

## William MacIntosh, Natural History and the Professionalization of the New Brunswick Museum, 1898-1940

Lianne McTavish and Joshua Dickison

Volume 36, Number 2, Spring 2007

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad36\\_2art04](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad36_2art04)

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

McTavish, L. & Dickison, J. (2007). William MacIntosh, Natural History and the Professionalization of the New Brunswick Museum, 1898-1940. *Acadiensis*, 36(2), 72–90.

Article abstract

This article explores the life history of William MacIntosh, the longtime curator of the Museum of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick and the first director of the New Brunswick Museum – both founded in Saint John. His active career as an entomologist and museum worker sheds light on the development of museums within New Brunswick as well as the changes wrought by the gradual professionalization of museum staff during the first half of the 20th century. MacIntosh's work expands our knowledge of both the cultural history of the Atlantic region and the history of Canadian museums.

# William MacIntosh, Natural History and the Professionalization of the New Brunswick Museum, 1898-1940

LIANNE McTAVISH AND JOSHUA DICKISON

*Cet article explore la vie de William MacIntosh, qui fut le conservateur du musée de la Natural History Society of New Brunswick pendant longtemps et le premier directeur du Musée du Nouveau-Brunswick – tous deux fondés à Saint John. Sa carrière d'entomologiste et de travailleur de musée nous éclaire sur le développement des musées au Nouveau-Brunswick et sur les changements apportés par la professionnalisation graduelle du personnel muséal durant la première moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'œuvre de MacIntosh élargit nos connaissances à la fois sur l'histoire culturelle de la région de l'Atlantique et sur l'histoire des musées canadiens.*

*This article explores the life history of William MacIntosh, the longtime curator of the Museum of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick and the first director of the New Brunswick Museum – both founded in Saint John. His active career as an entomologist and museum worker sheds light on the development of museums within New Brunswick as well as the changes wrought by the gradual professionalization of museum staff during the first half of the 20th century. MacIntosh's work expands our knowledge of both the cultural history of the Atlantic region and the history of Canadian museums.*

WILLIAM MACINTOSH (1867-1950) HAD A LONG and remarkable career in New Brunswick. He was curator of the Museum of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick in Saint John beginning in 1898, and continued to serve in that capacity as a salaried employee from 1907 to 1932. Beginning in 1929, MacIntosh participated in the planning for a provincial museum and became its director two years later. Prime Minister R.B. Bennett presided over the official opening ceremonies at the New Brunswick Museum in 1934. Even as MacIntosh was collecting specimens, arranging exhibitions and giving educational lectures to museum visitors, he functioned as the provincial entomologist for the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture thus helping to combat the spread of destructive insects. Despite his ever-increasing responsibilities, MacIntosh also continued to take local children on camping trips throughout the province almost every summer – famously launching each excursion by performing a handstand in his canoe. Studying his efforts to promote the love, use and control of nature in New Brunswick sheds light on the life of a unique individual, but it also reveals much about how museums developed in the province. MacIntosh's career spanned a period when understandings of the function of museums were changing, and his retirement from the New Brunswick

Lianne McTavish and Joshua Dickison, "William MacIntosh, Natural History and the Professionalization of the New Brunswick Museum, 1898-1940", *Acadiensis*, XXXVI, 2 (Spring 2007), pp. 72-90.

Museum in 1940 – which was surrounded by controversy – was informed by international efforts to redefine the identity of museum workers.

This essay draws on the life history of MacIntosh to examine the shifting status of museums both within and outside of New Brunswick. It considers how the New Brunswick Museum and its predecessor were defined and operated to cater to particular audiences during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. MacIntosh was a key figure in the establishment of both museums, but he did not always agree with other administrators – especially about the exhibitions to be featured in the new provincial institution and the kind of education required of the people who would be employed there. Though in some ways specific to the two museums in question, these debates also transcended local concerns. Administrators of the New Brunswick institutions corresponded with a museum community that extended well beyond the province, exchanging objects and ideas. The New Brunswick Museum also received financial support from abroad during the early 1930s, when the Carnegie Corporation of New York provided grants for educational programming.

It is important to place both the Museum of the Natural History Society and the New Brunswick Museum within this broader historical context while attending to the international dialogue that currently surrounds museums. Since the late 1960s art historians, sociologists, anthropologists, historians and curators have been analyzing the changing epistemological role of museums, approaching them as sites of public culture where social values are constructed as well as contested. According to art historian Donald Preziosi, the museum is a system of representation contributing to what he calls the “factualization” of knowledge thus influencing the way we envision ourselves and others.<sup>1</sup> This recognition of the importance of museums has encouraged a proliferation of studies on their social function and historical development with most work emphasizing European or American institutions. Our analysis of MacIntosh draws attention to the ways in which two New Brunswick museums produced knowledge about the province and its people while engaging with the wider world.

Despite its theoretical goals, this essay employs a more traditional biographical approach. While MacIntosh’s career provides a logical and convenient framework for discussing the museums, this method does have limitations. Focusing on MacIntosh risks both lending a false coherency to the development of the institutions and awarding the curator too much agency. He was, after all, always a member of groups such as the Natural History Society and subject to the opinions of others. His appearance as an influential figure is largely created by the archival records, including the annual reports, teaching notes and letters he wrote. In keeping with recent work

1 Donald Preziosi, “Collecting/Museums”, in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff, eds., *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago, 1996), p. 281. See also the following: Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *L'Amour de l'art: Les Musées européens et leur public* (Paris, 1969); Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London, 1995); Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (New York, 1992); and Randolph Starn, “A Historian’s Brief Guide to New Museum Studies”, *American Historical Review*, 110, 1 (2005), pp. 68-98. Funding for this research was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The authors wish to thank the archivists at the New Brunswick Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum and the National Gallery of Canada as well as the anonymous reviewers for *Acadiensis* and editor Bill Parenteau for their helpful suggestions.

on museums, scholars increasingly approach archives as historical structures that shape rather than simply preserve knowledge.<sup>2</sup> By selecting, discarding and classifying material, archivists help to determine what is worth remembering and how it will be remembered. The following account self-consciously partakes in the continuing representation of MacIntosh, acknowledging that it has been influenced by the careful organization of documents that were, for the most part, meant to present a positive view of the curator and his activities.

Born in 1867 in Edinburgh, Scotland, MacIntosh moved with his family to Saint John where he attended high school before studying architecture and landscaping for four years in Toronto. After returning to Saint John, MacIntosh was employed as a landscape gardener at the Allison conservatories. Few documents remain to illuminate these early years, and it is not clear when or how he started to pursue an interest in natural history. MacIntosh first appears in the minutes of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick in 1897, donating insect specimens to the museum he would take charge of the following year.<sup>3</sup> The collections of the society began to be assembled, however, before the birth of MacIntosh. When 43 men – including business owners, customs officials and teachers – founded the organization in 1862, they favoured the creation of a museum that would “illustrate the Natural History of this Province, and so far as possible, of other countries”.<sup>4</sup> These men wasted no time pursuing their goal, for records show that by August of 1862 a museum was in place and that in 1864 it contained 10,000 minerals and fossils, 2,000 marine invertebrates, 750 insects, 500 plants and 30 stuffed birds.<sup>5</sup> According to early members, the collection and display of these objects contributed both generally to the dissemination of useful knowledge and specifically to the promotion of New Brunswick’s natural resources – especially the “vast and varied deposits of mineral wealth in which our Province abounds”.<sup>6</sup> This conflation of museums and industrial expansion was commonplace during the Victorian era when exhibitions were meant to develop the economy as well as the mind.<sup>7</sup>

The Natural History Society was quite active during its first decade: extending the opening hours of its museum, offering free public lectures and arranging regular “field days” during which members would visit such locations as the fossil-rich Fern Ledges that stretched along the Bay of Fundy near Saint John.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear why the society was dormant between 1874 and 1880 although the lull was likely exacerbated by the

2 See, for example, Carolyn Hamilton et al., eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Dordrecht, Netherlands, 2002) and Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC, 2005).

3 General Minutes of the Natural History Society (NHS), 1890-1911, 7 December 1897, NHS fonds, S127, F41, Archives of the New Brunswick Museum (ANBM).

4 General Minutes of the NHS, 1862-90, 29 January 1862, NHS fonds, S127, F40, ANBM.

5 Le Baron Botsford, “Annual Address”, *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 7 (1888), p. 5.

6 General Minutes of the NHS, 1862-90, 29 January 1862, NHS fonds, S127, F40, ANBM.

7 Eileen Diana Mak, “Patterns of Change, Sources of Influence: An Historical Study of the Canadian Museum and the Middle Class, 1850-1950”, PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1996, pp. 36-42; Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, p. 168; Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science: The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums during the Late Nineteenth Century* (Kingston, ON, 1988).

8 General Minutes of the NHS, 1862-90, 2 January 1865 and 2 April 1867, NHS fonds, S127, F40, ANBM; Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 5 April 1874, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM.

great fire of 1877, which devastated the city of Saint John even though it left the Museum of the Natural History Society untouched. In 1880, the founding members strove to revive the Natural History Society by attracting new male recruits and by inviting women to join as associate members in 1881.<sup>9</sup> At first the female participants were the wives and sisters of longstanding male members, but soon many other women joined and they helped to expand the society by organizing fund-raising bazaars and various social events.<sup>10</sup> The *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, first published in 1882, disseminated the geological and botanical studies of the male members around the world, primarily because they were exchanged for the publications of similar societies in the United States, Poland, Belgium, Germany and Czechoslovakia.<sup>11</sup> During the 1890s, administrators of the Natural History Society also sent “gift sets” of duplicate New Brunswick minerals and fossils to established museums in the hope of receiving exotic objects in return. In one case, the Field Columbian Museum reciprocated by sending the society 23 pieces of Peruvian and Costa Rican pottery that had been previously exhibited at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893.<sup>12</sup> The increasing international prestige of the Natural History Society was no doubt bolstered by the reputation of some of its founding members, including George F. Matthew (1837–1923) who, despite holding a full-time position as chief clerk of the customs service in Saint John, was widely recognized as an expert in Cambrian geology, publishing his research in established journals both within and outside of Canada.<sup>13</sup>

All the same, when MacIntosh became the honorary curator in 1898 he was faced with an expanding and largely disorganized array of objects, some of which were in poor physical condition. The voluntary nature of caring for the museum meant that specimens were cleaned and arranged on a sporadic basis. The first honorary curator, George F. Matthew, was elected in 1862, and he devoted as much time as he could to identifying and labeling the mineral samples.<sup>14</sup> Once women were allowed to become associate members, they began to assume curatorial duties on a less official basis. In 1882, the annual report notes that skilled entomologist Caroline Heustis had “taken charge of and mounted a number of insects presented by various friends and members of the Society”.<sup>15</sup> In spite of these efforts, most objects lacked proper display cases and remained unlabeled for decades. This situation was exacerbated by the itinerant

9 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 3 August 1880, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM. In 1881 the NHS resolved to create an associate class of membership for women, available for a fee of one dollar per year. Women would be allowed to participate in all public business of the NHS, but not its council. See Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 9 May 1881, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM.

10 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 6 June 1881 and 13 June 1881, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM. The contributions of these women are discussed at length in a current book manuscript; see Lianne McTavish, “Between Museums: Exchanging Objects, Values, and Identities, 1842–1950”.

11 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 5 January 1886 and 11 September 1894, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM.

12 Record Book of Artifacts Donated to the NHS, 1889-1912, 29 May 1896, NHS fonds, S128A, F134, ANBM.

13 Randall F. Miller, “George Frederic Matthew’s Contribution to Precambrian Paleobiology”, *Geoscience Canada*, 30, 1 (2003), pp. 1-8.

14 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 23 February 1899, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM.

15 General Minutes of the NHS, 1862-90, 17 February 1882, NHS fonds, S127, F40, ANBM.

nature of the museum, which was moved between various locations in downtown Saint John. At first the collections of the Natural History Society were exhibited in a single room at the Mechanic's Institute, an organization founded in 1838 to instruct working men in popular and useful science.<sup>16</sup> In an effort to attract student visitors, in 1868 administrators of the society moved its collections to the basement of the Saint John Grammar School where the specimens quickly began to suffer from mildew. By 1874 the objects were again housed in the Mechanic's Institute, but in 1881 the City Corporation of Saint John responded to the constant appeals made by members of the society for a more suitable location by awarding it two rent-free rooms on the third floor of the Market Building.<sup>17</sup> The museum was still in this edifice when MacIntosh stepped in as the new curator and began ordering display cases for the extensive collection of stuffed birds while striving to amalgamate the objects – including over 2,000 specimens originally amassed during the 1830s and 1840s by geologist Abraham Gesner – that had been acquired from the Mechanic's Institute when it had closed in 1890.<sup>18</sup>

MacIntosh embarked on a more thorough reorganization of the collections in 1907 when the Natural History Society purchased a large building on Union Street. This former residence had multiple rooms for the displays and enough space to accommodate both MacIntosh and his wife. As the resident curator of a permanent and more impressive museum, MacIntosh's authority and visibility in the records of the society increased. The extensive curator's reports he presented at the annual meetings began to appear in the *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*. In 1908 MacIntosh undertook an inventory, classification and evaluation of the entire collection of 25,354 objects, declaring the mammals below "museum standards" and the birds "credible". After repainting the museum walls and the interiors of all cases a buff colour, he became more selective about what was placed on display. Some shells were removed, for example, to a study collection. The rest were mounted on black tablets so that "every specimen can be seen, and the label at the front of each tablet is easily read".<sup>19</sup> This new emphasis on order and visibility was in keeping with the increasing systematization of modern museums throughout the Western world, a development MacIntosh clearly endorsed.<sup>20</sup>

The curator also endeavoured to produce a collection that more thoroughly

16 Martin Hewitt, "The Mechanics' Institute Movement in the Maritimes, 1831-1889", MA thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1986.

17 For the move to the Grammar School see Scrapbook of the NHS, 1862-96, 16 March 1868, NHS fonds, S129, F120 and Le Baron Botsford, "Annual Address", *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 7 (1888), p. 5. For the Market Building see Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 9 May 1881, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM.

18 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 3 December 1889 and 7 January 1890, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM. Gesner's objects were given to the NHS in trust, but the rest of the objects were sold for \$200. For Gesner's public museum in Saint John (1842-46), see Allison Mitcham, *Prophet of the Wilderness: Abraham Gesner* (Hantsport, NS, 1995).

19 William MacIntosh, "Curator's Report", *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 26 (1908), p. 59.

20 For the careful arrangement of museum displays to create narratives of regional and national identity see Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum", *Art History*, 3 (December 1980), pp. 447-69 and Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York, 1996).

represented the products of natural as well as human activity in New Brunswick. In the past, most specimens were acquired rather haphazardly through donations by members of the Natural History Society as well as traveling missionaries, ship's captains and wealthy tourists. The accession records include 19th-century gifts of opium balls from China, a jar containing the fruit and leaves of a nutmeg tree from Java and "coins from the ruins of old Alexandria" in addition to more conventional donations of local fossils, plants, insects and taxidermied animals.<sup>21</sup> Although his own interest was in entomology, particularly the identification of regional moths and butterflies, MacIntosh drew attention to the gaps in the collections and then actively strove to fill them. Noting that the museum did not possess a single specimen of "Indian beadwork, basketry or quill work", he called for donations. In 1907, a longstanding member of the Natural History Society, Dr. William F. Ganong, professor of botany at Smith College in Massachusetts and a native of Charlotte County, New Brunswick, responded by providing a valuable wampum belt. The female associate members of the society presented the bulk of the Aboriginal items to the museum, including baskets, clothing and souvenirs from their personal collections.<sup>22</sup> According to art historian Ruth Phillips, Victorian women valued Native souvenir objects, particularly those decorated with floral motifs, because they accorded with Western notions of femininity.<sup>23</sup> Their acquisitions were made possible by the increasing production of handicrafts by Aboriginals for the growing tourist trade in New Brunswick and Maine – a trade encouraged by government officials interested in diminishing Native people's need for relief monies.<sup>24</sup> MacIntosh also began purchasing such items for the museum using funds donated by patrons or raised by the associate members, who regularly held tea rooms and gave public lectures to support the Natural History Society.<sup>25</sup> In 1908 the accession records show MacIntosh buying a "Sweet Hay basket made by Esther Mary Francis, Passamoquoddy", and a "square blue splint basket made by Mrs. Frank Jacobi, Malecite".<sup>26</sup>

While MacIntosh pursued the contemporary museum standards of order, coverage and an active acquisitions programme, he paid increasing attention to the public by arranging the displays with a new emphasis on the visual interest of visitors. MacIntosh noted, for example, that the exhibitions should be structured "more with regard to the needs of the student and the ordinary man than the scientist". In an

21 See the numerous entries in the Record of Artifacts Donated to the NHS, 1889-1912, NHS fonds, S128A, F134, ANBM.

22 William MacIntosh, "Curator's Report", *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 26 (1908), p. 69 and Record of Artifacts Donated to the NHS, 1889-1912, NHS fonds, S128A, F134, ANBM.

23 Ruth Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle, 1998), pp. 188-9.

24 Bill Parenteau and James Kenny, "Survival, Resistance, and the Canadian State: The Transformation of New Brunswick's Native Economy, 1867-1930", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Review*, 13 (2002), p. 58-9.

25 Lianne McTavish, "From Cake to Caribou: Women's Contributions to the New Brunswick Museum, 1862-1950", paper at annual conference of Universities Art Association of Canada, Victoria, BC, November 10-12, 2005.

26 Record of Artifacts Donated to the NHS, 1889-1912, March 1910, accession number 5293, NHS fonds, S128A, F134, ANBM.

article published in Saint John's *Daily Telegraph* in 1907, the curator explained that he would reorganize the bird specimens to show each species alongside its nest, eggs and young – a display method benefiting tourists, sportsmen and “our own people”.<sup>27</sup> MacIntosh also rearranged the mineral collections in 1909 after finding that the public responded favourably to exhibitions featuring the economic uses of minerals and ignored those displays emphasizing geological methods of classification.<sup>28</sup>

These exhibitions marked a change in direction, for previous museum administrators were primarily concerned with the opinions of skilled amateurs and foreign experts. Local museum visitors had always been welcome, and the Natural History Society had even provided extended open hours in 1886 when the installation of gas lighting in the Market Building allowed the exhibitions to be viewed at night.<sup>29</sup> Yet efforts to attract the public were stepped up after 1907. Annual attendance grew from 150 visitors in 1895 to 1,100 in 1899, and jumped to 6,000 in 1912 and 8,775 in 1916 while continuing to increase dramatically thereafter.<sup>30</sup> These numbers can be partly explained by the new visibility of the Natural History Society's building and the museum it housed. At the same time, members of the society needed to interest a broader public to justify the small annual grants then received from the government – in 1908 the provincial government gave \$400 and the City Corporation of Saint John gave \$250 – as well as their continual requests for increases.<sup>31</sup>

MacIntosh and other members of the Natural History Society insisted that their organization and its museum had obvious social benefits. Following a Baconian approach to the study of natural history they focused on the inventory and description of nature, believing that the observation of a wide range of specimens could educate the average person and render university training unnecessary.<sup>32</sup> Members of the society were particularly interested in promoting the skills of close observation in keeping with what historian Steven Conn calls “naked eye science”, an approach that affirmed that looking closely at objects could impart important information about

27 “NHS to Lend Collection to Schools”, *Daily Telegraph* (Saint John), 11 May 1907, p. 10.

28 William McIntosh, “Curator's Report”, *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 27 (1909), p. 157.

29 General Minutes of the NHS, 1862-90, 26 January 1886, NHS fonds, S127, F40, ANBM.

30 General Minutes of the NHS, 1862-90, 21 January 1896, NHS fonds, S127, F40, ANBM; Samuel Kain, “Secretary's Report”, *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 17 (1899), p. 176; William MacIntosh, “Curator's Report”, *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 30 (1913), p. 484; General Minutes of the NHS, 1912-20, 17 October 1916, NHS fonds, S127, F42, ANBM.

31 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1901-1920, 6 October 1908, NHS fonds, S127, F38, ANBM. For an overview of the society's finances see the treasurer's reports (1911-26), NHS fonds, S128, F54, ANBM.

32 For a description of the scientific approach to nature inspired by Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) see W.A. Waiser, *The Field Naturalist: John Macoun, the Geological Survey, and Natural Science* (Toronto, 1989), p. 10 as well as the following: Suzanne Zeller, “George Lawson: Victorian Botany, the Origin of the Species and the Case of Nova Scotian Heather”, in Paul A. Bogaard, ed., *Profiles of Science and Society in the Maritimes Prior to 1914* (Fredericton, 1990), pp. 53-4 and Suzanne Zeller, *Land of Promise, Promised Land: The Culture of Victorian Science in Canada* (Ottawa, 1996), p. 3. See also Lianne McTavish, “Learning to See in New Brunswick, 1862-1929”, *Canadian Historical Review*, 87, 4 (December 2006), pp. 553-81.



them.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the best known supporter of this pedagogical method was scientist Louis Agassiz, the Swiss-born founder of Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology in 1859 and a corresponding member of the Natural History Society. He would ask students to spend days on end examining specimens, such as small pickled fish, learning directly from them without resorting to books.<sup>34</sup> MacIntosh arranged objects accompanied by little written texts within the Museum of the Natural History Society to encourage looking rather than reading. Yet he also created displays featuring the industrial potential of minerals and lumber in accord with the society's longstanding efforts to advance both the love of nature and the ability to recognize the economic potential of the natural resources within New Brunswick.

Like curators today, MacIntosh did far more than collect and display objects to convey specific messages. He gave guided tours of the museum, responded to inquiries and identified specimens brought in by members of the public – usually landowners hoping their mineral samples were valuable.<sup>35</sup> MacIntosh also conducted what would now be called “outreach programs”, loaning objects, posters and educational notes to New Brunswick schools. During the late-19th century members of the Natural History Society had started distributing to selected schools in Saint John pieces of bamboo, local ores, fossils and stuffed birds “not considered valuable to [the] collection”.<sup>36</sup> By 1907 MacIntosh was preparing small collections of native insects and fossils for the use of public schools throughout the province. According to him, in 1909 some 98 loans were made to schools while by 1915 a total of 274 specimens were loaned (with a further 57 objects or collections of objects given to schools outright).<sup>37</sup> In 1908 MacIntosh started including notes with each specimen and poster explaining how the natural history material should be presented to students – indicating that at least some written text was necessary to achieve a full understanding of the objects. His 1916 annual report indicated that 1,824 typed lessons were mailed to teachers in 1915, with an additional 52 prepared in response to their specific demands.<sup>38</sup> Historian Eileen Mak argues that Canadian museums followed the British trend by eschewing or ignoring educational programming for children until the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>39</sup> The Museum of the Natural History Society was delivering innovative educational material to school children long before that, however, and this work was internationally recognized.

At the same time as MacIntosh was promoting the teaching of natural history lessons in New Brunswick schools he was acting as the provincial entomologist, a

33 Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago, 1998), pp. 32-73.

34 Mary P. Winsor, *Reading the Shape of Nature: Comparative Zoology at the Agassiz Museum* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 12-14.

35 See, for example, the letter sent from George R. Hansen of Petitcodiac, New Brunswick, asking MacIntosh to evaluate two rock samples: 11 October 1907, NHS fonds, S127, F2, letter 24.

36 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 6 March 1894, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM. In the Scrapbook of the NHS, 20 August 1896, NHS fonds, S129, F212, it is noted that a teacher, Miss M.E.S. Leat, was presented with bamboo, ores and fossils for use in her school.

37 William MacIntosh, “Curator’s Report”, *Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 27 (1909), p. 155 and General Minutes of the NHS, 1912-20, 26 October 1915, NHS fonds, S127, F42, ANBM.

38 General Minutes of the NHS, 1912-20, 17 October 1916, NHS fonds, S127, F42, ANBM

39 Mak, “Patterns of Change, Sources of Influence”, p. 201.

post he held from 1907 to 1932. His two roles were mutually reinforcing rather than in competition with each other. MacIntosh's participation in the campaign to eradicate the browntail moth from New Brunswick provides an example of the links between his curatorial work for the Natural History Society and his entomological work for the government. Around 1907 MacIntosh was contacted by the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture about the potential for the browntail moth to move into New Brunswick from the eastern United States and destroy apple and cherry trees. At first MacIntosh concentrated on discovering whether or not the moth was present in the province, primarily by identifying suspicious specimens sent to him at the museum. By 1911, officials at the Department of Agriculture had asked him to visit all of the schools in central and western Charlotte County and the larger schools between McAdam Junction and Saint John to give talks to students on how to identify the nests of insect pests – especially those of the browntail moth.<sup>40</sup> Drawing on the outreach work he was already undertaking, the curator urged New Brunswick students to collect specimens in order to learn about their surroundings, protect farmers and, eventually, earn money. With the support of the provincial government, he offered the children a monetary incentive of 10 cents for every browntail moth nest they found and mailed to him at the Natural History Society's museum. The archives include many letters sent to MacIntosh by children requesting payment for their conquests.<sup>41</sup> In this case, his role as curator and government worker were combined in the effort to create entrepreneurial students able to intervene in nature and promote the economic health of their province.

Similar goals informed other activities undertaken by MacIntosh. Practically from the inception of the Natural History Society its leaders had sponsored field days – escorting members to various forests, lakes and geological sites around the province both to study and enjoy nature. Organizers such as George F. Matthew and William F. Ganong had initially favoured such outings, but MacIntosh was especially devoted to guiding children on extended camping trips throughout New Brunswick. These children were enrolled in the Natural History Society, for boys could join as junior members after 1883 and girls were being admitted as junior associate members by 1908.<sup>42</sup> Since camp activities included hiking, swimming and eating, the children remembered them as entertaining holidays directed by their beloved leaders “Mr. and Mrs. Mac”.<sup>43</sup> According to historian Carl Berger, natural history groups flourished during 19th and early-20th centuries precisely because they provided leisure activities considered both socially appropriate and physically beneficial to participants.<sup>44</sup> Yet MacIntosh also pursued his museum collections during the trips, having the children

40 Thomas A. Peters, Department of Agriculture, to MacIntosh, 12 March 1907, NHS fonds, S127, F2, 46, ANBM and W.W. Hubbard, Department of Agriculture, to MacIntosh, 25 November 1911, NHS fonds, S127, F7, ANBM.

41 See the many letters sent to MacIntosh from children in the NHS fonds, S127, F7-F10, ANBM.

42 The Junior Society for boys between 12 and 18 years of age was described as “revived” in 1885. See Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 3 March 1885, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM. An early mention of the Junior Associate Branch for girls aged 10 to 21 occurs in the “Report of the Ladies’ Association”, *The Bulletin of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick*, 27 (1909), p. 171.

43 See the letters sent to MacIntosh by young people between 1915 and 1916 in NHS fonds, S128A, F99(1), ANBM.

44 Carl Berger, *Science, God, and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto, 1983), pp. 17-18.

gather plants, flowers and insects. He even directed them to perform archaeological work at ancient Aboriginal sites. In 1911, the accession records describe the prehistoric material collected from Jemseg, Indian Point, Maquapit Lake, French Lake and the Portobello River and Little River by the girls' camp while in 1916 the boys donated objects taken from Indian camping places in central New Brunswick.<sup>45</sup> Though highly questionable now, this kind of amateur collecting was not uncommon at the time; it fell out of favour as the field of archaeology was professionalized.

MacIntosh emerges from the records of the Natural History Society as an active, hard-working and innovative man who loved New Brunswick and who was dedicated to children, creating nature lessons for them both within and outside of the classroom. As an educator he stressed the pleasure of learning, striving to entertain as well as challenge his students. As an entomologist he helped to shape governmental policies designed to encourage agriculture in New Brunswick. As a curator he was tireless, with his presence recorded at all society events: he gave talks at the annual "conversazioni", met with associate members to discuss fund-raising events, operated the magic lantern during lectures and greeted museum visitors. He also did secretarial work, corresponding with teachers, and even mailing Ganong's articles to scientists throughout Canada and the United States. At times MacIntosh was a caretaker, buying coal to heat the museum, fixing the roof of the storage shed and ordering supplies for the camping trips.<sup>46</sup> In short, William MacIntosh was involved with every aspect of the Natural History Society and his identity was barely distinguishable from that of its museum.

Members of the Natural History Society had always wanted to create a provincial museum in Saint John, including this goal in their mission statement of 1862.<sup>47</sup> Their ambitions remained unattained, however, during the late-19th century. In 1882, delegates tried unsuccessfully to combine forces with the New Brunswick Historical Society to construct a Centennial Museum and Art Gallery while in 1897 their efforts to have the natural history collections included in a new library building planned for Saint John were immediately discounted by the officials involved.<sup>48</sup> By the 1920s, however, the Natural History Society was taken more seriously. At this point, what has been called the "golden age" of museum-building in North America was beginning to decline.<sup>49</sup> Grandiose institutions were nevertheless firmly linked with the attainment of civility and considered a necessity in any established city; the sheer number of groups and individuals also lobbying for the construction of a modern fireproof museum, including the New Brunswick Historical Society, the Loyalist Society and a range of political and business leaders, meant that their efforts were

45 Record of Artifacts Donated to the NHS, 1889-1912, October 1911, NHS fonds, S128A, F134, accession records 5405-5415, ANBM; General Minutes of the NHS, 1912-20, 17 October 1916, NHS fonds, S127, F42, ANBM.

46 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1901-1920, 1 June 1912, NHS fonds, S127, F38, ANBM; William F. Ganong to MacIntosh, 11 October 1907, NHS fonds, S127, F2, 20, ANBM.

47 General Minutes of the NHS, 1862-90, 5 February 1862, NHS fonds, S127, F40, ANBM.

48 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 3 October 1882, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM; J.W. Lawrence, president of the New Brunswick Historical Society, to LeBaron Botsford, president of the Natural History Society, 3 October 1882, NHS fonds, S127, F1, 13, ANBM; Council Minutes of the NHS, 1862-1901, 21 January 1897 and 2 February 1897, NHS fonds, S127, F37, ANBM.

49 Ruth Phillips, "Replacing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age", *Canadian Historical Review*, 86, 1 (2005), pp. 83-4.

finally successful.<sup>50</sup> Bureaucrats recognized the value of a provincial museum, with the City Corporation of Saint John donating \$100,000 and the provincial government \$150,000 towards a new building – sums that were considered insufficient by members of the Natural History Society.<sup>51</sup> When the New Brunswick Museum received its sanction in 1929, it was largely due to a written promise from the society to forward all its possessions to the new institution including its entire collections and more than \$28,000 in funds.<sup>52</sup> Lieutenant-Governor Murray MacLaren also played a prominent role by donating \$25,000 to the building he hoped would accommodate the collections of the Natural History Society as well as “historic records, relics, and art relating especially to the Province of New Brunswick”.<sup>53</sup>

The society nevertheless wished to retain control of its collections, insisting “the Council of the Natural History Society shall have a prominent part in the management of said [new] museum”.<sup>54</sup> A number of longstanding members were placed on the board of the New Brunswick Museum and MacIntosh was named its first director (ostensibly to protect the interests of the Natural History Society). Of course in many ways MacIntosh was well equipped to assume this position, given his long years of experience in the society’s museum. He had furthermore prepared for such a role by researching museums throughout North America. In 1924, MacIntosh took a one-month leave of absence from his curatorial position to study various museums in the eastern United States. Upon returning, he presented his findings to other members of the Natural History Society, showing slides of renowned institutions – especially the American Museum of Natural History in New York City where George F. Matthew’s son, William Diller Matthew, worked as a vertebrate paleontologist.<sup>55</sup> When plans for the provincial museum were confirmed in 1929, MacIntosh visited an additional 65 North American museums in 21 different cities, claiming that “much information was gained which may be utilized in the building and arrangement of the new Provincial Museum”.<sup>56</sup>

MacIntosh scarcely had time to apply his knowledge of modern museums to the displays inside the provincial institution. The new building begun in 1930 was mostly finished by 1933. It was a large structure with an imposing neo-classical facade complete with columns and broad sandstone steps. Inspired by a wing of the Metropolitan Museum in New York City, the impressive edifice was meant to establish Saint John as a cosmopolitan centre.<sup>57</sup> All the same, MacIntosh’s annual

50 Greg Marquis, “Commemorating the Loyalists in the Loyalist City: Saint John, New Brunswick, 1883-1934”, *Urban History Review*, 33, 1 (2004), p. 31.

51 Minutes of the Board and Executive Committee and Management Committee of the New Brunswick Museum (NBM), 1 October 1930, ANBM.

52 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1924-1942, 4 June 1929, NHS fonds, S127, F39, ANBM; Minutes of the Board and Executive Committee and Management Committee of the NBM, 4 February 1930, ANBM.

53 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1924-1942, 6 January 1929 and 20 August 1929, NHS fonds, S127, F39, ANBM.

54 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1924-1942, 20 August 1929, NHS fonds, S127, F39, ANBM.

55 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1924-1942, 1 April 1924 and 2 December 1924, NHS fonds, S127, F39, ANBM.

56 Council Minutes of the NHS, 1924-1942, 5 November 1929, NHS fonds, S127, F39, ANBM.

57 For discussions of the building and its site see Minutes of the Board and Executive Committee and Management Committee of the NBM, 27 June 1929, ANBM.

director's report in January of 1934 explained that the building remained closed, with the telephones removed, heat cut off and one female staff member discharged because of "financial troubles". He remained hopeful, however, noting that a great outcry from the public had encouraged the museum to open on one Sunday afternoon each month, attracting as many as 1,200 visitors – some from as far away as Moncton, St. Andrews, St. Stephen and Fredericton.<sup>58</sup> After official ceremonies inaugurated the New Brunswick Museum in August of 1934, its administrators managed to maintain more regular opening hours.<sup>59</sup>

Despite providing funds for the new building the local and provincial governments offered little continuous financial support, compelling the New Brunswick Museum to rely on wealthy patrons. Dr. J. Clarence Webster (1863-1950) and his wife, Alice Lusk Webster (1880-1953), were the most prominent benefactors, and both played a significant role in defining the institution. Dr. Webster was born in Shediac, New Brunswick, and trained as an obstetrician in Scotland before conducting a successful practice in Chicago for over 20 years. While living in the United States he and his wife became connoisseurs of Asian art and fraternized with other noted collectors, including Ernest F. Fenollosa, the curator of the Department of Oriental Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts from 1890 to 1896.<sup>60</sup> When ill health prompted Dr. Webster to retire to his hometown, he pursued his interest in Canadian history and focused on the life of the 18th-century British general James Wolfe and, more locally, on the history of the Acadians. He was the driving force behind the creation of museums at both Fort Beauséjour and Louisbourg, but the New Brunswick Museum was one of his greatest passions. After helping to found the provincial museum in 1929, he served as vice-president of its board and acted as honorary curator of the Department of Canadian History within the museum until his death in 1950.<sup>61</sup> Dr. Webster brought many changes to the museum. Unlike the Museum of the Natural History Society, the New Brunswick Museum was not principally devoted to natural history specimens as it also embraced Canadian history. The new museum was furthermore divided into separate departments to be run by individual salaried curators, a development that alarmed MacIntosh and led him into conflict with the Websters.

MacIntosh's displeasure increased when Alice Lusk Webster began installing Egyptian, Asian and European art objects on the main floor of the museum, requiring him to move his collection of New Brunswick mammals to the basement.<sup>62</sup> From a

58 Minutes of the Board and Executive Committee and Management Committee of the NBM, 23 January 1934, ANBM.

59 "Museum Commemorates Province's Founding", *Telegraph Journal* (Saint John), 14 August 1934, NHS fonds, S128A, F125, ANBM; "Museum a Symbol of Life, Progress Declares Bennett", *Evening Times-Globe* (Saint John), 17 August 1934, p. 11.

60 For the Webster's Asian art collection see the John Webster Clarence (JWC) fonds, S200, F639-642, ANBM.

61 Gerald Thomas, "John C. Webster: Applying Material History – Developing the New Brunswick Museum", in Peter E. Rider, ed., *Studies in History and Museums* (Hull, PQ, 1994), pp. 33-55.

62 In "Museum Exhibits Swelled by Gifts Valued at \$25,000", *Telegraph Journal*, 31 July 1934, p. 12, MacIntosh explains that various art works will be "occupying the hall originally intended for the natural history objects of the province". In a letter to John C. Webster, Ganong writes that MacIntosh is "lukewarm" about the art collection because he fears it might impose on his "pet N.B. animals room". See Ganong to Webster, 20 November 1934, William Francis Ganong (WFG) fonds, S218, F115, ANBM.

wealthy family in New York, Lusk Webster was a well-travelled woman who had been educated in France and had specialized in art history. She funded the Art Department with her own money and acted as its honorary curator while donating many items from her personal collections and physically installing most of the exhibitions. At the same time, Lusk Webster employed inventive strategies to acquire what she hoped would be a representative display of international culture. Approaching her well-heeled contacts in New York, she scavenged anything valuable as well as cast-off items such as broken porcelain, which she carefully reassembled and put on display.<sup>63</sup> Lusk Webster additionally drew on her connections with friends in the museum world, especially the director of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology in Toronto C.T. Currelly (1876–1957). In 1934, she offered his museum 17 fine Japanese paintings owned by her and her husband in exchange for a substantial number of objects including Chinese porcelain, which was given as a gift in kind to the New Brunswick Museum.<sup>64</sup> The resulting influx of Asian art caused MacIntosh great anxiety, for in the Museum of the Natural History Society such objects had been considered exotic “curios” that were secondary to New Brunswick natural history specimens. He, along with allies such as Lieutenant-Governor MacLaren, wanted the New Brunswick Museum to be almost exclusively devoted to the celebration of New Brunswick. MacIntosh soon found, however, that both his authority and his vision of New Brunswick were being displaced by that of the Websters.

According to Dr. Webster, the resulting battle pitted the old guard – namely members of the Natural History Society – against the progressives striving to reform the museum.<sup>65</sup> Though debatable, this characterization dominates the archival records because they feature the powerful voice of Dr. Webster. His growing status was founded on multiple kinds of capital. With his economic resources Dr. Webster essentially funded the everyday operation of the New Brunswick Museum during the 1930s, purchasing even the display cases and other supplies. In 1934 he donated his unparalleled Canadiana collection of maps, photographs, medals, paintings, sculpture and documents to the museum, then proclaimed the most valuable gift ever given to a Canadian museum.<sup>66</sup> A highly educated medical man, he nevertheless produced over 50 well-respected historical publications during his lifetime – bolstering his claims to what Pierre Bourdieu would call cultural capital.<sup>67</sup> Dr. Webster was also equipped with social capital. His international network of connections stemmed in part from

63 Alice Lusk Webster’s Working Files, Art Department Records, undated lecture notes, NBM fonds, F545, ANBM.

64 For details about the trade see Records of the Registration Department, Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and “Museum Exhibits Swelled by Gifts Valued at \$25,000”, *Telegraph Journal*, 31 July 1934, p. 12.

65 John C. Webster to H.O. McCurry, 20 September 1937 and 22 September 1937, RG 7.4C, Outside Activities/Organizations, Carnegie Corporation – Individuals, Bailey, Alfred (1934-1939), Archives of the National Gallery of Canada (ANGC).

66 Scrapbook of the NHS, Newspaper Clippings 1934-36, “Dr. Webster’s Gifts Notable Feature in Museum Display”, NHS fonds, S128A, F125, ANBM. See also Thomas, “John C. Webster: Applying Material History”, pp. 42-5.

67 For an elaboration of the multiple kinds of capital informing historical definitions of class see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA, 1984), pp. 12, 53-4, 80-3, 303.

participation in the Historic Sites and Monuments Board and the Canadian Museums Committee of the Carnegie Corporation. Overshadowed by the financial power and social and intellectual prestige of Webster, MacIntosh's voice fades from the records after 1934.

Lusk Webster's status within the New Brunswick Museum was more complicated. On one hand, her pedigree, relative wealth and marriage to a powerful man made her a privileged woman and someone able to insist that her definition of culture was more important than MacIntosh's specimens of natural history. On the other hand, her economic, social and cultural capital were undermined by a gendered hierarchy that devalued women.<sup>68</sup> Her feminine aesthetic concerns were for the most part merely tolerated by the male administrators of the museum, and she received very little funding for her department. Her voice is less dominant in the archival sources than that of her husband and some of her important accomplishments – including a major acquisition of British-Roman and early English material from the Guildhall Museum in London in 1940 – have been virtually erased from the records of the New Brunswick Museum.<sup>69</sup> In that sense she did not fare much better than the associate members of the Natural History Society, who contributed substantially to the organization even as they were denied full membership.<sup>70</sup>

In contrast to Webster and Lusk Webster, MacIntosh lacked economic resources and had few social connections outside of Saint John. His prestige declined, however, primarily in relation to cultural – and more specifically educational – capital. MacIntosh was entirely self-trained in natural history, a fact that had not hindered his position within the Natural History Society. According to the 19th-century definition of natural history that had infused the society, nature was an organic unity of all living things and available for study by generalists equipped with a keen eye and an enterprising spirit. This broad and practical method of studying nature was respected even by universities at the time, and in 1921 the University of New Brunswick awarded MacIntosh an honorary Masters of Science degree. Other Canadian institutions embraced amateurs during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Despite lacking formal education, the Irish-born teacher John Macoun, for example, became Dominion botanist in 1881 and left more than 100,000 plant specimens to the Natural History Museum of Canada. The timing of MacIntosh's second honorary degree – a

68 For the role of women in museums see the following: Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1991); Janice B. Yablonski, *Museum Women: A Century of Women's Employment in Art Museums* (New York, 1992); Anne Higonnet, "A New Center: The National Museum of Women in the Arts", in Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp. 250-64; Kendall Taylor, "Pioneering Efforts of Early Museum Workers", in Jane R. Glaser and Artemis A. Zenetou, eds., *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums* (Washington, DC, 1994), pp. 11-27; Brian Young, *The Making and Unmaking of a University Museum: The McCord, 1921-1996* (Montreal, 2000), pp. 80-111; and Gaby Porter, "Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums", in Bettina Messia Carbonell, ed., *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 104-11.

69 Alice Lusk Webster's Working Files, Art Department Records, undated lecture notes, NBM fonds, F545, ANBM.

70 McTavish, "From Cake to Caribou: Women's Contributions to the New Brunswick Museum, 1862-1950".

doctorate from the University of New Brunswick in 1934 – suggests that some people continued to appreciate the accomplishments of the director of the provincial museum.<sup>71</sup> Yet the recognition given to men like Macoun and MacIntosh was based on a historical understanding of erudition that was in steep decline by the early 1930s.

According to the Websters, being truly educated meant receiving methodical training at a university and attaining an advanced degree. In 1934, Dr. Webster stated that while MacIntosh “was a good curator of a Natural History Museum he is scarcely of the calibre to direct a Modern Museum . . . due to his lack of a good education and of general culture”.<sup>72</sup> This opinion was informed by a shift toward professionalization both within and outside of the museum world. Writing before 1923, the Anglican archdeacon of Saint John and an influential member of the patrician class, William Odber Raymond, argued that only scientists trained systematically in fundamental principles deserved to be professors at the provincial university in New Brunswick. He nevertheless noted that “some shortsighted people entertain the idea that provided a man has somehow or other stuffed his brain with a vast and imposing collection of disjointed facts on any subject of science, and can parade them by the hour to a wondering audience, that he is therefore properly qualified to give instruction in that subject”.<sup>73</sup> According to historian Mary Winsor, the increasing professionalization of science in universities led to the denigration of those “amateur” scientists working in museums while it also marginalized the research done by museum curators with science degrees.<sup>74</sup>

Raymond’s arguments were echoed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a foundation that promoted the training of professional museum staff as well as the development of educational programming in museums. Dr. Webster was chair of the Carnegie Corporation’s Canadian Museums Committee in 1933 and helped to decide which promising young men and women would receive fellowships to train at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa or the Courtauld Institute in London, England, before taking up positions in selected museums across the country. According to this committee, Canada urgently needed museum professionals “to replace, as opportunity permits, the casual, amateur and volunteer assistance with which most of the museum work in the Dominion is carried out”.<sup>75</sup> Dr. Webster appealed to the Canadian Museums Committee, hoping it would assist him in professionalizing the New Brunswick Museum. In 1934 the museum received a grant of \$9,000 over three years directly from the American branch of the Carnegie Corporation to avoid the appearance of favouritism toward Dr. Webster. Some of these monies were earmarked for the children’s educational programmes provided by MacIntosh, which had been

71 UNB Honorary Degree Recipients, University of New Brunswick Archives (UNBA), [www.lib.unb.ca/archives/honorary/hon3.html](http://www.lib.unb.ca/archives/honorary/hon3.html) (accessed 21 August 2006); Waiser, *The Field Naturalist*, p. 7. No records were found identifying the nominators of MacIntosh or the reasons why he received the honorary degree.

72 John C. Webster to H.O. McCurry, 31 March 1934, RG 7.4C, Outside Activities/Organizations, Carnegie Corporation – Individuals, Bailey, Alfred (1934-1939), ANGC.

73 Notebook of W.O. Raymond, Notes on Education at the Provincial University, undated, WFG fonds, S223, F445, p. 15, ANBM.

74 Winsor, *Reading the Shape of Nature*, pp. 187-97, 209.

75 The Carnegie Corporation of New York, Canadian Committee on Canadian Museums Progress Report, 1937, JCW fonds, S193, F95, 15, ANBM.



praised by British scholars Sir Henry Miers and Sydney Markham when they published their survey of Canadian museums for the Carnegie Corporation in 1932.<sup>76</sup> In his progress report of 1935, MacIntosh noted that the first cheque had been spent on a Gestetner machine for duplicating teaching notes and on numerous cases for shipping specimens to schools.<sup>77</sup> Despite this endorsement of MacIntosh's educational work, his own education was no longer considered adequate. Carnegie monies were also used to pay the salary of Alfred Bailey, the man handpicked by Dr. Webster to succeed MacIntosh as director of the New Brunswick Museum.

Bailey started in 1935 as a curator with a salary of only \$100 per month and the promise of the title of assistant director, a designation fiercely resisted by MacIntosh. In fact, the director resented almost everything about Bailey's presence. With a recent doctorate in history from the University of Toronto, Bailey spent most of his time researching Dr. Webster's Canadiana materials or labeling the art objects of Lusk Webster and did not work with the natural history collections – the most important aspect of the museum according to MacIntosh. The older man disapproved of Bailey's high level of education, complaining that a PhD was of no use in a museum because "a person holding that degree would not roll up his sleeves and get down on his hands and knees and perform [the] manual labour required of the position".<sup>78</sup> Then in his late sixties, MacIntosh was contemplating retirement and selected Gerald Sansom, a New Brunswick teacher largely self-trained in natural history, as his successor.<sup>79</sup> In a letter written in 1937 to H.O. McCurry, assistant director of the National Gallery and de facto leader of the Canadian Museums Committee of the Carnegie Corporation, Dr. Webster claimed that MacIntosh "now speaks of the domination of an outside body, and proclaims he can select and train a curator much better than the C. Committee. So much for his gratitude".<sup>80</sup> Opposed to the employment of Samson, Dr. Webster and his supporter Ganong affirmed that a specialist in what was by then called natural science – rather than a generalist in natural history – would be hired and that he would be appointed curator not director.<sup>81</sup>

At this point, the image of MacIntosh emerging from the records changes drastically. Instead of a dedicated employee preoccupied with educating children, the director is portrayed by both the Websters and Bailey as a scheming old man who imagined that the New Brunswick Museum was his personal property. The worst example of the director's mistreatment of Bailey involved the publication of the young man's 1934 doctoral thesis, "The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700, A Study in Canadian Civilization". Wanting the New

76 Sir Henry A. Miers and S. F. Markham, *A Report on the Museums of Canada to the Carnegie Corporation of New York* (Edinburgh, 1932), p. 42.

77 Progress report sent by William MacIntosh to H.O. McCurry, 17 May 1937, RG 7.4C, Outside Activities/Organizations, Carnegie Corporation – New Brunswick, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, 1933-1939, ANGC.

78 Alfred Goldsworthy Bailey, "Saint John and the New Brunswick Museum in the Hungry Thirties, 1935-1938" (revised 1982), MS4.7.1.6, UNBA.

79 Minutes of the Board and Executive Committee and Management Committee of the NBM, 24 November 1938, ANBM.

80 John C. Webster to H.O. McCurry, 8 September 1937, RG 7.4C, Outside Activities/Organizations, Carnegie Corporation – Bailey, Alfred (1934-1939), ANGC.

81 William F. Ganong to John C. Webster, 11 May 1938, JCW fonds, S195, F297, ANBM.

Brunswick Museum to be associated with scholarly publications, Dr. Webster had used his personal funds along with Carnegie monies to release Bailey's book on behalf of the museum in 1938. Unfortunately, though permission to print the name of the museum on the title page was granted, Dr. Addy, a longtime member of the Natural History Society and then chair of the Management Committee of the New Brunswick Museum, had neglected to inform the other members of the committee. Taking advantage of this oversight MacIntosh wrote letters to various libraries and institutions stating that the New Brunswick Museum had not authorized Bailey's book, implying that the young man had used the name improperly in an effort to increase sales. When MacIntosh's actions were discovered by administrators at the museum, a second batch of letters was written to exonerate Bailey.<sup>82</sup> This incident probably had little impact on the reception of Bailey's publication, which was ignored during the 1930s and 1940s primarily because its innovative combination of anthropology and history was too advanced for the field; when the book was republished by the University of Toronto Press in 1969, it was praised as the first work of Canadian ethnohistory and is now considered a foundational text.<sup>83</sup> The event did have an impact, however, on MacIntosh's standing, for even longtime supporters such as Lieutenant-Governor MacLaren were shocked by the director's behaviour. MacIntosh announced his intention to resign by 1940, but Bailey had had enough. He left the New Brunswick Museum in 1938, noting "I should rather starve than be under or connected with the Old Fiend in any way"<sup>84</sup>

In addition to personal grievances and efforts toward professionalization, the struggle for power at the New Brunswick Museum was informed by historical articulations of class and gender. Although he occupied a middle-class position, MacIntosh identified with the common man who was not afraid to roll up his sleeves and get things done. MacIntosh insisted that museums should be staffed by curators like him – adventurous men who trekked through the woods finding specimens to display in the museum. According to him, the target audience of these exhibits was primarily made up of like-minded, working-class people who would learn useful information about their surroundings in the pursuit of both pleasure and economic gain. This vision of the ideal museum positioned Bailey as an outsider not because the younger man was "from away" (he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of New Brunswick in 1927), but because Bailey's theoretical training, in MacIntosh's view, threatened to displace the educational value given to first-hand encounters with nature. MacIntosh furthermore assumed that university men such as Bailey lacked an appropriately rugged form of masculinity, rendering him unwilling to "get down on [his] hands and knees" to perform manual labour. Yet even as MacIntosh characterized Bailey as an elite interloper, it was the young man's want of economic capital – the limited Carnegie fellowship meant that he did not have a financially secure position at the museum – that made him a vulnerable target for the director.

82 John C. Webster to H.O. McCurry, 11 April 1938, RG 7.4C, Outside Activities/Organizations, Carnegie Corporation – Bailey, Alfred (1934-1939), ANGC.

83 Alfred G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (Toronto, 1969). See also Bruce Trigger, "Alfred G. Bailey – Ethnohistorian", *Acadiensis*, 18 (Spring 1989), pp. 3-21.

84 Alfred G. Bailey to John C. Webster, 8 September 1937, JCW fonds, S194, F237, ANBM.

Webster and Lusk Webster can be more convincingly identified as members of the upper-middle class, even though records show them working very hard in the museum to the point of undertaking manual labour.<sup>85</sup> Their goals for the New Brunswick Museum resembled those of the 19th-century British museum reformers described by cultural theorist Tony Bennett. According to Bennett privileged reformers viewed the modern museum as an instrument of social management that, along with public libraries and parks, was a potential site for reforming the habits, morals, manners and beliefs of the subordinate classes.<sup>86</sup> There is no evidence that the Websters attempted to modify the behaviour of the working classes, but both of them believed museums could improve the tastes and values of New Brunswickers. Bailey summarized Dr. Webster's theories of the positive effects of museums as helping to refine the senses, heighten self-knowledge and improve character. According to Dr. Webster himself a good museum was capable of elevating an entire society beyond a decadent love of popular culture, noting that the pride and cultural knowledge produced by such an institution would ultimately have beneficial effects on the economy.<sup>87</sup> Like her husband, Lusk Webster held that museum displays could improve society, though she concentrated on the value of aesthetic appreciation rather than the preservation of historical documents capable of instilling pride. In letters sent to Currelly in Toronto she conveyed a desire to bring art exhibitions of the highest quality to the people of New Brunswick in order to advance their sensibilities. Lusk Webster clearly found most New Brunswickers bereft of cultural knowledge, for she claimed to help those "men and women, boys and girls, who are groping blindly for the finer things in life" in the "backwoods".<sup>88</sup> In keeping with what historian Neil Harris has described as the primary goal of early-20th-century American museums, she strove to influence taste by providing the working classes with opportunities to mimic bourgeois styles.<sup>89</sup> Lusk Webster's goals were also in line with developments in other Canadian museums. According to Eileen Mak, when middle-class patrons shifted attention away from the utility of industrial displays and toward the civilizing effects of culture they adapted in order to continue to legitimate their own values.<sup>90</sup>

Mak's account of ongoing middle-class domination does not, however, fully describe the situation in New Brunswick. The Natural History Society was never an elite group, but was made up of a diverse membership. While some participants were rich in economic and social capital, including Lieutenant-Governor MacLaren – reputed to be the wealthiest man in New Brunswick – others, such as MacIntosh and even George F. Matthew, were far less wealthy. All the same, it would be equally simplistic to portray the Museum of the Natural History Society as a modest

85 Lusk Webster describes herself working in her department to the point of collapse. See Alice Lusk Webster's Working Files, Art Department Records, undated lecture notes, NBM fonds, F545, ANBM.

86 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York, 1995), p. 19.

87 Bailey, "Saint John and the New Brunswick Museum", p. 9; Thomas, "John C. Webster: Applying Material History", pp. 33-5; J. C. Webster, *The Distressed Maritimes* (Toronto, 1926), pp. 10-12.

88 Alice Lusk Webster's Working Files, Art Department Records, undated letters, NBM fonds, F544, ANBM and Alice Lusk Webster's Working Files, Art Department Records, undated lecture notes, NBM fonds, F545, ANBM.

89 Neil Harris, "Museums, Merchandising and Popular Taste: The Struggle for Influence"; I.M.G. Quimby, ed., *Material Culture and the Study of American Life* (New York, 1978), pp. 140-74.

90 Mak, "Patterns of Change, Sources of Influence", pp. 326-29.

organization taken over by elites when it became part of the New Brunswick Museum. MacIntosh was not a victim of the class struggle occurring in the New Brunswick Museum; he had influential supporters and enough power to retain his position as director for six years. In the end, a complicated array of forces shaped the new museum, including the declining stature of natural history, the rise of both professionalized science and museum work, and changing opinions about what constituted a good education. These factors altered societal beliefs about both the purpose of museums and their benefit to the public. There is nevertheless little evidence to show how visitors to either the Museum of the Natural History Society or the New Brunswick Museum actually experienced the institutions. Critical museum theorists have argued that museum exhibitions do not impose meanings on hapless visitors noting that, however powerful, museums are sites of both dialogue and debate.<sup>91</sup> The people of New Brunswick could have used the two institutions for their own purposes, drawing on their personal beliefs to interpret the displays in ways not intended by any curator.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York may have been pleased with what ultimately transpired at the New Brunswick Museum. According to historian Jeffrey Brison, the organization worked to establish the authority of intellectual elites, especially professional men, in bureaucratized cultural organizations rather than community-minded institutions controlled by nonprofessionals.<sup>92</sup> By 1941 Dr. Webster could write with satisfaction about the national standing of the New Brunswick Museum: "I think we may now claim third place in Canada, next to the R[oyal] Ont[ario] Museum] & National [Gallery of Art] in Ottawa".<sup>93</sup> Despite losing the battle to retain Bailey, the Websters managed to professionalize the New Brunswick Museum and their foundation continues to fund their respective interests in Canadian history and art to this day.

As indicated by this concluding reference to the Websters, it is difficult to maintain an exclusive focus on MacIntosh when recounting the history of the two museums in Saint John. The transformation of the Museum of the Natural History Society into a provincial institution created a diffusion of his authority. The new organization was not administered by a group unified by a commitment to natural history, and MacIntosh could no longer identify himself with every aspect of the museum. His career nevertheless sheds light on the general narrative of the professionalization of modern museums, even as it complicates that story by attending to regionally specific details. Although the images of MacIntosh emerging from the records vary according to who was producing them, his legacy remains. His presence continues to be felt inside the New Brunswick Museum, especially in its displays of New Brunswick birds and mammals as well as in the memories of those residents who went on camping trips with MacIntosh when they were children. According to one woman, Mr. Mac performed a handstand in his canoe even when he was 80 years old, much to the delight of spectators.<sup>94</sup>

91 Phillips, *Trading Identities*, p. 69.

92 Jeffrey D. Brison, *Rockefeller, Carnegie and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada* (Montreal, 2005), pp. 41, 133.

93 John C. Webster to C.T. Currelly, 5 May 1941, Records of the Registration Department, ROM.

94 Personal communication of Nancy Benn to Joshua Dickison, 13 March 2007.