

Connecting Vicariously Through My Transferware

By A. Ian Gillespie

My Great, Great-grandfather, Alexander Gillespie (1819-1863) came out to Canada in 1844 for a five year period after he married Marion Paterson on December 26, 1843. In Canada, he worked in the Montreal firm of Gillespie, Moffat & Company's Quebec City office. Formed in 1810, it became one of the largest importing and exporting houses and was heavily involved in the fur trade. This firm did substantial business with John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company at Michilimackinac, in Montreal as well as in London, UK.

Marion kept a diary for part of her five years in Canada before they returned to Scotland. What follows are selected and edited snippets from this diary in her first year, which



Figure 1: "Boston Mails Ladies Cabin", James & Thomas Edwards

reference many of the principal places captured on transferware items by various potters, prior to, during, and following this period. Where applicable, the TCC Database of Patterns and Sources (TCC DB) transferware pattern records are indicated.

April 19, 1844: 'This morning we sent to inform Miss Montgomery Campbell what time we meant to embark the "Hibernia." We had been requested to take charge of Miss Campbell as far as Boston...' 'We had to wait some time for the letter bags. I was astonished at their number and immense size... I made a very bad sailor during this passage which was a tolerably long one...I from

being so constantly in my berth and the ladies cabin did not see much of our companions de voyage. We were 105 I believe in number.' *Figure 1 shows a view of the "Ladies Cabin Version #02" in the Boston Mails series (James & Thomas Edwards, 1839-1841, Burslem, TCC DB #9907).*

April 28: ' We were quite in the ice meeting large fields of it and the Captain was obliged to alter



Figure 2: "Acadia" (bowl), maker unknown.



Figure 3: "Acadia" (tea pot), maker unknown.



Figure 4: "Halifax view from Dartmouth", Podmore, Walker & Co.



Figure 5: "Quebec City", Enoch Wood & Sons.



Figure 6A and 6B: "Quebec City", Cities Series unknown maker.



his course to avoid it. Our paddles were injured by it and the shock it sometimes gave the vessel rubbing against it was, by no means, pleasant. There were two small icebergs seen but not by me. The cold this day was extreme.'

April 29 (Monday): 'I continued to write a letter for home and we hoped to be in Halifax on Tuesday evening, but no such luck awaited us. On Wednesday a dense fog arose and remained all Thursday...Our anxiety lest the steamer for England should have left Halifax before our letters were on board, was intense and every face was long for we were at a complete stand-still, the Captain does not proceed for fear of Breakers'.

May 3 (Friday): '...on waking we found ourselves in the same position and the fog no lighter. We were

disheartened. Towards the afternoon we fancied it clearing and suddenly between 2 and 3 o'clock it was removed like a veil from the face of the watersand we had a fine run into Halifax harbour...To our great relief we soon ascertained that the "Acadia" had also been lying still in the fog and only entered the harbor a few hours before ourselves, therefore our letters were yet in time'. *Note the background icebergs on the "Acadia" patterns featured in Figures 2 and 3 (makers unknown).*

'At Halifax we landed and took a little walk to stretch our legs but I can say nothing of the Town'. Alexn. soon secured a stateroom on board the "Unicorn" and we embarked in the evening. It was a very pretty Boat, the saloon very nicely fitted up and painting all round which gave

it quite a gay appearance...' 'These three steamers "Hibernia" "Acadia" and "Unicorn" all left the harbor at the same time for their different destinations.' *Figure 4 portrays a view of "Halifax from Dartmouth" (Podmore, Walker & Co, 1834-1859, Tunstall, Staffordshire).*

They then sailed from Halifax to Quebec City aboard the steamer the "Unicorn" on May 3, arriving May 11.

May 11 (Saturday): 'We were sailing up the mighty St. Lawrence but there was not much to admire in the scenery, the most beautiful part is the approach to Quebec and as we arrived there in the night or rather about 3 o'clock ...we missed it. This morning the 11th before I was dressed (for two people cannot make their toilet well at the same time in the stateroom of a steamer)



Figure 7: "Quebec", Cities Series, printed mark of importer Neff Warton (sic), Louisville.



Figure 8: "Quebec" #03, British America series bowl, Podmore, Walker & Co.



Figure 9: "Quebec" #03, British America series jug, Podmore, Walker & Co.



Figure 10A and 10B: "Fall of Montmorenci Near Quebec", Enoch Wood & Son.

Figure 11: "Lorette Falls, Chutes de Lorette", Robert Cochran & Co, Britannia.

Uncle Moggy, Cousin James were on board and waiting to convey us...'. Various views of Quebec City are shown on the following five figures, respectively Figure 5 "Quebec #1" (Enoch Wood & Sons, TCC DB #3402); Figure 6A "Quebec" (Cities Series) (maker unknown, TCC DB 6165), and its source print, Figure 6B "A General View of Quebec from Point Levy" by Richard Short, engraved by P. Canot, Sept 1, 1761; Figure 7 "Quebec" (Cities Series) reverse with "Neff Warton (sic) & Co., Louisville" importer printed mark; Figure 8 "Quebec" #03 (British America Series) (Podmore, Walker & Co.) large bowl; and Figure 9 "Quebec" #03 (British America Series) (Podmore, Walker & Co., TCC DB #12557) large jug.

May 13 (Monday): 'Uncle Andrew very kindly drove us to the Falls of Montmorencie (sic) (Figure 10A, "Fall of Montmorenci Near Quebec" (Enoch

Wood & Sons, 1818-1846, Burslem, Staffordshire, TCC DB #3592), and its source print, Figure 10B "A View of the Falls of Montmorenci" by James Peachey, engraved by J. Wells, 1784. After so much rain the Falls looked very full and pretty but it was rather too early for the trees about there which were scarcely budding. The roads were very bad at this time and the bumps we had occasionally very amusing. Mr. Peter Paterson had a very nice house near the Falls. There is a large sawmill here worked by water which we went to see. We were fortunate in having a very fine day for this pleasant drive'.

May 14: 'Good Uncle Andrew took us today to see the Indian Village called Lorette. He hired a large coach in which four horses were put and we drove off in style, but we required them all – the roads were almost impassable and the good shaking we

had caused much mirth. We only saw three or four young squaws wrapped in their blankets, there seems to be more French Canadians there, more than anyone else. There is a very small but pretty waterfall quite close to the Village which we walked to see.' A view of the falls near Lorette is shown on an Aesthetic Period teapot (Lorette Falls, Chutes de Lorette, Robert Cochran & Co, Britannia, Glasgow 1850-1920, with importer's mark of F. T. Thomas, Quebec), Figure 11.

May 15: 'Alexr. and I embarked on board the boat for Montreal at 5 o'clock pm. The passage is made in one night. The river soon after leaving Quebec is pretty but the scenery afterwards becomes tame until a near approach to Montreal. The town then looks very well from the water and the pretty little Island of St. Helens just getting green, and the trees



Figure 12: "Montreal", Davenport.



Figure 13: "Kingston, Lake Ontario", Podmore, Walker & Co.



Figure 14: "Kingston, Lake Ontario", Francis Morley & Co.



Figure 15: "Table Rock, Niagara", Enoch Wood & Sons.

nicely budding was much admired by us all on the Boat'. A vegetable dish depicting a view of "Montreal" (Davenport, 1794-1887, Longport, Staffordshire, TCC DB #2800), with a British America Line steamship in the foreground, is shown on Figure 12A, and its source print, Figure 12B "View of Montreal from St. Helen's Island" by R.A. Sproule, engraved by W.L. Leney, 1830.

In early August, Marion gave birth to a very premature baby girl which died within 24 hours.

Aug 5: 'From being so much before her time she was very very small but quite perfect in every way.'

Aug 31, 1844: 'My dear kind husband soon began to talk of taking a little trip to Upper Canada to show me the Falls of Niagara to which I

look forward to with much pleasure'.

September 9 (Saturday): '... Kingston looked very well from the water and we approached and the New Market place was very conspicuous it seems too handsome for the rest of the town, but it was built when they thought Kingston would be the seat of Government'. "Kingston, Lake Ontario" appears in Figure 13 on a platter (Podmore, Walker & Co, 1834 - 1859, Tunstall, Staffordshire, TCC DB #12553); and on a jug (Francis Morley & Co. 1845-1858, Hanley, Staffordshire), Figure 14.

September 17 (Tuesday): 'We had risen early this morning as the Boat for Niagara or rather Queenston left Toronto about ½ past 7 o'clock. The Niagara River was very pretty on

either side. At its entrance are British and American Niagara. We landed at Queenston...We had to be all pulled up a steep hill before reaching the railroad. The day was very warm and the crowded coach not at all pleasant...The Railroad was a curious one and the carriages drawn by horses, still. It conveyed us to the wonderful Falls or at least within a short distance of them and another clumsy coach finished our journey to the Clifton House'.

'Miss Moffat and I were quite delighted on leaving the coach to have a view of them from the verandah of the Hotel and did not feel at all disappointed although we were much more gratified with a long look from the Table Rock which commands a full view of the Grand



Figure 16: "Niagara from the American Side", Enoch Wood & Sons.



Figure 17: "Falls of Niagara", Celtic China Series, Enoch Wood & Sons.

Horseshoe Fall, the British one being by far the finest. The various colours of the water from deep emerald green to dazzling white were very beautiful and the ceaseless cloud of spray ever rising on which the sun's rays made a fine rainbow heightened the beauty and interest of the scene'. "Table Rock, Niagara", Figure 15 is the subject of a pattern by Enoch Wood & Sons, TCC DB 2013).

September 18 (Wednesday): 'After breakfast at the Table d'Hôtel we having packed a few things together in one portmanteau crossed the Ferry to the American side. I got a slight dunking in the boat. We had to mount a long staircase but rested at times to admire as we ascended... and slowly crossed the bridge to Goat Island'. Four figures following portray various views of Niagara Falls, respectively Figure 16 "Niagara From the America Side" (Enoch Wood & Sons, TCC DB #3034); Figure 17 Celtic China Series "Falls of Niagara", (also by Enoch Wood & Sons, TCC DB #12183); Figure 18 "Falls of Niagara, U.S."



Figure 18: "Falls of Niagara, U.S.", William Adams IV & Sons.

(William Adams IV & Sons, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, TCC DB #5822); and Figure 19 a large jug or pitcher "Ornithology", alternatively "American Eagle over Falls" (J. Meir & Son, 1837-1897, Tunstall, Staffordshire, TCC DB #7079).

We had a nice walk around the pretty island and looked at the Falls from all the favorite points. We went to the foot of the Tower but did not think it worthwhile to ascent (sic) so many steps for a further view'. Figure 20, a tile by Josiah Wedgwood (1759

– 2005, Burslem, Etruria & Barlaston, Staffordshire), portrays "Niagara Falls from Prospect Point" and includes the Hennepin Tower (barely visible, TCC DB #18102).

'On the island I gathered a few wild flowers which I afterwards sent home in a letter to my dearest Margaret but it was rather late in the season for these flowers. We had a capital dinner at the Hotel on this side much better than that at the Clifton and delicious icecreams afterwards'.

September 20 (Friday): 'Having taken a farewell look of this splendid work of nature "The Falls of Niagara" we left much pleased with our visit...'

August 2, 1849 (Thursday): Some five years after their arrival in Canada, the family left Quebec and after three days of travel, and six changes in their mode of conveyance, they arrived in New York for their departure August 8th on the "Caledonia" bound for Liverpool arriving August 20th. They then took the train to Symington, Scotland with a final destination of Biggar arriving August 22, 1849. ♦



Figure 19: "Ornithology", alternatively "American Eagle over Falls", J. Meir & Son.

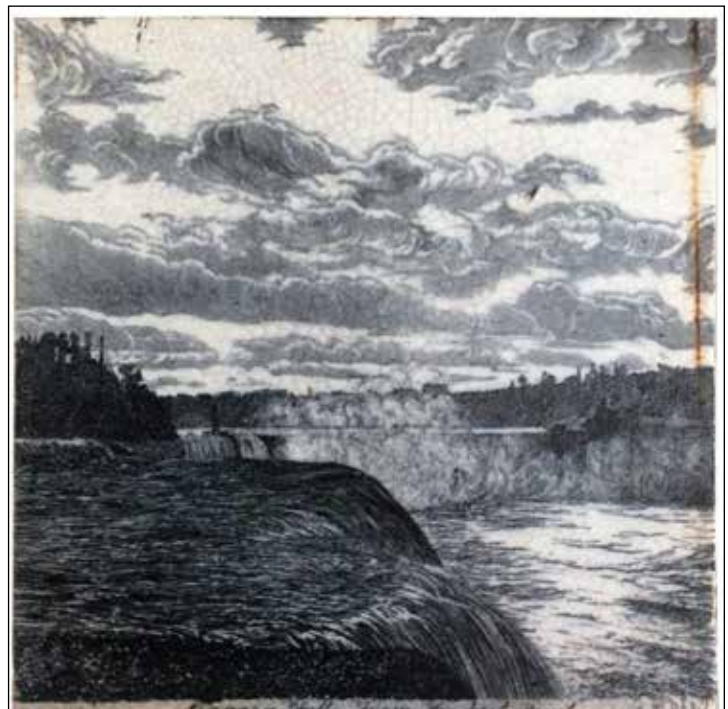


Figure 20: Niagara Falls from Prospect Point", Josiah Wedgwood.