

CHAPTER IXCOMPLETION OF THE CORNERSTONE1911 to 1916

The year 1911 is one of great importance in the Fraser story, for it was this year that Fraser activities first commenced at Edmundston, which from then on was to become more and more important as the Fraser story developed.

It was in March 1911 that Donald Fraser & Sons, Limited acquired all assets of James Murchie Sons, Limited; consisting of a sawmill at Edmundston, timber limits in New Brunswick and Quebec and freehold timberlands in Quebec, mostly on the watersheds of the Madawaska River. These were operated under the name of a new company, known as Fraser, Limited which was incorporated that year. Donald Fraser, Donald Fraser, Jr., and Archibald Fraser were named Directors of the company, and April 15, 1911 elected as officers were Donald Fraser, President; Archibald Fraser, Vice President; and General Manager; J. Le Roy Saunders, Treasurer; and William Matheson, Secretary.

Le Roy Saunders, who had started with William Matheson in the Fraser St. John office in 1905, and who had gone to Cabano when that office closed following the Aberdeen mill fire, now left Cabano for Edmundston to open up the new sawmill there as outside Superintendent. This mill was remodeled and it continued to operate successfully and profitably until 1917.

In 1911, too, grants were secured and the Glendyne Mill developed.

In 1912 Archie Fraser seeing the changing export market being affected by Swedish trade of lumber recommended the channeling of more of the Fraser lumber products to the United States, especially to the New England States, New York, and as far west as Buffalo, from 1912 on becoming one of the largest suppliers of lumber to this area. The peak of the export business had been from 1895 to 1912, although three years later, when the

Nelson sawmill was built at Newcastle, considerable export business continued to be carried on from there.

1912 marked the return of Fraser to Fredericton, the city which had seen their successful early operations around the turn of the century in the Aberdeen mill. That year, Fraser Limited acquired extensive timber holdings in the counties of York, Sunbury, Queens and Kings, and the mill at Fredericton of the Scott Lumber Company, Limited. According to the titles, this mill site was evidently that of a former mill owned and operated by Frederick H. Hale and George A. Murchie in 1889 who had also been owners of the Plaster Rock mill property. At the same time the Victoria mill was purchased in 1913 and the company opened general sales offices in Fredericton through which the enormous business of all of the Fraser mills was transacted. In 1912, Fraser also acquired the property of the Oromocto Lumber Company Limited in York and Sunbury Counties. Then in 1916, they acquired from James Murchie's Sons Company their Phoenix shingle mill in Fredericton, property which previously had been developed by John A. Morrison, another well known early lumberman on the St. John River, prior to the year 1886. The Phoenix shingle mill had operated until 1914 when there were no longer logs to be cut, and it then turned to the cutting of shingles, turning out products, which in that day were well known throughout the New England states for their fine quality. This Phoenix mill, which had been so named, because it had risen out of the ashes of a former mill, subsequently burned, so the two properties were merged, and became the site of the Victoria mill when it was constructed in 1915.

In 1925, the annual productive capacity of the Victoria mill at Fredericton was given as 15 million ft bm lumberand 3 million pieces of Shingles. This represented % of the total annual capacity of 124 million ft bm lumber and 158 million pieces of shingles for the twelve Fraser sawmills by this time in operation at Cabano, ^{Escort,} Notre Dame du Lac, Province of Quebec, and Plaster Rock, Fredericton, Quisibis,

Baker Brook, Magaguadavic, Edmundston, Summit, and Campbellton, New Brunswick.

From the time the Victoria mill was built, manager of this mill was William Glenn, or Billy Glenn, as he was always referred to, who was looked upon as one of New Brunswick's most competent lumbermen. He was to meet a tragic and untimely death in 1938, in a fifty foot fall from a water ^{tower} tower of the mill on which he was inspecting some recently completed repair work. Following his passing, Vernon C. F. Bastin was appointed Superintendent of the Fredericton Division. Formerly of St. John, he was a graduate of the University of New Brunswick class of 1932. He continues today as Superintendent of the Fraser interests in Fredericton.

At the time of the purchase of the Victoria mill from the Scott family, who had been in the lumber business many years in the Province, Mr. James Scott was employed by Fraser as Woods Manager for that section, and this position he continued in for a good many years.

Through the years between 1912 and up through the Second World War, the Victoria mill continued to engage in large scale operations on the St. John River. The products of the mill, rough and dressed lumber, spruce and pine laths, and cedar shingles, used primarily for export to the United States market with a portion going to England. Some idea of the scope of this mill can be gained from the excerpts from the early newspapers of the Fredericton Gleaner "In March 1938 the paper quoted the season's run at Victoria mill as five million feet". Another activity of this mill reported in the Fredericton Gleaner in March 14, 1938 commented: "It's an ill wind....according to the old saying. The misfortune suffered by the Fraser's of Cabano early last Friday in the destruction of fire of the large planing mill at Fraser Companies, Limited will mean more planing work here at the Victoria Mill. Large sawmill in flames but planing mill was destroyed. All orders normally handled at Cabano will split among four New Brunswick mills of the concern, that at Fredericton likely will get the largest percentage of the orders for lumber of the United States market. Cabano mill was" "

If not for fire, planing mill at Fredericton would not open until April 1st. A crew of fifteen men will get steady work. Planing mills at Plaster Rock, Nelson, Quisibus, will receive extra orders due to the fire." In May 1938, The Gleaner reported "Fraser drive is oncreek twice hung up but the drive will come out. Victoria to start late in the month to cut about 6 million feet as compared to nine million last year". In the fall of that year, the St. John Telegraph Journal speaks of spoolwood for Scottish thread factories as a product emanating from this mill. Products of the mill were described in the advertisement of the newly constructed Waverly Hotel. Inasmuch as the Victoria mill furnished all material for the construction of this hotel, its products were listed in the advertisement. They were matched flooring, beaded and plan sheathing, shingles, lath, novelty siding, dressed and rough lumber, and spruce dimensions. In 1940 the run at Victoria mill was given as seven million feet and quoted as being considerably larger than the previous year stimulated by the interruption of continental imports due to the war.

In April 1941, the Gleaner reported that "The Long Lumber industry was being revived. Not since the last war such activities."

Again, in May 1941 the paper states:

"One of the largest sawmills of the St. John River, which at one time was doted with mills and lumberyards, the Victorial Mill of Fraser Lumber Companies, Ltd. will start up Friday....approximately 7 million feet to be sawed this year. Improved market conditions, about 100 men will be employed in and about the mill when the long familiar whistle sounds at 7 o'clock saws will be buzzing friday and planing mill will run all year."

In September the Frdericton Gleaner reported:

"Sawing season at Victoria mill to close in about a week. During this season its operations had been concentrated on miliatry and other projects which take rough lumber. Plant planing mill to continue dressing lumber during the winter season. Output about 7 to 8 million feet for season, finished lumber in demand. Seasons operations at sawmill of Fraser Lumber Cos., Ltd. at Victoria mills wound up. Local mill shipped no rough lumber overseas this year, all for local and provincial."

The Victoria mill continued to operate as a sawmill division until the sawmill ^{closed} cleared operations on August 24th, 1943. In recent years all that has been left of this important

Fredericton landmark were the boilers and smokestack near the south end of town, and these were finally demolished during the summer of 1948.

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In 1915 Fraser acquired their first properties on the Miramich River, a long famed lumber center of the Province, where activities dated back to the first days between 1740 and 1790...When William Davidson, peioneer lumber man, engaged in producing the first masts for the Kings Navy in 1775. This acquisition consisted of extensive timber limits amounting to 5,420 acres, also certain Crown Land timber license areas, and a sawmill at Nelson, New Brunswick, purchased from Timothy Lynch Company, Limited. Fraser Limited later acquired further lands and premises in the vicinity of the Nelson mill property.

Roy Saunders left Edmundston in October 1915 to become manager of the Nelson operations. At this time, when the Nelson mill was taken over from Lynch, they were still sawing the last logs there, so it was necessary to wait until this work was completed before Fraser could start the drive. Rebuilding the mill was started in November, with a crew of 75 to 100 men employed on the construction work, and the first logs were sawed at the mill the following August. About 150 men were employed there in the production of long lumber and lath, During the early years, this production amounted to about 10 million board feet of lumber. It is recorded that 15 million feet of lumber (bm* was the annual production in 1925, at which time, it was one of the 12 large sawmills operated by the Fraser interests. In 1918 a planing mill was added, to dress the lumber as it was sawed. The Nelson mill was dismantled in 1948, following 30 years of successful and profitable operation from 1916 to 1946.

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In 1916 Archib Fraser was considering a newsprint mill at Grand Falls and he wanted to acquire the water rights to develop power at the Falls. However, a competitive company

had already purchased the rights several years before giving them the right to develop power at the Falls. Archie Fraser tried to obtain permission to develop the Falls in 1916, but it was decided by the Provincial Government that the other company rights were sustaining and could not release permission for this purpose. Consequently, the power at Grand Falls wasn't developed until 1926. When it was decided that this Grand Falls project could not be developed in 1916, Fraser had a survey made concerning power possibilities of Tobique River Narrows. However, this revealed that the cost of development and particularly the cost of construction of supplementary dams in the lakes feeding into the Tobique, which would be required for this project, were too high, so the idea was discarded.

CHAPTER XTHE PASSING OF A PIONEER

The years from 1905 on, when the Mathesons and Andrew Brebner joined Donald Fraser & Sons, Donald Fraser, the founder, passed on more and more responsibility to his two sons, Archibald and Donald Jr., and^{to} the Mathesons and Andrew Brebner, who were participating more actively in the business. However, at all times, he was the guiding light and mainspring back of all of the successful activities of the companies until the very time of his death, Acting as a Director of the F & M Lumber Company, which owned and operated the Whitworth and Escourt mills in the Province of Quebec, and serving as President of Donald Fraser & Sons, with mills at Cabano and Glendyne, Quebec, and Baker Brook, New Brunswick, as well as being President of Fraser Lumber Company, who owned and operated the Plaster Rock mill.

He traveled considerably during these years, making frequent trips to Montreal to take care of his financial affairs, and on various occasions, taking trips to England, and back to his native homeland, Scotland. On one occasion he made an extended trip to the Antipodes, where his brothers, Archibald and James lived, the former having been the brother with whom he had formed the partnership in the lumber business in Scotland following the death of his father, which had been known as A & D Fraser Companies. He often visited a good friend in the United States, a Mr. Murchen, a bachelor, who lived in Wisconsin and who was quite a musician. He was one of the very early people to have a pipe organ in his own home. Donald Fraser's travels, of course, also encompassed continual short trips around parts of New Brunswick, where the Fraser lumbering activities took place.

So deep was his grief over the early loss of his wife, Ann Reith Fraser, that he never went back to River du Chute after her death. When not travelling, he made his home in Plaster Rock with his son, Donald Jr. and spent a lot of time, too in Fredericton, where his son Archie and three grandchildren had lived from 1910 on, following the death of Mrs. A. Fraser.

It was during one of these intervals spent with the Archibald Fraser family in Fredericton, toward the end of March 1916, that he was attending a Sunday night church service with his grandchildren at the St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, whose activities held so much of his interest and who gained so much by his philanthropy, that Donald Fraser was stricken with the sudden fatal heart illness which in less than a week was to result in his death. On April 1st, 1916, in his seventy-fifth year, he passed away in his Fredericton home on Government Lane.

A newspaper account of his death, which appeared in the Fredericton Gleaner pays tribute to the career and character of Donald Fraser in these words:

"Old Scotia has given many splendid men to the Province of New Brunswick, but none have filled such a position of usefulness and done so much to develop the resources of New Brunswick as the late Donald Fraser. From a humble beginning, he came to be recognized as New Brunswick's foremost captain of industry and his career was one which should provide an inspiration to young men of this province. His business dealings were ever characterized by the strictest honesty and integrity. He enjoyed the respect of all who knew him. A man of generous impulses, he gave largely of his means for the promotion of religious and philanthropic purposes ... In politics, he was a staunch Liberal, and in religion a devout member of the Presbyterian Church. During recent years, he has traveled a great deal, making extensive trips to the land of his birth. The deceased gentleman was 74 years of age on the 5th of last February."

(This account carried an excellent informal picture of Donald Fraser and Alexander Dunbar, in conversation.)

"His life story reads like a romance. Starting with little capital, except rugged health and strength and traditional courage, he possessed the ingenuity, enterprise and integrity that carried him on his road to success. Today, in addition to the vast and far-flung business activities of Fraser Companies, Limited and subsidiaries, two other great and lasting monuments to the memory of the man are to be found in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The first is the Donald Fraser Memorial Building of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, which was completed in 1918, erected by his two sons, Donald, Jr. and Archibald, in memory of their father, - the second is the substantial stone structure, the Fraser Memorial building now part of the Victoria Public Hospital, also in the same city. The building of the latter had been provided for under Donald Fraser's will, which donated \$300,000. for the founding of this Hospital building. It was completed in 1922 and dedicated on March 6th of that year.

An account in the Fredericton Gleaner of January 23, 1918 not only describes the St. Paul's Church Memorial, but pays tribute, as well, to the sincerity of Donald Fraser in his public works. It is headed "The Donald Fraser Memorial Is About Completed -- Contractors Will Finish in Another Week -- Beautiful Addition to St. Paul's Church Provided by Late Donald Fraser - A Splendid Building for Sunday School Purposes and Other Church Auxiliaries" and perhaps no more sincere tribute can be paid Donald Fraser than further excerpts from this and other newspaper accounts:

"Whatever the late Donald Fraser did, he did well. There was no half-way business about his undertakings. His business transactions were carried out with mathematical exactness. That same percision was applied to his several benefactions in this city. His benevolences were always substantial and left no doubt but that his whole heart was in every act he performed for the benefit and betterment of mankind. His sons,

"Archie and Donald have carried out his request that the Society which he so dearly loved, should have a suitable place for its Sunday School work and for other functions connected with the church. The walls of the building are Ashley Granite, giving it a massive appearance. One of the best heating systems obtainable: The basement is of concrete throughout. The first floor assembly room accommodates 600. A dozen rooms shut off by folding doors have rest rooms, cloak rooms, ..., kitchenette and a small dining room. The balcony has 12 more stalls and 6 rooms, ... The third floor is a large room furnished in fir and southern pine with flooring of birch. There is good lighting and ventilation throughout. Indeed, this memorial is a monument to the memory of the man who loved his church and his city and always stood ready to do his part to further the best interests of both."

On February 11, 1918, the St. John Standard carried a notice of the dedication of the Memorial, and the same day, the Fredericton Gleaner covered it with an extensive story headed "Donald Fraser Memorial Dedicated Sunday Afternoon ... Dr. J. McP. Scott, Toronto Delivers Most Eloquent Eulogy on Life of Donor - Exercises Full of Interest .. Childred Play an Important Part -- Hearty Response to Call for Money to Furnish Building." Dr. Scott having been long associated with Donald Fraser, in his dedication speech, brought out interesting facts of the man's character. He spoke feelingly of the work for good, done by the late Donald Fraser. He spoke of his deep love for children that prompted the gift of the building being dedicated. He pointed out that it came as an outright gift, free of debt, and that two-thirds of the amount required for the complete furnishing of the new building had already been obtained. Dr. Scott said:

"I have been asked to say a word this afternoon about the late Donald Fraser, the donor of this new building. If it is easy to speak of a friend, it ought to be easy for me to speak of Mr. Fraser, yet knowing Mr. Fraser as I did and how any reference of a praiseworthy or eulogistic character of him would have embarrassed, if not distressed, him, I am under constraint to speak carefully and temperately. My acquaintance and friendship for Mr. Fraser dates to the Autumn of 1883. I was under obligation to drop my college course in that year and was appointed to a Home Mission Field in the Presbytery of St. John and found when I reached that city that my appointment was to Kincardine colony in Victoria county. I preached my first summer there and at that service were Mr. and Mrs. Fraser. From that day on, until his death, less than 2 years ago, our friendship and love

"for one another never had an interruption but grew stronger with the passing days. Outside of my immediate circle, I held Mr. Fraser and rightly so as my very best friend. Minister, as I am, in a large congregation in Toronto and with a large circle of friends that one gathers in thirty years of ministry, it is something to say that any one man is one's best friend - I hold him as the very best friend I ever had" Of his early career, Dr. Scott said, "Mr. Fraser, with his young family came to Canada and the early '70s found him in Kincardine colony. Then began the life in this country that issued into the great business of which he was head when he died. I understand, knowing some of his early hardships of the early settler but the simple tastes and frugal habits and undiscouragable industry, he went on and laid the foundation of the great business that later fell into control of his like-minded and able sons who with such conspicuous success have promoted the lumbering business in this country."

Then, speaking of the character of the man, Dr. Scott continued, "It is proper to speak of Mr. Fraser's character as all who knew him will bear testimony that he was of a type, quiet, reserved, who had no taste for public life, yet one of the best informed men on the public affairs of this Province and of our country. He was retiring in disposition, fond of his home and friends and withal a man of unusual activity and understanding, ... He was a man of unimpeachable integrity, to whom wrong-doing in business, life or breach of trust in public life, was abhorrent and repulsive, an exceptionally able man, strong character supported by strong, well informed discipline of mind. Exceptionally capable in matters of business, he was a man of great capacity. He was informed as few are on Canada, and the great features of British public life.... What was true of his interest in and knowledge of public life of Old Land, was true in our Province and our Dominion."

Continuing, Dr. Scott said, "Public life and particularly interests of the political world had no personal attraction for him. He was informed, but had his own judgment founded, wise and safe. He never needed advice of first or second class politicians to tell him how to vote. He was a successful business man but his business did not possess him. He was always able to disassociate himself from the appeal of business to give interest and mind to human concern as well as moral and religious appeal. In matters of personal religion, he was a sincere and well assured Christian. He was one of the best informed men on ecclesiastical life. He was a good reader. He read only good books and read well, by apt quotations used to purpose, the knowledge acquired in living a life of careful reading, stood him in good stead. He spoke appreciatively and affectionately of the minister. I am instructed to say by Mr. Archie and Mr. Donald Fraser, that the building passed over and dedicated as a gift today, comes into the possession of the congregation without any conditions that would embarrass its use by church in days to come. Not a gift simply because he was able to make it, but because of his sincere interest in the work amongst the children and youth of the church."

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All newspaper accounts of the death of Donald Fraser, on April 1, 1916, pointed out the remarkable rise of this man from his early lumbering operations in 1877 at the small River de Chute mill where he laid the foundations to what was

conceded, at the time of his death, to be the largest lumbering and milling business carried on under one management in the "Maritime Provinces." At that time, he was head of and owned nine modern sawmills along with immense tracts of timberlands employing several thousand men and carrying on a business amounting to over a million dollars annually. Called a "Captain of Industry and One of Eastern Canada's Industrial Leaders, the concerns of which he was head at the time of his death, were: Donald Fraser & Sons with mills at Cabano and Glendyne, P.Q. and a mill at Baker Brook, N.B., & The Fraser Lumber Company, owning and operating the mills at Plaster Rock; the F & M Lumber Company, owners and operators of mills at Whitworth and Estcourt, P.Q. and Fraser Limited, with mills at Edmundston, Nelson and Fredericton.

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On March 6, 1922, the Fredericton Gleaner carried an account of the dedication of the Fraser Memorial Building at the Victoria Hospital in that city, the construction of which was made possible through the donation of \$300,000 which Donald Fraser provided for in his will for this purpose. Headed "The Fraser Memorial Building Formally Taken over by Victoria Hospital, Trustees and the City's Memorial Tablet Unveiled," ...it continued "Interesting Ceremonies at Hospital Last Night attended by Hundreds of People...the Keys Handed over to Trustees by Donald Fraser Jr. and Accepted by Colonel Loggie, Surveyor General, as President of the Board of Trustees...City Memorial Tablet in Honor of Late Donald Fraser Unveiled by Countess of Ashburnham." Because it serves as a fitting tribute to the late Donald Fraser and reports the unveiling of a large memorial tablet to honor the man, as well as brings in comments regarding his wife and early helpmate, Ann Reith Fraser, who without doubt was the inspiration for this particular memorial, it is quoted here:

"The Fraser Memorial Hospital Building was formally opened last evening with a public reception, when hundreds of citizens of all walks of life from the city of Devon, Marysville and other parts of York county were present at this formal handing over of the keys of the building by Archibald and Donald Fraser to Lt. Col Loggie, President of Victoria Hospital Board, and the unveiling of a large memorial tablet erected by the City Council in honor of the late Donald Fraser, the donor. As the guests arrived, they were received by Archibald Fraser, Donald Fraser, Colonel Loggie, the Countess of Ashburnham and Miss Stairs, Matron of the hospital."

"At 9 o'clock, formal proceedings took place when Col. Loggie extended a hearty welcome to all at the opening of the Fraser Memorial Hospital. We regretted that Lt. Gov. Pringsley was not present to do honor to an old friend, Donald Fraser, but he had been called to Ottawa and sent regrets as did A. B. Hanson, MP who had gone to Ottawa. We thanked the people for the donations, referred to a splendid gift of the late Edward Moore, of \$14,000 for x-ray and sterilizing plants which are second to none in Eastern Canada, presented with the consent of the Edward Moore Estate. We thanked all who had furnished rooms, the Town Council of Marysville, \$500 Lady Hospital and especially Lady Ashburnham for her untiring efforts in connection with the work. Mayor, Aldermen, Citizens of Fredericton were addressed by the late Donald Fraser's son, Donald, ~~JK~~, who had been asked to speak and to hand over the keys to Col Loggie.

Mr Fraser said his father was a quiet man, and so were his sons much the same, but in standing where he was, he could feel not only his father's influence, but his mothers. "If anything encouraged father" said Donald Fraser, "to build this hospital it was my mother. It was said this was the rich man's hospital but he wanted it understood that it was for the poor as well as the rich."

He then told of an incident in the life of his mother when a friend was taken seriously ill, ten miles away, and expressed a wish to see her. She walked the ten miles through the forest to the bedside of her friend. That was how she felt about the sick. He continued that he wanted everyone to have a chance in the hospital and hoped it would turn out to be a blessing to the city and that others would follow in enlarging it as the city grew and the hospital would be big enough for everyone. *

In replying, Col Loggie accepted in behalf of the Trustees of the Victoria Public Hospital and the Fraser Memorial Building with profound gratitude.

"We all know the great interest both you and your brother have taken in the construction of the building. You have given us your time, the very best materials, and beauty of design.... for a city this size, no place in the Dominion of Canada can boast a more beautiful building with more up-to-date equipment. "Col Loggie then spoke of the early life of Mr. Fraser.

"Previous to their (the colony) coming out, Captain Brown came out and after examination of Crown Lands on the upper water of the River St. John, decided no more beautiful spot than Victoria County could be found, which included what was known at the time as the Mauniac Mountain, now called Kincardine settlement. The Captain was remonstrated to by the Government of the day, but Captain Brown told the Government it would remind those hardy men of the hills and dales of Scotland
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so the colonists were placed on the mountaintop. Mr. Fraser and his wife and two boys and many hardships, carved him a home out of the forest, but a farmer's life was not for Mr. Fraser. Wilder fields were calling him. He soon was to hear the buzz of the saw and the ring of the woodsman's axe. And from the small beginnings, with energy and determination, he was soon to make a name for himself and afterwards to become one of the 'Captains of Industry in the Province."

"Such is the man who we are here to honor tonight," Col. Loggie concluded. "His memory will long remain in our hearts not only for his generosity in giving this building but also for his Christian life."

C. D. Richards, MSA, said a fitting memorial to the man was the bronze tablet about to be unveiled, given by the citizens of Fredericton in memory of the donor of the hospital. Dr. C. C. Jones, Councillor of the University of New Brunswick, said,

"Every citizen had a part in the presentation of the tablet which was recognition of the gift of Donald Fraser, who was a most quiet and unassuming man but had wonderful business abilities and was kind and noble."

At this juncture, the Countess of Ashburnham pulled the silken cord which held the flag covering the tablet and said she regretted that Miss Man Fraser, a grand daughter of the late Donald Fraser was not present to unveil the tablet, as it would have been befitting such an occasion that she do so.

The inscription of the bronze tablet, which is today to be seen in the entrance of the Fraser Memorial Building of the Victorial Hospital seems a worthy tribute to the character of the man and his contributions to far more than the building then being dedicated.

It bears the words:

This Tablet is Placed by the Citizens

Fredericton in Memory of

The Late Donald Fraser, through Whose

Generosity This Building

Was Erected