

Canadiana Bruxellensia: Two Canadian Manuscripts at the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels

MICHIEL VERWEIJ

RÉSUMÉ Cet article présente deux documents relatifs au Canada, conservés dans le Cabinet des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque royale de Belgique (Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België), à Bruxelles. Le premier est le carnet personnel d'un Major Henry Scott, qui fit une visite au Canada en 1886–1887; l'autre est un album-photo présenté aux participants d'un voyage à travers le Canada, suite à un congrès de la British Medical Association en 1930.

ABSTRACT This article presents two documents on Canada, preserved in the Department of Manuscripts of the Royal Library of Belgium (Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België/Bibliothèque royale de Belgique) in Brussels. One is a personal notebook by a Major Henry Scott who visited Canada in 1886–1889; the other is a photo album presented to the participants in a journey through Canada following a congress of the British Medical Association in 1930.

The Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels is not the first place to start searching for historic documents on Canada. Although the collection of manuscripts ranks among the most important in the world, the quantity of manuscripts on the Americas is extremely low. In this article I should like to present two manuscripts that may be of some interest to a Canadian audience, and that otherwise would be absolutely lost on the richly filled shelves of that venerable institution, dating back to the fifteenth century.

The so-called “Third series” contains all modern manuscripts (i.e., all manuscripts produced after 1500) that have been acquired since 1950. Ms. III 891/1 and Ms. III 891/2 were purchased on 24 July 1967 from Charles W. Traylen of Guildford, England.¹ The Royal Library's real interest in this sale was formed by two *livres d'heures* in the Ghent-Bruges style from the late fifteenth century (ms. IV 478 and ms. IV 479). Apart from those two precious manuscripts, the Library also bought on that occasion a diary of a journey through Africa (in English), from the beginning of the nineteenth century, by

¹ Catalogue 66, no. 10.

Thomas Boteler (ms. III 890). The total price for these two *livres d'heures*, the Boteler diary and the two Canadian documents was £4756. The text in the sale's catalogue suggested that the two Canadian volumes belonged together, but, in fact, they do not. The only relationship between them is the date of acquisition and the general subject, viz. Canada. Nothing is known about the previous provenance of these two documents. The fact that they were put up for sale together may suggest that they had belonged together before, but it cannot be ruled out that the auction house combined them itself. In view of the nature of the documents, an English provenance seems the most likely hypothesis. In the years around 1970, it was the policy of the manuscript conservator Martin Wittek to collect samples of different kinds of writing and non-European manuscripts. Whether that explains the Library's interest in these two documents or that they were simply "given" away together with the two precious manuscripts, remains uncertain.

Ms. III 891/1 is part of a personal notebook, the other part(s) of which presumably has/have been lost.² It contains an index by the author that has on top: "Volume 2," thus suggesting the existence of at least one other volume. The manuscript measures 31.8 x 20.2 cm and contains [25] + [1] unnumbered leaves and 407 numbered pages. It is in fact a notebook, such as those used in schools or offices, containing 34 preprinted lines in light blue and a red line to indicate the left margin. The binding is still the original one, but the spine is gone. On front the remains of a label partly preserve the name of the owner and author, a Major Henry Scott from Dover (England), on whom no published biographical note seems to exist. A search in the British Census of 1881,³ however, suggested a possible identification. In 1881 a Major Henry Scott of the 9th Royal Lancers was living at 9 Victoria Park in Dover St. James, England. The label on the front of the Brussels document lost its left half, but on what remains, one still reads: "... a Park ... Dover." This Henry Scott was 48 years old at the time, which puts his birth year in 1833. According to this information, he was born in Middlesex. As yet, I have not been able to determine the year of death.⁴ The library number and label of the Brussels Library have been added after the purchase. Another element of its recent history consists of a description, apparently from the auction, in which the manuscript is praised as "unique," dated to 1886–1889 and estimated at £95. In this description the album of photographs now forming ms. III 891/2 is considered to belong to the diary of Henry Scott,⁵ but my predecessor in the Brussels

2 A microfilm of this manuscript, made in 1968, is held in the Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta. I wish to thank J. Bowman for kindly replying to my question about this microfilm.

3 Accessible and consulted via URL <www.familysearch.org>.

4 This identification, supported as it is by the traces of the address on the document, meets with some difficulty in view of what Major Scott says on page 1, viz. that he has been travelling about for nearly fifty years.

5 "Also an album containing 147 numbered photographs relating to Maj. Scott's Diary."

Library had already recognized the fact that these two manuscripts do not form a single whole. In front of the actual text, there is an alphabetical index without pagination, that in its empty state, already belonged to the original product when it was bought.

The auctioneer's description is absolutely right when it states that the manuscript is unique. Major Scott filled page after page with his notes, each time under a clear heading of its own. If the basis of this notebook is a discussion by subject, the various subjects themselves follow one another without any apparent order. Furthermore, he enlivened his notes with various drawings in pen, mostly only in black, and he added many newspaper clippings and other printed material, so that his notebook presents itself as a kaleidoscopic mosaic of Canadian life as seen by the author. This mixed character starts already at the beginning: against the front cover one finds a souvenir card of the ship in which Major Scott travelled, the *City of Rome* of the Anchor Line, with immediately below a newspaper cutting containing the advertisement for this ship and line. On the other side, on the front cover of the index, is the first page of a "Carnival Souvenir & Programme 1887," lavishly illustrated, but without any identification of location. From the way the cuttings and the handwritten text are presented in the manuscript, it is clear that the cuttings were glued on the page first, and that Major Scott added his own text afterwards. It cannot be ruled out that he copied other notes written during his actual journey, as there are hardly any corrections. Possibly, Major Scott worked on it at various moments, starting in Toronto in April 1887, and adding new items as his journey progressed, but without any general plan. In that way, the manuscript may even partly have been written or finished in England after Major Scott's return. The beginning of the notebook on page 1 could at least suggest the idea of a more or less orderly classified diary. It is dated "Toronto, April 17th 1887." Major Scott opens his commentary as follows: "It's awfully difficult to write a book about travels and things of that sort, without rubbish. I have been traveling about for nearly fifty years in all parts of the world and can't think of an adventure worth mentioning."

Major Scott's interest was that of a tourist: contemporary political events aroused much less attention. Only the *Scott Act* had some interest (cuttings on p. 189). No word whatsoever is said about the Métis and Louis Riel. One of the rare examples of a more political commentary can be found on p. 203 (with a newspaper cutting with the title "The Disloyalty Cry," bearing no date, discussing Commercial Union):

"Disloyalty Cry.

It has always appeared to⁶ a very interesting and curious thing that the Canadians are so particularly fond of being found so loyal to the British Crown.

⁶ Addendum: me.

I conclude that they must think the Old Country hardly understands or does not take the trouble to read and inform itself of the truth.

Canada has always proved itself thoroughly Loyal and Patriotic beyond all other Colonies.

Mixed up with us by all Family ties, by Birth mostly drawn from the Mother Country, they are therefore in a manner of speaking drawn entirely to the affections of England and at present so long as the Mother Country looks wisely over her offspring there need be no take of Disloyalty.

On the contrary! But once let that good feeling dissolve into Irresponsibility, Canada will undoubtedly act as other Colonies have done, and small blame to them.”

He discusses, however, many aspects of fishing and hunting, of sporting life and atrocious incidents that seem to have had some fascination for him. An example of the last category can be found on p. 82 (following a newspaper cutting about a murder in which a mother cut off the head of her six-week-old infant and chewed his arm):

“Murders.

This is one of the most dreadful cases I ever read of.

Granted that Canada is a very large country and therefore there is more scope for horrors, certain it is however that the daily papers are awfully full of the worse⁷ crimes. Possibly the various riff raffs of all countries come together here, and so it happens.”

It is not difficult to multiply the passages of this kind: on page 65 is a cutting about a railway crash involving a Grand Trunk excursion train and a Michigan Central freight train with nineteen casualties; page 135 discusses blizzards (dated January 16th 1888) with appropriate cuttings, this time bearing only on the United States; page 159 has a cutting (dated in the handwritten text next to it May 6th 1889) on a cruel and fiendish hoax perpetrated by some medical students in Montreal; page 208 contains a fragment on a lethal accident due to snow blocking the smoke stack of a snow plough, and on page 210 another fragment tells how a father and son were devoured by wolves in Fargo, Dak[ota Territory]. A number of these cuttings are from American newspapers.

Descriptions of touristic sites are less dominant than those of fishing techniques. However, with due respect, I give one example. On p. 213 he describes the Native Americans near Quebec City:

“Aboriginies

The Huron Nation.

You never find an Indian ashamed of his blood; these still call themselves proudly,

⁷ Worse: sic in ms.

'The Huron Nation' and on official occasions, such as the visit of a governor or the Indian Commission, their Chiefs wear full Indian costume. Among them are a few Abenakis, and other representatives of the great Algonquin family, to which the Montagnais of the Lower St. Lawrence, the only real wild Indians of Lower Canada, also belong.

The French term 'Sauvage' is much more expressive than 'Indian' but seems rather a misnomer when applied to some of the fair complexioned well dressed and polished inhabitants of Lorette, among whom there is a great admixture of white blood.

They do a large business in all sorts of Embroidery in silk and porcupine Quills upon Birch Bark and deer skin make snow shoes bead work and mocassins and other curiosities.

Traces of an old Angonquin stockade that stood where the Upper Town of Quebec is now and was destroyed before Champlains time, were found when the Boulevard facing the St. Lawrence was made.

The Mohawks in those times were the Free fighters of the day."

Apparently, Major Scott lived for some time in Canada and visited various regions. According to the remains of an envelope on what Major Scott called "Page 1," but which in fact precedes the numbered page 1, his address was for some time "Walker House, Toronto, Ont." On page 19, he relates "A Turkey shoot" in Winnipeg on November 20th 1887. Another envelope, on page 81, gives Major Scott's address in the beginning of December 1887 in the Long Hotel, Niagara-on-Lake. Pages 211–214 describe some sights in or near Quebec City (p. 211: Wolfe's monument; p. 212: Montmorency Falls; p. 213: "Aboriginies – The Huron Nation"; p. 214: "Sauguenay River"), and in Quebec he probably stayed at the Chien d'Or, as is witnessed by the publicity brochures between pages 206–207 and again between pages 248–249.

The second Canadian manuscript at the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels, Ms. 891/2, is an album of 147 photographs on 35 unnumbered leaves, measuring 22.7 (height) and 27.5 cm (width). It still has its original binding in blue pseudo-leather on cardboard (although damaged at the spine) with the inscription "My Canadian Journey" in gold, written diagonally on the front. The photographs are glued on thick brown paper. There is no other title, no reference to an "author" or owner, except for the labels of the Royal Library in Brussels. There is, however, an index, printed at the beginning of the album, and the photos themselves are numbered, also by printed numerals. Analysis of this index brought me to contact the British Medical Association in London to ask if there had been a congress of that Association in Canada in the period between the two World Wars (the period suggested by clothing and cars), and, if so, when. L. Sands, information officer of the Records and Archives of the BMA kindly replied that, indeed, there had been an annual meeting of the Association at Winnipeg in August 1930 and that this meeting had been followed by a tour of Canada. An album with photographs had been offered to

participants in this tour by the Canadian Pacific Railway. The BMA Archive holds the same album as the Library in Brussels. A print of the e-mail sent by L. Sands has been added to the Brussels copy. It stands to reason that more albums of this type have survived the last 75 years, but probably most of them will be in private possession.

The general structure of the album is quite regular. On most recto-sides, there is a single larger photo of a landscape or a panoramic view of a town, whereas on the verso-side (and some recto-sides) are four smaller photographs, portraying participants on the tour or specific scenes from the journey. Photos 77–81 and 106–112 form two series of larger photographs following one another. The smaller photos are somewhat brownish in colour, while the larger photos are purely black and white. The difference in quality as well as in colour has led me to believe that probably most of the larger photos were not taken during the journey, but were added to the photos of the trip by the Canadian Pacific Railway from its own stock, taken with different cameras, perhaps even by different photographers. There are, however, some cases in which the larger photographs have evidently been taken during the journey itself (nos. 106, 110, probably 112).

Most smaller photos present members of the BMA, identified in the index. Some photos show images from other aspects of the journey, as photo 4, showing a zeppelin (“R. 100”) above the ocean, or a typical tourist photo as no. 38, figuring “Lord Dawson as Indian Chief – Winnipeg,” showing this respectable Englishman with a Native American feather headdress. Other smaller photographs include pictures of Native Americans from the Prairies, bisons and some landscapes, although, as mentioned above, the quality of the latter is below that of the larger photos. These larger photographs include several breathtaking views of the Niagara Falls (no. 16) and of the Rocky Mountains (e.g., nos. 52, 77–81, 86, 96, 101, 107) as well as some cityscapes of Quebec City (no. 6), the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal (no. 11), Toronto (no. 21), Winnipeg (no. 42), Edmonton (no. 47), Victoria (no. 57), Vancouver (no. 62), Calgary (no. 116), and Ottawa (no. 29, Parliament). Photos 86, 91, and 101, in which one of the large Canadian Pacific Railway hotels is predominant, suggest that these photos have indeed been taken from the Railway company’s stock. Photo 106 gives a group photo of all participants of the tour.

As far as can be made out, the reportage begins well before the congress in Winnipeg, as some photos at least suggest the journey from Great Britain to Canada by boat. The album opens with a few photographs of Quebec City, Montreal, and Toronto, to pass quickly to Winnipeg. Most of the following tour seems to have been concentrated in the provinces of the Prairies and the Rocky Mountains. The journey seems to have been limited to the southern border of Canada, along the route of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Whether the cowboy figuring on photo 108, in the middle of the Rockies, has anything to do with the tour, remains entirely open to speculation: in any case, this

proves the mixed provenance of the larger photos. In general, the album confirms classical (European) images of Canada or North America: Native Americans, bisons, rodeos, Prairies, Rocky Mountains, and modern cities. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, however, are absent.

The two Canadian manuscripts in Brussels have a clear European and even British background. In that way they do not illustrate aspects of Canada as such, but aspects of Canada as seen by Europeans. In the time of Major Scott, the Canadian Pacific Railway was a very recent phenomenon, and he must have been among the first to use it purely for travel purposes. The photo album attests to the vital role this railway still played some fifty years later as a way to explore Canada.

