

THE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF P.E.I.

PART I: 1889 - 1891

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1889

On March 26, 1889, six ardent naturalists gathered in Charlottetown to form the Natural History Society of Prince Edward Island. Its first officers were Hon. D. Laird - President, Malcolm MacLeod - Vice President and D. Montgomery - Secretary-Treasurer. Although small, the fledgling society seems to have taken immediate steps to establish its credentials nationally. At the April 27th executive meeting the president read a letter from Sir William Dawson, offering to place the P.E.I. society on the exchange list of the Natural History Society of Montreal and to send certain papers published by the Peter Redpath Museum. The letter also intimated that the Island group was now entitled to send a representative to the Royal Society of Canada.

At the executive committee meeting held in the Education Office on May 11, 1889, the secretary reported that he had interviewed Premier Sullivan to request that one of the rooms of the Provincial Building be placed at the disposal of the society. The premier promised to reply in a few days.

That spring a series of public lectures on natural history topics was initiated. These were given at intervals of every second week (sometimes less often), and during the first year were held in J.D. MacLeod's Hall or the Philharmonic Hall. By 1891 the location had switched to the YMCA Parlours. According to newspaper accounts of the day, lecturers were very well received, often speaking to standing-room only audiences. For a list of early speakers and their topics see Table 1.

1890

At the first annual meeting, held in the YMCA on Feb. 14, 1890, it was reported that membership had grown to fifty-two and the balance on hand was \$38.54. A discussion was held on the advisability of the society embracing the civil as well as the natural history of the province, and the matter was referred to the executive committee. Mr. Bain presented the society with a copy of his new book on the Natural History of Prince Edward Island.

At the March 10, 1890 executive meeting, three members were appointed to visit the Leader of the Government to obtain a room for a museum. It was also decided to procure a copy of Gray's Manual of Botany, 1890 edition. The total cost was \$1.96.

At the sixth Public Meeting, held on April 14, 1890:

"The committee appointed at a previous meeting to endeavor to secure the use of a room for the purpose of a library and museum for the Society in the Provincial Building, reported that the Leader of the Government regretted that there was no vacant room in the building at his disposal; whereupon a committee was appointed to make further application to the City Council for use of one of the rooms in the Market Building, and elsewhere if necessary."

Membership became a concern in the early summer of 1890. The annual fee was set at \$1.00 or \$5.00 for Life Membership. A letter was sent to the editor of the Patriot from the secretary Lawrence Watson telling the public they were invited to join, as the society was not just for the very learned. In August, the first annual outing was held, a sailboat excursion to St. Peter's Island.

The Nov. 19, 1890 executive meeting was held in the Board of Trade Rooms, Cameron Block. Acquisitions of various papers and gifts were noted (see Table 2).