

Maximilien Bibaud: Early Canadian Teacher, Scholar and Pundit

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Abstract

Maximilien Bibaud (1823-1887) was a significant voice in the mid-nineteenth century Lower Canadian legal community, and remains a significant figure in Canadian legal history. He was the first full-time law professor in Canada, founding the École de Droit in Montreal in 1852. He took a progressive approach to legal education, significantly choosing to include international law among the subjects of study. However, his frequently off-putting defensiveness and vanity came to obscure his impressive accomplishments. As well, though he was a significant legal figure of his time, his public opposition to two important legal reforms – bar admissions, and the codification of the law in Lower Canada – put him on the losing side of history. As such, when, after fifteen years his school was effectively closed through legislative changes, Bibaud retired from the Lower Canadian legal scene in 1867. Bibaud was influenced by the personal and historical circumstances of his life, but was most affected by his own distinctive personality. He should be understood as a polymath who devoted significant time and energy to legal issues and the legal community, but when he felt that community turning its back on him, he retreated, disappearing from the legal world of early Canada

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