

# **INVENTORY DESCRIPTION**

**Great Britain. Colonial Office.**

**Original Correspondence : Nova Scotia and Cape  
Breton (CO 217) : 1710-1867.**

Transcripts, 1603-1840. 11.40 m. Photostats, 1831-1865.  
2.10 m. Microfilm, 1710-1867. 111 reels. Finding Aids:  
Nos. 99, 201, and 655; Public Archives of Canada Reports  
for the years 1894-1895, 1946-1948; Parker's Guide.

Colonial Office 217 is for Nova Scotia the first of the six classes normally assigned to a geographically defined collection, and follows the usual system of arrangement for " colony " classes (see the MG 11 Introduction under Arrangement). Volumes 1-30 (1711 to 1782) include correspondence of the old Board of Trade. Volume 30 provides abstracts for the period 1713-1754, but these abstracts are not complete for the entire span of years. Predominantly in the case of some of the governors' letters, these abstracts appear to have been read to the Board in place of the originals, probably for the sake of efficiency. In many cases, the original item may be located from the abstracts by using the alpha-numeric code devised for filing by the clerks. This registration code (e.g. E 40, P. 10, etc.) simply identified the location of the documents for the Board's clerical staff. Only volume 1 (1711-1715) includes an index at the beginning of the bound papers, and it should be noted that this index includes references to many items not to be found in volume 1. The contents of the correspondence reflect the breadth of the Board's colonial functions, particularly in gathering information relating to trade and commerce, and the administration of colonies. Apart from general correspondence, a great variety of other types of material may be located, such as heads of instructions and the responses, reports on Board meetings, maps, petitions, patents, acts, Privy Council decisions, appeals and some records of the proceedings of Colonial legislatures.

Volumes 31-242 (1710-1867) provide the documents of the Secretary of State responsible for colonies. The overall arrangement of these records largely reflects the geo-political development of Nova Scotia: that is, volumes 103-138 (1744-1820) include documents relating to Cape Breton Island especially during the period when it was a colony separate from Nova Scotia (1784-1820); the remaining volumes include documents relating to both Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island. Material concerning both colonies, however, may be found in either location even during Cape Breton's brief existence as a separate colony, reflecting the interrelationship of the island and mainland.

The usual system of arrangement, which divides the records into " Despatches ", " Offices ", and " Miscellaneous " or " Individuals ", does not begin to appear systematically until records dated 1797-1800. Internal indexes to the volumes do not appear with reasonable regularity until the volumes for the records dated 1815, although a small number of earlier volumes are indexed. In many instances the indexes exist only for the " Despatches " category, and in such cases the indexes frequently appear after this category rather

than at the end of the bound volume. However, a substantial proportion of the records does have full internal indexes to all categories of documents. Note that these indexes may sometimes be divided into the same categories as are represented by the contents of any given volume, and may then appear separately at the end of each category instead of together at the end of the volume.

While most of the volumes in C.O. 217 appear in more or less chronological order by category of documents, the researcher must be particularly careful with the volumes before 1801 since their arrangement is occasionally quite unreliable. For example, volumes 32 and 33 purport to cover the period 1746 to 1753, yet volumes 39 (1730-1746) and 40 (1748-1752) should also be consulted.

In addition to the usual categories of material in C.O. 217, there are a number of noteworthy special subject volumes, for example: volumes 41 and 42 (1782-1786) are entitled "Military Despatches", and include a considerable amount of material relating to Loyalists; volume 94 (1814) provides the enclosures from despatch number 153 in the preceding volume primarily dealing with land matters in Nova Scotia; volume 160 (1831-1835) houses documents concerning aspirants to the title Earl of Stirling and claims to land in Nova Scotia in right of this title; volume 169 (1836-1838) includes drafts of correspondence; volume 173 (1839) relates exclusively to reform and responsible government in Nova Scotia, and the representations made to London by Assembly delegates William Young (1799-1887) and Herbert Huntington (1799-1851), and Council delegates Alexander Stewart (1794-1865) and Lewis Morris (1801-1887); volume 196 (1843-1846) pertains to an appeal to the Privy Council against the annexation of Cape Breton Island.

The entire series is available on microfilm. After 1867, the appropriate Canada classes of the Colonial Office records should be consulted for material relating to New Brunswick.

In addition to the complete C.O. 217 class on microfilm, the Public Archives of Canada also houses the well-known composite series Nova Scotia "A" and Cape Breton "A", which are similar in nature to the "Q" Series (see entry for C.O. 42), but have certain peculiar characteristics.

The Nova Scotia "A" series is composed of both transcript and photostatic copies, the latter being concentrated in the volumes following Nova Scotia "A" 174 (which is the transcript equivalent of C.O. 217, volume 152) for 1831. While the largest part of the series derives from the manuscripts which became C.O. 217 at the time of the 1908-1910 Public Record Office reorganization, material was also copied from the British Museum, from Lambeth Palace, and from what was, in the 1890's, the personal collection of the Earl of Dartmouth. (For additional information relating to the Dartmouth papers, see Manuscript Group 23, Late Eighteenth Century Papers). By the time the Public Archives of Canada's copyists had reached documents dated 1801, however, the Public Record Office had completed its reorganization, and the Public Archives of Canada abandoned the idea of a composite series.

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was

Consequently, after 1801 the transcripts were prepared directly from the new class, C.O. 217, only and the transcripts and photostats from 1802 onward bear both the Public Record Office's designation and the Nova Scotia " A " title. For example, Nova Scotia " A " 136 (1803) is the equivalent of C.O. 217, volume 78. The Nova Scotia " A " transcripts (volumes 1 to 170) are also available on microfilm, reels C-9119 to C-9143.

The Cape Breton " A " transcripts have precisely the same characteristics as the Nova Scotia " A " series. Prior to 1802, the series is composite. Following this date, it is the equivalent of C.O. 217, volume 120-133, and the transcripts or photostats bear both the Public Archives of Canada's and Public Record Office's designations. For example, Cape Breton " A " 23 (1802) is the equivalent of C.O. 217, volume 120. The Cape Breton " A " transcripts (volumes 1-40) are also available on microfilm, reels C-11530 to C-11536.

In addition to the transcripts known as " A " series, there are some selections, either transcript or photostat, from C.O. 217, including: from volume 27, accounts for the period 1758-1776; from volume 50 quit rents, 1773; from volume 195, responsible government, 1846; from volumes 224 and 225, disqualifications from public offices, 1859; from volumes 226, 230 and 237, relating to Confederation, 1860, 1862 and 1867.

Researchers should note that the Public Archives of Canada's copyists were prohibited from transcribing marginal notes and memoranda until they had reached documents dated 1811 in Nova Scotia " A " 146, and 1814 in Cape Breton " A " 35, by which time the restriction had been removed. These missing marginalia may be found in the microfilmed copies of the originals.

Additional material similar in nature to the Public Record Office collections relating to Nova Scotia may be found in various Public Archives of Canada sources including Record Group 7, Governor General's Office, and Manuscript Group 9, Provincial, Local and Territorial Records.

Finding Aid 90, British Records on Microfilm, lists all material available on film. Finding Aid 635 provides a manuscript calendar for Cape Breton " A ", volumes 23-41 (1802 to 1820). Calendars for Nova Scotia " A " and Cape Breton " A " have been published in the annual Reports of the Public Archives of Canada as follows:

Nova Scotia " A "

Volumes	1-153	(1603-1801)	P.A.C. Report for	1894
	134-161	(1802-1820)		1946
	162-184	(1821-1836)		1947
	185-198	(1837-1840)		1948

Cape Breton " A "

Volumes	1-22	(1784-1801)		1895
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These calendars may be used as finding aids to C.O. 217 by using various conversion tables and by applying a knowledge of the basic organization of the records. To convert from the calendars provided in the Public Archives of Canada Reports for 1894 and 1895, the old references provided after each calendar entry should be noted and the appropriate volume then identified by using the table of equivalents in C.M. Andrews, Guide to the Materials for American History, to 1783, in the Public Record Office of Great Britain, I, pp. 279-307. Andrews partial list has been supplemented at the Public Archives of Canada, though the key is still incomplete. The calendars in the Public Archives of Canada Reports for 1946-1948 may be converted by using tables provided in Finding Aid 201, which also includes a copy of Andrews' augmented list mentioned above.

A useful overview and brief description of Nova Scotia " A " volumes 1-153 (1603 to 1814), and Cape Breton " A " volumes 1-38 (1784-1817), may be found in David W. Parker, A Guide to the Documents in the Manuscript Room at the Public Archives of Canada, I, pp. 161-187. A number of contemporary registers and indexes are also available as finding aids, but must be used with caution because of the vagaries of arrangement and classification. These indexes and registers include: C.O. 326, Registers, General (q.v.), volumes 47 and 48 (1712 to 1758); C.O. 326, Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, Register of Correspondence (q.v.), volumes 1-5 (1850 to 1867); C.O. 714, Indexes to Correspondence (q.v.), volumes 125-126 (1815 to 1866).

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& Manuscripts