

Recognition of Founders 2017

Citation for Father Francis Bolger

Born in Stanley Bridge, Prince Edward Island, Father Francis W.P. Bolger has served generations of Prince Edward Islanders with distinction.

Father Bolger was ordained as a Roman Catholic Priest in the Diocese of Charlottetown in 1951 and served as a Professor of History at St. Dunstan's University from 1959 to 1969 and then at the University of Prince Edward Island from 1969 until his retirement in 1994.

His life experiences, such as serving as Chaplain in the Air Force Reserve and as a USSO Officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force have broadened his appreciation for the contributions from people from all different segments of our society. This insight is reflected in a number of important publications, most notably *PEI and Confederation, 1863–1873* and *Canada's Smallest Province*, which were definitive texts used to teach Island history in schools. Father Bolger has also authored and contributed to numerous publications on the works and life of famed Island author Lucy Maud Montgomery.

During his career, Father Bolger was widely recognized as the unofficial "Dean of Island history," in large part because of his leading role in popularizing the academic study of Prince Edward Island history at the university level. At a time when only national histories were seen to matter, he lobbied UPEI to offer a course in the history of PEI. It became enormously popular, regularly attracting between 100 and 200 students, both regular undergraduates and members of the larger community. They were eager to understand their own history and irresistibly drawn to his charismatic lecturing style, his legendary memory for names (along with where on PEI a student was from), and his comic asides, usually capped with an appeal to put "the seal of the confessional" on his sly and sometimes saucy editorial comment. As a teacher, he managed to make history endlessly entertaining and somehow

personal for students, without slipping into mere anecdotage. A former student and now Professor of History himself, Dr. Ed MacDonald, offers this summary, "As chair of a Department of History full of strong personalities, Father Bolger displayed a rare tact and diplomacy that would have earned him a job at the United Nations if he didn't already hold down two careers, as professor and priest. He is a wise and discreet counsellor."

In recognition of significant contributions as an educator, Father Bolger has received several Canada Council awards. For his tremendous public and educational service, he was named "Islander of the Year" in 1974; received the UPEI Award of Excellence in Teaching, the "Youth Education" Excellence Prize, Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of Canadian Confederation, and Hillsborough Rotary Club Vocational Services Award; was named a Rotary Club Paul Harris Fellow; and was inducted as a Member of the Order of Canada and to the Order of PEI.

He has served in leadership roles with the Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, PEI Heritage Foundation, SDU Board of Governors and Senate, Diocesan Senate of Priests, Atlantic Canada Institute, "Acadiensis", Lucy Maud Montgomery Foundation, PEI Government Committee on the restoration of Province House, L.M. Montgomery Heritage Society, Public Documents Committee of the Public Archives, Canadian Historical Society, Advisory Board of Kindred Spirits of Prince Edward Island, "The Friends of St. Andrew's," and the L.M. Montgomery Institute.

Father Bolger's efforts have been truly exemplary and will leave a significant and lasting legacy for the benefit of all Prince Edward Islanders.

Today, it is my honour to recognize Professor and Father Francis Bolger's tremendous contributions and tireless work on behalf of UPEI by naming him a Founder of the University.