

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORY

The Committee on History, or Historical Committee as it was styled in its early days, is one of the older committees of the General Assembly. First established on the 21st of June 1879, the Committee has been - more or less - in continuous existence ever since. In its early days the Committee appears to have been more concerned with the collection and preservation of records than with the actual history of the Church. However concern over church records was expressed in the report of the Committee on Re-Organization presented to the First General Assembly at the Second Sederunt on the 16th of June 1875.

The final paragraph of the report reads: "That the Clerks of all Ecclesiastical Judicatories, except Kirk Sessions, procure new Minute Books, in which to record their proceedings from and after the date at which the Union takes effect in such Judicatories; that all newly-arranged Presbyteries be instructed to place the Records of their predecessors in safe keeping until the General Assembly acquire a secure and fire-proof building or apartment in which to deposit them; and that the Assembly take immediate steps to obtain such a building or apartment in connection with the Agency of the Church."

A special building or apartment was not obtained and ultimately the records of the four constituent bodies were deposited elsewhere: Knox College, Toronto, for the Canada Presbyterian Church; Queen's University, Kingston, for the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland; Presbyterian College, Halifax, for the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America; and Dalhousie University, Halifax, for the Presbyterian Church of the Maritime Provinces in Connection with the Church of Scotland.

The Committee seems to have become dormant in the early years of the 20th century until it was reactivated at the 42nd General Assembly in 1916. This followed an Overture from the Synod of Toronto & Kingston praying that Assembly appoint a Standing Committee to be called the Historical Committee. Dr. Alexander Fraser, the Ontario Provincial Archivist was appointed convener with two members from each Synod associated with him. The Committee has functioned continuously since that time.