

Found: piece of Canadian history

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Archivists in the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections recently re-discovered a bill of treason dating back to the Rebellion of 1837. Photo courtesy Mills Library.

Archivists in the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections recently re-discovered a bill of treason dating back to the Rebellion of 1837.

Written on parchment and dated March 1838, the bill was filed against William Rogers, a yeoman living in or near Albion, York Township, Upper Canada.

The document was found by archivist Sheila Turcon in a storage area in the archives at Mills Memorial Library. Archivists were excited to recover the piece and stress its significance for research staff and students at McMaster.

"The bill has great research potential for scholars of Canadian history and specifically of Canadian politics in the pre-Confederation period," said archivist Renu Barrett.

The bill pertains to the 1837 uprising led by William Lyon Mackenzie, a Scottish-Canadian journalist, reformer and politician. Mackenzie rallied 400 rebels, including many farmers from the Toronto area, to fight the bureaucratic allocation of land, much of which was controlled by wealthy owners in the government as Crown reserves or in support of the Anglican Church.

Rogers was arrested for treason on December 13, 1837 in connection with offences that took place before, after and on December 4, 1837 in the Township of York: plotting an insurrection against the Queen, persuading others to join in the insurrection, and assembling with approximately fifty others.

In his indictment Rogers is described as "not having the fear of God in his heart but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil." He was tried on April 18, 1838 and acquitted.

Archivists have catalogued the bill to provide easy access for researchers. Its description is available on the [William Ready Division of Archives web site](#).

Provided by McMaster University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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