

MECHANICS  
INSTITUTE  
OF MONTREAL





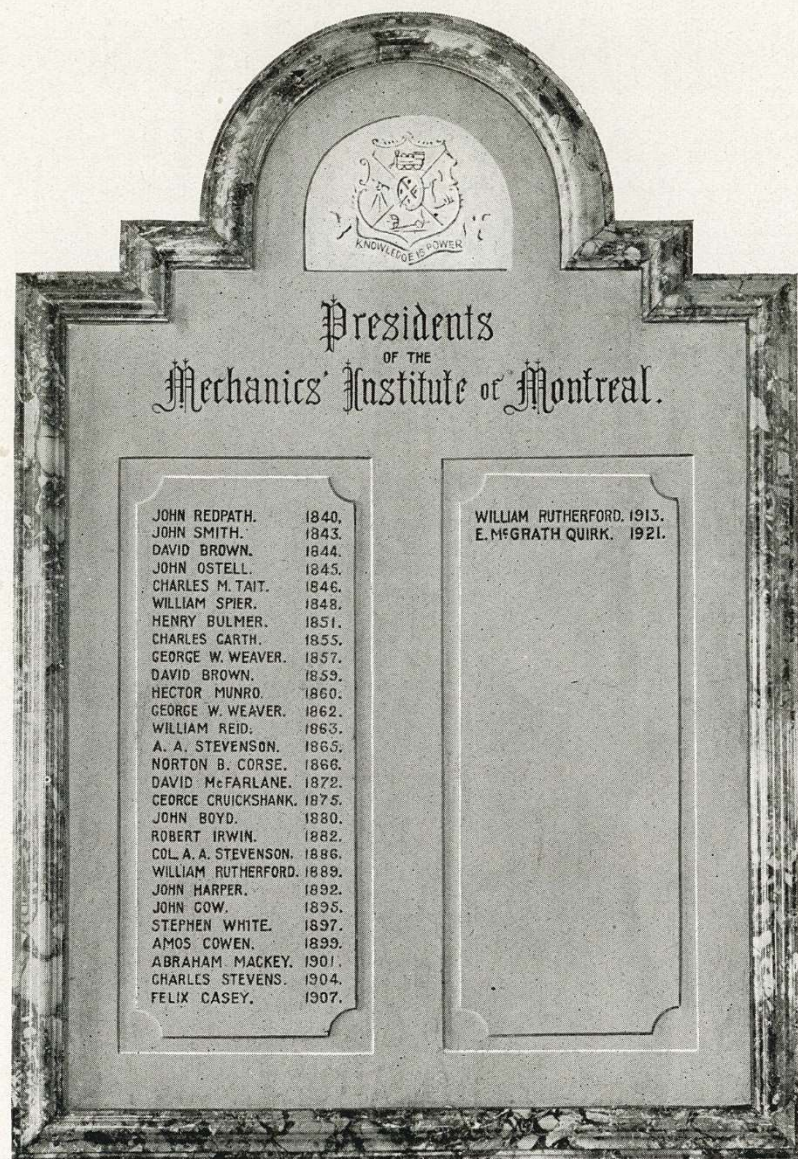
# MECHANICS INSTITUTE OF MONTREAL



*We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;  
In feelings, not in figures on a dial,  
We should count time by heart throbs. He most lives  
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.*

*—Philip James Bailey.*





## FOREWORD

IN presenting to our members and friends this short history of the activities and progress of the Montreal Mechanics Institute, we are persuaded that they will find much satisfaction in reviewing its early struggles and be highly gratified to know of its march onward to its present plane of usefulness.

While the traditions and history of Montreal are easy of access, the important details of the Institute's early history were mainly recorded in the minds of those pioneer citizens who co-operated so faithfully for the perfection of the Institute.

This history has not been prepared without some research; from the old minute books, old newspaper clippings and other sources we have secured such data as has been utilized to compile this book.



## PAST PRESIDENTS



Col. A. A. Stevenson  
1865-66  
1886-89



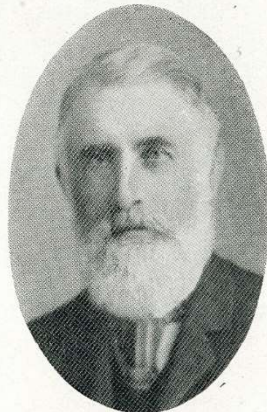
Henry Bulmer  
1851-55



John Redpath  
1840-43



Robert Irwin  
1882-86



William Rutherford  
1889-92

## THE BIRTH OF THE INSTITUTION 1828 • 1835

**I**F those who appreciate modern Montreal, with its hustling business activity and industrial supremacy, could look into the first part of the last century and visualize conditions as they were then, they would better realize the greatness of the present city and the part the Mechanics Institute has played in shaping the destiny of thousand of its citizens.

Montreal, a mere village, lying practically on the outskirts of civilization, was only in the making ninety-one years ago, when the idea of organizing the "Mechanics Institute" was conceived; and it was in the first decade of its life, that many of the civic improvements, which in after years had such an important bearing on the city's growth and development, were considered or begun.

The principal commercial and social centre of the city at that time was St. Paul Street, now almost entirely given over to warehouses. The business men as well as many of their clerks lived over their stores.

On St. James Street, where now stand mighty banking houses and tall office buildings, stood mostly residences with here and there a small shop. Craig Street was a meadow through which flowed a small stream; and beyond this stream were the farms and gardens which supported the inhabitants. Few streets were lighted. Ten years before, the Bank of Montreal had petitioned the Governor to appoint night watchmen, and the city was guarded by some thirty or more men whose duties were to keep the street lights burning as well as protect the property of citizens.

Indeed the history and development of the Mechanics Institute is linked to the old as well as the new Montreal in such an intimate way, that to consider it is to visualize the advancement of the city step by step as it gradually took its place as one of the important commercial centres in America.



It was an important epoch in the city's history, as well as in the lives of many of the more ambitious young men of that generation, when its need was recognized and active steps were taken to organize an institution where every man, regardless of creed or nationality, could secure the higher knowledge of the arts and sciences which would enable him to better fill his place in the nation's life.

The first serious attempt to organize an institution was made on November 21st, 1828, when a number of earnest, thinking men, representatives of the industrial, commercial and professional classes, met at the home of the Rev. H. Esson, Pastor of St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church, to consider the propriety of organizing a Mechanics Institute. At this meeting, it was evident that no well-defined plan had been developed as to the course of studies which would best benefit its future members. "Its Aim and Objects" were briefly explained by the Rev. H. Esson, which were "to see to the instruction of its members in the arts and in the various branches of science and useful knowledge."

While it was true that its intentions were expressed in rather a broad sense, it is certain that its founders had in mind its particular usefulness for imparting knowledge to those of a mechanical turn of mind, inasmuch as it was unanimously agreed to call the society "The Montreal Mechanics Institution," and it was further agreed to open its membership to all, irrespective of race and creed.

Institutions of this kind were not too plentiful in 1829; in fact, the Montreal Medical Institute organized in 1823-1824 was about the only one pretending to specialize in any of the higher sciences, and its faculty was devoted solely to medicine and the sciences allied with such studies. McGill College, though granted a charter in 1821, because of protracted litigation, did not begin the work of teaching until 1829, one year after the Mechanics Institution was organized, and then only in two branches, Arts and Medicine.

It was evident that there was an extreme need for an institution which could supply practical knowledge of the arts and sciences, and that its birth was a timely addition to the educational facilities of the city.

Montreal was growing in importance and attracting immigration from abroad and reports of the opportunities at hand in this great unknown land of the mighty west were adding new citizens each year.

The founders of the Institution were men who were helping to make history for Canada—men of broad vision who had the interest of Montreal and her future at heart, men with the determination and will to create an institution worthy in every way of the patronage of the future generations as well as the present.

With Sir James Kempt as Patron, the Hon. L. Gregg as President, Hon. L. H. Papineau, Hon. John Molson, and the Rev. H. Esson as Vice-Presidents, the Institution had the endorsement and support of Montreal's leading citizens. For some five years it took a prominent part in shaping the knowledge of its members and moulding the opinions of the citizens. Then the stirring and troubled political times between 1835 and 1840 compelled it to temporarily suspend activities. The last meeting held during the first decade, as reported in the minute book, was March 24th, 1835.

During seven years the records of its activities and growth are rather vague. Events following, however, will be indicative that its usefulness had been fully recognized and established, and that its founders had planted the seed which was to multiply and develop into the splendid Institute of today.



## PROGRESS AND REORGANIZATION

1840 - 1854

With the rapid recovery from the political and financial distress of 1836-1840, the tide of immigration had again set in and the city had begun to prosper and grow.

Eight years before, the city had started on her first line of docks; and now work was resumed on these. The completion of the Welland Canal had been undertaken and, four years before, the first steam railroad in Canada (between La Prairie and St. John) was successfully operated.

Still there were none of the mechanical developments so common in these days. Modern machinery and tools were unknown, and most of the work was done by hand. There were no threshing machines and grain was still threshed as it had been for three thousand years. The sewing machine was unthought of, gas lights were unknown and steam, as a motive power, had been in use but a few years.

But the year 1840 saw the closing of the old order of things and the beginning of a newer, more prosperous decade. A Board of Trade was organized and Montreal had commenced to take its place as an important trading and shipping port.

Increased business and industrial activity brought with it a need for an institute where practical knowledge, along mechanical and scientific lines as advocated by the former institute, could be secured. It was thus agreed among many prominent citizens that to meet this need, a reorganization of the old Institute was necessary. Consequently, a public notice was issued, asking all those interested to attend a meeting at the schoolroom of Mr. J. Bruce, on McGill Street, February 7th, 1840, to consider the best ways and means of reorganizing and reestablishing the "Mechanics Institute" in Montreal which formerly existed. It was the intention of the promoters to resume the work of the old Institute along the same lines as originally planned; and for that reason, the attendance was composed of men from various occupations and professions.

Above all else, it was the desire of those interested to

form an association on a solid and enduring basis; one that would not only reflect credit upon its founders, but that would also render a real help to those desiring to increase their knowledge and acquire a broader understanding of science and the mechanical arts.

Mr. John Redpath was made Chairman, and Mr. Joseph Fraser was appointed Secretary. After appointing a committee to formulate a Constitution and By-laws and to ascertain the state of the library and apparatus of the old Institution, also to make some arrangements for uniting the Institutions, the meeting adjourned to meet at the same place on February 25th. This meeting took place and a provisional committee was appointed to carry on the operations of the Institution.

That interest was intense and fast awakening is shown by the holding of two meetings in March. The first, on March 10th, was attended by the members elect who heard the Constitution and By-laws, then seconded and approved them. The matter of subscription fees was then discussed, and it was agreed that the fees should be as follows: Life members £5 in cash or £7 10s. in books or apparatus. Annual subscriptions were fixed at 15s. and quarterly at 3s. 9d. Sons and apprentices of members were charged a quarterly fee of 1s. 3d.

The meeting held in the Free School Room, corner of St. Joseph and St. Henry Streets, on March 16th, was the deciding factor in the reorganization plan, and at this meeting the Institute again took its place as a permanent educational help to many ambitious men.

It was decided at this meeting to change the name to "The Mechanics Institute of Montreal," and follow out the original plans of study in use by the former society. Officers were elected as follows: Mr. John Redpath, President; Mr. Benjamin Holmes and Mr. Jos. Fraser, Vice-Presidents; Robert Scott, Treasurer; Dr. A. Hall, Corresponding-Secretary; and Mr. Eben Wedenhall, Recording-Secretary. Four trustees and three auditors were also elected, also a committee of twelve.

The committees immediately began to function and frequent meetings were held with those still in charge of the old Institute. Arbitrators were appointed by both societies, and the property of the old Institute was finally valued at £44 16s. 6d. The Secretary was instructed to



issue annual tickets for the current year to cover the amount, to members of the old Institute. Thus the amalgamation of the two societies was finally consummated on June 1st, 1840, and the new Institute was free to again begin the important work mapped out by its original founders.

The members were now fully alive to the importance of their undertaking and enthusiastic as to the future possibilities of the work. Those of a more progressive spirit thought they saw the need of consolidating with several other societies working along lines of a higher educational order. The amalgamation with these societies was agitated to such an extent, that a special meeting was held on November 17th, 1840, to take into consideration the propriety of forming a national social institution on the lines proposed by Mr. Alexander Vattimore, the distinguished philanthropist, and joining forces with the Natural History Society and Mercantile Library in carrying out the plan of consolidation.

It was proposed by this amalgamation to combine in one central body the facilities of the several institutions for better study and scientific investigation, and to inaugurate at a convenient central location a museum of natural history, an extensive library and a gallery of painting, sculpture and models.

This idea, which no doubt originated in the minds of the more intellectual members and evidently reflected their aims and aspirations to a marked degree, was never realized. Such an advancement into the realms of higher art and science would have perhaps defeated the very ideals of the society and deprived those most in need of knowledge along practical lines, the opportunity so needful for their future welfare.

In addition to the day classes conducted for the benefit of the sons of the members, it was decided to establish evening classes for workmen who were unable to attend during the day. It was felt that such classes would be of incalculable benefit to the apprentices and men of the different trades. So evening classes were begun and carried on through the winter for many years. In these classes reading, writing, arithmetic, French, architectural, mechanical, and ornamental drawing were taught. Thus the workman, while gaining practical experience at his daily

work, imbibed the theoretical knowledge at the Institute which was so necessary in making him an expert workman and better citizen.

In this period, conditions were evidently semi-primitive, and classes at night were conducted under some difficulty. Not all the conveniences now so plentiful in modern school-rooms were in use. An insight into some of these conditions is found in the old minutes. On March 29th, 1841, we are told that "Mr. Hose laid on the table a sample of wax candle and was authorized to purchase 20 lbs. for the use of the Institute."

That these pioneer students were anxious to improve their skill and minds is shown by the fact that for many years these evening classes were conducted with good success. The instructors imbued with the spirit of helping those who were seeking more knowledge, found ample reward in seeing the dormant minds of student-workmen develop and grasp the fundamentals of an education, which then, as now, is so necessary for the creation of better citizens and craftsmen. This good work went on until 1870, when, for lack of financial support, it was discontinued.

Other free classes, then being conducted in the winter months by the Council of Arts and Manufactures, absorbed the students and were considered sufficient to meet the requirements and render any other efforts on the part of the Mechanics Institute unnecessary.

Although since then several efforts have been made to re-establish these evening classes, none proved successful. The day classes, for the sons of members, were only conducted a few years after the establishment of the Institution, as the merits of the public schools increased to the extent of being able to meet the requirements of these pupils.

The first work of the Institute in the quarters devoted solely to its own method of education was in May, 1840, two months after the reorganization; it opened its doors in Mr. Mullins' building on Commissioner Street, opposite the wharf, where instruction was given in the several courses of its curriculum.

It was while domiciled at this place, that the idea of holding an annual Mechanics Festival was advocated. These festivals were a sort of diminutive industrial exhibition, with



the addition of vocal and instrumental music and addresses. They were largely patronized by the citizens generally and were looked forward to with great interest by the mechanics of the city. They assisted greatly in keeping before the public the work that the Institute was doing, created favorable comment, and kept the aims and objects of the society in the foreground.

The first of these was held in the hall of St. Anne's Market on February 16th, 1843.

As an index of the favor with which they were received, we turn to the Secretary's report of the annual festival of the year 1846, in which he comments on the gaieties in this manner: "An entertainment which has contributed to the hitherto well sustained character of the Mechanics Institute, and had tended to impress upon the mind of the public the dignity and importance which they consider is due the Mechanics Institute of Montreal. For style and extent, it certainly has never been surpassed in this city."

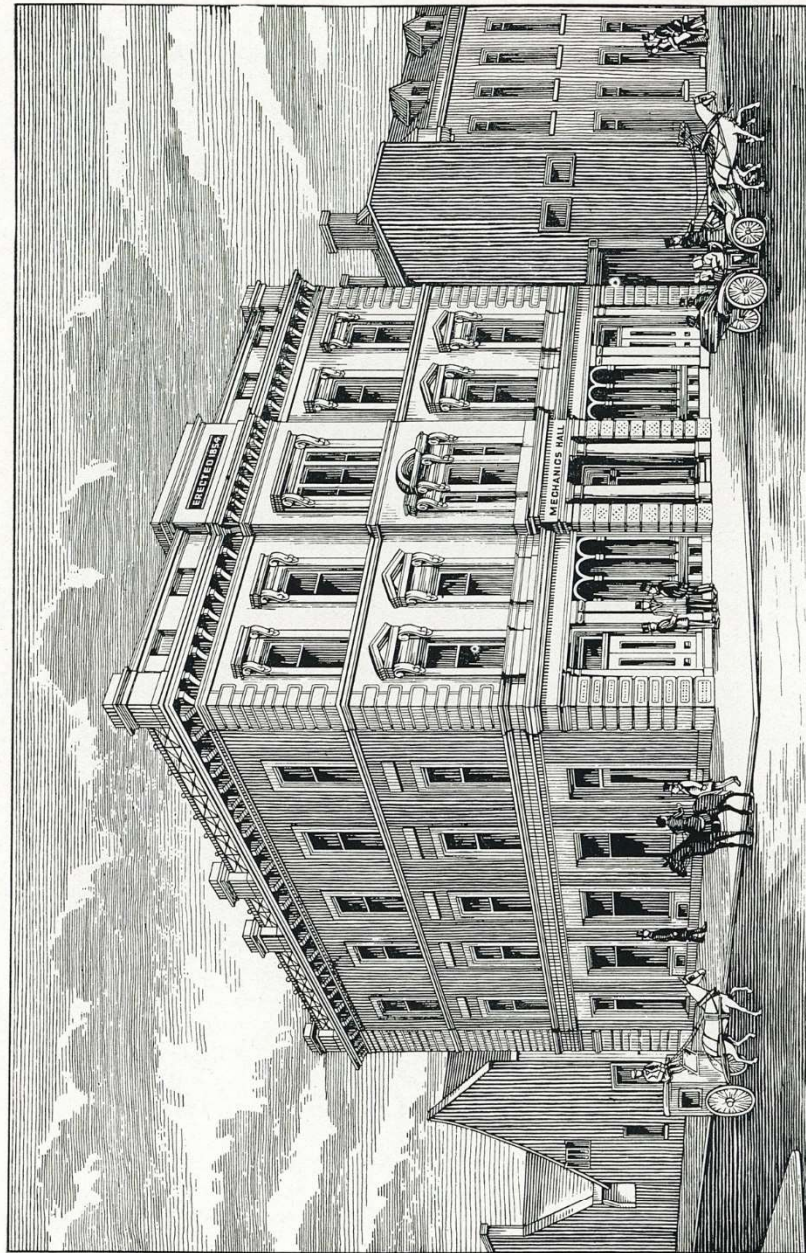
For many years these festivals were held in the old Bonsecours Hall, and afterwards in the hall of the Institute, where they were largely attended, and reflected great credit on the Institute and its members.

When the increasing attendance called for more room, we find them again in new quarters. In May, 1843, they moved to a house in St. Urbain Street formerly occupied by the Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society. An option was given the Institute of purchasing the property and adjoining lots for £1,500 currency, by the owner, Mr. Alex. M. DeLisle. The size of this property was evidently not in accordance with the needs of the Institute, for we find them located (one year later) in premises occupied by Mr. Thornton on Fortification Lane. In 1845 the use of illuminating gas had become general, and it was installed in the lecture and reading room in October of that year. This improvement was generally commented on and attracted a large attendance from many who wanted to profit by the work the Institute was doing. In 1848, the Institute again moved, this time to premises belonging to Mr. Berthelet on Great St. James Street, adjoining the Ottawa Hotel. An enjoyable trip to Portland, under the auspices of the Marine Charitable Mechanics Association of Portland, was held during August, 1853, and helped to

further cement the ties of its members and increase the esteem of the public.

The year 1854 found the membership so increased that it again became necessary to seek larger quarters. Fortunately the premises at No. 8 Great St. James Street were vacant; and, as they were thought to be large enough to meet the needs for several years to come, the Institute was moved there in May, 1854. This location was occupied jointly with the Mercantile Library Association, the rent being equally divided between the two.





Mechanics Institute Building 1854

## THE INSTITUTE'S FIRST PERMANENT HOME

It was but natural, even from the beginning, that the members should want a permanent home. They foresaw that the extension of the work and the growth of the institution would require a building so situated that its facilities could be increased to meet the demand of its steadily growing membership. Considerable interest was therefore awakened in April, 1843, when Mr. J. Torrance offered a lot on Craig Street for £1,000. Some members, however, favored the property on St. Urbain Street, then occupied by the Institute, and an option was secured on this, but it was never taken up. Again an opportunity was offered in 1844 to secure the Congregational Church on St. Maurice Street and the Baptist Chapel on St. Helen Street, which were thought to be suitable, but like the previous options, nothing came of it.

It was about this time that the members decided to have the Institute incorporated, and corporation papers were issued in 1845 under an Act of Parliament of the old Parliament of Canada.

In the petition asking for the act of incorporation, it was represented that "a number of persons had associated themselves together in the year 1828 with the object of affording instruction in the principles of the Arts and in the various wonders of science and useful knowledge necessary or advantageous to the Associates in their pursuits in life."

The following were the names of the original incorporators: John Ostell, Thomas W. Guin, William Foatner, William Telfer, Charles Garth, Andrew Cowan, George Dickenson, John Fletcher, William M. Muller, John Lambert, John Hilton, James Morice, William Watson, Charles Shrimpton, Donald McNeven, James Turners, John George, Joseph Busby Brindsdon.

In 1852 interest had again awakened in a permanent home and two offers were considered. Mr. J. J. Gibb offered to sell his property in Bonaventure Street for the



sum of £800, and the Hon. Chas. Wilson and Mr. J. J. Gibb offered other property at the corner of Commissioner Square and Bonaventure Street for £1,500. The latter, being more suitable, was selected.

But here an unexpected difficulty arose. The proprietor of the property could not give the customary warranty deed, and the former proprietor, Mr. C. S. Rodier, declined to ask his wife to sign a renunciation of her right of dower. Hence, the property was not purchased.

Finally it was found that the building at the corner of Greater St. James and St. Peter Street could be purchased from Mr. Richard Tate for £2,400. This was considered the most suitable to be had at that time. As the parties were minors, it was sold at the Church door and bought by the Institute who at last, after much effort, were in possession of a lot of ample size to accommodate the type of building which would meet their needs.

Now that the lot was bought it became necessary to secure architect's plans for a building commensurate with the present and future needs of the Institute.

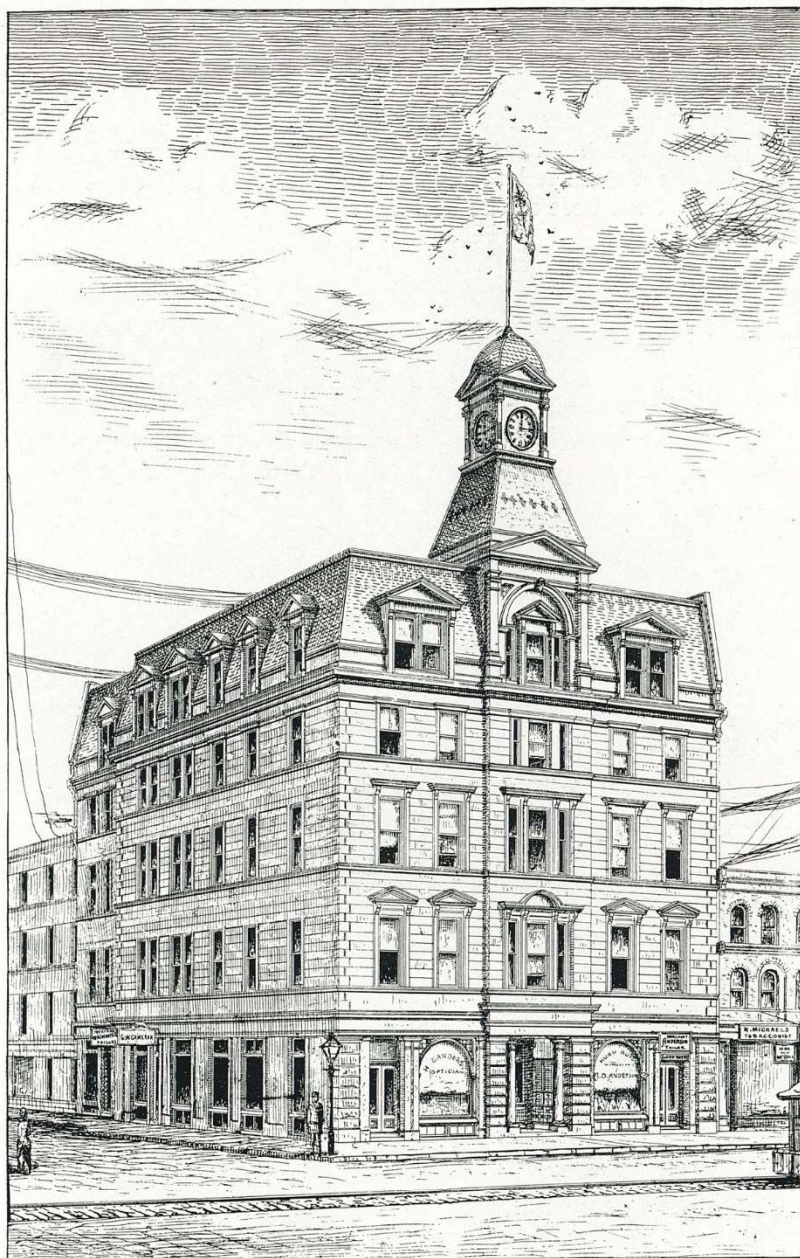
The Institute was fortunate in having as its members three architects, Messrs. Maxwell, Mayor and Hutchinson. When it was thought that the lot of Commissioner Street had been bought, these gentlemen had consented to prepare plans and specifications and their plans had been approved by the committee. The committee was therefore in possession of a set of plans which could not be utilized because of certain differences in the shape of the lot finally purchased and the first one selected. Happily the plans were not of such intricate nature that they could not be altered, and Messrs. Hopkins and Nelson, other architects, consented to make the necessary alterations, retaining as far as practicable the same style and character of front and details of interior arrangement and accepting as their fee life membership in the Institution.

Immediately contracts were let and the autumn of 1853 saw the fulfillment of a long cherished hope, for the building of a home had at last commenced. It was expected to occupy the same in December, 1854, but the rebuilding of a wall on St. Peter Street, found to be out of plumb, caused a delay until 1855.

In 1852, after it was definitely decided to build, a sub-

scription list had been opened to secure a "building fund" to defray the cost of the new building. A special appeal was made to the members and the public generally. A general and liberal response came from all classes in the community, so much so that when the inauguration ceremony took place, this fund amounted to £3,850, towards the £8,000, which was to be the cost of the building.





Mechanics Institute Building 1888

## LAYING THE CORNER STONE

1854

Nothing could have been a more fitting climax to the long struggle to obtain a permanent home than the solemn and impressive ceremonies connected with the laying of the corner stone on May 11th, 1854.

The whole city was interested in the event and thousands participated in the festivities. The beautiful spring weather and bright sunshine made the day an ideal one and the route of the procession was lined with eager spectators; other thousands assembled at the building site to observe the impressive ceremony.

With full Masonic Honors, and all the striking and sacred solemnity of this ancient fraternity, the Hon. Wm. Badgely, C.M.P.P., the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master of Free and Accepted Masons of Canada, performed this important function.

This ceremony was imposing, including as it did a master procession with many organizations, banners, and bands of music. The procession formed at St. Lawrence Hall, moved to Place d'Armes Square, then through Notre Dame Street to McGill and along St. James to the site at the corner of St. Peter Street.

Leading the procession was the Mayor and Corporation, then followed the clergy, members of the Institute, subscribers to the building fund, and citizens generally. Next in line were these societies and associations:

Odd Fellows,  
 Temperance Associations,  
 National Societies,  
 President and Council of Board of Trade,  
 Literary Association,  
 Institute Canadien,  
 Mercantile Library Association,  
 National History Association,  
 Governors, Officers and Professors  
 of McGill College,  
 Masonic Fraternity,



The address by the Hon. Wm. Badgely was replied to by Mr. Henry Bulmer, President of the Institute, who also presented him with a very richly-chased silver trowel suitably inscribed.

There was deposited in the corner stone an interesting lot of papers and other objects, among which were:

List of Office Bearers for 1854 who were:

Henry Bulmer	President.
James H. McGee	2nd Vice-President.
Charles P. Lodd	3rd Vice-President
James Hayes	4th Vice-President.
Alexander Murray	Corresponding Secretary.
Alexander A. Stevenson,	Recording Secretary.
Henry Lyman	Treasurer.
Thomas D. Reed	Librarian.

And list of General Committee, consisting of twelve names together with Superintendent's name.

List of contributors to fund up to May 11th, 1854.

List of Masonic Officers of Provincial Grand Lodge, who took part in ceremony, among which were:

R. W. The Hon. Peter McGill, Provincial Grand Master,  
R. W. Brother Frederick Griffin, Deputy Provincial Grand Master, and others.

Coins of different denominations, newspapers of that date, last annual report of Institute, by-laws, President's address on laying corner stone and programme of the order of the procession. The ceremonies concluded with an address in French by the Hon. Mayor of the City, Dr. Wolfred Nelson.

Monday, May 21st, 1855, the building was occupied by the Institute and on that evening, the inauguration ceremonies took place in the new hall.

The hall was handsomely decorated with flags and various devices. Mottoes were prominently displayed, one in particular, bearing these words: "To make a man a better mechanic and the mechanic a better man."

The hall was crowded with the members and invited guests, some 600 being present, all of whom were deeply impressed with the inaugural address, which was so ably delivered by the Hon. Mr. Justice Aylwin.

The inauguration festivities were continued throughout the week and were the most enjoyable events given by the Institute for some years.

## CONTINUED ACTIVITY AND SUCCESS

1855 - 1900

With the occupancy of the new home came a period of usefulness and increased prominence. Students were attracted to the Institute in larger numbers and the leading citizens gave their support by frequent attendance and by using their influence for the benefit of the Institute.

The Lecture Hall, because of its central location and utility, was in constant demand for concerts, lectures and important gatherings.

A series of public lectures under the auspices of the Institute was an annual feature which attracted large crowds. For these lectures the Institute engaged some of the best-known scientists, travellers and men of public letters, among whom were George Dawson, the eminent English Nonconformist divine, friend and associate of Carlyle and Emerson; Paul de Chaillu, the African traveller; W. H. Kerr, K.C.; Rev. Dr. Stevenson and many others of like fame.

If the old hall could re-echo the words of those who spoke from its stage, there would come to our ears the voices of such notable men of the past as the Rev. Canon Kingsley; Edmund Yates, novelist and newspaper writer; Dr. MacDonald, writer; Gerald Massey, the poet; Rev. Henry Beecher, the eminent divine; Josh Billings, humorist; Prof. Pepper, of ghoulish fame; Prof. Bodes, scientist; Artemus Ward, Rev. J. M. Bellew, Thos. D'Arcy McGee, Sir John A. MacDonald; Sir William Dawson, the first President of the Royal Society of Canada and Principal of McGill University; Prof. Richard Proctor; Mrs. Scott Siddons; Hepworth Dixon; Goldwin Smith and many others whose lectures were instrumental in molding the thoughts and actions of Montreal citizenship.

So from 1855 to the early eighties, continued activity and success made the Institute a prominent factor in the educational circles of the city. Like many other societies of its kind at that time, its financial condition was not prosperous. During this period, the residential section of the city was expanding east and west. The people had awakened to the



need for better and cheaper schools, all of which had a tendency to take away from the Institute much of its former usefulness.

And then came a period of depression when the hall, which for years had been yielding a revenue of from \$3,000 to \$4,000 annually, began to decline in revenue, mostly on account of the building of other halls in the city and it could no longer be relied upon as a source of revenue.

Again in 1871, the Mercantile Library Association made a proposition to the Institute for an amalgamation. A committee was appointed to look into the matter and reported favorably. A basis on which such a union could be made was submitted and a copy sent to them was never acknowledged. The matter was then dropped and afterwards the Mercantile Association disposed of their real estate.

In 1886, some of the members, foreseeing the trend of the residential section and educational institutes to locate in the uptown district, began a campaign to dispose of the present buildings. A special meeting was called for November 15th to consider the matter. An offer of \$105,000 had been made for the property and at this meeting several members put forward a plan to sell the property and invest the proceeds in a suitable building uptown. It was also advocated to dispose of all the light literature to a free citizens' library, together with the sum of \$5,000. The technical and scientific books were to be retained and a technical school founded, which was to affiliate with McGill College.

The suggestion to dispose of the building brought forth such a storm of protest from the majority of the members that the offer was declined and it was decided to continue as before.

With the extension of the city's industrial activities came a need for an institute in closer proximity to the residential section of the workmen, so that in 1887 a branch was opened at Point St. Charles. Property was purchased at the corner of Wellington Street and Bourgeois Streets, for \$5,000 and certain movables for \$900 extra. Of this sum, \$2,000 was subscribed and a mortgage given for the balance. This branch was conducted for four years when it was finally closed for lack of support by the community. Nine years later the property was sold.

It was now realized that more revenue was necessary and

a proposal was made to remodel the building so that part of it could be used for other purposes.

It was decided, therefore, to alter the stores, enlarge the reading room and library and make the upper part of the building into first class offices. Having decided on this course, Mr. James Wright was authorized to prepare plans, which in due time were submitted at a proposed cost for the work of \$30,000. Before the plans could be accepted, a fire broke out on October 24th, 1887, doing considerable damage, but in view of the proposed remodeling only such repairs as were necessary for the time being were made.

The plans as submitted by Mr. Wright were accepted at a special meeting and the committee was empowered to start work at once.

The work was begun and finished without materially disturbing the work of the Institute or interfering with the tenants on the ground floor.

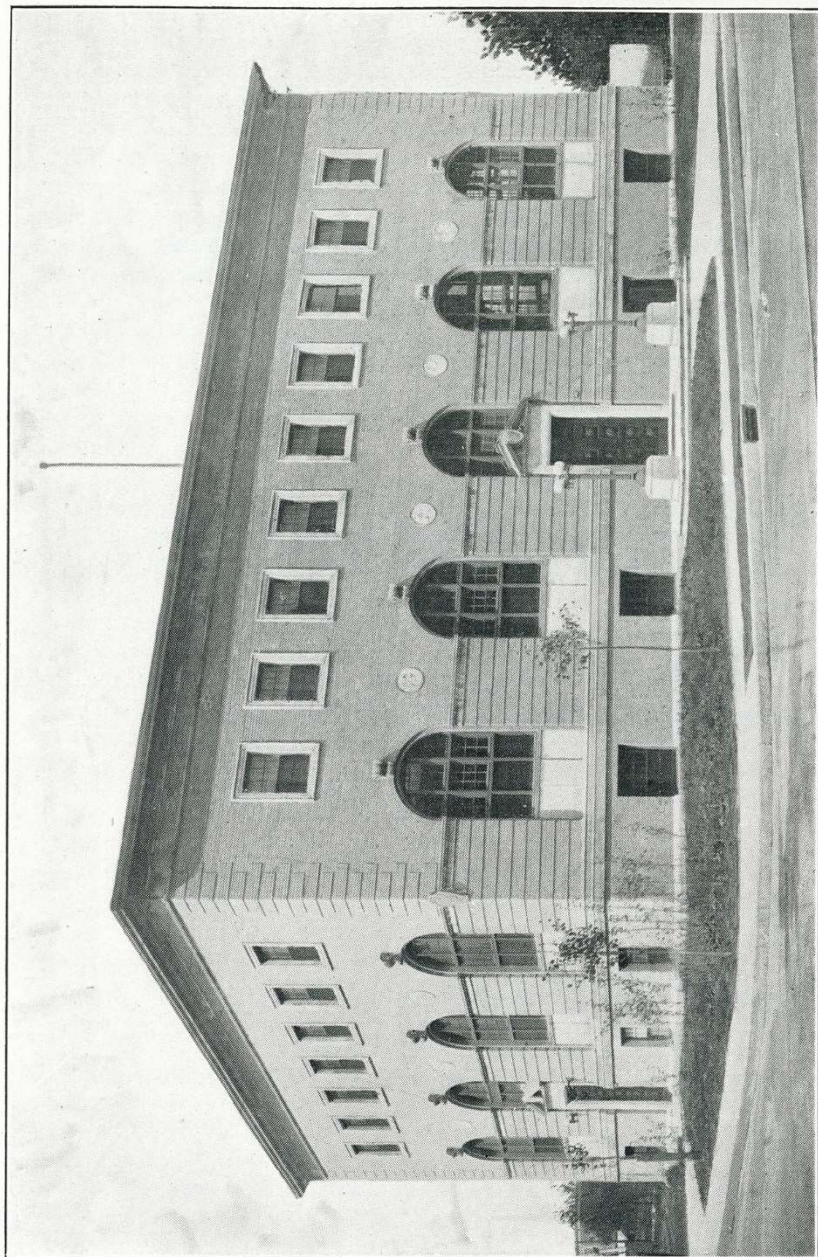
May 1st, 1888, found most of the offices rented, although the alterations had exceeded the original estimate, costing \$45,541, the Institute had an estimated revenue of \$14,500 from the remodeled building.

At this time, the mortgage debt upon the Institute was \$26,000 and power was obtained from the legislature to borrow \$50,000 to meet the cost of the alterations. This increased the mortgage indebtedness to \$69,000.

In 1888, the membership had increased to 928 and the Institute possessed a library of 10,000 volumes. With the years came various offers for the building, ranging from \$165,000 to \$240,000 but all were refused. The people of Montreal were recognizing that the Institute was rendering a creative service of high value to its many members, and that it gave promise of a future full of usefulness to the community.

It thus entered the new century equipped by years of experience and with the good will and well wishes of the men who had profited by its teachings, as well as the approbation of the leading citizens of the city.





New Building 1920

## FORWARD WITH THE NEW CENTURY

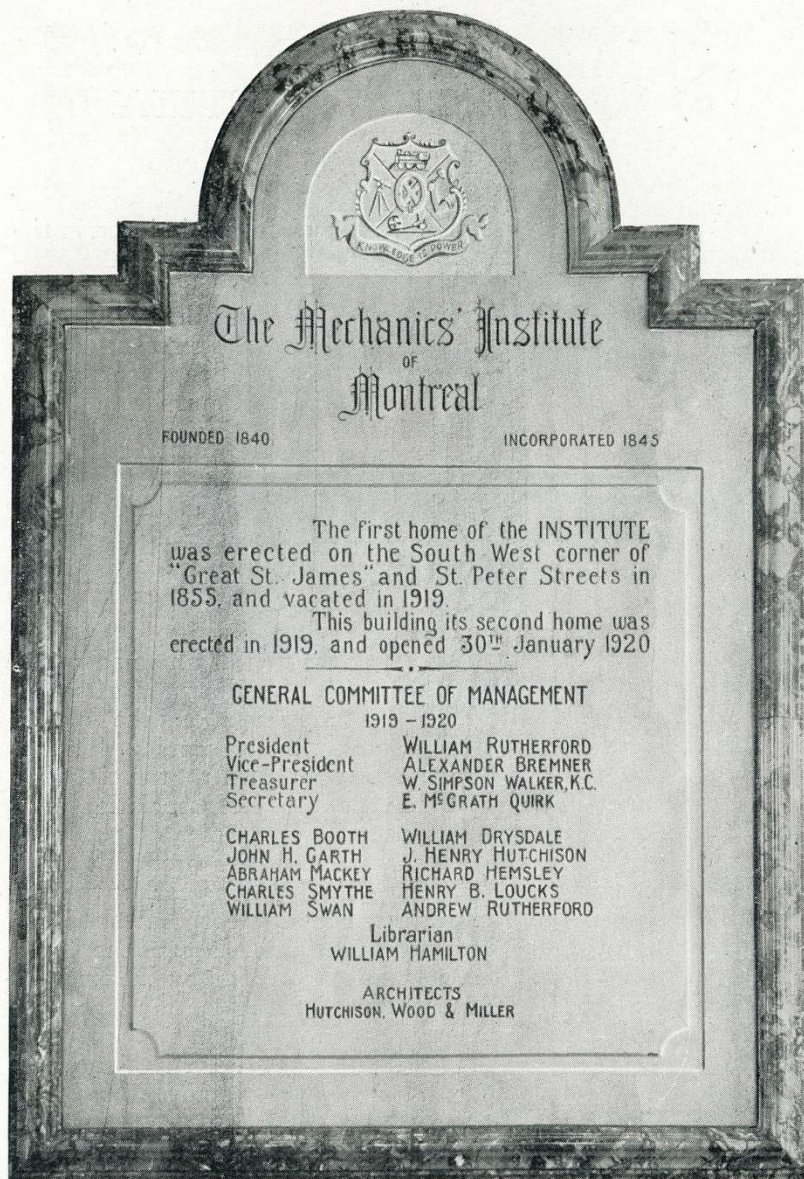
1900 • 1915

With the birth of the new century bringing in its train the wonderful economic developments of the city and the marvels of industrial supremacy, together with the advancement of mechanical skill and invention, came another movement by some of the members to dispose of its present home, establish a Mechanics Institute Technical School and locate in a part of the city better suited for the purpose. Simultaneously came a suggestion from the Manufacturers Association of Montreal to aid in carrying out this project. By combining the two forces, it was predicted that ample funds could be easily raised to complete and maintain such a home. A tentative proposition was made to that body that if they would raise a sum of \$100,000, the Mechanics Institute would enter into the plan, adding its equipment and resources and thereby assuring success.

At the meeting in 1902, the offer was again re-affirmed. At the annual meeting in 1903, the Manufacturers Association, having failed to raise the endowment or take further interest in the matter, the resolution was rescinded. Thus a project, which would have meant so much to the city and which was proposed by the Manufacturers Association with such a flourish of trumpets, was allowed to die.

It was not until 1909, that any further proposals were made to amalgamate. In December of this year, at the annual meeting, the Builders Exchange, a corporate body of which many of its members were also members of the Institute, conceived the idea of obtaining control by the election of its members to the general committee of the management of the Institute. The idea was to form a joint stock company and erect a building suitable for both Institutions, and also a general office building. The plan did not receive support and failed to materialize. Then, for the second time, in 1910, the amalgamation of the Institute with the Natural History Society was brought up and discussed, but not acted upon.





William Rutherford, President 1913-21



With the passing of the years, the property owned by the Institute had increased in value. The financial and banking interests of the city had slowly gravitated to that part of the city in which it was located, and the property bought fifty years ago at such a modest sum was now situated in the centre of the financial district and worth a large amount of money.

A number of offers having been received for the property, a special meeting was called for July 18th, 1911, to consider an offer made on behalf of a syndicate by Messrs. Gault & Ewing, who offered the sum of \$350,000, net cash, the building to be transferred May 1st, 1913. Then came several other bids just as the meeting was called to order, which tended to delay matters. As Messrs. Gault & Ewing had been negotiating for some time, it was decided to give them an opportunity of making a second offer, as another had been received for \$355,000. They then increased their bid to \$357,500. Col. Burland, seconded by Mr. J. W. Hughes, moved: "That whereas no plans for the future of the Institute after their present home should be sold had been formulated, that the operating expenses of the Institute were comparatively low, and that the Institute stood to lose heavily by having a large sum of money on hand that could only be invested at a low rate of interest, it would be inadvisable to sell at the present time especially as within the next few months a much higher sum might be obtainable."

After considerable discussion, the general committee was empowered to sell for a sum not less than \$400,000. On October 17th, 1911, a general meeting of the members was called for the purpose of approving, ratifying and confirming the resolution passed by the general committee at a meeting held on September 12th, 1911, and accepting an offer of \$400,000 made by Gault & Ewing as contained in their letter of September 7th. The deed was signed and transfer made of the property to the Montreal Trust Company on October 21st, 1911.

The disposal of the property again revived interest in the advisability of combining with some other Institute of a like nature. At the annual meeting held on December 4th, 1911, a special committee was appointed "To obtain information and consider suggestions which might be useful in guiding the future policy of the Institute and especially that the

Committee keep in view the fact that the Institute should not be deprived of its identity."

The Institute was now without a permanent home although still occupying its old quarters, and it was of paramount importance that some plan be worked out for its future need. The special committee in the meantime was busy and reported on January 22nd, 1912, that they had discussed informally with the Fraser Institute, the Natural History Society and the Montreal Technical Institute the possibilities of amalgamation. They submitted six different schemes but without any special recommendations.

Finally, on May 27th, 1912, terms of amalgamation with the Fraser Institute were drawn up by the Special Committee. When the terms were submitted, however, the Fraser Institute refused to discuss amalgamation under the conditions proposed.

Again the matter was taken up with the Natural History Society and a report submitted at the annual meeting held on December 2nd, 1912. A special committee was then named by Col. Burland to continue on the lines of the resolution of December 4th, 1911. At the next annual meeting, December, 1913, Col. Burland submitted his report of this committee. The report was received and referred to the incoming committee, and the special committee was tendered the thanks of the members and discharged. Amalgamation with the Natural History Society was approved, providing suitable terms should be arranged. Nothing further was heard on this amalgamation until the annual meeting held on December 4th, 1916, when the special committee reported that they had failed to obtain the necessary information regarding the financial condition of the Natural History Society and asked that they be discharged.

Having failed up to this time to amalgamate with other societies, it was decided to build a new home suitable for carrying on the work of the Institute.

Thus, at the annual meeting held on December 6th, 1915, we find that the General Committee of Management was empowered to obtain an amendment to the Charter of the Institute to amalgamate with any other corporation having a similar object in whole or part and also power to purchase land for a building site at the corner of Atwater Avenue and Tupper Street, Westmount.



## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

1915 · 1920

With the acquisition of a splendid building site, it was determined to make plans at once for the construction of a thoroughly modern building, one that would answer the present requirements fully as well as meet the demands of its members for several years to come.

It was decided to embody in its architectural design and service features, the most modern and practical ideas and with that end in mind, a sub-committee was appointed to consider the matter from the viewpoint of the present and future needs of the Institute, ascertain the probable cost of such a building, and determine the cost of maintenance and administration.

During the year 1917, the committee went thoroughly into the matter, holding frequent conferences with architects and experts.

After fully considering all the conditions, the committee submitted a complete report at the annual meeting of December 3rd, 1917.

A summary of the report was that the Institute should have a building, at least 80 x 80 feet, fully equipped, containing a reading room, library, lecture room, class and club rooms and smoking rooms, to cost approximately \$100,000, and that the sum of not less than \$240,000 be invested to yield an annual income of \$12,000 for maintenance and administration.

It was also considered advisable that a special committee be empowered to visit some of the more modern libraries in the eastern section of the United States to investigate the equipment and methods in use there.

Accordingly, the President, Secretary, Treasurer, Chairman of the House Committee and Superintendent visited Boston, Somerville, Waltham, Springfield, New Haven, New York and Brooklyn Libraries, where the librarians and others were interviewed and complete investigations were made as to methods of construction and conducting modern institutions of this kind. Owing to the fact that the Insti-

tute's lease on the building it then occupied would expire the following May, it was agreed that the new building should be ready for occupancy in the spring.

A report of the stocktaking shows that there were more than 22,000 volumes on the shelves and that more than 12,000 books were in circulation during the previous year.

At the next meeting, on December 2nd, 1918, it was decided that it would take at least \$120,000 to construct and equip the kind of building necessary, and the committee was authorized to expend that amount.

Work had already commenced the previous May under the supervision of Messrs. Hutchison, Wood & Miller, Architects, the contract price being \$88,471.43, which did not include the cost of lighting fixtures, steel book stacks, and the necessary furniture.

Though numerous delays had occurred, it was expected that the new building would be ready for occupancy by the end of April, 1919.

This was the last annual meeting held in the old building, where for sixty-three years, the officers and committee had met and faithfully striven to increase the usefulness and maintain the ideals of the Institute and its founders.

In consideration that the new building be used as a library and for educational purposes, the City of Westmount agreed to exempt it from taxation.





Main Hall

## OPENING OF THE NEW BUILDING

1920

Unfortunately, because of labor troubles, scarcity of material and delayed shipments, it was found impossible to complete the building for occupancy when expected.

The lease on the old premises expiring on May 1st, it became necessary to close the library and store the books in the basement of the new building.

Finally, after many vexatious delays, the new Mechanics Institute Home was formally opened on Friday evening, January 30th, 1920, at 8.30 o'clock.

At that hour, many prominent citizens, the officers, members and the invited public, assembled in the new hall, when the building was formally opened.

Everyone was lavish with praise and the officers and committees were congratulated time and time again for the practical and useful arrangement of the reading and other rooms and for the general utility of the entire building.

With the completion of this, the new home of the Institute, the citizens of Montreal and the vicinity are offered the privileges of a library, modern, well lighted and comfortably furnished, a library building second to none in Canada in its appointments and practical usefulness.

With its thousands of books, its central location and its home-like atmosphere, the door of opportunity is further opened for the present and future generations of ambitious men and women to capitalize their intellect and improve their knowledge.



## THE NEW HOME *of the* MECHANICS INSTITUTE

In designing and equipping the splendid new building, the architects and officers had in mind first of all the serviceableness of the Institute and the part it was destined to take in shaping the intellect of Montreal's future citizens.

It was deemed necessary that the building should conform in dignity and usefulness with the ideals and inspirations of its founders.

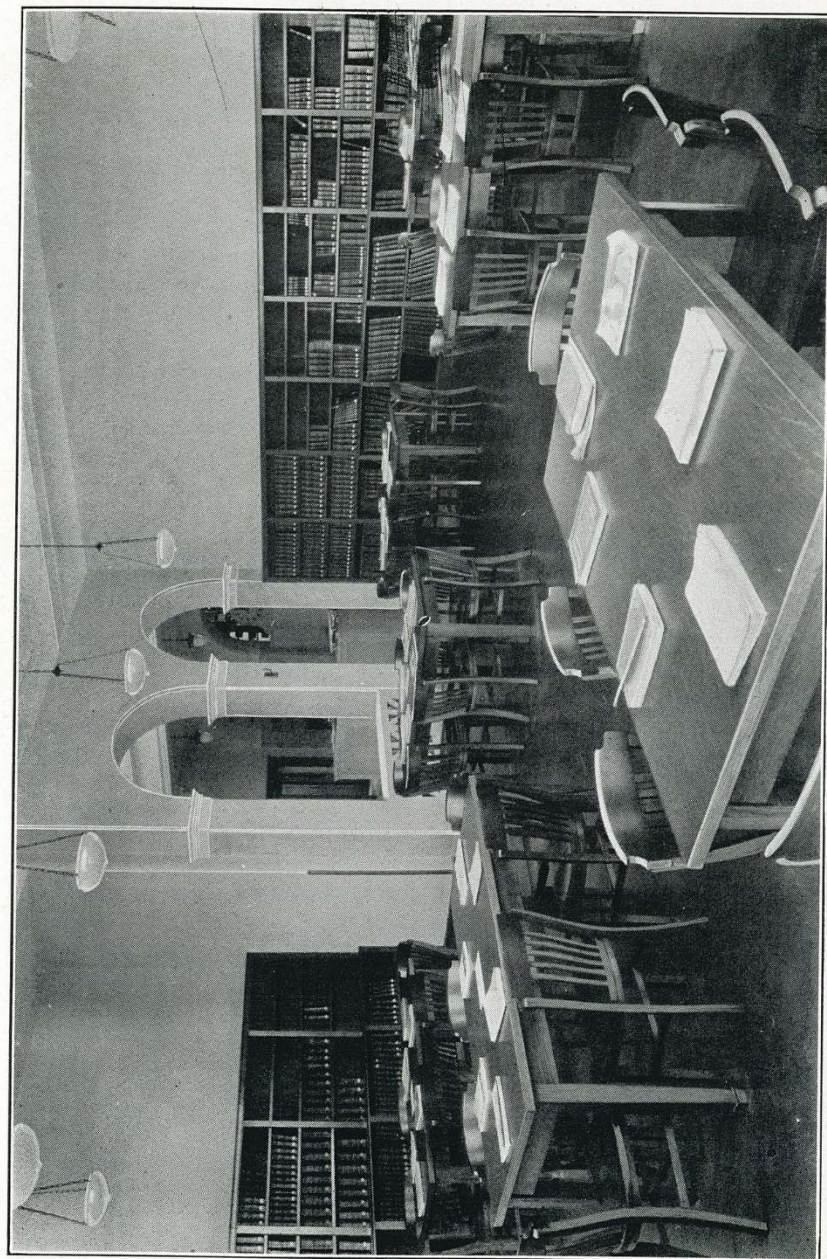
The examples of the past showed that the building would have to be enlarged from time to time and it was considered advisable to design the building, not as a structure to be discarded after a few years for lack of room but as a nucleus of a permanent structure which could be enlarged as time went on and one that would always be fitting in form and appointment for the purpose for which it is intended.

It was considered that facing as it does a public square, it should by its presence ennoble and dignify the surroundings. That the structure should symbolize, too, the great principles and high ideals of the founders of the Institute—this was another object which the officers kept constantly in mind. The new building was to be a lasting monument to those who have striven so faithfully in the past for its benefit and stability.

Though severely plain from an ornamental viewpoint, the building immediately impresses one as a place where thoughtful, earnest people can acquire knowledge, surrounded by an atmosphere of quiet and restful comfort.

The building is of buff brick, with stone trimming, ornamented with symbolical plaques typifying the degrees of art, science and industry. It is of sufficient height to allow high ceilings, large lighting space and a large assembly room in the upper storey for meetings.

The salient feature of the entrance way is its massive oak doors. Ascending from the vestibule entrance a short flight of marble steps leads one directly into a wide hallway, panelled in beautiful marble, from which large oval doorways on both sides lead into the reading rooms.



One of the two Reading Rooms





Section of Stack Room

The delivery desk, situated at the extreme back of the hallway, is of marble and conforms with the other appointments. Capping this entrance hallway is a skylight dome of ample proportions to furnish sufficient light on the darkest days.

The reading rooms are fitted with open book shelves finished in dull oak, with reading tables and chairs to match. A very important feature is the number of high windows for lighting purposes.

Back of the delivery desk and on the right, two large archways lead to the open-access steel book stacks which are two stories high, the upper stack being reached with a steel stairway, a dull glass floor permitting light to radiate on both levels.

Amidst these book stacks, with their thousands of volumes, carefully labeled as to subjects and authors, one may choose at their leisure such books as best meet his fancy, either to peruse in the comfortable reading rooms or to take home for more careful study and reading.

To the left of the delivery desk, doors open into the administration rooms. Above the desk is a beautiful marble clock, the gift of Mr. Richard Hemsley; and under the clock a small tablet bearing a brief enunciation of the principles and aims of the Institute.

At each side of the vestibule doorway is a tablet, one bearing the names of the past presidents of the Institute, and the other the date of opening of both the present buildings and that of the first home of the Institute on St. James Street. This tablet also bears the names of the librarian, the architects and the office holders for 1920-21.

The whole building is fireproof and all floors are of concrete. With the exception of the delivery room, which is laid in marble, all the rooms for public use have floors covered with a sound-proof material, thus adding to the quietude of the building. In the basement is a fireproof steel vault in which are stored the valuable records of the Institution.

The Assembly Hall is ample to seat 200 people and it is expected at some future date that its walls will resound with the voices of notable men—just as in the old hall of the by-gone century.

As a whole, one finds that utility is combined with simple dignified beauty in the construction and appointments, and that the Institute has built for permanency.





Delivery Desk

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Men are but children grown up—and like them are constantly asking the “why” of everything.

Those with analytical minds turn to books for the knowledge and the facts that make them wiser than their brothers.

According to Francis Bacon, that master philosopher of the sixteenth century, books serve three purposes:

“Studies serve for delight, for ornament and for ability.

“Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring;

“for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the

“judgment and disposition of business, for expert men can

“execute, and perhaps judge of particulars one by one, but

“the general counsels and the plots and marshalling of

“affairs, come best from those that are learned.”

Never has the world been in greater need of practical knowledge—the learning that leads men’s minds in the channels of constructive thinking, the erudition that teaches men to create higher ideals and practice lofty aims.

With the problems of mankind ever growing more complex, with mighty nations realizing more and more the urgent need for some satisfactory solution of their economic difficulties, the future of industrial and economic supremacy rests with the nation which commands the greatest percentage of intellect.

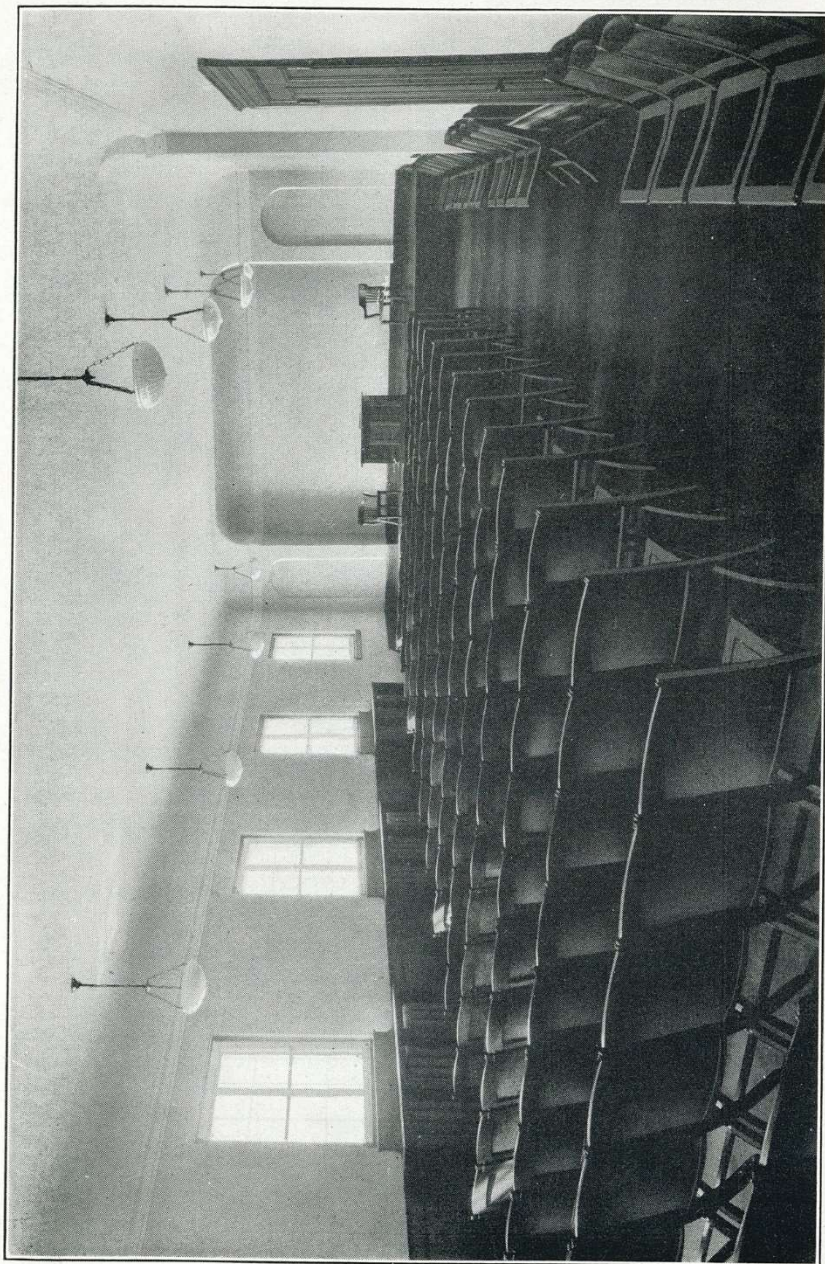
## A WORD IN CONCLUSION

Through the facilities offered by the Mechanics Institute, any ambitious man or woman may acquire a broad understanding of the principles that underlie the technical and business world. Its equipment of books, pamphlets and magazines cover hundreds of subjects, each selected with the view of giving practical understandable knowledge to those who seek it.

The business men and women whose aspirations are for greater heights in their chosen calling will find here the way and the means to reach their goal.

The ambitious artizan or the most humble apprentice may





Large Lecture Hall

attain the knowledge that will make them master of their trade.

"Knowledge is Power" and the world's verdict during these days of intense industrial strife is to get on or get out.

To those who will, this Institution offers the way to get on.

## RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION

Life Members . . . . .	\$50.00
Annual Subscribing Members . . . . .	\$5.00 per annum

Annual Subscribing Members shall be those who pay and contribute to the funds of the Institute the annual subscription of five dollars, and who after having been members for ten consecutive years and fully paid up their dues, shall thereafter automatically become life members.

The annual subscription shall be payable on the first day in January in each year; persons elected members after that day in any year shall pay the subscription due on the same day.

Persons elected after the first day in July in any year shall only pay one-half the amount thereof, as their subscription up to the first day of January then next.

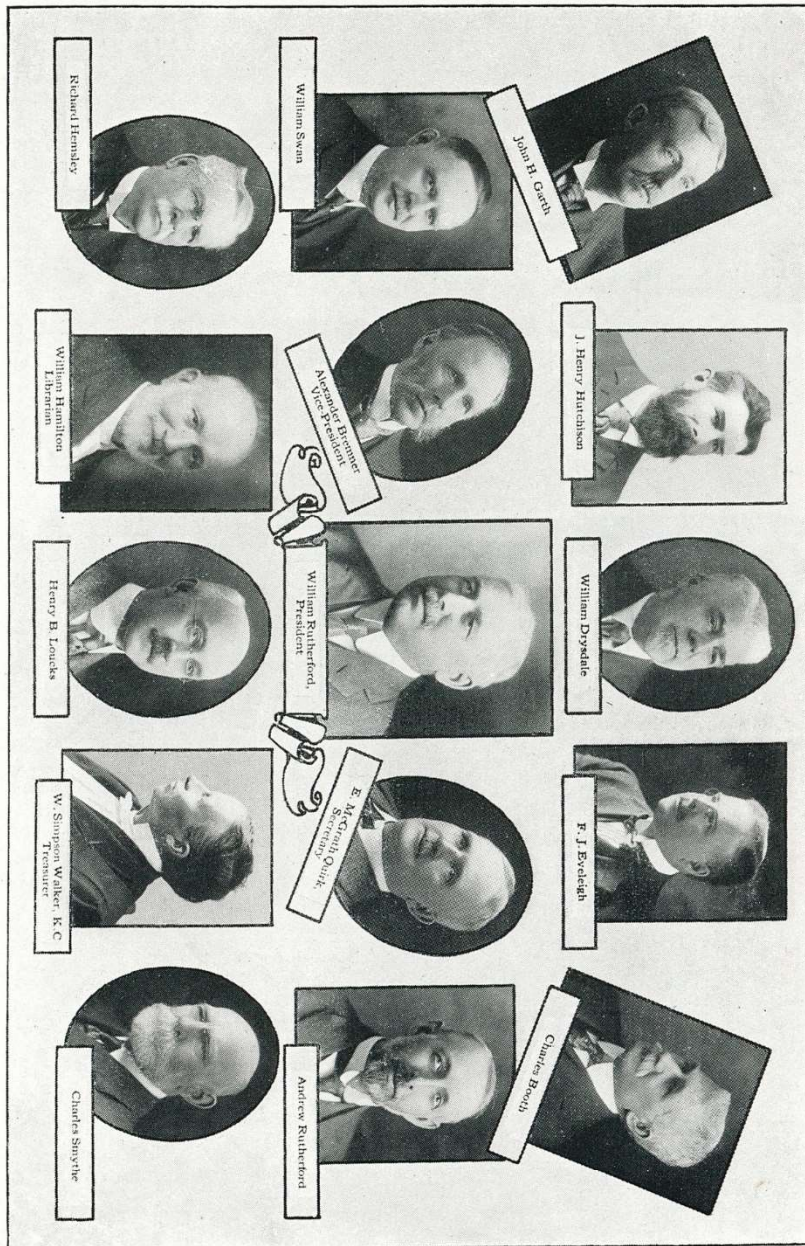


# GENERAL COMMITTEE of MANAGEMENT 1920-1921

President . . . . . E. McGRATH QUIRK  
Vice-President . . . . . W. SIMPSON WALKER, K.C.  
Treasurer . . . . . HENRY B. LOUCKS  
Secretary . . . . . WILLIAM DRYSDALE

*Committee*  
ALEXANDER BREMNER ABRAHAM MACKEY RICHARD HEMSLEY  
WILLIAM RUTHERFORD CHARLES SMYTHE ANDREW RUTHERFORD  
CHARLES BOOTH WILLIAM SWAN F. J. EVELEIGH  
JOHN H. GARTH J. HENRY HUTCHISON

*Librarian, WILLIAM HAMILTON*





## THE SUPPORT OF THE INSTITUTE

It is very commendable that throughout its long and useful existence, the Institute has been mostly self-supporting, that is, only on special occasions and for specific purposes has it been the recipient of outside bounty.

No large endowments have ever been settled on it, although the outside public has always responded with liberality when called upon for special purposes.

The first decade and up until 1855, several interesting donations were made. In this respect, the old minute book of the earlier years unearths the names of Montreal's foremost citizens and indicates the force and influence which was behind the Institute from the beginning.

The minute book of 1841 shows among the contributors to the Institute the Hon. George Moffatt, Hon. Peter McGill, Mr. John Molson, Mr. Stanley C. Bagge and Mr. John Redpath. In consideration of the value of their donations, they were made life members.

In 1841 and for several years thereafter, a grant of £50 to the Institute was made by the Governor and Council.

On February 17th, 1847, a letter was received from Mayor John E. Mills, in which he stated that it had always been his intention to dispose of his salary as Mayor to deserving objects connected with the welfare and interests of the city and he, therefore, had much pleasure in handing a donation of £150 to the Mechanics Institute for the purchase of books.

In August, 1853, Mr. Robert Stephenson, on visiting the rooms of the Institute accompanied by Mr. Jackson of Jackson & Co., the builders of the Victoria Bridge, made a donation of £50, and Mr. Jackson one of £100.

Donations were freely made by the public generally towards the cost of the new building in 1853-1855 and also for the purchase of the branch at Point St. Charles.

The Institute has grown and prospered because it has filled an important place in the needs of a great city where thousands of ambitious men, prevented by lack of finances, were anxious to acquire concrete knowledge pertaining to their vocation and life work.

## VISIT of an EMINENT ENGINEER

1852

The Institute was particularly fortunate in August, 1852, in having as a visitor one who, at that time, was perhaps the most distinguished engineer in the English-speaking world. The great Victoria Bridge was under construction and Mr. Robert Stephenson, the designer of this remarkable triumph of engineering skill, was in Montreal. Mr. Stephenson had an international reputation, his practice extending from Sweden to Egypt. Having built some of the greatest bridges in the world, and being at that time a member of the House of Commons, his visit to the Institute emphasized the esteem in which it was held and was in a way, an endorsement of the work being done.

Accompanying Mr. Stephenson was Mr. Jackson, of Jackson & Co., builders of the bridge, and both were received with due ceremony by the President, Mr. Henry Bulmer, the office bearers and other distinguished members.

The large crowd, which had attended to pay Mr. Stephenson honor, completely overflowed the rooms of the Institution and the meeting was compelled to adjourn to the large St. George Hall where an address was presented to Mr. Stephenson. He replied complimenting the Institute and its officers on the work they were doing, predicting a long and useful future and wishing them well. Mr. Jackson also addressed the meeting in complimentary terms.



# MECHANICS INSTITUTE LIFE MEMBERS

JANUARY 31ST, 1921

ALEXANDER, CHAS. M.  
ALEXANDER, J. F.  
ALLAN, SIR H. MONTAGU  
ALLAN, HUGH A.  
ANGUS, R. B.  
ARMSTRONG, G. E., M.D.  
ARNOLD, J. PORTEOUS  
ATWATER, HON. A. W., K.C.

BADENACH, THOMAS  
BARNARD, C. A., K.C.  
BELLEW, H. C.  
BENNETT, A. L.  
BENTLEY, DAVID  
BENTLEY, E. C.  
BICKERDIKE, R.  
BINMORE, C. J.  
BLACK, JOHN P.  
BLAIKIE, THOMAS  
BOIVIN, P. A.  
BOOTH, CHARLES  
BOURNE, ARTHUR  
BRADY, JOHN  
BREMNER, ALEXANDER  
BUCHAN, J. S., K.C.  
BURNETT, ALEXANDER

CAVERHILL, GEORGE  
CHARLTON, A. H.  
CHURCH, D. K.  
CLEGHORN, GEO. S.  
CURRIE, ROBERT  
CURRIE, THOS. S.

DAVIDSON, JAMES  
DAVIS, H. W.  
DAWSON, SAMUEL E.  
DESJARDINS, R.  
DICKSON, JOSEPH  
DORAN, W. E.  
DOUGLAS, JAMES  
DOW, MISS JESSIE  
DRYSDALE, WILLIAM  
DRYSDALE, W. F.  
DUFF, JOHN M. M.

EAVES, ALFRED  
EGAN, RICHARD  
EVELEIGH, F. J.

FORBES, A. P.  
FORESTER, R. W.  
FORSTER, W. C.  
FOSTER, R. A.  
FRASER, THOMAS  
FREEMAN, L.

GAGNON, N. T.  
GARTH, HENRY  
GARTH, JOHN H.  
GRANDE, MRS. P.

HAGAR, L. M.  
HAGUE, FREDERICK, K.C.  
HAINS, J. MCD.  
HAMILTON, W. R.  
HAMPSON, ROBERT  
HARTE, JAMES A.  
HARTE, JAMES H. M.  
HEMSLEY, RICHARD  
HENDERSON, JOHN T.  
HENDERY, ALEX.  
HERSEY, DR. MILTON L.  
HICKSON, LADY  
HILL, A. H. J.  
HILTON, EDWARD A.  
HOOD, R. GEORGE  
HOSMER, CHARLES  
HUDSON, WILLIAM  
HUGILL, J. H.  
HUTCHINSON, HON.  
JUSTICE M.  
HUTCHISON, A. C.  
HUTCHISON, JOHN H.

IRWIN, R. C.

JONES, WALTER  
JOHNSON, WILLIAM

KIERNAN, FRANK  
KING, JAMES C.  
KNEEN, DANIEL  
KYDD, R. A.

LESLIE, JAMES  
LEWIS, SIR F. ORR, BART.  
LEWIS, ROBERT  
LINDSAY, E. G.

# MECHANICS INSTITUTE LIFE MEMBERS

*Continued*

LIGHTBOUND, T. H.  
LOUCKS, H. B.  
LOWDEN, JAS. R.  
LYMAN, W. E.  
LYALL, W.

MACCALLUM, MISS S. A.  
McCULLOCH, JAS. L.  
McDOUGALL, A. A.  
MACDUFF, A. J. G.  
McFARLANE, DUNCAN  
McGILLIVRAY, J. M.  
McGOUN, A., K.C.  
McGOUN, WM.  
MACKEY, A.  
McKEOWN, JAS. H.  
MACKERCHER, J., LL.D.  
McMASTER, WM.  
MALTBY, W. L.  
MANN, WM.  
MASSEY, LT.-COL.  
MELDRUM, JAS.  
MEREDITH, CHARLES  
MESSERVEY, P. C.  
MILLAR, A. P.  
MILLER, G. A.  
MILLER, W. R.  
MITCHELL, J. M.  
MOIR, J. A.  
MOODIE, JAMES  
MORGAN, JAS. D.  
MORRIS, ALEX. W.  
MORRISON, JOHN  
MOUNT STEPHEN, LORD  
MUNDERLOH, HENRY W.

NIVEN, R.

PATON, HUGH  
PEEL, A. E.  
PEEL, ROBERT  
PELL, HENRY S.  
PHELAN, M. A., K.C.  
PHILLIPS, CHAS. S. J.  
PRATT, A. T.  
PRICE, W. L.

QUIRK, E. MCG.

RAPHAEL, J. T.  
REID, PETER  
REID, W. D.  
ROBERTS, E. M.  
ROBERTS, J. J.  
ROBERTSON, ALEX.  
ROBERTSON, JOHN A.  
ROBINSON, F. D.  
ROGERS, F. D.  
ROSE, DANIEL  
RUTHERFORD, A.  
RUTHERFORD, WM.

SADLER, G. W.  
SCHOLLES, R. MARSHALL  
SCOTT, GEORGE  
SCOTT, ROBERT L.  
SHAUGHNESSY, RT. HON.  
LORD, K.C.V.O.  
SHEPPARD, GEORGE J.  
SIMPSON, JAMES  
SIMPSON, J. CRADOCK  
SLACK, MISS C. A.  
SMITH, GEO.  
SMYTHE, GEORGE M.  
SMYTH, CHAS.  
SOMMERVILLE, P. A.  
SPEAR, F. J.  
SPENCE, JAS. ROBERT  
STARR, F. R.  
STEPHENS, GEORGE W.  
STEVENS, CHAS.  
STEWART, G. M.  
STONEMAN, A. N.  
SUMNER, GEO  
SURPRENANT, MRS. M. A.  
SWAN, WM.

THOMPSON, MRS. J. D.  
THORNLOE, W.  
TOMS, LOUIS M.

WALKER, ALEX.  
WALKER, S. M.  
WALKER, WM.  
WALKER, W. S., K.C.  
WEAVER, ARCH.  
WILL, W. A.  
WILSON, WALTER  
WOLFF, H. H.



