

The Drawings of James Cockburn: A Visit through Quebec's Past. CHRISTINA CAMERON and JEAN TRUDEL. Agincourt, Ont.: Gage Publishing, © 1976. 176 p. ill. ISBN 0 7715 9966 8 \$25.00.

Institutions or government departments involved in the preservation and development of historic monuments, sites or parks recognize pictorial evidence as one of the most useful of records. Not only is it important in the process of dating, restoring or reconstituting various vestiges of our past material and architectural culture, but also in understanding the relationships between elements of this culture and their impact on the environment. In some cases, the absence of written documentation obliges historians to rely exclusively on pictorial evidence.

Quebec's fortifications as a conservation project illustrates the importance of pictorial evidence. Although fortification treatise and written evidence provided abundant information about the profile, materials and disposition of Quebec's fortifications, some elements and relationships remained unclear. The landscape of the *terre-plein*, for example, was poorly documented. In fortification, landscaping can vary considerably according to economic, strategic, climatic and geographical factors, or even the competence of engineers. It was known that the French engineer Vauban recommended the planting of trees on the *terre-plein* as a precautionary measure in order to supply a fortress with the necessary wood for fascines, gun carriages and platforms in case of siege. Written evidence indicated that trees had been planted on the fortifications of Quebec in the 1800s but not what type of trees and how they were spaced in order not to hinder the defense. The answer was to be found in some of James Cockburn's drawings. The trees, some ten years later, as seen in *The Drawings of James Cockburn* (illustrations 54, 58, 59 and 62) are poplars or trees shaped in such an elongated form as not to hinder manoeuvres. Well spaced, they are situated near the parapet and at the base of the slope so as not to hinder access to the parapet by way of the ramp.

Such examples are numerous on most historic preservation and development projects and help in understanding the importance of pictorial evidence. But what is required in order to use such evidence critically? Knowledge of the artist and his technique most definitely. Michael Bell's *Image of Canada* (Ottawa, 1972) and J. Russell Harper's *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada* (Toronto, 1970) already provide valuable information about artists and their techniques. Thus, a scene of Quebec's advanced works (fortifications) by Philip John Bainbrigge, an engineer and professor of fortification, can be readily compared with a similar scene by Mary Millicent Chaplin who belonged to an informal sketching group of amateurs that often copied works of others. But even after some excellent studies of artists, their techniques and their work, the historian still frequently faces problems in determining the accuracy of works of art as documentary evidence. For example, W.H. Bartlett is considered by some as a very competent topographical artist but has been criticized by others for not paying close attention to architectural detail. To what extent can the historian ascertain if the artist has sought *vraisemblance* rather than accuracy in a scene?

The Drawings of James Cockburn helps in the understanding of pictorial evidence. In their introduction, Cameron and Trudel clearly define the limits of the book. It is not meant to be a major biography nor is it meant to be a major study of Quebec City between 1826 and 1832. The authors deal briefly but successfully with the artist and his art "in order to appreciate his care for exactness and precision". The chapters on Cockburn's training, interests and drawing techniques confirm widely held assumptions on the accuracy of his drawings. In this, they provide a valuable service to the historian using the works as documents.

On Cockburn, his family and their sojourn in Quebec City, the authors would have benefited by consulting British War Office 55 records and the "Register of baptisms,

marriages & burials of the military congregation of the Garrison of Quebec'' at the Archives nationales du Québec. They would have found that Cockburn also had a daughter Eliza, born circa 1804 and was married at Quebec in 1829 to captain Frederick Hope of the 15th Regiment. The short monograph on Quebec City reveals more serious errors or over-generalizations. For example, the authors seem unaware that their information on the composition of the French-Canadian population was much more varied than the artisan, farmer and church groups. The liberal professions and unskilled labourers were important components of the French-Canadian element of the city's population, while farmers were definitely a very small group in this urban population. The assertion that there was little industry in Lower Town with the exception of Cape Diamond Brewery does not take into consideration the importance of ship yards such as Bell's. Also, a greater concentration of shipyards was to be found at the mouth of and along the St. Charles River rather than along the coves near Cap Blanc. The authors would have benefited by studying more closely some of the plans of the city and in reading Fernand Ouellet's *Eléments d'histoire du Bas-Canada* (Montreal, 1972).

The chapters dealing with Cockburn's views are of much greater interest. The authors have clearly made a remarkable contribution in locating drawings hitherto unknown to most historians. Also, they must be commended for the identifications and descriptions of the views which inevitably increase the reader's appreciation of their contents. Cameron and Trudel indicate that they have not tried to make a complete catalogue of Cockburn's production but a selection of his works on Quebec City to serve as an historical guide in a walking tour. Yet an effort might have been made to at least catalogue Cockburn's complete Quebec City output and to eliminate reproduction of the same views in colour and in black and white, although the quality of reproduction is excellent, if marred in clarity through reduction.

If much of the information is of the guide book type, many descriptions also provide insights into the decor of streets, activities of the population, general urban ambience, city growth, physical and spatial appearance and main urban functions. The dating and architectural descriptions and the information on owners of some of Quebec's buildings is very valuable (see nos. 62, 64, 66, 78 and 100). Quotations from Fowler, Hawkins and Cockburn are often very well chosen (see nos. 94 and 97) and provide effective accompaniments to the reproductions. Nevertheless, sometimes the information is unnecessarily repetitive: for example, the house built for Vanfelson circa 1780 is mentioned twice (nos. 96 and 97); information on the "Royal William" designed by James Goudie and built in Campbell's shipyard by George Black is repeated on adjacent pages (nos. 18 and 19). As to sources, the authors seem to have made good use of city assessment rolls, Canadian Inventory of Historic Building files certain military records and Quebec City newspapers, although they also seem to rely heavily on a limited number of authorities of varying credibility.

In all, *The Drawings of James Cockburn* is a successful publication within the framework of the authors' intentions, a significant contribution to a better understanding of Canada's visual past, and a pleasure as an accompaniment on a walking tour of Quebec City today.

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The National Research Council is perhaps best known for its long dash which occurs after ten glorious seconds of silence on CBC radio, indicating exactly one o'clock