

THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT



NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTIONS¹

Principles and Approach

This note outlines the principles and approach for collecting and transcribing the archival papers in this book. These documents mostly follow a standardized type, size of paper, and font. Many of them are chronologically interconnected, almost always reference each other, and feature authenticating parliamentary watermarks and other insignia confirming their official government status. And many were found at Library and Archives Canada (exclusively in the John A. Macdonald Fonds).

First, their official nature, confirmed via watermarks, marks and source origins, satisfy our requirements for authenticity and reliability.² Readers may not only examine these details themselves by referring to the commentary and citations provided for each document, or by consulting the scans of the original documents available on PrimaryDocuments.ca, and via the provided hyperlinks within the document.

Secondly, there is a consistency throughout these primary documents such that a relatively simple and straightforward transcription system can be easily followed. The standardization of type and size of paper, as well as font, and the uniformity of the drafting process at London (the consistent use of strikethroughs for amendments and consistent approach to longhand textual insertions) have made it possible to construct a simple set of rules for transcription.³

Many features of this collection of documents facilitate a transcription system. In this task, we have opted to follow the rigorous principles of what is known as the science of “diplomats” – a long-established field with developed principles and rules for reproducing primary and official papers.⁴ This approach requires a specific set of features, including textual and visual alterations and intrusion (strikethroughs, blotting, the location of word insertions, and other symbols) be described and included in a transcription. Its purpose is not only to produce a truly faithful transcription and to give the reader everything he or she would need without having to examine the primary source, but to also provide a better guide to understanding these original documents.

The principles followed from this approach are outlined below. A total of seven (7) rules of transcription were adopted. They are as follows:

Rule 1: All original amendments are reported inside brackets, italicized and superscripted.

Example: “... the General Revenue *[as subsidy toward local expenditures]* towards...”

¹ Much of this text, and the rules contained therein, are from [Charles Dumais, *The Quebec Resolutions*, 2nd Ed. \(CCF, 2025\)](#).

² See particularly Luciana Duranti’s “Reliability and Authenticity: The Concepts and Their Implications”, in *Archivaria*, Vol. 39, pp. 5-10; as well as Peter Hogg’s *Constitutional Law of Canada* (Carswell, 2014) and the legal literature cited in that volume.

³ I’ve been inspired by David L. Vander Meulen and Thomas G. Tanselle’s “A System of Manuscript Transcription”, in *Studies in Bibliography*, Vol. 52 (1999), pp. 201-212.

⁴ See Luciana Duranti, “Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science, Part I”, in *Archivaria*, vol. 28 (Summer, 1989), and the same title Part II in *Archivaria*, vol. 2 (Winter, 1989-1990), Part III in *Archivaria*, vol. 30 (Summer, 1990), and Part 4 in *Archivaria*, vol. 31 (Winter, 1990-1991).

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Rule 2: For cancelled text, we have used the strikethrough.

Example: “9. ~~The Rate of Interest.~~”

Rule 3: When a word is illegible, whether a cancellation or an amendment, the following was inserted: *[illegible]*. When a symbol was used, and could not be replicated, a description was inserted in brackets: *[checkmark]*.

Example: “Shall the *[illegible]* provided items be committed to the general government or to the local?*[checkmark]*”

Rule 4: Typographical peculiarities like printing were not preserved (line breaks, unusual spacing, text positioning, and so forth).

Rule 5: Punctuation and period spellings were however retained. In a few rare cases, shorthand was expanded to facilitate meaning.

Rule 6: Where the document did not have a title, we have provided one.

Rule 7: All editorial commentary is reported in footnotes.

The above set of rules was mostly followed in the production of this book. However, due to the incomplete nature of this book, there may be instances where these rules have not been adhered to. For this we apologize, and will seek to rigorously follow these rules in the published edition. If the insertions or transcription is ever unclear, we encourage the reader to consult the primary document, which is always linked within this eBook.

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