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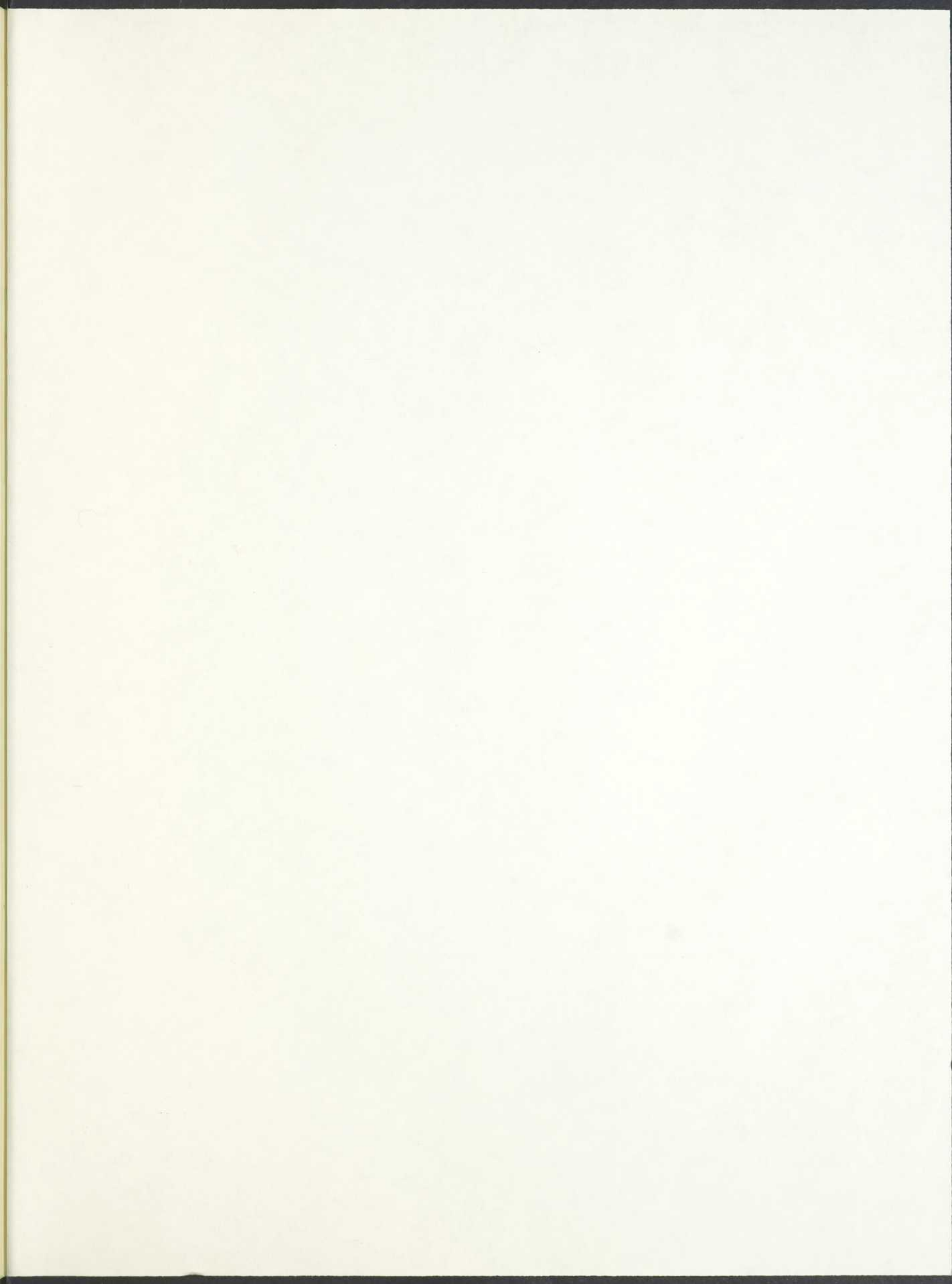
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MCGILL UNIVERSITY PUBLICATIONS

SERIES XIII (ART & ARCHITECTURE)

No. 35

THE CHURCH OF
STE. JEANNE FRANCOISE DE CHANTAL
ON THE ILE PERROT
QUEBEC

By

RAMSAY TRAQUAIR, M.A., F.R.I.B.A.

and

E. R. ADAIR, M.A.

*The excerpts from the parish and other records were made by
Eleanor S. Wardleworth, M.A.*

SALLE GAGNON

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MONTREAL, 1932

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THE CHURCH FROM THE NORTH-WEST

Photo R.C.B.

The Church of Ste. Jeanne Françoise de Chantal on the Ile Perrot, Quebec

By Ramsay Traquair, M.A., F.R.I.B.A., and E. R. Adair, M.A.

The excerpts from the parish and other records were made by Eleanor S. Wardleworth, M.A.

ON October 29, 1672, François-Marie Perrot, Governor of Montreal, obtained a grant of the island that was thenceforth to bear his name.¹ He had no intention of carrying out the normal duties of a seigneur; instead his mind was concentrated on the profits of the fur trade, on the possibility of establishing on this island a post from which his men might intercept the Indians as they came down the Ottawa, and so buy up the best furs before they could reach the hands of the merchants of Montreal. The scheme was a good one and might have succeeded had not Perrot fallen foul of Frontenac, the Governor of New France. Perrot was summoned to Quebec and in November, 1674, was sent home to Paris. Meanwhile his agent on the island, Antoine de la Fresnaye, Sieur de Brucy, had been imprisoned and his trade goods seized.² The King of France, however, decided that Perrot had already been punished sufficiently for such faults as he had committed and restored him to his position as Governor of Montreal.³ Brucy had already been

released and on January 1, 1676, was given by Perrot a grant of the western end of the island as an arrière-fief.⁴ Here the fur trading business continued to be actively pursued until 1684 when Perrot was finally deprived of the governorship of Montreal. Before his departure Perrot sold his seigneurie to his fur trading rival, the famous Charles Lemoyne, and on Lemoyne's death it passed again by purchase into the hands of Joseph Trotier Desruisseaux.⁵

Even under Brucy a little grain had been grown on the island and when Gédéon de Catalogne surveyed it in 1712, he reported that, though the seigneur was the only inhabitant, he had already built a fine mill and that the land produced good wheat, while game and fish were very abundant all the year round.⁶ This stone windmill is still to be seen on the extreme eastern end of Ile Perrot and as a notarial document of 1785 assures us that the seigneurial house had been built quite close at

(1) Régistre d'Intendance, No. 1, fo. 5, in the Quebec archives.

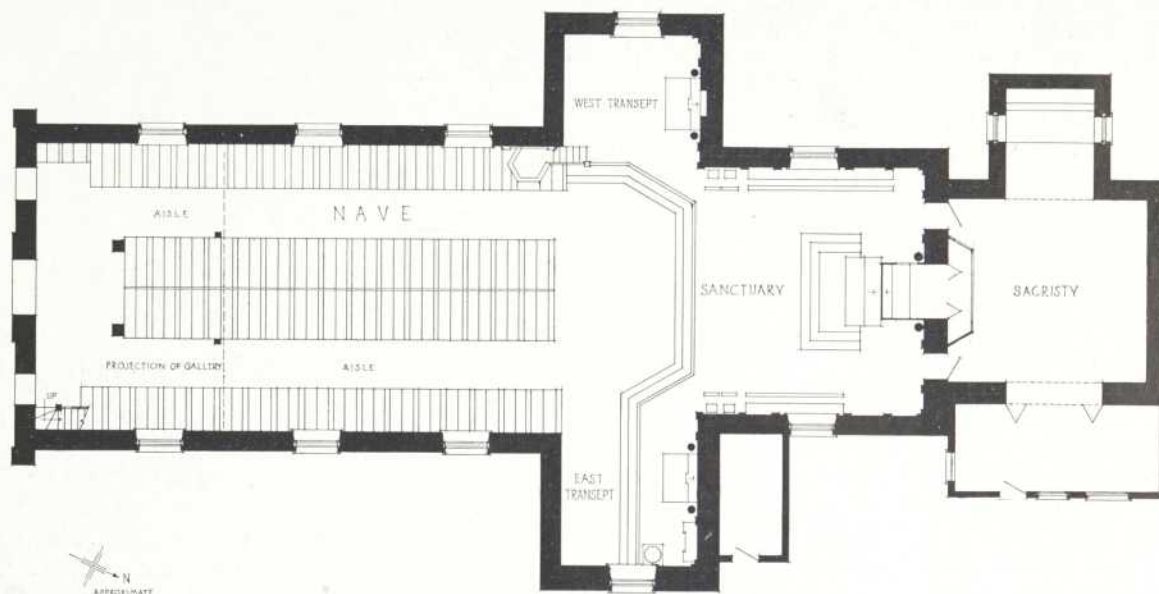
(2) Jugements et Délibérations de la Conseil Souverain. Vol. 1, p. 811. June 19, 1674.

(3) Transcript in Dominion Archives: Archives des Colonies B/6, pp. 69-71. Letter to Frontenac probably from Colbert, May 13, 1675.

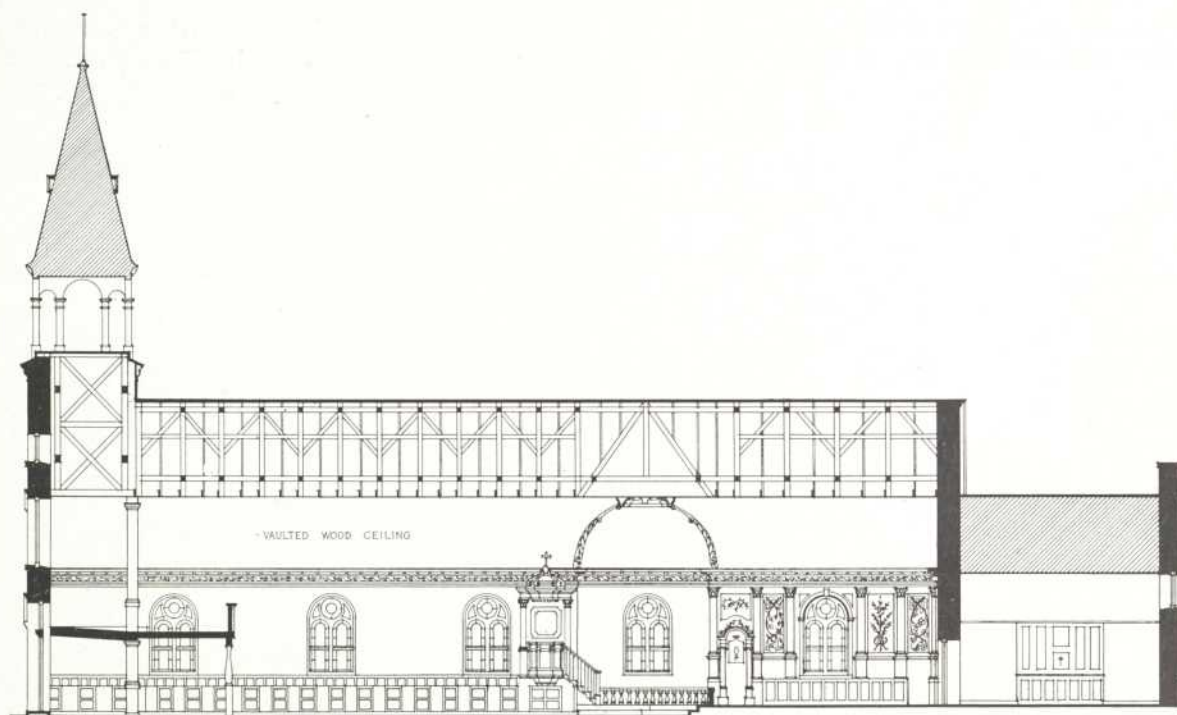
(4) Inventaire des Commissions en Fief et Seigneurie . . . conservés aux archives de la Province de Québec. Vol. 2, p. 217.

(5) Ibid. Vol. 2, p. 213. March 2, 1684, April 27, 1703.

(6) W. B. Munro: Documents relating to the Seigneurial Tenure in Canada, p. 107.



PLAN



0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80
SCALE OF FEET

LONGITUDINAL SECTION
CHURCH OF STE. JEANNE, ILE PERROT P.2.

R.C.B., 1927

hand,¹ it is not improbable that at least the outer walls of this house survive in the form of a large stone barn which stands a little to the west of the windmill.

Such advantages as Gédéon de Catalogne described could not long go unnoticed and by 1740 there were enough settlers upon the island to justify the building of a church. Hitherto the island had been divided between the parishes of Pointe Claire and Ste Anne de Bout de l'Ile,² but in that year the seigneuresse Dame Françoise Cullerier³ had given three arpents of land for a church and 60 arpents for the support of the priest whom it was hoped that the Bishop would send them. A church and a presbytery must have been built almost at once, for when, in 1743, the original grant by Dame Cullerier was given a legal basis it was stated that these two buildings had already been erected.⁴ But this first church was situated down at the Pointe-au-Moulin, near the seigneurie and the mill, and when the Bishop of Québec came to the island to investigate the whole matter, he decided that it was too small and too remote for the general convenience of the inhabitants; he ordered, therefore, that the site of the church should be changed. This involved an exchange of land with the seigneur, which was carried out in January, 1753, and consequently preparations had to be made for building another church on this new site.⁵ It is improbable that the first church was ever consecrated and it is certain that no curé was at this time appointed to Ile Perrot. By 1767, according to a petition to the Bishop from the seigneur, Jean-Baptiste Leduc, only the four walls of the earlier church were standing and there is no mention made of the presbytery at all; of course neither building may ever have been really completed. And of the proposed new church some two and three quarter miles to the west of the old site, Leduc could give no very promising report. The troubles through which New France had recently passed, the enrollment of her men for service against the English, had left them neither time nor wealth to build a church. All that they had succeeded in doing by 1767 was to cart the stone to the appointed spot. Therefore the inhabitants still had to go across the water or, in winter, across the ice, to obtain the benefits of a religious service and Leduc petitioned the Bishop that they might have a curé of their own, or at least a priest to say mass every two weeks; if this could be granted, a comfortable house, thirty feet square, would be provided for the services, and as a lodging for the curé until the church and presbytery should be completed; moreover the inhabitants would supply as much as they could in the way of wheat and wood and money to

provide for the curé's subsistence.⁶ The Bishop, however, refused to accept these offers, for he felt that the Ile Perrot was still too poor to support a resident priest; instead he placed the island in the charge of the curé of Soulanges, and from 1767 to 1787 M. Denaut, the curé of that parish, gave as generously of his time and strength as the needs of his own parish would permit.⁷

Especially did he encourage the inhabitants in the building of their church. As early as 1774 he is writing to Mgr. Briand, the Bishop of Québec, that he has told them of the satisfaction which the Bishop feels at the zeal they are showing in its construction.⁸ In 1786 it was finally completed and consecrated,⁹ and the earliest surviving register of births, deaths and marriages dates from that year. It is probable that the first *livre des comptes* was started in that year also or even earlier, but it was carried away to Soulanges by M. Brunet when he went as curé from Ile Perrot to the neighbouring parish¹⁰ and has since disappeared. Therefore the earliest *livre des comptes* that the parish possesses dates only from 1790, and in consequence we have no knowledge of the cost of the building or of the names of those who carried out its construction.

The walls of the church today are those of the building of 1786. Additions were made to the sacristy in 1848.¹¹ On the evening of January 19, 1852, this sacristy was destroyed by fire¹² but it must have been repaired almost at once for a meeting of marguilliers was held there in August of the same year. Taught, however, by their disastrous experience, for the presbytery had also been burnt early in March of 1852, the marguilliers in 1854 insured the church for 1000 louis, the sacristy for 150 louis and the presbytery for 400 louis.¹³

In 1842, 3000 livres were spent on repairs to the church and steeple.¹⁴ This steeple was struck by lightning on November 6, 1863,¹⁵ and by this time it appears that the roof was in need of considerable repair. Therefore, on December 20 of the same year, it was agreed that a skilled workman should be consulted as to the best method of effecting this repair and of restoring or rebuilding the steeple.¹⁶ On May 15, 1864, the marguilliers were authorised to enter into a contract for the work, which Bishop Bourget described shortly afterwards as very urgent.¹⁷ Though they refused a suggestion of the contractor, Mr. Chrysostome Peladeau, a native of the parish, that he should put on a whole new shingle roof, they were prepared to have a new steeple if the additional cost were not too great. The work was probably completed during the next year, for

(1) Greffe de Joseph Gabrion, in the Archives of the Court House, Montreal. Aug. 1, 1785.

(2) See the "Procès Verbaux . . . dressés dans chacune des paroisses de la Nouvelle France" of 1721, published in the *Archives de Québec* for 1921-2, pp. 302-4; *Edits, Ordonnances Royaux, etc.* (1854). Vol. 1, p. 459.

(3) She was the widow of Joseph Trotier Desruisseaux.

(4) Greffe de Danré de Blanzay, in the Archives of the Court House, Montreal, May 3, 1743.

(5) Ibid. January 9, 1753.

(6) Leduc's petition to the Bishop of Québec quoted in T. N. LeMoine: *Ile Perrot et les Environs*, published in *L'Opinion Publique*. Aug. 17, 1882, p. 386.

(7) Ibid. pp. 386, 388.

(8) Ibid. p. 388.

(9) Ibid. in *L'Opinion Publique* for Sept. 7, 1882, p. 422.

(10) *Livres des Comptes*, vol. 1, p. 3. Order of the Bishop of Québec. June 21, 1791.

(11) *Livres des Comptes*. Vol. 1, p. 183.

(12) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 224.

(13) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 235. The louis here is used as the equivalent of the English pound.

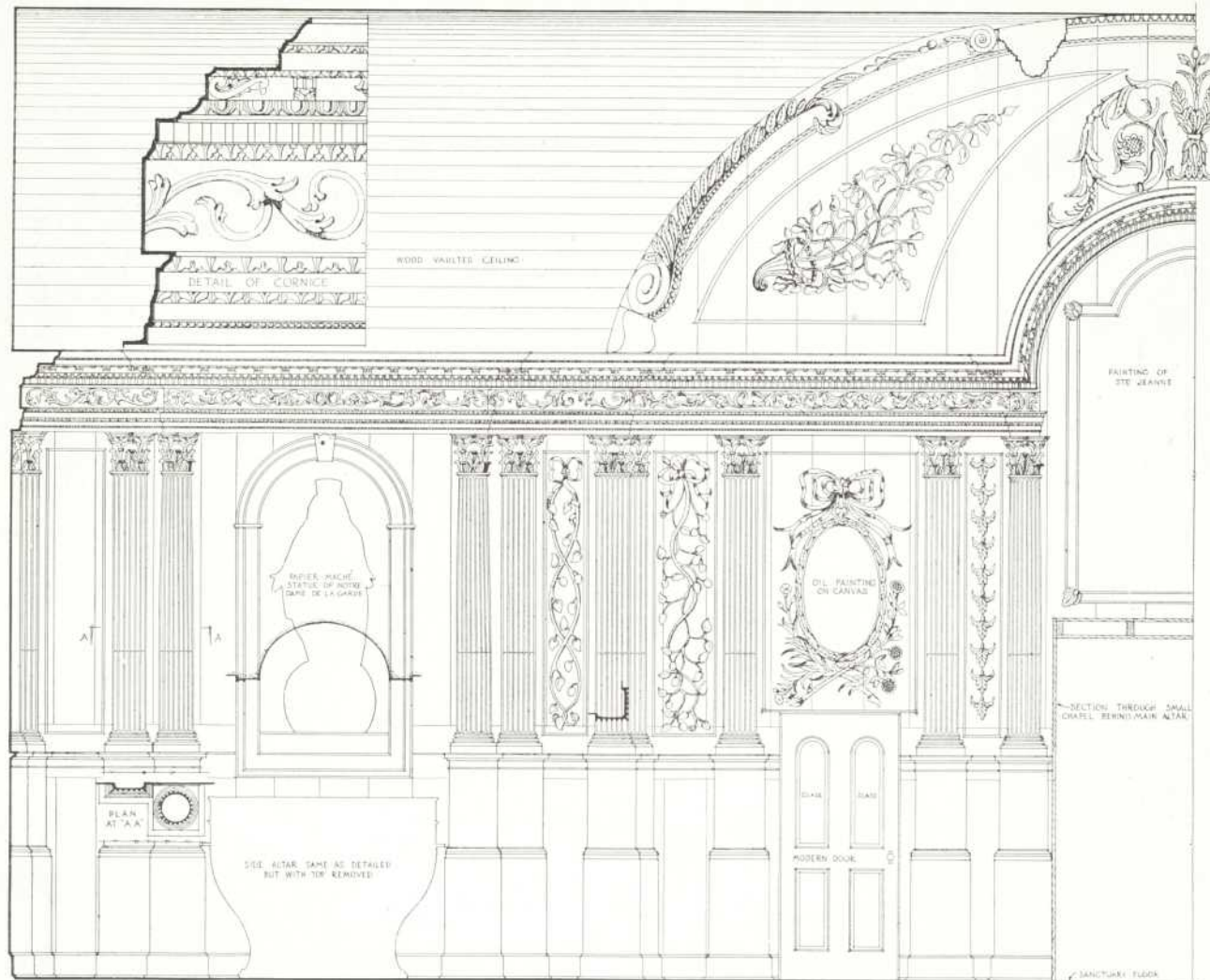
(14) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 164.

(15) T. N. LeMoine in *L'Opinion Publique*. Oct. 12, 1882, p. 489.

(16) *Livres des Comptes*. Vol. 1, p. 273.

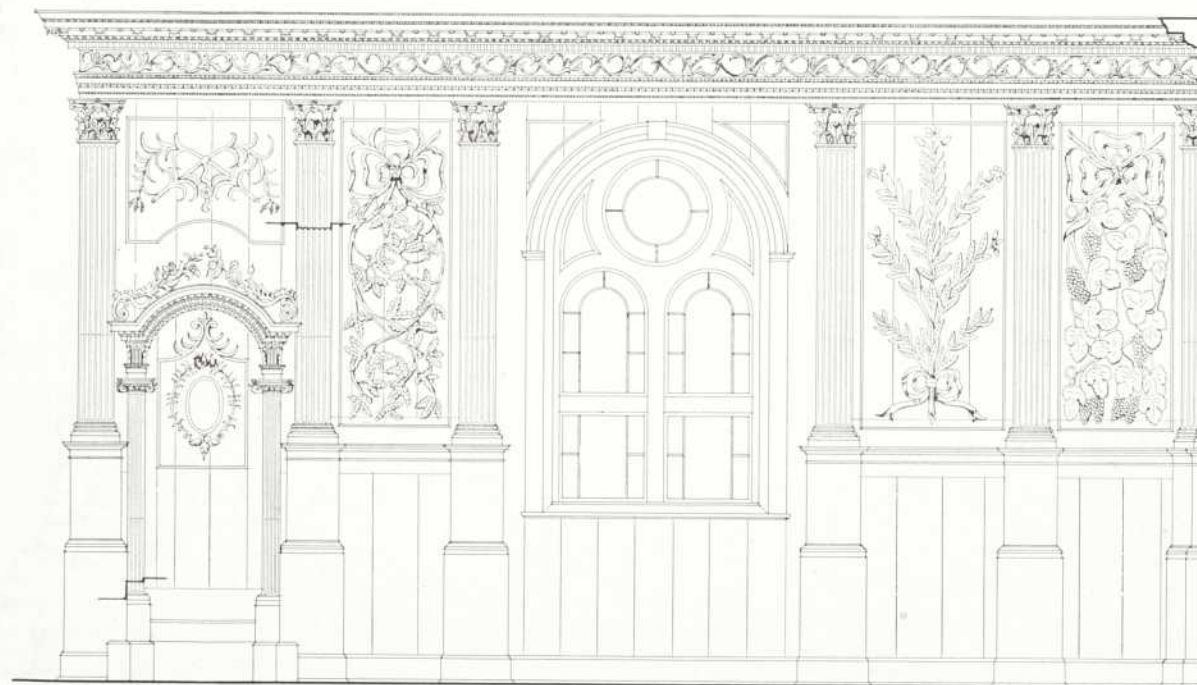
(17) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 279.

SCALE FOR CORNICE DETAIL



SCALE OF FEET

DETAIL OF WOOD CARVING ON SANCTUARY WALL
CHURCH OF STE. JEANNE ILE PERROT P2



DETAIL OF WOOD CARVING ON SANCTUARY WALL
CHURCH OF STE JEANNE
ILE PERROT P2



PANELS FROM THE RETABLE

Photo R.C.B.



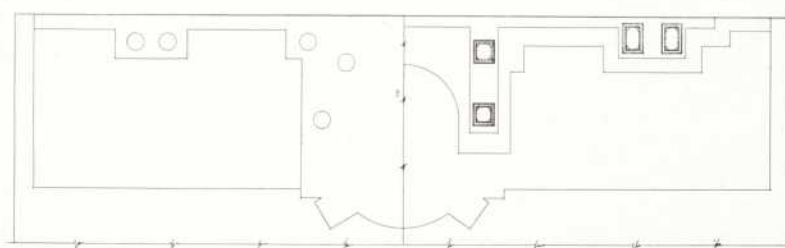
PART OF THE SOUTH WALL OF THE SANCTUARY

Photo R.T.



FRONT ELEVATION

SIDE ELEVATION



PLAN

TAKEN ABOVE AND BELOW
CORNICE

SCALE OF FEET



MAIN ALTAR FROM THE
CHURCH OF STE. JEANNE
ILE PERROT P2.

R.C.B. '27
G.E.A. '33

by the end of 1866 the contractors had been paid 2970 livres.¹

As to the interior of the church when it was first built, we have no knowledge but, as Ile Perrot was then a very poor parish, its walls were probably left bare. The first expense of which we have record was in 1790 when 222 livres were paid for the large painting of Ste. Jeanne that still hangs over the high altar;² it is said to have been brought from

ouvrages en sculpture, en menuiserie et peinture," the greater part probably to Joseph Turcaut who is described as "sculpteur;" in addition nearly 700 livres were laid out in materials.⁷ Though there is no specific statement to that effect the work that was done during these years must have been the carved retable, the cornice round the church and the three altars, namely the high altar and the two side altars in the chapels of Notre Dame de la



THE HIGH ALTAR

Photo R.T.

France by the Abbe Desjardins-Desplauts.³ In the following year candlesticks were bought at a cost of 300 livres⁴ and in his visitation of 1805 the Bishop ordered that an altar stone be procured; this was done in 1808.⁵ In 1809 a silver lamp to hang before the high altar was purchased for the very considerable sum of 1300 livres and, in 1812, 366 livres were paid for new pews;⁶ in this year, also, the complete redecoration of the church was commenced. In the eight years that followed, from 1812 to 1819, 11,162 livres 16 sols were paid "pour

Garde and of the Sacré Coeur. All this work is typical of the early years of the XIX century and there are no large payments for such carved work at any other period.

For ten years after this decoration of the sanctuary the parish could do little beyond current repairs; then, in 1828, the work was resumed. The whole interior vault was reconstructed and was ornamented with the fine carved decoration that can still be seen over the sanctuary and the crossing. This was done at the total cost of 5479 livres 45 sols, a sum which included the purchase of the two painted medallions which are still to be seen one on each side of the high altar.⁸

(1) Ibid. Vol. 1, pp. 289, 290, 302, 327.

(2) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 2.

(3) T. N. LeMoine in *L'Opinion Publique*. Sept. 7, 1882, p. 422.

(4) *Livres des Comptes*. Vol. 1, p. 5.

(5) Ibid. Vol. 1, pp. 32, 38.

(6) Ibid. Vol. 1, pp. 40, 47.

(7) Ibid. Vol. 1, pp. 47, 49, 53, 55, 57, 62, 64.

(8) Ibid. Vol. 1, pp. 93, 99.

One of the most interesting pieces of carving in the church is the font, made out of two pieces of wood and provided with a carved cover hinged on to the top. The accounts give us no direct evidence as to its date, but we know that the Bishop ordered on his visit in June, 1822, that a font should be procured.¹ This order was renewed in May, 1827,² and in November, 1830, the curé obtained a special letter sanctioning the placing of "le futur baptistaire"³ in the chapel on the right hand side of the church instead of near the door as had previously been suggested. Though other matters connected with the ceremony of baptism are mentioned in the Bishop's order of June, 1833,⁴ nothing is said in regard to the font and therefore it may not unfairly be assumed that it had been procured shortly after 1830. It is probably the finest carved wooden font in the whole province.

In 1827 the Bishop had ordered that a small door be pierced in the north wall of the church;⁵ in June, 1839, he elaborated the order by suggesting that the door might be made in the wall of either of the side chapels and that from it a covered way should be built to allow of communication between the body of the church and the sacristy without passing through the sanctuary.⁶ There is no evidence that this was ever done. In this same order of 1839 the Bishop recommended that the parish should take suitable measures for the proper repair of the interior of the church. For some time the state of the church funds did not permit much to be done, though in 1845 Marcel Lortie was paid 58 livres for repairing the floor.⁷ But the Bishop was by no means satisfied with this and on his visit in 1846 he repeated his recommendation that various repairs should be made.⁸ In consequence, on March 5, 1848, the marguilliers were authorised to conclude a contract with M. François-Xavier Poitras for a thorough-going renovation of the interior of the church at a cost of 15,700 livres.⁹ As to what exactly M. Poitras did we have no knowledge but it was probably in the nature of a general repair of the woodwork. He was not a sculptor and there is no reason to suppose that he interfered with the carved work of the church, for it was all too recent to be in need of repair.

Until the end of the century little more appears to have been done to the church, certainly no large works were carried out, but in 1901 the old west front was taken down and the present front built. At the same time a certain amount of internal woodwork was executed, the existing tracery was put into the windows and the church was slightly lengthened. Subsequently a heating chamber has been placed under the sacristy and the existing "rustic" chimney placed on the end gable.

During the hundred and fifty years of its existence the church has steadily been adding to its store of ornaments and vessels necessary for the services. In 1797, 100 livres were paid for a holy water stoup and brush;¹⁰ in 1806 the old chalice, valued at 96 livres, was exchanged for a new one, the difference in cost—400 livres—being paid in cash;¹¹ this is probably the chalice that the church still possesses. Three years later an Easter candlestick, probably of carved wood, was bought at the cost of 60 livres, and 200 livres were expended on a silver ciborium, in addition to the silver sanctuary lamp already mentioned.¹² In 1820 a silver censer was procured for 600 livres;¹³ the candlestick, the ciborium and the lamp are still to be seen in the church. In February, 1844, a new bell weighing 479 pounds was obtained from the St. Mary's Foundry Co. of Montreal for £39-18s-4d.¹⁴ This has since been replaced.

It was, however, on June 20, 1849, that the great moment came in the religious history of the church, for on that day, in the presence of the Bishops of Montreal, Martyropolis and Bytown, a statue of the Virgin Mary was set up in the left hand chapel under the title of Notre Dame de la Garde.¹⁵ This papier-maché statue was brought from Notre Dame de Bon-Secours in Montreal where it had stood for nearly eighteen years, and it was installed at Ile Perrot as the patron of those who sailed down through the rapids of the St. Lawrence. Still, every year as evening falls on the anniversary of its installation, it is carried in solemn procession through the village while, as the Bishop exhorted them to do over eighty years ago, the faithful assemble from the country round about to enjoy a modest "fête champêtre."

(1) Livres des Comptes. Vol. 1, p. 65.

(2) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 81.

(3) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 65.

(4) Ibid. Vol. 1, pp. 105-6.

(5) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 81.

(6) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 132.

(7) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 188.

(8) Ibid. Vol. 1, pp. 153, 179.

(9) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 179.

(10) Livres des Comptes. Vol. 1, p. 16.

(11) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 35.

(12) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 40.

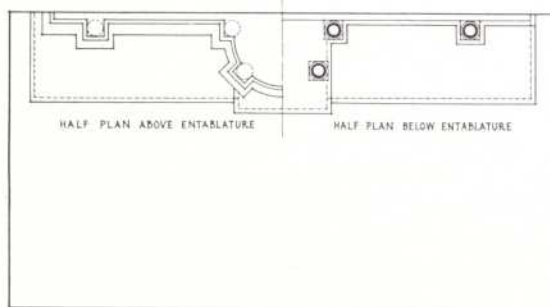
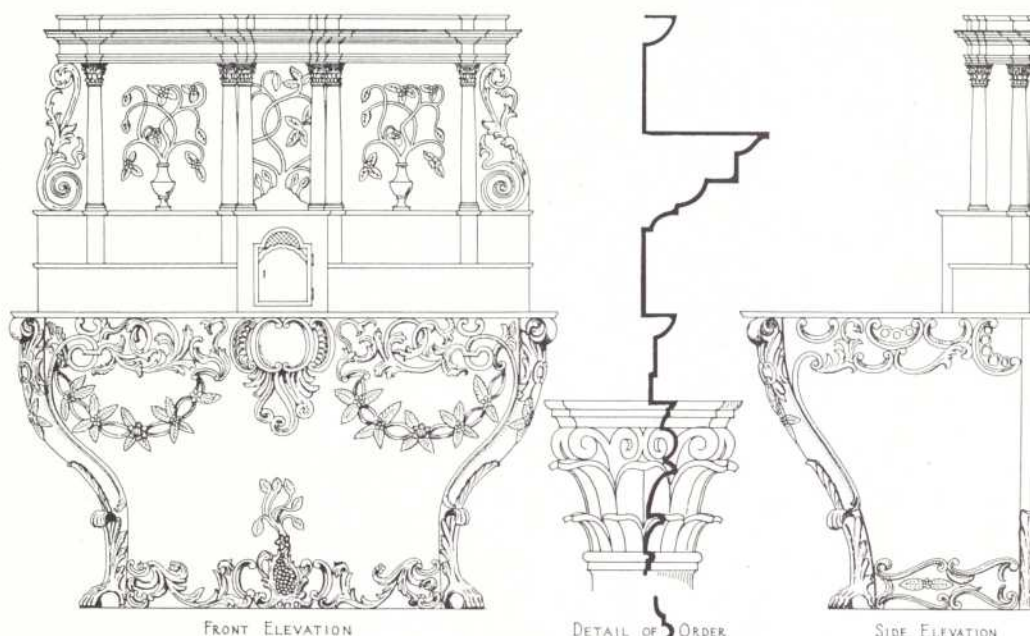
(13) Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 68.

(14) Extra papers in possession of the curé of Ile Perrot.

(15) Livres des Comptes. Vol. 1, p. 196.

SCALE OF FEET

SCALE OF INCHES FOR DETAILS



PLAN

WOODEN ALTAR FROM THE
CHURCH OF STE. JEANNE
ILE PERROT

BIBLIOTHEQUE
DE
MONTREAL

R.C.S.'27

THE BUILDINGS

The church is cruciform in plan with transeptal side chapels and a square ended sanctuary directed to the north-west. It is a small church, only 96 feet from the door to the back of the sanctuary, and the plan form is one of common in the old churches of the province. At the south end is a single gallery, resting on four columns, in which is a small organ. The proportions of the church are low and broad and the height of the vault does not permit of an upper gallery.

The walls are of stone rubble, about 2 feet 4 inches thick, rendered in cement on the outside; the windows are round arched with 6-inch dressed stone margins and sills, and are filled with simple wooden tracery. The rendering of the walls is first mentioned in the accounts in 1838¹ but has evidently been repeated many times since then; the wooden tracery corresponds in style with that in the present front and must have been put in when that was built in 1901.

This front is in a kind of "romanesque" architecture only too common in modern Quebec churches. On it are two date stones, one of 1753, the date when the site was acquired, the other of 1901 when the new front was built. The internal wooden cornice shows a break at 8 feet 4 inches from the end wall and this seems to mark a lengthening of the church by this amount when the new front was built. The spire is of the same date as the front. It contains three bells by G. & L. Bollee, of Orleans, France, of which the largest bears the date 1925.

The sacristy is at the back of the sanctuary and enters from it by two doors at the sides of the high altar. In 1848 an addition was made on the west side to accommodate an altar so that the room could be used as a chapel on week days in the winter months. This work was carried out by François Poitras at a cost of £22-10s.-0d.² An extension in wood framing has recently been added on the east side and a large opening cut in the wall of the sacristy, so as to give even larger space.

Except for the evident additions to the sacristy and the new front, the walls are those of the church consecrated in 1786, though the roof, of tinplate painted grey, has, of course, been renewed.

In the interior the walls are in plain plaster, crowned by a carved wood entablature, from which springs the elliptical wood vault. The carved retable, the work of Joseph Turcault between 1812 and 1819, covers the walls of the sanctuary and of the side chapels and is one of the finest retables of its date in the province.

The wall is divided into panels by corinthian pilasters on a high dado; in the centre of the sanctuary, behind the high altar, the entablature breaks

forward over two detached columns between which the cornice rises in a semicircular arch with a large pierced cresting. Under this arch is the picture of Ste. Jeanne, purchased in 1790. In the spandrels of the vault on each side are cornucopiae from which issue tangled scrolls of branches and leaves.

On each side of the arch, the design is symmetrical, both in arrangement and in carving. Above the doors to the sacristy are oval paintings framed in branches of roses and carnations and suspended from large ribbon knots; in the narrow angle panels of the end wall are scrolls of that curious but very effective stem and leaf work which seems to be characteristic of the Montreal carvers in the early XIX century. The panels of the side walls have low relief carvings of oak branches, lilies and vines, all planted on to the boarded background in the manner of the Quebec carvers. In the first panel of the sanctuary on each side are crested canopies for seats, resting on pilasters. The side altars are flanked by columns above which the entablature breaks forward.

The work is designed and executed with a great deal of spirit and individuality. It shows a number of points which seem to be characteristic of the Montreal School of Carving in the beginning of the XIX century. The cornucopiae in the vault spandrels are used in a similar position in Sault-au-Récollet (1816) and in St. Jean on the Island of Orleans.³ The side seats with their crested canopies are found at St. Matthias (1821) and at Pointe-aux-Trembles (1822), the high pierced crestings at St. Matthias, Pointe-aux-Trembles and L'Acadie, whilst the peculiar loose scroll work is used in all these churches. The very similar work at Beaumont, near Quebec, suggests very strongly that the sculptor, Etienne Bercier, was trained in Montreal.

The three altars are complete and typical Quevillon and are in their original condition, excepting for some trifling additions to the top of the high altar. Judging from the number of altars of this pattern found in churches throughout the province and particularly in the district around Montreal, it seems highly probable that Quevillon and his associates made them in quantity. M. Turcault probably bought tombeaux and tabernacles direct from St. Vincent-de-Paul, where Quevillon had his establishment. They should be compared with the altars at Sault-au-Récollet which are known to be by Quevillon.

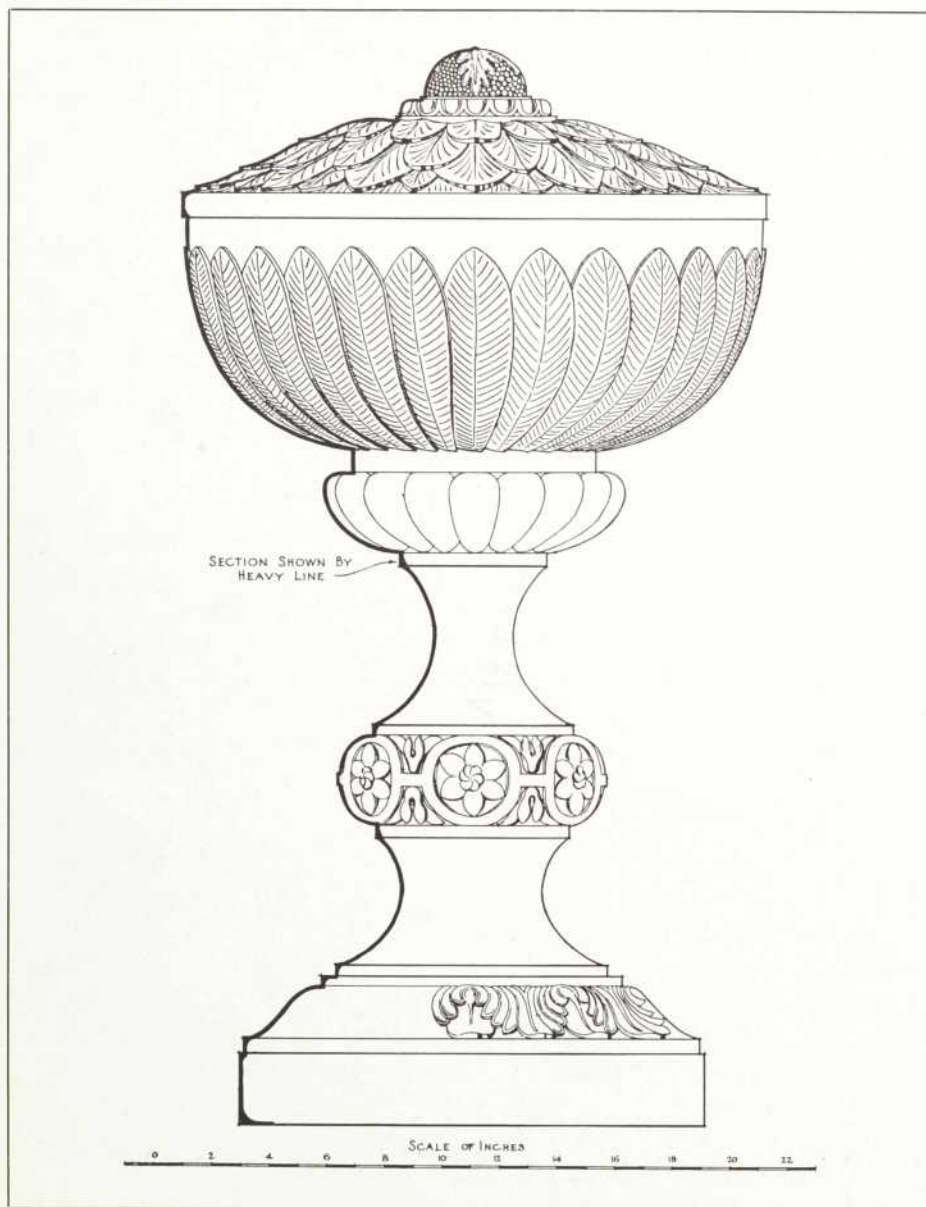
The angle scrolls and hexagonal panel of the crossing were put up in 1828, when the vaulting was renewed. The floral ornaments on the frame of this panel are particularly well designed and carved.

Behind the high altar and facing into the sacristy is an old altar tombeau of simple, almost crude design. Local tradition has it that this is the

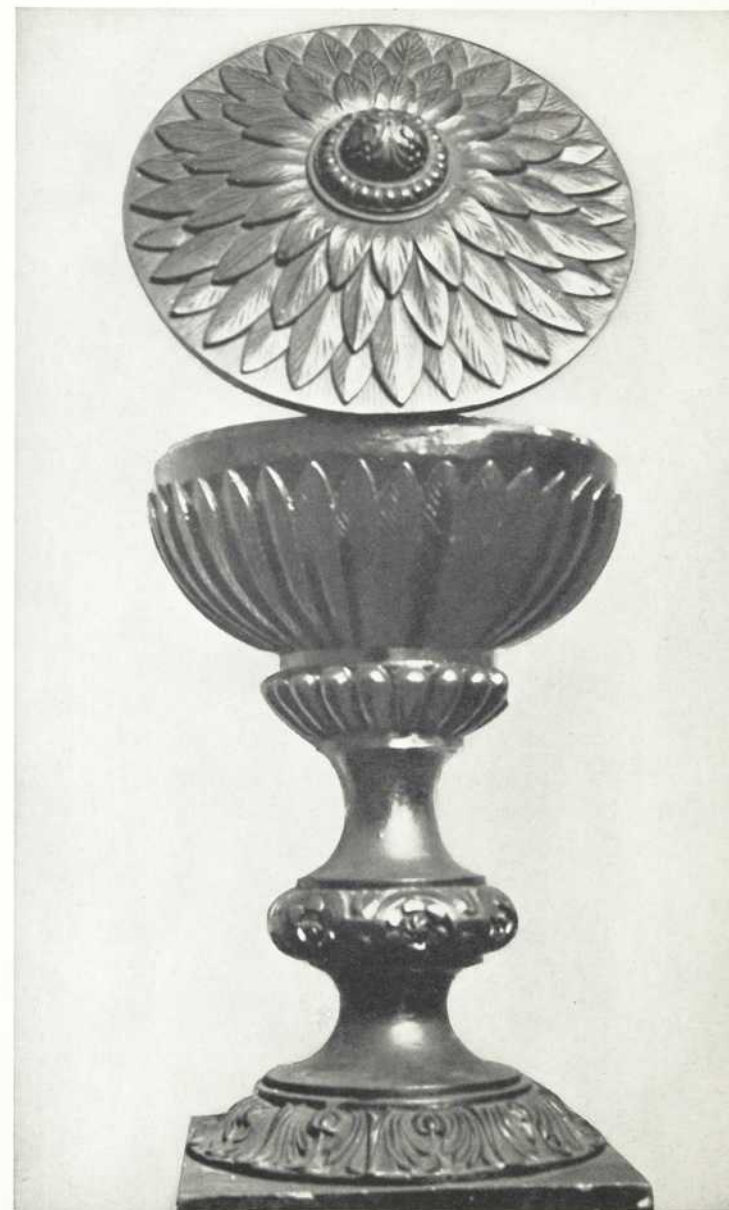
(1) *Livres des Comptes*. Vol. I, p. 145.

(2) *Ibid.* Vol. I, p. 183. See also original contract in the possession of the curé.

(3) St. Jean is the work of Bazil David, a Montreal sculptor.



DETAIL OF WOODEN FONT



THE FONT

Photo R.C.B.

original altar of the church and there is nothing in its style which makes this impossible. Indeed, as the accounts give no evidence at all that an extra altar was ever acquired, it is very probable that this altar came to the church some time during the four years between 1786 and 1790 for which the accounts no longer exist.¹

The pulpit is not mentioned in the accounts. Judging by its style, it was erected some time about the middle of the XIX century. It shows the last stage of the traditional style, when it was becoming rather worn out.

In the sacristy is a good small table with a carved front and slender straight legs, and two turned candlesticks of pleasant proportions. The table is probably early XIXth century, while the candlesticks look earlier and may belong to the first furnishings of the church.

Alongside of the church lies the presbytery with a pleasant terraced garden running down to the river. By 1839 the first presbytery to stand there was in need of such extensive repairs that the bishop suggested that it might even be completely rebuilt.²

(1) This altar is illustrated in P. G. Roy, *Les Vieilles Eglises de la Province de Quebec*, p. 266.

(2) *Livres des Comptes*. Vol. I, p. 132.

It seems doubtful if much was ever done, though a meeting of the marguilliers was held to deal with the matter. In consequence, by 1845 it was stated that it was hardly possible for a priest to live there at all, and on March 8th, 1852, the presbytery was burnt down.³ Rebuilding was at once undertaken and a bargain was made with Jacques Goyette, "cultivateur, maçon et entrepreneur de la paroisse de St. Clement de Beauharnois," to carry out the job.⁴ The building was probably completed within the year and in 1854 it was insured for 400 louis.⁵ Since then there have been comparatively few changes and the presbytery today is substantially the same as it was when it was built seventy years ago.

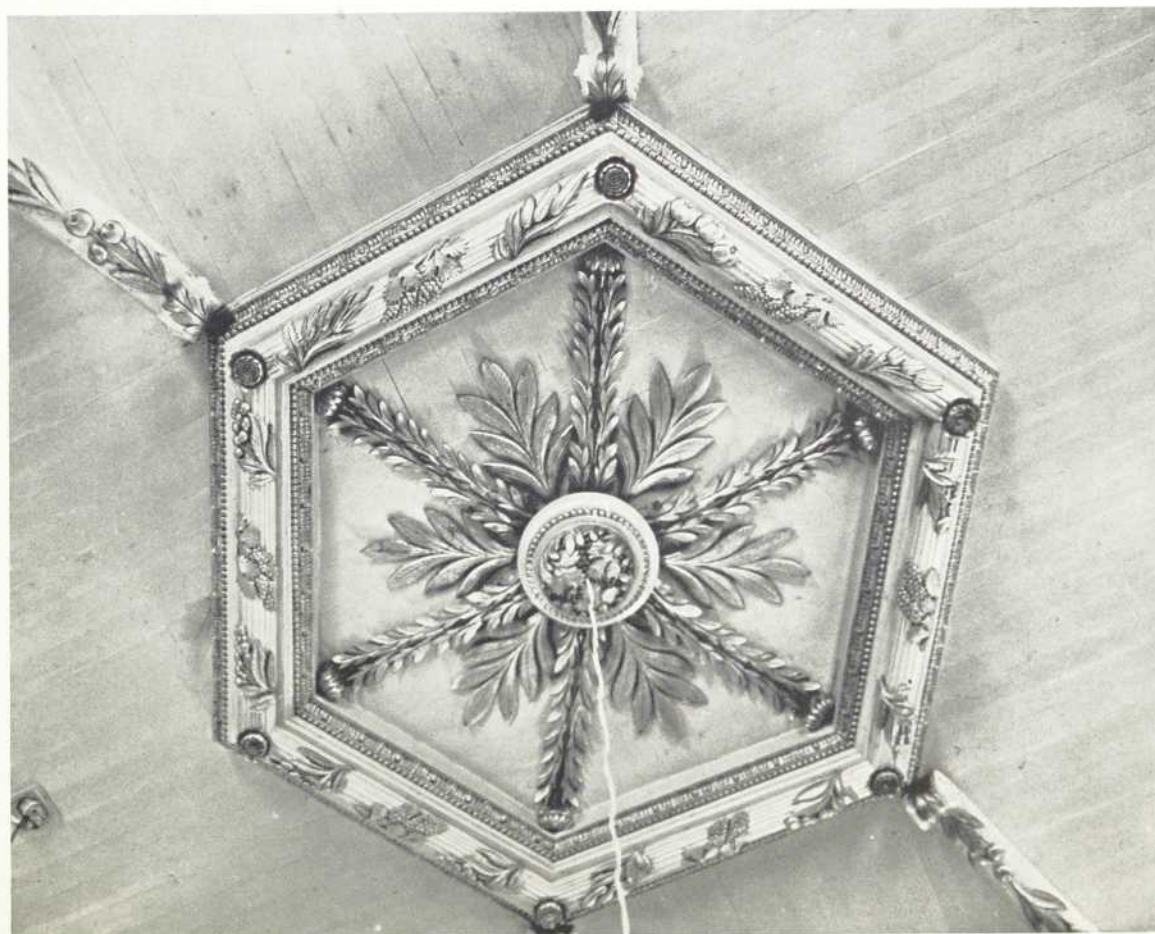
Ste. Jeanne de l'Ile Perrot has lain off the beaten track away from the main line of Canadian prosperity and Canadian development and in this it has found its salvation; it remains today an excellent example of the French Canadian village church, where a fortunate lack of wealth has preserved those simple beauties which the patient care and self-sacrifice of its parishioners have created.

(3) T. N. LeMoine in *L'Opinion Publique* for October 5, 1882, p. 472.

(4) Extra papers in possession of the Curé of Ile Perrot.

(5) *Livres des Comptes*. Vol. I, p. 235.

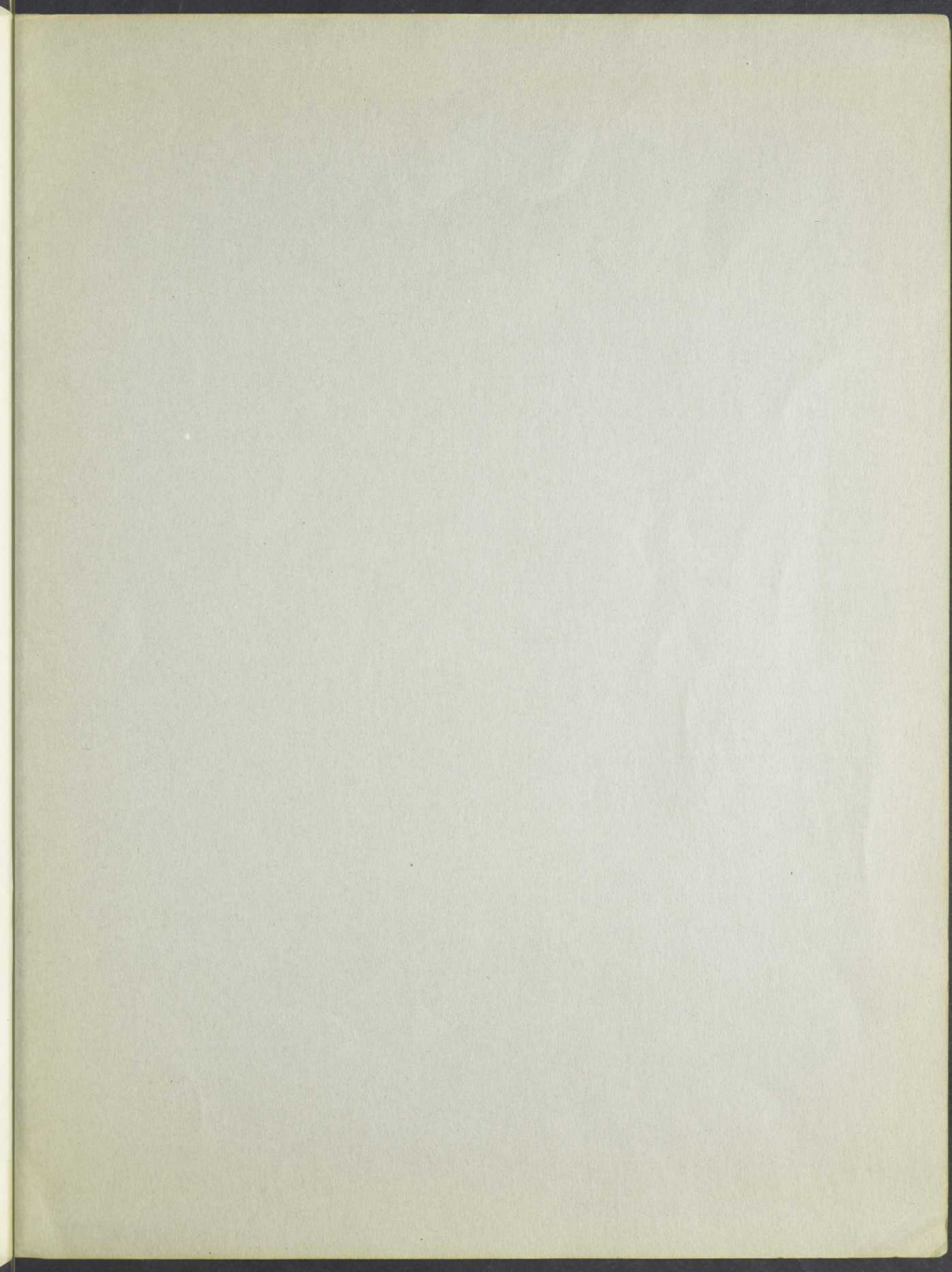
NOTE—The measured drawings were made by Mr. R. C. Betts for the travelling scholarship of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects, in 1927.

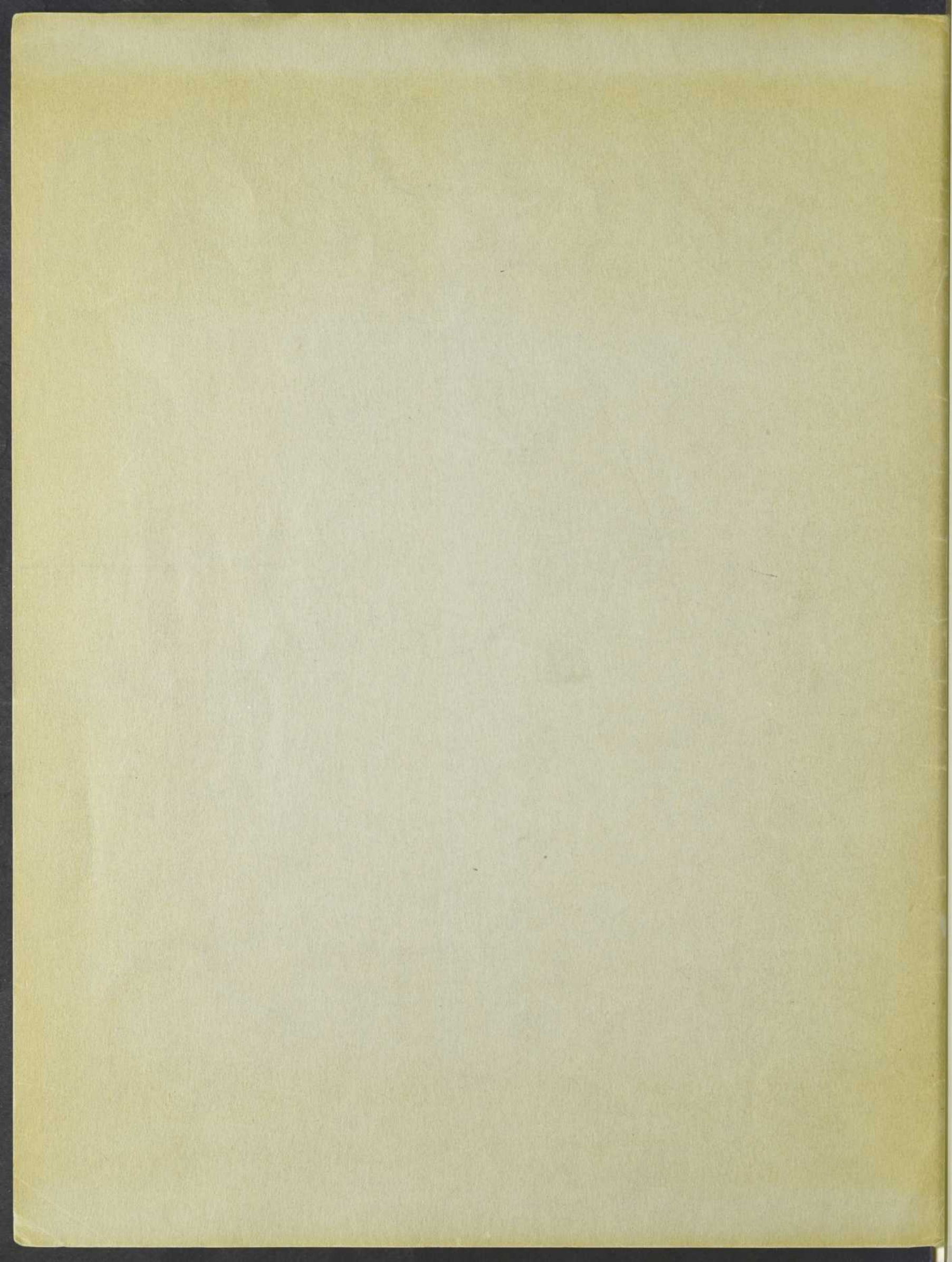


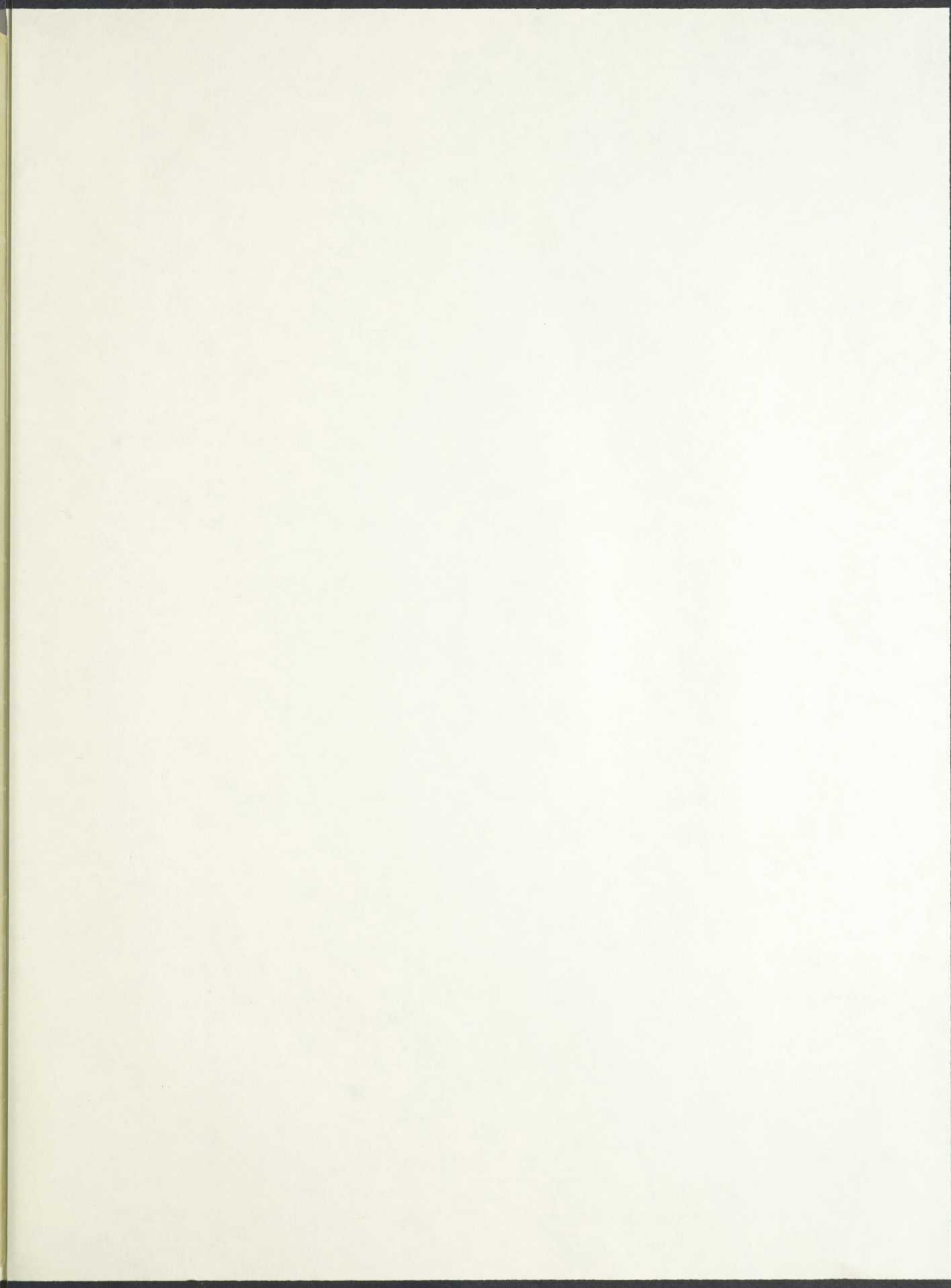
CENTRAL PANEL OF THE VAULT

Photo R.T.

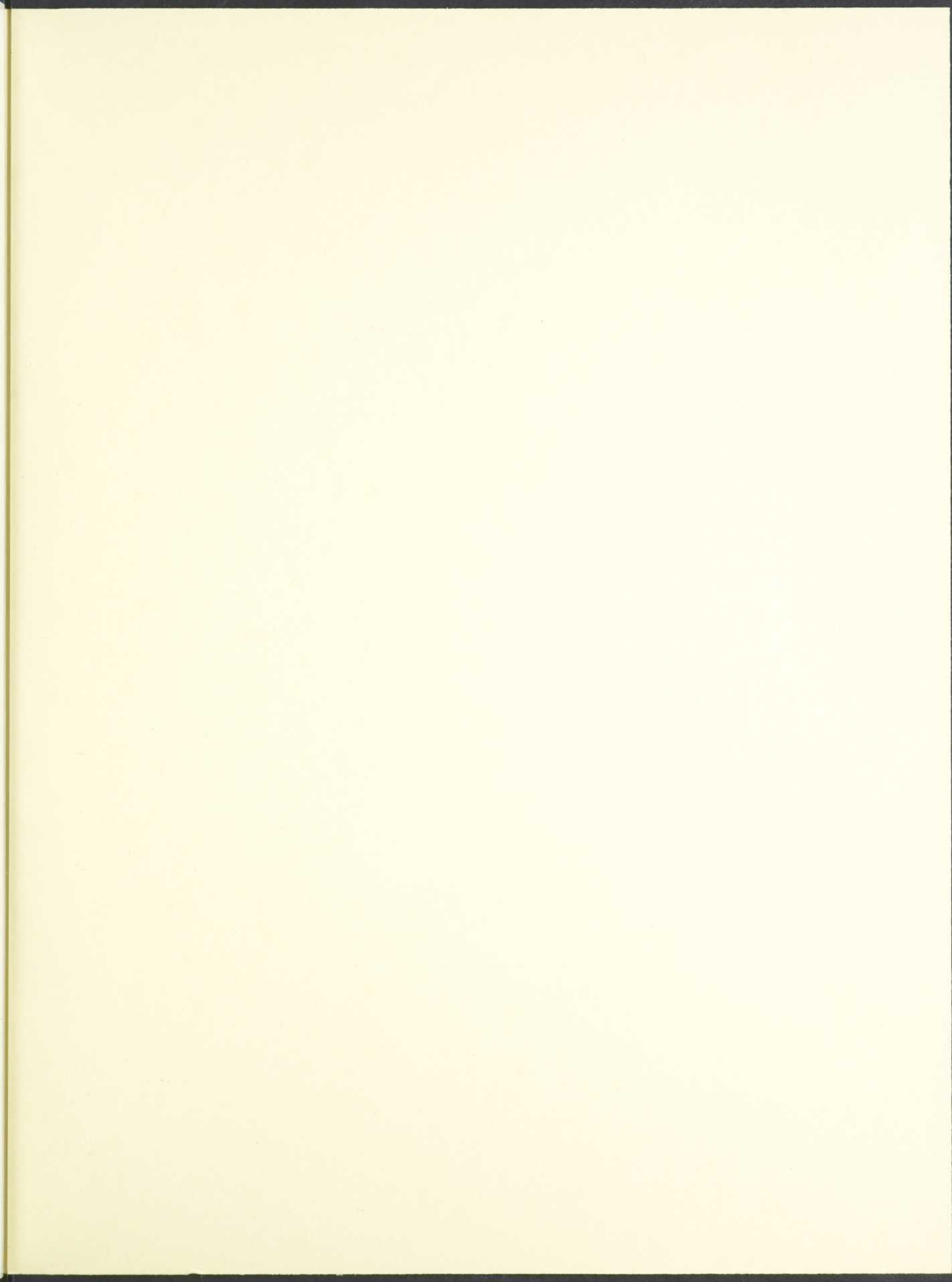
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