

T H E S T R A C H A M P A P E R S

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THE STRACHAN PAPERS

INTRODUCTION

John Strachan (1778-1867) was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, and educated at the Universities of Aberdeen and St. Andrews. In 1799 he emigrated to Upper Canada and taught for a time in Kingston. He opened his well known grammar school at Cornwall in 1803. The same year he was ordained a deacon in the Church of England and appointed incumbent of Cornwall. In 1807 he married Ann (Wood) McGill; they had four sons and five daughters.

In 1812 Strachan became rector of York (Toronto) and headmaster of the York Grammar School. During the years which followed he took a prominent part not only in the religious, but also in the political, life of the province. He was a member of the Executive Council from 1815 to 1836, and of the Legislative Council from 1820 to 1841. He became known as one of the leaders of the "Family Compact" and as a champion of the Anglican position in the Clergy Reserves controversy.

Strachan was appointed Archdeacon of York in 1825, and in 1839 he was consecrated Bishop of the newly created Diocese of Toronto. From that latter date he took little part in politics, and devoted himself to religious and educational work. He had been instrumental in obtaining a Royal Charter for King's College, of which he was the first President (1827-1848), but before it was reorganized as the University of Toronto, a non-sectarian institution, he withdrew and in 1852 founded the University of Trinity College, of which he became the first Chancellor.

Bishop Strachan's papers were deposited in the Ontario Archives in 1911. They consist mainly of correspondence, letter books, and sermons. The unbound papers (apart from the sermons which are grouped together at the end) have been arranged chronologically. In addition to, and interfiled with, the correspondence are a few other types of documents, such as reports, lists, memoranda, minutes of meetings, and land grants. The correspondence consists mainly of letters to Strachan, but there are also drafts of some of his outgoing correspondence.

Drafts of many more of Strachan's letters are to be found in his letter books, ten in number, which range in date from 1812 to 1867. The letter books do not follow a straight chronological sequence, there being some overlapping in date from one volume to another. Some of the pages of the letter books are missing; they were cut out by one of Strachan's executors because they were drafts of letters dealing with private family matters.

Although the Strachan Papers in the Ontario Archives are fairly extensive, they do not include all the Strachan correspondence which has been preserved. There are in the Toronto Public Reference Library a number of Strachan letters collected under the title "Bishop Strachan Papers; Dr. Scadding Collection". Additional correspondence and Strachan's autobiography to 1799 are in the possession of Trinity College, Toronto. (The Ontario Archives has a microfilm copy of the latter.) There are also many letters from Strachan scattered through various collections in the Ontario Archives, such as the John Beverley Robinson Papers.

As insurance against the deterioration of the originals, it has been decided to microfilm the Strachan Papers (except the sermons). The calendar of the unbound papers will be microfilmed first, followed by the papers themselves in chronological order. Then the letter books will be