University of Aberdeen

Special Libraries and Archives

“This most beautiful country”: American materials in Aberdeen

Thomas Harriot, Admiranda Narratio ... de commodis et incolarum vitibus Virginiae (Frankfurt am Main, Johannes Wechel, Theodore de Bry, 1590), Map II: ‘The arrival of the English in Virginia’ (trans.). pl f9(735) Har

An Information Document

University of Aberdeen Development Trust
King’s College
Aberdeen
Scotland, UK
AB24 3FX

T. +44(0) 1224 272097 f. +44 (0) 1224 272271
www.abdn.ac.uk/devtrust/
The University of Aberdeen was founded in the decade in which America was discovered (King’s College, 1495, Marischal College, 1593). Throughout six centuries, from books which have been at King’s College since shortly after the Renaissance discovery of America, to the collections of books and pictures which are still accruing to the University’s collections, the constituent colleges of the University of Aberdeen have consistently acquired, through gift and purchase, books, manuscripts, pamphlets, engravings, and other material relating to the history of America, and in particular, to the involvement of Scots with that history.

The first principal of King’s, Hector Boece, had been educated at the Sorbonne, and remained in touch with Continental humanism. Humanism was above all an exploratory movement. The reclamation of the classical past went hand in hand with other ways of pushing back the frontiers of the known. Geography, in particular, became a focus of intellectual energy from the late fifteenth century, as the world expanded to include reports of the fabulous territories across the Atlantic, as well as the northern ice fields and the empires of the East. The dream of a connected world seemed to be in the process of realization. Thus Aberdeen holds an excellent collection of early atlases; including Hector Boece’s own copy of the Greek scholar Ptolemy’s atlas (1482), which is without America. But ‘Ptolemy’ was periodically brought up to date, and in the edition of 1513, which we also have, the south-east coast of America begins to emerge from the mist of conjecture: the Gulf of Mexico, Florida, Cuba and the Caribbean are, literally, on the map, whereas to the

Ptolemy: Atlas. (Strasbourg: Johann Schott, 1513). Map of the Gulf of Mexico and adjacent regions. pi F8899/91 Pto
north and south the firm lines of the coast gradually dissolve into uncertainty. By the time of the great Mercator Atlas of 1615, America is mapped in a superb plate, already broadly recognisable in outline, even though much of the western coast and interior still remained *terra incognita*.

Aberdeen also owns a beautiful copy of Thomas Harriot’s book illustrated by Theodore de Bry, *A Wonderful and Faithful Narration of the Goods and Religion of the Inhabitants of Virginia*, (Frankfurt am Main, 1590). One fascinating feature of this volume is the presence in it, alongside maps of the coastline and the interior, sketches of fishing-methods and other native crafts, such as how to build a canoe, villages and peoples of various ranks and types, of an antiquarian appendix on the primitive inhabitants of Britain, comparing their way of life, clothes, and warfare with those of contemporary Americans. Harriot introduces them thus: ‘The Illustrator who gave me the images of the inhabitants of Virginia, also handed over the five which follow, found, as he assures me, in some ancient English history. I have decided it is worth the labour to add them to the preceding ones, in order to demonstrate that at some earlier time, the inhabitants of Britain were no less wild than the Virginians themselves.’ De Bry’s beautiful and meticulous engravings indicate a genuine intellectual commitment to understanding the Virginians and offer a comparative interpretation of their way of life.

Another sixteenth-century book dealing with the new plants, and to some extent animals, of America was carefully studied in Aberdeen. A copy of Monardes’ *Joyfull News out of the New Found World* (published in translation in London in 1577) was owned by one of the most important medical men connected with seventeenth-century Aberdeen, the surgeon Alexander Reid. He gave his scientific (mostly medical) books to King’s, including his copy of Monardes, and the careful attention he gave to the *materia medica* of the New World is marked by his neat marginal annotations.
Religious and cultural links between Aberdeen and America began early in the seventeenth century. The learned Patrick Copland (c. 1572–1651), born in Aberdeen and educated at Marischal College, after a period as preacher to the navy and fleet of the East India Company, taught in Virginia, where he attempted to found a college at Henrico for the education of the children of Native Americans. After his intentions were disappointed, he became a missionary settler first in Bermuda, then in Eleuthera (Bahamas). From ‘my house in Paget’s Towne in Summer Islands’ [Bermuda], he wrote back to Aberdeen to reprove the authorities of Marischal College for their failure to acknowledge his gift of two thousand marks ‘for the ... Divinitie and Hebrew reader in your schooles’.

From nearer the end of the seventeenth century, we have an unique, illustrated document for the early history of the Carolinas. James Fraser (1645–1751), born in Inverness-shire, and educated at King’s College, Aberdeen, became tutor to one of Charles II’s illegitimate sons in the mid-1660s and thereafter held various posts under royal patronage. There is no doubt that Fraser moved in the most educated and scientific circles in Britain: he bought and sold books for many of the most distinguished scholars of his day. He also gave 1051 valuable books to the library of King’s College, as well as the then substantial sum of £1600 for a new library building. Several letters to and from Fraser survive in the Historic Collections at King’s College, Aberdeen, as well as a substantial archive which he deposited there, including material from Whitehall Palace, where he appears to have acted as private librarian to Charles II and James II.

A manuscript account of Carolina in our library is endorsed in the hand of James Fraser (1645–1751) as ‘a Letter giving an account of Carolina in the West Indies written by an ingenious French gentleman to Mr Fraser, Anno 1691’. Its author, Jean Boyd, seems, on the evidence of another letter in the same bundle, to have been a cousin of Fraser’s whose family had settled in France. Boyd was an assemblyman in Carolina where he lived for some time. His account of the Carolinas (a substantial extract is appended here, translated from Boyd’s French) describes Native Americans and the building of Charleston, as well as offering descriptions of the flora and fauna of ‘this most beautiful country in the world’, and includes the first surviving representation of Charleston on its present site, as well as drawings of plants of the Carolinas.

The map of this part of the Carolinas which we have seen until now in Europe is almost entirely incorrect. Even the best known rivers are not represented accurately on it. It shows the River Ashley as almost straight whereas in fact its course is very serpentine. As with the Cooper River, these rivers are fed by numerous little branches which the English call ‘creeks’, the tide goes almost to the top and they are navigable everywhere, especially the Ashley River. They are full of fish and of [thatching] reeds in the Winter. In the mouths of the rivers, as much as on the coasts, you see many birds, mainly pelicans and a bird called Kingfisher who dives into the sea from a height when he sees something. You can see four or five thousand of them. In the mouths of the rivers there are many beds of oysters, which are revealed at low tide, they do not have the same taste or the same shape as ours, they are much bigger and much longer than...
ours, and smell somewhat. The waters higher up
the rivers and particularly the creeks are full of
crocodiles so huge that some are 22 feet long.
They do no harm to anyone and people fear
them so little that several people while they are
bathing will swim after them. They are extremely
difficult to kill, unless one can strike them on their
vulnerable point. Bullets slide off their scales.
Being in a boat in a place called Goose Creek, I
shot at a dozen without hurting a single one,
hearing the bullets sliding off their backs — they
are no higher than an arm’s length when they are
on the shore.’

Even apart from Jean Boyd, we are peculiarly
rich in primary sources for the Carolinas. We also
have an important manuscript collection relating
to the Ogilvie family of Auchiries. Having been
drawn into the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, the Ogilvies
were ‘lucky to escape alive with property
intact’, and three brothers went to Carolina,
where Charles Ogilvie was sufficiently successful
to bring his nephew George to America to assist
him. George Ogilvie wrote from Myrtle Grove
Plantation, in June 1774, ‘I slept last night for the
first time in my life at least four miles distant from
any white person like the Tyrant of some Asiatick
Isle the only free man in an Island of Slaves.’
Later in the same letter, he describes eating
broiled chicken and wild cherries in a tempera-
ture of 92 degrees, with a thunderstorm coming.
He became a dedicated and effective planter,
with a strong sense of his responsibilities towards
his slaves. But despite their Jacobite heritage,
the Ogilvies remained loyal to the British crown at
the Revolution. George refused to take the oath
of Abjuration in 1778 and had to leave Carolina in
haste; in a letter of 25 April, he movingly records
his sorrow and anxiety about his slaves:

In this Land of Nominal freedom and actual Slav-
ery, Self-Love suggested that by alleviating the
too common weight of the chain, I might in some
degree justify the keeping my fellow beings in
bondage …for these three years past, besides as
much corn as they can use, I have allowed them
flesh meat, twice or thrice every week or even
oftener, when hard work’d, & notwithstanding the
enormous advance in the price of Clothing, have
even made a small addition to the usual allow-
ance — whilst many of the Richest men here
have not clothed their negroes for two or even
three years. But now I fear they must all be sub-
ject to the most humiliating circumstance of
human nature, that of being sold like the Brutes
that Perish; and when deprived of the little indul-
gences I allowed them, will they not have reason
to curse me for having taught them wants that
they might else have never known?

A friend of the Ogilvies (George Ogilvie sent him
seeds from the Caribbean which he had collected
in the course of his long journey home), Dr Alex-
ander Garden (1730–1791), was the first system-
atic botanist of the American South, the man af-
ter whom the gardenia is named, and a corre-
spondent of Linnaeus. We have 44 letters to and
from Dr Garden and his son, apparently unknown
and unpublished. Garden was born and educated
in Aberdeen, but immigrated to Carolina and
practised medicine in Charleston from 1752 until
the Revolution, when he was forced to flee to
London. His correspondence with the Ogilvies
includes a nostalgic description, written in 1789,
of the beloved gardens at Otranto in South Caro-
lina (now ‘possessed by a Goth’) which he had
been forced to abandon; one of the very first bo-
tanical pleasure-gardens ever made in the new
world, for which he had used only plants native to
America. His description affords a nice balance
of botany with lyric evocation:
The house on the top of the hill commanding a fine prospect of the adjacent grounds & many different views of the meanderings of the River — guarded on the west from the afternoons sun by two large liriodendrons or Tulip trees full of foliage and beautiful blossoms during May June and part of July ... Near the House is a rural library overshadowed with an umbrageous Catalpa and lofty Magnolia under cover of which the first company of the world reside — the Maeonian and Mantuan Bards having Milton and Tasso on the right and left, the eccentric Ariosto and the Gay Voltaire — the learned & philosophical Horace & the sweet & rural Thompson all accompany you within. Linnaeus and Bufon accompany you to the fields. Sir Isaac of Cassini to the celestial dance. —

The gently hanging garden where Art only gives easy access to the inimitable productions of Nature from the early and mildly blushing Atacano Lily to the modest Moccasine flower, the pride of the meadows, surrounded by the Sariacenias, orange coloured Asclepias the Cripnapus the azure lobelias and purple Juceas and deep Gentiascellas ... The Andromedas — the Iteas — the Cyrilla — the Hilingria — the Styrax the Stewartia — The Illicium, all beautiful flowering shrubs ... The Magnolia altissima the proudest of the vegetable kingdom challenging both the Indies in the rich verdure of its foliage and excelling every vegetable in the magnitude and grandeur of its flowers ... The caliganthus or sweet scented shrub diffusing an aromatic fragrance seemingly a compound of strawberry Pineapple and the clove — called sometimes by the candid name of Bubby Blossom from the ladies often carrying them in their Bozoms ... The borders dash with full blown liliciums Kalmias Erythima Calycanthus — Accacia coccinea — Umbrella Magnolias — Stewartia — Pteleas — Styrax — Itea cyrilla and many other aromatick and flowering shrubs give a lively glow [to] the gardens of Otranto that your cold bleak gardens of Albion can never see or produce.

These collections of letters and other material from three exceptionally lively and observant writers in the Carolinas reveal how much these families contributed to Carolina life, in terms of real commitment, enthusiasm, and love for their adopted country. They also tell of impending catastrophe and personal tragedy, escape via the Caribbean and American exile life in London. George Ogilvie wrote broken-heartedly from London, ‘I am restored to my native land stripd almost naked of Property and dependent, in my old age, upon the Justice of a Nation that seems to have lost every Idea of that Virtue, as well as its Honor.’ But there is also a happier epilogue. A younger generation of Ogilvies and Gardens returned to Carolina to become American citizens. This correspondence continues to the 1820s.

There are also connections between Aberdeen and America in the area of religious history. The first bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States was consecrated on 14 November, 1784 in Aberdeen: Samuel Seabury (1729–1796), First Bishop of Connecticut. It is therefore fitting that one of the most significant Aberdonian interventions in the developing intellectual culture of eighteenth-century America is that of an Episcopalian, Dr William Smith (1727–1803), who was born in Aberdeen and educated there at King’s College, where he matriculated in 1743–4. He immigrated to America in 1751, and in his 1753 essay, A General Idea of the College of Mirania, impressed Benjamin Franklin and led to Smith's appointment to teach Logic and Natural Philosophy at the College of Philadelphia. Smith subsequently served as first Provost of the Col-

lege. Although he was himself an Episcopal clergymen, during his directorship (which ended before the College became the University of the State of Pennsylvania in 1779), he encouraged students of all faiths to enrol, and held that true religion was to be learned from truthful and ethical teaching. His intellectual distinction was marked by the award of three honorary Doctorates, from King’s College, Aberdeen, the University of Oxford and Trinity College, Dublin. He died in 1803, just before his consecration as first Episcopal Bishop of Maryland.

Our copy of Dr Smith’s *Discourses on Public Occasions in America* (London, 1762), has the inscription

To Kings College
University of Aberdeen
In grateful Rememberance of

The Author’s Obligations
To that Seat of Learning, the Place of his Education
This Volume is Presented, for the use of
The Public Libraries
October 17th 1762, Will: Smith

The book expresses Dr Smith’s sense of the importance of religion and education in forming the character of the new nation, and his awareness of the need to prepare for the moment when the citizenry of New England would find themselves interacting with settlers whose history and culture was dependent, rather, on Spain and France, with their very different histories: ‘both we and our enemies are an increasing multitude of people, continually approaching each other in our frontier settlements, and having no surrounding ocean, or impassable barrier, to divide between us. Nothing, therefore, but a high and command-
ing sense of the great difference between our
religion and theirs, between Liberty and Slavery,
kept alive and propagated on our part, can ever
preserve us a separate people from them.’

His continued remembrance of Aberdeen is also
suggested by our copy of the *Transactions of the
American Philosophical Society*, Vol I., printed at
Philadelphia in 1771, which has the fascinating
manuscript inscription ‘The American Philosophi-
cal Society held at Philadelphia humbly desires
to cooperate with the University of Aberdeen, in
their laudable Endeavours for the Advancement
of useful Knowledge ....’ with the further inscrip-
tion ‘Dr Smith begs that Dr Franklin would direct
this copy to Dr John Chalmers, Principal, for the
library of King’s College, Old Aberdeen, in which
place Dr Smith had his Education.’

The nascent American Philosophical Society
evidently attracted serious interest in Aberdeen.
In Thomas Reid’s papers, we find the note (June
1769), ‘Read Experiments and Observations in
Electricity made at Philadelphia in America by
Benjamin Franklin LLD & FRS. To which are
added letters & Papers on Philosophical Subjects
London D Henry 1769.’ Reid’s papers are a be-
guiling series of notes by the philosopher, who
was to attract a substantial following in the United
States. They suggest that he was particularly
interested in Franklin’s studies of electricity, cli-
mate, raindrops and storms, notably with the op-
erations of Franklin’s ‘Thunder Rod’ during a bliz-
zard, but he was also concerned with the Phi-
losophical Society’s work on musical harmony
and acoustics.

Another Aberdeen Episcopalian, Alexander
Murray, also remembered Aberdeen from Phila-
delphia. Having graduated MA from King’s Col-
lege, Aberdeen, in 1746, he became an Anglican
missionary at Reading, Pennsylvania. He died in
Philadelphia in 1793, and by his will established
the Murray lectureships – a series of winter Sun-
day lectures set up in King’s College Chapel to
save students and staff from attending their par-
ish services in poor weather – suggesting that he
had never forgotten the physical rigours of stu-
dent life in Aberdeen.

We have a variety of other fine material concerned with eighteenth-century America. The gradual discovery of the continent continued, and is recorded in books held in Aberdeen. A London Atlas Manuale of 1723 which is in the library shows California as an island. Fitz Hugh Sound is represented as the ‘Straits of Annian’, and the land to the north, christened ‘Annian’, simply ceases. The blank, later to be known as the coast of Oregon, was filled by Captain George Vancouver's epic voyage of 1792 (the report of which is also in this library), which mapped it, gave it the name of ‘New Albion’, and claimed it for the King:

Accompanied by Mr Broughton and some of the officers, I went on shore at about one o'clock ... and under the discharge of a royal salute from the vessels, took possession accordingly of the coast.’ (I, p. 289)

It is not always easy to identify Captain Vancouver's names for prominent features, though Mount Rainier (named ‘after my friend, Rear Admiral Rainier’, I, p. 235) still has the name he gave it. But he was an interested and extremely observant visitor, who went to considerable lengths to find out about the indigenous peoples. Two illustrations in particular, both made from sketches on the spot, ‘Village of the Friendly Indians’, and ‘Cheslakee’s village’, bear comparison with the earlier work of Theodore de Bry for ethnographic interest.

Another kind of mapping, which began with works such as Monardes’ Joyfull News and the labours of men such as Dr Garden, was the scientific description of New World flora and fauna. One of the greatest of all such works, John James Audubon’s Birds of America, has a significant input from an Aberdeen ornithologist, William MacGillivray (1796–1852). MacGillivray played a substantial part in the writing of the Ornithological Biographies which accompanied Audubon’s wonderful colour plates. Audubon commemorated his collaborator in the naming of two American birds, both illustrated in his magnum opus — ‘MacGillivray’s Ground Warbler’ and ‘MacGillivray’s Shore Finch’. MacGillivray later became professor of Natural History at Aberdeen, so his copious ornithological notes, interspersed with beautifully-observed records of his field-expeditions in northern Scotland, and even some of the actual bird-skins from which Audubon worked, came to the University. Also amongst the MacGillivray manuscripts is this extraordinary glimpse of Audubon at work, one of many such windows into the past offered by Aberdeen’s rich collection of unpublished journals and life-writings, in which the exasperated MacGillivray sketches a moment when mutual patience was wearing thin:

The Two Ornithologists, Dialogue

[A large room, in which are a heap of bird’s skins and a long table covered with others arranged in lines. Mr Audubon seated, and transcribing references to author. Mr MacGillivray enters with a portfolio.]

Audubon. [pretending to be very busy, and not looking up] How are you?

MacG. Pretty well.

Aud. I will be done presently ... .

MacG. I wish if you please, to begin at the other end of the series, and take the Icterius that we may better understand their connection with the Finches and Buntings; for I think they run more into the Finches.
Aud. [Cross] That I think is a very bad plan. It is strange to begin with the Icteruses, at the wrong end...

[Searches in a heap on the floor, finds one, and throws it rudely on the table, another, and throws it with less force, but grumbling to himself. MacG. Writes on without speaking.]

Aud. This is very strange, these birds have slender bills and I think are nearer to the Icterus Baltimore... [In a pet.] It is impossible to bear this it is really awful...

MacG. Very well. What is the use of squabbling in this way? You say it is all 'nonsense', mere 'child's play'. If you think so, let it alone.

[Rises and throws the papers on the table.]

After that, MacGillivray walked out, but fortunately, all was well that ended well: the next morning, Audubon called to apologise, blaming his bad temper on money worries and ‘the hurry of arranging for departure’ and MacGillivray agreed to continue as collaborator.

Aberdeen also made a contribution to the development of the visual arts in America. Andrew and Archibald Robinson, who became miniature painters in America in the eighteenth century, were born in Aberdeen and educated at Marischal College. More significantly, the Aberdeen painter Cosmo Alexander (1724–1772), of whose work we hold several examples, worked for three years in America (1769–71), where he taught Gilbert Stuart, later famous as the painter of George Washington. The architect James Gibbs (1682–1754) was an Aberdonian Catholic and the friend and patron of Cosmo Alexander (who was a major beneficiary from his will). Gibbs’s finely engraved books of his works were one of the most used sources for the formal architecture of the eastern seaboard of the US in the eighteenth century. We have the whole run of his contemporary printed and engraved architectural folios.

We also hold material of considerable American interest in our pamphlet and graphic collections, including contemporary journalistic accounts of the trial of Admiral Cornwallis; and caricatures of the part played in the American War of Independence by John Stuart, Lord Bute (1713–92) Chancellor of Marischal College and Secretary of State, who was also a major donor to the library. The wide range of pamphlets from the seventeenth to the late nineteenth centuries in our Special Collections include a variety of writings about slavery: a slave-narrative of the 1850s; *Curiosity visits to Southern Plantations*; and *Discussion on American Slavery in Dr. Wardlaw’s Chapel between Mr George Thomson and the Rev. R.J. Breckenridge of Baltimore*, Glasgow, 1836.

There is also a wide variety of other American material on other topics, such as a pamphlet of
an anti-American sermon preached at Old Aberdeen, *Liberty the Cloak of Maliciousness* (1778), two ostensibly Paris-printed pamphlets taking the side of the Americans, and two Scottish editions of pamphlets by “Peter Porcupine”, *History of American Jacobins, commonly called Democrats* (Edinburgh, 1797), and *Democratic principles illustrated by example* (Aberdeen, 1798). We also have an oddity: *Familiar Epistle to Robert J. Walker, formerly of Pennsylvania, late of Mississippi, more recently of Washington and last heard of in Mr Coxwell’s balloon* (London, 1863).

We also have documents connected with an American Scot notorious in his own time, Peter Williamson of Aberdeen (‘Indian Peter’), whose story gave rise to Robert Louis Stevenson’s novel, *Kidnapped*. The thirteen-year-old Williamson was kidnapped in Aberdeen in 1743 as he played on the quay, taken to Philadelphia on a ship called *The Planter*, and sold as an indentured servant. He was purchased by a Scot from Perthshire, Hugh Wilson, who treated him well and left him £150. He settled as a farmer in Bucks County, Penn., near the forks of the Delaware, where in October 1754, he was attacked by Indians in the pay of the French, captured, and taken with them back to their winter quarters in the Appalachians. He escaped in unseasonal snowmelt and arrived back in 1755 at his father-in-law’s farm. He then enlisted in Governor Shirley’s regiment of Philadelphia foot soldiers and was taken prisoner by the French, but subsequently returned to Britain where he published his autobiography and (eventually) obtained legal redress against his original kidnappers. Thereafter, he kept a coffee house in Edinburgh and was, oddly enough, considered the most famous Scotsman of his century by contemporaries. We have not only the full edition of his *French and Indian Cruelty Exemplified* (1792) but also the numerous nineteenth-century printings of the posthumous and more sensational version, *The life and curious adventures of Peter Williamson who was carried off from Aberdeen and sold for a slave* (Aberdeen, 1801).

On a more serious note, a particularly important manuscript letter, from a collection of letters and reports sent back to an Aberdonian with commercial interests in the New World, serves as a reminder of the links which had developed between the north-east of Scotland and the American States. This letter is only one aspect of a rich and extensive collection of papers which is also of the greatest interest for its Caribbean material (indeed, more generally, we have extensive holdings concerned with early Caribbean history). Charles Gordon’s letter (see overleaf and appendix) offers a compelling eyewitness report of America’s slide into the War of Independence.

The Ogilvies of Carolina also have much to say about the slide towards the war of independence. Their companion or factor Alexander Cumine writes from Carolina of the first stirrings of trouble in opposition to the Stamp Act:

No person here approves of this odious Act so disagreeable to the people as being imposed on them by a legislative body where they have no proper representation...in short the people here think themselves highly injured by this Act and are determined never to admit of it until compelled by Force, and if the Government at home persist God knows what may be the consequences.

A draft of a sermon on the text Jer. xviii. 7–10, makes topical reference to the war between Great Britain and the American colonists, in a way that suggests a clear indication of sympathy for the New Englanders, unsurprising, in view of the close relations between Aberdeen and the emerging nation: ‘But some may say, We are on the conquering side, going on successfully, God seems visibly to be contending with the Americans, not with us, with us he seems pleased The War is not at an End. We should thankfully ac-
knowledge God but still mix trembling with our mirth. Is it not matter of deep sorrow and grief to be driven to the necessity of hewing down and destroying our brethren, bone of our bone?'

It is natural that we should have a variety of material connected with the War of Independence, given the variety of Aberdonians with interests in America, but it is perhaps more surprising that we have little-known material connected with the American Civil War. The library holds the only near-complete run of a newspaper, the Aberdeen Free Press, which carried, from January 1864 to October 1866, a series of letters reporting on the Civil War from a correspondent signing himself "The Wisconsin Scot", most probably the Aber-

Extract from letter from Charles Gordon to his Uncle (Quebec 1774). MS 1169/5/24, 1v-2v. Full transcription of letter in Appendix 1.
deen-born banker and later Democratic congressman Alexander Mitchell (d.1887). What is unique about these letters is that they advance a temperate pro-Lincoln and pro-war standpoint, at a time when (it seems, in retrospect, surprisingly) all the major English and Scottish papers, especially \textit{The Times}, were strong supporters of the Confederates. Despite consistent Scottish support for the abolition of slavery, even the intellectual \textit{Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine} was extreme in its support of the Southern States, publishing truculently pro-Confederate essays into the 1870s. The best moment in what is mostly a series of crisply factual reports is an anecdote in a letter written from Milwaukee in June 1865 retailing how the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” (which he assumes will be unknown to his Scottish readers) is becoming universally popular.

\begin{quote}
It was sung by Chaplain M'Cabe of the Christian Commission while a prisoner in Libby, after hearing Old Ben, the coloured newspaper seller in Richmond, cry out, ‘Great news by Telegraph! Great battle at Gettysburg! Union soldiers gain the day!’ Upon hearing this glorious news, the Chaplain sung the soul-stirring hymn, all the prisoners joining in the chorus, making the old prison walls ring with ‘Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!’
\end{quote}

Others of our nineteenth-century collections relate to travel and topography. The 1833–34 Diary of Patrick Bell includes an entire volume about New York State, including a rapturous description of the Niagara Falls in winter:

\begin{quote}
On every part icicles are formed of the most fantastic and grotesque appearance and of a most gigantic size when the water is sufficiently small to permit the frost to act upon it. The frozen spray covers everything in the neighbourhood with ice of glassy brightness. The trees in particular have a most dazzling appearance when enshrouded in their crystal coats of mail.
\end{quote}

When he travelled up the Hudson River, the scenery, ‘very excellent and upon a larger scale’ reminded Bell of ‘parts of Scotland that I have seen, the scenery of the Dee for instance, about Braemar and the Tweed at Melrose and Abbotsford. The greater part of it has steep banks wooded to the water’s edge, every now and then a pretty enough wooden village presents itself to the view with its Stores and Churches prominent. The only hills seen from it are a range called the Catskill Mountains.’

Nineteenth-century interactions between America and Aberdeen also resulted in a surprisingly good collection of Native American ethnographic material. Marischal Museum now has the third-largest ethnographic collection in Scotland, with a particular strength in North American material (almost 2000 items). In 1824, Professor William Knight of Marischal College wrote in his catalogue of the College’s Museum that the collection included an ‘Indian Pouch, Indian knife, Belt of Wampum, Eight various Girdles, Belts &c used by the N. American Indians, Cloak, ornamented with Beads’ and noted that ‘One of the Girdles and Garters were presented by Mr Ogilvie of Barras’. There are also a number of other items with a Cherokee or Choctaw provenance, implying that much of this collection originated in the Southwest in the era before the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Unfortunately, not enough is known about Ogilvie to explain how he came by this early collection or the nature of this contact between Scotland and North America. Nonetheless, this material and a small group of other items is an important record of indigenous life before Western impact. We continue to collect material of ethnographic and geographic interest; most recently, a lifetime’s collection of books, papers, guidebooks, maps and slides about the physical and human geography of the North American West has come into the library, presented by Gordon Sutherland.

While some of these contacts have been unequal and destructive, some have been much more creative. A significant moment of international friendship and understanding resulted, paradoxically, in our losing an important item: in 2003 a split-horn headdress was repatriated to the Horn Society of the Kainai (Blood Tribe). The headdress had been donated to the museum in 1934 by a Mrs Bruce Miller about whom little is known 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. She did not record any tribal names or other de-
The wrapped split horn headdress from Marischal Museum Senior Curator Neil Curtis. 7 July 2004.

Members of the Horn Society of the Blood Tribe (Kainai) accept the

tails, so for many years the headdress was merely catalogued as a ‘war bonnet’. This reflects European attitudes towards Native American people and an ignorance of the headdress’ status as part of a sacred bundle (sacred bundles are treated as living beings, cared for like a child by people to whom they are ceremonially transferred). On 13th November 2002 a delegation from the Horn Society, now based in Alberta, Canada, visited Aberdeen to see if this headdress was the final sacred bundle for which they had been searching. They were welcomed to the University by the Principal and museum staff after which they smudged and prayed before identifying the headdress. On 7th July 2004, at a public ceremony in the museum, ownership of the headdress was transferred and a Memorandum of Understanding signed to outline the conditions of the repatriation (including a promise of objects to be given to the museum) and to help us to work together in the future. At a private ceremony afterwards, the headdress was taken into the care of the Horn Society members.

Another facet of connection between Aberdeen and America at the turn of the twentieth century is exemplified by one of our most significant twentieth-century donations, that of William MacBean, a successful businessman of New York, born in Nairn, Aberdeenshire, in 1856. He was a member of (and historian of) New York St Andrew’s Society, and a resolution by the society for a memorial of his service to the society is now held in the collection. MacBean made a magnificent collection of Jacobite pamphlets and other Jacobite material, including many prints, which he donated to Aberdeen in 1918. The University gave him an Honorary Doctorate of Laws in 1920.

More surprisingly, we have a significant collection of material which relates to American scholars’ work abroad. Generated by the American Society for Archaeological Research in Asia Minor, it contains impressions of inscriptions, notebooks, photographs, maps and correspondence relating to the fieldwork carried out by Sir William Moir Calder (1881–1960, Aberdonian archaeologist and classical scholar) and others, under the auspices of the Society from 1925 to 1954. This collection is of real significance, since much of it was collected in regions which are now inaccessible. Though most of the inscription impressions in the collection were transcribed and published in Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua, the photographs and other primary data which we hold offer unique images of the countryside, towns and people, and may in some cases be the only surviving record.

To summarise — as befits an ancient University, we have a consistent North American collection going back to the first humanist attempts to integrate the newly discovered continent with existing knowledge of the world, from the first appearance of the tip of Florida to the relations, botanical works and engraved depictions of the era of exploration. From the seventeenth century onwards, there is a two-way traffic: besides collecting information about the new world, Aberdeen students and professors became actively involved with the religious and intellectual development of America. In the age of the enlightenment we have evidence of important intellectual contacts with America’s emergent academies, as well as traces of some real sympathy with the American Revolution. An Professor of Natural Philosophy, William MacGillivray, made very substantial contributions to Audubon’s iconic Birds of America, and thereafter, scholars and archaeologists from Aberdeen can be seen at work in cooperation with their North American colleagues in the modern exploration of remote reaches of the physical world, and the deep-buried evidence for the past.
Qubec [sic] 28 September 1774

Dear Uncle

[ ...] the whole Continent of America seems at present to be very much discontented, even this Province which was formerly very quiet begins to grumble at the new laws, which have been made for them. The Governor arrived from England about ten days ago, he was address’d by the Roman Catholick Clergy & by some of the Canadians, but not by one Englishman, nor even by the Council, as they believe him to be the sole promoter of the laws they are so much displeased with. The Congress of Deputies from the several Provinces have been met at Philadelphia since the first of this month, it is not yet known what they are doing. New England is at present all in confusion. The people have refused openly to comply with the acts of Parliament, they have had town meeting even at Boston in the face of the Camp, the Grand Civil jurors when the Court met refused to be sworn; and in some places they have been so daring as to refuse the Court admittance into the Courthouse. They have obliged the Lieutenant Governor and several of the new Chancellors to resign their seats at the Council board. On the other hand General Gage seems determined to enforce them: he has siezed upon all the Powder belonging to the Province; he has imprisoned the Comitee of Correspondence, who acknowledged that they called the people together to the Town meeting, & he sent the High Sherriff with the Companys of Grenadiers with Justices orders at any rate to disperse them, but they had done their businesse & were gone before the soldiers arrived. There are now 7 Regiments at Boston & Salem & there are 4 more ordered there immediately, the 16 and 47th from Philadelphia & New York, & the first of the Transports arrived here yesterday to carry the 10th and 62nd from this [i.e. Quebec]. God only knows where it will end but every body thinks not without a great deal of bloodshed. I leave this on Sunday. Next in my way to Boston from whence I shall acquaint you if anything new or extraordinary happens.

I am dr Uncle  
Your dutifull nephew  
Charles Gordon.
MANUSCRIPT AND PAMPHLET HOLDINGS AS INDICATED IN THE TEXT

- Autographic notes of William Macgillivray, chiefly on British Birds, 1836-40. MS 2159.
- Draft of Sermon on Jer. XVIII, 7-10, Preached on 13 and 16 March 1760. MS 983/2/1.
- Letter, Jean Boyd to Dr James Fraser, Secretary of Chelsea Hospital, describing Carolina, 1691. MS K 257/44/9.
- Letter, Partick Copland to the Provost and Magistrates of Aberdeen, 1 March 1631. MS 991.
- Papers of the Ogilvie-Forbes family, Boyndie, Aberdeenshire, 1700-1960. MS 2740:
  - Letter, Alexander Cumine, Portroyal, to Alexander Ogilvie, Auchiries, 15 February 1766. MS 2740/10/4/11;
  - Letter, George Ogilvie, Myrtle Grove, to Miss P. Ogilvie, 25 June 1774. MS 2740/10/5/1;
  - Correspondence (consisting of 44 letters) between Alexander Garden (father and son) and George Ogilvie, 1779-1801. MS 2740/10/7/1-44.
- Papers (1833-37) of Rev. Patrick Bell (c.1799-1869). MS 2137.
- Papers of Thomas Reid (1710-96), philosopher. Notes on natural philosophy, including electricity. MS 2131/3/1/14.
- St Andrew's Society, New York. Memorial to William MacBean, 1914. MS 979.
- Thompson, George, Discussion on American Slavery...between Mr. George Thompson and the Rev. R. J. Breckenridge of Baltimore...June 1836 (Glasgow: Gallie, 1836). King 104/17.