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THE CHAPEL OF MGR. OLIVIER BRIAND

IN

THE SEMINARY OF QUEBEC

—————

No 26

THE PRESBYTERY OF THE BASILICA AT QUEBEC

BY

RAMSAY TRAQUAIR, M.A. (HON.) F.R.I.B.A.

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MGR. OLIVIER BRIAND

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The SEMINARY *of* QUEBEC



By RAMSAY TRAQUAIR
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THE ALTAR AND RETABLE

Photo, Edwards, Quebec

The Chapel of Mgr. Olivier Briand In the Seminary of Quebec

By RAMSAY TRAQUAIR, M.A. (HON.), F.R.I.B.A.

IN THE year 1785 two rooms in the Seminary of Quebec were being refitted as study and bedroom for Mgr. Olivier Briand, the aged Bishop of Quebec. The accounts for the work are preserved in the papers of M. l'abbé Henri Gravé who was secretary and executor to the Bishop. In an account of the 15th February, 1785, we find:

A l'Etourneau, serrurier, pour la	
chambre neuve.....	367 li 7
A Romain, Vitrier, pour idem.....	90 18
A Jourdain, maçon, pour idem.....	108
A Emond, menuisier, pour idem.....	759 13

This "Emond, menuisier," was Pierre Emond, a well-known craftsman of Quebec in the second half of the XVIII century. He executed one of the side altars in the Basilica at Quebec, three altars and their tabernacles in the Church of St. Pierre, I. O. in 1795, and did much other work of which we have record at the Seminary and the Hôpital Général at Quebec. The work he did here for the Bishop's rooms is joiner work and we are also told that he made "les armoires en grand nombre" whilst his work at St. Pierre is carver's work so that, as was probably the case with all the Quebec

"sculpteurs," he was at once joiner, cabinet maker and carver.

At the same time that the living rooms were being prepared, an adjoining room was fitted up as a private chapel. The documents referring to this are also to be found in M. Gravé's papers and are as follows:

Chapelle interieure

C'est a ses frais (de Mgr. Briand) que d'une chambre il en a été faite une chapelle plafonnée, le rétable, le cadre doré servant de tableau qui représente le mariage de la Ste. Vierge. Les armoires en grand nombre, le poêle et sa monture, les huit chandeliers de cuivre argentés qui sont sur l'autel, les bras de cuivre aux deux côtés, les bouquets artificiels, les statues de la Ste. Vierge et de St. Joseph, la dorure de celle de l'Enfant Jésus, deux petits reliquaires dont l'un contient une petite croix faite du cercueil de Ste. Jeanne de Chantal, l'autre où se trouve du sang de St. François de Sales, un petit cadre doré contenant une image qui a touché à la châsse du dit saint, un petit cadre doré, un cadre dont l'intérieur est de papier doré au fond duquel est une image de St-Jean-Baptiste,

missel et pupitre et autre chose nécessaire au S Sacrifice, etc."

There is also a receipt signed by Pierre Emond for the retable:

J'ai resçus de Monsieur gravé pour le retable de la petite chapelle de Monseigneur..... 1000 li
 et pour la croisée double du cabinet de Monseigneur..... 21

These documents give the history of the little chapel. The picture of the "Marriage of the Virgin" is still in its place above the altar, surrounded by the laurel trees and the three reliquaries. The "armoire" in the chapel is beyond doubt one of those made by Emond in great number. The stove, the candlesticks, the copper arms and the artificial flowers are gone but the two statues still occupy their niches. With the excep-



DETAIL OF THE CARVED LAUREL OVER THE ALTAR

Photo. R.T.

Le tout monte à..... 1021
 Pour aqvi à Québec 27 novembre 1786
 (signé) P. Emond

Amongst other accounts of Pierre Emond dealing with the work in the two rooms are two items which concern the chapel:

1 septembre 1784
 Payé à jaque, Sont pr. Lesculture des gradins..... 18 li
 22 décembre 1786:
 Pour les deux Lauriers et les trois reliquaires et le piedestal de la chapelle 139 li

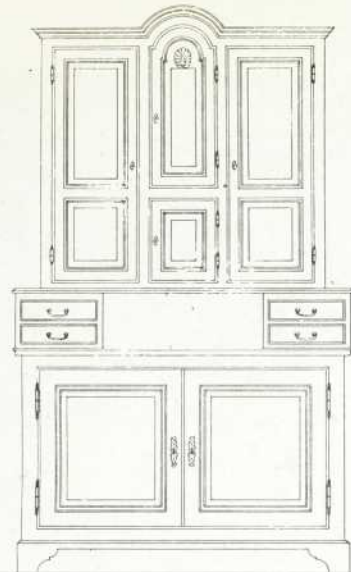
tion of the carving on the grades of the altar, the whole of the woodwork is by Pierre Emond and was finished by 1786.

The chapel is a room some eighteen feet square opening onto the corridor by a door on one side and lighted by two windows on the opposite side. The end wall is panelled in pine to form an altar and retable. The wood has never been painted and has weathered to a beautiful brown colour. The altar table stands upon a platform of one step and is rectangular with a large central panel now filled by a plain silk frontal, flanked by slender side

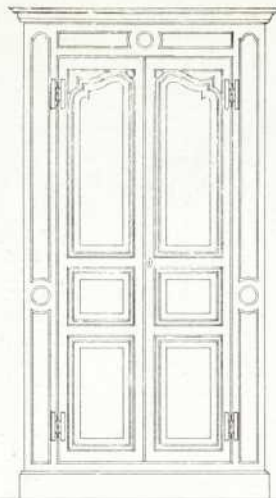
CHAPEL OF MGR BRIAND & THE SEMINARY & QUEBEC

DOOR AND PRESS

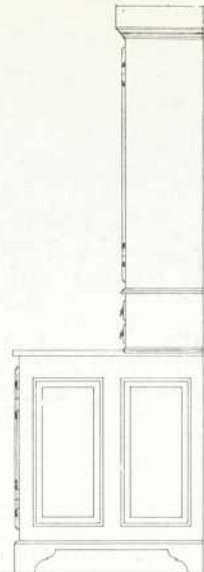
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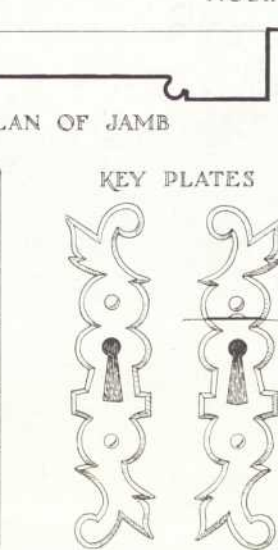
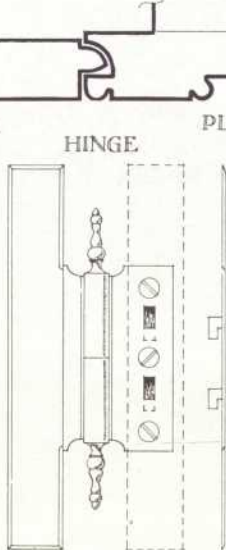
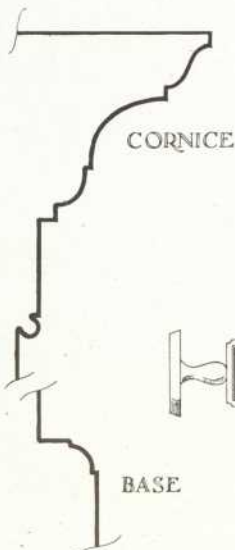
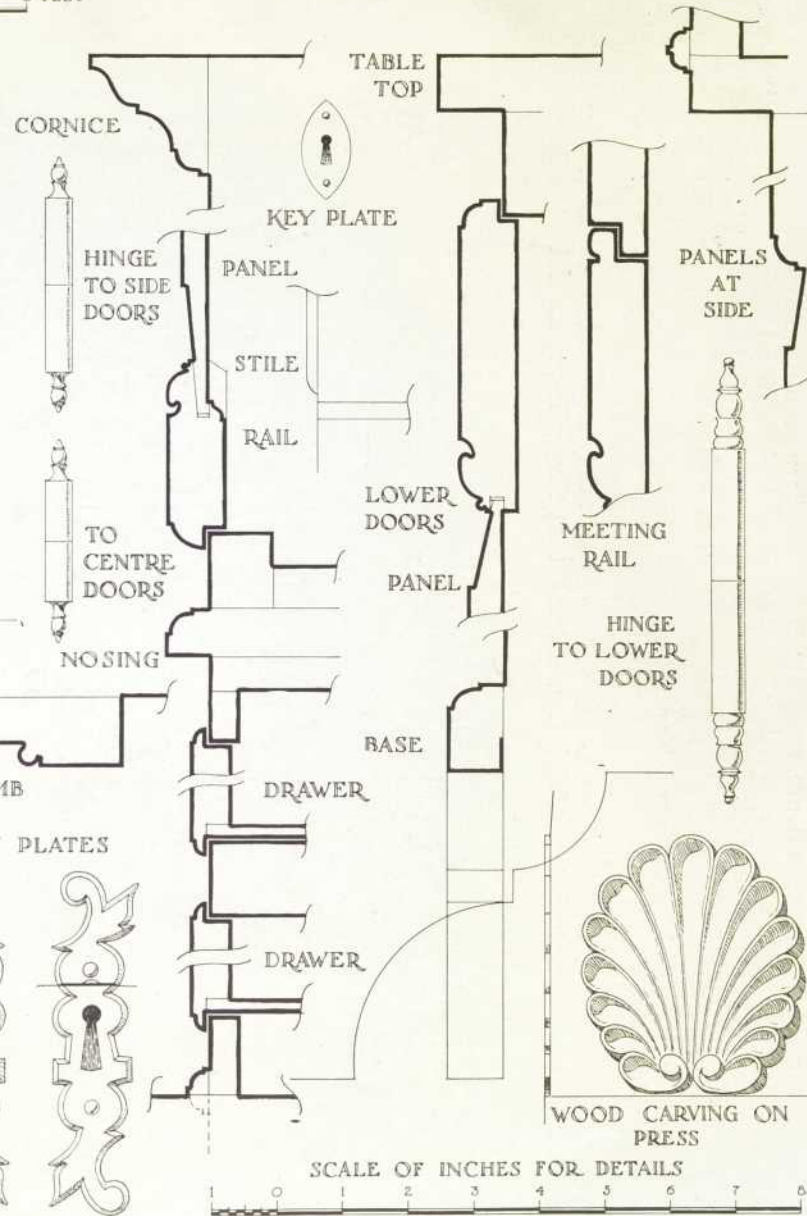
ELEVATION



ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION



SCALE OF INCHES FOR DETAILS 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

panels with arched heads. On this rests the tabernacle with its two grades. These are carved with rather crude foliage and are probably the grades referred to as having been carved by "jaque, Sont." The work is certainly inferior to the other carving of the retable and shows little resemblance to work of the kind elsewhere by Emond.

The altar is flanked by two corinthian columns above which the entablature is broken forward to form a shallow canopy. In the centre of the panel thus formed is the engraving of the Marriage mentioned in M. Gravé's notes. This is framed in a

with presses. Above this is a pedestal course supporting corinthian pilasters and a fully enriched entablature. In the centre of each bay is a round arched niche, flat in plan with a curved bracket supported on scrolls. The niches have jambs and arches with an ovolo egg pattern, octagonal capitals and conventional shells in the arch heads. The statues of Our Lady and of St. Joseph are those mentioned in the notes. Unlike the rest of the work they are painted and Mgr. Gosselin believes that they were presented by the Bishop and there-



THE ARMOIRE AND DOORS IN THE CHAPEL

Photo. R.T.

rich border of laurel branches (*les deux Lauriers*) springing from a boss above the tabernacle and spreading out in a rich tangle of branches and leaves on each side of the picture. The olive foliage is a favourite motive for altar carvings and here was perhaps additionally appropriate as referring to the Bishop's christian name "Olivier." The design, with its strongly accentuated branches and tangled interlacing quality is both decorative and original. Loose foliage of this kind is not uncommon in seventeenth and early eighteenth century renaissance; indeed something of the kind is to be found in Canadian churches of the early XIX century* but this is an unusual example for its date and decoratively very successful. The three reliquaries are simply hung onto the carving.

The walls at each side of the altar have a projecting dado, 30 inches high and 16 inches deep,

* Compare the font in St. Francois de Sales, I.O. by Samson, 1854, the wall panels in Beaumont church of 1812 by Bercier and the similar panels in Ste. Jeanne, Ile Perrot, of about the same date.

fore are not part of Emond's work. The niches were probably designed from the first for their accommodation.

Set between the scrolls of the brackets are carved wood tablets surrounded by flower scrolls and with painted inscriptions. They fit their spaces neatly and were probably made for them, although not attached in any way. The inscriptions are as follows:

(1) SALVETO VIR JUSTE / DAVIDICI
THRONI / HAERES PATER JESU / ET
MARIAE SPONSE.

(2) O MATER MARIA / AB ORIGINALI
LABE PRAESERVATA / CORDA TERGE
NOSTRA.

The panel mouldings are very finely worked. They seem to be distinctive of Quebec work of the latter half of the XVIII century and are worthy of particular attention as being accurately dated and the work of a known master.

The large panels on each side of and below the niches have a double moulding—a projecting ogee to the outside, a hollow and an ogee and bead to the inside. At the angles the mouldings separate; the outer moulding forms the square panel, the inner, the shaped head or angle. A similar moulding with a raised panel, is used in the press doors. The remaining doors and panels have an ogee and bead, excepting the pedestal panels and the side panels of the altar which have raised ovolo mouldings. The mouldings are not worked on the framing but are separate. The large double mouldings as

The wall press door has a panelled surround and a little cornice. The door panels have shaped heads and an ogee and bead moulding similar to that on the retable. In the Hôpital Général at Quebec are very similar doors which there is good evidence to attribute to Emond.

The metal hinges and keyholes are quite worth notice. They appear to be of iron and must be the work of l'Etourneau, "serrurier."

The door to the corridor is more recent though the long iron latch and the hinges are old ones, evidently reused.



THE STATUE OF OUR LADY

Photo, R.T.



A NICHE BRACKET

Photo, R.T.

far as could be seen, are framed into the rails and styles and carry the panels.

As suits work of domestic character, the scale is small and the finish throughout high.

The door of the wall press beside the retable and the armoire which stands beside it at present are similar in their moulded detail to the retable and are probably contemporary. The door is part of Pierre Emond's work and the armoire is probably one of those mentioned in M. Gravé's notes and also by Emond. It is a straightforward, practical piece of furniture in pine, painted. Both doors and drawers are rebated with fine edge mouldings; the panels have an ovolo and bead moulding and raised panels.

There seems to have been a great deal of good woodwork made in and near Quebec in the years following the English occupation and this little chapel gives us a very high opinion of the technical and artistic skill of the craftsmen of that period. For comparison with other work it is of peculiar value because we have accurate information as to its date and its maker.

For this thanks are due to the researches of Mgr. Amedée Gosselin, Archivist of the Seminary, who first investigated the history of the chapel. He has been kind enough to provide copies of the important documents which have been cited in this account.

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of the
BASILICA AT QUEBEC



By RAMSAY TRAQUAIR
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THE PRESBYTERY OF THE BASILICA, QUEBEC

Photo, A. G. N.

The Panelled Room in the Presbytery of the Basilica, Quebec

By RAMSAY TRAQUAIR, M.A. (HON.), F.R.I.B.A.

THE Presbytery of the Basilica at Quebec was built between 1773 and 1775. The "Livre des Délibérations de la Fabrique" records a meeting on October the 8th, 1772, for the purpose of considering the building of a presbytery. On March 5th, 1775, another minute records the final payments for the contract.¹

. . . Aujourd'hui cinquième mars mil sept cents soixante quinze, M. Beaumont Curé . . . s'étant assemblé au son de la cloche . . . dans une chambre du presbytère . . . ledit Sr. Langlois dit que pour parfait payement de la maçonne charpente façon d'ouvrages du dit presbytaire il seroit du pour solde les sommes cyapres sçavoir.

A Mr. Beaujour pour solde de la maçonne	1987 li 16
A Mr. Lafleche idem pour la charpente &c.	337 18
A Mr. Dufait suivant son compte de fourretyère	15 10
A Mr. Connefroy suivant idem	13 4
A Mr. Brassard pour idem	60 12
A Romain Vitrier pour ouvrage de son metier	3 12
A Mr. Germain fils pour fourniture sc. . . (?)	8 11
A Carier (?) menuisier pour façon (?) douvrages &c.	72 14
A frere serrurier pour idem	51 12

¹ Livre des Délibérations de la Fabrique, 1742 à 1777. MSS 16. First meeting p. 268. Meeting for final payment p. 283. Thanks are due to Mgr. Laflamme, Curé of the Basilica, for permission to make the extract.

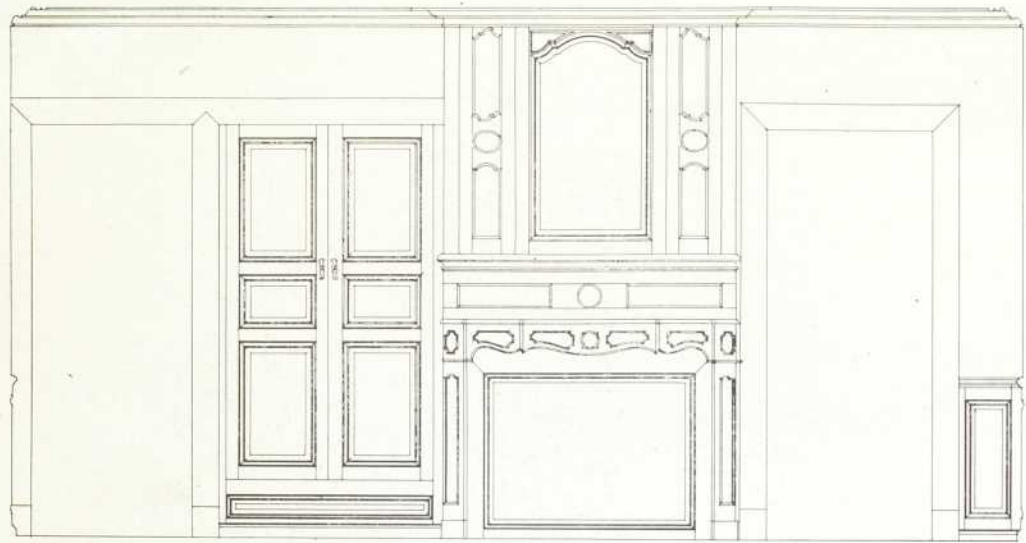
The writing towards the end is rather illegible, as though the writer were getting a little tired of his task, but the important names and payments are quite clear. Romain the glazier is mentioned in the accounts for the chapel of Mgr. Briand in the Seminary.

The presbytery stands at the corner of Buade Street and is today of two stories and an attic. Mgr. Laflamme, the Curé of the Basilica, informs me that, as originally built, it was of one storey only. It is a plain stone house of typical Quebec form, with a door in the centre and three windows on each side. In plan it consists of a series of front and back rooms separated by a thick central wall and opening into one another without corridors. Fireplaces and flues were placed either in the thick gable walls or in this central wall. The plan is found also in Montreal and seems to have been the accepted plan for the larger town houses throughout the XVIII century.¹

Along with the old roof, the old fittings have almost all disappeared from the presbytery, but

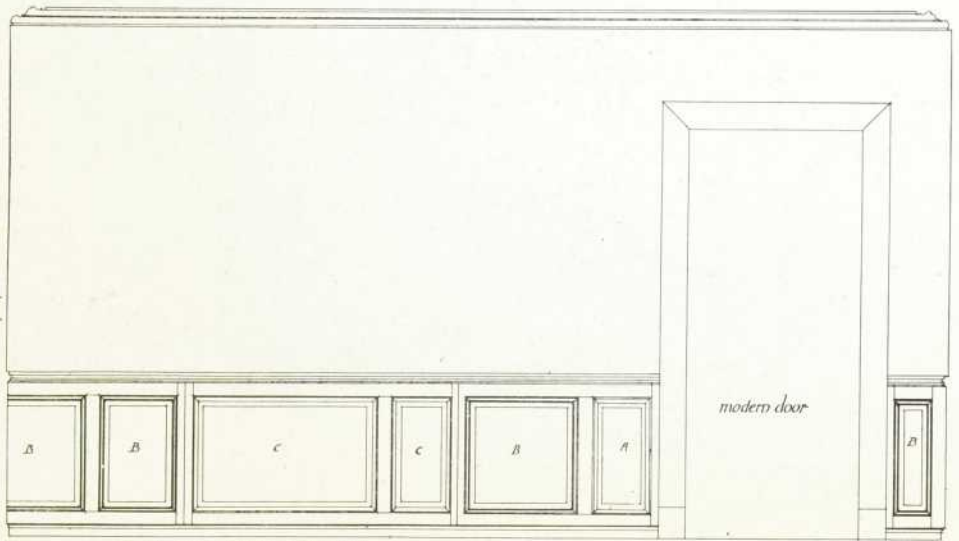
¹ The Chateau de Ramezay in Montreal, and No. 92 St. Peter Street, Quebec, are good examples.

THE PRESBYTERY OF THE BASILICA QUEBEC · THE PANELLED ROOM ·



modern door press fireplace modern door

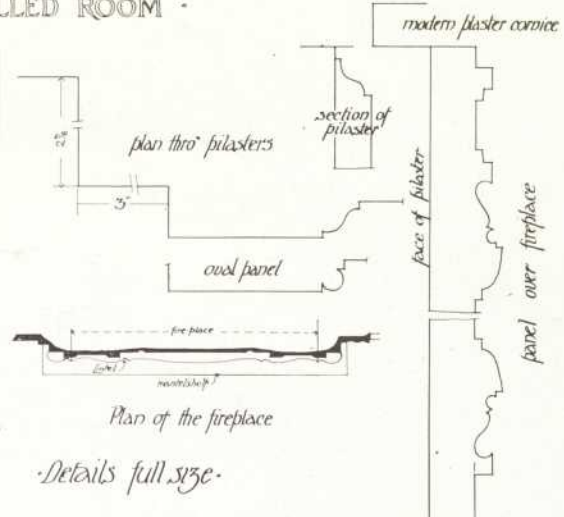
THE SIDE FACING THE WINDOWS



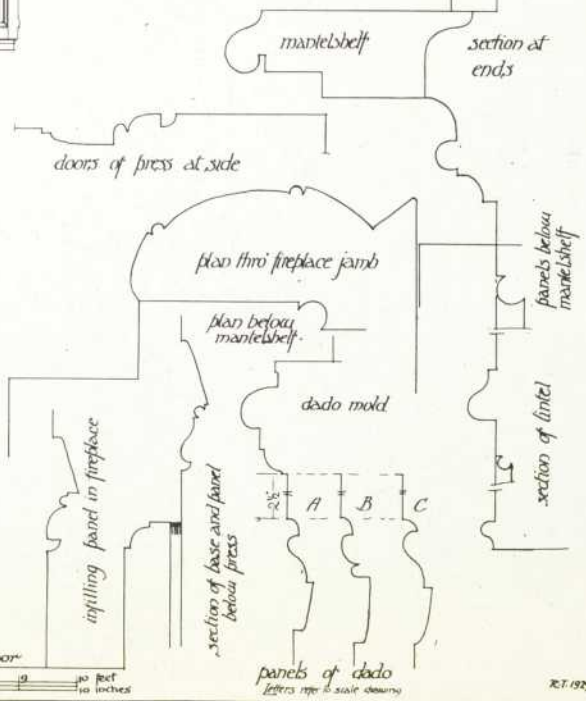
fireplace side here

modern door

THE SIDE NEXT THE HALL



Details full size.



Scale - for Elevations read feet - for details read inches
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 feet
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 inches



one room, probably used as a meeting room for the marguilliers, has preserved the old mantelpiece and some parts of the wall panelling. It lies to the left of the entrance hall and is lighted by the two ground floor windows next to the door.

The fireplace occupies the centre of the wall opposite to the windows. The mantelpiece is of wood with rounded jambs and a shaped lintel, and is clearly modelled upon an original stone or marble design. Both jambs and lintel are panelled with shaped panels having a small bead moulding. The fireplace opening is filled by a large wood panel which seems to be of the same

surround, as well as the room doors, are quite modern.

Originally, the room had a low, panelled dado all round; parts of this, somewhat altered, remain on the wall to the right of the fireplace. As is shown on the drawing there are three different panel moulds. The panels marked "A" and "B" appear to be old and parts of the original design; panels "C" are coarser and have apparently been put in to fill a gap, possibly a stove opening made at some time between this room and the entrance hall, and later built up.

The mouldings of the old woodwork show an



THE PANELLED ROOM

Photo, Edwards, Que.

date as the rest of the woodwork. Such panels are not unusual and were no doubt provided for use in summer. With the introduction of stoves they would become permanent. In the dispensary of the Hôpital Général is a mantel of almost identical design to this in which the opening has been made into a press with double doors.

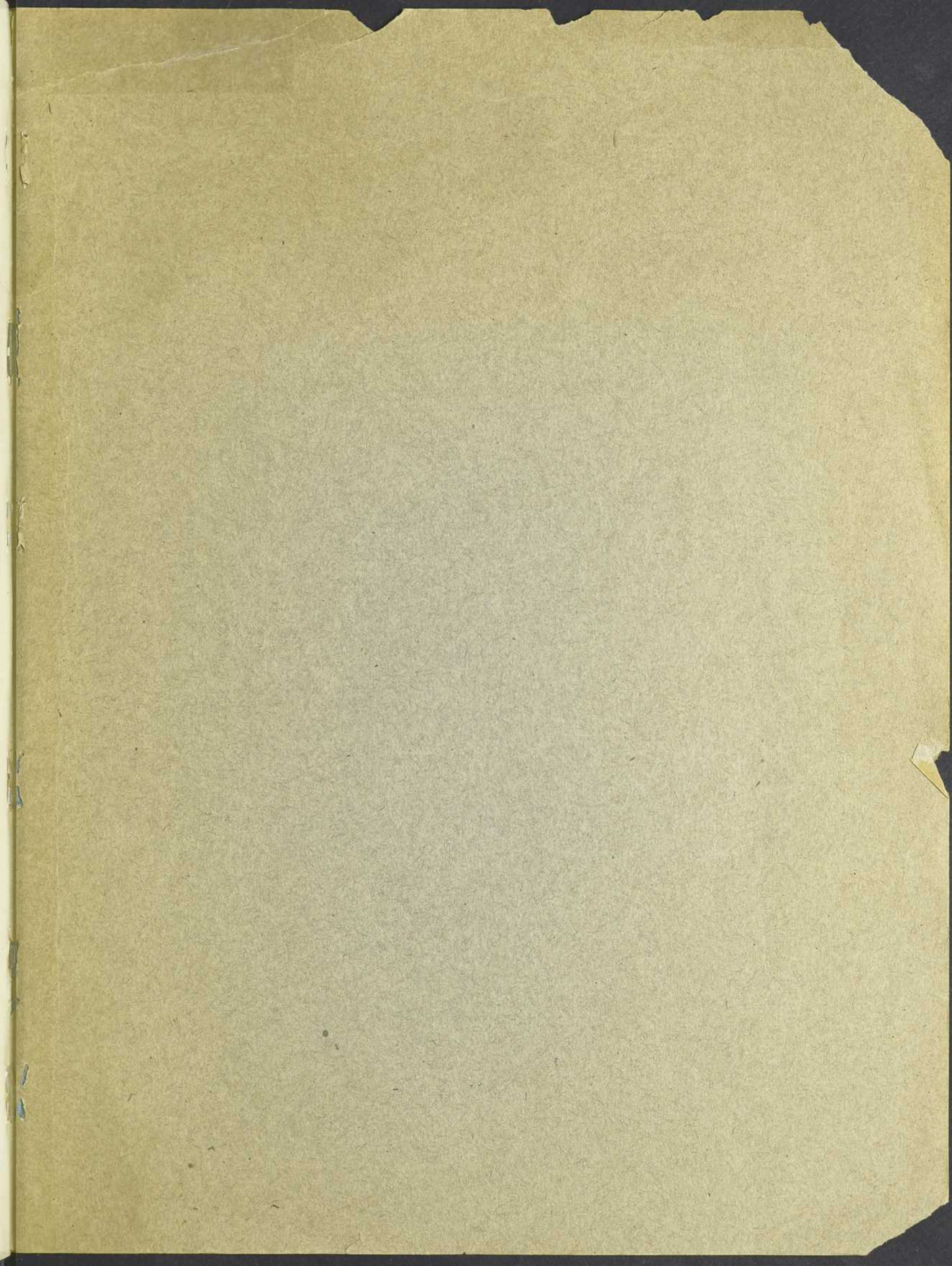
Above the mantel is a panelled frieze and a small cornice. Above this is a large central panel flanked by broad, flat-panelled pilasters. The central panel has an arched head and a raised field; the side pilasters have oval panels in the middle and long, shaped panels top and bottom. The cornice is of plaster and is modern.

On the left-hand side of the fireplace is a wall press with double doors of three panels each. The doors are of the same date as the mantel, but the

interesting correspondence with those of the panelling in Mgr. Briand's chapel in the Seminary. At this time, the seventies and eighties of the XVIII century, the common panel moulds seem to have been the ovolo and bead or the ogee and bead and variants of these. Small oval or shaped panels are often used and usually have a bead moulding. The general design of the mantelpiece, with its shaped panels, is, of course, XVIII-century French. The ceiling was probably originally of wood, either wainscot or with exposed wood beams.

Panelled rooms are not very common in old Canadian work. This one may be taken to represent good average work of the period, designed, as was all the woodwork of the Canadian school by the craftsmen who executed it.

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