

Elizabeth Collard, *The Potters' View of Canada: Canadian Scenes on Nineteenth-Century Earthenware* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983.) 194 pp., ill. Hardbound \$29.95, ISBN 0-7735-0421-4.

A collector of British earthenware intended for sale in North America will be disappointed in the reference books on transfer-printed pottery which were published in Britain. So many patterns were produced specially for the North American market that they are seldom seen in the United Kingdom. Several books have dealt with American historical views, but these are almost exclusively views in the United States with scarcely a reference to Canada. Now *The Potters' View of Canada* by Elizabeth Collard has filled this gap in the literature of scenery depicted on pottery. This book is so readable that I was reluctant to put it down.

A useful chapter on printing on pottery gives information about little known references to the impact of English earthenwares in Europe and North America. (The process is described in an accurate account by Rev. Dionysius Lardner in his 1832 *Cabinet of Useful Knowledge* [pp. 7-8].) Change and variety were the spurs then, as now, to the British potters to meet the public demand. "What the people *will* have... the manufacturers *must* make." In this book Collard limits her study to scenes transfer-printed on earthenware for the popular market. Although some designs with Canadian views were sold in the United Kingdom and other markets, examples rarely are found outside North America in these days.

Only a few British potters produced patterns with subjects drawn from Canadian sources and Collard shows that many of these were intended for sale in the much larger market to the south in the United States. It is astonishing that British earthenwares were being traded as far west as Edmonton, but, when it is realised that enamelled tinware was the only cheaper alternative to glazed pottery, it is not so surprising that at least some of the pioneer families wanted to use utensils more decorative than tin. After all it is always a market need which stimulates supply.

In discussing the potters' versions of "The Death of Wolfe," Collard rightly points out that most potters would not have had access to original paintings but only to the prints which were produced from them. So far as transfer-printed pottery is concerned this might be regarded as a universal rule with scarcely any exceptions. It seems some pottery engravers often adapted these prints to a considerable degree. There are several instances throughout the book where the item of pottery is compared with the original print, but Collard is not content merely to observe these differences. She researches the facts of the event itself, so that in the case of "The Death of Wolfe" she

shows that Jones's version includes not only an Indian but also a horse and rider; she then explains that not only were there no Indians present but that there were no horses on the British side of the battlefield at the time of Wolfe's death.

The event on 16 December 1829 in the Staffordshire pottery town of Burslem, when the townspeople turned out to honour the "Father of the Potteries," is a typical example of Elizabeth Collard's research; by using it to introduce the Canadian Scenes from Enoch Wood's factory, she enhances the character of the potter and increases the enjoyment of the book which, in the hands of a less accomplished author, could have been a very dry catalogue. Enoch Wood sent huge amounts of earthenware to North America, including many patterns having nothing to do with the country; but he was astute enough to play on the emotions of the public by naming these patterns after American places, such as an oriental design he named "Detroit"!

Collard has not succumbed to the popular habit of authors of blindly repeating statements by earlier writers without checking their accuracy. One example will show what I call the "Collard clarification." Previous books on American historical scenes have included Enoch Wood's "Table Rock" as being a view in the United States; Elizabeth Collard explains in depth that "Table Rock" was very definitely Canadian. This error was corrected in her marvellous 1967 book *Nineteenth-Century Pottery and Porcelain in Canada*. [Editor's Note: A new edition will be published by McGill-Queen's University Press in October 1984.]

The same analytical approach is apparent throughout the book which covers scenes, like "Montreal" with paddle-wheelers, and the early Cunard ships with views of their interiors as depicted in the "Boston Mails" pattern of J. & T. Edwards. (Examples of these can be seen both in the National Museum of Man, Ottawa, and in the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum in Rochester, New York.) Examples of the "Arctic Scenery" pattern by an unidentified potter are illustrated with their sources. The scene of Esquimaux building igloos (plate 26) is the one example of a Canadian scene illustrated in *The Dictionary of Blue and White Printed Pottery, 1780-1880* where it is shown on a 9½" plate, an item omitted from the book under review. The Canadian scenes depicted by W.H. Bartlett are dealt with comprehensively in studies of "American Views" by T. Godwin of Burslem Wharf (that being the location of the factory on the side of the Trent and Mersey Canal), of "British America" by Podmore, Walker and Co., which made extensive use of Bartlett's Canadian scenes to decorate items of dinnerware, and of Francis Morley's equally important service which he marketed under the name "Lake." The sources of the "Canadian Sports" pattern of John Marshall at the Bo'ness

pottery in Scotland are identified as being Christmas cards published in Montreal by Bennet and Co. Another Scottish potter, Robert Cochran, appealed to this market with the pattern "Quebec" which drew its material from photographs of that city in the 1880s. Amongst a few miscellaneous patterns Collard points out that Joseph Heath's pattern "Ontario Lake Scenery" earns its mention by its name alone because the romantic views are not related in any way to real scenes either of the province or the lake.

The book omits any mention of hand-painted scenes, but I believe it is worth mentioning the dessert services produced by Minton on bone china which were decorated

with scenes from the *The North West Passage by Land* by Viscount Milton and W.B. Cheadle (London, 1865). A selection from one of these services is in the Minton Museum, Stoke-on-Trent, and is mentioned in Collard's *Nineteenth-Century Pottery and Porcelain in Canada* (p. 172).

Illustrated with 148 black and white photographs and 23 individual marks, a glossary of terms and nine pages of notes with references, *The Potters' View of Canada* is an excellent study of how the British potter "turned the dinner table into a picture gallery."

Robert Copeland

### Les Tonneliers du Québec

Marcil, Eileen. *Les Tonneliers du Québec*. National Museum of Man Mercury Series/Musée national de l'Homme, Collection Mercure, ISSN 0316-1854; History Division Paper/Division de l'histoire, Dossier, no. 34, ISSN 0316-1900. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1983. x, 122 pp., ill. Free/gratuit.

This book is made up of two elements: a descriptive account of the cooper's trade in Canada and a history of coopers in Quebec City. The descriptive portion is in the best tradition of Diderot's encyclopaedia; the author meticulously recounts all that she has learned by reading and observation about production methods, materials used, and range of products. The technical descriptions are supported by a fine array of illustrations. The reminiscences of surviving craftsmen cover the recent past.

In the historical account of coopers at Quebec, primarily between 1660 and 1860, the author is reluctant to go beyond a recitation of discrete facts and to come to general conclusions. This is a pity since no one is better qualified to place the facts in a broad context that would make their significance evident. Mme Marcil's deductive ability is evident from the shrewd suggestion that the absence of saw-horses in estate inventories indicates that many coopers bought their staves ready-made. Typical of the writer's diffidence is the modest ambition of the chapter about the consumers of the cooper's ware: it is to reveal "l'importance de ses produits dans la vie quotidienne." It is, however, evident from this and other chapters that barrelmaking was central to wholesale commerce and that the activity of the coopers mirrored the maritime traffic of Quebec City. Authors customarily overstate the importance of their subject; in this case the value of the study is understated.

The universal employment of barrels as containers for transportation is evident in the dual meaning of *tonneau*:

cast or a ton weight (the English word "tun" is equally suggestive). Before the twentieth-century barrels were the preferred containers for transporting drygoods (dry or slack cooperage) and liquids (wet or tight cooperage). The author mentions one advantage of the wooden containers: they sustained shocks that would shatter an earthenware container. It could be added that barrels were lighter than metal or pottery vessels; their construction allowed limited expansion and contraction without loss of integrity; and, as cylinders, they could be easily moved by rolling. These were reasons enough for their popularity.

The history of the Quebec coopers is a composite portrait made up of details eclectically chosen from different periods and diverse regions. There is an apparent assumption that there had been an eternal, standard cooper's world. For example, it is written that "la marque du tonnelier (voir pl. 36) est apposée sur le fond ou sur le chanfrein d'une douve, en la gravant avec la rouanne ou à l'aide d'un poinçon." The estate inventories do not list trademark punches and plate 36 illustrates the personal marks of English coopers in the early fifteenth century. Yet there is no reference to the royal assize marks stamped on wooden volume measures after 1800, even though such a mark is visible in plate 77. The celebration that marked the end of an English cooper's apprenticeship is mentioned with the remark "même sans preuve à l'appui, nous pouvons croire que les artisans de la Nouvelle-France en faisaient autant."

This composite portrait wants a strong frame. The narrative emerges bit by bit and it is a story worth telling. According to Mme Marcil, coopers (*tonneliers*) were primarily engaged in making staves, casks, and barrels for commercial enterprises. Small or white cooperage (*boissellerie*), which produced wooden vessels for domestic and farm use, was left to amateur craftsmen in French Canada. An ingenious analysis of the wood of surviving cooper's