

Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of May the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth at the Victoria Memorial Museum, Ottawa Presidential Address

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Volume 2, numéro 1, 1923

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300013ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/300013ar>

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Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (imprimé)

1712-9095 (numérique)

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Citer ce document

Burpee, L. J. (1923). The Annual Meeting of May the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth at the Victoria Memorial Museum, Ottawa: Presidential Address. *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada*, 2(1), 9–13.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/300013ar>

**THE ANNUAL MEETING OF MAY THE TWENTY-FOURTH
AND TWENTY-FIFTH AT THE VICTORIA
MEMORIAL MUSEUM, OTTAWA**

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

BY

LAWRENCE J. BURPEE

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

This is the first annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association. Thanks to the excellent foundation laid by the organization out of which we have grown—the Historic Landmarks Association of Canada—we are in a position to build up a strong and useful national society. We have across the border a fine example of what may be achieved by means of well-directed enthusiasm and teamwork. If we can measure in any degree up to the standard of the American Historical Association we shall not have lived in vain.

But that high standard cannot be reached without serious effort. The problems with which we have to deal are similar to those upon which our American friends have been engaged. What they have accomplished we may also achieve in our smaller field; and I have not any doubt that we shall do so. All that is really needed is a worth-while objective and a determination on the part of the executive and all the members of the association to reach that objective, once it is clearly defined.

Now, what are the objects of the Canadian Historical Association? As set forth in the Constitution (which will be brought before you for consideration and approval at this meeting), they are to “encourage historical research and public interest in history; to promote the preservation of historic sites and buildings, documents, relics and other significant heirlooms of the past; and to publish historical studies and documents as circumstances may permit.” Simple and unpretentious as is the language of our Constitution, here and elsewhere, it is evident that a comprehensive and ambitious programme can be built up without going outside its four corners.

The Canadian Historical Association is of course interested in all that relates to the history of our own country, but it does not necessarily confine its interest to that field, large and diversified and important as it unquestionably is. The association should, in fact, bear somewhat the same relation to provincial or local historical societies as a national library—if we were fortunate or broad-minded enough to possess one—would bear to provincial or local libraries; that is to say, its field should be all-embracing rather than limited. Its purpose is to encourage historical research in every field, here and else-

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where, ancient as well as modern; and it places the broadest possible definition on history, as including not only political, military, social and economic records of the past, but also, to a greater or less extent, biography, geography and travels, folk-lore, archaeology, and ethnology.

That is not of course to say that we expect to accomplish any definite things in all these fields, but merely that we do not exclude them from our horizon; and that we welcome to our membership, and will be prepared to help in any way within our power, any one who is seriously engaged in any branch of historical work. It may be added here that we welcome to membership in the Canadian Historical Association not merely those who are actually engaged in historical research, but any man or woman who takes a sympathetic interest in the work of the association, and desires in that way to further its objects.

Since the organization meeting in May last, certain matters have come before the executive or the council for consideration. One of these, the question of preparing a series of outline lectures on various phases of Canadian history, is dealt with elsewhere. We hope that when the scheme has been mapped out—the first step obviously being to make a survey of the available material for lantern slides and other illustrative equipment—the members of the association will be prepared to aid in the preparation of the skeleton lectures.

A most appropriate memorial to David Thompson, the western explorer, was opened on the last days of August, 1922, with equally appropriate ceremonies. The memorial, which takes the form of a reproduction of a typical fur-trading fort of Thompson's day, stands on the shores of Lake Windermere, in the valley of the Columbia, not far from the spot where the explorer, in 1807, built his first post west of the mountains. The suggestion was made by one of the officers of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, which was largely responsible for the memorial, that the title to Fort Kootenay—as it has been called—should be vested in this association, and that we might undertake the responsibility of maintaining it as a museum of western history and the fur trade. On further consideration, however, it seemed advisable to put the management of the fort in the hands of the local authorities at Windermere, who were keenly interested in it, and could be relied upon to maintain it in a satisfactory manner.

While those in charge of the Windermere Memorial Fund did not find it practicable—as mentioned in last year's report—to put aside a certain amount for the erection of a suitably inscribed stone over David Thompson's grave in Mount Royal Cemetery, the matter has not been dropped. A memorial meeting was held in Montreal on the same day that Fort Kootenay was opened, and there is reason to believe that before long we shall be able to remove the reproach

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against the people of Canada that they have allowed one of their greatest explorers to lie in an unmarked and practically unknown grave.

A statue was unveiled at Quebec on September 28 last, to the memory of Pierre Gaultier de La Vérendrye, who devoted a lifetime to western exploration and particularly to the discovery of an over-land route to the Pacific. In this as in some other directions the Government of Quebec has set a praiseworthy example to the other provinces. The suggestion has been made to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board that a stone shaft or cairn be placed in Three Rivers to mark the birthplace of La Vérendrye.

The question of suitably marking the landfall of Jacques Cartier, which, as mentioned in last year's report, had been brought to the attention of the Dominion Government through the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, is still under consideration, but there is reason to hope that favourable action will be taken before long.

A suggestion also came before the council last year for the utilization of portions of the old well of the Recollet Monastery at Brouage in the erection of a monument on the Gaspé shore. The matter was referred to the Quebec Monuments Commission for their consideration.

As a representative of the association, I had the pleasure of taking part, on the 12th of this month, in the unveiling of a memorial at Quebec to the memory of the first of Quebec pilots, Abraham Martin, after whom the famous Plains were named.

Dr. Coyne and several other members represented the Association at the dedication at Port Dover in July last of the memorial to the explorers of Lake Erie, Dollier de Casson and René de Bréhant de Galinée.

In December I attended the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, at New Haven, and conveyed to them a message of good will, expressing also the hope that the two national organizations might find opportunities of friendly co-operation in promoting the interests they both have at heart.

An International Congress on the History of America was held in September, 1922, at Rio de Janeiro. Dr. Doughty, a member of our council, represented the association. The association was also represented at the International Historical Congress at Brussels in April, 1923.

The attention of the association having been brought to the fact that "The Priory," an historic building at Guelph, associated with the Canada Company, was rapidly falling into decay, the possibility of restoring or preserving this interesting relic of Upper Canada was taken up with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board and early consideration was promised.

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Another matter which has been the subject of correspondence between this association and the British Columbia Historical Association and others, is the protection and preservation of certain remarkable Indian petroglyphs near Nanaimo. The latest information we have is that the company on whose land these prehistoric pictures stand has undertaken to take charge of their conservation.

The situation at Nanaimo suggests the desirability of the Canadian Government being urged to adopt some such policy as that of the United States Government, in withdrawing from settlement and turning into reservations areas containing prehistoric or Indian memorials.

Your executive has taken up with the Canadian Authors Association the desirability of these two national bodies joining with others in some appropriate celebration of the centenary of the birth of Francis Parkman, on September 16 next.

The British Columbia Historical Association reports that at its last meeting it passed a resolution urging the Historic Sites and Monuments Board to consider the erection of two monuments, one at Nootka sound, and the other at the spot where Alexander Mackenzie reached the Pacific on his memorable overland journey.

A matter to which the association should give some consideration is the desirability, or otherwise, of bringing about some such relationship between the Canadian Historical Association and one or more of the Canadian historical periodicals as exists between the American Historical Association and the American Historical Review.

It may be noted as a gratifying sign of the times that to-day three of the colleges of the United States are offering regular courses in Canadian history.

In last year's report we noted the establishment of the Quebec Historic Monuments Commission. We have now the pleasure of recording the organization of a British Columbia Historical Association, and provision by the Government of Ontario for an historical survey of the province.

A group of students of the Montreal High School, during the past winter, put on a very successful Canadian historical masque, written by Miss J. F. Baillie, one of their teachers. The masque was presented under the auspices of the association, and it is understood that Miss Baillie intends to publish it, so that it may be available for similar presentation elsewhere throughout the country.

Something has been said already about various historical memorials in different parts of Canada, established within the last year or two. It seems appropriate that this association should recognize the fine public spirit shown by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, in promoting and meeting the cost of several of these memorials. The two companies joined in the

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expense of the Thompson Memorial at Windermere. The Hudson's Bay Company also put a memorial stone, with a suitable inscription, over the grave of Simon Fraser; and among other things has undertaken to keep the old Stone Fort at Winnipeg in repair and maintain it as an historical museum. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company has paid for the Abraham Martin memorial; and we must also thank them for the appropriate Acadian memorial at Grand Pré.