

QUEBEC and LOWER CANADA: "S Series", 1760-1841

(Correspondence received by the Civil and Provincial Secretaries;
records of the Clerk of the Executive Council)

Volumes 1-622

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The lack of clear lines of demarcation between the duties of various government officials and the frequency with which offices were held in plurality meant that the records from the first decades of the British régime were not kept in neat, discreet blocs or series. The first impression of the S Series is often one of chaotic mass. Without some understanding of government structure at the time these records were accumulated, it is difficult to understand and make use of them. The various efforts at organization and reorganization of the series have not always contributed to its coherence.

Provenance and **respect des fonds** are two archival principles which have not been well observed in relation to the S Series. The records now found under that designation are the "rump" of a massive transfer -- some 5760 volumes, bundles and portfolios -- received from the Secretary of State's office in 1906. Many volumes were given new homes in the B series of RG 4, in several series of RG 1, in RG 11 and RG 19, to name those most easily traced. (A rough listing of the blocs of records in that transfer, annotated with modern locations where they known or suspected, is kept in the Pre-Confederation Archives section.)

On the establishment of civil government in 1764, Henry Ellis was named Secretary to the Governor and Clerk of the Executive Council, but he did not perform the duties of the office himself. James Goldfrap acted as his Deputy until 1768 and George Allsopp from that date. Hector T. Cramahé, who had been Secretary during the military régime, became the first Civil Secretary of Quebec. The Quebec Act resulted in certain reorganizations and George Pownall was appointed "Register" of the Province. Pownall spent most of his time as Registrar, leaving most secretarial functions to be performed by the Civil Secretary. The office of Provincial Secretary and Registrar expanded its responsibilities over time, but the duties appear to have been neither clearly defined nor understood and observed. For a time between 1820 and 1822, John Ready was both Civil and Provincial Secretary. After the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841, the administrative structures were reorganized and functions clarified. (Evidence of the functions attributed to each office is found in the list of the Civil Establishment submitted annually in the Blue Book of Statistics, copies of which are found in RG 1, E 13 and in MG 11, CO 47.)

For many years, the office of Civil Secretary was held in plurality with that of Clerk of the Executive Council by Herman Witsius Ryland. This has resulted in the inclusion of many Council records in the S Series. It should also be noted that as Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, Ryland was responsible for organizing elections to the provincial Parliament, 1802-1815, and held that office jointly with Thomas Douglas, Assistant to the Civil Secretary, after 1815.

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Related series are found throughout the B series of RG 4 as well as in the E and L series of RG 1. Records accumulated in relation to the responsibilities of the Civil Secretary or the Provincial Secretary and Registrar include the applications for commissions and licences (RG 4, B 8 and B 28), applications for clemency or pardons (RG 4, B 20) and drafts of Commissions or Letters Patent (RG 4, B 9 and B 10), applications for public offices and lists of incumbents (RG 4, B 26 and B 33), and various office records (RG 4, B 27 and B 42). Returns of duties collected are found both in the Public Accounts (RG 1, E 15 A) and in a series of Customs records (RG 4, B 58). Submissions to the Executive Council on land matters are largely found in RG 1, L 3 L, but only a few draft or rough Minutes on state matters are to be found in RG 1, E 2. The majority of submissions to the Executive Council of Quebec and Lower Canada appear to be incorporated in the S Series. Records of certain committees, including the Board of Audit and the committee on highways, are found in RG 1, E 15A and E 17. The relationship of some records in RG 1, L 7 awaits further investigation and identification.

NB: Many instances of inconsistent filing have been noted. The various topical files in the B series should always be investigated in conjunction with the main series of correspondence and petitions in RG 4, A 1.

Throughout the S Series there are reports, returns and accounts which relate to expenditures of government funds and monies collected on behalf of the government. The accounts submitted to the Board of Audit are to be found in RG 1, E 15A. During the review of that series and this in 1986-1987, certain general principles are being used in determining the proper location of documents, identifying them appropriately and transferring them where feasible. The term account is being used to identify a statement of funds collected or expended by an officer of the Crown, of a court, or of a municipal corporation. The term return is being used to identify a table of data on a matter of interest to the government, be it, for example, the number of ships clearing a port or the names of officials commissioned within a set period. The term report is being used where data was presented in narrative rather than columnar format.

In essence, where accounts could be identified as having been presented to the Board of Audit or to the Inspector General of Public Accounts for verification, they are considered to belong in RG 1, E 15A. Many letters, accounts, returns or reports were addressed to the Civil Secretary to record the expenditure of public funds, to request advances on or the payment of balances due on grants and subsidies, and to inform the government of monies collected. The Civil Secretary was responsible for issuing warrants to authorize payment of salaries and grants in such circumstances, so it is appropriate that these documents be filed in the S Series. There are, however, several unresolved questions, such as

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the matter of returns from the Collector of Customs. Where he submitted monthly or quarterly returns of duties collected merely for the information of the government, the returns are appropriate to the S Series. Where he submitted returns of duties collected for audit purposes, the documents are appropriate to RG 1, E 15A. The latter series had been only partially organized and showed much evidence of confusion in the mind of the staff who undertook that preliminary stage of arrangement.

The **arrangement** of the records has been altered on several occasions. The order within volumes 1-140 is essentially chronological, with many enclosures filed by their date rather than that of the covering letter. As those documents have been paginated and microfilmed, the order cannot be corrected. In preparing the remainder of the series for microfilming, the order has been set by the date of the covering document (be it a letter, a report, or a draft Minute of Council). The documents are effectively in two concurrent series: the Civil Secretary's records, consisting of incoming correspondence, reports, returns and other documents addressed to the the government; the Clerk of the Executive Council's records, consisting of copies or drafts of Minutes of the Council and of Reports by Committees to Council, and the various petitions and other documents submitted to Council on specific cases.

Dates of documents have been established from internal evidence where possible, particularly when they were associated with covering letters or Minutes of Council, and the items are filed accordingly. Partially dated items should be found at the beginning of the relevant month (when known) or year. Items for which no date could be established were placed in volumes 615-622. The review of the arrangement undertaken in 1986-1987 may result in the dating and refiling of some items from those volumes. Reports and returns summarizing activities over a period of time should be found by the date of completion of the activity or the date of reporting. Failure to observe this principle has been noted in the early volumes. Pending completion of the present review of arrangement, researchers should not place absolute confidence in the chronological order suggested by the Shelf List.

Page numbers were stamped on the documents in volumes 1-140, in preparation for their being microfilmed. Endorsements were not consistently identified with a page number. In citations, researchers are advised to refer to them by the term verso, with the number of the preceeding page, in the style "page 371 verso" or (in shorter format) "p. 4792v". The document numbers inscribed by hand, with pencil, should not be used in lieu of page numbers for identification of the documents. Those pencilled document numbers bear little relation to the present sequence of the items and may prove a source of some confusion. (Further advice on citation styles is provided below.)

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A certain degree of conservation treatment was provided when the series was unbound and volumes 1-140 were arranged between 1965 and 1970. In 1981 certain oversize items shelved as volumes 623-632 were refiled in their correct location or placed in horizontal cabinets (with a note to that effect filed in their correct location). When microfilming is resumed, these items will be filmed in their proper sequence. Further conservation treatment will be required for much of the series.

Microfilming of the series was begun in 1968 but suspended at volume 131 (October 1813). **RESEARCHERS MUST USE THE MICROFILM for volumes 1-131.** The Shelf List provides the reel numbers. Reader-printer copies can be prepared from the film; photocopying from the originals (of volumes 1-131) is not permitted.

Note: →
Card index
is located
in LMB...

FINDING AIDS for the S Series are limited to the Shelf List which follows this inventory entry and an antiquated card index. Researchers investigating some topics may be able to conduct a limited search based on a time frame, consulting the volumes containing documents from relevant years, such as 1837-1840 for matters relating to the Rebellions of 1837-1838. Other topics can be investigated only by a thorough review of the complete series. The old card index provides some points of departure but must not be seen as a reliable guide to identifying all relevant items.

The old **card index** prepared to serve the original "S Series" (the records transferred in 1906) provides only limited access to the present S series -- although cards are filed under personal and geographical names as well as under subject headings. Since that card index provides some access to a number of series in RG 4 as well as in other RGs, an explanation of its use is provided in the Introduction to RG 4.

Obsolete references to the "S Series" can sometimes be traced in RG 4, A 1, or in other series. The identity of the document needs to be known, to determine whether it is best to begin with RG 4, A 1 or with another series. Only where the citation is to RG 4, A 1 with a volume and page or date reference can items be found readily. Certain categories of documents (lawsuits, public accounts, licences) can be located in other series of RG 4 or in RG 1, according to the guidelines laid down in the Guide to the use of the old card index.

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CITATIONS to the present S Series should follow the style illustrated below. Page numbers appear on the documents in volumes 1-140, with the exceptions noted above. Frame numbers will appear on the microfilm of subsequent volumes. These should always be included in the citation.

First reference:

PAC, Quebec and Lower Canada, S Series, RG 4, A 1, vol. 15, pages 5542-5547 (on reel C-2998).

Subsequent references:

RG 4, A 1, vol. 394, letter of Charles Ogden to Lt. Col. H. Craig, 1 Nov. 1832 (3 pages).

RG 4, A 1, vol. 394, resolutions of the Quebec Board of Health, 3 Nov. 1832, (2 pages) enclosed with a letter of the Board's Assistant Secretary to the Civil Secretary of the same date (2 pages).

RG 4, A 1, vol. 394, petition of Sydney Cutting to the Governor, 25 Oct. 1832 (4 pages) enclosed with a letter of the Justices of the Peace, 6 Nov. 1832 (2 pages).

Requests for photocopies should follow the style as illustrated. When requesting copies from microfilm, researchers may abbreviate their citations by following the style

RG 4, A 1
reel C-2997, pages 3981-3983
reel C-3013, pages 24337-24339
reel C-3200, pages 39227-39230.