

Outlook on Lifestyle

Audubon's treasures on display

By Gil Hardy
Ottawa Bureau
Thomson News Service

A set of Audubon's Bird's of America, worth at least \$2 million, will soon be nestled in a new home in the basement of the Library of Parliament.

The four-volume collection of colored plates, engraved in England and Scotland between 1826 and 1837, will be the most valuable item in the library's new rare book room. But the Audubon volumes may not be the most important titles destined for the climate-controlled, fire-proof chamber, according to library officials.

There also will be "a very good collection" of memoirs and descriptions of 17th- and 18th-century Canada written by explorers and historians. They will share shelf space with political pamphlets and tracts from turn-of-the-century Canada.

"We have a lot of good material on election campaign platforms for the end of the 19th century, beginning of the 20th century," says Michael Graham, head of the collections division.

The oldest book is a 1558 description of New France, replete with grotesque drawings of animals.

By the Parliamentary Library's standards, such documents are almost equal in value to the Audubon prints because they deal directly with Canada's past. The library is primarily a resource centre for MPs and senators and the new rare book room will play a part in that.

"There are a lot of pamphlets here of speeches done in the House, speeches done outside the House, so anybody wanting to research free trade, for example, can find it here. It's fundamentally a very

Road repair requested

Cars often left "caked with mud" after a rainstorm have prompted residents of the Fifth Line in Halton Hills to call for repairs to the road.

Robert Cameron, a resident of the Fifth Line, said the 1.2-kilometre stretch of road hasn't had any major repairs in 20 years.

"After a rainfall, or mild weather, the road will deteriorate to a muddy suit," Mr. Cameron said of the stretch of road between Sideroad 15 and Sideroad 17 in Halton Hills.

When cars drive down the road they become covered in mud, he said.

And after the town grades the road, which is often after a rainfall, the road "is just a solid sea of mud," he said.

Coun. Joe Hewitt called the stretch the "spongliest piece of road in the whole town" after a rainfall.

Councillors agreed to have a preliminary engineering study done for the road and a proposal to make repairs will be sent to the 1993 budget committee for consideration.

strong research collection," says Graham.

In the past, the library's rare book collection was stored under lock and key on the main floor of the library, which stands behind the Centre Block on Parliament Hill. The documents weren't deteriorating but were in peril if a fire occurred.

The 20,000-volume Canadian Pamphlet Collection was languishing under the library's roof in a high-humidity area subject to extremes of heat and cold. Francois LeMay, assistant direc-

tor of information and technical services, says a special room was needed to protect the collection.

"If we don't keep it in that area, material tends to disappear," he says.

The specially constructed chamber with concrete block walls has its own independent heating and ventilation systems. The room is raised off the floor to guard against water damage and is sealed by a metal door with a three-hour fire rating.

Instead of sprinklers, the room is

equipped with a Halon gas system. If a fire starts, the gas is released to remove oxygen from the air (without oxygen, fires die).

Humidity and temperature levels will be controlled and the lights switch off automatically after 30 minutes. The whole project will cost about \$135,000, which includes mobile shelving to make the most of limited space.

The room will contain some 430 metres of shelves and house upwards of 9,000 titles ranging from thin pamphlets to multi-volume sets of books. The room is designed to hold future acquisitions and the library is eager to get its hands on political memorabilia from past elections.

"Just as people are asking what was the platform of Laurier at the turn of the century, now they are starting to ask what were the election platforms of parties in the 1970's. We want to protect that

material, even though it doesn't have a value as rare books," LeMay says.

The library is hoping Canadians will donate printed documents and other articles from more recent campaigns so the material will be available for future research.

The core of the current rare-book collection was assembled in the mid-1800's, but its roots go back farther. It was begun by the clerk of the Assembly of Lower Canada who travelled to England and France buying first editions.

They were lost when the legislature in Montreal, burned to the ground in 1849. The collection was "re-generated" and has moved with Parliament from Montreal to Ottawa by way of Quebec City and Toronto.

These moves were often made by barge and there are items in the collection bearing waterstains from those nomadic times.



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