

Rev George Monro Grant
Minister at St. Matthews United Church
1863 – 1877

The vision in support of public education in the early years of Canada was largely the work of the Christian churches. George Monro Grant, minister at St. Matthews from 1863 to 1877 was one of the principal voices supporting higher education in Nova Scotia and Ontario. Protestant Christians wanted not only to teach the Bible in the schools, but understood that citizenship and faith were served best by an educated citizenry. In every province there were battle lines between Catholics and Protestants about schools, but even in the midst of those battles, everyone shared in the fundamental conviction that education was an essential part of nation building.

George Monro Grant benefited personally from the Presbyterian churches priority to have an educated clergy. He was given a scholarship to attend the University of Glasgow. During his ministry at St. Matthews, Grant played a major role in the re-establishment of Dalhousie College, later Dalhousie University, in 1863. St. Matthews through the Synod of the local Church of Scotland made major contributions to establish a Chair in Mathematics and Grant became a Board member of the College. Thereafter

St. Matthews had many Dalhousie faculty among its members and continued to support the University financially into the 1920s.

Another major project during his ministry at St. Matthews was the development of a theological school to train clergy in Halifax. In company with Grant's on-going commitment to Presbyterian church union, Grant led the support for the development of the theological hall which ultimately became Pine Hill Divinity Hall of the United Church of Canada. In turn, Pine Hill became one of the founding partners in the ecumenical –Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Church – theological school, Atlantic School of Theology.

Grant's success in the field of higher education led him to accept a call to become the Principal of the Presbyterian college which became Queen's University. From this position Grant became renowned simply as "The Principal" and he was able to use this as a "pulpit" to articulate a national vision for Canada.

Grant traveled with Sir Sandford Flemming across Canada and wrote *Ocean to Ocean* giving voice to the national aspiration for a nascent Canada. His ecumenical vision led him to write one of the early books on world religions, the product of his travels around the world. Grant supported Confederation and the Imperial connection with Great Britain. He fought for

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education for women, aboriginal rights and the racism in the restrictive policies against Asian immigration to Canada. Grant's was a Christian visionary for the Dominion of Canada for his time and beyond.

Based on information found in:

Elizabeth Townsend, Laura B. Morgan, Judith Fingard and Graham Morgan *St. Matthew's United Church: A Sentinel on the Street, Halifax 1749-1999*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd. 1999.

D. B. Mack. "Grant, George Monro" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.
<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=40870&query=george%20AND%20Monro%20AND%20Grant> (accessed June 27, 2007)