

# *Scottish Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories*

by MICHAEL B. MOIR\*

The importance of British historical manuscripts and government records for the writing of Canadian history, particularly for the period prior to Confederation, has brought about a vigorous campaign lasting more than a century to make these sources more accessible to researchers. The duplication of material relevant to colonial administration was clearly a priority with the first Dominion Archivist, Douglas Brymner, and starting in 1878 the holdings of the Archives Branch of the Department of Agriculture (later to become the Public Archives of Canada) slowly expanded with the addition of transcripts from the British Museum. By 1883 the work had been extended to the Public Record Office, where the copyists were closely monitored by Brymner for the next twenty years.<sup>1</sup> Under the subsequent direction of Arthur Doughty, this programme was enlarged beyond the confines of these London institutions. As a result of Doughty's attempts to locate the muniments of those "illustrious persons whose careers were intimately bound up with Canada ... which must find a place in our archives before we are in a position to offer our students the material for a comprehensive history," attention was increasingly focused upon the mansions, libraries, and register house of Scotland.<sup>2</sup> Beginning between 1906 and 1910 with the duplication of the voluminous papers of the Earl of Selkirk, Scottish manuscripts have frequently been reproduced by the Public Archives of Canada and other institutions to fill gaps in their research collections.<sup>3</sup>

---

\* A version of this paper was presented at the Scottish Heritage Festival that was held at the University of Guelph in May 1983. The author would like to thank the Festival's Chairman, Professor Edward J. Cowan, for permission to publish this article at this time.

1 Ian E. Wilson, "A Noble Dream: The Origins of the Public Archives of Canada," *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-83), pp. 19-20; Canada, *Report on Canadian Archives, 1883* (Ottawa, 1884), pp. 2-5. For a comprehensive guide to the work in Britain of Brymner and his successors, see the Public Archives of Canada, *General Inventory: Manuscripts*, vol. 2 (Ottawa, 1976) for the material copied in the Public Record Office, and vol. 3 (Ottawa, 1974), pp. 301-72 for transcripts from the British Museum.

2 Canada, *Report concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905* (Ottawa, 1906), pp. xiii-xiv.

3 While the Public Archives has been in the vanguard of this activity with the microfilming of the papers of Edward "Bear" Ellice, Lord Elgin, the Earl of Dalhousie, and others, Scotland has also yielded considerable information relevant to the needs of Canadian religious archives; see the United Church of Canada, Committee on History, *Bulletin* 20 (1968), pp. 96-97. In addition, the University of Guelph Library has been particularly active in acquiring microfilm from the National Library of Scotland and the Scottish Record Office on such diverse topics as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious history, the management of landed estates, emigration, and crofter colonization in Canada.

This task is by no means near completion, and published inventories only hint at the wealth of material in Scotland that remains to be explored by students of Canadian social and business history in particular.<sup>4</sup>

Scottish repositories have played an important role in the preservation of Canada's written heritage, but few archivists and historians seem to be aware that Canadian institutions have reciprocated this favour to a significant degree. As a result of the increasingly heavy waves of emigration from Scotland that reached North America from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, Canada has become a rich but relatively untapped source of manuscript material generated by Scots on both sides of the Atlantic. While collections have occasionally been returned to Scotland by individual donors,<sup>5</sup> many more remain in the possession of Canadian archives, libraries, and museums. These manuscripts not only document the Scottish experience in Canada, but could also form the basis for valuable contributions to current themes in Scottish historical writing.

Manuscripts of a Scottish nature can be grouped into three fairly distinct categories according to the manner by which they have found their way into Canadian institutions. The first and most straightforward approach has been the direct acquisition of collections either by purchase or donation due to their close affinity with the research interests of certain repositories. The donations, for the most part, are characterized by the prominent position in Canadian political and social circles that was enjoyed by those individuals responsible for the original composition of the manuscripts. Although these papers were created as a result of Scottish involvement in Canadian affairs, they were eventually returned to Scotland to form parts of larger family muniments. Given the importance of the role their creators played in the national life of Canada, it is not surprising that subsequent efforts to return collections of this nature to the place of their origin have been directed towards the Public Archives of Canada by Professor J.M.S. Careless and the Baroness Pentland. Such donations as the papers of George Brown and the Marquess of Aberdeen (who served as Governor General from 1893 to 1898) and his wife, the Marchioness, represent valuable additions to the nineteenth-century

---

4 See, for example, the books reviewed by Bruce Wilson in *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979-80), pp. 238-41. Some indication of the Scottish holdings pertinent to Canadian history can also be found in the List and Index Society: *Source List of Manuscripts Relating to the U.S.A. and Canada in Private Archives Preserved in the Scottish Record Office*, Special Series, vol. 3 (1970) — which has been superseded by a more comprehensive list available only at the General Register Housing in Edinburgh — and to a much lesser degree in the National Library of Scotland's *Catalogue of Manuscripts Acquired Since 1925*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1966); and Ian MacDougall, ed., *A Catalogue of Some Labour Records in Scotland and Some Scots Records Outside Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1978). A more nearly definitive statement on this subject should appear in the near future when the Public Archives of Canada publishes the results of its British Records and Manuscripts Inventory; see Public Archives of Canada, *Report, 1980/1981* (Ottawa, 1981), pp. 25-26; *1981/1982* (Ottawa, 1982), p. 30.

5 Ian MacDougall, "Scottish Labour Records Project," *Archivaria* 8 (Summer 1979), pp. 182-3. During the course of the research for this article, only one other similar donation was discovered: two exercise books written by Arthur Martin in 1820 and 1826 at Robert Owen's schoolhouse in New Lanark were discovered in Nottawasaga, Ontario, and were subsequently donated to the Strathclyde Regional Archives in 1979. Photocopies of these rather uncommon sources for the development of Scottish education can be examined at the Simcoe County Archives, R2A S1 Sh1.



*Scottish immigrants waiting to go ashore at Quebec, P.Q., c. 1911. Photograph by William Topley. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada, PA-10225.*

holdings of the Public Archives.<sup>6</sup> In essence, such contributions might be regarded as an extension of that institution's traditional efforts to identify and duplicate British manuscripts that are relevant to the mainstream of Canadian political life.

The economic and social changes that have caused the dissolution and sale of many Scottish landed estates throughout the twentieth century have had a similar effect upon their family archives. While research libraries in the United States have been particularly active in acquiring such collections,<sup>7</sup> their Canadian counterparts have been relatively insignificant contestants for the muniments of prominent Scottish landed families. There are, however, two notable exceptions, namely the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto and the University of Guelph Library. The Thomas Fisher Library, for example, acquired a portion of the papers of George Dempster of Dunnichen in 1968 as an addition to a collection of books on the Scottish enlightenment. Concentrating upon the management of Dempster's Skibo estate in Sutherland, this substantial collection deals with the transformation and upheaval of the Highland economy during the late eighteenth

6 For more detailed information on these collections and their provenance, see the Public Archives of Canada, *General Inventory: Manuscripts*, vol. 4 (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 188-90 and vol. 5 (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 83-84.

7 American interest in Scottish manuscripts was perhaps best exemplified during the dispersal in the 1920s of the papers of the Viscounts Melville among fourteen repositories, eight of which were in the United States: List and Index Society, *List of Melville Papers (Sections 2 and 3) Preserved in the Scottish Record Office*, Special Series, vol. 4 (1971), pp. 2-3.

and early nineteenth centuries, along with the ensuing problems of social disruption. In a series of letters to a wide range of Highland landowners and government officials, as well as in unpublished memorials in response to the work of the Earl of Selkirk in support of emigration, Dempster explored the options available for the employment of a seemingly redundant population. It is a problem that has vexed writers from Dempster's time to the present, but the recent emphasis upon the use of Highland estate papers affords an opportunity for these expatriated manuscripts to provide an important contribution to this diverse literature.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of the large number of accounts that have been devoted to the problems associated with Highland economic development, it is sometimes easy to lose sight of the fact that Lowland Scotland was equally beset by the disruption created by agricultural improvement and industrialization. The Lowland perspective on these changes to the economic and social fabric of Scottish life is clearly evident in the Ewen-Grahame Papers, the muniments of two families related by marriage that were purchased by the University of Guelph in 1974. John Ewen played a prominent role in the movement for burgh reform in Aberdeen in the late eighteenth century, and his extensive correspondence is particularly relevant to research currently underway into the town's merchant community.<sup>9</sup> The estate papers of the Grahames of Morphie, by contrast, illustrate the difficulties facing a predominantly rural society in the first half of the nineteenth century. The impact of the improving movement upon the Grahames' Kincardineshire property was by no means as sudden or emotive as the events unfolding in Dempster's Sutherland, but it is clear nonetheless that the rate of change on the estate was surpassing the ability or willingness of many to adapt to an increasingly different world. In view of the recent call for a less centralist approach to Scottish social history — a call that is not without its parallel in Canadian historical writing — this extensive collection offers an alternative to the traditional concentration upon the social and economic development of areas such as the Lothians and Berwickshire.<sup>10</sup>

The second type of Scottish manuscript that can be found in Canada is of material generated in Scotland which pertains primarily to Scottish issues, although it was subsequently removed to Canada as the result of emigration. This translation could take place in two ways. In the first instance, many families of substantial means were able to find room for personal papers, often accumulated over several generations, in the additional space that was denied to those who could afford no more than steerage accommodation for their passage. The small number of such manuscripts extant indicates that this was by no means a common occurrence, just as their

---

8 The most recent examples of this approach are James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976); J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815* (Edinburgh and Winnipeg, 1982); and Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances: Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions, 1746-1886*, vol. 1 (London and Canberra, 1982). A discussion of the broader historiographical debate over Highland development can be found in an article by Rosalind Mitchison, "The Highland Clearance," *Scottish Economic and Social History* 1 (1981), pp. 4-24.

9 Tom Donnelly, "The Economic Activities of the Members of the Aberdeen Merchant Guild, 1750-1799," *Scottish Economic and Social History* 1 (1981), pp. 25-41.

10 Ian Carter, *Farm Life in Northeast Scotland 1840-1915: The Poor Man's Country* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 178-79.



*Dancing competition, Canadian Highland Sports Meet, France, July 1918, probably taken by William Rider-Rider. Highland battalions of the Canadian Corps earned a well-deserved fighting reputation during World War I. The commander of the 1st Canadian Division was Major-General Sir Archibald Macdonnell. Significantly, eight of the Canadian winners of the Victoria Cross between 1914 and 1918 were members of Highland battalions. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada, PA-2815.*

owners were representative of only a small portion of emigrants. Those collections that have survived, however, tend to illuminate groups of individuals that have not assumed major roles in Scottish historical writing.

One of the best examples of this sort of manuscript is the letter-books of Martin MacLeod that are in the possession of the Canadian History Department of the Metropolitan Toronto Library. After retiring from the British Army with the rank of captain, MacLeod took up the lease for his father's sheepfarm on Skye. The ensuing correspondence written at Drynock deals with the usual family concerns, especially MacLeod's attempts to ensure that his children receive both a sound education on the isolated farm and ample provision for their future subsistence. For the most part, MacLeod was much more preoccupied with the management of his flocks, steadings, labourers, and sub-tenants as they all struggled through the difficult decade of the 1840s. MacLeod's dealings with his own landlord, McLeod of MacLeod, were essentially restricted to the letting of the estate's shootings, and the tenant was apparently unaided in his attempts to introduce new crops and Lowland agricultural methods to his farm. Instead of profiting excessively from these

improvements, MacLeod stressed in June 1842 that sheepfarming, like most other occupations in Scotland, was vulnerable to the fluctuations of market forces and the severity of natural elements:

Altho prices have recently been good, and very good, yet, from the heavy losses of sheep from Braxy and severe weather as well as from the exorbitantly high prices of shearing materials, & for some years of meal, matters were not, as people generally imagine, so easily brought to bear....<sup>11</sup>

MacLeod continued to find life on Skye difficult, and in 1847 he joined the large number of his countrymen who decided to emigrate to Upper Canada in the face of the potato famine that sorely afflicted both the Highlands and Ireland. He continued to fill his letterbooks with remarks on agriculture, emigration, and the state of the Church of England in the area of Thornhill, but MacLeod's correspondence is particularly useful as a foil for the traditional depiction of Highland sheepfarmers by academic and popular historians. Accounts that deal with these individuals usually emphasize their role as advocates for an accelerated policy of eviction adopted by many landlords towards their lesser tenantry, and give little account of the origins of this class of farmer or of the economic pressures that they were forced to contend with as sheep prices eventually declined. Until the second volume of Eric Richard's history of the Highland clearances appears in the near future, MacLeod's letterbooks represent some of the most accessible material for researchers desiring a more comprehensive view of Highland society in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Professionals who had been trained in Scottish universities were another group of emigrants who tended to find room for their personal papers during the Atlantic crossing, although in this case the preservation of these historical documents was probably the result of very practical occupational demands. Doctors in particular found that lecture notes acquired or recorded during their student days in Scotland were often a singular source of medical information in the small communities of British North America. As a result, volumes such as "The Chymical Lectures of Dr. Cullen," transcribed by Edward Foster in 1763, have survived in Ottawa alongside the subsequent "Medical and Cirurgical Observations" made by Scottish-born physician and publisher, Alexander J. Christie.<sup>12</sup> The arts are frequently represented in the papers of Presbyterian clergymen that have been acquired by a wide range of secular and religious archival institutions. A lingering tendency to send sons who were born in Canada back to Scotland to complete their formal education, particularly in the study of divinity, continued this tradition well into the nineteenth century. The notes taken in 1853 by George Munro Grant, while attending lectures on moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, which eventually found their way into the D.M. Gordon Papers at Queen's University Archives, are a notable example of this important trend. While the papers of a scientific nature are valuable for their

---

11 Metropolitan Toronto Library, Canadian History Department, MacLeod Letterbooks, vol. 1. MacLeod to the Rev. John McRae, 1 June 1842.

12 Historical Society of Ottawa Archives, Christie Family Papers, JCHR 1/1-2. Additional material pertaining to the lectures in medicine given at the University of Edinburgh during the first half of the nineteenth century can be found in the Public Archives of Canada, Henry Fitzgerald Jarvis Papers, MG 24 K 57, and in the papers of John Hutcheson in the Peterborough Centennial Museum.

insights into a system of medical education that was achieving international prominence, the work of Grant reflects the adoption of the Common Sense philosophy that would become "one of the defining characteristics of the Scottish mind in Canada," and would figure prominently in the development of Anglo-Canadian thought.<sup>13</sup>

Scottish manuscripts were also removed to Canada as the result of the inheritance of landed property. Estates occasionally passed to junior members of a family who had emigrated, and in some cases this transfer of property led to the dispatch of significant amounts of material to keep the new owners apprised of the condition of their Scottish possessions. The papers of these Canadian families consequently assumed many of the essential elements of Scottish estate papers: rentals, tacks or leases, and the correspondence from factors, gamekeepers, and tenants.<sup>14</sup> More often the succession of Canadian residents to Scottish property resulted in the transmission of legal documents to bolster their proprietary claims or — if the estate had been sold, as was often the case — simply to ensure the preservation of the papers. These records are predominantly composed of instruments of sasine dating from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries that helped to make the rights to Scottish property among the most secure in the world. While they are not as historically significant as most of the other Scottish collections to be found in Canada, these documents can be particularly useful to local historians and genealogists as they frequently contain references to marriage contracts or other instruments that prompted the initial transfer of property.<sup>15</sup>

These first two categories of Scottish manuscripts in Canadian repositories are not exceedingly common. As these collections deal for the most part with the management of Scottish property, it is fitting that their limited number should reflect the small proportion of Scottish society that was enjoyed in nineteenth-century Scotland.<sup>16</sup> Given the current tendency in both Scottish and Canadian historical literature to get away from an emphasis upon the military and political figures who sprang from these landed families and to concentrate instead upon broader examinations of society as a whole,<sup>17</sup> it is also fortunate that the bulk of manuscript falls into a third category that represents the interests of much larger segments of the population. This last type of collection was generated after the emigration and subsequent resettlement of two groups who, as the nineteenth century wore on, found Scotland to be an increasingly unrewarding locale for their time and capital, namely the business community, and the growing number of farmers, tradesmen, and labourers who looked to land in North America as their principal hope for economic and social mobility. The impact of these Scots upon the political,

13 A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal, 1979), pp. 30-32.

14 One of the best examples of this type of collection is the seven feet (2.13 m) of material relating to a Mactavish estate in Argyleshire (c. 1315-1898), found in the Public Archives of Canada, Hargrave Family Papers, MG 19 A21, Series 2, vols. 1-25.

15 James Fergusson, "The Public Records of Scotland (I)," *Archives 1*, no. 8 (Michaelmas 1952) p. 35.

16 By the second decade of the nineteenth century, there were reported to be only some 7,654 landowners out of a total population of approximately 1,800,000: T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830* (London, 1969), pp. 259, 284.

17 This trend has been discussed at length in the article by David Gagan and H.E. Turner, "Social History in Canada: A report on the 'State of the Art,'" *Archivaria 14* (Summer 1982), pp. 27-52.

economic, and intellectual development of Canada has been examined at length.<sup>18</sup> Approached from a different direction, the financial, institutional, and personal records produced by these immigrants and their families attest to the existence of a trans-Atlantic community of Scottish interests that has a great deal to say about the conditions that prompted the migration of so many of its members.

This was particularly true in the case of Scottish commercial activities in British North America. The most outstanding example of the dominant position that Scottish interests enjoyed in the economic life of the colonies was the fur trade. Although the intense corporate rivalry within this staple industry led to the destruction and dispersal of numerous records pertaining to the North West Company,<sup>19</sup> the emphasis of the Hudson's Bay Company upon organization resulted in the production and preservation of large amounts of business records. The bulk of these documents was transported from London to Winnipeg in 1974, but an ambitious programme of microfilming the company's records undertaken earlier by the Public Archives of Canada had already ensured their availability in Ottawa near a host of related manuscripts.<sup>20</sup> Not only do these papers describe the progress of the Scottish settlement at Red River,<sup>21</sup> but they are quite useful for an analysis of small sections of the Scottish labouring population, particularly of marginal Highland communities. As Philip Goldring recently pointed out, "From the choices and behaviour of such men, reported in their own words or in the letters of agents who hired them, much can be learned about conditions and aspirations in the communities from which they came."<sup>22</sup>

Equally important for the economic development of the colonies was the presence of Scottish merchants in other centres of trade in Canada. As the Clyde firms continued to expand their capacity for export despite the loss of the American colonies and increasing tensions with Russia, it was seemingly inevitable that they would extend their operations into the remaining loyal colonies.<sup>23</sup> Resettled loyalists such as James Dunlop, a Glasgow-trained merchant, and the arrival of rival agents from Scotland facilitated the growth of wholesale trading ventures in Montreal, Halifax, and Saint John that formed the basis for subsequent expansion into secondary industries such as shipbuilding. Similar backgrounds and common business concerns forged the competitors into a close-knit community that expressed their anti-American and often anti-French-Canadian sentiments in the

---

18 Two of the more recent efforts in this genre are D. Campbell and R.A. MacLean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar: A Study of the Nova Scotia Scots* (Toronto, 1974); and W. Stanford Reid, ed., *The Scottish Tradition in Canada* (Toronto, 1977).

19 Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *The North West Company* (Toronto, 1957), pp. 229-30, 286-87.

20 For a detailed description of the extent and history of these records, along with other relevant collections, see Public Archives of Canada, *General Inventory*, vol. 3, pp. 167-69.

21 Douglas Sprague and Ronald Frye, "Manitoba's Red River Settlement: Manuscript Sources for Economic and Demographic History," *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979-80), pp. 179-93.

22 Philip Goldring, "Labour Records of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1870," *Archivaria* 11 (Winter 1980-81), p. 85. Additional remarks on the relationship between the Company and Scotland can be found in two other articles by Goldring, "Lewis and the Hudson's Bay Company in the Nineteenth Century," *Scottish Studies* 24 (1980), pp. 23-42; and "Scottish Recruiting for the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1880," *Scottish Tradition* 9/10 (1979-80), pp. 83-104.

23 This paragraph is for the most part based upon David S. MacMillan, "The 'New Men' in Action: Scottish Mercantile and Shipping Operations in the North American Colonies, 1760-1825," in MacMillan, ed., *Canadian Business History: Selected Studies, 1497-1971* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 44-103.





*Piper Robert Hannah and native girls, Cape Smith, N.W.T., 30 July 1934. Photograph by D.L. McKeand. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada, PA-102146.*

security of formal associations, such as the North British Society in Halifax and the St. Andrew's Society in Saint John. Moreover, they shared a close association with the Clyde firms that supplied both clerical support staff and trade goods, an arrangement that encouraged the generation of a large volume of financial records throughout the duration of these partnerships.

The survival rate for these papers has been rather disappointing. In his account of the diverse activities of Scottish merchants in the North American colonies before 1825, David MacMillan had frequent cause to lament the destruction or disappearance of the records for the great majority of the firms that he investigated. Outside of the letterbooks of William Forsyth and Company (a firm central to the commercial life of Halifax in the 1790s) that are preserved in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, the bulk of material pertaining to Scottish commercial activity in Canada was to be found in the Scottish Record Office or various repositories in the Strathclyde region.<sup>24</sup> There are indications, however, that there is much more relevant manuscript material preserved in the Maritimes, for the period after 1825 in particular,<sup>25</sup> and this is certainly the case for Ontario. As the recent work of Douglas McCalla has demonstrated, the papers of Peter and Isaac Buchanan not only preserve "Insecurity's place in history" by offering an alternative to the records of successful firms that are usually the ones to survive, but they also document the close commercial ties that developed between Glasgow and such Upper Canadian centres

24 *Ibid.*, *passim*. A more comprehensive list of the financial papers located in Scotland that pertain to Canadian businesses can be found in Charles A. Jones, ed., *Britain and the Dominions: A Guide to Business and Related Records in the United Kingdom Concerning Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa* (Boston, 1978), pp. 163-98.

25 New Brunswick Museum, Department of Canadian History, Archives Division, *Inventory of Manuscripts* (Saint John, 1967), pp. 32-37, 52, 55, 79.

as Hamilton and London during the middle decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Such collections are by no means unique, and the Hamilton Public Library in particular contains complementary papers of sufficient length to make similar investigations into the affairs of Scottish merchants worthwhile.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the common interests that existed between Scottish commercial expansion and Canadian economic development, the papers of these merchants reflect sharpened sensitivity to issues that were predominantly Scottish in nature. This was especially true of the Disruption that split the Church of Scotland in 1843, which was followed by a similar rupture in Canadian Presbyterian synods despite the irrelevance of the basic question of church-state relations to their situation. While lay involvement in the controversy was to some extent precipitated by domestic factors,<sup>28</sup> other incidents reiterated this deep concern for Scottish developments. Their subsequent correspondence with friends or relatives in Scotland not only demonstrated the merchants' awareness of the situation, but also indicated that their knowledge and views were to some degree representative of the whole Scottish community in Canada.

Perhaps the best example of this reaction is to be found in the letters of Adam Hope, a hardware merchant in London and later Hamilton, whose success led to a series of partnerships in the various business interests of the Buchanans. Unlike his associates, who had briefly enjoyed the fruits of landed estate acquired through the family's commercial success in Glasgow, Hope had come from tenant stock. His family occupied the farm of Fenton Barns in East Lothian and, by the time of his departure for Upper Canada in 1834, his father and older brother, George, had begun the arduous process of improving its damp clay soil to match the advanced conditions that surrounded them. Hope's early letters back to his family reflected the prosperity that they were enjoying under the benevolent supervision of the landowner, Mrs. Hamilton Nisbet Ferguson. With her death in 1855 and the subsequent sale of the Dirleton estate, this harmonious atmosphere quickly eroded. The tenants, including the Hopes, were soon embroiled in heated debates with the new landlord over their destruction of the estate's game that had been ravaging their crops, a quite common complaint in agricultural communities. Matters finally reached a climax when George Hope, who had unsuccessfully run as a Liberal candidate in the 1865 election, replied to his landlord's remarks at a dinner in Haddington and took the opportunity to assail the proprietor's political sensibilities. Hope's lease, which had been signed under Mrs. Ferguson and was about to expire, was not renewed by the indignant landowner.

News of this affair and the subsequent stir that it created in the British press quickly reached Canada, and the reaction was by no means restricted to the family of Adam Hope. The merchant had earlier stated that Mrs. Ferguson "was known pretty widely over Canada as model landlady for the English aristocracy," and subsequent letters suggested that George Hope enjoyed a similar reputation for his

---

26 *The Upper Canada Trade, 1834-1872: A Study of the Buchanans' Business* (Toronto, 1979).

27 See, for example, the Ferrie Family Papers, the John Young Papers, and the Brown-Hendrie Papers.

28 John S. Moir, "The Quay of Greenock — Jurisdiction and Nationality in the Canadian Presbyterian Disruption of 1844," *Scottish Tradition* 5 (1975), pp. 44-45.

farming methods.<sup>29</sup> Canadian newspapers ran editorials in support of Hope, and one Toronto firm appended to a business letter to Adam Hope the conviction that “we fancy the landlord will lose far more in losing your Brother as a tenant than your Brother will lose in losing the Farm.”<sup>30</sup> The affair ended quite satisfactorily when George Hope purchased his own farm, demonstrating an upward mobility that matched his brother’s progress since emigrating. In the meantime, the storm of concern that had been raised in Canada over his treatment suggests a continuing sensitivity to predominantly Scottish problems long after Scots had resettled and begun to adjust to a new environment.

This tendency is also evident in the papers of Scottish emigrants of somewhat more modest means, but a variety of factors have tended to restrict the size and scope of these collections. Lacking the stimulation provided by business connections or the prominent involvement of leading social or political questions, the papers of these farmers, tradesmen, and labourers are composed primarily of correspondence that was much more infrequent than the letters found in the muniments of families such as the Buchanans. Postal arrangements for the period only compounded the problems of trans-Atlantic communications. Routes in British North America were slow to expand, particularly as the *General Post Office in London insisted* that the lucrative runs to Quebec or Montreal could not be used to subsidize those routes that were not self-sufficient.<sup>31</sup> Service was not much better in many parts of Scotland in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, and the usual practice of paying postage upon the receipt of a letter inhibited the rate of correspondence. As one father in Dumfriesshire remarked to his son in North America:

Now Jock, if ye’re weel so much the better, and if ye’re doing weel yer mother and me’s vera glad tae hear’t, and if ye’re no weel we’re vera sorry, but we canna help it, and as the postage between American and the Langholm runs pretty high, I must insist that the correspondence be stopped!<sup>32</sup>

Such a rebuke may seem somewhat apocryphal, but it does not appear to be too far-fetched in view of the numerous assurances in letters that the return postage would be gladly paid, or the frequent arrangement to send letters by a friend who was emigrating. In spite of these efforts to circumvent the deficiencies of the postal service, letters were still regularly lost in transit or failed to catch up with immigrants who frequently moved within North America in their search for more promising opportunities.

A variety of more personal reasons also inhibited the free flow of correspondence from the Canadian side in particular. It has frequently been pointed out that the rigours of carving out a new life kept many Scots too busy to write, and this seems to have been compounded by the novelty of their situation. As one young Scottish clerk in Hamilton reported to his father, “it is a general thing for people to forget

---

29 Archives of Ontario, Hope Papers, MU 3276, Adam Hope to George Hope, 14 September 1855, and 15 April 1872.

30 *Ibid.*, 22 April 1872.

31 Kenneth S. MacKenzie, “Canadian Postal History Sources,” *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979-80), p. 154.

32 John and Robert Hyslop, *Langholm as it Was. A History of Langholm and Eskdale from the Earliest Times* (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1912), p. 694.

home when they are a long way from it.”<sup>33</sup> For some, the spirit of adventure precluded lengthy and frequent correspondence until sickness or an advanced age brought a loneliness that called for the emotional (and frequently the financial) assistance of family members in Scotland. The moral support generated by a close-knit Scottish settlement in Canada might also have decreased the desire to communicate with Scotland in order to alleviate the strain of adjusting to a novel environment,<sup>34</sup> but such speculation requires more quantitative analysis than is at present possible. Most of these factors were missing from the Scottish side, but in a few cases the increased literacy of the nineteenth century inhibited correspondents who were slow to share in this development. One woman in Aberdeenshire, for example, informed her new sister-in-law in 1855 that “as I am not a good hand at the pen I put it off always as long as possible.”<sup>35</sup> All things considered, it is not surprising that families in both Scotland and Canada generally preferred to convey news of local and national events through the regular exchange of newspapers. Unfortunately, few of the wide variety of Scottish numbers that were regularly sent to Canada have survived.

In spite of these impediments, several runs of correspondence between Scotland and Canada are extant for the period between the 1820s and the 1870s, when the periodic occurrence of depressed markets that followed the Napoleonic wars induced many to depart from a steadily changing society. Family members on both sides of the Atlantic were eager to find out the material well-being of their relatives, perhaps both out of familial attachment and as a way to measure the propriety of their decision to stay on or to emigrate. As a result, their letters were replete with details concerning the development of the local economy, as well as with requests for similar information from the other side. The importance of this personal correspondence from North America to the many friends or relatives in Britain who were still debating the merits of emigration has long been recognized.<sup>36</sup> Filled with observations about agricultural conditions, opportunities for alternative employment, and the progress made by mutual acquaintances, these letters provided a more reliable alternative to the published correspondence found in British newspapers or the growing amount of literature directed towards prospective emigrants. What has usually been overlooked, however, is that the return post from Scotland often brought letters that graphically chronicled the rate and progression of change in small communities there over several years.

As might be expected from a nation that was dependent upon rural industries for the greater part of its livelihood before 1850, most of the material in this correspondence deals with agricultural matters. The value of livestock and crops, the current course of cropping, and the state of recent improvements to the farm all

- 
- 33 University of Guelph Library, Archival Collections, Urquhart-Campbell-Sutherland Papers, XS1 MS A003, folder 2, George Campbell to the Rev. James Campbell, 17 January 1845.
- 34 Charlotte Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America* (London, 1972), p. 5.
- 35 Richard Arthur Preston, ed., *For Friends at Home: A Scottish Emigrant's Letters from Canada, California and the Cariboo 1844-1864* (Montreal and London, 1974), p. 239. The papers of this settler, James Thomson, who emigrated from Aboyne in 1844, are available at the Queen's University Archives.
- 36 Helen I. Cowan, *British Emigration to British North America: the First Hundred Years* (2nd ed.; Toronto, 1961), pp. 178-79; Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*, pp. 4-5; Bumsted, *People's Clearance*, pp. xiv, 65, 68, 84, 99-100, 117, 135.



*Debutantes at the St. Andrew's Ball, Montreal, P.Q., 28 November 1956. Photograph by Montreal Gazette staff photographer, Montreal Gazette Collection. The traditions of "home" died slowly, and the evident links between Scottish Canadians and their relatives and friends overseas reflected the creation of documentation of value to students of Scottish as well as Canadian history. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada, PA-132563.*

received ample coverage. These accounts of agrarian life are valuable supplements to the optimistic testimony of Scottish witnesses, who were usually closely associated with the landowners' interest, that was given before the parliamentary committees called in the 1830s in particular to investigate the depressed state of agricultural markets. The correspondence also offers a unique perspective on the relations between landlords and their tenants, for the letters to North America gave many farmers an opportunity to describe their leasehold arrangements and other tenurial problems with a frankness and emotion that was impossible in the more political discussions with proprietors and factors. The insights garnered from these papers could play an important part in the current attempts to discover why the violence that accompanied agricultural change in England was largely absent from Lowland Scotland.<sup>37</sup>

37 T.M. Devine, "Social Stability in the Eastern Lowlands of Scotland during the Agricultural Revolution, 1780-1840," in Devine, ed., *Lairds and Improvement in the Scotland of the Enlightenment* (Proceedings of the Ninth Scottish Historical Conference: Edinburgh, 1978), pp. 59-70.

Despite the preponderant emphasis upon farming life, letters from Scotland address a wide range of additional subjects that should appeal to a variety of historical interests. Like the merchants, Scottish farmers and tradesmen in Canada were kept informed about the growth of the Free Church not only by newspaper accounts and discussions with recent emigrants, but also by a flow of correspondence that stressed local rather than national religious developments. Family news in such letters represents an unexpected source of information for demographic studies of the Scottish population. While emigration had a dramatic impact upon the settlement of Canada, it was numerically less significant in Scotland when compared with internal migration.<sup>38</sup> Details of the dispersal of various relatives often provide clues as to how the family unit responded to the economic changes that reduced the ability of many rural communities to support the increased population densities of the eighteenth century. As the family spread out over Britain or emigrated to North America or Australia, their correspondence reflected the new problems that were emerging in the support of elderly or infirm relatives who could identify less and less with an increasingly commercial and urban society. The task of relaying this news frequently fell to the female members of the family, and their letters offer an important feminine perspective on both these questions and the larger role of women in nineteenth-century Scottish society.

This last category of Scottish manuscripts in Canadian repositories is by far the most important of the three. The generation of these collections after emigration meant that opinions and observations that seldom appear in indigenous Scottish sources were drawn out of a labouring population that has largely remained voiceless. Nevertheless, these manuscripts present more than the usual share of interpretative obstacles that plague the social historian's use of family papers.<sup>39</sup> The great majority of letters were exchanged between Canada and the Lowlands, leaving the large numbers of Highland emigrants and their families back in Scotland sorely under represented. It should be pointed out, however, that this situation also exists in Scottish repositories, forcing historians to grasp at sources of debatable reliability or to make educated guesses about the attitude of the Highland peasants who, for a variety of reasons, were largely "careless of posterity."<sup>40</sup> The towns and villages of the Lowlands are also seldom heard from, and few letters have survived from those who did not till the soil in either Scotland or Canada. The material that does exist for men involved in industrial occupations consists mainly of Scottish certificates of apprenticeship that would have been useful in their search for work in British North America. It is possible that the more rapid assimilation of these labourers into their host society, as Charlotte Erickson noted in the case of British immigrants in America,<sup>41</sup> helped to stem the flow of correspondence between Scotland and

---

38 Malcolm Gray, "Scottish Emigration: The Social Impact of Agrarian Change in the Rural Lowlands, 1776-1875," *Perspectives in American History* 7 (1973), pp. 95-106.

39 W. Peter Ward, "Family Papers and the New Social History," *Archivaria* 14 (Summer 1982), pp. 63-64.

40 Richards, *History of the Highland Clearances*, vol. 1, Preface; Hunter, *Crofting Community*, pp. 4, 282; Bumsted, *People's Clearance*, pp. xiv-xv.

41 Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*, pp. 255-62.

Canada. Finally, the great bulk of personal papers dates primarily from the late eighteenth century to the 1870s, giving a distorted view of the pattern of Scottish emigration to Canada, which in fact continued unabated into the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> It is unfortunate that the papers of these persons, who emigrated at a time of considerable economic and social change in both countries, should not have found their way into Canadian institutions on a much more regular basis.

A reliable analysis of whether or not these family papers are indicative of the Scottish experience in both Canada and Scotland must wait until their full extent is known. Indeed, one of the most difficult tasks in the use of this material is locating it on a systematic basis. The inventories of some institutions, such as the New Brunswick Museum and the Public Archives of Canada,<sup>43</sup> help to reduce this problem by frequently mentioning ethnicity in the descriptions of their collections, but these are the exceptions rather than the rule. Scottish manuscripts are not, for instance, particularly well served by the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories* (second edition, Ottawa, 1975). The index seldom leads researchers to collections possessing content of a Scottish nature, as notices are usually limited to such perennial topics as Scottish immigration and Scots colonists in Canada, or the names of individual Scots. Yet even this principle has at times been applied in an inconsistent manner. The papers of George Dempster of Dunnichen do not appear under the names of the Sutherland landowner or, one of the principal objects of his attention, the Earl of Selkirk, but are listed instead under the name of Thomas Telford, a Scottish engineer who was also active in the early nineteenth-century debate over Highland emigration and economic development. While the difficulties in assembling a comprehensive index for a work with the scope of the *Union List* are readily apparent, some consideration might be given to making the manuscripts' descriptions more accessible for scholars out of the mainstream of Canadian historical research. This approach can perhaps best be seen in the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections*, which has been published on a regular basis by the Library of Congress since 1962. Despite the magnitude of this undertaking, ample attention has been given to a wide range of subjects that have figured prominently in the writing of Scottish history over the last decade.

The problems encountered in the use of the *Union List* are further compounded by a marked tendency to emphasize the Canadian content of family collections to the exclusion of their Scottish elements. The most dramatic illustration of this point is the papers generated between 1756 and 1778 by Alexander Baptie. Although they were described in the *Union List* as contracts and memorials belonging to a settler in Peel County, Upper Canada, upon closer examination these documents turned out to be leases and memorials craving legal action between Baptie and his landlord concerning the farm of Peel in Roxburghshire, Scotland.<sup>44</sup> This mistaken identification was particularly significant in view of the prominent role that sources of this

---

42 By the 1920s, the number of Scots leaving Britain was sixteen times greater than those leaving England and Wales: Maldwyn A. Jones, "The Background to Emigration from Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century," *Perspectives in American History* 7 (1973), p. 82.

43 New Brunswick Museum, *Inventory*; Public Archives of Canada, *General Inventory*, vols. 3 and 4 (Ottawa, 1972). It should be noted that the latter guide was out of date almost as soon as it appeared in print, but it can be effectively supplemented by the lists of accessions that are published in the annual reports of the Public Archives.

44 Archives of Ontario, Baptie Papers, Miscellaneous Collection, MU 2098, 1756, no. 2.

nature have played in revisionist accounts of Scottish agricultural history that were written during the 1970s.<sup>45</sup> While the description of the Baptie papers is an extreme example, it is in some ways characteristic of a general propensity to undervalue or ignore those smaller Scottish portions of large manuscript collections. This is true of the description entered in the *Union List* for the letterbooks of Martin MacLeod, and another important example is the papers of James Mavor. A professor of political economy at the University of Toronto, Mavor played an active part in Canadian artistic circles as well as in the negotiations to bring the Doukhobors to Canada in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Before his departure for Canada in 1892, however, Mavor had been similarly involved in Scottish cultural and political life. His papers, which have been deposited at the Fisher Rare Book Library of the University of Toronto, contain significant runs of correspondence and other material that document his time in Glasgow and his term as editor of the *Scottish Art Review* — material that overwhelms the sources for his career that are available in Scotland which, ironically, are primarily composed of his Canadian publications.<sup>46</sup> It is unfortunate that no mention was made of this important component of Mavor's papers in the description that they received in the *Union List*.

Such omissions may have been caused to some degree by the limited resources that were available to the editors of this publication,<sup>47</sup> but the brunt of the responsibility must be borne by the reporting institutions. There have been, however, several mitigating circumstances. In their attempts to respond to the traditional concerns of Canadian historical scholarship, such as constitutional development and a staple-based economy, archivists have emphasized collections that dealt with these areas and made accessibility to other family papers a lower priority.<sup>48</sup> Recent developments in the academic community have made this approach somewhat dated, and there are signs that Canadian archivists are resetting their sights to take into account the myriad interests of social historians, among others.<sup>49</sup> Current financial constraints will make this chore doubly difficult, especially for the local, small-scale institutions that often have the best chance of acquiring the collections of those families whose influence was restricted to a given area. In addition, a lack of familiarity with Scottish social, economic, and political development during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can frequently pose serious problems for those archivists in Canada who are charged with the identification and description of collections containing elements of a Scottish nature. The temptation is great to continue to treat Scottish material as an ancillary component of manuscripts pertaining to Canadian families, deemed to be only a curious sidelight to the more vital aspects of the collection. This is particularly true in view of the limited demand to date for these Scottish papers. The problem, however,

---

45 Two of the best examples of this literature are the articles by R.A. Dodgshon, "The Removal of Runrig in Roxburghshire and Berwickshire, 1680-1766," *Scottish Studies* 16 (1972), pp. 121-37; and "Farming in Roxburghshire and Berwickshire on the Eve of Improvement," *Scottish Historical Review* 54 (1975), pp. 140-54.

46 MacDougall, *Catalogue of Some Labour Records*, p. 483.

47 Grace Maurice Hyam, "The National Manuscripts Inventory," *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979-80), pp. 203-4.

48 Ward, "Family Papers and the New Social History," p. 72.

49 See, for example, the articles in *Archivaria* 14 (Summer 1982).



is more one of awareness than lack of interest, and as the work in Scottish history in both Canada and Scotland continues at an accelerating pace, attention will increasingly be focused upon these promising sources of new information.

In an attempt to facilitate this process, the Department of History at the University of Guelph is undertaking a survey of Scottish manuscripts in Canadian repositories. Although still very much in its preliminary stages, the intention of the survey is to identify, describe, and eventually publicize those collections that were produced by Scots as a result of their activities in both Scotland and Canada. Beginning with the numerous archives, museums, and libraries in Ontario that possess manuscripts answering this description, it is hoped that national coverage can eventually be achieved. As the result of some of the initial inquiries, there has also been some success in locating manuscripts of a Scottish nature that are still in private hands, which were then duplicated and placed in the Archival Collections of the University Library. The magnitude of such an endeavour will call for the commitment of considerable amounts of time and effort over many years, but the project is not without a significant precedent. More than a century has passed since Douglas Brymner, himself a Scot, returned to Britain to survey the materials required for a more comprehensive history of the young Canadian nation. It would be fitting if a reciprocal effort was now made to open up the wealth of Scottish material in Canadian repositories to the growing community of scholars who have shared in the resurgence of Scottish history during the last two decades.