Story had some vocabulary collections upon which to start a dictionary of Newfoundland English. They especially acknowledged the research of P.K. Devine and Leo English and their efforts in the early 20th century on local folklore and dialect. There was also the work of an "unknown teacher at the old Memorial College (could it have been the late A.C. Hunter?) who, some time during the 1930's, encouraged his students to collect the regional vocabulary and formed a file of a thousand or so cards which was handed over to us by the then University Librarian, Mrs. Huston Dixon, when formal work for the Dictionary was begun in 1956." See Story and Kirwin, "The Dictionary of Newfoundland English".

<sup>52</sup>MUN, Box PO-35, file "Historical Research - Survey of English Language in

Newfoundland, E.R. Seary, 1955-", memo by Seary, March 26, 1955.

<sup>53</sup>In the 1960s Seary initiated research into the origins of local family names, findings published as *Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland*. See MUN, Box PO-33, file "Historical Research Survey of English Language", E.R. Seary to the Canada Council, November 14, 1957. In 1956 P.D. Drysdale joined the English Department, enhancing the department's expertise in phonetics and linguistics.

President Gushue, in the mid-1950s, was also interested in stimulating research into local folklore and had hoped to bring Irish folklore scholar J.H. Delargy to the university to give a lecture series. Illness, however, prevented Delargy from visiting Newfoundland. See MUN, Box PO-26, file "The Canada Council, 1957-1959", Sadie Organ to F.R. Emerson, November 21, 1957, and Box PO-76, file "Dr. J.H. Delargy", Delargy to Gushue, December 14, 1953, May 24, 1954, February 19, 1959, and Gushue to Delargy, January 21, June 11, 1954, December 2, 1958.

<sup>54</sup>MUN, Box PO-26, file "The Canada Council, 1957-1959", Gushue to the Canada Council, January 14, 15, 1958.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, A.W. Trueman to Gushue, February 17, 1958.

<sup>56</sup>MUN, Box PO-27, file "Foundations, Corporations, etc. - Carnegie Corporation", Gushue to Alan Pifer, February 18, 1958.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, Pifer to Gushue, April 28, 1958.

<sup>58</sup>In a 1958 article written for *The American Archivist*, Harvey Mitchell wrote that "should the government accept the act, now in its hands, and devote funds to the Archives, there is a prospect of establishing a proper archival institution that will take its place alongside other provincial archives."

<sup>59</sup>MUN, Box PO-90, file "Newfoundland Historical Research Committee Minutes, 1955-1959", Minute of Carnegie Committee Meeting for October 24, 1958. The Committee noted that "since the appointment has neither been announced publicly nor reported to this Committee, it was suggested that all relations with Mr. Fraser should be kept on an informal basis". See also CNS Archives, Coll-75, file 02.012, Fraser to Smallwood, January 9, 1958 where Fraser indicates that Smallwood had offered the appointment to him in 1957, but no announcement of the appointment would be made until Fraser had returned to Newfoundland from his employment in New York. A minute of the Executive Council (752-57) for August 23, 1957, noted Fraser's appointment as Provincial Archivist and Director of the Newfoundland Museum to be effective from April 1, 1958. This minute was later rescinded and replaced by one of August 25, 1958, with his appointment as Provincial Archivist effective from April 1, 1958. See PANL, GN74/2/B, Cabinet Secretariat, cabinet minutes 752-57 and 705-58.

<sup>60</sup>MUN, Box PO-44, file "Governments, Provincial - Various," E.J. Phelan, Chairman, Board of Regents, to E.S. Spencer, Minister of Finance, October 11, 1957.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, Murray to Gushue, November 5, 1958.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, Rothney to Gushue, November 19, 1958.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, Morgan to Gushue, November 19, 1958, and Gushue to Murray, December 2, 1958.

<sup>64</sup>MUN, Box PO-33, file "Departments - Archives", Morgan to J.G. Channing, March 26, 1959.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, undated note by Morgan in the file.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, Gushue to Myles Murray, April 13, 1959.

<sup>67</sup>*Proceedings of the Second Session of the Thirty-First General Assembly of Newfoundland* 1959, pp.566-69, 597-98.

<sup>68</sup>*Statutes of Newfoundland* 1959, No. 76.

<sup>69</sup>MUN, Box PO-33, file "Departments – Archives", Gushue to Murray, April 13, 1959.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, Channing to Gushue, August 11, 1959.

<sup>71</sup>The depth and diversity of Crewe's knowledge of local history can be seen in his private papers located at PANL. See MG 281 at PANL. His role as a collector of old manuscripts and his influence with Premier Smallwood gave Crewe an unique role in the 1950s in the promotion of a public archive for Newfoundland.

<sup>72</sup>Fraser, "The Newfoundland Archives".

<sup>73</sup>On the creation of the folklore department see *MUN Gazette* 5, 10 (1972), 2, 7, and Herbert Halpert, "Preface" (xi-xvi).

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