

William Logan's 1845 Survey of the Upper Ottawa Valley.
Edited and introduced by Charles H. Smith and Ian Dyck.
(Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2007. xvii + 238 p.,
ill., maps, notes, bibl., index. ISBN 978-0-6601-9662-6 \$29.95)

Brian C. Shipley

Volume 32, numéro 1, 2009

Medical Sciences and Medical Buildings

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/037631ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/037631ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

CSTHA/AHSTC

ISSN

0829-2507 (imprimé)

1918-7750 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Shipley, B. C. (2009). Compte rendu de [*William Logan's 1845 Survey of the Upper Ottawa Valley*. Edited and introduced by Charles H. Smith and Ian Dyck. (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2007. xvii + 238 p., ill., maps, notes, bibl., index. ISBN 978-0-6601-9662-6 \$29.95)]. *Scientia Canadensis*, 32(1), 70–72.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/037631ar>

The seven thematic chapters are followed by a brief conclusion, a well-crafted carto-bibliography of the 86 maps used in the book, a list of references, and an excellent index. The carto-bibliography thankfully mentions the holding institution and reference numbers. Unfortunately, Dawson provides no bibliographic information on any of the 25 non-cartographic illustrations (the photographs and documentary art) that she has dispersed throughout the text, but she does credit the institutions from which they were obtained.

The majority of the illustrations are in colour and were printed with far better definition than her title from 20 years ago, a testament no doubt to the improvements that archival institutions have made in reproducing their originals and to advances in printing generally. Only a few of the maps appear to have been reproduced from poor quality black and white photographs (for example, see figures 2.4 and 9.2). The majority of her illustrations originate with Nova Scotia institutions, specifically the Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management. Given that this title is meant to be a “picture” book, one wonders if the overall quality of the work might have been improved slightly if better examples of some of the less attractive illustrations were obtained from archival repositories outside of Halifax. These criticisms aside, Dawson’s book is well worth the price. It is an ambitious work that will surely leave a lasting and long-overdue tribute to Nova Scotia’s cartographic past.

JEFFREY S. MURRAY

Library and Archives Canada

William Logan’s 1845 Survey of the Upper Ottawa Valley. Edited and introduced by Charles H. Smith and Ian Dyck. (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2007. xvii + 238 p., ill., maps, notes, bibl., index. ISBN 978-0-6601-9662-6 \$29.95)

This volume is a very welcome contribution to the history of early Canadian field science. It is also likely to be of interest to historians of geology, environmental historians, and historical geographers more generally.

Canadian-born and British-trained, Sir William Edmond Logan (1798-1875) was the founding director of the Geological Survey of Canada, and remains to this day one of the best-known scientists of early Victorian Canada. Having explored Québec’s rugged Gaspé peninsula in 1843 and 1844 to begin his survey, Logan turned his attention in 1845 to the Ottawa River, a convenient route into the northern reaches of the colonial province of Canada. Unlike the well-stratified sedimentary rocks of the south, which were the principal objects of geological mapping in this era, here Logan

encountered highly metamorphosed and granitic rocks that resisted the usual tools of classification, relative dating through superposition, and the deduction of historical processes and structural relationships. This work did lead, however, to his eventual conceptualization of the Laurentian and Huronian systems, and was thus the beginning of scientific studies of the Canadian Shield.

If this seems like tough slogging, rest assured that the present publication is *not* that of Logan's three data-filled field notebooks from the voyage (though these are referenced as warranted). It is rather an edition of the companion diary that Logan kept in order to record (in both words and charming drawings) his personal thoughts, feelings, and observations about his fellow surveyors, people they met, and this region of Canada that he was visiting for the first time.

Along the way, we learn some rather surprising facts: for example, whereas Logan had slept on spruce boughs in Gaspé, on the Ottawa River expedition he made use of an inflatable "Mackintosh bed, big enough for three." But, Logan noted, "It takes an enormous quantity of wind to fill it. Mr. McDougall [his assistant] has filled it at last however after 3 or 4 days blowing.... It is a great comfort. But I wish it were smaller" (p.71). On one more frightening occasion, Logan recorded that he was "awakened this morning by a suffocating smoke & found my jacket on fire, with my note books in pockets of it. Of course I was not a little in trouble. I started up & seized hold of it & carried it out of the tent, & trod it underfoot, & twisted it with my hands, & at length succeeded in extinguishing the fire.... I have burnt the fingers of my right hand rather much. The extremes of the 1st and 2nd are blistered from one side to the other & I can scarcely use them" (p.158). The notebooks in question bear fire scars to this day, though Logan did manage to save them all.

Travelling upriver as far as Lake Timiskaming, Logan encountered a world already settled, in some places for many years, and a landscape already changed, by dams and timber slides for example, as a result of the lumber trade. Always keen to talk to the locals to extract whatever information might be obtained, Logan constantly had to strike a balance between generating interest in mineral possibilities and at the same time managing expectations by dissuading over-enthusiastic optimism that would only lead to disappointment.

Another important dimension of Logan's experience illuminate in his diary was his relationship with his Aboriginal employees. These were guides, paddlers, and camp staff, and were essential to Logan's practice of travelling lightly and flexibly (allowing for numerous detours), which he had successfully developed in during the preceding two years in Gaspé. Logan even received the traditional "baptism" given to voyageurs crossing

into the interior for the first time, and was accorded the name “‘Tanyarhita,’ signifying breaker of rocks” (p.119). On the other hand, Logan was also a demanding employer, and worried that he might spark a mutiny in trying to push the expedition as late into the season as possible, even into November snowstorms on Lake Timiskaming.

The value of such a volume is that it records the personal, social, cultural, and environmental contexts that inevitably shaped Logan’s scientific experience. Geological surveying is a quintessential field science, where nature must be encountered entirely on its own terms, and the observer’s personal situation is very much part of the equation. Smith and Dyck’s introductory essay is invaluable, particularly the section on Logan’s tools and methods, which substantially deepens our accounts of the early years of the Geological Survey of Canada. Their painstaking identification of personal names and places mentioned in the text (there are 242 footnotes to the diary itself, which runs some 130 printed pages, including Logan’s original illustrations and many supporting maps and figures) also earns them the gratitude of historian and general reader alike.

Reviews of editions of primary sources too often focus solely on the text itself, neglecting the countless hours of scholarly work necessary to bring them to publication. The documentary editor’s task is too often a thankless and anonymous one, when in fact we need much, much more of this sort of work. As thousands upon thousands more of page images of archival materials are published online every year—including this diary, part of Library and Archives Canada’s Logan project at www.collectionscanada.ca/logan—what we sorely lack is the “value-added” labour involved in indexing these documents by adding name, date, place, and subject keyword data, so that researchers can actually make practical use of the bonanza of historical information that is now just a mouse click away.

From the point of view of professional documentary editing, my only real reservation concerns Smith and Dyck’s tendency to place annotation in parentheses in the main text, rather than solely in footnotes where it belongs. This practice, sometimes inconsistently applied, can occasionally be distracting. Also, spellings of common words are often needlessly modernized, while geological terms go unglossed, where doing so might help the readers coming from other backgrounds. Finally, an appendix on the contemporary stratigraphical systems in use in New York State and in the UK, as part of Logan’s intellectual apparatus, would not have been amiss. These things said, however, we can do little more than sincerely thank Smith and Dyck for having devoted so much of their time to this project, which opens an unprecedented window of access into an important, and engaging, chapter in the history of Canadian science.