

A Royal Visit The Prince of Wales in Montreal in 1860

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It is to be hoped that the one per cent policy of the Quebec government, besides bringing some fortunate solutions, will become an example and a stimulus for all future construction projects.

1. Catalogue of the *L'Art et la ville — Art dans la vie* exhibition.
2. 8 Places publiques, p. 70.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

A ROYAL VISIT: THE PRINCE OF WALES IN MONTREAL IN 1860.

By Gloria LESSER

The construction of the Victoria Bridge was one of the greatest feats of its time. James Hodges, the Montreal engineer in charge of the project, specified twenty-four piers of limestone of gigantic size to support the structure. When completed, the bridge would be one of the longest in the world, running for nearly two miles and costing millions of dollars.

Constructed for the passage of the trains of the Grand Trunk Railway across the St. Lawrence River by one unbroken line of railway, it opened up transport throughout the year, denied previously due to the severity of the climate. Politically advantageous, the bridge connected and associated together the British dependencies in North America, bringing them all into direct communication with the United States and the best ports of the Atlantic. As well, the Bridge connected the city of Montreal with the south shore of the St. Lawrence after 1860.

An industry was in itself created through the making of the railway over the Bridge as well as the construction of the Bridge itself. Three thousand and forty men were employed. Temporary workmen's houses as well as workshops were set up upon the banks of the river. The risky, hazardous work lasted six years. Twenty-six men lost their lives, mostly through drowning. Ravages of cholera, typhus and frostbite affected workers. Strikes held back progress, and the river's rising, which caused the ice to pack and shove, carried away abutment scows and dams which constantly needed to be rebuilt.

The opening of the Bridge occasioned great festivity and jubilation. Popular tunes and dances were composed in its honor. The Prince of Wales' visit on August 6, 1860 to Montreal as part of his famous American tour prompted unbounded enthusiastic responses. Over 60,000 people witnessed the ceremonies, and the reception of great pageantry was magnificent, extending over two miles in length. Flags, banners and arches decorated the street along the route. Montrealers felt proud of the greatest and richest city of the time of British North America, with the reputation of the highest commercial position.

The Prince's tour extended to the Maritimes, the Canadas, and to Washington to meet with the President of the United States. Factories in England created household articles of various types to commemorate the visit. Royal Worcester was requested to fill a special order in Canada. They produced plates and dishes ornamented with green maple leaves and the Prince of Wales' feathers. Tradition has it that these Worcester plates made by Kerr and Binns of Worcester for Upper and Lower Canada were among the table furnishings commissioned in connection with entertainments given for the Prince in his honour. One of these was a luncheon given by Sir George Simpson (1787-1860), Governor-in-Chief of The Hudson's Bay Company, which took place at his estate on Dorval Island, three miles above Lachine, to which the Prince was grandly transported in a large barge escorted by a flotilla of canoes manned by one hundred Indians in ceremonial dress. During the visit, the Indian tribes seized the opportunity to express their loyalty to the son of their sovereign and flocked to many points on the route in order to offer gifts of wampum and other Indian objects and to pay homage to the heir to the throne of Great Britain. This important event provided a suitable occasion for the distribution of medals to Indian chiefs. These were bestowed personally by His Royal Highness at the various gatherings of tribes throughout Canada and worn with pride. The medals were struck in silver in three sizes. They commemorated the laying of the last stone and the driving of the last rivet by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. They were a reissue of a medal struck in 1840, known as the Micmac medal, as it was originally given to members of a delegation of Micmac Indians from Gaspé. When reissued in 1860 upon the Prince's visit, it was surcharged with the Prince of Wales' plumes and motto and the date

1860. As well, five medals were struck in a limited series, one in gold, which became the property of the Prince, and four in silver.

It is very difficult to ascertain which of various items printed with the Prince of Wales' motif was indeed used by the Prince himself. Somehow the belief persisted that the Worcester pieces printed with the Prince of Wales' feathers were used only by the Prince himself. This was an impossibility due to the fact that dinner-services were used by many officials involved at the various functions. However, over the years many souvenirs of the visit were bought with this idea in mind. The water or wine glass carafe etched with encircled maple leaves would most probably have been used in a table setting with the Worcester porcelain as the designs seem to interrelate harmoniously.

The commemorative etched glass wine jug of which the MMFA has a matching goblet was probably used by dignitaries and guests celebrating the visit, probably at a banquet. They were likely produced by the new etched glass technique. This method of etching on glass had been unknown until 1853, when C. Breeze of London patented a process of printing a negative image on paper with printing ink and transferring this to glass to be etched. Specimens of this type of work were exhibited at the Paris Exposition in 1855, and it is believed that these items were also produced in this manner. This would have been considered an advancement of technology over engraving, because the etching method could be adapted to mass production. Also used for banquet purposes would have been a cut glass tumbler in the MMFA's collection bearing the etched Prince of Wales' device of three feathers.

An occasional chair, of tiger maple, was likely made in England of imported Canadian maple for the Prince of Wales' visit, or could possibly have been made by an English cabinetmaker in Canada. English influence is noted in the use of the shield back, as well as the Jacobean turning on the stretcher. The refined carving of the Prince of Wales' feathers contributes to the great charm of the piece. The seat upholstery, a matelassé, is thought to be a later addition.

A chamber candlestick of silver plate, an item of personal comfort owned by John Russell, would have been made in England. This would be one of the few items possibly used by the Prince personally, a bedside accoutrement.

Many of the items from the visit found their way to auction, then to collectors or dealers, later to museums. Distribution of goods by auction was common in Canada in the nineteenth century.

A Victorian curiosity was the selling off of what had been used at some special event. Royalty, such as the Prince of Wales, though welcomed and greeted enthusiastically, had scarcely to leave a city before everything purchased in anticipation of the visit, and imported for the occasion, was up for sale. Commemorative plates, glasses and flatware, many bearing the Prince of Wales' feathers as the decoration, were purchased and resold in prolific quantities. Probably the flatware in the museum's collection, silver plated with mother of pearl handles, would fall into the category of memorabilia, and was probably purchased by many as mementoes of the visit, rather than used by the Prince and his associates for official purposes.

The Prince's visit was commemorated architecturally as well. The Prince of Wales Terrace between Peel and McTavish (now demolished) was built by architects William Footner and George Browne for Sir George Simpson, who was involved in several developments in Montreal. It was under construction at the time of the Prince's visit, and the motif of the feathers was added as an embellishment to the finials at the peak of each façade. This row housing subsequently was named in honour of the Prince's visit, though construction was coincidental with his visit. The house on the extreme left of the row was occupied by the Prince's aides-de-camp for the duration of the visit, while the Prince stayed at the home of Sir John Rose.

Rosemount, the home of Sir John Rose, the Minister of Public Works, became the official residence of the Prince and was entirely refurbished at government expense, which meant that no expense was spared. Rose commissioned new carpets, new furniture, curtains and ornaments of all kinds, but it was in the drawing room that the true sumptuousness of the prestigious visit could be appreciated. Here, ruby-coloured skylights bearing the Prince of Wales' plumes cast a glow over the furnishings and stairway. In the Prince's bedchamber, the head and footboard were deeply carved with royal arms. Rosemount was torn down in 1940, and is today the site of the Percy F. Walters Park, on Dr. Penfield Avenue.

During the 1850's stereography was introduced to the public and generated tremendous excitement as an entertainment as well as an educational medium. William Notman, founder of the William Notman photographic firm, advertised his first Canadian set of

stereoscopic views in 1859, in which he pictured construction details of Montreal's new Victoria Bridge. Victorians were soon able to enjoy three-dimensional views of this wonder of the world by looking through a stereoscopic viewer at a pair of slightly offset photographic prints. Since the engineering feat posed by the Bridge staggered public imagination, Notman photographed the Bridge from many angles. When the Prince of Wales made his famous American tour, Notman was the 'official photographer'. Lord Monck, the Canadian governor-general, ordered stereoscopic and other photographic views of the tour as a memento for the Prince of Wales. Stereo prints were mounted on cardboard, nine pairs to a large sheet, some of which pictured the new Bridge, while others recorded the various towns and cities which the Prince visited. The collection was presented in two leather portfolios, one containing views of Canada East, the other containing views of Canada West. They were bound by William Lovell, a Montreal bookbinder, and housed in a beautiful bird's-eye maple box with silver mounts. A stereoscopic viewer accompanied the photographs. Notman made a replica of the gift for himself, now in the Notman archives, but unfortunately some views showing specific incidents are missing.

Regarded as a great work conceived by a provincial government, the construction of the Victoria Bridge can be said to stand as evidence of the energy and enlightenment of a colonial population, which affected the province's social, mercantile and political position, and which personified the attitude of Canadians towards industrial progress.

TOM HENDERSON: A MARITIME SCULPTOR

By Virgil G. HAMMOCK

Tom Henderson is a sculptor who lives in the Maritimes, and who speaks of himself as a realist. I guess this makes him a Maritime Realist, but I doubt that fans of this particular school of painting would find much in his work with which they could identify or like. Yet Tom Henderson is a realist, none the less, for what he is talking about is the reality of the *piece* of sculpture rather than the construction of a three-dimensional Alex Colville, or, as he says: "It looks like what it is." His new pieces in wood represent this kind of truth to the material. The wood is wood, mostly uncoloured, banded together in a rather direct way. Most of the wood is found on his own small farm in Point de Bute some eight miles from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, where Tom teaches sculpture.

I have known Tom since the early Sixties when we were both students at the San Francisco Art Institute. Since 1970 we have worked together, first at the University of Manitoba, and from 1975 at Mount Allison. In some ways this long friendship makes it more difficult for me to write objectively about his sculpture than if I were looking at his work for the first time, but I know some of the things that make him tick and I have watched his work progress over the years to the point where I think that others in Canada should know about his art. Frankly, Tom has not been the best agent for his sculpture, spending far more time making it than making it known. Living in Winnipeg and now in Sackville has not been much help either, since few people influential in Canada's art world have seen the work, or if they have, they have placed it in the realm of that of a provincial artist outside of the mainstream. Last, and far from least, in this era of short-sight xenophobia, his American nationality has been somewhat of a deterrent.

While in Winnipeg, and before that in the United States, Henderson worked almost entirely in metal. During this period, Tom thought himself lucky to complete three or four of these pieces a year, so complex was their construction. The sculptures were hammered and welded from flat sheet steel into intricate organic shapes. Generally the complete pieces were not painted but were placed outside and allowed to rust. Eventually these sculptures will rust into oblivion, although they will take a good long time to do so. These early works were built up piece by piece using an additive process, where each section makes demands on the next until the sculpture seems complete. As a painter, I can understand this process. Much recent art makes its own demands on the artist during its coming into being; one part will call for another until the piece is finished. This process makes the detailed, advance planning of many contemporary works of art impossible, even undesirable, as the artist does not know at the outset what his finished work will look like. Art should start with the idea and not finish with it. Tom

still uses this process while working, but because of his use of different materials, it is not the same. In his newest work, he is not as sure of himself as he was in the past. These new works represent a period of transition not only from one material to another, but from one mode of thinking to another. In my mind, such periods are necessary to the growth of nearly all artists, show real maturity and can lead to better art. I worry when artists don't, or even worse, resist, change.

Tom has never used drawing or maquettes as a basis for his sculpture, but prefers to work directly on the piece. I don't want to imply that he doesn't draw — he does, and well — but rather that he wants his drawing to remain drawing and his sculpture, sculpture. Despite Tom's protest, I maintain that sculptors draw like sculptors — that they tend to think about their subjects in a three-dimensional way while painters or printmakers might intentionally do otherwise. Sculptors, as well, traditionally ignore the corners of the page while emphasizing their subject. I realize that these are broad generalizations, but, for an example of what I mean, look at the drawings of Henry Moore. These same characteristics were evident in Tom's drawings. This is not to say his, or Moore's, drawing is bad. I like them, but I firmly believe that there is such a thing as sculptural thinking. However, certain new drawings of Tom's give my rather pat ideas on this subject trouble for it is not only Tom's sculpture that is in a period of change, but his drawing as well. He is, to my mind, drawing like a painter; in fact, his new large drawings are nothing more than paintings on paper. Many painters have, by necessity, become part-time sculptors when their painted images needed to come off their flat surfaces on the wall and become free-standing forms. Ellsworth Kelly or Robert Rauschenberg are artists who could fit this description. Henderson tells me that he has reversed this idea and that many of his sculptural ideas seem to need to be stated in two, rather than three, dimensions. These drawings, like his latest sculpture, could be transitional, but more than likely this new graphic style will be around for some time. This change in drawing comes, in large measure, from Tom's teaching the subject for the last three years at Mount Allison. This has made him deal with drawing independent of sculpture.

In all of Henderson's sculpture there is a close relationship with the environment. Tom regards himself as a sort of alternate-lifestyle country person — in so far as his job and latent sophistication will allow — living close to the land; by his own description he is "an aging Hippie". How much of this is a reaction against his academic background is hard to say. Tom grew up in a university town, his father was a university librarian, his brother is a professor and his sister is married to a professor. I don't want to give the impression that Tom is an anti-intellectual. He has, after all, taught, and enjoyed it, in universities for some fourteen years and he is one of the best-read and well-informed artists that I know. But, like most artists, he has an image of himself. He is a romantic of the old school and his work clearly reflects that romanticism. There has been a shift in the form of his sculpture because of his move from the Prairies to the Maritimes and the resulting change in the environment. However, the change is more related to Tom's changes in sculptural thinking in general than a change of place. Despite the physical isolation of Sackville, Tom attempts to keep up with what is going on in sculpture through the magazines and trips out of the region to galleries. He freely admits debts to such artists as Jackie Winsor and Eva Hesse, who share with him some common artistic concerns. There has been much use of unusual natural materials in recent sculpture — tree branches, string, feathers and the like — in place of the more traditional materials. To an urban artist, materials of this type are exotic, but to Tom they are the very stuff of his life. This is exactly where strength is found in his work and where it is lacking in the work of many other artists, who share the use of similar materials.

Tom does not name, number or even keep an accurate record of the pieces he completes. This, of course, is not very helpful when trying to write about individual pieces. He does not title his works, even though some of them might have vague or even precise literary meanings to him, because he feels, correctly, that this would lead the viewer away from seeing the work in a fresh or direct way. Many contemporary abstract artists follow this practice. However, he has not neglected to number or date his work for such lofty reasons, but rather because of a lack of organization and a feeling that it is more important just to keep working. Work is an important word to Tom and he admits to following rather too strongly the Protestant Ethic in the past and sees the new work rather like a remedy. Tom is not alone in this problem; it is shared by many North American artists — sculptors and printmakers in particular — but no artist is immune to the idea that tedium is somehow related to the making of art. The public, unfortunately, tends to share elements of this ethic as