

Grand Duke Alexis Visits Canada Public Reception through a Diplomatic Lens

Lee A. Farrow

Volume 106, numéro 1, spring 2014

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1050720ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050720ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (imprimé)

2371-4654 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Farrow, L. A. (2014). Grand Duke Alexis Visits Canada: Public Reception through a Diplomatic Lens. *Ontario History*, 106(1), 34–56.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1050720ar>

Résumé de l'article

En 1871-72, le Grand-Duc Alexis de Russie visita les États-Unis et le Canada pendant trois mois, s'arrêtant dans toutes les grandes villes des deux pays et les sites touristiques tels que les chutes du Niagara. Aux États-Unis le duc fut accueilli avec exubérance et extravagance; mais au Canada sa réception fut beaucoup plus sobre. Dans une certaine mesure, la différence peut s'expliquer par la rigueur du climat et par la maladie du Prince de Galles. Mais il est vrai aussi que la réaction publique au jeune Russe fut influencée par l'inquiétude que provoquait chez les Canadiens (et leurs protecteurs britanniques) l'amitié russo-américaine. Les journaux britanniques et canadiens suivirent le voyage du Grand-Duc à travers les États-Unis, accusant les Américains de flagornerie et de servilité hypocrite devant la royauté, et affirmant que les Canadiens ne se conduiraient pas de la même manière. Étant donné les appels à l'annexion faits par certains hommes politiques américains, et l'achat récent de l'Alaska par les USA, on comprend facilement les soupçons que les Canadiens et les Britanniques pouvaient avoir concernant l'amitié russo-américaine et le vrai but de la visite du Grand-Duc.

Grand Duke Alexis Visits Canada

Public Reception through a Diplomatic Lens

by Lee A. Farrow

In the winter of 1871-1872, Grand Duke Alexis Romanov, the third son of Tsar Alexander II, set out on a grand tour of the United States and Canada. Traveling with a group of Russians that included the Russian minister to the United States, Constantin Catacazy, and Alexis's guardian, Admiral Constantin Possiet, the Grand Duke visited the major cities of both nations, saw impressive national wonders such as Niagara Falls and Mammoth Cave, and met celebrated historical figures, such as Samuel Morse, Henry W. Longfellow, and General George Custer. Alexander chose to send his nineteen-year-old son at that particular moment in part to squelch his romance with Alexandra Zhukovskaya, a commoner whom he could never marry with official recognition; but the trip also was intended as a good-will tour designed to strengthen and secure good relations between the United States and Russia. During the American Civil War, Russia had supported the North through its determined neutrality; now that the

country was reunited, Alexander understood the need for a newly-defined relationship. The success of Alexis's trip, not surprisingly, was viewed by many as a barometer of Russian-American relations and during the Grand Duke's three-month stay in the United States, he was the focus of American popular and political attention.

The temperature of the Russian-American relationship was being closely watched by others as well. In both Canada and Great Britain the press paid close attention to the Grand Duke's movements and speculated about the purpose of the visit and what it might mean for international relations more generally. Indeed, trepidation about Russian and American intentions influenced the way in which the Grand Duke was received during the week that he spent touring the cities of Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto in December 1871. In general, the Canadian crowds were smaller and more subdued, the programme of events less elaborate and hectic, and there was no suspension

of business or gushing displays of public idolatry. The Canadian public welcomed the Grand Duke, to be sure, but the reception was, on the whole, more quiescent and restrained. Even the Canadian press dedicated less ink to Alexis than its American counterparts.

To a certain extent, this very different atmosphere was dictated by factors beyond anyone's control. During the week that the Imperial party spent in Canada, the weather was exceedingly cold, with temperatures below freezing the entire week and even dropping below zero on several days. The cold was so severe that it affected city operations and transportation; trains were late, rivers were clogged with ice and, in Toronto, thirty barges were frozen in the canal and at the wharves. A correspondent for the *St. John News* joked that Alexis would be reminded of the "Siberian winter to which his autocratic father consigns his obdurate subjects from time to time." Such severe weather surely accounted for fewer stargazers and less loitering, and it may

Abstract

In 1871-1872, Grand Duke Alexis of Russia visited the United States and Canada over a period of three months, stopping in all the major cities of both countries and visiting sites like Niagara Falls. While in the United States, reception of the Duke was gushing and extravagant, his reception in Canada was much more subdued. While the extremely cold weather and the illness of the Prince of Wales explains some of this difference, it is also true that Canadians (and their British protectors) viewed the Russian-American friendship with trepidation and this influenced public reaction to the young Russian. British and Canadian newspapers followed the Grand Duke's progress through the United States, commenting in particular on American toadyism and hypocrisy in fawning over royalty, and suggesting that Canadians would take a different approach. Given the various calls for annexation from American politicians, and America's recent purchase of Alaska, it is understandable why Canadians and their British brethren might be concerned about the Russian-American friendship and underlying purpose of the Grand Duke's visit.

Résumé: *En 1871-72, le Grand-Duc Alexis de Russie visita les États-Unis et le Canada pendant trois mois, s'arrêtant dans toutes les grandes villes des deux pays et les sites touristiques tels que les chutes du Niagara. Aux États-Unis le duc fut accueilli avec exubérance et extravagance; mais au Canada sa réception fut beaucoup plus sobre. Dans une certaine mesure, la différence peut s'expliquer par la rigueur du climat et par la maladie du Prince de Galles. Mais il est vrai aussi que la réaction publique au jeune Russe fut influencée par l'inquiétude que provoquait chez les Canadiens (et leurs protecteurs britanniques) l'amitié russo-américaine. Les journaux britanniques et canadiens suivirent le voyage du Grand-Duc à travers les États-Unis, accusant les Américains de flagornerie et de servilité hypocrite devant la royauté, et affirmant que les Canadiens ne se conduiraient pas de la même manière. Étant donné les appels à l'annexion faits par certains hommes politiques américains, et l'achat récent de l'Alaska par les USA, on comprend facilement les soupçons que les Canadiens et les Britanniques pouvaient avoir concernant l'amitié russo-américaine et le vrai but de la visite du Grand-Duc.*

have dulled Alexis's enthusiasm for reception activities as well. According to one report, while in Toronto, the Grand Duke clung steadfastly to the roaring fur-

naces of his apartments, politely refusing all invitations that would have forced him out into the bitter cold.¹

A more serious consideration, however, was the illness of Albert, the Prince of Wales, son of Queen Victoria and heir to the British throne. The Prince of Wales had traveled to Canada and the United States in 1860, leaving behind many pleasant memories. During his two months in Canada and one month in the United States, he had been enthusiastically received everywhere he went. In Montreal, he had driven the last rivet into the Victoria Bridge; in Ottawa, he had laid the cornerstone of the Federal Parliament building; and, at Niagara Falls, he had seen the French acrobat Charles Blondin walk across the falls on a tight rope, first pushing a man in a wheelbarrow and then on stilts. Canadians and Americans alike remembered the prince fondly, so when he fell ill in November 1871, it was front-page news; and when he was diagnosed with typhoid fever, the same disease that had killed his beloved father, Prince Consort Albert, it was particularly hard on his close family and distant admirers. For several weeks the prince hovered near death, precisely when Alexis was visiting Philadelphia and Boston and on his way to Canada. In light of this news, Alexis and his Canadi-

an hosts agreed that out of respect for the British royal family all elaborate displays should be kept to a minimum.²

Finally, however, one must consider the possibility that the Grand Duke's reception in Canada was affected by the international tensions of 1871. In January of that year, Germany had completed its process of unification and declared itself an empire, dramatically shifting the balance of power in Europe and increasing the importance of the current and future alliances of other European nations. At the same time, there were ongoing tensions between the United States and Great Britain over issues like the *Alabama* claims, and between Russia and Great Britain over influence in southern Europe and the Near East. Closer to home, British officials and their Canadian counterparts had general nervousness about the future aspirations of the United States and Russia, both growing nations with visions of expansion. Though Great Britain, the United States, and Russia would find themselves allies in the First World War, at this moment, they shared little in the way of common interests. Mutual suspicion was the mood of the day.



Canadian officials had received the first hints that Alexis might head

¹ *Toronto Globe*, December 4, 1871; *Ottawa Citizen*, 22 December 1871; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Daily Weather Maps [<http://docs.lib.noaa.gov>] [Accessed October 2, 2010]; *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 December 1871; *Boston Herald*, 23 December 1871.

² Robert Cellem, Comp., *Visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to the British North American Provinces and United States in the Year 1860* (Toronto: Henry Roswell, 1861); Ian Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Christopher Hibbert, *Edward VII: The Last Victorian King* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 31-35, 112-15.

north for a visit in late November 1871, soon after his arrival in New York, and the Canadian press had quickly picked up the story, predicting stops in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto.³ Immediately, government officials began to sort out the responsibilities and financial obligations associated with the Russian visit. On 24 November, Governor-General John Young, Baron Lisgar, wrote to Prime Minister John A. Macdonald to clarify his role in the upcoming visit. Apparently responding to a request that he help fund the welcome activities in Montreal, the governor-general explained that, as the representative of the Dominion, he had invited Alexis to Ottawa and would be spending money on the festivities there. Lisgar asked Macdonald if, perhaps, the privy council could help finance the reception in Montreal. Macdonald must have supported Lisgar's view of the matter for, in the end, the cities of Montreal and Toronto hosted Alexis at their own expense and the governor-general received the Russian visitors on behalf of the Dominion in Ottawa. Prime Minister Macdonald, who had been ill on and off since early November, did not participate in the reception, nor does it appear he aided in the planning.⁴

The first stop in Alexis's Canadian leg was Montreal. Originally fortified, the walls had been torn down in the early nineteenth century to accommodate the growing city which had begun exporting a variety of materials and utilizing the St. Lawrence River for transportation. To facilitate this, the city and private companies constructed barge canals, improved the harbour, and built railways and an impressive railway bridge. The city continued to thrive with the appearance of churches and public buildings, such as the Bonsecours Market that housed, among other things, the various offices of the city government, including those of the city council. The city grew in numbers, as well, as waves of immigrants from Scotland, England, and Ireland settled in Montreal, so that by the time of Confederation in 1867, the city's population had grown to approximately 100,000 residents. By 1871, Montreal was the seat of the Grand Trunk Railway, a vibrant, bustling city with nearly five dozen hotels, thirty-five newspapers, and a diverse commercial arena that included clothing and dry goods stores, liquor and wine merchants, booksellers and stationers, and a supplier of artificial limbs.⁵

The Montreal press had followed the

³ *Toronto Globe*, 25, 30 November 1871.

⁴ Lisgar to Macdonald, 9 November 1871, Reel C1514, Vol. 77, pages 30049-30050, November 24, 1871, Reel C1514, Vol. 77, pages 30065-30067, 15 December 1871, Reel C1514, Vol. 77, pages 30088-30089, Prime Ministers' Fonds, John A. Macdonald, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

⁵ John Irwin Cooper, *Montreal: A Brief History* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1969), 4, 9, 18, 30, 59, 66-67, 73-75; Eric McLean, *The Living Past of Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 4, 22, 29, 48-50; *The Ottawa Hotel Traveller's Guide for Lewiston, Niagara River, Toronto, Lake Ontario, River St. Lawrence, Montreal, Quebec and the Saguenay* (Montreal: Gazetter Book and Job Printing House, 1871), 22-26; *Montreal Directory for 1871-72* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1871/1872), 34-62.

Grand Duke's progress as he journeyed across the Atlantic and then through the American northeast, and expressed hope that the upcoming visit to Canada would be mutually beneficial. The *Montreal Gazette* noted that while Alexis might learn some useful things about Canadian ways, they might learn from him and his associates also; at the very least, the interaction with the Russian visitors might remind Canadians of the good in people and institutions different from their own. The paper was grateful that the "bitterness of that Crimean struggle" had long passed away, allowing the two countries to enjoy friendly relations.⁶

City officials in Montreal began planning for the Grand Duke's visit in late November. Though the date of the royal visit was still unknown, Mayor Charles-Joseph Coursol decided to move ahead with plans as he waited for further information from Admiral Possiet and called a general meeting of citizens at the Corn Exchange for Saturday, 2 December. At that meeting it was decided to hold a ball in the Grand Duke's honor and a planning committee was struck. A subscription list for tickets was also created and by the end of the meeting there were already numerous signatories. In the following days, the mayor received specific dates for the Grand Duke's arrival, leading to more meetings, and some of the ideas that had been bandied about over

the previous days were solidified into a plan. The Grand Duke was expected to arrive on the 11th and stay until the 14th, so the reception planners proposed to hold the ball on the 13th at either St. Patrick's Hall or St. Lawrence Hall and set ticket prices at ten dollars a couple.⁷

The men who orchestrated the reception of the Grand Duke were familiar names in Montreal. Sir George Cartier had held a number of important positions within the Canadian government, including the offices of provincial secretary and attorney-general, and had been a significant leader in the Confederation process. Sir Hugh Allan was an important businessman and industrialist in such pursuits as the Montreal Telegraph Company, the Canadian Navigation Company, the Merchant's Bank of Canada, and the Vermont and Canada Marble Company. Also involved were William Workman, who had recently served as mayor of Montreal, L.O. Lorange, considered one of the best attorneys in the city and an alderman since 1861, and George Desberats, who had been the Queen's official printer in Ottawa for about a year before moving to Montreal where he founded the *Canadian Illustrated News*.⁸

Alexis was still over a week away from his anticipated arrival in Montreal when already the newspapers began running advertisements for various luxuries that

⁶ *Montreal Gazette*, 29 November 1871.

⁷ *Toronto Globe*, 1, 4 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, 4 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 1, 2 December 1871; *Montreal Evening Star*, 3, 4, 5, 6 December 1871.

⁸ John D. Borthwick, *Montreal: Its History with Biographical Sketches* (Montreal: Drysdale and Company, 1875), 36, 53, 86, 123; *Montreal: From 1535 to 1914* (Montreal: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1914), III: 469-473.

would be needed for the ball. William McDunnough's British and Foreign Lace House assured that their show room contained the most elegant accessories available for ladies, while Savage, Lyman and Company boasted new and elegant jewelry designs and a complete assortment of wood, ivory, and pearl fans direct from Paris.⁹ The Recollet House advertised French kid gloves, ball dresses, and "immense supplies of goods for evening wear arriving by every steamer crossing the Atlantic," and repeatedly urged reception organizers to

bring the Grand Duke to its stores, the city's "first-class Emporiums of Fashion."¹⁰ The Recollet House was outdone only by Harper's One Dollar Store, which advertised almost daily that Alexis, "like all other great men," would be visiting the store to shop for holiday presents.¹¹ The dollar store went so far as to compose a poem that asked,

My friends, what's the matter,
Who's raising this noise,
Where are people going,



GRAND DUKE ALEXIS.

And what is the cause?
Is it the Grand Duke,
Who has arrived on our shore,
Or the varied assortment,
At Harper's One Dollar Store?¹²

Portraits of Alexis were also for sale. One ad stated that a double-page portrait of Alexis, "suitable for framing," could be found in the new edition of *Dominion Monthly*, but a rival paper declared that the portrait was terrible and resembled Alexis about as much as "chalk is like

⁹ *Montreal Daily Witness*, 11, 14 December 1871.

¹⁰ *Montreal Gazette*, 6 December 1871; *Montreal Evening Star*, 5 December 1871 through 18 December 1871.

¹¹ *Montreal Evening Star*, 4 December 1871.

¹² *Montreal Daily Witness*, 19-22 December 1871.

cheese.”¹³

Not everyone welcomed the Grand Duke’s visit. The *Evening Star* printed a letter from one reader who opposed the display of the fire brigade and water works planned for the royal guest. The reader pointed out that Montreal’s citizens were regularly warned against wasting water and, in fact, the water was completely turned off every night at seven o’clock until seven in the morning in his neighbourhood. Under such circumstances, he complained, city officials should not be “literally throwing away thousands of gallons of what the citizens cannot get a sufficiency of, although they have to pay higher for it than probably any other city in the Dominion.”¹⁴ Such public complaints were, however, the exception.

As the Grand Duke completed his visit to New York, the various arrangements committees in Montreal fine-tuned their plans, announcing the date of the ball and trying to entice subscribers, while the general ball committee swelled to a bloated 124 members. Despite their best efforts, however, the programme of events continued to change. Planning for a royal visitor was no easy matter, and the committee was left with little choice but to accommodate the Grand Duke’s every changing desire. The committee was forced to change the reception plans twice over the next few weeks, then, two days before his new arrival date, Alexis

made another request—due to the serious illness of the Prince of Wales, he preferred that there not be any elaborate demonstrations at all.¹⁵ Indeed, the news received daily by Canadian and American newspapers about the prince’s health had continued to worsen; on 11 December 1871, under the headline, “All Hope of Recovery Abandoned,” the *Ottawa Daily Citizen* sadly reported that the condition of the prince was very serious and the Archbishop of Canterbury in London had requested that all Anglican churches incorporate prayers for his recovery into their services.¹⁶

Coincidentally, the ball committee had already decided to cancel the ball for the same reason, and was in the process of notifying the Russian party when it received the telegram of the Grand Duke’s wishes. Under such dire circumstances the ball committee deemed it inappropriate to host such a festive event while a member of the British royal family, and particularly one who has so recently visited Montreal, lay on his deathbed. Many Canadians agreed with the committee’s decision and appreciated the Grand Duke’s sensitivity to the prince’s condition. The *Montreal Gazette* called the Grand Duke’s wish considerate and timely, adding that when his request had become public knowledge it, “at once and forever settled the popularity of the Grand Duke Alexis in Montreal.”¹⁷

¹³ *Montreal Evening Star*, 15 December 1871.

¹⁴ *Montreal Evening Star*, 7 December 1871.

¹⁵ *Montreal Gazette*, 6, 7, 9, 13 December 1871; *Toronto Globe*, 13 December 1871.

¹⁶ *Toronto Globe*, 13 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, 13, 15 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 13 December 1871; *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 December, 1871.

¹⁷ *Toronto Globe*, 13 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, 13, 15 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Wit-*

Alexis departed Boston at nine o'clock on the morning of Thursday, 14 December, traveling on the Vermont Central Line. It was over 300 miles from Boston to Montreal, and along the way the Grand Duke's train passed through a number of cities, including Lowell, Concord, Montpelier, St. Albans, and St. John's, running along the eastern side of Lake Champlain.¹⁸ The Imperial train arrived in Montreal that evening at the Bonaventure Station where Mayor Coursol, members of the city council, and the reception committee awaited him. It was a bitterly cold evening, the thermometer dipping down to ten degrees, but several hundred enthusiastic citizens had braved the frosty night air to welcome the royal visitor. About fifty policemen were on hand for crowd control, but this precaution proved unnecessary; despite the large numbers present, the atmosphere remained subdued and orderly and the handsome young Russian had no trouble getting from his train car to the awaiting sleigh. The well-mannered crowd was not lacking in curiosity, however, and all eyes were on the Grand Duke during those brief moments he was visible. Many in the crowd commented on Alexis's "stalwart and manly" appearance, and one woman declared that he was "just the

image of a young Englishman." The *Montreal Daily Witness* described the reception at the station as "cordial rather than demonstrative."¹⁹

The Grand Duke would be staying at St. Lawrence Hall during his brief stay in Montreal. Located on Great St. James Street, the city's chief thoroughfare, St. Lawrence Hall had opened in 1851 and soon became one of the premier hotels in the city. Over the years, it had served as the headquarters for the contractors of the Grand Trunk Railway and as the Montreal headquarters of the Confederacy during the American Civil War and, as such, was the only hotel in Canada to serve mint juleps.²⁰ An 1868 advertisement for the hotel boasted hot and cold baths, and interior furnishings that would rival those of the finest Boston and New York hotels.²¹ In preparation for the Grand Duke's visit, the hotel's proprietor had selected a suite of four rooms and ordered new furnishings, a bedroom set of finely carved black walnut in a Grecian design, and a piano and exquisitely inlaid furniture for the parlour. On the outside of the hotel, a sentry box had been placed on each side of the door at the Craig Street entrance to accommodate extra guards during the visit.²² Upon arriving at the hotel, Mayor Coursol wel-

ness, 13 December 1871.

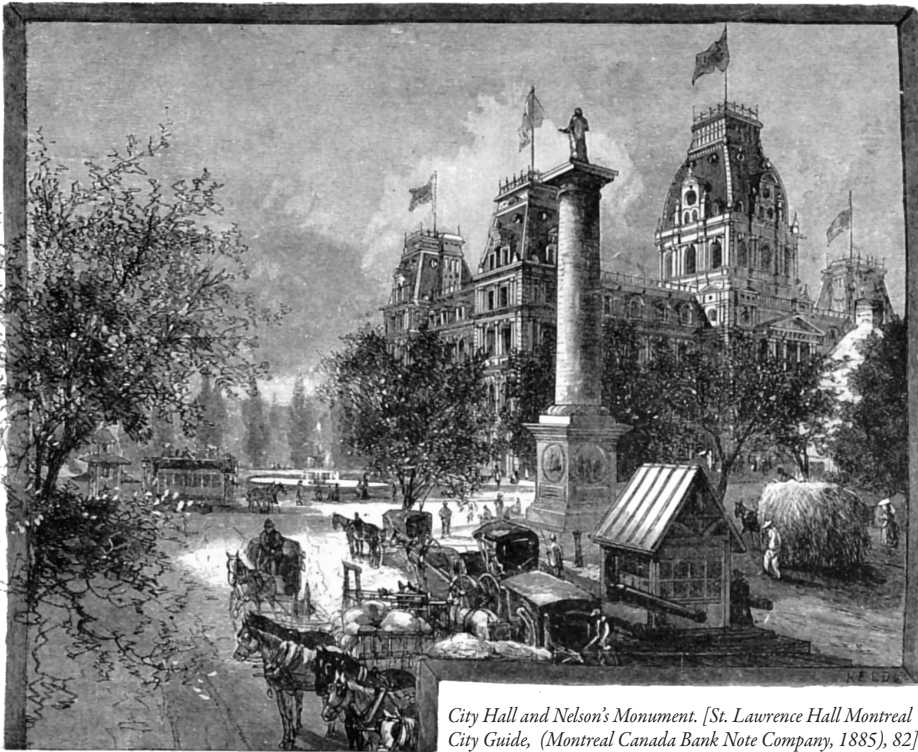
¹⁸ *Toronto Globe*, 15 December 1871.

¹⁹ *Montreal Gazette*, 15 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 15 December 1871.

²⁰ Robin Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 141.

²¹ J. Disturnell, comp., *The Great Lakes, or Inland Seas of America; embracing a full description of Lakes Superior, Huron, Michigan, Erie and Ontario; Rivers St. Mary, St. Clair, Detroit, Niagara, and St. Lawrence; Commerce of the Lakes, etc., etc. Together with a Guide to the Upper Mississippi River, giving a description of cities, towns, etc.* (New York: The American News Company, 1868), n.p.

²² *Montreal Evening Star*, 14 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 13, 15 December 1871.



City Hall and Nelson's Monument. [St. Lawrence Hall Montreal City Guide, (Montreal Canada Bank Note Company, 1885), 82]

comed Alexis in French, and expressed his regret that the illness of the Prince of Wales prevented a more elaborate programme. Alexis, dressed in a dark suit that “displayed to advantage his manly form,” thanked his hosts, voiced his wish for the prince’s speedy recovery and, on a lighter note, added that he was happy to see snow, the first he had seen since leaving Russia. The Russian party then met the members of the assembled group and retired for the evening.²³

On Friday, 15 December, the Grand Duke had a quiet morning indoors, rising only at ten o’clock. Breakfasting in his private dining room with Mayor Coursol and the other Russians, Alexis noticed

that the glasses from which they drank displayed the insignia of the Prince of Wales. Obviously a remnant of Albert’s visit eleven years earlier, the glasses prompted Alexis to express his sincere hope once again that the prince would recover soon. By the time the men finished eating and made their appearance downstairs, a large cluster of people had gathered outside St. Lawrence Hall making the street in front of the hotel virtually impassable. The crowd was respectful and restrained, however, so there was no difficulty in getting the guests through the doors and into the awaiting sleighs. Alexis, Minister Catacazy, Admiral Posset and Mayor Coursol climbed into the

²³ *Montreal Gazette*, 15 December 1871; *Montreal Evening Star*, 15 December 1871.

first sleigh, and when the remaining individuals had settled in their sleighs, the procession began.²⁴

Magnificent gray horses pulled the sleighs over the rough surface of Great St. James Street to the Ottawa Hotel, several miles away. Built in 1845, the Ottawa Hotel was known for its spectacular view onto Mount Royal and the harbour and impressive Lachine Rapids on the St. Lawrence River. The Russian party spent half an hour there enjoying snacks and conversation before climbing into sleighs again and returning to the city center toward the Champ de Mars, the original site of the city's fortifications, now a military parade ground.²⁵ Alexis observed the Montreal Field Battery undergoing inspection and made a short speech complimenting the soldiers and their commander, noting that their appearance and demeanor was particularly impressive since the unit was composed entirely of volunteers.²⁶ Departing the parade ground, the members of the Russian party made their way through the narrow streets of the city, past the Notre Dame Basilica, the monument to the hero of Trafalgar, Lord Nelson, and the clock

tower at the seminary of the Sepulcians, a gift from Louis XIV of France.²⁷ Returning to St. Lawrence Hall, the Grand Duke ascended to his apartments where he spent a quiet evening indoors, relaxing amidst the comfortable familiarity of his own companions.

On Saturday, 16 December, Alexis enjoyed a sumptuous lunch at the home of Mayor Coursol along with several dozen of Montreal's leading citizens, after which the Russian party embarked upon another city tour, beginning with the Victoria Bridge. Construction on the bridge had begun in 1854 and was completed in 1860, the last rivet put in place by none other than the Prince of Wales. After spending some time examining and admiring the iron and stone structure, the Russian party returned to the city center for a brief stop at an imposing structure of a different sort, the Church of the Gesu on Bleury Street.²⁸

Later that evening, Alexis appeared at the Victoria Skating Rink. In 1862, the Canadian Parliament had passed an act incorporating the Victoria Skating Club of Montreal, making it possible for the organization to acquire property

²⁴ *Halifax Chronicle*, 18 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, 16 December 1871; *Toronto Globe*, 16 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 16 December 1871.

²⁵ *The Ottawa Hotel Traveller's Guide for Lewiston, Niagara River, Toronto, Lake Ontario, River St. Lawrence, Montreal, Quebec and the Saguenay* (Montreal: Gazette Book and Job Printing House, 1871), 3, 69; *Montreal Gazette*, 16 December 1871; *Toronto Globe*, 16 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 16 December 1871.

²⁶ *Montreal Gazette*, 16 December 1871; *Toronto Globe*, 16 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 16 December 1871.

²⁷ Robert W. S. Mackay, *The Montreal Directory; New Edition, Corrected in May, 1852* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1852), 305; McLean, 13, 18, 20, 21, 35, 38.

²⁸ *Montreal Evening Star*, 15 December 1871; *The Victoria Bridge* (Montreal: Toronto Leader, 1859), 3-15; *The St. Lawrence Hall Guide from Niagara Falls to the Saguenay* (Montreal: s.n., 1877), 40; Borthwick, 74. *Montreal Daily Witness*, 16 December 1871.

and establish a skating rink. People skated outdoors on the St. Lawrence River, of course, but inclement weather often made that difficult and created the desire for an inside rink. Measuring some 250 by 100 feet, the rink could accommodate hundreds of skaters on the ice and had recently been renovated to include the apparatus for “prismatic fountains.”²⁹

Only ticket-bearers were admitted for this special skating event, but news of the royal visitor had encouraged everyone to come out that evening, even those who had not been to the rink in years. By eight o'clock the building was “comfortably thronged” as expectant skaters waited for the arrival of the Grand Duke and the signal to begin skating. After some time had passed and still no duke had arrived, authorities succumbed to the pressure of the crowd and permitted the skaters to take the ice. Immediately, a swarm of “diminutive skaters” filled the rink, but just as the skating had begun, the sound of cheers indicated that Alexis had arrived at last. As the secretary of the Victoria Skating Club greeted the Grand Duke, the crowd of small boys on skates stopped and stared, until finally someone broke the spell and yelled, “Skate, boys!” and the small skaters were off again. As Alexis joined the children on the ice, the band of the Grand Trunk Brigade played a Russian hymn. An *Evening Star* report-

er joked that Alexis looked quite gigantic on the ice, especially surrounded by all the little boys, adding that the sight reminded him of a “big trout followed by a shoal of inquisitive minnows.” Eventually, other skaters overcame their hesitation and stepped onto the ice as well. Alexis was introduced to a number of ladies and circled the ice several times with his lovely companions before being escorted to the director’s room for supper.³⁰

Sunday, 17 December, was a day of rest for the young Russian and his party, and his only major excursion of the day was a visit to the Church of Notre Dame.³¹ The following morning, Alexis left St. Lawrence Hall for the Bonaventure Station, accompanied by the mayor, the reception committee, and several other men. A sizable knot of excited citizens had gathered to bid the Russians farewell and gave the party three cheers as the train pulled away bound for Ottawa. The *Montreal Gazette* crowed that Alexis had told reporters that he felt more at home in Montreal than he had in any other city thus far. A little over a week after leaving Montreal, Alexis sent a donation of \$1,000 to Mayor Coursol for the less fortunate of the city, noting that “the late severe cold may have caused some suffering among the poor of Montreal.” Unfortunately, political wrangling kept the money from reaching its intended beneficiar-

²⁹ *Statutes of the Province of Canada Passed in the Twenty-Fifth Year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria and in the First Session of the Seventh Parliament of Canada* (Québec: Stewart Derbishire and George Desbarats, 1862), 278-281; *St. Lawrence Hall Montreal City Guide* (Montreal: Canada Bank Note Company, 1885), 85-87; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 8 December 1871.

³⁰ *Montreal Evening Star*, 16 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, 18 December 1871; *Toronto Globe*, 18 December 1871.

³¹ *Montreal Daily Witness*, 18 December 1871.

ies for over a month. According to one report, when Alexis left Montreal, the expense of his accommodations at the St. Lawrence Hall fell upon the mayor, and when the City Council refused to appropriate money for that debt, the mayor held hostage the Grand Duke's monetary gift until the City Council agreed to pay the bill. Finally, at the end of January, the *Ottawa Free Press* reported that the money had been distributed to the poor in Montreal.³²



As Alexis left Montreal, he traveled on the Canadian Central Railway, proceeding west about 130 miles to his next destination, Ottawa. Located on the Ottawa River, a major tributary of the St. Lawrence River, Ottawa owed its birth to the construction of the Rideau Canal between 1826 and 1832. Lieutenant Colonel John By of the Corps of Royal Engineers was put in charge of creating a navigable waterway between the Ottawa River and Lake Ontario, and the settlement founded to facilitate canal construction was called Bytown. In 1850, Bytown was incorporated as a town, but five years later it was incorporated again under a new name, Ottawa, an effort to shed the town's reputation as a lawless, lumber village and enhance its bid to become the capital of the Province

of Canada. In 1859, Ottawa was chosen as the capital of Canada, and its importance and potential for growth increased even more with Confederation in 1867. In the census completed just before Alexis arrived, Ottawa was reported to have over 21,000 residents. By 1871, Ottawa was a genuine city, boasting a university, seven newspapers, a thriving commercial life, and impressive sites like the massive Parliament Building.³³

As the capital of the Dominion, Ottawa faced the greatest pressure to make a good show for the royal visitor. Soon after the Grand Duke's arrival in the United States, Canadian papers confirmed that Governor-General Baron Lisgar expected the Grand Duke to visit Ottawa and stay at Rideau Hall, the residence of the Governor-General. Soon after this announcement, discussions began for a citizens' ball and Mayor John Rochester asked the Ottawa City Council to participate in a reception for the Grand Duke that would comprise an address from the Corporation of Ottawa in the Senate Chamber. Nonetheless, the general attitude, both in official and public circles, seems to have been one of mild curiosity at best. The *Ottawa Daily Citizen* followed the news of the pending visit but gave it very little space, just a line or two every few days.³⁴ The Ottawa papers did not provide daily updates on the reception plans with lists

³² *Toronto Globe*, 19 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, 16, 29 December 1871; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 24 January, 1872; *Ottawa Free Press*, 29 January, 1872.

³³ Shirley E. Woods, *Ottawa: The Capital of Canada* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1980), 1-140; *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 November 1871; W. H. Irving, comp. *City of Ottawa Directory for 1870-71* (Ottawa: Hunter, Rose and Co., 1870), 180-212.

³⁴ *Toronto Globe*, 4 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, December 5, 1871; *Ottawa Citizen*, 2, 5, 7, 8, 11 December 1871.

of committee members the way the papers in many other cities did. Indeed, the papers did not see fit to report much on preparations for Alexis's visit at all.

There were, however, some hints of anticipation and, perhaps, a small touch of "Alexis mania." In a column of the *Citizen* called "For the Ladies Only," alongside bits of gossip and fashion tips, several mentions appeared of new trends inspired by the appearance of Alexis. The "Alexis cut of hair" was newly in demand for men, while for women it was the "Alexis twist," a high puff of hair surrounded by a twist of hair made to look like a cable rope, ornamented on one side by a large gilt anchor. For those in need of Christmas gifts, one merchant on Elgin Street advertised an Alexis tea set and ornamental centerpieces designed to look like Russian bears.³⁵

At last, the day of the big event finally arrived. The arrangements at the train station were relatively modest; one small section of the platform had been cordoned off to protect the Grand Duke from the "profane intrusion of the great unwashed," some carpet had been laid for him to walk upon, and a few dozen lamps had been set out to light his way. About an hour before Alexis's arrival, a small crowd had gathered and milled about in the bitter cold; several women were overheard to complain about their cold noses and freezing toes. The whole police force was out in the event of an unruly mob, but they were

not needed. One reporter joked that the police were probably a bit disappointed, for no one tried to rush inside of the railings or cause any trouble at all. At last, at about half past six the Grand Duke's train with four elegant palace cars came roaring into the station and, after a few moments, Alexis alighted from the train and walked briskly to the awaiting sleigh, disappearing almost as quickly as he had materialized. He was visible long enough, however, for a reporter from the *Daily Citizen* to remark that while the Grand Duke could have passed for the son of an eminent Ottawa barrister, he looked "pale and puffy, no doubt from late hours, traveling, and American pastry."³⁶

Unaware of this harsh assessment, Alexis was whisked away to Rideau Hall, a two-story, eleven-room structure with Doric columns situated on a hundred-acre estate overlooking both the Rideau and Ottawa Rivers. The building was affectionately known as "MacKay's Castle" after Thomas McKay, the businessman who had built it. After McKay died in 1855, the Canadian Government leased the home under its new name of Rideau Hall, making it the residence of the Governor-General. In subsequent years, the Canadian Government added a 10,000 square foot wing and purchased 88 acres of adjacent land, allowing for more expansion and the addition of a guard house and an impressive main entrance with ornamental gates.³⁷ In preparation

³⁵ *Ottawa Citizen*, 9, 12 December 1871.

³⁶ *Ottawa Free Press*, 19 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, 19 December 1871; *Ottawa Citizen*, 19 December 1871.

³⁷ *Ottawa Free Press*, 19 December 1871; *Montreal Gazette*, 19 December 1871; *Ottawa Citizen*,

for the special guest, requisitions were made at Rideau Hall for “furniture, fixings, etc. required for the reception of H.R.H. the Grand Duke Alexis.”³⁸

On 19 December, his only full day in Ottawa, Alexis began by touring the various sights of the city. The day was cold and white, the ground covered in snow and the Ottawa River frozen. As the *Halifax Chronicle* observed, “everything seemed to conspire to make a Russian feel himself perfectly at home.”³⁹ The morning’s programme entailed a visit to the lumber yards of the city and to the Union Suspension Bridge over the Ottawa River near Chaudiere Falls. Located immediately to the west of the city center, where the Ottawa River narrows considerably, the falls were an impressive sight; in the words of one local travel guide:

“with thundering cadence, the waters precipitate themselves down the precipice of forty feet in height, and gathering into a basin, boil, and seethe, and hiss, and whirl around in mad excitement, while the spray arises and the sunbeams gleaming upon it form an almost perpetual rainbow.”⁴⁰

After lunch at Rideau Hall, the Grand Duke and his party visited the government buildings in the center of the city, accompanied by the Governor-Gen-

eral and Lady Lisgar. At the Parliament Building, the Senate Chamber brimmed with ministers of the government and their fashionable wives and daughters, while outside a band played “God Save the Queen” and the Russian hymn while an honour guard stood by.⁴¹ According to one estimate, thousands had gathered there, but only those with tickets could gain entry, resulting in a “very general and bitter feeling of dissatisfaction on the part of those who were excluded.” Luckily, the Grand Duke arrived in an open sleigh, so even “the unfavored portion of humanity” could catch a glimpse of him.⁴²

At about a quarter after three, the Imperial party approached the Parliament Building, prompting the guests inside to press forward in search of a better view. One reporter conjectured that “no doubt some of the fair sex on this particular occasion longed for necks half a yard long.”⁴³ The reception began with a welcome speech by Mayor John Rochester who thanked Alexis for finding time in his short visit to America to come to Canada. He pointed out that as subjects of the Queen of England they too were tied to the old monarchies of Europe. Alexis replied with thanks, after which the Gover-

19 December 1871; Woods, *Ottawa*, 79, 134-136; R. H. Hubbard, *Rideau Hall: An Illustrated History of Government House, Ottawa, from Victorian Times to the Present Day* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1977), 3-5.

³⁸ Ledger book from Rideau Hall, Frame 6191, RG 11-B-1-6, Vol. 667, Public Buildings – Rideau Hall (1869-1872), National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

³⁹ *Montreal Gazette*, 29 November 1871; *Halifax Chronicle*, 27 December 1871.

⁴⁰ *St. Lawrence Hall Guide* (1877), 61.

⁴¹ *Montreal Gazette*, 20 December 1871.

⁴² *Halifax Chronicle*, 27 December 1871.

⁴³ *Ottawa Free Press*, 20 December 1871.

nor-General formally introduced Mayor Rochester and the members of the City Council to Alexis and showed him the library, the offices in the Eastern Block, and the Privy Council Chamber.⁴⁴ That evening, Lady Lisgar hosted a reception in honor of the Grand Duke that was well attended and included all of the elite of Ottawa, several of whom were Fathers of Confederation.⁴⁵ It can be safely assumed that the affair was closed to journalists, since none of the papers reported on the details of the dinner.

The next morning, at nine o'clock, Alexis departed Ottawa for Toronto. The Imperial train traveled along the Grand Trunk Railway along the northern edge of the St. Lawrence River, passing Prescott and Brockville to Kingston, where the St. Lawrence spilled into Lake Ontario. The journey began smoothly enough, but a few miles from Brockville, the Imperial train experienced an unexpected delay: two of the Pullman cars were thrown off track due to a broken rail. The Russian guests, who were breakfasting at the time, were shaken by the event, figuratively and literally, but were unharmed; nonetheless, the derailment did delay the train's progress for several hours and damaged a telegraph wire and pole.⁴⁶ Fortunately, one of the "repairers" of the Montreal Telegraph Company was on board the train with his toolkit.

He ascended the pole, repaired the wire, and re-established communication with Toronto about the delay. Alexis was so impressed by the whole endeavor that he requested and was given a set of the instruments known to those in the business as a "repairer's outfit."⁴⁷



Situated on the northwest shore of Lake Ontario, Toronto was the chief city in the province of Ontario. Founded by British colonial officials in 1793 as the town of York, it had grown quickly and was incorporated in 1834 and given the new name of Toronto. In 1845, a visitor wrote that Toronto was "a city in earnest ... gaslit, with good plank sidewalks ... vast sewers and fine houses of brick and stone." There were setbacks, of course—in 1849, Toronto was struck by the double scourge of fire and cholera—but despite these challenges, the city continued to develop and grow. But a few years later, when Daniel Wilson arrived in 1853 to become the new professor of English history and literature at the University of Toronto, he could happily report back to his wife that, "Everything indicates wealth and prosperity," with many nice shops that could rival those of Edinburgh; "if a person has only money, he need want for nothing here that he desires."⁴⁸ By 1871, in addition

⁴⁴ *Toronto Globe*, 20 December 1871.

⁴⁵ *Montreal Gazette*, 20 December 1871; George Maclean Rose, ed., *A Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography, Being Chiefly Men of the Time* (Toronto: Rose Publishing Company, 1886), 128-30, 499-500.

⁴⁶ *Montreal Gazette*, 21 December 1871; *New York Evangelist*, 28 December 1871.

⁴⁷ *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 December 1871.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Martin Friedland, *The University of Toronto: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 24-31.

to the university, this city of over 50,000 was a hub of intellectual and commercial activity, with several dozen newspapers and booksellers, shops of all varieties, and an impressive exhibition hall modeled on the Crystal Palace in London.⁴⁹

Of the three Canadian cities that Alexis deigned to visit, Toronto by far seemed the least interested in making a fuss over the royal traveler. On 18 December, during a city council meeting, Alderman John Turner suggested that the least the council could do was appoint a committee to draft a welcome address. The council approved the motion, making no other plans for a reception. Though the Lieutenant-Governor William Howland and his wife would host a dinner and ball for Alexis, there would be no great public festivities and relatively little press coverage before or during the Grand Duke's brief stay.⁵⁰

Alexis arrived at the Union Station in Toronto shortly after eleven o'clock on the evening of 20 December. Since several earlier announcements had indicated that the Russians would arrive at either nine or ten o'clock, a group of excited citizens had begun to congregate in the waiting room of the station much earlier, including several determined young

women who were not frightened away by the chilly fingers of Jack Frost. When the special train finally crept into the station, a group of about one hundred shivering citizens waited to greet the Grand Duke. Dressed in a dark suit and a fur astrakhan hat, Alexis made a good impression; a reporter for the *Globe* observed, "as far as could be judged from his appearance ... he is physically the type of a perfect man." The weather was "fearfully cold" and the ground was covered in snow, so there was no lingering about outside and Alexis quickly climbed into a sleigh and was escorted to the Queen's Hotel where a small group of hardy gentleman cheered his arrival. The Grand Duke then retired to his apartments until morning.⁵¹

Situated on Front Street, between Bay and York, the Queen's Hotel had been built in 1843, but over the years, it had been refurbished, enlarged, and renamed several times, assuming its current name in 1862. Advertising itself as "one of the largest and most comfortable hotels in the Dominion of Canada," the building was four stories high, with a magnificent billiard room and a splendid view of Lake Ontario and Toronto Bay.⁵² The Grand Duke and his party would occupy the entire first floor of the west

⁴⁹ Henry McEvoy, ed. and comp., *The Province of Ontario Gazetteer and Directory* (Toronto: Robertson & Cook, 1869), 472; Charles Pelham Mulvany and Graeme Mercer Adam, *History of Toronto and County of York, Ontario* (Toronto: C. B. Robinson, 1885), 260-62; *Cherrier, Kirwin & McGown's Toronto Directory for 1873* (Toronto: Cherrier, Kirwin & McGown, 1873), 15-40, 308; *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 November 1871

⁵⁰ *Toronto Globe*, 19 December 1871.

⁵¹ *Montreal Gazette*, 21 December 1871; *Toronto Globe*, 21 December 1871.

⁵² *The Queen's Hotel Traveller's Guide for the City of Toronto: with a list of principal business houses and sketches of the prominent points of interest* (Toronto: Queen's Hotel, 1871), 5-6; *The Queen's Hotel Traveller's Guide: Descriptive of Toronto, Its Points of Interest and Public Buildings* (Toronto: Queen's Hotel, 1918), 8; *The Traveller's Guide for the Cities of Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa, &c. and the Rivers St. Lawrence*

wing and also a number of rooms in the front of the main building, a grand total of twenty-five rooms.⁵³

The morning of 21 December was cold, with the promise of snow in the air and the bay frozen solid enough to accommodate ice skaters. Alexis breakfasted late and then received the members of the city government who had assembled at the hotel to give him an official welcome. Mayor Joseph Sheard expressed their collective hope that the good relations between the British Empire and Russia would continue. The Grand Duke reciprocated these kind sentiments and thanked his hosts for their cordial welcome. After this very understated and modest ceremony, Alexis climbed into Lieutenant-Governor William Howland's sleigh to take in some of Toronto's most notable sights.⁵⁴

One of the major stops on the Grand Duke's tour that day was the University of Toronto, a secular institution which had been founded in 1850. Situated in Queen's Park, its Norman Romanesque buildings represented, in one person's view, "the architectural glory of Canada, being second in beauty only to the Parliament buildings in Ottawa."⁵⁵ A short distance away was the Normal School for educating future teachers, where Alexis

and his party were received by the Reverend Dr. Egerton Ryerson, a man who had contributed a great deal to educational life in Toronto and was currently serving as the Chief Superintendent of Education.⁵⁶ The city tour that day concluded with a stop at Osgoode Hall on York Street. Named for William Osgoode, the first Chief Justice of Upper Canada, the beautiful building of the classic style housed the rooms and offices of Superior Courts of the province.⁵⁷

At seven o'clock, Alexis and his entourage dined with a large number of government officials at the newly completed residence of the Lieutenant-Governor, the Government House on King Street. In the State Drawing Room, members of the Parliament of Ontario and their wives were introduced to the Grand Duke, and when all the introductions had concluded, Alexis and his suite entered the ball room and the dancing commenced. In the opening set, Alexis's lucky partner was Miss Macpherson, daughter of Honorable D.L. McPherson. Presumably, the news of the improving condition of the Prince of Wales made such festivities no longer inappropriate and the guests could dance with light hearts and light feet.⁵⁸

The following morning, 22 December, Alexis departed Toronto. The sta-

↳ *Saguenay* (Montreal: Daniel Rose, 1873), 50.

⁵³ *Toronto Globe*, 20 December 1871.

⁵⁴ *Montreal Daily Witness*, 22 December 1871; *Toronto Globe*, 22 December 1871.

⁵⁵ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 58; Charles Pelham Mulvany, *Toronto: Past and Present* (Toronto: W. E. Caiger, 1884), 89.

⁵⁶ *Journal of Education* (Ontario), Vol. 25, #1, January 1872, 15.

⁵⁷ *Queen's Hotel Traveller's Guide* (1871), 22-24.

⁵⁸ Mulvany, *Toronto: Past and Present*, 51-52; *Toronto Globe*, 20, 21, 22 December 1871; *Montreal Daily Witness*, 22 December 1871; *New York Evangelist*, 28 December 1871.

tion of the Great Western Railway had been decorated with curtains and strips of red, white and blue cloth, accented by American, British and Russian flags, and a shield bearing the Russian coat-of-arms. About five hundred people, many of whom were young ladies, had gathered to bid him farewell and cheered repeatedly as he made his way into the train and out onto the rear platform.⁵⁹ The train departed at about ten o'clock in the morning, traveling around the southern edge of Lake Ontario, arriving at Clifton, near Niagara Falls, at two in the afternoon. After a brief address by the mayor and a polite acknowledgement by the Grand Duke, the party boarded sleighs bound for the Canadian side of the falls.⁶⁰



Discovered by Europeans in the seventeenth century, Niagara Falls had been first described by Father Louis Hennepin, a Belgian monk in the Récollet branch of the Franciscan order, who had traveled to the North America and encountered the impressive sight during an expedition with French explorer Robert de LaSalle.⁶¹ By the early nineteenth century, hotels had appeared on both the Ca-

nadian and American sides and Niagara had acquired its reputation as the penultimate honeymoon destination. Aided by the construction of railroads, bridges, and the Erie Canal, it attracted more and more visitors, including the Marquis de Lafayette, Charles Dickens, and the Prince of Wales. By the 1840s, over 40,000 people a year came to view this natural wonder and more facilities were built to meet the demand for food and accommodations. Entrepreneurs of all sorts saw the potential in this increasingly popular tourist attraction and a variety of amusements and activities became part of the Niagara Falls experience, such as a ride aboard the *Maid of the Mist*, a steamer that would take visitors on a thrilling and wet ride to the base of the falls. By 1871, Niagara Falls was part of the standard tourist itinerary for well-to-do travellers.⁶²

The Grand Duke's tour of the falls began in Barnett's Niagara Falls Museum, a museum of natural curiosities that included stuffed animals, live animals, skeletons of exotic creatures, weapons and art from various parts of Asia and the South Pacific, and the yet-to-be identified mummy of Ramses I.⁶³ It was here at Barnett's museum in a private parlour that the Russians donned oil cloth out-

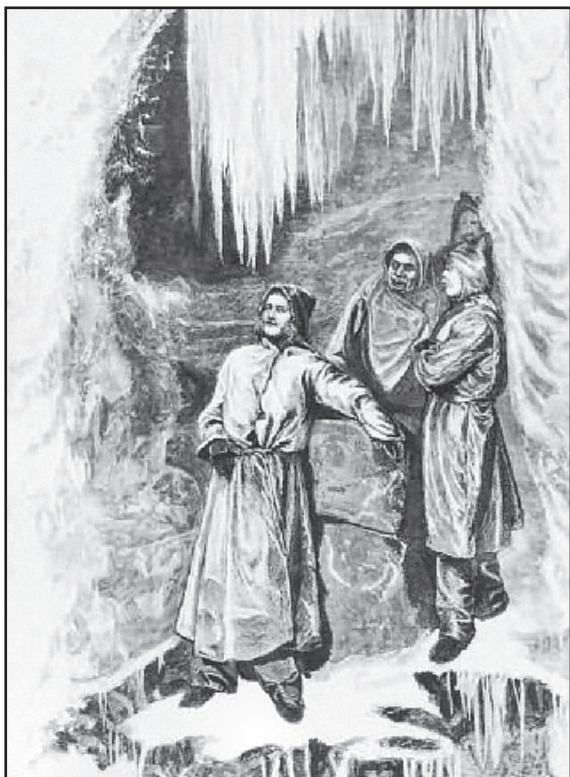
⁵⁹ *Toronto Globe*, 23 December 1871.

⁶⁰ *Toronto Globe*, 23 December 1871; *New York Times*, 25 December 1871.

⁶¹ "Louis Hennepin", in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), 215-18;

⁶² John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4, 12; Karen Dubinsky, *The Second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooners, Heterosexuality, and the Tourist Industry at Niagara Falls* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 31-35; Jeremy Elwell Adamson, *Niagara: Two Centuries of Changing Attitudes, 1697-1901* (Washington, D. C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1985), 9.

⁶³ Ginger Strand, *Inventing Niagara: Beauty, Power, and Lies* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 77-80; Dubinsky, 85-87.



The Russian prince and his entourage visit Niagara Falls.

the trees and rocks that bordered it, and as the water rushed over the upper edge to crash down into the freezing river below, it tossed huge chunks of ice about in the churning depths. After admiring this wonder of nature for some time, the party returned to Barnett's to shed their wet suits and view the curiosities in the museum. It was mid-afternoon when the Grand Duke Alexis and his party walked across the Suspension Bridge that led to the American side, officially concluding the Russian visit to Canada.⁶⁴



fits, laughing and talking in their native tongue as they navigated the awkward, but necessary, costumes. One reporter observed, "Any one who has ever seen a party of fisherman by the sea, fully rigged in their oil-skin suits for stormy weather, can imagine how royalty looked on the occasion in question." Once everyone had dressed, the party walked down the steps at the river bank and under the falls. The scene that greeted the royal spectator was truly sublime for as impressive as the falls were in the summer months, they were even more so in winter. A silvery, icy sheen covered the banks of the river and

All in all, Alexis's visit to Canada had gone well and all parties claimed satisfaction. For the young Russian duke, these days spent in Canada must have been a welcome respite from the frenzied pace of his days in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Even the lack of idolatry from Canadian citizens likely seemed a relief, rather than an insult. There were, of course, some displays of enthusiasm for the Grand Duke, but these were different from the American example for they were not tainted by professions of republicanism and fears of hypocrisy. While in the United States there were heated debates about spending tax dollars on reception festivities and concerns about toadyism, in Canada the plans to host Alexis were made without angst or

⁶⁴ *Toronto Globe*, 23 December 1871; *New York Times*, 25 December 1871; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, 23 December 1871.

argument. In fact, Canadians were both amused and appalled by Americans' behavior over the Grand Duke.

In early November, the *Toronto Globe* ran an essay under the title "Republican Flunkeyism" in which the author criticized the "servile adoration of royal personages" in America. "There is something very amusing, not to use a less polite phrase," the *Globe* remarked, "in the excessive anxiety of republican Americans to pay court to the representatives of old monarchical feudalism." In subsequent weeks, the *Globe's* author sniped that for all their declarations of republicanism, Americans somehow still had "the most pronounced admiration for titles and royalty of any people on the face of the earth," and were happy to grovel in the dust "in a manner which the sturdiest and most earnest upholder of Monarchical Government would be ashamed." Moreover, the *Globe* warned, Americans would do well not to be so harsh in their views on monarchy as a system of government since "royalty in the concrete seems to have such attractions for them." In fact, Americans were distinctly guilty of "Republican Duke Worship."⁶⁵

Other papers mocked American adulation of royalty as well. The *Montreal Daily Witness* declared that Canada's Republican neighbours had a tendency to go overboard when hosting distinguished visitors, laying the flattery on too thick

and putting "too much sugar in the cup of adulation." All the while, the *Daily Witness* added, the American papers were admonishing citizens not to show too much excitement or make fools of themselves, "like children telling one another to keep still."⁶⁶ The *Volunteer Review and Military and Naval Gazette* in Ottawa declared that citizens in Boston were "manifesting their aptitude for Prince worship and toad eating," while the *Halifax Chronicle* observed that New Yorkers and Washingtonians were "unable to resist the temptation to do what they have so often ridiculed... idolizing the son and representative of the most despotic ruler in all Europe."⁶⁷ In a similar vein, the *Montreal Evening Star* described Americans, "Lionizing the Russian Bear."⁶⁸

The press in Great Britain also found humour in American's reaction to royalty. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, noted that the "New York Republicans" were "jumping on each other's shoulders to catch a glimpse of him" and his entry into the city was that of a "triumphant conqueror."⁶⁹ The *Belfast News-Letter* was particularly harsh in its assessment of American behavior toward the Grand Duke, noting sarcastically that this behavior "would be called snobbish, if the well-known hatred of the citizens of the Great Republic for everything relating to Royalty was not taken into consideration."⁷⁰ Later, the paper complained of

⁶⁵ *Toronto Globe*, 4, 22, 24 November 1871.

⁶⁶ *Montreal Daily Witness*, 24 November 1871.

⁶⁷ *Halifax Chronicle*, 30 November 1871.

⁶⁸ *Montreal Evening Star*, 5 December 1871.

⁶⁹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 December 1871.

⁷⁰ *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 December 1871.

the ridiculous amount of attention paid by the American press to every move and moment of the Grand Duke's visit. "Piles and piles of this nauseous bosh," the *News-Letter* sniped," was swallowed by these strange... Republicans."⁷¹ The Belfast press mocked American women specifically. In response to the rumours that Alexis was searching for a bride, the *News-Letter* remarked, "There are very few young ladies who would not be willing to give up Republicanism for despotism."⁷²

The Canadian press remained true to its criticism of American toadyism and gave the appearance, at least, of caring little about the Russian visit. On the day the Grand Duke was due to arrive in Ottawa, for example, its major newspaper dedicated only one-seventh of one column on an interior page to news of the expected visitor. The following day, as Alexis toured the capital and met the Governor-General of Canada, the same paper committed less than two columns to the Russian guest, while most American papers in the same situation filled column after column with information about the Grand Duke's every move. Finally, a few weeks after Alexis departed the *Ottawa Daily Citizen* published its column, "A Retrospective Glance," in which it recalled a number of interesting events from the closing year—Italian unification, the Washington Treaty, the Fenian Raid, British Columbia's acceptance as a prov-

ince, the Chicago Fire, and the American crackdown on polygamy—but failed to mention the Grand Duke's visit.⁷³

Why this coolness toward the young Russian? Certainly, the weather and the illness of the Prince of Wales explain some of it. These realities made it unsuitable to celebrate on a larger scale, even if parties had wanted to. But there was clearly something more at work here. Perhaps a journalist for the *Ottawa Free Press* defined the mood most clearly when he reported that the low turnout at the train station in the Canadian capital could be best explained by the widely-held sentiment that though Alexis was surely an "estimable nobleman" worthy of honor, "there was not the same feeling involved in the case of a foreigner as there would have been in the case of one of our own royal family."⁷⁴

Great Britain and its imperial colonies had also developed a significant sense of Russophobia by the second half of the nineteenth century. The Crimean War (1853-1856) certainly contributed to this, but there were other factors as well. In 1870, Russia repudiated the Black Sea clause of the Treaty of Paris that had concluded the Crimean War and had prohibited Russia from keeping war vessels in the Black Sea and from maintaining naval vessels on its coasts. Never happy about these restrictions, Russia waited for the chance to push for revision. That opportunity came in the fall of 1870 during

⁷¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 30 March 1872.

⁷² *Belfast News-Letter*, 4 November 1871.

⁷³ *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 December 1871, 19 December 1871, 30 December 1871.

⁷⁴ *Ottawa Free Press*, 19 December 1871.

the Franco-Prussian War. At that propitious moment, Prince Gorchakov issued a circular to the signatory powers of the treaty stating that Russia could no longer be bound by the objectionable Black Sea terms. Britain, in particular, was very upset by Gorchakov's announcement; in the words of British foreign secretary Earl Granville, the problem with Russia's stance was that it was "not a request to those Governments for the consideration of the case, but an announcement to them that it has emancipated itself, or holds itself emancipated, from any stipulations of the treaty." British fears about Russian encroachment into India and Afghanistan only intensified the matter. For a brief period, war between Russia and Britain seemed possible and a split in the British Cabinet over the issue threatened the stability of that government.⁷⁵ The matter was smoothed over by the Protocols of London (1871), but Britain knew that Russia would continue to work for greater rights in the straits.

One other factor helps explain the subdued nature of the Canadian reception—the very real trepidation on the part of Canada and its protector, Great Britain, about American imperial dreams and Russia's support of those aspirations.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, British and Canadian officials battled a series of annexation movements, both homegrown and originating across the border. Politicians in Washington repeatedly proposed the annexation of British North America and William H. Seward, in his various roles as Governor of New York, Senator, and Secretary of State had for years suggested publicly that such a path was inevitable. Moreover, Seward and others admitted that the Alaska purchase was designed, among other things, to squeeze out the British presence in the Pacific Northwest. Seward also believed that it would have the effect of reviving the annexation movement in British Columbia. The Confederation of Canada in 1867 was, in part, a reaction to these threats. It is also true, of course, that at the time of the Grand Duke's visit the United States and Great Britain had just settled the *Alabama* Claims, that lingering dispute in which the American government accused Great Britain of not enforcing its own declaration of neutrality during the American Civil War. Though by 1871, the worst of the crisis had passed, there were certainly some lingering tensions.⁷⁶ Given Great Britain's fears about American

⁷⁵ Chester W. Clark, "Prince Gorchakov and the Black Sea Question, 1866 A Russian Bomb that Did Not Explode," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (October 1942), 52-60; W. E. Mosse, "The End of the Crimean System: England, Russia and the Neutrality of the Black Sea, 1870-1," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1961), 164-90; *New York Sun*, 16, 17, 18, 21 November 1870; Hannis Taylor, *A Treatise on International Public Law* (Chicago: Callaghan and Company, 1901), 124-25, 400-401.

⁷⁶ Adrian Cook, "A Lost Opportunity in Anglo-American Relations: The Alabama Claims, 1865-1867," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 12, 1 (1966), 54-65; Maureen M. Robson, "The Alabama Claims and the Anglo-American Reconciliation, 1865-1871," *Canadian Historical Review* 42, 1 (March 1961), 1-22; Frank J. Merli, *The Alabama, British Neutrality, and the American Civil War*, ed. By David M. Fahey (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004).

and Russian intentions, and that those intentions might align to the disadvantage of British interests, it should come as no surprise that the Russian-American friendship might be viewed with some apprehension by Canadians who were, after all, British subjects.⁷⁷

Several Canadian papers saw something ominous in Alexis's visit to the United States, believing it had something to do with Russia's preparations for a future conflict with the newly unified Germany. If such were the case, the reasoning went, it was logical that Russia would seek an ally in the United States, which also had "a traditional policy of aggression and aggrandizement at the expense of others."⁷⁸ This hostility to a potential Russian-American alliance found echoes in England, as well. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, reported on the Grand Duke's American tour and explained the strange friendship between the United States and Russia as a reaction to a "common dislike or distrust of British power and policy." Noting the shared experience of slavery in both countries, the *Gazette* believed that with the northern victory in the American Civil War, another similarity had emerged: the American federal government's subjugation of the Southern states greatly resembled the Russian

situation in Poland and the Baltic provinces. The *Gazette* concluded sourly that at least everyone could take solace with the knowledge that these two aggressive nations were so different that their relationship could be little more than a temporary understanding.⁷⁹ While the *Belfast News-Letter* joked that the Russian and American eagle "fraternized like a pair of love birds in a cage... [as] the bird of Washington gave up screaming for the nonce, and billed and cooed like a turtle dove," in reality, the image of the two cozying up to one another was not a comforting one to British officials.⁸⁰

If many Canadians shared these concerns, it might explain why the reception of Grand Duke Alexis lacked the effusiveness of the American reception. As citizens of the British Empire, many Canadians would certainly have taken seriously the possibility of an American-Russian alliance, the threat of Russian expansion in the near East, and the rumbling of American expansionism. For anyone of this mindset, Alexis's visit might have been seen as an ill omen. In that vein, the *Volunteer Review of Ottawa* warned, "the next battle of Pultova [*sic*] will not be fought at our expense, and our clever neighbors may rest assured that we have to be consulted on the issue as well as the Czar of Russia."⁸¹

⁷⁷ Glynn Barratt, *Russian Shadows on the British Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 55-69.

⁷⁸ *The Volunteer Review and Military and Naval Gazette*, (Ottawa), 1 January 1872. The British Colonist, a newspaper out of Victoria, British Columbia, printed many anti-Russian pieces and articles about the potential of a Russian-American alliance; see, Barratt, *Russian Shadows*, 55-69.

⁷⁹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 December 1871.

⁸⁰ *Belfast News-Letter*, 30 March 1872.

⁸¹ *The Volunteer Review and Military and Naval Gazette*, (Ottawa), 1 January 1872.