

# LORD BEAVERBROOK AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK LAW SCHOOL

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Lord Beaverbrook had been very generous to the University of New Brunswick before the Second World War. He built the Lady Beaverbrook Residence and the Gymnasium, which have been in constant use ever since. He had been a student in the King's College Law School in Saint John in the 1890's and obviously absorbed a good knowledge of contracts and corporation law to fit him for the business world into which he was about to plunge.

In 1948 when he was Chancellor of the University of New Brunswick, he questioned me, I was then Secretary of the Faculty and had been a volunteer lecturer for nearly thirty years, about the suitability of our lecture rooms which were in the old Provincial Building on the corner of Princess and Canterbury Streets in Saint John. These rooms were dark, dusty and too small. The library of the Saint John Law Society, which our students were at liberty to use, was also inadequate.

He was shocked at the appearance of the building and said he would provide a new building. A year later Mr. Thomas Drummie, who acted as agent for Lord Beaverbrook, purchased or obtained an option on two buildings on Germain Street. The residence of the late F.P. Starr on Coburg Street was purchased through the efforts of Alexander Knox, then manager of Eastern Trust Company, and Miss Mary Louise Lynch, then of the firm of Gilbert, McGloan & Gillis. On one of his visits to New Brunswick, Lord Beaverbrook invited all members of the Law Faculty, as well as Brigadier Michael Wardell, who was with him, to a lavish dinner at the Admiral Beatty Hotel. Starting with cocktails and ending with champagne, he soon got his guests pretty high. When the table was cleared, he produced his plans for the Starr House for our inspection. Unfortunately, some of the guests became somewhat critical of the plans, which had been prepared by the late Garnet Wilson, Architect. The Dean, having noticed a large vacant room on the lower floor, inquired: "What is this room for? I do not see any book shelves but, is this the library?" Lord Beaverbrook replied, "Oh, no, this is a reception room for the common council of the City. We will have a grand piano and beautiful paintings on the walls." The Dean then went on: "Oh, I thought this was to be a law school - we don't want the City Council in here." One or two others agreed with him. Suddenly Lord Beaverbrook rolled up the plans and said, "You are unworthy of the Starr House. We will use other buildings. The meeting is adjourned." We all said good night and started home. I joined the Dean and offered my arm to steady him. He shook me off but accepted my offer to drive him home. I assisted him to the door but he could not find his key, so I located it in a coat pocket. I then offered to assist him upstairs but my offer was refused with, "You may NOT." The next day I heard that he had broken his

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wrist. Lord Beaverbrook, whom I saw on the following morning, said rather boastfully: "Well, I winged one." Then we discussed the Law School. After an hour or more, he agreed to use the Starr House plans without modification. However, they were modified.

Then he proceeded to purchase a law library and asked a lecturer, now deceased, to recommend what books should be acquired. Unfortunately, this lecturer would write long letters to Lord Beaverbrook explaining why certain books should be purchased. I am sure his letters were not read and I persuaded him to merely send a list with his recommendation. A splendid library was purchased. It includes all the American State Reports and is probably as good as any law school library in Canada.

Also, Lord Beaverbrook purchased in England some very fine oak furniture for the Law School. Unfortunately, he did not purchase it in the name of the University of New Brunswick. Consequently, it would have been subject to customs duty on arrival in Canada. He refused to pay such duty. The Customs Inspector insisted that he must have an Order-in-Council exempting the furniture from duty. Miss Lynch, who was in our firm and doing much of Lord Beaverbrook's legal work, was worried. I suggested that she should call Prime Minister St. Laurent, who knew Lord Beaverbrook very well. She did so. Mr. St. Laurent, who was then in a Cabinet meeting, came to the telephone and she explained how important it was. He said an Order-in-Council would be enacted that day and sent to her. This was done and the furniture was exempted and the books are now in the Law School - not back in England.

Later Lord Beaverbrook told Miss Lynch that he wanted to build an Art Gallery in Saint John and authorized her to purchase the necessary site at the north-west corner of Queen Square on Charlotte Street. This was done and options for the site of a Playhouse were also obtained. Unfortunately, he told the manager of the hotel where he was staying that he would like to display some valuable works of art in the ballroom. The manager, unwisely told Lord Beaverbrook, that the ballroom was in use each week by certain service clubs. Evidently Lord Beaverbrook took offense and decided to build the Art Gallery in Fredericton and gave instructions to sell the land which had been purchased. This was done and the Art Gallery was in fact built in Fredericton and so was the Playhouse, which has been an unfortunate start. Saint John would have been a much better location for both buildings. Politicians probably intervened.

### Chief Justice Baxter

One of the most unusual characters in the early days between the First and Second World Wars was Chief Justice J.B.M. Baxter, formerly Premier of New Brunswick. He was a practical joker.

On one occasion when the Judges of the Court of Appeal were staying at the old Queen Hotel, which used to be on the West side of Queen Street in Fredericton, Judge Grimmer found a sheet of paper under the door of his bedroom on which the following verse was written:

Mr. Justice Harrison,  
Is neat beyond comparison,  
But that old Grimmer  
Should cut his mustache trimmer.

At breakfast the next day, he was very angry and said he knew that the clerk of the hotel (Boyle) had done it and would ask the Manager to dismiss him. Boyle published pamphlets of poetry from time to time but was incapable of disrespect toward the judges. Baxter finally confessed to Grimmer that he was the culprit.

On another occasion in the early thirties, Baxter was having a shave in Bill Lund's barber shop on Princess Street, a popular place in the early morning. The three chairs were occupied and other patrons were waiting. Mr. Justice Baxter was stretched out in front of Lund when the latter said: "Now John, you should tell us how much you got out of the Valley Railway contract," (referring to the 1917 scandal). The judge jumped to his feet and grappled with Lund, but Lund was quite a wrestler and soon had his client on the floor. Everyone laughed and good will was soon restored.

On another occasion, I was consulted by a lady who had been certified as mentally incompetent by one doctor only, whereas the Hospital Act required certificates of two doctors. I succeeded in getting her liberated but could not be sure of getting her investments back into her own name. Her only fault was that she carried her assets around with her in a hand-bag and accused the maids in the Admiral Beatty Hotel where she had a room, of wearing her clothes.

The Chief Justice urged me to have her examined by at least two physicians, which I did. However, the Superintendent of the Provincial Hospital was not satisfied and her property remained with a trust company. One morning the Chief Justice called me on the telephone and said, "That woman of yours - I want to see you." On reaching his chambers he told me: "As I got out of a car on Prince William Street near the Bank of Montreal, I felt bony fingers seize me by the collar. I saw this white figure of a woman with angry eyes. I told her 'Woman, unhand me, I see now the evidence I need.' " They evidently exchanged angry words and the Chief Justice declined to make an order for her. She kept writing me long after being committed to Homewood Sanitarium.

### A Smart Law Student

Some years ago, when the University of New Brunswick Law School was in Saint John, there was a student who had difficulty passing an examination on a subject of which Judge Armstrong was the lecturer. This student (now deceased) was articulated in the office of Messrs. Porter & Ritchie. One morning when Mr. Porter was walking to his office, he met Judge Armstrong in King Square. The latter remarked to Mr. Porter - "That's a nice young man you have in your office, he gave me three nice partridge recently." Mr. Porter, when he reached his office, took his student to task and accused him of trying to bribe Judge Armstrong into passing him on his supplementary examination. The student replied, "I wasn't trying to bribe him, I just wanted to bring him back to normal."

### My First Client

After the First World War, Gregory F.G. Bridges (later Chief Justice of New Brunswick) now deceased, was a contemporary of mine at University College, Oxford, where our rooms were on the same staircase. One evening he came into my sitting room, quite upset, and said he wanted my advice. He had been served with two summonses by a police officer charging him with riding his bicycle without a light after dark and riding it on the sidewalk. He did not want to plead guilty, nor did he want to pay a fine after a conviction. I advised him to plead guilty, but he was disinclined to take my advice.

The next morning he visited my room again, with a grin on his face. His first words were: "I got off." He then proceeded to tell me what had happened. He attended the Court Room before two Justices of the Peace and sat down on a bench. On one side of him was a man who pleaded guilty to a charge of cruelty to his horse and was fined five shillings, which the Clerk of the Court entered in a book even before the penalty was announced. On his other side was a woman who was charged with drunkenness and was also fined five shillings. When his name was called, he stood up and asked the two Justices of the Peace if he could make a statement. His request was granted.

He was a tall lanky young man with a frank, open countenance and looked quite dignified wearing his gown. He said - "Your Honour, my home is in the little City of Fredericton in the Province of New Brunswick. We have only a few paved streets and I have always been accustomed to riding my bicycle on the sidewalks and have never had to use a light after dark. I am unaccustomed to the by-laws of a modern city like Oxford and can assure you it will never happen again. I hope it will not be necessary to enter a conviction against me, as that would be a serious reflection on my reputation."

The two Justices conferred together and finally said - "Mr. Bridges, in view of what you have said, we think that a warning to you will be sufficient and the information will be withdrawn."

As Bridges was leaving the Court Room, the police constable who had sum-

moned him remarked: "It won't work a second time sir. Perhaps not," replied Bridges, "but it did work the first time."

Gregory Bridges became a very conscientious trial Judge and Chief Justice. He was a good rugby, football player and swimmer. He used to swim across the St. John River below what is now the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel. One of us would row a boat while the other swam alongside. He was highly respected as a Judge.