

Record of Empire, 1835-1896: The John A. Vesey Kirkland Album

by **JIM BURANT**

In March 1984, Bruce Wilson, then the Chief of the London Office of the Public Archives of Canada, contacted the Picture Division of the PAC about an album which would be offered for sale at the Christie's South Kensington photograph sale on 29 March 1984. The album, in his opinion, was an "extraordinary item." It was described in the catalogue as Lot 319, a "mixed military album" of some four hundred pages, which contained photographs, prints and drawings of South Africa, India, Mauritius, the Crimea, St. Helena, Scotland, and, most importantly to the PAC, of Canada. The Canadian material alone sounded exceptional — sixteen watercolours by various people, including a view of a ball of the officers of the 11th Regiment, Quebec, 4 October 1839; an officer of the Coldstream Guards in winter and summer dress; and views of Micmac Indians at Point Levi; a set of six engravings by Dr. George Russell Dartnell of the 1st Regiment entitled "The Wreck of The Premier;" an incomplete set of *The Quebec Volunteers*, published in Quebec in 1839, and known to exist in only three other sets; a number of prints of other Canadian subject matter; and a series of photographs of Quebec villas circa 1860. The album was unidentified, but Bruce Wilson offered the opinion that it had been put together by an ex-officer of the 5th Regiment of Foot (the Northumberland Fusiliers), since that regiment's history figured quite prominently in the album. It was indeed an extraordinary item, and although there was little time to act, the PAC succeeded in acquiring it for a very reasonable price.

When the album was forwarded to the Public Archives of Canada, Dr. Wilson's enthusiasm and acumen was confirmed by a first-hand examination. Although the album was found to consist of only 125 folios rather than the estimate of 400 made by Christie's, on these 125 pages was mounted an incredible range of material: 118 photographs, of which 17 were of Canadian subjects; 40 watercolours and drawings, of which 16 were Canadian; 82 prints, of which 29 were Canadian; and 3 coats-of-arms; 727 heraldic devices, stamps, and insignia; 53 autograph signatures; 95 letterheads; 2 maps; 3 pages of newspaper clippings; and various other ephemera.

As well as the extremely rare examples from the set of *The Quebec Volunteers*, two other single prints, *The Obelisk in Memory of Sir Benjamin D'Urban* (figure 1) and *The Grave of Sir Mackenzie Fraser, Montreal*, were found in the album. As the only other known copies of each of these prints were in a private collection, the price paid for the

album was justified by the acquisition of these two prints alone. The Canadian watercolours were also unique and unusual, particularly the interior view of the 11th Regiment's ball (figure 2), as were the seventeen album photographs. Fourteen of these were copies of those published in J.M. Lemoine's *Maple Leaves*, Vol. III, published in Quebec City in 1865, while a further three were variants or unique copies. Although these seventeen were the only ones directly Canadian in content, a number of the others, particularly those of the Crimean campaign, were also valuable, since they included portraits of officers who had served in Canada, including Sir James Bucknall Estcourt (1802-1855), a former Boundary Commissioner; Edmund Gilling Hallewell (1822-1869), who had served in London and Montreal; and Sir Richard Airey (1803-1881) who was stationed in southwestern Ontario in the 1830s and 1840s, and whose uncle by marriage was Thomas Talbot. Finally, a map and a drawing were signed by Sir James E. Alexander (1803-1885), an officer who had spent considerable time in Canada, who had published two books on America, and whose artistic work was already represented in the Picture Division's collections.

The album was then a remarkable object. The question which next arose was how to identify it. In the nineteenth century, the collection of material of all types into scrapbooks and albums was almost ubiquitous. (Military men were not the only compilers of such albums.) And these albums not only contain prints, drawings, and watercolours, but also poetry, prose, dried flowers, and other objects of every conceivable type. Unless the album had a provenance (in this case, Christie's could not provide one), was clearly signed, or was easily traceable to one person, it would be difficult to determine such an attribution. A previous issue of *Archivaria* carries an article devoted to the search for the author of a mid-nineteenth century diary.¹ The same problem of identifying the compiler of this album arose. How could one identify such a person? The album seemed to span the years from 1839 to 1872, as indicated by the dates of the prints which appeared therein, but it also involved references to a number of Army Regiments, including the Coldstream Guards; the 5th Regiment of Foot; the 21st Regiment of Foot; and the 11th Regiment. Moreover, the postings involved were world-wide, and the watercolours and maps included in the album were signed by various officers, including J.A. Vesey Kirkland, Sir James Alexander, and Francis R. Bradford. Although the identification of the album in retrospect seems obvious, the problem at the outset appeared insoluble, given the number of British officers who had served in Canada in the nineteenth century.

The identification of the album was approached using two methods. Since the activities of the 5th Regiment of Foot (the Northumberland Fusiliers), as Bruce Wilson had suggested, were such a prominent feature of the album, particularly from 1857 to 1860, an examination of the Army Lists for those years, and for that regiment, was carried out. This investigation quickly confirmed the involvement of the 5th Regiment — Kirkland was a Lieutenant-Colonel, appointed 26 December 1857; while a number of other officers, such as Lieutenants E.W.B. Villiers, Netterville J. Barron, and Francis R. Bradford, all of whom were mentioned, portrayed, or otherwise represented in the album, also appeared in the Lists. A slight suspicion that Bradford, as the artist of several of the watercolours, may have compiled the album was laid to rest when it was discovered that he had joined the army only in 1857, and that he retired after selling his commission in 1864. Another possibility was Sir James Edward Alexander. Alexander had served for a long period of

1 John Stuart Batts, "Fishing for Identity: Establishing Authorship of a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Diary," *Archivaria* 20 (Summer 1985), pp. 136-41.

time in Canada, including a period as aide-de-camp to Sir Benjamin D'Urban; he had also served in South Africa, India, and the Crimea. His dates, however, did not match those of the album, particularly the South African service, and his service in various regiments, including the 13th and 16th Light Dragoons, the 42nd Foot, and the 14th Foot, did not include any connections with the Northumberland Fusiliers. Furthermore, other Alexander material, including a sketchbook and a portrait, had already been acquired by the PAC from Alexander family descendants several years before. That such an album would have been retained only to be disposed of at a later date did not seem likely. For the moment, Alexander was excluded from consideration.

At this point, the Picture Division's second line of investigation bore fruit. In the first few pages of the album had been inserted a large coat-of-arms, executed in watercolour and gouache on board by T.W.I. Groves. The division's heraldic expert, Auguste Vachon, quickly identified the arms as those of Paterson impaled over Kirkland. He supplied the further reference from W.A. Copinger's *Heraldry Simplified* that "Every man entitled to bear arms is entitled to impale his wife's family arms, whether an heiress or not, with his own during his life."² The coat-of-arms, therefore, was that of Kirkland and pointed strongly in his direction as the owner and compiler of the album, or, if not him, to one of his family. Kirkland was not well known enough to appear in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, or even in the first edition of Frederick Boase's *Modern English Biography* of 1904. He did appear, however, in the second volume of Boase's supplement of 1912, and this biography confirmed the suspicion that Kirkland was the subject, as well as the likely compiler, of this album.

John Agmodisham Vesey Kirkland was born in 1820, the only son of Sir John Kirkland (1796-1871) and Augusta Elizabeth Vesey (died 1824), who had married in 1819. He was educated at Harrow, and entered the army as a second lieutenant in the Rifle Brigade in August 1837. He transferred to the Coldstream Guards in July 1838, was promoted to captain in the 20th Foot in June 1846, transferred to the 21st Foot in April 1852, and was placed on half-pay as a major in July 1855, after serving in the Crimea campaign. Kirkland returned to full pay as a major in the 5th Foot in October 1857, after raising a second battalion for service in the Indian Mutiny, and became a lieutenant-colonel in December of the same year. Kirkland, according to the biography, retired with the honorary rank of major-general in December 1869, had been appointed a member of the Royal Company of Archers in 1872, been promoted to adjutant-general in 1875 and brigadier-general in 1895. He died at Fordel, Glenfarg, Perthshire on 24 March 1896 at the age of seventy-five.

The military career certainly fit, but Boase's biography does not give all of the story.³ Further research had to be carried out. *The Annual Register...for 1896* contained only a brief obituary, but it added a great deal of information. It mentioned his service, not

-
- 2 W.A. Copinger, *Heraldry Simplified: An Easy Introduction to the Science and a Complete Body of Armory* (Manchester, 1910), p. 184. M. Vachon also consulted Sir Bernard Burke's *The General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales...* (London, 1884) and *Papworth's Ordinary of British Armorial Bearings* (London, 1961), a reprint of the original 1874 edition, in order to verify the Kirkland-Paterson arms.
 - 3 Frederic Boase, *Modern English Biography* (London, 1965), vol. V, pp. 828-29. This set was originally published in 1904, with supplemental volumes published in 1912. Further information about Kirkland's family, particularly his mother's name and death date, and the date of his parents' marriage, none of which appear in Boase's entry, were obtained from *Debrett's Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage for 1871* (London, 1871), p. 572.

only in the Crimea, but also in Canada and Mauritius. Two more pieces of the puzzle had been found. Furthermore, his marriages, first in 1840 to Susan, daughter of Andrew Paterson of Quebec; and second in 1873 to Isabella, daughter of J. Hay-Mackenzie of Edinburgh, were mentioned. The puzzle was now complete, and the presence of so many and such various objects in the album was explained.

Kirkland's Canadian career can be more fully explored. He transferred to the Coldstream Guards in July 1838 as an ensign and lieutenant, apparently in order to join the 2nd Battalion of that Regiment, stationed in Quebec City since the spring of 1838. Although the exact date of Kirkland's arrival there has not yet been ascertained, he probably arrived in the summer of that same year. The Coldstream Guards was one of several units stationed in Quebec as a result of the Rebellion of 1837; it contained a number of officers who, like Kirkland, were excellent amateur artists. Kirkland served under James Hope (later Sir James Hope-Wallace, 1807-1854) who is considered to be the artist who created *The Quebec Volunteers*, printed and published under the pseudonyms Peregrine Pouchbelt and Rodrick Ramrod at Quebec in 1839.⁴ This accounts for the presence of several prints from this series in Kirkland's album. The evidence of two watercolours in the album signed by Kirkland, *Lorette Indian (Male)* and *Lorette Indian (Female)* (figure 3), however, point to a more direct connection. The pencilled backgrounds of the two watercolours are virtually identical in style to that found in *The Quebec Volunteers*. It is possible that Kirkland was the second officer involved with Sir James Hope-Wallace in the creation of *The Quebec Volunteers*. This speculation is based only on stylistic attribution, but until further evidence is uncovered to the contrary, it is as good a supposition as any. The other watercolours in the album, although unsigned, are also attributable to a number of Kirkland's fellow garrison officers, including Philip John Bainbrige (1817-1881) and Henry James Warre (1819-1898).

On 5 March 1840, Kirkland, then only nineteen, married Susan, the second daughter of Andrew Paterson, Esq., a partner in Paterson, Young & Company, General Merchants and Importers. What Kirkland's family may have thought of the match is unrecorded, but Kirkland's apparent attachment to his wife, and to Canada, is strongly indicated by the subsequent vagaries of his military career. He apparently left Canada with the Coldstream Guards for England in October 1842 and was promoted to captain in 1844. In June 1846, however, he transferred to the 20th Regiment, which was then being posted to London, Canada West. Kirkland subsequently obtained an appointment as military secretary to Lieutenant-General Sir Benjamin D'Urban, the Commander of the Military Forces at Montreal. Among D'Urban's aides-de-camp was Sir James Alexander of the 14th Regiment. Kirkland spent most of the next few years in Montreal or Sorel, as existing correspondence confirms. After Sir Benjamin D'Urban died in 1849, Kirkland is recorded as one of the subscribers to the monument in his memory, which also accounts for the presence of a print of the subject in Kirkland's album.

Kirkland had been actively seeking to purchase a promotion but settled for an exchange to the 21st Foot in April 1852. He remained in Canada, according to correspondence,

4 For information on this set of prints, one should consult W.M.E. Cooke's *W.H. Coverdale Collection of Canadiana: Paintings, Water-colours and Drawings* (Ottawa, 1983), pp. 123-26; and Mary Macaulay Allodi's *Printmaking in Canada: The Earliest Views and Portraits* (Toronto, 1980), pp. 134-39. It is of interest that the title page of the set of prints in the Kirkland Album includes a partially cropped ink inscription above the name Rodrick Ramrod which reads "Col. H."

until July 1854, when he left for service in the Crimea.⁵ In July 1855 he was promoted to major, and then went on half-pay. In December 1856, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel, and in response to the Indian Mutiny, he helped raise an extra battalion of the 5th (Northumberland Fusiliers) Regiment. This battalion trained at Aldershot and sailed for India in 1858. Thereafter Kirkland and the troops that he commanded were stationed in India, Mauritius, and South Africa. Kirkland may have also travelled to St. Helena in the 1860s, as prints in the album dating from the period seem to show. He retired in 1868, and in 1871 succeeded to his father's estate. Little is known of his activities after retirement, but he may have returned to Canada on occasion in later years. Certainly the contents of the album, with its prints and photographs of Canadian scenery and cities dating from the 1860s, indicate that at the very least he maintained contacts with this country.

The Kirkland Album, as it is now referred to in the Picture Division's files,⁶ is a valuable and impressive record, not just of the career of one officer, but of an important period in Britain's imperial history. Like so many of his fellow officers, Kirkland served his country widely and well and married far from his native shores. He also accumulated a veritable archive of these services and of his career in his album. Much more research is necessary before all of the details of Kirkland's life and career, particularly its Canadian phases, are revealed; but the album provides much of the colour and background necessary to plot that career and to examine one aspect of Canada's past.

5 References to Kirkland's Canadian military career abound in PAC, British Military and Naval Records RG 8 I Military "C" Series, microfilm reels C-1194C, p. 224; C-752, p. 3; C-863, p. 95; C-1194E, pp. 103, 141, and 158; C-32, p. 169; and C-864, pp. 1, 22. One can also consult the *Canada Directory for 1851-1852* (Montreal, 1852), p. 162, which lists the military establishment at Montreal. Army lists can also be consulted.

6 Accession No. 1985-70, Picture Division, Public Archives of Canada. All of the works have been photographed and catalogued. An artist's file is also available.



Figure 1: Unknown artist; unknown lithographer; Obelisk in memory of Sir Benjamin D'Urban (died at Montreal 25 May 1849); folio 100 recto, Kirkland Album, ca. 1835-1896, Picture Division, PAC, Acc. No. 1985-70-193. Photograph courtesy: Picture Division, PAC, C-124919.

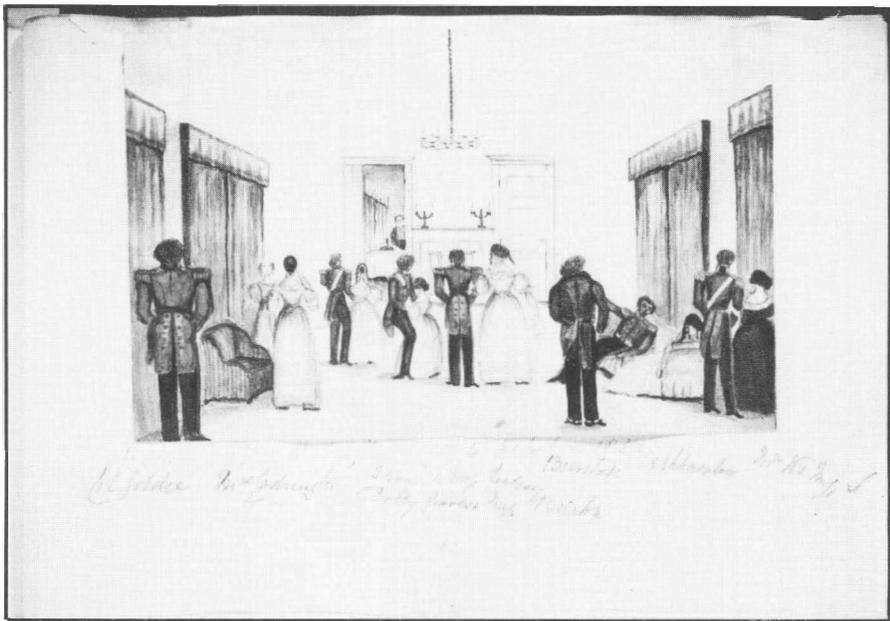


Figure 2: *Unknown artist; Ball of the officers of the 11th Regiment, Quebec, 4 October 1839; watercolour and gum arabic over pencil, 10.6 × 16.8 cm; folio 115 recto, Kirkland Album, ca. 1835-1896, Picture Division, PAC, Acc. No. 1985-70-576. Photograph courtesy: Picture Division, PAC, C-124952.*



Figure 3: John Agmodisham Vesey Kirkland, (1820-1896); "A Lorette Indian (Female);" watercolour and gum arabic over pencil, 28.5 × 20.5 cm; folio 124 recto, Kirkland Album, ca. 1835-1896, Picture Division, PAC, Acc. No. 1985-70-970. Photograph courtesy: Picture Division, PAC, C-124981.

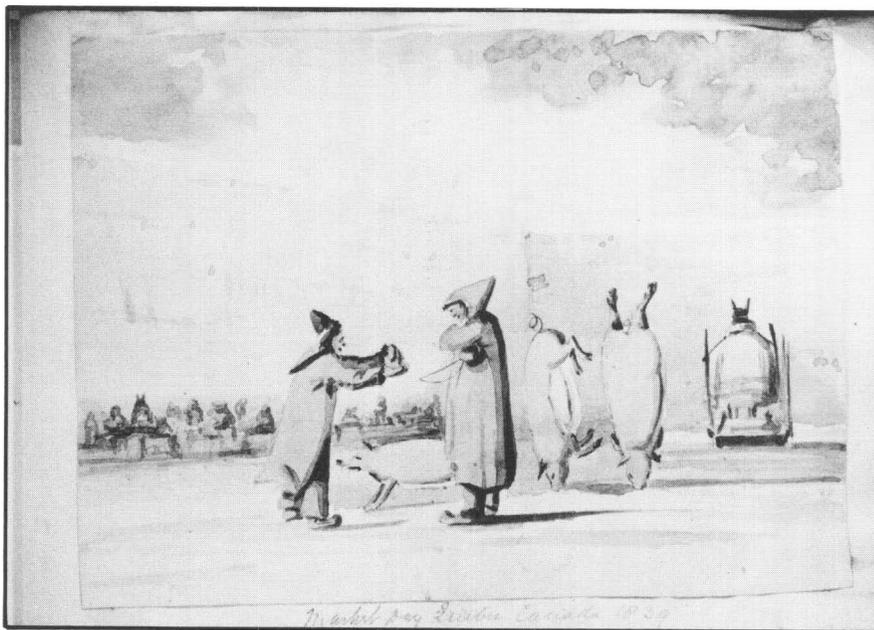


Figure 4: Unknown artist; "Market Day, Quebec, Canada, 1839;" watercolour over pencil, 14.6×20.0 cm, folio 117 recto, Kirkland Album, ca. 1835-1896, Picture Division, PAC, Acc. No. 1985-70-632. Photograph courtesy: Picture Division, PAC, C-124948.