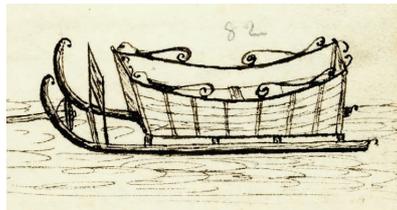


University of Aberdeen

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***The Aberdeen Connection:
Scottish Ties and Exploration in Canada***

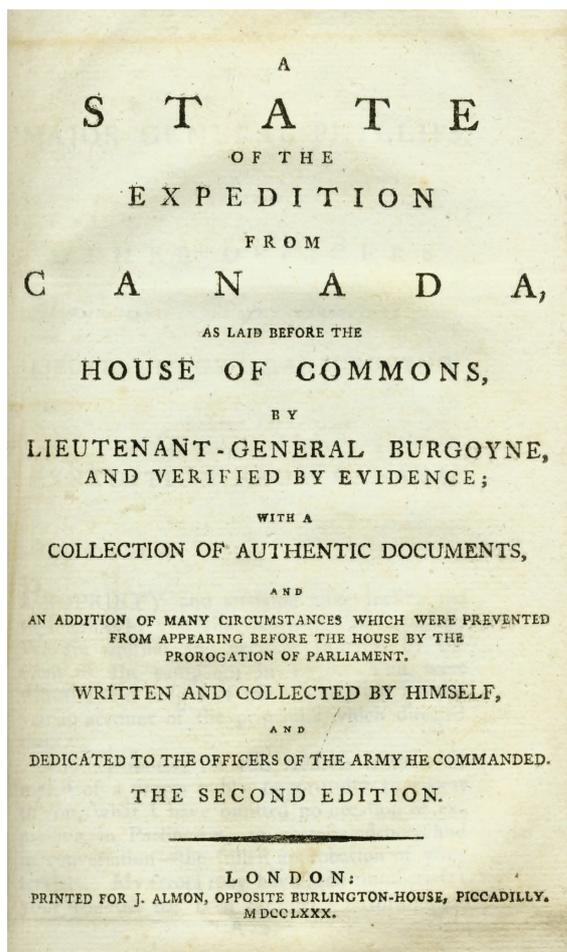


*Top: Detail from Patrick Bell, MS 2138 p.309
Bottom: Caribou, ivory, ABDUA 5735*

An Information Document

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A state of the expedition from Canada, as laid before the House of Commons, by Lieutenant-General Burgoyne, and verified by evidence (London: Almon 1780). Thomson 76/1, title page

The Canadian material held in Aberdeen is rich and various, unsurprisingly, considering the depth and duration of relations between Canada and northern Scotland and the long history of the University's constituent Colleges (King's College dates to 1495, and Marischal College to 1593; they combined in 1860 to form the modern University.) Northern Scots have gone to and fro between Aberdeen and Canada as traders, settlers, whalers, explorers, missionaries, journalists and fishermen; communities such as Bon Accord, Alberta testify directly to these connections. As well as considerable printed holdings and superb ethnological museum collections, Aberdeen University is also fortunate in holding a substantial group of unpublished manuscripts which constitute in themselves an important group of primary sources for the history and social history of Canada.

The extent and depth of mutual involvement is suggested by the existence of the North of Scotland Canadian Mortgage Company (later Aberdeen Trust Ltd.), which was incorporated in 1876, with the sole purpose, as its name implied, of raising capital in Scotland to finance the mortgages of the emigrant farming community in Canada. By the late nineteenth century, the company's annual reports describe extensive emigration and ever-increasing demand for their financial services. The building of the railways to the west of Canada opened up great tracts of farmland, and from fairly modest beginnings, it was able to extend its business to Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Prairie Provinces. As its scope and size increased, the administrative headquarters were transferred from Toronto to Winnipeg, an indication of how the country was opening up. The University holds the company's records from 1875–1984, one of many primary sources for the history and social history of Canada.

One King's alumnus who played a significant part in the history of Canadian university education is John Strachan (1778–1867), who ended his days as Anglican Bishop of Toronto. Born in Aberdeen, he obtained a bursary to enter King's College and graduated in 1797. He served various churches in Upper Canada, and as a reward for his services in ministering to the sick, wounded and homeless during the War of 1812–14 and for his presidency of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada, he was appointed to the Executive Council of Upper Canada. He became Bishop of Toronto in 1839. He was an eloquent and powerful defender of the principles of hierarchy in church and state, but for all that, he was an active promoter of education. Having married a wealthy widow, Anne McGill, he persuaded his brother-in-law to endow a now famous university under the family name—McGill University. He also secured a charter in 1827, endowing an Anglican university in Toronto, to be called King's College after his *alma mater*; the small beginning from which the University of Toronto was to grow.

The Church of Scotland was similarly concerned with education, and after the Scottish Presbyterian churches in Canada had obtained a charter for Queen's College, Kingston, a number of dis-

tinguished professors divided their career between Queen's and Aberdeen, such as P.C. Campbell, John Macnaughton, and William Hamilton Fyfe, who was consecutively principal of both universities. In the field of medicine also, Aberdeen-trained graduates were involved with the new medical schools founded in the Western provinces in the early twentieth century. The most notable Aberdeen medical scientist to work in Canada was J.J.R. Macleod, who graduated with bachelor degrees in medicine and surgery (MB ChB) from Marischal College in 1898. He became a professor of physiology at Toronto where he and his Canadian colleagues carried out the research which led to the development of insulin as a treatment for diabetes, earning him a Nobel Prize in 1923. In 1928, he returned to Aberdeen as Regius Professor.

A variety of other evidence for culture in both Scotland and Canada moved back and forth across the Atlantic. Some of the earliest written versions of seventeenth-century Scottish Gaelic poetry were first collected in Nova Scotia in the 1920s, a reminder that Gaelic-speaking Highlanders entered Canada in significant numbers, many as a result of the Highland Clearances. This is the case for the evictions from the estates of the Gordons of Cluny. John Galt's *Canadian Boat Song* claims, *Yet still the blood is strong; the heart is Highland / And we in dreams behold the Hebrides*; but in fact, there were many English and Scots-speaking emigrants whose dreams in exile would have been of the granite shores of north-eastern Scotland. At least one of these is documented in the family papers of the song-writers and collectors, the Buchans of Peterhead. A small notebook compiled by Patrick Buchan, is primarily an account of a mid-Victorian voyage from Peterhead to Greenland, but includes also collections of traditional songs including the poignant 'Scottish Emigrant's Farewell'. The Buchan collection is extensive and far-ranging: it is more than possible that many other items of Canadian interest will be recovered as work on it continues.

A number of northern Scots held political office in Canada; we have a collection of papers connected with one of them, Commodore Alexander Grant (1734–1813). Grant, though the son of the

Laird of Glenmoriston, and a member of Upper Canada's Executive Council, was not an aristocratic figure; his career in the Army and Navy had given him much practical skill, but little polish. 'An old Scotsman, a large stout man not very polished, but very good-tempered with a round, plump, pocked-marked face as red as a pomegranate.' On being introduced to Prince Edward Augustus, Grant is supposed to have exclaimed, 'How do you do, Mester Prince? How does your Pawpa do?'

A fine manuscript collection which we hold, the journals of Francis Burnett of Elrick in Aberdeenshire, demonstrates a cheerful curiosity about, and enjoyment of Canadian society. Burnett spent three years (1815–1818) in Quebec and Montreal. His journals are continually illuminated by his quick eye for the unfamiliar, for the glimmering forms of the 'Islands of Ice' sighted off St John's, Newfoundland on 29 June 1815; for the 'dashing parties' and amateur dramatics, French and English, in Quebec city; for the 'speech in the Indian language' and pipe of peace of 'the Beaver club' of pioneers and adventurers.

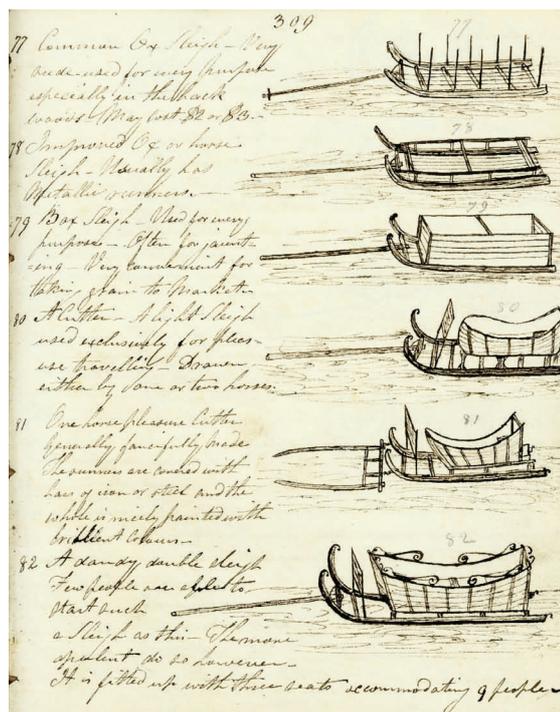


Sketches of icebergs (40 miles from St. John's, Nfld.) made by Francis Burnett on his journey from Greenock to Quebec. From v. 1 of his diary, covering 1815-18. MS 3613/33

Enjoyment of Canada and its natural wonders also distinguishes the writings of the Rev. Patrick Bell (1799–1869) in his unpublished *Journal, or rather Observations, made in Upper Canada during the Years 1834–7*. This immensely detailed account is the work of a Church of Scotland minister who was also a pioneer of the agricultural revolution of the nineteenth century, an inventor of agricultural machinery far in advance of his time. He also writes a leisured, thoughtful, sharply focused prose, and accordingly his journal, illustrated with his own accomplished drawings, is far more than a tourist's account of the country. It is a scientific record of climate (Bell noted the weather on every day from 1834–37), soils and vegetation (there are numerous pencil-rubbings of the leaves of Canadian trees) and above all, of every aspect of Canadian agriculture, particularly tools, vehicles and apparatus of every kind. He was particularly concerned with the processes which were used to clear virgin forested land for cultivation: no rake or fork was too humble for his careful, interested drawing. He illustrates, across a double page, the system of mash-tubs and still pipes which were used to produce what can hardly have been a particularly smooth whisky (vol.2, pp. 248–9). A considerable part of the first volume is taken up with fascinated recording of every aspect of the Niagara Falls, especially the effects of frost —

On every part icicles are formed of the most fantastic and grotesque appearance and of a most gigantic size . . . the frozen spray covers everything in the neighbourhood ice of glassy brightness. The trees in particular have a most dazzling appearance when enshrouded in the crystal coats of mail. (MS 2137, f.92v)

The second volume of Bell's journal is richly illustrated with sketches and diagrams of farm steadings, houses, agricultural implements, and detailed pencil drawings of plants and animals. His observations of people and places encountered are detailed, precise and often entertaining. When they touch on farming and farming practice they can rise to passion, as in his praise for the old fashioned, unimprovable design of Ontario harvest carts — his clearest, most loving illustrations are of varieties of sled and cart for farm use. Indeed, a whole Ontario farm of the 1830s could be reconstructed with its buildings, stock



Types of sleds. Patrick Bell, MS 2138, p. 309

tools, vehicles and machinery from this source alone, so detailed are the drawings and the descriptions. His description of the raising of a log house begins with the clearing of the ground and then goes on to estimate that, with some paid help from neighbours, a satisfactory cabin may be built for \$12 to \$20. But the settler 'with not a cent in his pocket' can do the logging himself as best he may from the timber on his plot and can build a (just) 'weatherproof' cabin with help from neighbours at a 'house raising or raising bee.'

Another manuscript collection, the letters of John McBean of Nairn are a primary source for Canadian social history at the beginning of the twentieth century. McBean emigrated from Scotland in 1902, and worked as a farm labourer in Manitoba for a year, after which he became a journalist in Winnipeg. He worked on *The Farmers' Advocate and Home Magazine* and later for the *Nor'West Farmer*, until his early death in 1906. McBean was in many respects the type of young Scot who prospered in Canada (although his own career was in fact curtailed by illness): endlessly energetic, intrepid, and equally importantly, highly literate and as capable of writing a trenchant leader for *The Farmer's Advocate* (at a salary of \$45 per month) as of writing a well-considered letter home.

Unusually, John McBean's letters were written to his brother and sister. The siblings were obviously close friends and of frank habits of speech: it is here that this collection grows in interest for the scholar, as John reports frankly on social mores and the behaviour of his acquaintances, feeling no need to tune his correspondence to the expectations or pieties of an older generation: 'I have only one hour to spare this Sunday before beginning those damned horses for the third time today', 'Bally had one of his "belt-winning" boozes at Mary MacQueen's wedding.' He is acute about shades and degrees of lodging house, vivid in his descriptions of travels often undertaken over long distances in adverse weather and unswerving in his conviction that Canada is the place for him, and would be for his

brother too. He draws his sister in to the plan:

Praise Canada as much as you like, it is really worth all of it, but I would let him find out for himself that it would be to his advantage to come here.

His descriptions of the dangers of the climate are vivid: a storm on the prairie crashes behind him out of a clear sky 'like a menagerie loose or a herd of wild elephants'. A March blizzard surprises his coach and obliterates the road —

The horses lay down in the snow several times and the driver wept and cursed alternately. We finally stumbled upon a farmhouse and stayed there until morning.

Aberdeen's manuscript holdings offer a variety of interesting, unstudied material for the history of

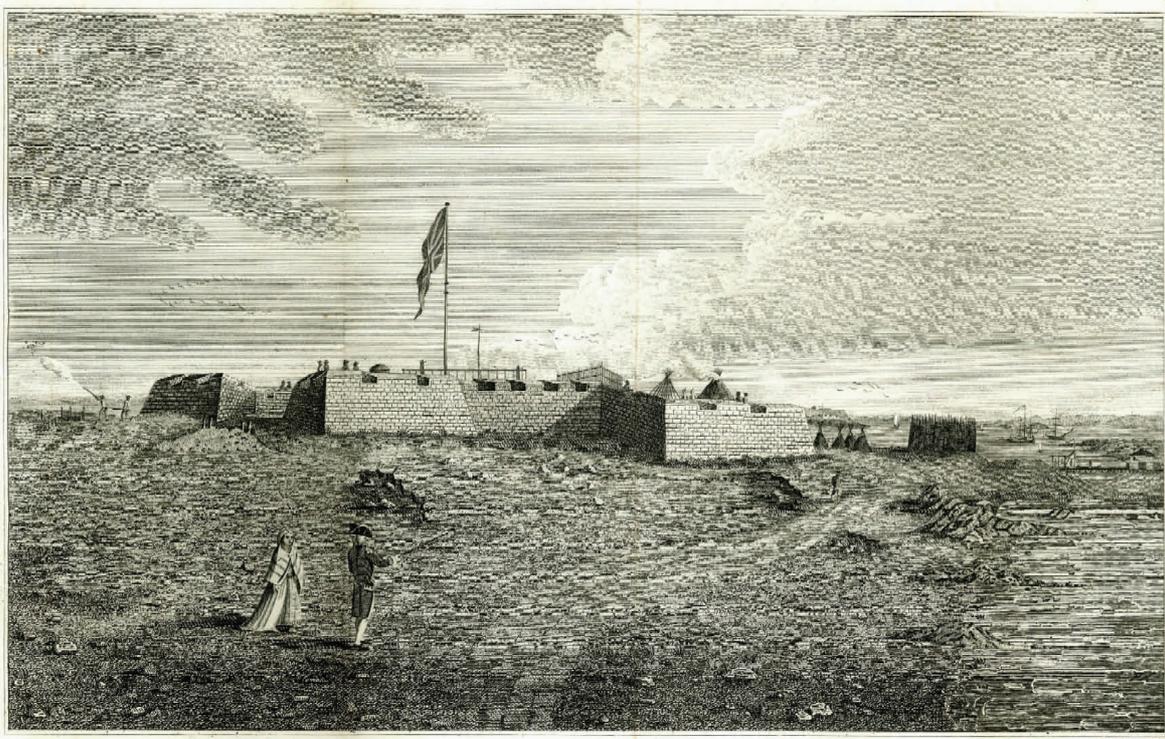


Gerard Mercator, Atlas sive Cosmographicae Meditationes, 1595, pi f912 (00) Mer 1

Canada's westward expansion, the taming of the Prairies, and the farming culture that developed there. But we also have a very good collection of printed books relating to early Canadian history; some of them very rare. The earliest is *An Account of the Captivity of Elizabeth Hanson* (London, 1760), the story of Mrs Hanson's captivity by Indians, and the terrifying year she and those of her children who survived spent as slaves somewhere in Upper Canada before they were redeemed by French settlers and ultimately reunited with her frantic husband. In the nineteenth century, the Indians ceased to present so direct a threat, and the narratives are those of settlement. It is characteristic of emigrants that whenever possible, they attempt to give themselves a safety-net by establishing networks; thus William Dalton, author of a very scarce book which was printed in Appleby 'for the author' in 1821, who was a native of Westmoreland, a small and thinly populated county, contrived to find former Westmorelanders in all kinds of places, even at 'the Forks of Chippeway' when he travelled in Upper Canada in 1820. He found it an interesting place, and notes, '*among these lonely settlers we found, what we scarcely ex-*

pected to meet with here, a considerable store of general knowledge. Even in this very remote part of the civilised world ... the peasant speaks as correctly, and as free from embarrassment, as the citizen in the midst of polished society (*Travels in the United States of America and Part of Upper Canada*, p. 182). Like the Rev. Bell, he was struck with admiration by Canadian wagons: '*these are beautiful vehicles, and although wonderfully light, they are, from the toughness and strength of the wood, and the superior nature of the workmanship, calculated to endure great hardship.*' A similar account by a Scot, John MacTaggart's *Three Years in Canada* (London, 1829), finds Scots everywhere, even in a completely isolated log cabin in the middle of the great woods, where a couple from Hawick lived with their children, '*some good sleek grey cats and a very respectable looking dog.*'

MacTaggart, an engineer, also gives a picture of one of the most peculiar experiments in Canadian social history, the attempt of Archibald, chief of Clan McNab, to transplant the clan system lock, stock, and barrel to Chats Lake near Ottawa, Ontario. Having received a massive land



A NORTH WEST VIEW OF PRINCE OF WALES'S FORT IN HUDSON'S BAY, NORTH AMERICA, BY SAMUEL HEARNE, 1777.

Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795) facing page 1, A North West View of Prince of Wales's Fort.

grant from the government, he moved his entire following of Highlanders to what is now the town of McNab. MacTaggart, who came across this experiment only a few years after it had begun, was awed: *'this is a beautiful place! Here stands the Castle of Mac Nab, surrounded by the houses of his followers.'* (p. 277). But sadly, within a few years, feudal lordship as reinvented in Canada began to look more like serfdom from the clansmen's point of view; and in 1843, the MacNab's followers revolted against him.

We have a variety of other works which testify to the University's interest in settlement in Canada, C. Stuart's *The Emigrant's Guide to Upper Canada* (London, 1820), for instance, and travel books, of which Mrs Jameson's *Sketches in Canada* (London, 1852), is one of the liveliest. She observes, with some regret, that *'a Canadian settler hates a tree, regards it as his natural enemy ... to be annihilated by any and all means'* (p. 22); and gives a splendidly atmospheric description of a country road:

The road, on which the sleigh track was only just perceptible, ran for miles in a straight line; on each side rose the dark, melancholy pine-forest, slumbering drearily in the hazy air. Between us and the edge of the forest were frequent spaces of cleared and half cleared lands spotted over with the black charred stumps and blasted trunks of once magnificent trees, projecting from the snow drifts (p. 10).

However, though our material on the social history of southern Canada is very rich, throughout the University's history, a very important area of our interaction with Canada has been our contacts with its Arctic north. The Arctic is of immeasurable significance to the discovery of North America more generally, since so much of the history of exploration was driven by the attempt to find a passage through — or above — the new continent, which would provide an easy sea route to the fabulous riches of the Orient. We have a very fine hand-coloured Mercator atlas from 1595 which bears ominous witness to this fantasy: at this time, northern Canada is almost completely unmapped, apart from the Davis Straits and a rumoured 'sea of sweet water', but between Canada and the Pole lies a completely mythical island marked *'this island is the best and healthiest*

of the entire Polar region'. In the centuries that followed, many men were to die demonstrating the illusory nature of the hoped-for passage of open water which Mercator represents in this plate.

The process of exploration which had begun with such men as Martin Frobisher and Henry Hudson in the sixteenth century continued in the centuries that followed, often financed by mercantile cartels rather than by governments. Northern Canada was the home of the beaver, which was for long enough Canada's most economically significant resource, since beaver hats were virtually mandatory for anyone with pretensions to gentility from the late sixteenth century until the early nineteenth, but the mirage which glittered before investor's eyes was the north-west passage. We have an excellent collection of books connected with exploration in northern Canada. One of the earliest is Samuel Hearne: his *Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795) records a journey made in the company of a group of Native Americans to map and survey the interior. The prim engraving of the Prince of Wales's Fort, with its Union Jack, and a British officer gesturing with his cane to impress a Native American lady suggests an obtuse attempt to impose European perspectives on a profoundly alien environment, and gives a completely inaccurate impression of this man. Unlike many later explorers, Hearne made no attempt to maintain European standards, but lived as his guides did, which required a strong stomach: *'the most remarkable dish among them ... is blood mixed with the half digested food which is found in the deer's stomach or paunch, and boiled up with a sufficient quantity of water, to make it of the consistency of pease pottage ... [I] always thought it exceedingly good.'* Observant and unjudgmental, his account brings the country and its people to life; while he is sometimes sickened by his guides' conduct (as when they massacre an inoffensive group of Inuit), he perceives them as fully adult and human, never as children or 'noble savages'.

Men from northern Scotland, already inured to a difficult climate, were attracted to the Hudson's Bay Company. One of Hearne's distinguished successors as an explorer financed by the com-

pany was John Rae, from Orkney in Orkney, who surveyed the as-yet unexplored northern coastline of Canada in the 1840s. Rae's outstanding success as a surveyor was, like Hearne's, grounded on attending carefully to what the Inuit had to tell him about Arctic survival and allowing them to teach him how to live off the land, in stark contrast to most British explorers of the period. The links between Aberdeen and the Company are evoked by a tag attached to a small comb donated to the Marischal Museum in 1929: 'Esquimaux comb from Dr. Rae, Hudson's Bay Co.' Another Hudson's Bay book, Thomas McKeever's *A Voyage to Hudson's Bay during the summer of 1817* (London, 1819) is the work of a man with a gift for description, who evokes the real strangeness of the arctic world:

The first thing that engages the attention of the passing mariner is the majestic, as well as singular form which the ice assumes in these chilling regions. I have seen many of these immense masses bear a very close resemblance to an ancient abbey with arched doors and windows ...while others assume the appearance of a Grecian temple, supported by massive columns of an azure hue, which at a distance looked like the purest mountain granite (p. 9)

He is above all, interested in ice phenomena; the engraving made from one of his drawings of

three ships frozen into the ice is strangely atmospheric. We also have a book by an erstwhile chaplain to the Hudson's Bay company who went as a missionary to the Red River colony (John West, *The Substance of a Journal* (London: L.B. Seeley, 1824)

The story of Aberdeen and the Hudson's Bay Company is a long and complex one, and we have benefited from our connections with the company in a variety of ways. One remarkable north-easterner who became one of its most distinguished servants was Donald Alexander Smith, later Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal (1820–1914), who was born in Aberdeenshire, and joined the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1838. By 1869, he was head of the company's Montreal department. His diplomatic success in achieving a peaceful solution to the Red River uprising (1869–70) seems to have whetted an appetite for politics, a career which culminated in becoming High Commissioner in London. However, the most significant thing about him is that by the time of his death, he had become easily the wealthiest Canadian of his time. His financial empire supported the great Canadian land boom in the early twentieth century, which we have also seen witnessed in the papers of the relatively humble North of Scotland Canadian Mortgage Company. Lord Strathcona became a



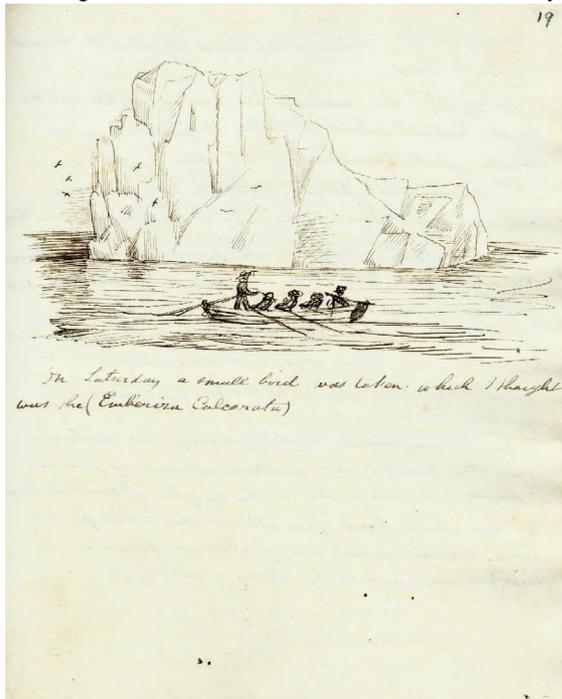
Thomas McKeever, *A voyage to Hudson's Bay* (London: Richard Phillips, 1819), *A moonlight Scene on the Ice*, facing p 37

noted philanthropist, and was particularly generous to McGill and Aberdeen Universities.

But the fur trade was not the only way that the arctic region was exploited. In the nineteenth century, whaling became an increasingly significant industry. Aberdeen's maritime heritage, and the northern Scot's ancient legacy of fishing in icy waters, ensured that Aberdonian fishermen and shipmasters were well represented in the development of British whaling.

The solitudes of the Canadian Arctic dominate the illustrations of an account of an 1831 whaling expedition which includes vignettes of icebergs and seabirds, arctic animals seen against the wastes of ice. The text is a richly factual diary of a whaling voyage (March–October 1831) from Aberdeen via Lerwick in Shetland to the Davis Straits, and back to Hoy and Bressay in the Orkney islands, full of fascinating and detailed descriptions of marine and bird life, weather conditions, whaling procedures, shipboard customs and superstitions, hunting expeditions and encounters with the Inuit. We also have another account, dating from 1853, of the Arctic voyage of a Peterhead whaler.

The world of early twentieth-century scientific investigation of the Canadian Arctic is vividly



Sketches of icebergs, MS 673

evoked in a set of stereoscopic images of an expedition of 1902. These pictures show scenes of whaling — “On the lookout for whales, Baffin Bay” — an image of ship's boats momentarily at rest amid the reflections of granite rocks in motionless water. There are also evocative records of ‘Fort Magnesia, the winter quarters of the Stein Arctic expedition to Cape Sabine, Ellesmere Land, 79 degrees north’. The substantial wooden hut is shown in winter completely buried in snow, obliterated, with a shaft cut at chimney level to the open air. There is also an interior of the hut, ‘Dr Leopold Kahn, the Arctic Explorer, in his winter quarters.’ Interestingly these arctic images come from the collection of William Clark Souter (1880–1959), better known for his record in manuscript and photographs of the Antarctic voyage of the *Terra Nova* in 1903–1904.

In 2000, the University hosted a major Inuit Studies conference. Though this was primarily focused on the increasingly complex and problematic relationship between peoples, resources, environment, and global processes in the Arctic today, it also had a significant historical dimension, since some of the Inuit who attended the conference had personal ties with the northeast of Scotland and consequently had the additional motive of tracing their heritage or ancestry. Many Inuit worked on Scottish whaling vessels, visiting and living in northeast towns such as Aberdeen and Peterhead.

One of the most remarkable pieces of evidence for Aberdeen's interaction with the circumpolar world dates from around 1700, and astonishingly, represents an epic voyage from the Americas to Europe; perhaps exploration, perhaps misadventure. The University preserves an ‘Eskimaux canoe in which a native of that country was driven ashore near Belhelvie, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, and died soon after landing’. The first record of this kayak is in a diary written by the Rev. Francis Gastrell of Stratford-upon-Avon who visited Aberdeen in 1760. He says that, “*In the Church . . . was a Canoo about seven yards long by two feet wide which about thirty two years since was driven into the Don with a man in it who was all over hairy and spoke a language which no person there could interpret. He lived but three days, tho' all possible*

care was taken to recover him.” At the time of Gastrell’s visit, the University Chapel was used as the library, and also as the museum, hence the ‘Canoo’ being ‘in the Church’. This enigmatic visitor has since been identified as a Greenlander, on the grounds of the style of his kayak. His arrival in Aberdeen seems almost miraculous, but he may have had an experience resembling that of another Inuit visitor to Scotland, who turned up in 1818 (the story is told in another of the books in our library; Thomas McKeavor’s *A Voyage to Hudson’s Bay* (London, 1819), p. 31):

This poor fellow had been drifted out to sea in his canoe near a hundred miles, when he fortunately met with one of the homeward-bound Greenland ships, which took him up ...

This second story ended more happily; the unnamed adventurer returned home, laden with possessions which he shared with his family.

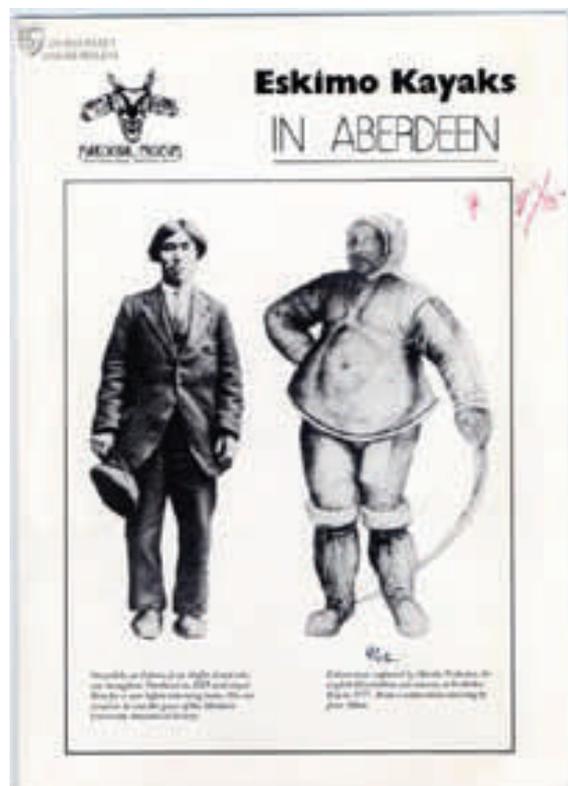
The search for the north-west passage lies behind one of our more unexpected Arctic holdings, a *hortus siccus*; an indexed volume of pressed plant specimens which were collected by Dr Walker, ship’s surgeon and naturalist, on board the yacht *Fox*, during one of the many searches for Sir John Franklin’s lost expedition commissioned by his grieving wife, in 1857–1859. Franklin had vanished on a doomed quest for the fabled passage in 1845. In the poignant words of the popular song of the time,

*With a hundred seamen he sailed away
To the frozen ocean in the month of May,
To seek that passage beyond the pole. . .
In Baffin’s Bay where the whale-fish blow,
The fate of Franklin no man may know.*

One remarkable Aberdeen whaling skipper who made a particularly significant impact on North Canada was Captain William Penny. In 1839, Penny encountered a young Inuk man, Inluupik, who told him he knew where to find a huge, sheltered fjord on the east of Baffin Island, which whalers had been searching for years, since it was known to exist, provisionally named Cumberland Sound, and to be the favoured territory of the bowhead whales which were their preferred target. Penny invited the young man to accompany him to Aberdeen for the winter,

which he was happy to do, and the *Neptune* reached Aberdeen on November 8, where Inluupik’s arrival created a sensation. He gave a demonstration of his kayaking ability on the River Dee: rashly, he wore full Arctic dress, far too warm for the climate, which sadly, put him in bed with a lung infection from which he never entirely recovered. The kayak he used is probably the one now housed in the University’s Medical School.

Inluupik and Penny left Aberdeen aboard another ship, the *Bon Accord*, on April 1, 1840, and on July 27, guided by Inluupik, Penny trium-



A catalogue for an exhibition entitled “Eskimo Kayaks in Aberdeen”,
LEMUR 1000420

phantly entered Cumberland Sound. Though tragically for Penny and the *Bon Accord*, the voyage was a financial disaster, in the following years Cumberland Sound became the most important whaling ground in the Canadian Arctic. Penny’s own reputation is suggested by the fact that he was selected to lead a British Admiralty expedition in search of Sir John Franklin, an exceptional honour for a whaling master. Concerned about the growing number of American whalers wintering in Cumberland Sound, Penny



Cradle, ABDUA 6174

applied for a Royal Charter in 1853 to establish a permanent commercial colony. Although his initiative was rejected by the British government, an Aberdeen Arctic Company was formed to purchase the *Lady Franklin* and the *Sophia* (the two ships he had commanded on the Admiralty Expedition), allowing him to maintain a land base in the Sound which became the chief British station on Baffin Island. In 1857–8, he returned to Baffin Island, accompanied, unusually, by his wife Margaret, and mapped the Cumberland Sound region.

Probably the most significant of the University's legacies from our Hudson's Bay connection is held in the Marischal Museum, which contains the third-largest ethnographic collection in Scotland, with a particular strength in North American material (almost 2000 items). The Arctic collections are perhaps the most important aspect of this; and they are certainly the largest, and many of the items which they contain are in superb condition, rendered vibrant by the skill of the artist and preserving the artist's frequent belief that what he made was a mimetic or magical efficacy. At the



Pipe model boat, ABDUA 5559



Knife, ABDUA 5819

core of this field is a donation by Sir William Macgregor (1846–1919) which includes archaeological material from Labrador of ancient date, as well as nineteenth-century ethnographic items. Macgregor, who studied medicine at the University of Glasgow and the University of Aberdeen, joined the colonial service in 1872 and gradually made his way up the ranks. He became governor of Newfoundland in 1904. He was one of the few governors who took an active interest in native peoples, visiting both Inuit and Mi'kmaq settlements, and drew on his medical training to help stop the spread of tuberculosis on the island. His term ended in 1909, and after a period in Queen-



Figure statuettes, ABDUA 9503



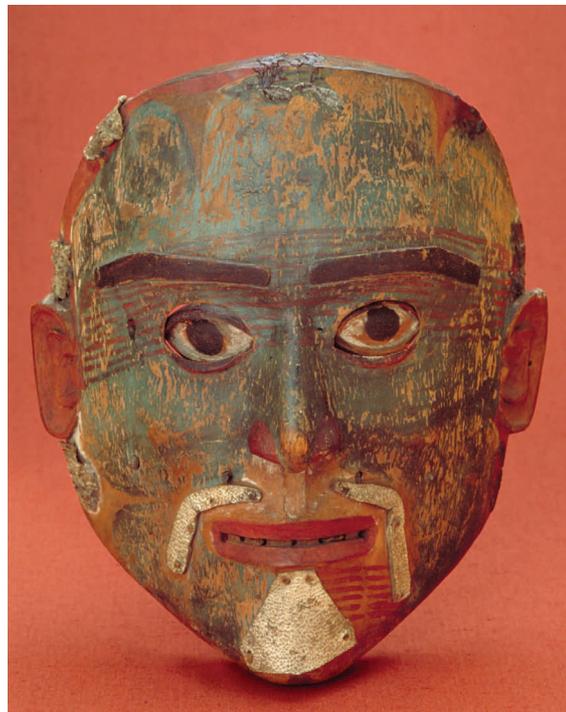
Chilkat blanket, ABDUA 63457

sland, Australia, he retired home to Aberdeen, where he died. Most of his collection consisted of quotidian artefacts such as scrapers, a soapstone kettle, and other tools of the Inuit's way of life. One of his more charming acquisitions was a toy cradle, some little girl's prized possession. But his donations to Marischal also include an object particularly rich in associations with the great enterprises of the nineteenth century, an Inuit knife. This knife was found by Captain Bartlett during Peary's attempt on the North Pole in 1906, on the site of the English camp at North Grant Land (82° 30' N), and had belonged to a member of the crew of the *Discovery* during the Arctic expedition of 1875.

However, one of our most important donors in this field was Captain William Mitchell (1802–76), an Aberdonian master mariner employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Like many Hudson's Bay employees, 'Willie' Mitchell was both sailor and trader. He was responsible for four vessels, *Cadboro*, *Una*, *Recovery* and *Beaver*, and later for the Company's base, Fort Rupert (Mitchell Bay in the Queen Charlotte Islands bears his name). A younger colleague recalled, '[we] formed quite a little society and many were the larks we organised and carried out. A favourite amusement was to get old Willie Mitchell to recite Shakespeare.' Among the many beautiful objects which Mitchell bequeathed to Marischal one has particular interest: among a collection of decoratively-carved panel pipes, mostly of argillite, is a charmingly humorous representation of Mitchell's own side-paddlewheel steamer, the *Beaver* (note the beaver figurehead), carved by a native of the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia. The *Beaver* was the first steamship on the West coast of the American continent;

understandably an object of interest. These panel pipes, which combine European and Haida Inuit motifs, are a particularly evocative reminder of the complex relationships between native people and European traders and settlers.

Captain Mitchell's taste for Shakespeare suggests more cultivation than usually characterised master mariners, and he evidently had a genuine and discriminating interest in Inuit art. Other highlights of his collection include a remarkable pair of wooden figures, sombre, thoughtful and dignified, also from the Queen Charlotte Islands, and an exquisite Chilkat blanket in the Tsimshian style. These blankets were worn by Tlingit people of rank, both men and women, and were



Mask, ABDUA 9497

placed as funerary robes on the graves of dead chiefs. He also collected five unusually beautiful masks; one of which conveys such a strong sense of individuality that it may be a portrait.

There is a variety of other Inuit and Native American art in the Marischal museum which has come to us from a variety of donors. We have a particularly beautiful raven rattle, also in the Tsimshian style. Raven was a culture hero of the Haida peoples, a divine trickster, and raven rat-

tles were made and used all over the northern Pacific coast. The theme of the frog holding the man's tongue has been interpreted to signify communication or transfer of power; and the red block in the bird's mouth has been interpreted as the light, or the sun, which Raven, Prometheus-like, stole and released into the sky. We also have a variety of Inuit representational art, including a little group of gaming pieces shaped like waterfowl, which may be of considerable age. They were excavated in 1866 from a house on the south entrance to Jones Sound, Banks Island, in the North West Territories. Though diminutive, the pieces are exquisitely carved, and



Grebe gaming pieces, ABDUA 6199

two are clearly identifiable as crested grebes. A particularly fine statuette of a walking caribou from Baffin Island similarly shows shrewdly affectionate observation of the animal's physique and movement. The collection also included a split-horn headdress donated to the museum in 1934 by a Mrs Bruce Miller. Little is known about her except that her family owned an Aberdeen chemical factory. It is likely that she visited the Blackfoot reservation in Montana, USA in the 1920s, collecting the headdress, a decorated buckskin shirt, moccasins and some other items. In November 2002, a delegation from the Horn Society of the Kainai (Blood Tribe), now based in Canada, visited Aberdeen and verified that this headdress was the one for which they had been searching. It was repatriated to them by the University in July 2004 and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the University and the Society.

This is a long, complex history. There might indeed be a case for saying that the first point at



Raven rattle, ABDUA 63456

which northern Scotland and northern Canada formed part of a single interacting world was actually the tenth century, when the same Viking families ramified across an Atlantic world which extended from Ireland to Hudson's Bay, but after that — in a sense — false start, from as early as the mid-eighteenth century, we see the beginnings of transatlantic economic interaction, and from 1800, an ever more serious and significant movement of peoples, goods, artefacts, art and ideas to and fro across the Atlantic. In this process, the colleges of the University of Aberdeen had a significant part to play. Alumni and professors alike travelled to Canada, and sometimes came back, often to the enrichment of our collections as well as of our intellectual life. The importance of Canada from the University's perspective is suggested by the University Library's collection of Canadiana, most of which has clearly been *in situ* here since it was published. Now what remains is to begin to introduce Canadians, and particularly Canada's historians, to the wealth of primary sources which await them in the Historic Collections at Aberdeen.



Caribou, ABDUA 5735



George Heriot, Travels through the Canadas, 1807, illustrating Quebec City.

MANUSCRIPT HOLDINGS AS INDICATED IN THE TEXT

1. MS 3211: Aberdeen Trust Ltd., 1875-1984
2. MS 3600: Cluny Castle Papers, c 1880-c 1930
3. MS 2303/7: Peter Buchan (1790-1854, 1811-1915)
4. MS 2528/36: Series of notes regarding the career of Commodore Alexander Grant (1734-1813) in Canada and the Great Lakes, compiled c 1900
5. MS 3713/63: Journals of Francis Burnett of Elrick, 1815-1818
6. MS 2137, MS 2138: Papers of Reverend Patrick Bell (c. 1799-1869), 1899-1837
7. MS 3184: McBean Family letters, 1902-1906
8. MS 673: Diary of a Whaling Voyage, 1831
9. MS 2719: Walter Henderson: Diary, 1853
10. MS3755/2: Photographs of Dr W. Clark Souter's Antarctic trip, 1903-1904, 1903-1904
11. MS 1332/9: Arctic Flora, 1857-1859