

The Cambridge Military Library

(Founded 1817)

Royal Artillery Park, 1575 Queen St Halifax, Nova Scotia



A Library for the Garrison and Town:

A History of the Cambridge Military Library, Royal Artillery Park, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Shirley B. Elliott, 1988

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Technical editing of electronically scanned text of Ms Elliott's article by Major P.F. Dawson, President, Cambridge Military Library, January 2018.

Welcome to The Cambridge Military Library

The Cambridge Military Library evolved from the Garrison Officers' Library established in 1817 with monies allocated from the Castine Fund created during the War of 1812. The library was an early example of British policy for overseas garrisons, in providing social, recreational and educational facilities for troops on active service, and is representative of the general modernization and consolidation of installations of the Halifax defence complex of the late 19th century.

The architecturally striking brick library building, built in 1885-86 as part of the Royal Artillery Park complex, was named in 1902 after His Royal Highness Prince George, Duke of Cambridge (1819 - 1904), the Commanderin-Chief of the British Army.

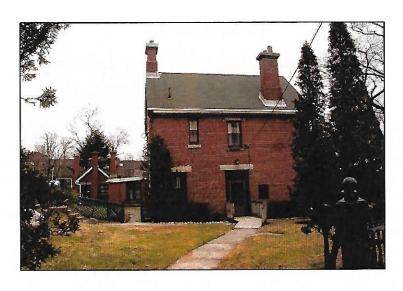
The Cambridge Military Library has a lengthy record of serving the military community and the wider public community as a centre for reading and social interaction. In 2017, it celebrated its 200th anniversary, as the oldest military library in Canada. The Cambridge Military Library collection currently comprises over 12,500 volumes, primarily on military subjects, and is accessible to the public for reading and research.

Public Hours of Operation: Wednesdays, 10:00AM – 2:00PM

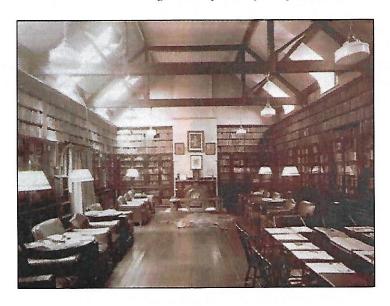
Appointments can normally be arranged for Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Contact Information:

Coral Peterson, Librarian 902.427.4494 or coral.peterson@forces.gc.ca



Front exterior, Cambridge Military Library, early 21st century



Main Reading Room, Cambridge Military Library, early 20th century

A LIBRARY FOR THE GARRISON AND TOWN: A HISTORY OF THE CAMBRIDGE MILITARY LIBRARY, ROYAL ARTILLERY PARK, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA¹

Shirley B. Elliott,² Wolfville, Nova Scotia [1916-2004]

The Cambridge Military Library (CML), originally known as the Officers' Garrison Library, is the only military-run military library existing in Canada today that is not run by a staff school or university. It owes its origin to George Ramsay (1770 - 1838), ninth Earl of Dalhousie, who arrived in Halifax on the 24th October 1816 to assume the office of Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia. Fresh from the glories of the Waterloo campaign the previous year, Dalhousie relinquished a successful army career for that of administrator in the British colonial empire. Immediately upon arrival at King's Wharf, the Earl and Countess proceeded in state to the Council Chamber, in the nearby Cochran Building, on the site of the present day Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, where his swearing-in took place. This custom, in which a governor took the oath of office at the moment of landing on Canadian soil, was to be repeated several times in Halifax during succeeding years, when winter conditions limited access to Canada solely through the port of Halifax.³

It would be interesting to know what the Earl's first impressions were of his new home. Sailing into Halifax Harbour on board the frigate Forth that autumn day, which his Journal records as being "most delightful fine," he might well have been impressed by the brilliant colouring of the foliage along the shores; but he must surely have been depressed by the appearance of the lower town, two blocks away, which had suffered a disastrous fire a fortnight before, totally demolishing the sprawling wooden shops and warehouses between Sackville and Hollis Streets and Bedford Row. The Winter to follow, which was unusually severe, must have seemed interminable long, for the town offered few amenities for entertainment other than the theatre which had been set up in an old store on Fairbanks Wharf the year before, and which was proving to be very popular.

As a Scot, Dalhousie was well aware of the value of education and the contribution of institutions in King's College in Windsor, but admission to King's was restricted to adherents of the Anglican faith.⁵ As a member of the Church of Scotland, Dalhousie was convinced that a similar institution founded on a more democratic basis should be established in Halifax. During his administration of four years he showed comparatively little interest or inclination in improving the lot of the general population, but his initiative in establishing Dalhousie College and the Officers' Garrison Library, Halifax's first Library, assures him a permanent place in Nova Scotia history.

During the War of 1812-1814 the British sent an expedition under Sir John Coape Sherbrooke (1764-1830) from Halifax to the coast of Maine, which resulted in British control of the territory between the Penobscot River and the border of New Brunswick. With the port of Castine as their base, the British proceeded to collect custom duties on all exports and imports, 38 cents on a gallon of rum, 43 cents on brandy and gin. As a consequence, when the occupation ceased a few months later, the British carried away in the paymaster's wagon American gold totalling over £10,000, booty which later came to be known as the Castine Fund. In October 1815 the authorities in London directed this fund be devoted .to general improvements in Nova Scotia, but Sir John Sherbrooke, whose appointment as Lieutenant-Governor was drawing to a close, wisely decided to leave the matter of disposition to his successor.

Dalhousie was fortunate indeed to have this ready source of funds at his command. Throughout the year 1817 he gave serious consideration to various proposals for its use, but he was convinced that a college established on domestic lines, in contrast to the autocratic King's was the most telling. On the other hand, because the Castine fund had been acquired through a military operation, he proposed a portion be set aside for the benefit of the Halifax Garrison. Accordingly, the bulk of the fund was designated for the establishment of the college and £1,000 was set aside for a library, which was to provide a means of recreation for the officers of the Garrison similar to the Garrison Library established at Gibraltar.

Having finally assured the future of a seat of learning, Dalhousie proceeded to show a keen interest in the library. He was not long in Halifax before he became acutely aware of the lack of books – "there is not a Bookseller's shop in Halifax, nor is there an individual possessed of

anything that can be called a Library" he wrote in his Journal? On the 6th December 1817 he recorded that his suggestion to the officers in the command – "that the great comfort and advantages that might result from the establishment of a Garrison Library" 8 – was enthusiastically received and by the end of the year plans for its execution were well underway. The sum of £1,000 set aside from the Castine fund "was a comfortable cushion – there being no problem securing additional moneys through subscription." 9

Protocol had to be observed, however, and Dalhousie was scrupulous in presenting to his superior and predecessor, Sir John Sherbrooke, Governor-in-Chief at Quebec, his proposal for "your favourable reception and approbation of it." He specified how the library would be financed, and that it would include "books of character and value" acquired in England and "others of light reading and trifling value"; from New York. His Scottish canniness is apparent when he assured Sir John that "we shall not start on an extravagant scale, or rather depend on friends at home for donations of books, than commence on an expensive collection - and thus patiently add to our stock as our friends shall allow."10 If books were to be imported from the United States it was necessary to obtain a permit from, of all people, the Lieutenant-Governor himself, consequently a letter addressed to Dalhousie from the newly appointed Committee of Management as early as the 11th December 1817 requesting permission to import books, signed by the librarian, John Robb "Your Lordship's most humble and obedient servant,"11

A year was to pass before the Officers' Garrison Library became a reality. The "1ight reading" from New York was received long before the order from London arrived on 13th December 1818 on the Castlereagh. Anxiously awaited, the ship laden with Christmas merchandise for the Halifax market had been seventy-seven days in transit. The shipment of books was joyfully received and, as Dalhousie recorded, "now completes that work to my utmost wishes." 12

In his letter to Sherbrooke the previous December, Dalhousie had indicated he had appropriated for the Library the home of a Mr Wilson, seedsman at the Government Gardens, which lay at the south of the town on the site of the court house – "a trifling expense will get it for the purpose." Whether this location was the first choice is uncertain and, if so, the fate of seedsman Wilson is also unknown. Dalhousie's diary of 15th December 1818 reported that there is "comfortably fitted in the center of all our Barracks, a quiet detached battery – now an excellent selection of general

reading in the amount of £1,500, fund in hand of £1,600; annual subscription of £150; general incidental expenses will not exceed £50 a year." 14

It is highly probable Dalhousie exerted a certain degree of pressure on the officers of the garrison to take out a membership, as well as officers of the navy, who were also permitted use of the library; indeed, membership was very likely regarded as a status symbol in the town. In addition to officers, the Chief Justice, Sir Brenton Halliburton (1775-1860), members of clergy and other influential citizens, such as Walter Bromley, of the Royal Acadian School, were permitted honorary membership, and it is gratifying to discover that women were not excluded from this privilege. The list of subscribers from 1818 to 1835 includes a number of ladies, for the most part wives of the officers, and not surprisingly the name of the Countess of Dalhousie.¹⁵

Several names among the first roster of membership represent men whose reputation has survived through the years because of their important contribution to public life and to the arts. These names include Colonel J.F.W. DesBarres (1722?-1824), of Atlantic Neptune fame, 16 Oliver Goldsmith (1794-1861), of the commissariat department, the author of The Rising Village, the first book length poem published by a Canadian;17 Sir George Head (1782-1855), for a brief period librarian of the Garrison Library, whose Forest Scenes and Incidents, in The Wilds of North America is one of the Maritimes' earliest travel books;18 Sir Howard Douglas (1776-1861), later to become Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick; John Frederick Fitzgerald De Roos (1804-1861), Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, whose Personal Narrative of Travels in the United States and Canada in 1826 has an attractive copperplate of Halifax Harbour,19 and Captain William Moorsom (1804-1863), author of Letters from Nova Scotia.20 Published in London in 1830 this is one of the few personal accounts of everyday life in the colony of Nova Scotia in the early 19th century." Moorsom delighted in the bounty Nova Scotia offered in hunting and fishing, but the Garrison Library must have proved a Godsend to one of his enquiring minds, for he observed in the Letters:

> And although during this protracted residence, the absolute monotony of the routine duties affords little scope for acquiring practical information, a resource (for which this Division of the army is indebted to the patronage of the Earl of Dalhousie) is provided in a well-assorted military library, which is open on very liberal terms to all officers of both sea and land service, and of which every officer who regards a season of peace but as a

valuable interval to be seized and maintained, in preparing for a foundation for the exigencies of war, will not fail to appreciate the value.²¹

In view of the fact that this was a military library, it is not surprising that it was governed by very stringent regulations, which were carefully laid down in the Rules and Catalogue, first issued in 1825 and revised at intervals, the latest being 1982.22 A Committee administered the library, which with the Earl as its patron, included a vice-president, a librarian, secretary, treasurer and two auditors, as well as several other members. Sadly to say no records of the early years exist today, no minutes if the meetings held the first Thursday of each month, and no register [of] benefactors of money or books, though fortunately the 1835 Rules and Catalogue has been preserved. ²³ The strict bye-laws state that any transgression will be properly treated. For example a patron who took a book from the library without it being recorded, was subject to a fine of twenty shillings; if a book was overdue as much as a day, the subscriber was to be contacted by the sub-librarian by noon the following day; servants coming for books were not permitted access to the room, and were to be furnished with a "book or a bag... that they (the books) may not be injured by dust or wet."24 The 1835 catalogue includes the best works published in the English language in the first quarter of the 19th century, a collection which would constitute the contents of an English gentleman's library for that same period of time. The catalogue is divided into thirteen categories beginning with Arts, Science and Heraldry and concluding with Maps and Globes. Surprisingly Class 10, War and Military History, is one of the smaller categories; Class 9, Voyages, Travels and Geography, and Class 5, Travels and Romances, vie in number of volumes for first place. The opportunities which this wealth of reading afforded must have been a Godsend to British officers destined to spend long periods isolated from the most civilized atmosphere of England.

The actual location of the library in the early years of its existence is difficult to determine. Harry Piers, in his *Evolution of the Halifax Fortress*, maintains it was moved from its original Upper Water Street location to the Glacis Barracks, (the north end of the east-west building) in 1858, where it remained until it was located on its present site in 1886.²⁵ The Glacis Barracks, which stood on the northeast slope of the Halifax Citadel facing Cogswell Street, was constructed between 1858 and 1868. On the other hand, in an article by Colonel H.T. Goodeve, written in 1934, reference is made to a move from the original site to a building adjacent to the Glacis Barracks

which at one time served as the Duke of Kent's Headquarters.²⁶ From there it was supposed to have been located in an attractive stone building on Upper Water Street, near the former Ordnance Yard, prior to its removal to the present site in 1886.

Sometime during the decade of the 1860s the library holdings were considerably augmented by the addition of a very valuable collection of books transferred from the Ionian island of Corfu after the British evacuation in 1864. This collection had originated as a Garrison Library at Messina in 1810; four years later it was moved to Corfu, where it became the focal point of social life for the military occupation, there being no proper English club on the island. This fascinating collection is housed separately in the Cambridge Military Library in what has been designated as the Hunt Room, in memory of Sergeant [-Major] William Hunt, who for many years served as the librarian.

Provenance of the Corfu books can immediately be determined either from the distinctive black ink stamp found in some volumes, or the words "Corfu Garrison Library" written in long hand on the title page of others. For years these volumes, numbering in the thousands, suffered indifferent if not ignominious treatment. Dust and unfavourable atmospheric conditions contributed to their outward deterioration and for a period of time they were unceremoniously packed away in cartons, to be stored in a government warehouse on the Dartmouth side of Halifax Harbour. Recently, however the books have been properly catalogued and are now shelved, many wrapped in acid free paper, in the Hunt Room. Unfortunately, the appearance of the shelves in this room is not appealing and titles are difficult to decipher. But within the sombre covers of these books are veritable treasures of voyages and travels, memoirs and geography, and military history, many of the finest works of the early nineteenth century.²⁷

In 1885 an agreement was made with one James Shand whereby the property on Upper Water Street would be transferred to him on the condition that he erect a building to house the library in Royal Artillery Park. Construction began on 3rd November 1885 and the library was completed on the 24th November 1886, at a cost of £1,350. By this time the library collection totaled some 30,000 volumes, the emphasis being on history, travel, military memoirs and with good editions of the classics and standard French and Italian works. Two men who were in daily attendance from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. provided orderly access to the collection. Nine years later, in September

1895, in a letter to the *Halifax Evening Mail*, Archibald MacMechan referred to the Officers' Garrison Library as "undoubtedly the most comfortable of all for the readers in Halifax." He reported that in the summer the atmosphere was dry and cool, though the winter found it drafty and difficult to heat the library. He mentioned a smaller reading room, and described it as "no cosier, quieter nook for a bookworm can be imagined in our stormy winter afternoon." MacMechan complained about the poor lighting, which he claimed could be rectified with the addition of new gas fixtures. Membership was 50 cents per month and MacMechan believed it was not generally known that civilians could qualify for access to such a splendid service.²⁸

In 1902 the officers of the garrison requested permission to name the library after His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge. The Imperial government was still in command in Halifax and the Duke, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army for nearly forty years, had retired a few years before. Perhaps naming it after its founder would have been more appropriate, but nearly a century had passed since Dalhousie's imaginative scheme had become a reality; his name is well perpetuated in Dalhousie University, and the title Cambridge Military Library does have a noble ring. Four years later, when the fortress of Halifax was transferred from British to Canadian control, the library was included. Fortunately, because of the generosity of the British authorities, the library was maintained as before, and the officers of the Halifax Garrison were permitted to enjoy its facilities in the same manner as their imperial predecessors.

A tablet commemorating Dalhousie's role in the establishment of the Cambridge Military Library was unveiled on the 29th October 1934 by Lieutenant-Governor Covert. At the formal ceremony, Brigadier-General H.F.H. Hartzberg and Lieutenant-Colonel H.T. Goodeve, who presented a brief history of the library, delivered addresses. With the band of the Princess Louise Fusiliers in attendance, the occasion was marked in true military fashion, tea being served from a marquee pitched on the grounds. The list of official guests the *Halifax Mail* reported, included Premier and Mrs Angus MacDonald, Halifax Mayor and Mrs Cragg, the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia, Colonel and Mrs Gordon Harrington, Frank Patterson, the president of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Dr and Mrs Carleton Stanley, Harry Piers, Commander and Mrs Murray, Mr and Mrs D.C. Harvey, Dr F. Sexton, the Bishop of Nova Scotia, Colonel and Mrs Eaton of

Annapolis, and [Major-]General and Mrs Foster of Kentville.²⁹ Invitations were also issued by the library committee to several citizens of Castine and Machias, Maine, however, it is not surprising that they chose to be absent.

Prior to 1952, public library services in Halifax was the responsibility of the Citizens' Free Public Library, a woefully inadequate institution located on the second floor of City Hall.³⁰ The Cambridge Military Library offered much more to the reading public not only in non-fiction and fiction, but also in current periodical literature. Consequently it is not surprising that many Halifax citizens chose to avail themselves of membership in the Cambridge Military Library. Nor was the reading material chosen for adults only. One Halifax matron of today, who refers to herself as an army brat and whose father served a term as honorary committee chairman, recall how she made her first acquaintance with Winnie the Pooh at the Cambridge Military Library.³¹

In addition to its reading facilities, a pleasant feature offered to visitors of an afternoon was a pot of tea, toast and jam, served by one of the two servicemen responsible for maintaining the library day to day, or following a game of tennis on the adjacent courts members might enjoy this privilege as well. During the first half of this century the Library served as one of the main centres of social life in Halifax. Dances and musicals were common occurrences, and the annual auction of discarded books and magazines, accompanied by brisk business at the bar, was an event eagerly awaited by members.

It is not surprising that with the growth and development of the Halifax City Regional Library, membership in the Cambridge Military Library gradually declined. Today, its new acquisitions are almost exclusively in the realm of military and naval matters. Many of the titles of a trivial or temporary interest, such as light fiction, have been withdrawn, which has helped to alleviate the problem of space. As a source of material relating to military and naval history it has been of invaluable assistance to students, scholars and writers across the country.

The Library continues to play a significant role in the life of Halifax today. Each summer the library committee is host to a garden party, with a Forces band in attendance. Wedding receptions and cocktail parties are still held there, though in smaller numbers than in earlier years. The library frequently serves as the setting for meetings of various organizations such as the St George's Society, the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia and the Royal

Commonwealth Society, but its primary role as a library *per se* has considerably diminished.³²

When the plaque to the right of the entrance was unveiled by the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia on 29th October 1934, the *Halifax Mail* carried an editorial which fittingly commemorated the memory of the Scottish soldier whose vision many years ago gave Halifax this fine institution. It read in part: "The Earl of Dalhousie, were it possible for him to come down through the years and be present at a ceremony of today, would have been proud of this well-built, finely appointed library which serves the needs of the military men of this post today." Let us hope it will continue to serve them for many years to come.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Antiquarian Club of Halifax, February 1988. [The published version of this paper is "A Library for the Garrison and Town: a History of the Cambridge Military Library, Royal Artillery Park, Halifax, NS", *Epilogue*, Fall 1989, no. 8 pp. 1-11.]

² Dr. Elliott was the honorary librarian of the CML, and from 1954 until her retirement, the Legislative Librarian for the Province of Nova Scotia. She holds the degrees BA, MA (Acadia), SB (Library Science) (Simmons College), an honorary DCL (Acadia, 1998) and an LLD (Dalhousie, 1995). Among her publications are: Nova Scotia in Books, 1752-1967 (Halifax: The Halifax Library Association, 1967), The Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1759-1983, A Biographical Directory (Halifax: Province of Nova Scotia, 1984), Nova Scotia in London: A History of its Agents General (London: Office of the Agent General of Nova Scotia, 1988), and several entries in the Directory of Canadian Biography. [NB – Obit. 15th October 2004.]

³ Other examples include Earl Grey, 10th December 1904; the Duke of Devonshire, 11th November 1916; and the Earl of Bessborough, 4th April 1931.

⁴ Earl of Dalhousie, *The Dalhousie Journals*, Marjory Whitelaw, ed. (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1978), Vol 1, p. 20.

⁵ The University of King's College moved to Halifax in the twentieth century where it is now affiliated with Dalhousie University. The bicentennial anniversary of its founding is being marked in 1989.

⁶ For further information on the history of Dalhousie University see George Patterson, *The History of Dalhousie College and University* (Halifax: *Morning Herald*, 1887) and Daniel C. Harvey, *An Introduction to the History of Dalhousie University* (Halifax: McCurdy, 1939).

- ⁷ Earl of Dalhousie. Journals p. 75.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS) RG1. V.365.doc.i.17.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 PANS RGI V. 228.doc. 69.
- 12 Earl of Dalhousie Journals p. 104.
- 13 PANS RGI. V. 365 doc. 117.
- ¹⁴ Earl of Dalhousie Journals p. 104.
- ¹⁵ Halifax Garrison Library, Rules and Catalogue (Halifax: John Munro 1835).
- ¹⁶ The *Atlantic Neptune* first version published in London in 1777, and the final version in 1781 was a major cartographical work representing the culmination of several years of work by DesBarres surveying and charting the coast along the Atlantic seaboard of North America. Copies of the Atlantic Neptune (indeed single sheets from the elephant folio volume) today command a high price on the rare book market. For further info on DesBarres' career see G.N.D. Evans, *Uncommon Obdurate: The Several Public Careers of J.F.W. DesBarres* (Salem MA: Peabody Museum of Salem. Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1969).
- ¹⁷ Originally published in England in 1825, the poem was later revised and published in Canada in 1834. See Oliver Goldsmith, *The Rising Village: A Poem* (London: Printed for John Sharpe by C.C. Whittingham, 1825) Oliver Goldsmith. *The Rising Village with other Poems* (Saint John: Published for the author by J. M'Millan, 1834). For further info see: Wilfred E. Myatt ed. *The Autobiography of Oliver Goldsmith. Published for the First Time from the orig. Manuscript of the Author of 'The Rising Village"* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1943).
- ¹⁸ Sir George Head. Forest Scenes and Incidents. In The Wilds of North America: Being a Diary of a Winter's Route from Halifax to the Canadas, and During Four Months Residence in the Woods on the Borders of Lakes Huron and Simcoe (London: J. Murray, 1829).
- ¹⁹ John Frederick Fitzgerald De Roos, Personal Narrative of Travels in the United States and Canada in 1826... With Remarks on the Present State of the American Navy (London: W.R. Ainsworth, 1827).
- ²⁰ William Scarth Moorsom, Letters from Nova Scotia: Comprising Sketches of a Young Country (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830).
 - ²¹ Ibid. p.32.
- ²² See Rules and Catalogue note 15. See also CML History and Constitution of the CML (Halifax, 1982) mimeograph.
- ²³ A copy of the Rules and Catalogue is located at the Nova Scotia Legislative Library. - 14 -

- 24 Ibid., p.11
- ²⁵ Harry Piers. *Evolution of the Halifax Fortress* (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia. 1942, p.61)
- ²⁶ R.T. Goodeve, "A Brief History of the Cambridge Library, Halifax". In *History and Constitution of the Cambridge Military Library* (Halifax, 1982), mimeograph.
- ²⁷ Further details of the Corfu collection can be found in a paper describing the books presented to the Library History Interest Group of the Canadian Library Association at its annual meeting, June 1988. See Elizabeth Jones, "The Corfu Collection on the Cambridge Military Library," *Epilogue*, No.6 (Fall 1988), 6-7 (abstract).
 - ²⁸ Archibald MacMechan, Halifax Evening Mail, 19th September 1895.
- ²⁹ Gordon Harrington was a former premier of Nova Scotia. Dr Stanley was the president of Dalhousie University. Harry Piers was an archivist and historian. Commander Murray was with the Royal Canadian Navy. D.C. Harvey was an archivist, and Dr Sexton was president of the Nova Scotia Technical College.
- ³⁰ The Citizens' Free Public Library became the Halifax Memorial Library and later the Halifax City Regional Library.
- ³¹ Reference is made to Mrs Gordon (D'Anne) Johnson, daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel R.N.C. Bishop.
- 32 As another example, the June 1988 meeting of the Library History Interest Group of the Canadian Library Association was held in this library.
 - 33 Halifax Mail, 29th October 1934, p.3.



His Royal Highness Prince George, Duke of Cambridge (1819 - 1904)