



National Archives

CENTENNIAL FLASHBACK: CANADA'S FIRST PARLIAMENT BUILDING

Above, to the right, is the original centre block of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, photographed on May 24th, 1866, during the ceremonies celebrating Queen Victoria's birthday. When first constructed, the building was without the tower clock, though space was provided for it, and a simple peaked roof topped the tower. On the left is a later picture of the building, taken in 1901, showing the clock in position and the tall central dome, topping the tower, which was completed in 1873.

The original centre block of the Parliament Buildings was constructed during the years 1859-1865, to house the legislature of the Province of Canada, which was formed in 1841 by the union of Upper and Lower Canada — the present day southern parts of Ontario and Quebec. Only one session of the provincial legislature was held there, that of 1866, be-

fore it was required, in the following year, to house the Parliament of the newly-created Dominion of Canada.

A distinguished English visitor, Anthony Trollope, wrote at that time:

“But the glory of Ottawa will be, and indeed already is, the set of public buildings which is now being erected on the rock which guards, as it were, the town from the river . . . How far the buildings may be well arranged for the required purposes, how far

they may be economical in construction, or specially adapted to the severe climate of the country, I cannot say; but I have no hesitation in risking my reputation for judgement in giving my warmest commendation to them as regards beauty of outline and truthful nobility of detail.”

The old centre block was destroyed by fire in February 1916, but the present building, begun in 1917, is a worthy, and larger successor to it.