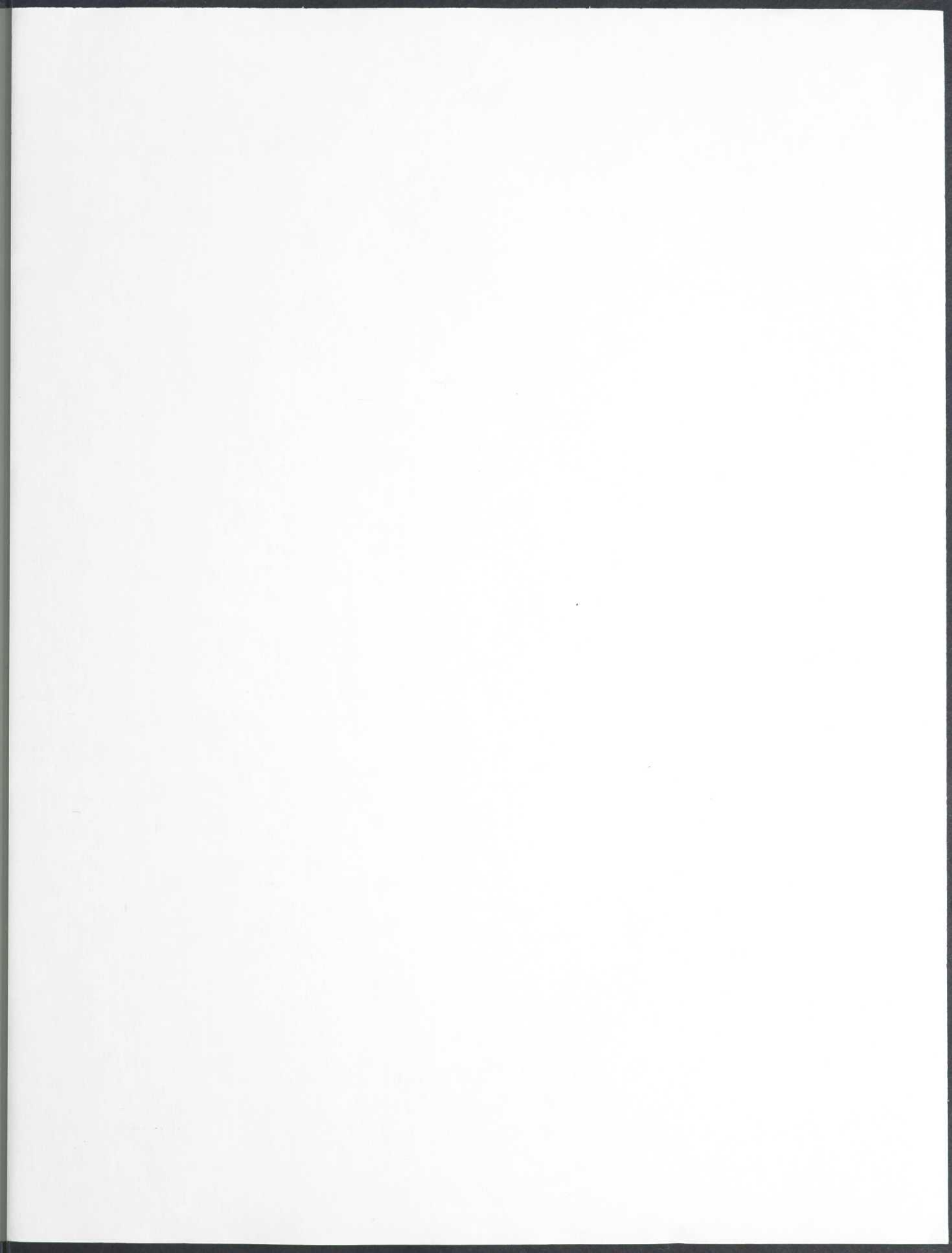


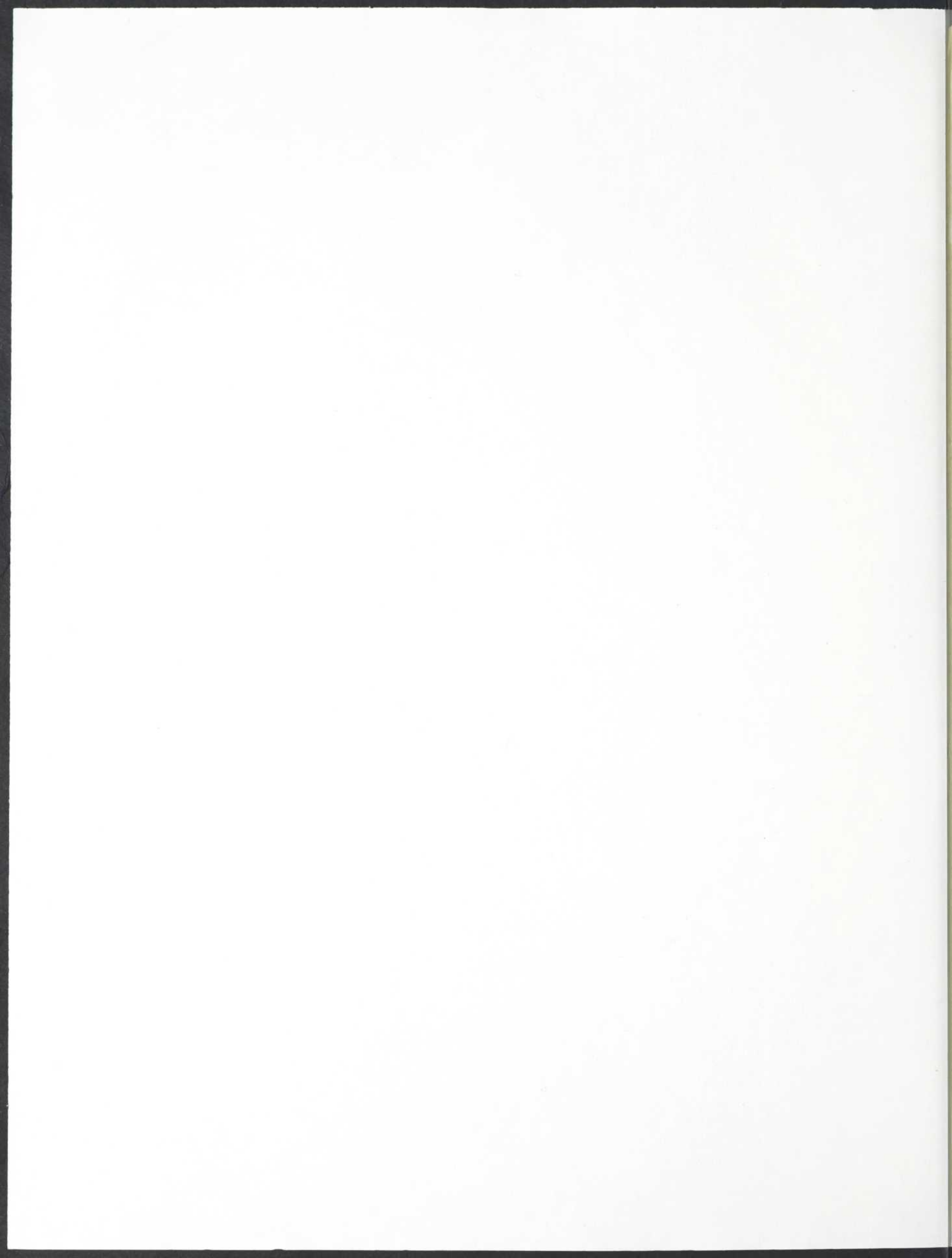
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Province of Quebec  
Since Confederation

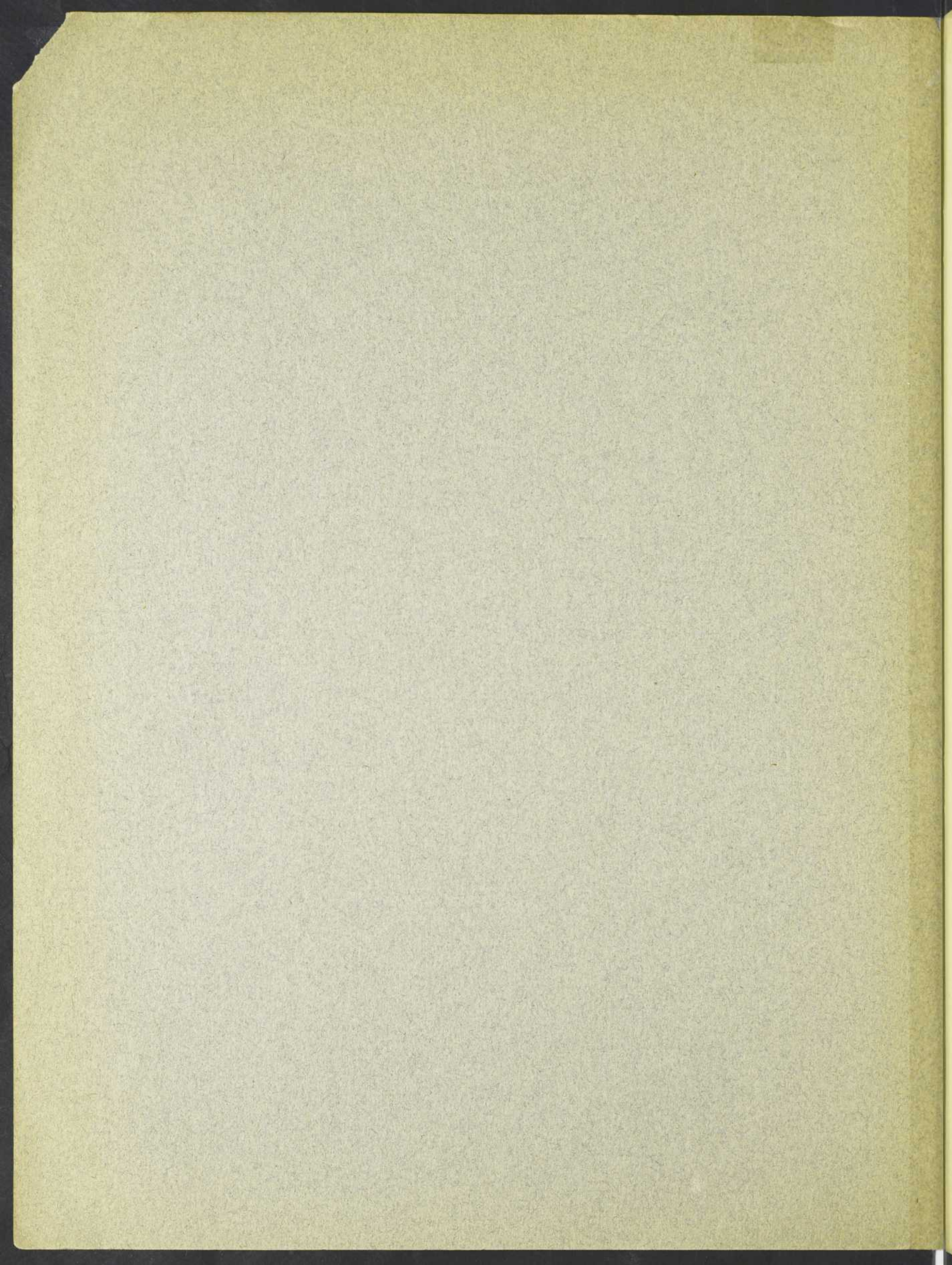
By

PHILIP J. TURNER, F.R.I.B.A.



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1891  
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MACKAY HOUSE, 681 SHERBROOKE ST., WEST, MONTREAL (1854)

FOWLER & ROY, ARCHITECTS

(A type of pre-Confederation Architecture that had considerable influence on architectural style in 1867)

# The Development of Architecture in the Province of Quebec Since Confederation

By PHILIP J. TURNER, F.R.I.B.A.

*Special Lecturer—Department of Architecture, McGill University*

OUTSTANDING characteristics of this great Dominion may be said to be the variety of its climate and the extraordinary differences that are to be found in the scenery as one travels from coast to coast.

For these reasons, it is not surprising that each Province should develop distinctive features in its architecture, with certain qualities that have been naturally influenced by its people and have therefore become peculiar to the district in which they occur.

At the same time, the spirit of Canada, as a nation, cannot be said to have clearly revealed itself in her architecture, in fact this spirit is so complex that it would be difficult to give it expression in any concrete form.

In the Province of Quebec is to be found what may be said to be a distinctive Canadian Architecture not seen elsewhere in the Dominion.

This national architecture is well illustrated in the many beautiful French-Canadian stone churches

and old Manor Houses scattered throughout the Province and which date back to 1660, and continue to the middle of the nineteenth century.

Credit is due to the Provincial Government for the splendid record that has been made of these outstanding examples of national architecture in the volumes "The Old Churches of Quebec" and "The Old Manor Houses" published by the Commission of Historic Monuments.

Naturally, the traditional style has had an influence in the later development and forms of architecture in the Province, but speaking generally it passed out of being about 1860 and was followed by a flood of revivals, some of them elaborate but more often unnatural and foreign to this country.

Owing to the historic background and also because the French race are largely in the majority in the Province, it is not surprising that the French School of Architecture is to be seen influencing the design of many of its important public buildings.



GEORGE WASHINGTON STEPHENS HOUSE, 363 DORCHESTER STREET WEST, MONTREAL (1867c.)

*W. T. Thomas, Architect*



Office Building, St. Helen and Notre Dame St., Montreal (1870)  
W. T. Thomas, Architect

But Montreal and Quebec are cities of contrasts and both civilizations have grown up, and developed side by side, adding their peculiar contributions to its architecture.

Due to the fact that the Province is subjected to some of the heaviest snow falls and severest climatic conditions of the Dominion, the general design of its buildings has been influenced accordingly.

Thus there are to be found steep sloping roofs, as simple as possible, free of all unnecessary dormers and other obstructions to snow and ice, or on the other hand the buildings are covered with the flat hopper type of roof, ugly it may be, but very serviceable and therefore popular.

Modern methods adopted by municipalities in recent years for removing snow in streets or sidewalks, have had also their effect on recent design, for whereas it was the practice to raise the main floor of a house some 5 or 6 feet above the sidewalk to be clear of a winter's snow level, this condition has not now to be taken into account.

Sixty years ago was a very barren era for good designs in architecture. The spirit arising from the achievement of the past was lost and its place was taken by a phase of architecture which is perhaps best described as "American Victorianism."

Between the years 1860-1880, however, were erected in the City of Montreal and Quebec some very fine large square houses.

These as a rule have much better detail on the exterior than in the interior. Good examples in the Metropolitan city are the George Washington Stephens house, 363 Dorchester Street, (1867) 681 Sherbrooke Street and the McIntyre House, 366 Peel Street.

The desire for this monumental and sturdy type of building, however, did not endure for many years, for the public taste appears to have become quite corrupted, and when galvanized iron was introduced to represent stonework, honest design dropped to zero point and all things in the way of shams seemed possible.

An outstanding architect at this time was W. T. Thomas of Montreal, who practiced between 1860-1890. He was responsible for the Stephens and McIntyre houses mentioned above and several office buildings, including the four storey block on St. Helen Street, (1870). These buildings all show a broad and scholarly treatment of classic details. Thomas also was the architect for St. George's Church, Dominion Square, which he won in competition. J. W. Hopkins (1877-1895c) and Fowler and Roy (1861-1895c) were also doing good work in the latter part of the century. The latter were the architects for the old Arts Building, McGill University, and the MacKay House, 681 Sherbrooke St.

Amongst the French architects who set a high standard during this period was Victor Bourgeau (1809-88). Bourgeau came of a family of woodwork-



Convent of the Grey Nuns, Montreal (1871)  
Victor Bourgeau, Architect



QUEBEC PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, QUEBEC CITY (1880)

*Eugene Tache, Architect*

ers and was probably the most distinguished ecclesiastical architect of his day, designing during his career twenty-two churches and remodelling twenty-three others.

Others that should be mentioned are H. M. Perrault who practised 1849-1895.

Albert Mesnard, Joseph Venne 1882-1920.

To Bourgeau's credit in Montreal are due the churches of St. Peters, St. Brigide, St. Denis, Hotel Dieu (1860), Notre Dame de Pitié, Convent of the Grey Nuns (1871) and the high altar at Notre Dame as well as many other buildings.

Perrault, Mesnard and Venne were jointly responsible for the Central Building of the University of Montreal (1890). Perrault and Mesnard designed the old Post Office (1875) which contains some good French Renaissance detail and H. M. Perrault was also Architect for the Old City Hall (1874-88).

At this time in Quebec City was built the Legislative Building (1880) which is noteworthy. The plans were the work of Eugene Taché. The elevation is a good specimen of the best 17th century French Renaissance, and on the building is some

unusually rich sculpture by Phillippe Hébert and Laliberté.

About 1880, a period of economy seems to have set in, and but few large residences were built, though there are to be found examples of nearly every style in architecture.

Some positive nightmares in the way of designs were perpetrated on the public, and buildings were erected which can only be described as following the worst features of the Neo-Greek on one side, and degenerating into "Gothic revivalism" in other examples.

The refined Colonial forms, and the dignified buildings inspired by the art of Greece and Rome gave place in general to ill-proportioned structures crowded with confused detail.

The jig-saws and turning lathes of a vigorous industrial expansion completed the architectural collapse. Elaborate and heavy mouldings, grained wood, and meaningless ornament, were the order of the day, features which did their best to make the buildings of that day unsightly.

The American Romanesque as practised by H. H. Richardson of Boston during the last twenty years



Redpath Museum, McGill University, (1880)  
*Hutchison & Steele, Architects*

of the 19th century, had a distinctive influence on architecture at this time. He believed that he had discovered the forms that were capable of erecting a national style in the States. But it proved a difficult style for its imitators and the fashion passed.

One of the best early examples of this period is the Redpath Museum at McGill University. This was designed by Hutchison and Steele in 1880. It has been described as a somewhat romantic version of Greek revival, and as it was illustrated in Ferguson's history of modern architecture, it evidently caused considerable interest at that time. The general mass and proportions are good, though the columns are over ornamented and the cornice is out of scale and overpowering.

The influence of Richardson is seen in the Redpath Library (1890-1) by Taylor and Gordon, as well as in the fine design by Mr. Bruce Price of the Windsor Street offices of the C.P.R. at Montreal, but the attempt to form a distinct national style out of a combination of Romanesque and Byzantine forms was not successful.

The buildings of Montreal and Quebec owe, where successfully designed, a great deal of their quality to the fine building material that is to be found in the Province.

Situated within the city limits of Montreal are the quarries that provide the hard light grey limestone from which most of the important buildings in Montreal are constructed. A similar stone (Deschambault) is also used in Quebec City and neighbourhood. These stones are unsurpassable as building materials, but owing to the fact that they are costly to work, it is to be noted with regret that most commercial buildings of the present time are built of softer and imported limestones from Indiana and elsewhere.

The colour of the local material, and its splendid wearing qualities, adapt themselves admirably to the climate, and nothing can be more satisfactory

than to see a large group of buildings, like those composing McGill University, all built of this same grey material, and set amongst the green foliage of the trees for which the College Campus is famous.

Another material that the Province provides is the grey granite from Stanstead. This has been used with much success by the architects Darling & Pearson in the monumental building of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, Montreal; and the Sun Life Assurance Company's Head Office.

It is universally recognised that Quebec can supply building materials as good as and more suitable for its climate than any that are imported, and one is glad to note that Quebec materials have been chosen for the two most recent and largest office buildings in Canada—Montreal and Deschambault limestones in the Head office of the Royal Bank and Stanstead granite for the Sun Life Assurance Company's building.

The influence of the work of well known American Architects is very marked in the latter part of the 19th century and the beginning of the present, especially that of Mr. Bruce Price of Boston and Messrs. McKim, Mead and White of New York.

Mr. Price was responsible for the fine design of the Royal Victoria College (1899). In its general



Montreal Trust Building, Montreal (1837)  
*Babcock, Cook & Williard, Architects*

character—prominent gables and bay windows with small projections—it follows the spirit of the contemporary English work of Mr. Norman Shaw which can be seen even more distinctly in the McGill Union Building (1905) (Nobbs, Hutchison & Wood) and the McDonald Engineering Building (1907 P. E. Nobbs). From this date onward the architecture of McGill has followed along lines of English traditions adapted to Canadian conditions. In this connection mention should be made of the Strathcona Medical Building (1907 Brown and Vallance) and the Pathological Institute (1923 Nobbs & Hyde) as being the most outstanding.

The latter building, distinctly Scotch in sentiment, is connected with the Royal Victoria Hospital (1887-1893 Saxon Snell, Architect) the Hospital being modelled upon the Edinburgh Infirmary.

Andrew T. Taylor, who practised in Montreal from 1883 to 1904, was an outstanding architect of his day and carried out some work of a high order including at McGill University the Library (1891) Physics Building (1890) and Chemistry Building (1896). These follow the style popularized by Richardson. Other buildings designed by this architect are the Drummond House, Sherbrooke Street (of red Scotch sandstone), Bishops College, Lennoxville, Diocesan Theological College, etc.

The Chateau Frontenac Hotel at Quebec (1890) and the Place Viger Hotel were designed by Mr. Bruce Price for the C.P.R. in the French style out



The Library, McGill University (1891)  
*Taylor & Gordon, Architects*

of compliment to the Province. The Loire was freely drawn on by the Architect. They may be said to have almost set a symbolic style for hotels of the railway companies who seem to have embarked upon a chain of "chateaux" throughout the Dominion.

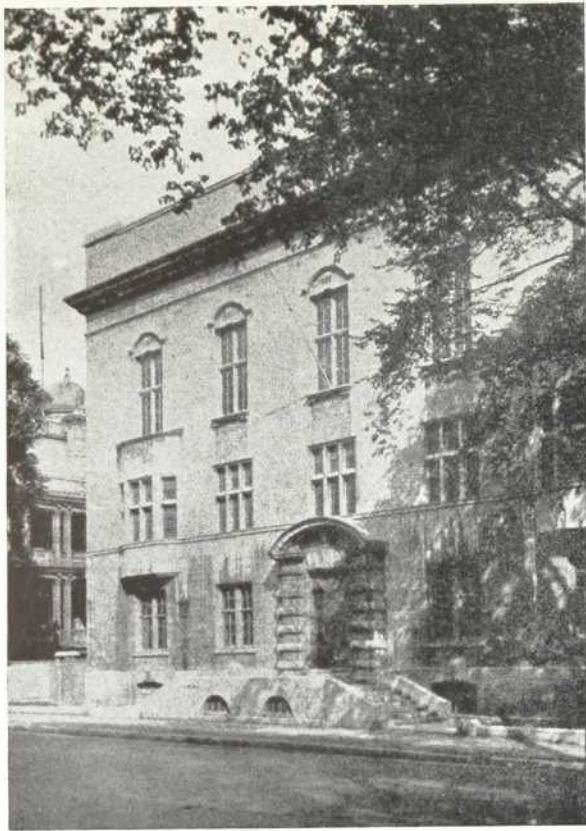
The Montreal Trust Company building on Place d'Armes Square, Montreal, designed by Messrs. Babcock, Cook and Willard in 1887, is of historic interest as being the first high office building to be erected in the city. The construction is honest and very heavy throughout and though steel is used in the floors and roofs, it has no steel frame—the walls 32 to 40 inches thick carry the superstructure at each storey.

McKim, Mead and White's work at the Bank of Montreal (1903) was a great popular success and it is a notable building of its time. The rear elevation to Craig Street with its refined classic detail is one of the finest pieces of architecture in the city.

Of modern ecclesiastical architecture it may be said that a great improvement is being shown in the religious houses of the cities, more so than in the rural districts. Notably is this to be seen in Montreal in the Chapel of the Seminary, Sherbrooke Street, (Architect J. O. Marchand) 1905-07. The interior constitutes one of the most serious and attractive monuments in the city. Here is the combination of severe simplicity and the unity of the whole brought to perfection with the richest materials. Nearby is the Mother House of the Ladies of the Con-



Bank of Montreal, Craig St. Elevation (1903)  
*McKim, Mead & White, Architects*



McGill University Union (1905)

*Percy E. Nobbs, Architect*

*Hutchinson & Wood, Associates*

gregation, 1907 by the same architect. It is the finest modern religious house in the Province and of monumental dimensions.

The Sulpice Library (1915) by Eugene Payette who was also the architect for the Civic Library, is planned to contain the Convocation Hall of Laval University on the lower floor. It is cleverly planned, refined in detail, and a good example of the modern French School.

The School of Commercial Studies erected by the Provincial Government on Viger Square—Gauthier and Daoust, Architects, has been said to be “the finest and most dignified structure devoted to that purpose in North America.”

Many fine public schools, which have developed quite a style of their own, have been erected in recent years but space will not permit to speak of any individual example.

Office buildings in Montreal are limited to a height of 130 feet but a recent amendment to this act allows the upper storeys of high buildings to “step back” after this height is reached, and in future higher buildings are likely to be the order of the day.

Two notable examples are the new Royal Bank of Canada, Main Office Building, (York and Sawyer) and the additions to the Sun Life Assurance



MOTHER HOUSE OF SISTERS OF THE CONGREGATION, MONTREAL (1907)

*J. O. Marchand, Architect*



The Chateau Frontenac, Quebec City  
Original portion of hotel erected in 1890  
*Bruce Price, Architect*

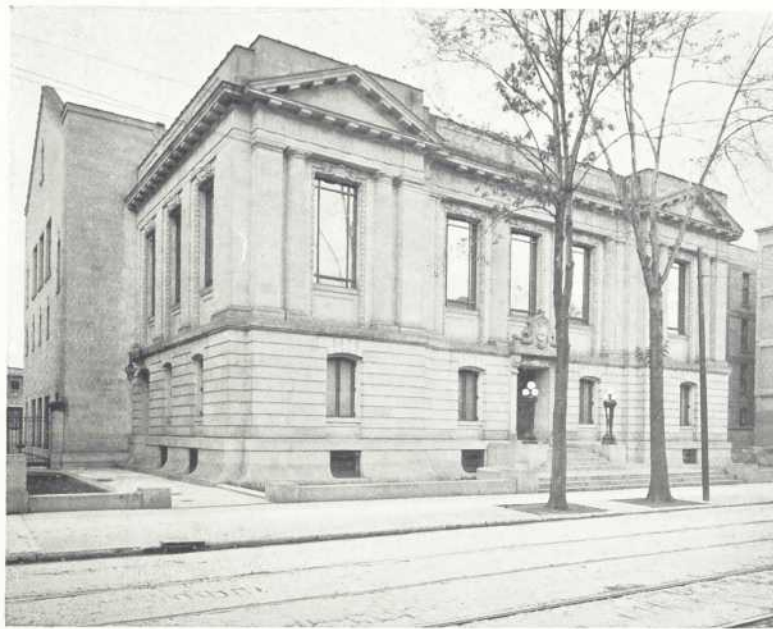


Sun Life Assurance Company's Building, Montreal  
Highest and largest office building in the British Empire, now being erected.  
*Darling & Pearson, Architects*

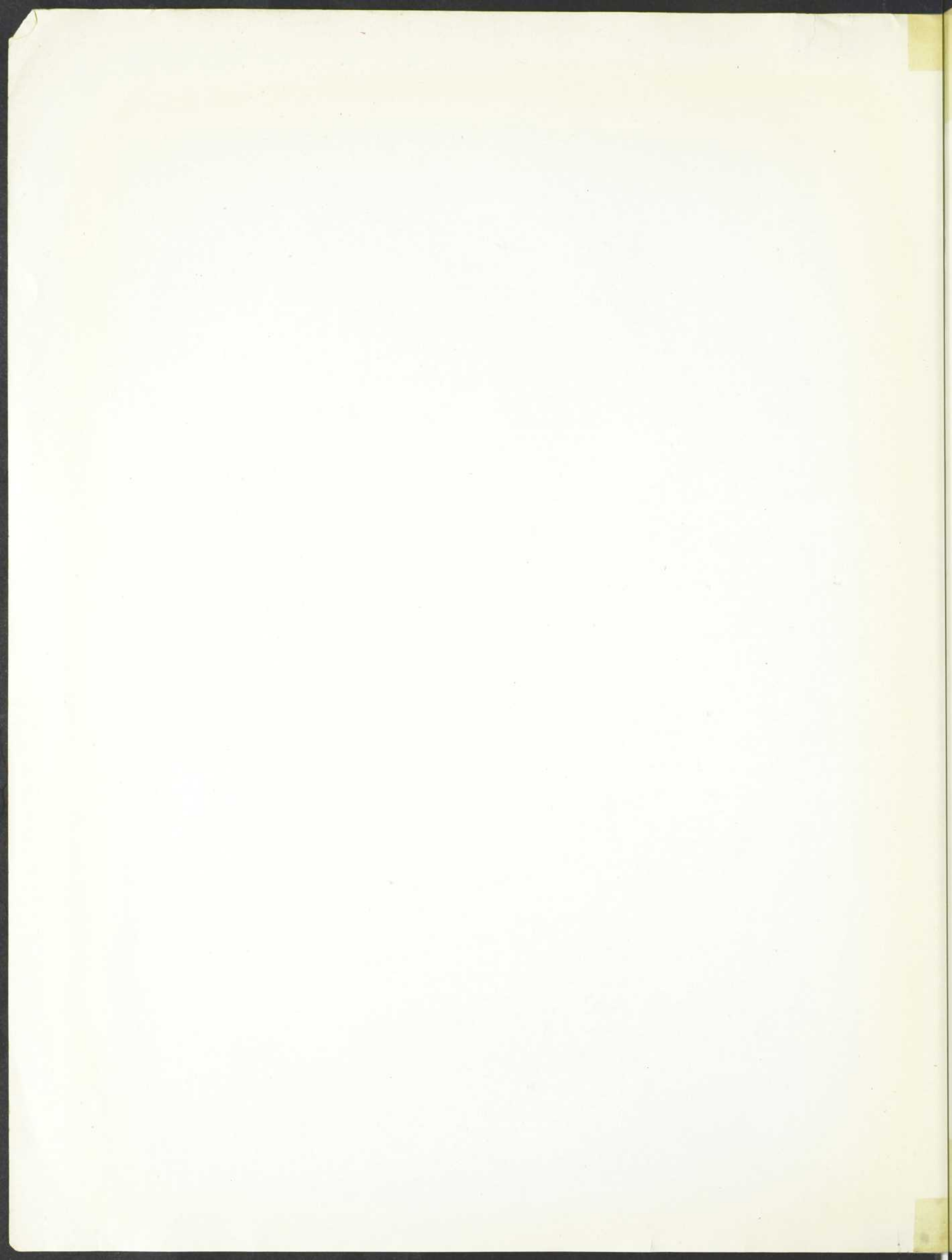
Company, (Darling & Pearson) which when carried out will give the latter the honour of being the highest building in the Empire.

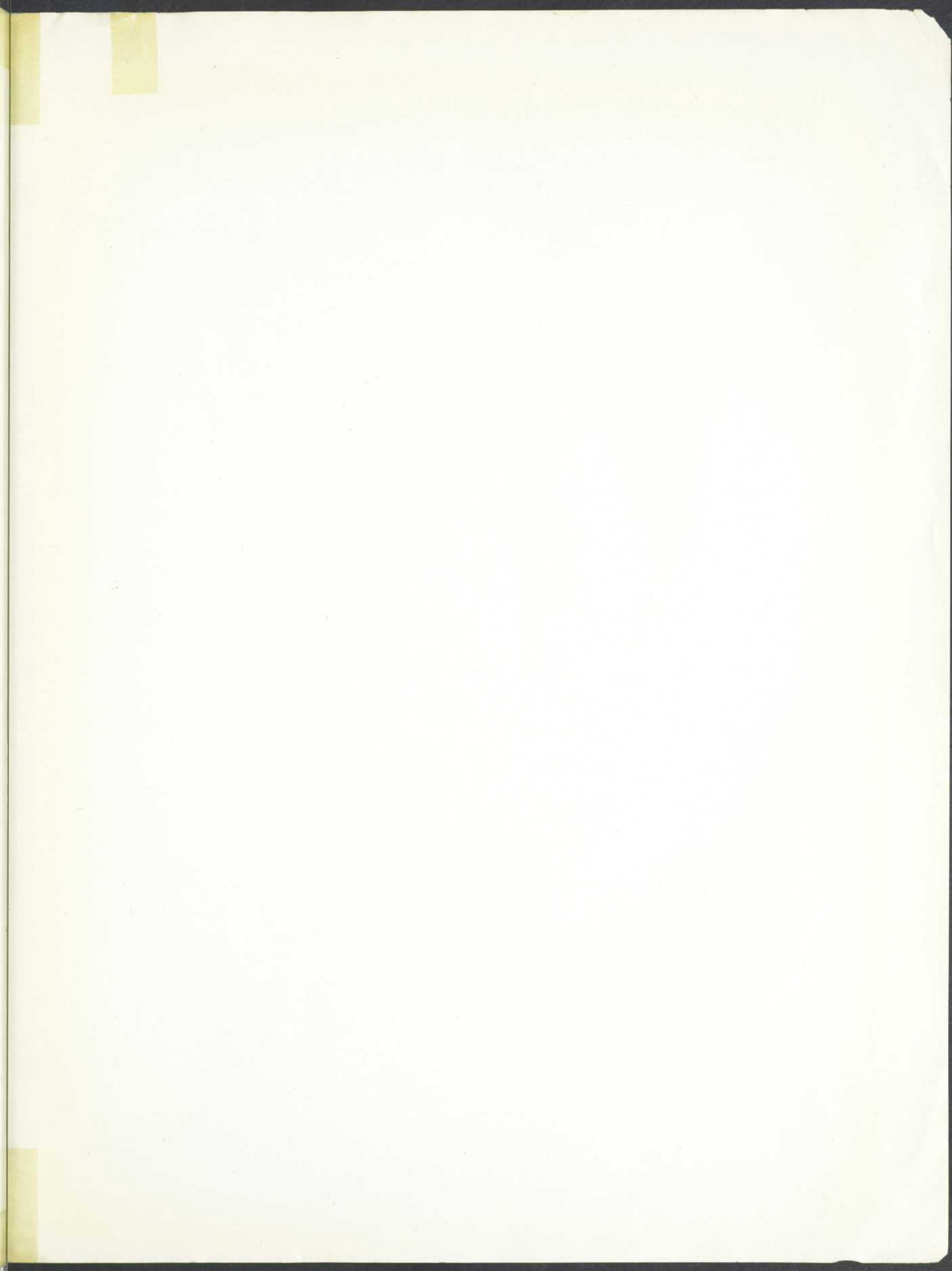
The future for Architecture in this Province may be faced with every encouragement, for not only is excellent work being carried out at the present

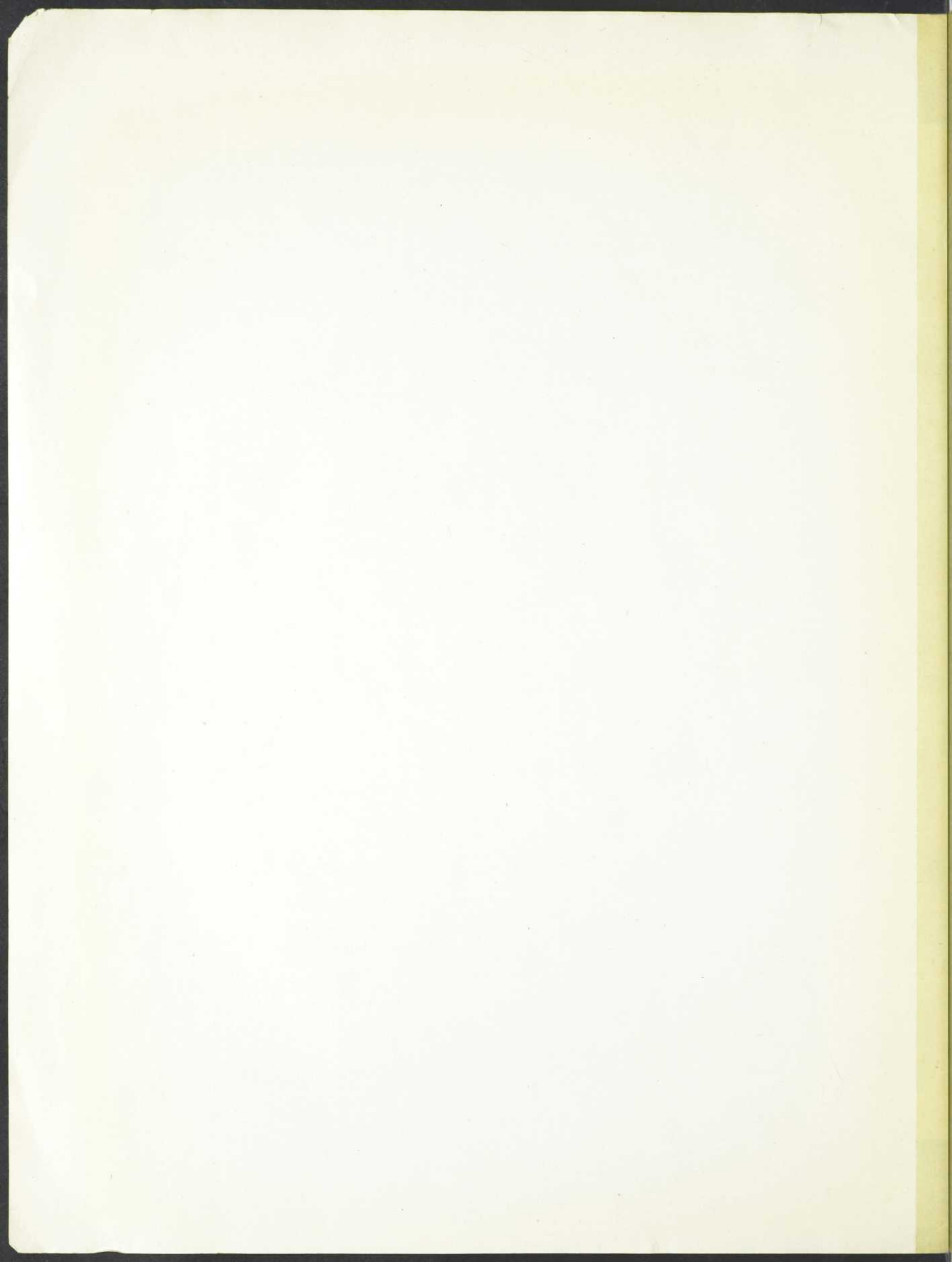
time by men trained as efficiently as any in the United States, but the professional educational facilities offered by McGill and Laval Universities are of the highest order, and the effect of such training is beginning to make a marked impression for good on the general output of architectural design.

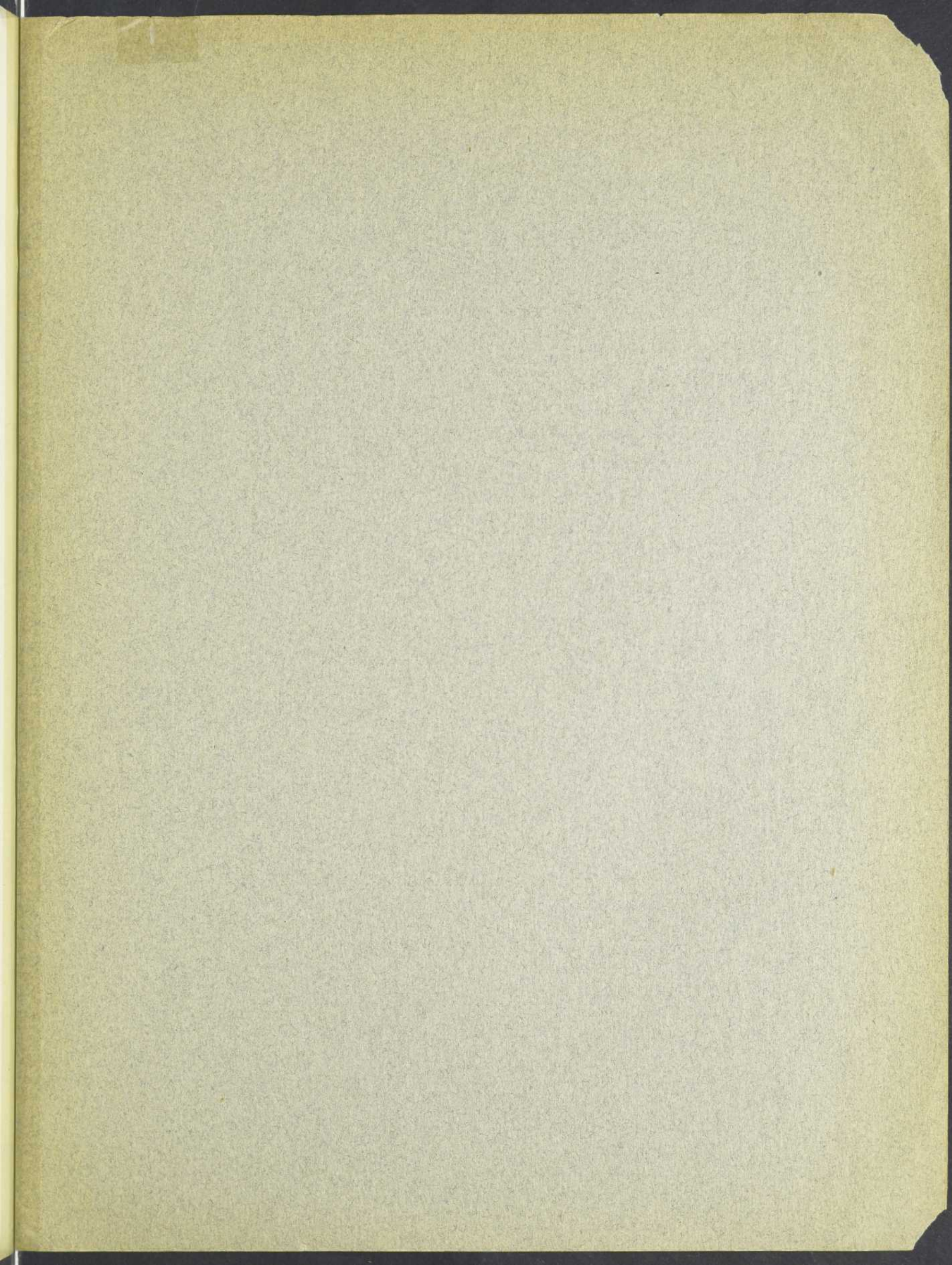


St. Sulpice Library, Montreal (1915)  
*Eugène Payette, Architect*









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