

# The Queen's Review

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## QUEEN'S OR VICTORIA: WHICH WAS FIRST?

By Dr. W. E. McNeill, Vice-Principal and Treasurer

"THE STORY OF QUEEN'S," told at the Centenary celebration in October, 1941, had the following passage:

Centenaries are not what they seem.

Victoria had a centenary five years ago, Toronto fourteen years ago, McGill twenty years ago. Yet Queen's began teaching before any of these. It opened its doors March 7, 1842; Victoria, June 21, 1842; King's, out of which Toronto emerged, in 1843; McGill's real as opposed to a technical opening was also in 1843, when its Arts work began. Laval was only a Theological Seminary till 1852, when it obtained its charter and the power to confer degrees.

Thus Queen's was the first active university in all the 3,000 miles between Fredericton, New Brunswick, and the Pacific Ocean.

The writer admits that his spatial designation is not accurate to the mile. But he stands by the rest. Some friends of Victoria were aggrieved to hear that their university is a few months younger than Queen's. This article is written to give the evidence.

Several McGill writers have jested at their centenary date of 1821 and their false dawn opening of 1829. Dr. Stephen Leacock, in a chapter on McGill University in his history of Montreal, writes: "Since the real date of the first teaching is 1843, the happy end of the war might give McGill another chance to rejuvenate itself back again to one hundred years, blushing at its first century." That hope was not to be realized. But something was done. The *McGill News* on May 15, 1943, issued a special number "to mark the 100th year of teaching in the Faculty of Arts," and the October Convocation officially celebrated the centenary. The technical opening in 1829, eight years after the Charter was granted, was to prove to the sceptical courts, where James McGill's bequest was under attack, that the institution had not been still-born but could really exercise some functions. So it put on a few hours of ceremony, gave a limited adoption to the five-year-old Montreal Medical Institution, and rested from its labours for fourteen years. This activity of 1829, Professor Cooper in the *McGill News* of May 15, 1943, calls "a fiction designed to deceive lawyers."

So McGill does not seek an unearned honour. Neither does the University of Toronto. Neither now does Victoria officially. But it was not always thus; there are many graduates who have been taught to believe that Victoria's Faculty of Arts dates from 1841.

Queen's, with the temporary name of The University at Kingston, got a provincial charter, February 10, 1840. But it was never operative. The Trustees, having to await Queen Victoria's permission to use her title, decided for their greater prestige to ask also for a Royal Charter. This through agents' slackness and the law's delay was not issued till October 16, 1841.

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Source: P. Climo



The Scottish Principal, though sailing as soon as he could, did not arrive in Kingston till the end of December and the college opening had to be postponed till the scattered settlements had been told the date through advertisements in the newspapers and announcements in the churches. The Trustees fixed upon March 7, 1842. Ten students then registered and a four months' session began.

Victoria, as a university College, started as an extension of Upper Canada Academy at Cobourg, which had been founded in 1836. The provincial Act of August 27, 1841, changed the name and gave degree-conferring powers. But the Academy did not then cease, except in name; as soon as possible it added a college department for some half-dozen students and went on.

The question of priority comes to this:

Did the newly named and newly chartered Victoria begin the work of a university College on October 21, 1841, with the opening of the first session after the Act of August 27? If so, it preceded Queen's by over four months. Or did Victoria postpone the addition of college courses till the beginning of the next academic year, which was actually on May 26, 1842, when the summer session began, and officially on June 21, 1842, when Egerton Ryerson was installed as Principal? If so, Queen's was earlier by about three months.

From the beginning Queen's has officially claimed to be first. A published report of a committee of the Trustees appointed to consider the Baldwin University Bill of 1843 had this statement: "Queen's College is in actual operation as a University, and was so at an earlier period than any Institution in Upper Canada." In March, 1845, a printed "Petition of the Trustees of Queen's College at Kingston to the Honourable the House of Commons Assembly of the Province of Canada, in Provincial Parliament Assembled" declared:

That the institution aforesaid was opened for the purpose for which it was incorporated, in the month of March, 1842—having been thus the first seminary within the bounds of the late province of Upper Canada in actual operation as a University.

On the other hand some Victoria voices have claimed priority. Burwash in his *History of Victoria College* and in various articles, including a paper read to the Royal Society of Canada in 1905, asserted that Victoria was first. He wrote:

Later, in 1841, this Academy [Upper Canada] received College rank by act of the legislature and the first session opened in October of the same year. The Presbyterians took the first steps towards founding Queen's College in 1839; in 1842 it actually came into existence in Kingston.

The Victoria College *Bulletin* for many years, though not since the issue of 1936-37, had the same claim in varying form. In 1918-1919 it appeared thus:

In 1841, the first Parliament of Canada extended the charter under the name of Victoria College, with power to grant degrees in the various faculties, and, beginning her work in the Faculty of Arts in that year, Victoria was the first University in actual operation in this Province.

The question of priority is not merely a private argument between zealous friends of Queen's and Victoria. Various histories of Canada, including

two written as high school text-books, Victoria began university work in 1841, published 1935-1937 under distinguished editors.

The evidence should be examined in the *Christian Guardian*, in Hodgins' *Deeds of Victoria*, in Ryerson's letters and speeches of 1841 and 1842.

The *Christian Guardian* was a weekly news, to promote religion, and to support the Church. Its first editor was Egerton Ryerson of Victoria College. It was for many years the only paper in Upper Canada. Lord Sydenham, in 1841, called it a "decent paper in both Canadas." It was used to advertise its opening on March 21, 1842. The later Victoria College, used it to advertise their opening special functions such as the annual meeting. Ryerson furnished it with copies. On June 21, 1842, to be referred to the Trustees from time to time sent.

J. C. Hodgins was a student of Victoria College, though he did not graduate. He was later Historiographer to the Ontario Historical Society. His *History of Education in Ontario* is the most important source-material. It contains many typographical and other errors, so that it now and then silently suppresses the truth. In two cases it omits from the narrative administration and work of Upper Canada College, and the record.

Burwash's *History of Victoria College* is a source-material, but as an official co-operation of the Board of Regents and the College Alumni Association." It was written from Victoria in 1859 and was published in 1918, leaving his *History* in manuscript in the editorship of F. H. Wallace, who made slight omissions, a few rearrangements and corrections. The statements of Burwash's. As Burwash was only a student, he had no direct person is therefore only a useful witness. He relied much on the *Christian Guardian*. In his *History* he missed important facts. A serious error, for which he was

<sup>1</sup> Vol. VI, p. 240. The same error occurs at McGill in 1829. (Vol. IV, p. 1)



two written as high school text-books, make the unsupported statement that Victoria began university work in 1841. So does the *Encyclopedia of Canada*,<sup>1</sup> published 1935-1937 under distinguished editorship.

The evidence should be examined. It is mainly in the contemporary *Christian Guardian*, in Hodgins' *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada*, in Ryerson's letters and speeches, and in two Victoria pamphlets of 1841 and 1842.

The *Christian Guardian* was established in Toronto in 1829 to give the news, to promote religion, and to maintain the interests of the Methodist Church. Its first editor was Egerton Ryerson, who was later the first Principal of Victoria College. It was for many years the most important newspaper in Upper Canada. Lord Sydenham when Governor-General called it "the only decent paper in both Canadas." Queen's College used it for several months to advertise its opening on March 7, 1842. Upper Canada Academy, and later Victoria College, used it to make their activities known. It contains advertisements of their opening and closing dates and gives accounts of special functions such as the annual examinations and public exhibitions. Ryerson furnished it with copies of his addresses of October 21, 1841, and June 21, 1842, to be referred to later, and the Secretary of the Board of Trustees from time to time sent it official accounts of proceedings.

J. C. Hodgins was a student in Upper Canada Academy and in Victoria College, though he did not graduate. He was at one time Deputy Minister and later Historiographer to the Ontario Department of Education. His *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada* in twenty-eight volumes is most important source-material. But it is not wholly dependable. It has typographical and other errors, some of them in dates. For partisan reasons, it now and then silently suppresses part of a document, distorting its significance. In two cases it omits from a letter to Ryerson severe criticism of the administration and work of Upper Canada Academy. Sometimes in the narrative connecting documents, Hodgins makes statements contrary to the record.

Burwash's *History of Victoria College* must be mentioned, not as source-material, but as an official publication, "made possible by the generous co-operation of the Board of Regents of Victoria College, and the Victoria College Alumni Association." Burwash was born in 1839. He graduated from Victoria in 1859 and was Chancellor from 1887 to 1913. He died in 1918, leaving his *History* in manuscript. It was published in 1927 under the editorship of F. H. Wallace, who wrote in the Preface: "I have merely made slight omissions, a few rearrangements of material, and some very minor corrections. The statements of fact and of opinion are entirely Dr. Burwash's." As Burwash was only two years old when Victoria got its college charter, he had no direct personal knowledge of the events of that time and is therefore only a useful witness when he produces sound evidence. Though he relied much on the *Christian Guardian* and on Hodgins' *Documentary History* he missed important material conflicting with his own statements. A serious error, for which he was doubtless not responsible, was in indexing

<sup>1</sup> Vol. VI, p. 240. The same *Encyclopedia* states that teaching began in Arts at McGill in 1829. (Vol. IV, p. 184).



and printing Principal Ryerson's inauguration address of June 21, 1842, with the date October 21, 1841.

Professor C. B. Sissons' *Egerton Ryerson: His Life and Letters* is a definitive contribution to knowledge of Ryerson and his work. It is based on over two thousand letters and other documents. The first volume was issued in 1937; the second is nearly ready for publication. The relevant letters have been drawn upon for this article.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Dr. Barber and to the staff of Victoria College Library for fullest co-operation in the search for historical material.

#### UPPER CANADA ACADEMY

First of all the nature of the work done in Upper Canada Academy and the relation of that school to Victoria College must be understood.

The Academy was founded in Cobourg in 1836 to provide a primary and secondary education in a religious atmosphere. Ryerson said at the beginning that it was "not to compete with any college (university) which may be established in the province, but rather to be tributary to it." It covered the work of the elementary common schools and of the more advanced grammar schools, and offered additional subjects as well. For example, it included Hebrew for intending ministers. Its pupils ranged in age from ten or twelve years to twenty or more. It had five departments: Juvenile, Commercial, Science and Arts, Letters and Fine Arts, and Female. The girls were kept almost wholly separate from the boys and, in the language of the day, were taught both the "Solid and Ornamental branches." The latter included Music, Drawing, and Painting. The academic courses were loosely organized and each student was free to take "all or any of the various branches as his parents or guardians may direct." The average period of stay according to Burwash was about two years. As in all schools of the time the proudest subjects were Classics and Mathematics but the most popular were those of the so-called Commercial Department. This was not to give business training but to provide a general education good enough for bread-and-butter pursuits. Because it had no Latin or Greek it was sometimes called the "English" Department.

The Act of August 27, 1841, changed the name to Victoria College and gave degree-conferring powers. But the Academy was not turned into a university College. Except for the Female Department, which was dropped at the close of the session 1841-1842, as no one then thought of women as college material, the whole institution, Juvenile Department and all, was continued as before. The university College, when established, was only another branch of work and was called first the Regular Division and later the Collegiate Division. The name Victoria College<sup>1</sup> applied to the whole

<sup>1</sup> There was no incongruity about this. The term "College" in England and Canada is freely used for a superior type of school, as Eton College, Winchester College, Upper Canada College. The corresponding American word is "Academy." Two of the most famous schools in the United States are Phillips Exeter Academy and Phillips Academy at Andover. The Methodists of Upper Canada had naturally called their Cobourg School an Academy because they were United Empire Loyalists in origin and until 1828 had remained under the jurisdiction of the parent American Church. But in 1841 they naturally adopted the English word. It was correct for the secondary school work which was retained and correct for the projected undergraduate studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Burwash, page 91, thirty-eight, and Victoria fewer than a dozen. Th 1857, when the Victoria were only thirty-three in

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institution; the same building accommodated all; the former masters continued as professors. There was no immediate clear-cut division between departments. Under these circumstances total registration figures<sup>1</sup> are very misleading as they include children and adults, juveniles and undergraduates. For a long time the Collegiate Department was numerically insignificant. In the session 1842-43, out of a total attendance of about one hundred, only five or six were in Collegiate classes and probably only two<sup>2</sup> of these were fully matriculated. Even in the session 1846-47 there were only two undergraduates.

The first degree was awarded in the middle of the session 1845-46 and the next in 1848. Though a four years' course for B.A. existed on paper from the beginning, not all the subjects were offered and there was no continuity of classes till 1854. Burwash says that "for the first thirteen years, the work was academic rather than undergraduate" (page 134); and referring to the period 1856-1865 he writes: "Victoria could now claim to be no longer an Academy but a college with University powers" (page 217).

The story of the elimination of Academy work can be told briefly. In the early fifties the Juvenile Department was dropped. "Next," says Burwash, "came the separation of the undergraduates from the matriculants and other students. . . . In 1858 the students were divided into three classes, (1) undergraduates; (2) specialists, i.e., students taking a partial or special course in undergraduate subjects; (3) and now in a separate catalogue high school students properly so-called." In 1867 the High School Department was merged with the Cobourg Grammar School and for the first time Victoria was a University and not a conglomerate of public school, high school, and college as in its early years.

Briefly then, Victoria College was for a long time two institutions under the same roof with overlapping work and staff:

1. A preparatory College, which like Upper Canada College then and now, served very young pupils as well as those of high school age.

2. A university College, fed almost exclusively for twenty-five years by the preparatory College. For the first thirteen years it had very few students; the preparatory department was almost the whole institution.

#### THE ISSUE

The question is, When did the work of the university College begin? King's could not open for sixteen years after it got its Charter; McGill not for twenty-one years; Queen's not for five months. Was Victoria, which received its new name and new powers on August 27, 1841, able to add immediately to its existing Academy courses the work of a university College? Or was there an interval of getting ready?

<sup>1</sup> Burwash, page 91, says that in 1844 King's had fifty-eight students, Queen's thirty-eight, and Victoria seventy-five. But as a university College Victoria had fewer than a dozen. The figures for Queen's are likewise too high. As late as 1857, when the Victoria Gazette, or Calendar, began to classify the students, there were only thirty-three in Arts out of a total enrolment of 352.

<sup>2</sup> Chancellor Nelles in his Convocation Address, May 13, 1855, said: "I had the honour of being one of the two students who first matriculated in Victoria University, in the year 1842."



The historical documents show that the winter session beginning October 21, 1841, was merely the usual Academy session, with possibly a slight re-organization to segregate a matriculation class, and that the opening of the College proper was postponed to the next academic year. The date was actually May 26, 1842, when the summer session opened, and officially June 21, 1842, when Ryerson was installed as Principal. What is the proof?

#### I. THE EVIDENCE OF OFFICIAL ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE AUTUMN OF 1841

A college does not open without public announcement of the date. In the pioneer conditions of 1841 with no railways, scattered hamlets, and few newspapers it was not possible to say, Let there be a college, with the certainty that by miraculous action there would be a college. In all the institutions started at that time there was a disappointing lack of students. Hardly any but candidates for the ministry felt the need of higher education — not Sir John Macdonald, or Sir Alexander Campbell, or Sir Oliver Mowat, for example, though living beside Queen's College. After three months' advertising Queen's opened with ten students; after much greater publicity a year later King's got twenty-six and McGill three,<sup>1</sup> two of them nephews of the Principal. Victoria had no less need of informing the public. Consider the course of events.

On June 18, 1841, the Methodist Conference authorized the Board of Upper Canada Academy to apply to the legislature for a college charter. A petition was prepared in the first week of July. The Bill received its first reading on July 16 and its last on August 5. On August 27 Lord Sydenham gave the royal assent.

"What next?" must have been an urgent question in the minds of the Academy Trustees. The answer was determined in part by the arrangement of the academic year. It consisted of a summer session of eighteen weeks from May to September, ending with semi-annual examinations, and of a winter session of twenty-six weeks from October to April, closing with several days of public oral examinations and a public exhibition. When the summer session opened on May 27, 1841, the new Bill was not in sight and only the usual Academy programme was announced in the *Guardian*. There was no intimation that a university College might be added in the autumn. Likewise, the last Circular, or Calendar, of the Academy, dated 1841, had not a word of any impending change in status.

Thus the students and teachers in the Academy on August 27, 1841, when the new name and the new powers were authorized, must have wondered how and when they would be affected. What changes, if any, could be made in the middle of the academic year? A clear announcement of policy was absolutely necessary and it was promptly made.

The first of the two notices quoted below states that the winter session of the Academy will open on October 21. The second repeats that information and adds that notwithstanding the new charter, no change in operations will be made "during the present year." Both advertisements are in the name of Upper Canada Academy, although Victoria College had become the strictly

<sup>1</sup> *McGill News*, May 15, 1943. Professor John I. Cooper in a Centenary article.

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legal designation. The explanation is, of course, that the new powers were not to be immediately exercised and the use of the new name might be misleading. The institution continued in reality as Upper Canada Academy<sup>1</sup> until the session ended in April, 1842.

Here are the advertisements:

The Semi-Annual Examinations of the Classes in the U.C. Academy will be held on the 27th, 28th, and 29th of September. The Winter Session to consist of twenty-six weeks, will commence on Thursday, the 21st of October.

—*Christian Guardian*, September 15 and 22, 1841.

### UPPER CANADA ACADEMY

The Winter Session of the U.C. Academy will commence on Thursday, 21st October. The following is a brief outline of the studies of the several departments.

These are word for word as in previous Academy announcements. Then comes the significant new paragraph:

Although the U.C. Academy has been Chartered under the name of "Victoria College," I am authorized to state, that no change in its operations will be made during the present year. The Male and Female Departments will be continued until public notice shall be given to the contrary.

—*Christian Guardian*, September 29 to November 3, 1841.

These two advertisements were in a seven weeks' sequence beginning nineteen days after the signing of the new Charter and continuing till the winter session was two weeks old. They are conclusive evidence that Victoria did not add a university College on October 21, 1841.

## II. EVIDENCE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF VICTORIA

Egerton Ryerson, the first President of Victoria, appointed in 1841, installed in 1842, and active head till 1844, surely knew when Victoria began as a university College. His evidence is perfectly definite: Victoria opened as a "preparatory College" October 21, 1841, and as a "College proper" June 21, 1842. Ryerson had a thought-out plan, which he followed step by step as the documents show:

### A. Ryerson's Plan to Make the Academy a Preparatory College

On September 1, 1841, five days after the new Charter was granted, the Board of Management, still calling itself the Board of Upper Canada Academy, asked Ryerson to accept the principalship. A week later he announced an important decision in a letter<sup>2</sup> to Hon. S. B. Harrison, appealing for a Government grant: "The present departments of Tuition will of course be retained as preparatory departments for the College." This is the first use of the word "preparatory" to designate the relation of the continuing Academy classes to the undergraduate courses soon to be set up. From this time on, Ryerson and others frequently used the word.

<sup>1</sup> Even the new name of Victoria did not immediately come into use. The advertisements of the autumn of 1841 did not use it. The minutes of the Committee of Management of September 1, October 6, and November 9 did not use it. As late as May 11, 1842, Rev. J. Ryerson, brother of the Principal, writing in the *Christian Guardian* referred to the closing exercises in April as "the late examinations of the students of the U.C. Academy."

<sup>2</sup> Sissons: *Egerton Ryerson, His Life and Letters*, Vol. I, p. 582.



Why was the Academy retained as a preparatory College? Practical financial necessity required that a building designed<sup>1</sup> for one hundred and seventy pupils should not be wasted on a bare half-dozen undergraduates. A school which had been religiously fostered for five years could not be suddenly thrown away. Above all, without it as a preparatory department there could be no College. Not for over twenty years more were the Grammar Schools of the province able to prepare for matriculation. Throughout these years King's and its successor, the University of Toronto, depended almost wholly upon Upper Canada College, Queen's upon Queen's College School, planned in 1840 and opened in 1843, and Victoria on its preparatory College. Ryerson's first task as Principal was to make sure of a supply of students for the College proper. He solved the problem by retaining and adapting the work of the old Academy. He made it a preparatory College.

#### B. The Trustees' Confirming Resolution

The early minutes of the Victoria Board of Trustees, as distinct from the Committee of Management which looked after financial matters, cannot be found. But there is clear evidence that sometime before October 21, 1841, the Trustees had confirmed Ryerson's policy of turning the Academy into a preparatory College. On November 29, 1841, Ryerson in a letter<sup>2</sup> addressed to his three professors begins a sentence thus: "The resolutions of the last Board meeting, by which the institution has been opened as a preparatory College, by which we have been appointed as Principal and Professors . . ."

#### C. The Opening of the Preparatory College: Ryerson's Speech of October 21, 1841

Ryerson though urged by his Board to enter at once upon his active duties as Principal was unable to do so. He was under obligation to remain with his church in Toronto for the winter of 1841-42. However, he came to Cobourg for a short time in the autumn to assist in planning and he was the speaker at the opening of the winter session on October 21, 1841. His address had no special significance. Burwash does not even mention it, though by error he prints in the Appendix the speech of June 21, 1842, with the date October 21, 1841. Ryerson, however, sent it to the *Christian Guardian*, which published it in full on November 3, 1841, under the title<sup>3</sup> "Observations Made by the Rev. Egerton Ryerson at the Commencement of the Session, October, 1841." The first part of the speech is a plea for the cultivation of the mind; the second part a series of admonitions: Do not neglect prayer, Value your opportunities, Husband well your time, Cultivate the habit of early rising, and much more of the same kind. It was simply an appropriate talk to young academy students. It marked no proud historical event.

But the first sentence is highly significant since it clears all doubt about the nature of the occasion. Ryerson was merely opening the winter session

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 281. Letter, Feb. 6, 1836, Egerton Ryerson to The Rt. Hon. Edward Ellice.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. II, Chapter I—typed but not yet published.

<sup>3</sup> When the speech was republished in a pamphlet giving also the courses of study the title appeared as "Explanatory and Practical Observations made by the Rev. E. Ryerson at the Preparatory Opening of the College, October, 1841."

of the former Academy at Victoria:

In opening the commencement as this year, I deem it advisable of that kind of preparatory College, and to afford assistance and encourage literary studies.

#### D. The Postponement

Why did Ryerson postpone the preparatory College and the College proper?" Why would he have no change

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of the former Academy which was now to be the preparatory department of  
Victoria:

In opening this Institution as a preparatory College, with a view to its  
commencement as a College proper, at the beginning of the next Academic  
year, I deem it advisable to make a few observations on the leading features  
of that kind of Education which it is intended to impart at the Victoria  
College, and to offer you a few practical suggestions for your present  
assistance and encouragement as Students, in your ordinary and prepara-  
tory studies.

#### D. The Postponement of "Its Commencement as a College Proper"

Why did Ryerson on October 21, 1841, open Victoria merely as a pre-  
paratory College and postpone to next year "its commencement as a College  
proper?" Why were advertisements run for five weeks saying that there  
would be no change in operations "during the present year?"

There may have been several reasons. The Principal in the first perilous  
year of a new project would wish to be at his post. But he had to be in  
Toronto in the winter of 1841-42. The compelling reason for postponement,  
however, was that there were no students ready for college on October 21,  
1841. Academy pupils in the middle of an academic year could not be  
turned abruptly into freshmen and there had been no advertising for others.  
Ryerson knew the facts. His hopes were for the next year. In a letter to  
the *Guardian* dated October 28, 1841, he wrote:

I have just returned from the preparatory opening of the Victoria  
College at Cobourg . . . I was glad to learn that upwards of a dozen of  
the Students are preparing for College; and I think, from what I have  
heard, that at least twenty young men will be prepared to enter the *Fresh-  
man Class* at the College commencement next year.

This was the proper optimism of a new venture but it had no solid  
basis. Fourteen years later President Nelles in his convocation address re-  
called that he "had the honour of being one of the two students who first  
matriculated in Victoria University, in the year 1842."

#### E. First Calendar of Victoria, 1841: Only the Preparatory Courses in Effect

Near the end of his address on October 21, 1841, when Ryerson opened  
Victoria "as a preparatory College with a view to its commencement as a  
College proper at the beginning of the next Academic year," he said: "The  
Collegiate Courses of study, as well as the Preparatory Studies—prepared  
after much consideration—will be published without delay." He announced  
them in the *Christian Guardian* of November 3, 1841; they were later pub-  
lished as a pamphlet,<sup>1</sup> which is really the first Calendar of Victoria College.  
It is dated 1841; it was certainly issued after the session began on October  
21 and probably after November 3, since it includes material not in the  
*Guardian*. The departments of study were named as follows: Preparatory  
School, Junior Division, Regular Division,<sup>2</sup> Commercial Department. The

<sup>1</sup> Victoria College Library has a copy. The *Guardian* of Nov. 3, 1841, has an  
editorial note respecting the Course of Study. It concludes: "It is probable it  
will be given to the public in a pamphlet."

<sup>2</sup> In the second Calendar, published in 1842, the Regular Division is renamed  
the Collegiate Division.



first three, as the detailed prescriptions show, were for juveniles, for candidates for matriculation, and for undergraduates. Were undergraduate courses, then, actually offered in the session 1841-42? The answer is clear. A note in this first Calendar warns:

The operations of the College at the present time are preparatory. The regular commencement will take place in 1842. Until then all letters relating to the admission of students should be addressed to J. Hurlburt.<sup>1</sup>

#### F. The Opening of the College Proper; Ryerson's Speech of June 21, 1842

June 21, 1842, has eclipsed May 26. The academic year began on the latter date, but Ryerson was not installed or the College formally opened till June 21. It was a great occasion. A writer in the *Christian Guardian* (July 6, 1842), using the conventional phraseology of the day, records that the chapel "was well filled by a select and respectable audience. At eleven o'clock the trustees of the College proceeded two and two to the chapel, followed by the Principal, the Faculty, and a number of Ministers. . . . The Rev. Anson Green gave a succinct history of the Academy and then . . . committed the keys of authority and management of the new chartered College to the Rev. Egerton Ryerson, Principal."

The time had come to which Ryerson had looked forward when he made his October speech. It was now "the beginning of the next Academic Year" when the "College proper" was to open. So he began and ended his speech of June 21, 1842, by marking the occasion. His first words were:

Before we commence any important undertaking, we should clearly understand its objects, nature, and advantages. In opening this institution as a College, and assuming the duties of Principal, it devolves on me to present a brief outline of that English and Liberal Education which we propose to impart.

In his conclusion Ryerson referred to "the preparations for a Provincial University on the one side, and the energetic commencement of Queen's College on the other." Then in fine comradeship he joined Victoria with these: "Not as enemies, or even rivals to kindred institutions, but as humble co-workers with them, we commence the important and arduous task of rearing up a well-instructed population and ministry." Thus in one of his last sentences spoken that 21st of June, 1842, Ryerson eloquently marked the occasion: "We commence . . . the task."

#### G. Second Calendar of Victoria, 1842: The College Proper Now in Operation

Ryerson's speech of June 21, 1842, was published in the *Christian Guardian* of July 6, 13, and 20, and also, along with an account of the opening ceremonies, in a pamphlet which is really the second Calendar of Victoria College. The first stated that only the preparatory courses were offered in 1841-42. The second has no reservations. It is an official and souvenir record to mark the opening of a university College. This was the title page:

<sup>1</sup> Hurlburt had been acting Principal of the Academy for several years and continued as such in the session 1841-42, as Ryerson was absent.

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## INAUGURAL ADDRESS on the NATURE AND ADVANTAGES of an ENGLISH AND LIBERAL EDUCATION delivered by THE REV. EGERTON RYERSON at the opening of VICTORIA COLLEGE JUNE 21, 1842

with an account of the opening services, course of studies,  
terms, etc., in the College

"Seek first the goods of the mind, and the rest shall be supplied,  
or no way prejudiced by their absence." Lord Bacon

TORONTO  
BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND VISITORS  
Printed at the Guardian Office, 9 Wellington Buildings  
1842

#### H. Ryerson's Foreword to Complimentary Copies of the Speech of June 21, 1842

Ryerson sent a personal printed copy of the speech to the Governor-General, to the Attorney-General, and to all the members of the legislature. It had a brief foreword, a manuscript copy of which in Ryerson's own handwriting is preserved in Victoria College Library. Hodgins prints it in his *Documentary History*, Vol. IV, page 218:

The establishment of the Institution now termed Victoria College was decided upon in 1832. The buildings were erected and the institution opened as an Academy in 1835.<sup>1</sup> In 1836 a Royal Charter was obtained incorporating the institution under the name of "The Upper Canada Academy." In 1840 it was incorporated by an Act of the Canadian Legislature as a College with University powers. It was opened as such June 21, 1842, with the usual ceremonies, during which the following address was delivered on the Nature of the English and Liberal Education which Victoria College proposed to impart, and its importance to the Clerical, Legal, and Medical Professions, as also to Statesmen and men engaged in the various pursuits of life.

#### I. Ryerson's Private Record

Ryerson's *The Story of My Life* was not completed by the author, but his private papers were at the disposal of literary executors, who told the story to the end and published it. J. G. Hodgins, one of the executors and editor of the book, quotes on page 304 the following sentence from one of Ryerson's private papers:

At the end of two years' labours in the station of Adelaide Street Church, . . . I was again wrested from my loved work by an official pressure brought to bear upon me to accept the Presidency of Victoria College, which was raised from Upper Canada Academy to a College and opened and inaugurated, in 1842, as a University College.

Thus Ryerson's testimony on many occasions and in many forms proves that Victoria opened as a College proper, not on October 21, 1841, but on June 21, 1842.

<sup>1</sup> Two dates are wrong. The Academy opened in 1836; the Act of the Canadian Legislature was passed in 1841.



### III. FURTHER EVIDENCE FROM THE *CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN*

The evidence so far taken from the *Christian Guardian* consists mainly of official advertisements. What follows is from editorials, news items, correspondence, and official communications.

A. The main editorial of the *Guardian* of April 27, 1842, quotes the following statement furnished by Rev. Alex. MacNab, Secretary of the Board of Trustees of Victoria College: "At a meeting of the Victoria College Board, held in Cobourg on the 20th instant, the requisite appointments and arrangements were made with a view to the opening of that institution as a college on the 26th May."

This was the date previously announced by advertisement in the *Guardian* for the opening of the summer session. It was "the beginning of the next Academic year" to which Ryerson had looked forward in his address of October 21, 1841.

B. The *Guardian* of May 4, 1842, published the following:

#### Communication by one of the Trustees

It is known that, during the last session of the Legislature, the Upper Canada Academy was incorporated as a College, but its operations as an Academy have continued up to the present time. Its first session as a College will commence on the 26th instant; the inauguration of the Principal will take place on the 21st of June.

C. The *Guardian* of June 8, 1842, has this editorial comment:

The first session of Victoria College commenced on the 26th of May, and we are gratified to be informed that more young gentlemen are now in the institution than have ever been.<sup>1</sup> This is auspicious, as well as the approaching inauguration of the Rev. Egerton Ryerson as Principal. It is to take place on Thursday, the 21st of June.

D. An editorial in the *Guardian* of June 29, 1842, in criticism of a statement made in London, England, by the Rev. John Road, thus summarizes the essential facts in Victoria's history in 1841-1842:

Why then does he omit saying, that before he took his departure from the colony to visit England, the Upper Canada Academy had by Royal favour been incorporated under the style of Victoria College, that an eminently talented minister as Principal, and able Professors had already been appointed, and that it was to go into operation in May? which it did under cheering auspices, and has now quite as many students in Theology in it after only a few weeks of the first term, as are in the Congregational Academy. [The italics are not in the original.]

E. The *Guardian* of July 6, 1842, published a letter from Rev. William Hayden, a Congregational minister, describing the ceremonies at the opening of Victoria College on June 21, 1842: "... we were invited to attend the inaugural services on the opening of Victoria College. . . . The ceremony took place in the chapel of the institution on Tuesday, the 21st June . . . ."

The *Guardian* has more evidence of a similar kind, but there is no need of assembling it. The case is clear.

<sup>1</sup> The statement about the increase in numbers does not mean that the undergraduate class was large. It consisted of only two regularly matriculated persons and possibly three others out of a total registration of about ninety.

### IV. EVIDENCE

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The case rests. All the pieces of proof fit compactly together into a perfect pattern. How then could the legend have developed that Victoria opened its Faculty of Arts in 1841? Because easy assumption and the will to believe replaced a hard search for facts. The reasoning ran thus: Upper



Canada Academy received its new name and charter, August 27, 1841; the next session opened in the following October; therefore university work began then. This inference became the flimsy foundation of conjecture and assertion. To deal with these now would be as pointless as to answer the old arguments that the earth is flat. Documentary evidence and ascertained fact leave no room for doubt. Burwash, the chief asserter of the priority of Victoria, makes no mention whatever of any of the official documents cited above. He never saw them. They are now assembled for the first time and they tell the story with authority. Upper Canada Academy was turned into a preparatory College and formally opened as such on October 21, 1841. The "College proper" began with the next academic year on May 26, 1842, and was formally opened on June 21. The first examinations under the new charter were held in April, 1843.

Official Victoria no longer claims more than history allows. Its Calendar no longer says that the Faculty of Arts began in 1841. Its present Chancellor has accurately retold its story in the light of fuller knowledge. In an address on "Victoria and a Century of Education," published in its Centenary volume,<sup>1</sup> he said:

Queen's College . . . receive[d] a Royal Charter . . . October 16th, 1841. On March 7th, 1842 the formal opening of the institution took place with Dr. Thomas Liddell as principal.

At the same time the Methodists were moving forward with their plans. The academy had been a success and they desired to develop it into a university. . . . At the first session of the new parliament following the Act of Union, . . . the institution was granted the rights and privileges of a university. This act was passed on August 27, 1841. There was no time to start university work that fall and at first only the Preparatory Department was organized, but in the following year, on June 21, 1842, Victoria was opened as a college giving university courses under the principalship of the Reverend Egerton Ryerson.

Thus Queen's as an active university was ahead of Victoria by about three months and ahead of the University of Toronto (King's) and of McGill by over a year. The other colleges in the vast territory west of the Maritime Provinces were still in the womb of time, most of them not to be born for many a year.

This article is written not for contention but for the record. Three months either way are as nothing in the growth of a hundred years. The memorable reality is that Queen's and Victoria came into being at almost the same time for almost the same reason. They have cherished the same ideals. More than once they have made common cause. When federation with Toronto was a burning question in the eighties they took friendly counsel. Grant, in a paper published<sup>2</sup> only two weeks before his death, recalled that Chancellor Nelles had "seriously discussed with [him] . . . whether it would not be wise to move to Kingston and unite with Queen's in building up there a second great educational centre." It was not to be.

<sup>1</sup> *On the Old Ontario Strand*, 1936; issued by authority of the Board of Regents of Victoria University.

<sup>2</sup> *The University Question. Queen's University Journal*, April 25, 1902.

But Ryerson's noble vision of Victoria, which he was already made "energetic" built, "not as enemies,

## ALFR

### An Appreciation

A PIONEER physician of Saskatchewan, who greatly beloved, Alfred ton died at Regina, following illness, May 14, 1943.

Dr. Singleton was the Henry Singleton, one of the dairymen of Ontario, and Almonte. Born sixty-two years ago at Singleton's Corners (now in Huron County, he spent his youth there. After attending the local school, he went to the Athens High School, he entered the University in 1897, at the age of sixteen, taking his B.A. in 1900, M.D., C.M. in 1904. Following his graduate work abroad, he returned to the C.P. of Glasgow, and then to the University of Edinburgh. Upon his return to Canada, in 1905, he married Miss Mary Arts '02, and in the same year he took up residence at Rouleau, Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan had been a new province the year before he came. The people were still primitive, the land was wide and widely scattered. His friends questioned the wisdom of his decision to solve to join his fortune in the young West. A hard land, it demanded of him the resources of character and strength. Some no doubt of his great personal charm, his genius for friendship with the vast isolation, but his endowments of mind and will to be among his richest. Unsparring of long and exhausting trails in all weathers, self with the fortunes high and low, poor and loved him. In a land of highways, and still a wave of immigration break over it, his un- were his compass to guide