PRE-CONFEDERATION ONTARIO BOOKBINDING

The subject of Pre-Confederation Ontario Bookbinding is probably familiar to readers of the *Papers* from an article which appeared last spring in volume XI. What I propose to do this afternoon is provide the illustrations for that article by showing thirty-five slides of Ontario bindings in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, the Library of the Public Archives and the D. B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario.

These bindings will show stylistic and technical developments from the early 1820's to 1867 and also illustrate levels of craftsmanship from that of simple workman to skilled artisan. Three of the leather bindings were presentation copies and were decorated with particular care, especially the *Journals* of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada for 1858 and 1859 destined for the Honourable John A. Macdonald and now in the Library of the Public Archives. Cloth bindings which became standard in the trade after their introduction in England in the 1820's were also decorated with blind and gold stamped motifs, appropriate in most cases to the content of the book.

Unfortunately for a historian of Canadian binding few binders signed their work. However ten stamps or tickets found in bindings of books as diverse as a collection of poems, a city directory, a government document and a blank book for accounts show how some early binders indicated pride in their work and advertised their skills. Signed bindings recorded so far have come from shops in Toronto, Ottawa, Galt, Cobourg and London.

My search for original Ontario bindings and information about binders is still in progress. A grant from the Canada Council assisted visits to public, university and government libraries last summer. A final report is the target this summer. It will include a stylistic and technical study of Ontario binding before 1867, a survey of the binding trade and a directory of binders working in the area (more than 220 identified so far) and a bibliography of pre-Confederation Ontario imprints with details of original bindings recorded in each library visited.

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