

Martin Burrell



 Martin Burrell, nd. Credit Library Archives Canada

b. October 18, 1858, Faringdon, Berkshire, England; d. March 20, 1938, Ottawa, ON

Education:

St. John's College Hurstpierpont College, West Sussex England
1928 Doctor of Laws, Queen's University

Positions:

He worked a short time for an English Bank
1883 Immigrated to Canada intending to be a fruit farmer in the Niagara Peninsula, but moved to Grand Forks British Columbia to start an apple farm
1903 Elected mayor of Grand Forks, British Columbia
1908 Elected to House of Commons (Conservative) for Yale-Cariboo, B.C.
1911-1917 Minister of Agriculture
1917-1919 Minister of Mines and Secretary of State Canada (Unionist)
1919-1920 Minister of Customs and Inland Revenue
1920-1938 Appointed Parliamentary Librarian on July 10, 1920

Publications:

Burrell, Martin, (1905). "The Fruit of Industry," in Mother earth's treasure vaults, and other true tales of achievement, development and opportunity in the Boundary, Southern Okanagan, Similkameen, Nicola districts to British Columbia, p. 27. Victoria, B.C.: Colonist Print and Pub. Co.

Burrell, Martin, (1909). Educational Book supplementary chapter on "Fruit raising" by Martin Burrell in Elementary agriculture and nature study. Toronto: John Brittain.

Burrell, Martin (1912). [Dominion Experimental Farms: A Guide to the Experimental Farms and Stations](#). Dominion Experimental Farms.

Burrell, Martin (1914). [Atlas of Canada](#) issued by direction of Hon. Martin Burrell, Minister of Agriculture. Ottawa. [descriptive narrative of Canada]

Burrell, Martin (1915). Patriotism and Production. Ottawa, Government. Printing Bureau.

Burrell, Martin (1928). Between Heaven and Charing Cross. Toronto. Macmillan.

Burrell, Martin (1934). Crumbs are also Bread. Toronto: Macmillan.

Martin Burrell (June 1934). Parliamentary library — Why are executions carried out on a Friday. Department of Justice.

Burrell, Martin (1937). "Books, Readers, and Reviewers." Ontario Library Review 21, 3 (August): 115-16.

Associations/Committees:

House of Commons

Special Committee on Bill No. 182 An Act to amend the Customs Act

Standing Committees: (1) Agriculture and Colonization; (2) Mines and Minerals; (3) Standing Orders; (4) Pollution of Navigable Waters

Accomplishments/Honours:

1912 He created the Department of Agriculture's Publications Branch to collect and distribute information.

1913 He introduced the Agricultural Instruction Act and developed a new system of field inspection and tuber examination for potatoes which proved to create a large enough increase in quality to remove a stifling American embargo. As the Minister of Agriculture, he oversaw large scale agriculture growth during WW1 to feed Britain and Canada.

1915 He opened a government Publicity division.

1915 In February, he represented Canada at the opening of the Panama Exhibition.

1916 Martin was badly injured in the fire that destroyed much of the Center Block of the Parliament buildings. He resigned from his post as Minister of Agriculture in 1917 partially due to the injuries.

1919 He was chosen as the government representative to accompany the Prince of Wales on his Trans-Canada tour.

1931 At the League of Nations meeting, Geneva, he was voted a 'living allowance.'

1938 At his funeral, on March 23, William Lyon Mackenzie King was an honorary pall bearer, as were Arthur Meighen and R.B. Bennett.

Comments:

1886 He married Sara B. Armstrong.

From the New York Times obituary: "He was a popular speaker and was sought persistently by societies, institutions and organizations of varied nature. He was considered a cultured and entertaining writer and kept a kindly eye out for Canadian writers of promise..."

1933 A diary entry on September 13 by William Lyon Mackenzie King refers to Martin Burrell as a "social snob of the first order." (He is present in numerous diary entries, often complimentary.)

He was the first farmer to become a Minister of Agriculture.

He wrote a weekly literature column, 'Literature and Life,' for the Ottawa Journal from 1924-1938.

Mr. Burrell died in office in 1938 and was not replaced until 1944. As General Librarian at the time of Mr. Burrell's death, [Félix Desrochers](#) became the de facto Parliamentary Librarian during the intervening six years.

Sources:

Farms.Com — Reflections: Farm & Food History

The Fonds Martin Burrell held by Library and Archives Canada

New York Times — March 20, 1938

L'Avenir du Nord — 25 mars 1938

[Library of Parliament website](#)

L'illustration nouvelle— 21 mars 1938

From:

<https://www.exlibris.ca/> - **EX LIBRIS ASSOCIATION**

Permanent link:

<https://www.exlibris.ca/biographies/martin-burell?rev=1762959191>

Last update: **2025/11/12 14:53**

