

Sir Herbert Meredith Marler: The Life and Lineage of a Montreal Patrician¹

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Abstract

Adopting the ‘patrician’ model as recently applied by Brian Young and John Irvine Little, this paper examines a family’s ascendancy across three generations. This process propelled Montreal born lawyer-turned-diplomat Sir Herbert Meredith Marler (1867-1940) into the upper echelons of Quebec and Canadian society. An archetypical patrician, Marler imbued an emergent Canadian-national identity. Through a contextualization of lineage, the author assesses aspects of Herbert Meredith’s identity – considerations that together illuminate the developments of a life in the public and private spheres of early-century Montreal. Not only was Herbert Meredith Marler a well-educated and wealthy Anglophone lawyer, Member of Parliament, diplomat, and head of Canada’s third foreign legation, he provides a multi-facet vantage point into Montreal society during a formative period of Canadian history. This article is based on contemporary press reports, Liberal party publications, the memoirs of colleagues, Canadian and Japanese diplomatic cables, and privately penned and published family histories. In addition, portraits and images from the McCord Museum’s Notman collection reveal the Marler’s self-perceptions and image-shaping habits. Concluding in late-inter-war period, the author’s analysis thus exhibits a parallel between the closing stages of the life of Sir Herbert Meredith Marler and the end of an era dominated by the ascendant patrician.

In early September 1929, Herbert Meredith and Beatrice Isabel Marler arrived at the port of Yokohama outside Tokyo where Herbert Meredith worked for the next seven years as the first Minister Plenipotentiary to Japan, head of Canada’s third foreign legation. The couple’s son, Howard, recalled that Herbert Meredith was “quite at home in the patrician environment in which diplomacy was conducted during that period when it was still the *métier* of gentlemen who were expected to have the appropriate educational and social background.”² Indeed his character and standing exceeded such requisite qualifications. The son of a prosperous Montreal notary and professor of law, Herbert Meredith Marler graduated from the Montreal High School,

¹ I would like to thank Dr. Peter Gossage for his guidance and comments during the research and drafting stages of this paper. Additionally, many thanks go to my colleagues in the Department of History at Concordia University, to the archivists at the McCord Museum in Montreal, and to the peer-review and editorial staff at Past Tense for their assistance.

² Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations of a Quebec Family* (Montreal, QC: Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, Price-Patterson Ltd., 1987), 109.

received a degree in civil law from McGill University, and partnered a practice with his father. He later sat as a Liberal Member of Parliament where he established a personal relationship with William Lyon Mackenzie King. In addition to his professional achievements, Marler wed a descendant of Andrew Allan and Mathew Hamilton Gault, two of nineteenth-century Canada's most eminent elites; he purchased and constructed a number of impressive estates around southern Quebec, meanwhile enjoying memberships to the exclusive Royal St. Lawrence Yacht Club and the Mount Royal Club.

Herbert Meredith Marler exuded an identity shaped by the life of his grandfather, who endowed his privilege to subsequent generations of Marlers. Innate to this patrician identity was a gendered and authoritative nature profoundly influenced by the public and private experiences of the Marler men. Recent scholarship in the field of Quebec history has led to a developed and nuanced understanding of the patrician elite as a primarily nineteenth-century construct. However, as the life and lineage of Herbert Meredith demonstrates, these processes of identification were as significant a factor as privilege was in English Quebec and Canadian society until at least the start of the Second World War. In fact, it was during the late-interwar period that nationalist global politics combined with the then long-established structures of patrician privilege to deliver men like Herbert Meredith to high-ranking civil servant positions as representatives of nations on the global stage. Whereas Quebec patricians had long since ascended to the pinnacles of urban and provincial society, as Canadian Minister to Japan (and later to Washington), Herbert Meredith Marler was one of the first to eclipse the hitherto regional authority of the patrician by entering the international society of high diplomacy. His life thus represents the high-water mark of the classically patrician Quebecer, despite observations suggesting their declining influence in the wake of the Great War.

George Leonard Marler, Herbert Meredith's grandfather and steward to the ascension of the Marler family, entered a patrician society in Quebec established by members of the top industrial, merchant, social, and religious circles. These men, centred in the early nineteenth-century at both Quebec City and, in increasing numbers, Montreal, were, to borrow and synthesize the frameworks of certain social historians of these regions, a landed class of interconnected and respectable heads of families able to exercise power across social spheres. In analyses of the McCord, Taschereau, and, in a fashion less evident, Cartier families, Quebec historian Brian Young has developed and refined a definition of patrician identity that is distinct to both the province and period at hand.³ Young has convincingly shown how prior tendencies to conflate patricians with classes of capitalists and bourgeois "promoters," in attempts to pinpoint the defining features of the provincial urban history, ignored social factors essential to this group's identity.⁴ Consideration of "birth, marriage, estates, place in the established church,

³ Brian Young, *Patrician Families and the Making of Quebec: The Taschereaus and McCords* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014); Brian Young, *George-Etienne Cartier: Montreal Bourgeois* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981).

⁴ Brian Young, "Patrician Elites and Power in Nineteenth-Century Montreal and Quebec City," in *Who Ran the Cities? City Elites and Urban Power Structures in Europe and North America, 1750-1940*, ed. Ralf Roth and Robert Beachy (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 231-2.

appointed position, and traditional forms of respectability” led Young to the identification of a Quebec patrician model whose “rank in the city,...visibility in the legal, medical, and military professions” and their established “roots in local, associational life” placed them at the helm of emergent Canadian “identity and institutions.”⁵ The gendered characteristics inherent to the patrician individual are of special importance to Young.⁶ His attention to such characteristics has illuminated a persistent dominance of the “rights of the father,” through and from which “name, profession, and legal priority” – all defining characteristics of a patrician identity – passed.⁷ The lineage upon which Herbert Meredith Marler made his public and private accomplishments in the last decade before the Second World War bears important resemblance to Young’s formulations, beginning with the life of his grandfather, George Leonard.

Following the analytical framework of Brian Young, Quebec historian Jack Irvine Little has further demonstrated how “noblesse oblige,” along with appropriate “skills in diplomacy” and the ever-important “family pedigree,” placed his subject of biography, Henri-Gustave Joly, amongst this same patrician class.⁸ Like Young, Little ascribes the very creation of a Canadian national identity to this group of eminent male patricians.⁹ Together, the work of these historians comprises a framework of understanding which accounts for material wealth and public activity, in addition to intra-societal family structures. This new brand of historical biography allows for a comprehensive look at both the individual as well as the society in which they enjoyed ascension. Analysis of the life of Herbert Meredith Marler – whose experiences span a period later than the subjects of either Young or Little’s studies and thus contain characteristics unique to the period – corresponds with such conceptualization, benefitting from its application. The traditional sources of authority Young describes necessary to the status of his subjects, considered in concert with the additional sources particular to early-twentieth-century society, reveal in the life and lineage of Herbert Meredith Marler privileges archetypal of the Quebec patrician. Inheriting his status, just as the Taschereau and McCord men Young has studied did, Herbert Meredith used a similar “institutional authority” derived from “property, profession, official appointment, and high culture” to lead a life as revelatory of inter-war Anglo-elite society as those of earlier studies.¹⁰ The patrician framework thus lends itself to an examination of the life of Montreal notary, politician, and foreign diplomat Herbert Meredith Marler, as well as the societies he inhabited. Observers are thus offered a glimpse into a world of social and political ascendancy made extinct by the upheavals of the Second World War. Meanwhile, the processes of an emergent Canadian foreign policy in East Asia are contextualized through an examination of Marler’s appointment to Tokyo in 1929.

⁵ Brian Young, “Death, Burial, and Protestant Identity in an Elite Family: The Montreal McCords,” in *Negotiating Identities in 19th- and 20th-Century Montreal: A Collection of Essays by the Montreal History Group*, ed. Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 105.

⁶ Young, “Patrician Elites and Power in Montreal and Quebec,” 234.

⁷ Young, *Patrician Families*, 6.

⁸ Jack Irving Little, *Patrician Liberal: The Public and Private Life of Sir Henri-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière, 1829-1906* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), xiii.

⁹ Little, *Patrician Liberal*, xiii.

¹⁰ Young, *Patrician Families*, 3-5, 142.

The first Marler to achieve ascendancy must have appeared an unlikely candidate early in his life to inaugurate the chain of increasingly patrician figures that culminated with the decorated Herbert Meredith. George Leonard Marler was born in 1813 in Nicolet, Quebec to retired British Officer Leonard Marler and the granddaughter of Anglican priest David Francis de Montmollin, Charlotte Marguerite.¹¹ Leonard's military pension, equalling half the salary received as a Clerk of Stores attached to a Royal Artillery regiment sent to Quebec in 1808, provided modest if not insufficient means of sustenance for the family. Later, as financial woes and unsuccessful petitions for the land grant entitled to him as a retired officer piled up, the family began to struggle.¹² Leonard Marler died in 1824 and his widow, forced to auction off the couple's estate, saw the entirety of her possessions sold for a sum sizably less than her late husband's debts. George Leonard, still only a child, matured watching his mother struggle to provide for him and his five sisters. Despite these struggles, the family remained in Nicolet where George Leonard was educated in the seminary, becoming fluent in both French and English.¹³

The turning point in Marler family history occurred when twenty-year-old George Leonard moved to Drummondville, hired as assistant to the registrar.¹⁴ Within five years of relocating, he had established a home in Grantham Township and had been elevated to the position of deputy registrar.¹⁵ Soon thereafter, the notarial skills learned on the job paid dividends; George Leonard successfully petitioned the Lower Canadian government for the lands owed to his deceased father. Quickly selling it off in parcels, George Leonard began a seven-year period of profitable land dealings. These developments, a descendant proudly explained in a 1987 family history, marked George Leonard's decision to become "responsible for the welfare of his whole family."¹⁶ Remembering the patrician status men of the family enjoyed from this moment onward, Howard Marler, son of Herbert Meredith and author of *Marler: Four Generations of a Quebec Family*, lauded his great-grandfather for insuring that the widowed Charlotte and her daughters "were never again to be allowed to be threatened by poverty."¹⁷ George Leonard Marler thus had laid the foundation upon which coming generations of Marler men were to build their success and prestige (See 'Appendix A').

¹¹ George C. Marler, *Leonard Marler and Charlotte: Founders of the Marler Family in Canada* (Montreal, QC: Private Publication, 1979), 17, 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³ Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 25.

¹⁴ Howard Marler describes the role of the registrar: "In 1830 the Legislature [Legislative Assembly] of Lower Canada had passed its first statute dealing with the registration of deeds relating to land and houses (immovable property in legal parlance). One of the new Registry Offices was established at Drummondville. George Leonard's early responsibilities included "the transcribing of deeds of mortgage and conveyances in the registers" quick mastery of which saw him become deputy registrar in charge of "the drafting of the necessary deeds when property was bought, sold or mortgaged, or when settlers wished to make wills or required marriage contracts." Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 27-28.

¹⁵ George C. Marler, *Leonard Marler and Charlotte*, 87.

¹⁶ Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

If professional and personal involvement in steering change in one's society was inherent to the characteristics of a patrician, by the latter half of the nineteenth century George Leonard Marler was within reach of such status. Hired as an accountant, George Leonard worked for the Sulpician Seminary at their Hôtel Seigneurial in Montreal from 1860, remaining its highest paid employee until his retirement in 1878.¹⁸ Likely offered the job as result of the experience gained while employed for two years at the Seigneurial Tenure Office of Montreal from 1858, his lengthy tenure in central Montreal marked the beginning of the Marlers' urban ascension. Assisting the Sulpicians with the commutation of their massive holdings as seigniors of the island of Montreal, George Leonard played a central role in one of the most marked shifts of secularization and professionalization within nineteenth century Montreal economic society. As Brian Young demonstrates, the seminary had transformed from a primarily ecclesiastical institution into a "model corporate citizen;" notarial business at the seminary offices tripled between 1839 and 1840, and was indeed booming throughout the George Leonard's time there.¹⁹ The coming generations of Marlers continued such involvement in the dynamically changing economic and social structures of Montreal – doing so in increasingly diverse, modern, and patrician ways.

William de Montmollin Marler, father of Herbert Meredith and the first Marler educated in Montreal, was born to the privileges his self-made father had not enjoyed as a child. Graduating *Dux* from the Montreal High School, William de Montmollin received an Arts honours degree with distinction from McGill before continuing on to study law.²⁰ He practiced at a number of locations in the city before settling into the Standard Life Building at 157 St. James Street (now Rue Saint-Jacques) in the historic business district of Montreal (See 'Appendix B'). Meanwhile, the death of his first wife and his later re-marriage provided the Marler family its two most accomplished and prestigious members in the form of half-brothers George Carlyle and Herbert Meredith. While teaching civil law at McGill part-time, William de Montmollin wrote a lengthy manuscript before his death. His two sons later managed its publication as a book, splitting the roles of editor and financier respectively. Howard Marler, beneficiary of his great-grandfather's wealth and status, later wrote that students reverentially referred to his book, *The Law of Real Property: Quebec* (1932), as "Marler on Property."²¹

Born to William de Montmollin and his first wife Josephine Howard in 1867, Herbert Meredith enjoyed the fruits of his father and grandfather's accomplishments from a young age. A childhood portrait, taken at the Notman & Sandham photography studio in Montreal in 1881, shows five-year-old Herbert Meredith, designated "Master H. Marler," posing as if in the deep contemplation of a man four times his age (See 'Appendix C'). From the mid-nineteenth century onward, the men of the family sat for portraits at the Notman studio numerous times. Marlers

¹⁸ Brian Young, *In Its Corporate Capacity: The Seminary of Montreal as a Business Institution, 1816-1876* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 32, 236n96; Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 50.

¹⁹ Young, *In Its Corporate Capacity*, 173.

²⁰ Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 58.

²¹ William de Montmollin Marler and George C. Marler, ed., *The Law of Real Property: Quebec* (Toronto, ON: Burroughs and Company [Eastern] Limited, 1932); Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 63.

were photographed when graduating, posing with siblings, in costume for upcoming parties, and in military uniform. The desire to present a clean and notably English image is visible across these shots. Photographs of the Marler men, especially those of Herbert Meredith, represent the clearest examples of a decidedly cultivated identity and appearance. Herbert Meredith Marler was photographed at the Notman studio on at least five occasions before his twenty-second birthday. Even as a young boy he appears as rigid, determined, and professional as he did when he graduated from McGill University (See Appendices ‘D’ through ‘F’).

As members of the Royal St. Lawrence Yacht Club, Herbert Meredith and his father regularly engaged English-Montreal’s most elite families. The Marlers established a summer home on Allan Point next to an estate of James Bryce Allan, son and nephew of steamship magnates Andrew and Hugh Allan, and only a short distance from the yacht club clubhouse. The structure later became part of the club’s facilities; known as “Marler House,” it offered members some of the first mixed-gender lounging spots.²² Before being absorbed into the club, however, the summer home served as place for young Herbert Meredith to meet the sons and daughters of nineteenth century Montreal’s Anglo-elite. Founded in 1888, according to an official history published during its centennial celebrations, the club’s “small and exclusive membership” comprised of the “captains of industry, the adventurers, [and] the movers and shakers... instrumental in creating the economic greatness of Montreal in Canada.”²³ An important part of urban ascendancy and patrician life, the social connections facilitated by the Marlers’ membership to the St. Lawrence Yacht Club undoubtedly benefitted the future of Herbert Meredith. The author of the club’s commemorative history astutely attributes the exclusivity of its membership to a combination of both the “clique syndrome” of Montreal at the turn of the century, as well as the privilege inherent to recreational activities such as sailing. As a past time, sailing at a private club “was the preserve of a relatively few well-to-do gentlemen.”²⁴ Herbert Meredith remained a member of exclusive clubs of this type for the duration of his life. Later, while living and working in the city, he spent his free time at the prestigious Mount Royal Club, cultivating a number of political as well as financial relationships.²⁵ At Allan Point, Herbert Meredith met his future wife Beatrice Isabel Allan, daughter of James Bryce Allan, forming his most enduring relationship.²⁶

Herbert Meredith’s first professional venture began shortly after graduation from McGill in 1898 when he joined his father at the Standard Life Building on St. James Street to form the firm of W. de M. Marler and H.M. Marler, or, “Marler and Marler” (See ‘Appendix G’).²⁷ His personal reputation and status thereby secured, Herbert Meredith soon wed Beatrice Isabel in an elaborate ceremony on 9 April 1902. At the ceremony, *The Quebec Mercury* noted the presence

²² George Hanson, *The Royal St. Lawrence Yacht Club, 1888-1988* (Montreal, QC: Centennial Book Committee, 1988), 11.

²³ Hanson, *The Royal St. Lawrence Yacht Club*, 10.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ William Fong, *J.W. McConnell: Financier, Philanthropist, Patriot* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 281.

²⁶ Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 67.

²⁷ Ibid., 73.

of only “relatives and intimate friends.”²⁸ Nevertheless, a long list of the province’s Anglo-elite attended, bearing an array of expensive gifts. That the couple’s ‘intimate friends’ were comprised of Allans, Molsons, Redpaths, and Skeltons, is telling of their already elevated status amongst the upper tiers of society. Both the *Montreal Star* and *Montreal Gazette* provided additional coverage, respecting the status of the father of the groom, William de Montmollin Marler, by appending to his name his preferred title: “esquire.”²⁹ Typifying the couple’s ascendancy alongside their extensive network of family and acquaintances, in 1907 Herbert Meredith began his pursuit of the first of several impressive estates.

The acquisition and subsequent renovations of the Grantham Hall estate in Drummondville by Herbert Meredith Marler marked one of the pinnacles of material achievement across both his own lifetime and the larger arc of Marler family history. Just as the homes and gardens of the Taschereau and McCord families served as “patrician skylines” for their worlds, Marler meticulously cultivated his real estate to reflect his refined sensibility and prestige.³⁰ The town in which his self-made grandfather had inaugurated the family’s ascension, Drummondville, was a doubly appropriate setting as it was also the birthplace of comparatively successful William de Montmollin. As the purchaser of Grantham Hall, Herbert Meredith became the third in a series of Marler men to proclaim some level of wealth in Drummondville (See ‘Appendix H’). Formerly in the possession of General Frederick George Heriot, founder of Drummondville and friend and colleague of Herbert Meredith’s grandfather George Leonard Marler, the grounds at Grantham Hall included elaborate gardens, a private nine-hole golf course, and a number of structures of various usages separate from the house.³¹ Remembering his time as a young boy at the estate, Howard Marler explains how the property represented a “base” from which his father desired future generations of Marler men, now each a part of what he called a “dynasty,” to “continue to build the family fortunes.”³² The estate at Drummondville, according to its cultivator’s son, was “England transported to a remote corner of a new land,” and “probably the most beautiful estate in the whole of Canada” in 1910. It was at Grantham Hall that Herbert Meredith’s patrician identity flourished as host to some of Canada’s most important individuals.³³ In the first decade of the twentieth century, Herbert Meredith tended to the establishment of his family’s prestige with determination.

Soon after acquiring the estate, Herbert Meredith began a process of renovation and redecoration with the help of Montreal architect and close friend Kenneth Rea (See ‘Appendix I’). This personal and professional relationship continued for many years as Marler repeatedly commissioned Rea to design or re-design subsequent acquisitions or constructions. Only a few years after acquiring Grantham Hall, construction began on an impressive home located on

²⁸ *The Quebec Mercury*, April 10, 1902, 3.

²⁹ *Montreal Star*, April 10, 1902; *Montreal Gazette*, April 10, 1902, 3; Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 191-2.

³⁰ Young, *Patrician Families and the Making of Quebec*, 19.

³¹ Ernestine Charland Rajotte, *Drummondville: 150 ans de vie quotidienne au Coeur de Québec* (Drummondville: Editions des Cantons, 1972), 19; Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 81-2.

³² Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 82.

³³ *Ibid.*, 85-6.

Montreal's exclusive Redpath Crescent; the building still stands today and the secluded neighbourhood's exclusivity and wealth remain visible (See Appendices 'J' through 'K'). Further additions to the Marler holdings occurred in the early 1920s when Herbert Meredith constructed another estate on the west end of the island of Montreal. Again, the family employed Kenneth Rea to this time build a "colonial style house" at Senneville. Furnishing their newest estate with wares bought while vacationing in England, Beatrice Isabel, thereafter so decided in her tastes, began a life-long habit of doing much of her shipping across the Atlantic (See 'Appendix L').³⁴

Herbert Meredith's land purchases reflected an appreciation for the English traditions of a landed gentry and its related prestige. Enshrining his family heritage in the imposing architecture of his weekend homes, Marler cultivated his patrician image in physical form. Furthermore, his dynastic motivations, exemplified by his continuous estate-building efforts as well as his active role within high, Montreal society, reflect a two-parted framework of self-identification. Herbert Meredith invested the wealth he accumulated in the public spaces of downtown Montreal into coveted and manicured real estate – the most visible signpost of achievement in the period. The family thereafter played host to guests throughout the holiday months, their private lives becoming increasingly public as they embraced their social responsibilities as members of Montreal's elite society. After a fire destroyed much of the main structures in 1922, however, Marler sold the Grantham Hall property and adopted the recently constructed Senneville estate as the family's primary keep. What remained of Grantham Hall and its surrounding grounds later became part of the Drummondville Gold and Country Club.³⁵ For a time, the Marler manors represented the importance of family heritage, the English value and prestige of landed gentry, imposing architecture, and the cultivation of a patrician image. He had solidified social and material wealth through marriage and real estate.

While working in the city, Herbert Meredith Marler complimented his acquisition of material wealth, bolstering his patrician identity and further elevating his influence in Quebec society. During the Great War, he was a Field Officer before later becoming a Major. While the army did not send him overseas, his decision to enlist represented a sense of voluntarism typical of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth patrician values. In 1921, this continued sense of responsibility to his nation led to him to run for federal election. He was elected Liberal Member of Parliament for the west-central Montreal riding of St. Lawrence-St. George, receiving just over 57 per cent of the electorate's vote. Marler became part of William Lyon Mackenzie King's first Parliament.³⁶ During this time Marler and King began the friendship that saw them in near-constant correspondence for Herbert Meredith's remaining years. As a Member of Parliament, Herbert Meredith dutifully presented the views of his female Presbyterian constituents who

³⁴ Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 105.

³⁵ Martin Bergevin, "Le Club de golf de Drummondville," *La Société D'Histoire de Drummond Défraie la Chronique*, May 29, 2014, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://www.histoiredrummond.com/Chroniques/le-club-de-golf-de-drummondville>.

³⁶ "History of Federal Ridings Since 1867," Parliament of Canada, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&Include=Y&rid=648>.

opposed the incorporation of the United Church of Canada.³⁷ In addition to being named to His Majesty's Privy Council in late 1924, he was also Minister without Portfolio for four months before the formation of the 15th Parliament, a position to which he was not returned.³⁸

Before his slim defeat in the 1925 election to fellow future diplomat Charles Hazlitt Cahan, Herbert Meredith authored and published a short tract for dissemination in his riding titled "Liberal Policy: 1925."³⁹ In the document, Herbert Meredith responded to claims made by his electoral opponents. Addressing their claims against the riding's incumbent MP, Marler critically summarized his opponents' recent public appearances. His imperialist tendencies are clear throughout the 76-page publication. He espoused recognition of regional economic and cultural differences in order to ensure effective national policy, meanwhile convincingly demonstrating the fiscal successes of the past Liberal government. Carefully balancing his national perspective, Herbert Meredith reminds the industrialists of Montreal that it is "of no value to the success of th[e] Dominion to consider only the local viewpoint of what a particular part requires to be done."⁴⁰

Appealing to the historic personae of George-Etienne Cartier and Sir John A. MacDonald, both of whom he argued were sources of inspiration, Marler also attempted to please his modernist contemporaries by selling himself as a candidate prepared to deal with the new issues facing Canadians in 1925.⁴¹ Regarding the "financial position of the dominion," as well as the biting attacks of his opponent C.H. Cahan, Marler provided economic evidence to demonstrate the consistent trade and budget surpluses the Liberals had achieved since 1921.⁴² "Liberal Policy" is also revealing about his later career as a Canadian diplomat: guiding his understanding of Canada's role and identity was a recognition of the many regional discrepancies within its political society, as well as a sense of its place within the British Empire. Despite his efforts that year, Herbert Meredith was one of only three members of his party defeated in Quebec in 1925.⁴³ Marler in fact devoted much of "Liberal Policy" to addressing

³⁷ 14th Parl. Deb., H.C. (3rd session, Vol. 1) (1924) 726; Sara Knight, "Voices United? The House of Commons' Role in the Creation of the United Church of Canada," in *Dalhousie Journal of Legal Studies* Vol. 13(2004): 118.

³⁸ "History of Federal Ridings Since 1867," Parliament of Canada, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&Include=Y&rid=648>; "Marler, The Hon. Sir Herbert Meredith, P.C.," Parliament of Canada, accessed December 2, 2014, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo/Files/Parliamentarian.aspx?Item=D532DE86-AD09-46E3-A8C4-9E590CDD3F60&Language=E>.

³⁹ The Honourable Herbert Marler, "Liberal Policy: 1925," (Quebec, 1925), at the Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec, Grande Bibliothèque Collection Nationale, 215471 CON, accessed November 12, 2014, http://iris.banq.qc.ca/alswww2.dll/APS_ZONES?fn=ViewNotice&Style=Portal3&q=490593&Lang=FRE.

⁴⁰ The Hon. Herbert Marler, "Liberal Policy," 2

⁴¹ While praising the legacies of Cartier and MacDonald, Marler was also careful to explain that their politics were no longer applicable to the ever-changing modernity of the 1920s. The two were to be respected but not emulated; this was a statement Marler aimed toward Conservative Quebec-lieutenant Esioff-Léon Patenaude who had brandished the the Fathers of Confederation's names earlier that year. The Hon. Herbert Marler, "Liberal Policy," 7.

⁴² The Hon. Herbert Marler, "Liberal Policy," 14, 21.

⁴³ The Hon. Herbert Marler, "Liberal Policy," 21; "History of Federal Ridings Since 1867," Parliament of Canada, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&Include=Y&rid=648>.

Cahan's claims that he had committed election fraud by manipulating ballots during his initial election in 1921. It is possible that these rumours, together with his own inability to resist his opponent's invitations to mudslinging, influenced the voters in Marler's riding. Interestingly, while writing of his father's failure to be re-elected in 1925, Howard Marler takes time to note the deployment of a "damaging trick" by C.H. Cahan who is described as a "lawyer of Irish extraction" with a "chequered career."⁴⁴ The alleged trick involved a pamphlet Cahan produced in Marler's name that proposed that the Liberal candidate's "social position" made him deserved of votes.⁴⁵ Marler's own "Liberal Policy" pamphlet reflects a level of self-consciousness and concern when it warns voters about "the election of members by deception."⁴⁶ The relations remained chilled between Marler and Cahan throughout this period; Cahan again caused trouble for Marler some seven years following the election while the two represented Canada abroad.⁴⁷

Although he was defeated in the 1925 general election, Herbert Meredith Marler retained his patrician identity and position atop Montreal society. Enjoying their sizeable estates on Redpath Crescent and in Senneville, the Marlers continued to host parties attended by leading political and economic figures. After local officials in Stanstead asked him to run, Herbert Meredith was preparing a 1928 return to federal politics. He quickly purchased a large home in the area of his future riding.⁴⁸ His friendly relationship with Mackenzie King provided an alternative path however, when the Prime Minister wrote personally to ask him to head the Canadian legation in Japan scheduled to open in mid-1929. A career in diplomacy proved an attractive venture for Herbert Meredith; he accepted the offer and immediately began planning in detail the inauguration of Canada's third foreign legation. He never again sought election in Canada, instead spending the rest of his life representing the dominion abroad, posted first to Tokyo before travelling to Washington, DC.

Herbert Meredith's appointment as First Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to Japan began a portion of his life of which nearly every aspect is exemplary of the prestige, tradition, and responsibility inherent to patrician identity. Writing to the head of the Ministry of External Affairs O.D. Skelton while preparing for his departure for Tokyo, Herbert

⁴⁴ Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 106.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ The Hon. Herbert Marler, "Liberal Policy," 1.

⁴⁷ Following a series of Japanese advances in occupied Manchuria, some individuals within the Canadian government were seeking an official position from Bennett's Conservative leadership. Discord amongst Marler's team at Tokyo, where Herbert Meredith was by 1932 the head of the Canadian legation, and Members of Parliament resulted in a delayed and hesitant reaction from Ottawa. Speaking at the League of Nations, Canadian delegate C.H. Cahan caused a notable diplomatic embarrassment when he appeared to adopt the interpretation of events proposed by British officials, suggesting Japan acted justifiably in response to Chinese aggression. Such a stance ran contradictory to the observations and communiqués provided to Ottawa by Marler and his team at Tokyo. Moreover, it contradicted the stance of most other western nations in a time when unity within the League was of dire importance. The Department of External Affairs, together with the Prime Minister, attempted damage control with a flurry of official statements. For academic examinations of the incident, along with interpretations of its causes and repercussions, see: F.H. Soward, "Forty Years On: The Cahan Blunder Re-examined," *BC Studies* xxxii (1976-7): 126-38; and Donald C. Story, "Canada, the League of Nations and the Far East, 1931-3: The Cahan Incident," *The International History Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1981): 236-255.

⁴⁸ Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations*, 107.

Marler expressed a belief that “Canada will do well to cultivate the people of Japan,” demonstrating a colonialist view of his imminent duties in Japan.⁴⁹ With the help of his wife, Marler proceeded to purchase extravagant furnishings for the legation in Tokyo, which, together with the elaborate uniforms he required for his staff, transposed both his patrician identity and his continued predilection for appearances to his new home in East Asia.⁵⁰ The public and private spheres of the Marlers’ lives continued to converge as Herbert Meredith went beyond the responsibilities asked of him by the Canadian government; during those first years the Marler’s were generous philanthropists as well as tireless socialites.⁵¹ With the help of his amassed wealth and privilege, Marler had fully embraced his role as a representative of Canada, personally pursuing the Legation’s mandate to “foster goodwill between the Canadians and Japanese” well beyond the sphere of international politics.⁵² His refusal of modesty as a representative of the Dominion to a rapidly expanding and increasingly authoritative imperial power allowed him to skirt inferiority in favour of pride and formalities; in Tokyo, Herbert Meredith’s paternalistic character remained indefatigable.

An official directive to represent his nation on the international stage only increased Herbert Meredith’s love of rigid etiquette and traditions inherited from late-Victorian society. Charged with establishing an arm of government in a part of the world yet untouched by Canadian diplomatic structures, Herbert Meredith ensured that the Japanese saw the Dominion as a professional and efficient entity distinct amidst England’s empire. In Tokyo his team was free from precedence and enjoyed large freedoms in their management of day-to-day operations. Mackenzie King had hoped the legation to be up and running as quickly as possible after offering the position in January 1929, so Herbert Meredith enjoyed plenty of leeway in his management of its opening. The limits of communication technologies during this period, along with 1930 election of the comparatively inward-focused R.B. Bennett, increased the freedom and authority of the legation staff at Tokyo. To the dismay of some lesser officials representing Canadian interests in China, under Herbert Meredith Marler this authority expanded informally over much of the Far East. As his letter to Mackenzie King regarding his imminent posting to Tokyo reveals, Marler had wanted to direct Canadian policy throughout the region since at least 1928: “do not hesitate on appointing me [to China],” writes Marler, “I believe if I have to travel in

⁴⁹ Herbert Meredith Marler to Undersecretary of State for External Affairs O.D. Skelton, 19-20 June 1929, RG25, D1, vol. 794, file 469, quoted in John David Meehan, “From Ally to Menace: Canadian Attitudes and Policies Toward Japanese Imperialism, 1929-39,” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2000), 38.

⁵⁰ Skelton voiced his concern to Marler as the costs began to pile up – Marler, however, was ever-ready to insure that any undesirable or unauthorized overages he would happily cover himself. This was to be a reoccurring theme throughout his tenure at Tokyo, especially as budgetary limits became increasingly stringent during the Depression era. Marler to Skelton, 30 January 1929; Skelton to Marler, 25 March 1929, both in Library and Archives Canada ((hereinafter cited as LAC), RG25-D1, vol. 794, file 469 pt1-2.

⁵¹ In a letter to Skelton, Marler describes how he and his wife’s donation to the “Isu Peninsula Earthquake Relief Fund” garnered “wide publicity,” the announcement of which he had heard to be “broadcasted over the whole of the Japanese Empire.” Marler to Skelton, 1 December 1930, LAC, RG25, vol. 1538, file 150-J-29.

⁵² “Report on the Activities of the Canadian Legation in Japan, for the year ending 31st of December 1930,” Canadian Legation to Tokyo, 2 January 1931, LAC, RG25, vol. 1538, file 150-J-29.

China as I think I should it would increase my prestige being accredited to that country [as well].”⁵³

Herbert Meredith Marler’s efforts to ensure an impressive first showing of Canadian diplomatic representation in East Asia saw him lobbying the Prime Minister in regards to the legation’s location, the uniforms of its staff, and even the type of men he wished to see employed beneath him (See Appendices ‘M’ through ‘N’). Micromanagement of this type resulted in a number of conflicting opinions amongst his staff, and, as first secretary Hugh L. Keenleyside notes in his journal, some considered the role Herbert Meredith imagined for Canada in Japan “a horrid negation of the whole principle of the service.” Marler, appeared convinced “that only a man of wealth can ever become a minister,” and seemed to ignore the value of personal merit and ability, instead obsessing over pompous presentation and formalities.⁵⁴ The 1933 construction of a new legation building – one designed in collaboration with his old Montreal friend Kenneth Rea and initially paid for by Marler himself – further exemplified this preoccupation with appearances.

After reading memoranda sent by Herbert Meredith to O.D. Skelton regarding preparations for the opening of the legation, Keenleyside could hardly resist criticisms of his superior: to the trained historian and career diplomat, Marler “was largely ignorant of history and economics, had travelled little, and was innocent of experience in foreign relations.”⁵⁵ Of the minister’s wife, Keenleyside was polite yet dismissive. He admittedly appreciated her “running a good house, making calls on the proper people,” and possessing qualities “valuable in a diplomat’s wife.”⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the pair’s obsession with formalities – perhaps best exemplified by Isabel Beatrice’s numerous memos to sternly reminding them to use the titles ‘His Excellency,’ ‘Her Excellency,’ and ‘Young Excellency’ for Herbert Meredith, herself, and their son Howard, respectively – bothered the staff, allegedly becoming the “subject of jest” in Ottawa as well as Tokyo.⁵⁷

As the 1930s progressed, it became increasingly apparent to international observers that the world was again slipping toward war. The League of Nations proved impotent in arbitrating the increasing discord amongst its dwindling members, Herbert Meredith’s role in Tokyo became less certain. Yet it was at this time that the most ‘patrician’ of all Herbert Meredith’s accomplishments occurred. On June 3, 1935, by recommendation of Prime Minister Bennett, King George V knighted the Canadian foreign minister. The honour was of course a source of exceptional pride for Marler and his wife. Isabel Beatrice’s requests on his behalf for formal salutations and titles were no longer to be limited to those sent to subordinates within legation. When her husband’s recently awarded title was missing from the memoranda sent by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Isabel Beatrice was quick to point out their mistake: “I

⁵³ Herbert Meredith Marler to W.L. Mackenzie King, 18 January 1929, RG 25, D1, vil. 794, file 469, quoted in Meehan, “From Ally to Menace,” 34, n.75.

⁵⁴ Hugh L. Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside: Volume I, Hammer the Golden Day* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1981), 257.

⁵⁵ Keenleyside, *Hammer the Golden Day*, 253.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

shall be very grateful if appropriate steps may be taken to ensure that further communications from the various Departments of His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Government to the Canadian Minister shall be addressed as follows," she wrote, proceeding to demonstrate the four lines of titles preferred by her husband (See 'Appendix O').⁵⁸

In relation to the various positions of authority he occupied, Herbert Meredith Marler's simultaneous love of empire and dominion was evident in his insurances of formalities and tradition. During late-career speeches, made while working as head of the Canadian legation at Washington, Marler continued to espouse the importance of Anglo-Canadian relations – at the same time vocalizing his preference of intra-imperial bonds over Canadian-American or otherwise external relationships.⁵⁹ As a family, the Marlers valued the prestige amongst Quebec and Canadian society that three generations of upward mobility and accomplishment had provided them. They were proud to demonstrate this identity at any chance, often in ways that appeared quite antiquated by 1935; while several noted their old-fashionedness, the Marlers, led by the figure of Herbert Meredith, retained the values and trappings of a traditional, patrician ideal.

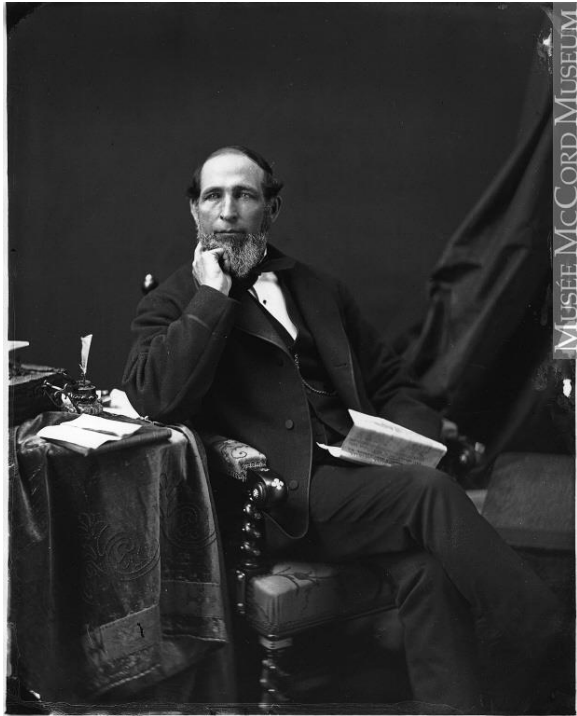
The family's ascension, begun by George Leonard Marler's successful sale of his father's 800 acres in rural Quebec nearly a century prior, culminated in 1935 with the highest personal honour a British subject could receive: inclusion into the order of St. Michael and St. George through knighthood. Herbert Meredith's life, however, was soon after cut-short when, following a six-month battle with illness and fatigue from overwork, he died on 31 January 1940 in Montreal. The press, describing him as a "prominent figure in the life of the Dominion" while noting the inclusion in his lineage of "two of the oldest English-speaking families of Canada," celebrated his achievements and professional record.⁶⁰ The Honourable Sir Herbert Meredith Marler was buried that spring in appropriate fashion, amongst the city's most affluent and patrician Protestant figures, at the Mount Royal Cemetery in Montreal. With him, the position and privilege of the Quebec patrician largely died. The upheavals of the Second World War finalized an already ongoing process of curtailment of the capacities of the patrician in society. Never again did hereditary wealth and prestige alone allow men to direct so many aspects of public and private life in Quebec or Canada.

⁵⁸ JACAR (Japan Center of Asian Historical Records) Ref.B12080809300, "Title to be used for Minister of Canada [sic] stationing in Japan November 1925," Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tokyo, Japan: Vol. 6, BN1219006), pp. 4-5, accessed September 30, 2014, http://www.jacar.go.jp/DAS/meta/Servlet?GRP_ID=G0000101&DB_ID=G0000101EXTERNAL&IS_STYLE=eng&IS_TYPE=meta&XSLT_NAME=MetaTop.xml.

⁵⁹ "Urges Canadians to Do Share in Peace Efforts," *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 27, 1937, 6; "English-Speaking Alliance Proposed," *The Montreal Gazette*, February 3, 1938, 10.

⁶⁰ "Sir H.M. Marler, Noted Diplomat, Dies at 63 Years," *The Ottawa Citizen*, February 1, 1940, pp3; "Sir H. Marler, Former Envoy, Is Dead at 63," *The Globe and Mail*, February 1, 1940, 7.

Appendix A



“George Leonard Marler, Montreal, QC, 1870,” William Notman, 1870, McCord Museum, I-45079.

Appendix B



“Standard Life Assurance building, Montreal, QC, 1898,” Wm. Notman & Son, 1898, McCord Museum, VIEW-3256.1.

Appendix C



“Master H. Marler, Montreal, QC, 1881,” Notman & Sandham, 1881, McCord Museum, II-62876.1.

Appendix D



“Master H. Marler,” Notman & Sandham, 1888, McCord Museum, 88,387-BII.

Appendix E



“H.M. Marler, Montreal, QC, 1896,” Wm. Notman & Son, McCord Museum, II117080.1.

Appendix F



“H.M. Marler, Montreal, QC, 1898,” Wm. Notman & Son, McCord Museum, II-123770.1.

Appendix G



“Standard Life Assurance Company, Standard Building, Montreal, QC, 1912,” Wm. Notman & Son, 1912, McCord Museum, VIEW-12615.

Appendix H



“Grantham Hall, Drummondville, QC, about 1910,” Anonymous, gift of Mr. Stanley G. Triggs, McCord Museum, MP-0000.1123.4.

Appendix I



“Mr. Marler’s house and garden, ‘Grantham Hall,’ Drummondville, QC, 1910,” Wm. Notman & Son, 1910, McCord Museum, II1822359.

Appendix J



“The Redpath Crescent House,” in Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations of a Quebec Family* (Montreal: Price-Patterson Ltd., 1987), 91.

Appendix K



“1277 Redpath Crescent,” Google Maps Street View, 2011, accessed September 25, 2014, <https://goo.gl/maps/NFiJz>.

Appendix L



“The Senneville House,” in Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations of a Quebec Family* (Montreal: Price-Patterson Ltd., 1987), 91.

Appendix M



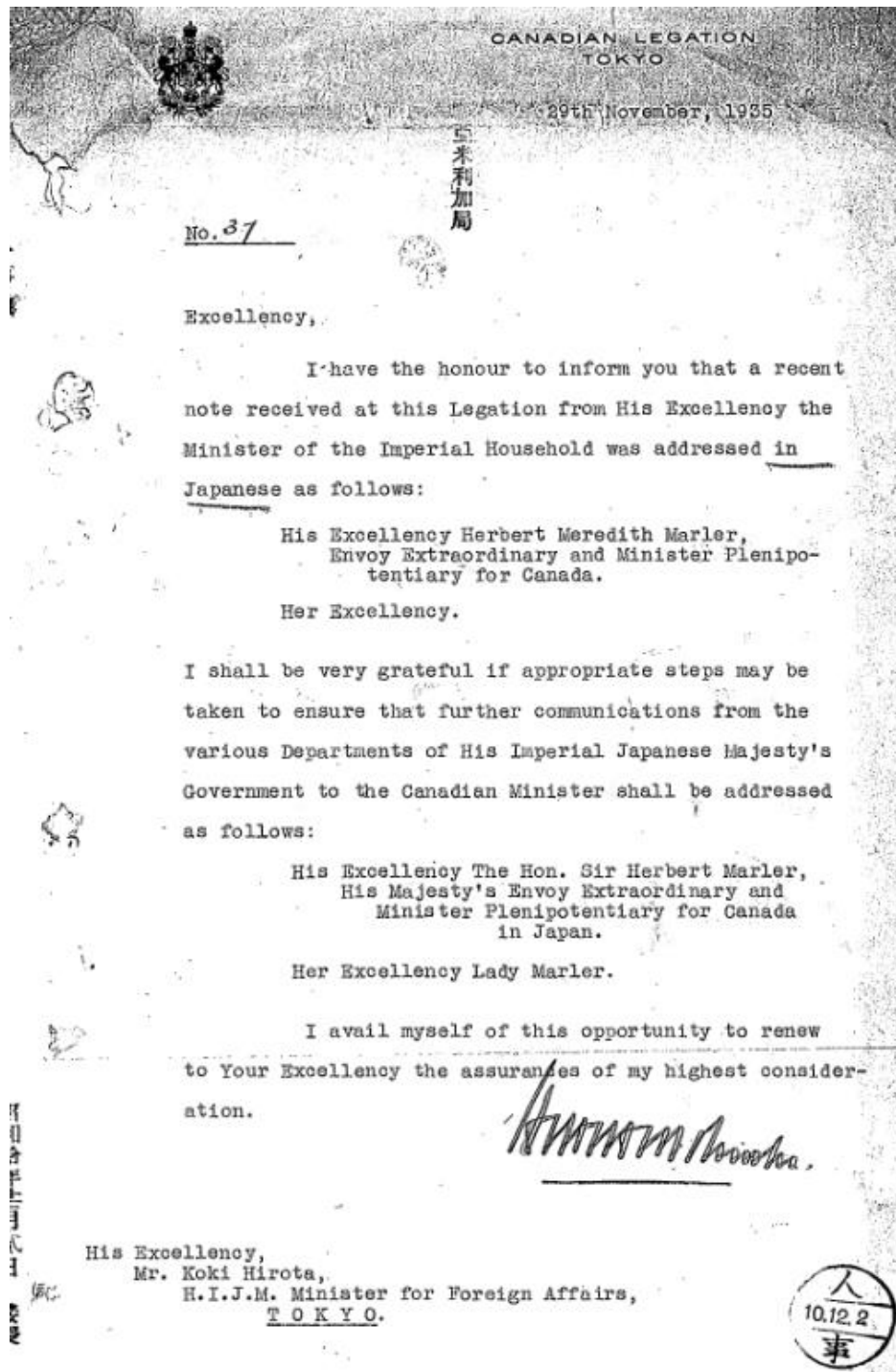
“Herbert Meredith Marler,” in Howard Marler, *Marler: Four Generations of a Quebec Family* (Montreal: Price-Patterson Ltd., 1987), 65.

Appendix N



“The Staff of the Canadian Legation in Tokyo,” Ueno Makita Kogabo, Library and Archives Canada, PA-12407, reprinted in *Architects and Innovators: Building the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1909-2009*, eds. Greg Donaghy and Kim Richard Nossal (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009).

Appendix O



JACAR (Japan Center of Asian Historical Records) Ref.B12080809300, "Title to be used for Minister of Canada [sic] stationing in Japan November 1925," Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tokyo, Japan: Vol. 6, BN1219006), pp. 4-5, accessed September 30, 2014,

http://www.jacar.go.jp/DAS/meta/MetaOutServlet?GRP_ID=G0000101&DB_ID=G0000101EXTERNAL&IS_STYLE=eng&IS_TYPE=meta&XSLT_NAME=MetaTop.xml.

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