

**Maritime Conference
The United Church of Canada
Conference Office and Archives**

A thorough exploration of Archives in the Maritime Conference of The United Church of Canada is available in the document, “Possessing our Heritage, The Story of the Maritime Conference Archives” by Nathan H. Mair.

The following chronicle was assembled from “Possessing our Heritage,” reports to the Conference Annual Meetings, and minutes and digest from Conference Executive and Sub-Executive meetings.

Conference Office

In the early days of The United Church of Canada, General Council provided regionally based Field Secretaries in support of the ministry of Christian Education. In Maritime Conference, the Christian Education Committee eventually established a Christian Education Office, based in Sackville, NB, located over the bowling alley. Sometime in the mid-1960’s, the office moved to the NB Tel building on York Street. In 1969-1970, with the institution of a full-time Executive Secretary, a “Conference Room” was established in the Christian Education Building. Shortly thereafter, the General Council Field Secretaries transitioned to become Conference Staff.

In 1973 the decision was made to have all Conference Staff located in Sackville, NB. It was also decided to make further renovations to the Conference Offices to accommodate the staff and to renew the lease for ten years.

In 1979, work began again to review the needs for office space for the Conference. In 1981 the Conference Executive acted to purchase the NB Tel building on York Street for \$30,000. The purchase was finally accomplished in 1982, followed by extensive renovations, funded by a bond sale at 11% return.

In 1997 renovations were made to accommodate the Archives in the lower level, and establish a small meeting room in the upper level (see below).

Archives

Inasmuch as the records of Sessions, Official Boards, Church Boards, Church Councils, Boards of Trustees, Congregations, Pastoral Charges, Presbyteries, and Conferences have an historical and legal value that necessitates their being correctly kept and carefully preserved, the General Council urges all these bodies and especially their Secretaries to use the utmost diligence to secure the accuracy and safety of their records. Since church records belong to the United Church, ministers, officials, or other individuals may not alienate them or in any way assume personal control of them.

2010 Manual 090(a)

To appoint...an archivist...who shall have responsibility, under the direction of the Committee and in accordance with professional archival standards and procedures, for sorting and cataloguing the material in the Conference archives, and for making accessible to official United Church bodies and to individuals information necessary for the preparation of historical studies relating to the United Church.

2010 Manual 460(c)iii

The development of the collections in the Maritime Conference Archives began as early as 1866 when the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America agreed that the clerks of the presbyteries be a committee "... to collect manuscripts and documents of interest ... and report to the Synod at its next meeting." The Presbyteries of the Maritime Synod formed a historical committee in 1918 with Rev. Prof. James Falconer, librarian of The Presbyterian College (Pine Hill), Halifax, as convenor.

In 1903 an informal meeting of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island Methodists organized a society to promote the study of Church history. Efforts were made to gather all records and other historical material at Mount Allison University Library. The Nova Scotia Conference formed a historical committee in 1904 and also began to gather records at Mount Allison.

Following Union, the Archives at Mount Allison and Pine Hill continued to be maintained separately and churches were reminded to send Methodist materials to Mount Allison and Presbyterian materials to Pine Hill. In 1958, Rev. George H. MacLean became the first Conference Archivist, without salary.

In 1960 a room equipped to serve as an Archives was opened in the residence of Pine Hill Divinity Hall, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. It was named in memory of Dr. J. W. Falconer, Professor of New Testament at Pine Hill, 1907-1941. In 1963, Rev. E. Arthur Betts came to Pine Hill to assist in the library as a retirement venture. Betts received an honorarium of \$2,000/year to divide his time between the library and the archives. Betts retired from the library in 1969, but continued with the archives, receiving an honorarium first through the General Council, and then directly from Maritime Conference.

Acknowledging the challenge of maintaining two archives storage locations through the oversight of one archivist, the decision was made in 1968 to relocate the Methodist records from Mount Allison University to the Falconer room at Pine Hill. Betts offered to retire, but, faced with three and one-half tons of material in 100 cartons to process from Mount Allison, agreed to stay on, ultimately for another 10 years! Following Betts' retirement in 1978, Rev. Neil MacLeod became Archivist.

In 1982, inadequate space, environmental controls, and staff time led to the establishment of a task force to study all aspects and needs of the Archives. The recommendations of the task force resulted in a renewed agreement with AST/Pine Hill, securing of space for the creation of a reading room, installation of equipment for improved climate control, and increased funding for the archives and for the Archivist's salary.

In 1987, a Conference task force recommended "The present quarters at AST be vacated as soon as proper facilities can be constructed either attached to or an integral part of the Conference offices." It was determined that such a construction would cost \$300,000 to \$350,000 and would provide 1200

lineal feet of shelving. It was also recommended that the position of Archivist should become permanent and full time.

In 1991, after exhausting the possibilities of including the Conference Archives in the construction of the new library at AST, Conference Executive instructed the Property Committee to identify locations suitable for the Archives in the Sackville area. After five years as Acting Interim Archivist, Carolyn Earle was appointed as Archivist, part time.

In 1994 the Conference Executive gave conditional approval for a two story addition to the rear of the Conference Office at 32 York Street. The estimated cost was \$350,000, with the requirement that 90% of the funding must be in hand before construction can begin. Conference would provide an initial \$30,000, the balance to be raised by the Archives Committee. "Friends of the Archives" was established for this purpose.

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In 1997, fundraising towards the new archives reached \$84,000. Disappointment was expressed at the inability to significantly approach the goal of \$350,000. However, enthusiasm was expressed for the proposal to renovate existing space within the Conference Office for the relocation of the Archives. Projected cost for the renovation was \$87,000. The plan was approved by the April 1997 Executive with the instruction to not exceed \$100,000. "Friends of the Archives" would continue to seek to raise the balance of the costs.

The Archives moved from AST to York Street, Sackville, NB, in December of 1997. The official opening took place during the May 1998 meeting of the Conference Executive. Carolyn Earle retired and Judith Coldwell was appointed as Archivist.

In 2000 it was reported that the Archives was within three years of running out of space. The Archivist became a permanent part time position under General Council guidelines for Conference staff.

In 2003 it was reported that the Archives would be completely filled by 2005. The Archives Unit of the Heritage and Resources Committee began to envision future space for the Archives.

In 2005 a Task Group was appointed to make a feasibility study of the long term needs of the Conference Office and Archives.

In 2006 the Heritage and Resources Committee reported to the Conference Annual Meeting:

"...the need for archives space; the present facility is full. A task force is presently studying the issue and there is a need to review all aspects of the property needs of the Conference. The question is one of finances; how much are we prepared to invest in facilities which meet the standards for preservation of archival materials?"

Table groups were invited to consider the question, “How important is our heritage and history and are we prepared to invest additional resources in preserving our present and future records?”

In 2007 the Archives Unit reported that judicious culling of the Archives collection had created breathing space of perhaps two years before, again, the Archives would be full. Possible storage sites were explored, but nothing suitable was found. “The option of sharing Archival space with another/other conferences has been explored. It has been determined that other Conferences are not yet prepared to go forward, although the possibility of ‘renting’ space for archival storage to other conferences may be a distinct possibility for the future.” Authority was given to hire a consultant “to explore options around archives facilities and to provide a report to the Executive.”

In 2008 the Conference Executive established the “Archives Planning Project Committee,” reporting and accountable to the Conference Executive with the following mandate:

1. *To provide leadership to the Conference and its Executive in the ongoing review and planning for the Archives of the Maritime Conference.*
2. *To review all documentation related to the National Archives study sponsored by the General Council, and all materials submitted by the project managers to this point.*
3. *To continue the conversation with the project managers to bring forward a plan for a new archival facility in Sackville, NB.*
4. *To engage in conversation with the ecumenical partners represented at the meeting at Atlantic School of theology November 6, 2007.*
5. *To present options and recommendations to the Executive of the Maritime Conference and the annual meeting.*
6. *To develop tentative financial plans to accompany all options to be presented.*

(Conference Annual Meeting minutes 2008, page 192)

Later in 2008 the Conference Executive agreed to “enter into a comprehensive dialogue with Sackville United Church (Vision-Building-Mission) regarding potential partnership that would not only include archival storage but Conference function, staff and facilities.” Ecumenical options continued to be pursued.

In 2009 the Conference Executive requested of the Archives Planning Task Group “a report outlining a concept of what a stand-alone Archives could be and rough estimates of cost and what a Conference Centre, including the Archives, could be and rough estimates of cost.” Conversation with Sackville United Church continued.

In 2010 a shared space plan with Sackville United Church was developed. Market value appraisals of all affected properties was done.

In June 2010, an unsolicited offer to purchase the York Street properties was received. The \$600,000 offer was \$200,000 over the appraised value. After due consideration, the Executive acted to sell the York Street properties. Closing date to be June 30, 2011, with the Archives vault able to stay in place

until September 30, 2011. The Conference Accommodations Committee was established to further the work towards a new facility in Sackville, NB. After several final exchanges with Sackville United Church, the talks came to a close, and the Conference Accommodations Committee proceeded with a Maritime Conference-only project.

In October 2010, the Conference Executive authorized the Conference Accommodations Committee to:

1. Purchase a building lot on Wright Street, Sackville.
2. Prepare building plans.
3. Initiate construction.

In November 2010, the Conference Sub-Executive accepted the recommendation of the Conference Accommodations Committee to:

1. Engage Kingsway Developments Ltd. as project managers.
2. Pursue a mortgage.
3. Engage Alliance Building Contractors to construct the building.

In December 2010, the Conference Executive further approved details relating to the above decisions of the Sub-Executive, including the securing of a mortgage of up to \$2,450,000. The Executive also acted to initiate a Financial Campaign.

In March 2011, the Conference Executive authorized the making of arrangements for temporary accommodations for the Conference Office.

In July 2011, the Conference Sub-Executive adopted a report from the Conference Accommodations Committee, including:

- building plans
- construction agreement, budget and timetable
- construction loan and mortgage agreement

Construction of the new facility began on October 12, 2011 with an anticipated occupancy date of April 28, 2012.