

“Prudent L. Mercure Papers, CDEM Collection [microform]”

(MCC:92-00135)

Finding Aid

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Revised by Anne Chamberland 5 June 2008

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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Collection Title: “*Prudent L. Mercure Papers, CDEM Collection [microform]*”

Citation: “Prudent L. Mercure Papers, CDEM Collection [microform]”; MCC:92-00135, Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Accession Number: MCC:92-00135

Shelf List Numbers: F99-100

Provenance:

“In his seven years as Canadian Archivist, Prudent L. Mercure collected a mass of documentation on the Madawaska Territory, that disputed No-Man’s Land between the United States and British North America initially settled in 1785 by Acadians from the Lower St. John River in New Brunswick. Much of his collection of books at the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa is on microfilm and available on inter library loan. This project focuses on his private collection, not available at National Archives, and notes containing personal responses to Mr. Mercure’s inquiries of a historical nature, responses provided by various authorities. Some original documentation such as letters from Pastor L. A. l’Hiver (Pastor of St. Bruno, Van Buren, Maine 186-1864) to Louison Mercure (The collector’s Father) detailing a plan to erect and Apostolic Vicariate for the Madawaska Region, as opposed to making it a part of either the Diocese of Portland (Maine of Chatham (New Brunswick) surface for the first time in these files.”

This is one of two known manuscript collections created by Prudent L. Mercure sometime between 1890 and 1913. Deposited in 1985 at the Centre de documentation et d’étude madawaskayennes (CDEM), Centre universitaire St-Louis-Maillet, Edmundston, New Brunswick. The other collection is deposited at the Manuscript Division of the National Archives of Canada (N.A.C.) in Ottawa, Ontario. (N.A.C. Collection MCC:96-00134) (See also “Prudent L. Mercure Papers, and MCC:00146)

This collection was donated as a single box of materials to the CDEM in 1985 by Monsignor Eymard Desjardins, then curate of the parish of the Cathédrale Immaculée-Conception of Edmundston, N.B.. Monsignor Desjardins apparently received this collection from Monsignor Bernier in 1974. According to Monsignor Desjardins, there were two other boxes of Mercure papers which he was unable to obtain.

Although ownership of this collection prior to Monsignor Bernier is undocumented, circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that Monsignor Bernier may have inherited the collection from Thomas Albert, whose pastorate Bernier assumed upon Albert’s death in 1924.

The most compelling evidence to suggest that the CDEM Mercure papers were once in the possession of Thomas Albert is the presence in this collection of a typescript of Albert's *Histoire du Madawaska* with handwritten annotations and comments from Monsignor Louis-Napoléon Dugal. In the introduction to the published version of this manuscript, Albert credits Monsignor Dugal with helping him to prepare the manuscript for publication. Albert also acknowledges having made extensive use of a collection of historical notes compiled by Mercure, which he received from Senator Patrick Theriault of Lille, Maine. According to Albert, Senator Theriault purchased these notes from Mercure for a large, unspecified sum of money.

Biography: Prudent L. Mercure was born at Saint-Basile, New Brunswick 20 February 1873, son of Joseph P. Mercure and Sophie (à Régis) Cyr. Mercure descended from two of the oldest Acadian families in the Madawaska settlement.

After graduating from the local district school, Mercure completed his studies at the Saint-Joseph de Memramcook College in southeastern New Brunswick. He then worked as a school teacher in Ste-Anne, Saint-Léonard, and Baker-Brook, N.B.. Deeply interested in history, Mercure championed the Acadian cause in his community, lecturing on regional history, writing article, and communicating with regional historians such as W. O. Raymond and Placide Gaudet. In 1895, Mercure decided to write a history of the Madawaska settlement. His research led him to communicate with the Dominion Archives (known today as the National Archives of Canada) in Ottawa.

By 1902, Mercure had moved to Ottawa where he worked as a postal employee for the House of Commons. In 1906 he became a clerk at the Dominion Archives. He married Rose-Eva Hudon in 1910 and transferred to the department of the Secretary of State in 1912. He died of peritonitis on 24 June 1913.

Date Range: 1890 – 1913

Physical Characteristics/Condition: 2 rolls of 35mm microfilm containing microfilm edition of notes, correspondence and other materials relating to the history of the Madawaska Settlement, created and/or compiled by Prudent L. Mercure circa 1890-1913 and deposited in 1985 at the Centre de documentation et d'étude madawaskayennes, Centre universitaire St-Louis-Maillet, Edmundston, New Brunswick. Some items are easy to read while others are very difficult to read because the writing is almost illegible.

Publication Information:

The Prudent Mercure papers deposited at the Centre de documentation et d'études madawaskayennes are catalogued as record group 25. This collection has been microfilmed twice: first in 1974 by the Centre d'études acadiennes at the Université de Moncton, and again in 1992 by the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick for the Société historique du Madawaska. At Monsignor Desjardins' instruction, the Centre d'études acadiennes filmed the collection exactly as received. After receiving the original papers, the CDEM staff reclassified the

documents according to a previously established order. The 1992 microfilm of this collection reproduces the CDEM's re-classification.

The Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes purchased the 1992 microfilm edition of this collection from the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick. The PANB reference numbers for the two rolls are A3668 and A3669.

Access: There are no restrictions on access on this collection

Revised by Anne Chamberland, 3 June 2008 from notes compiled by Lisa Ornstein