



**FREE
READERS'
EDITION**

**Unfamiliar
History:
Canada @ 150**

**From the files of
Earle Gray**

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Published by Civil Sector Press
Box 86, Station C
Toronto, Ontario M61 3M7 Canada
Telephone: 416-345-9403.
Fax: 416-345-9403

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Gray, Earle, 1931-, author (Unfamiliar history : Canada @ 150 / Earle Gray.

ISBN 978-1-927375-44-0 (PDF)

1.°Canada—History—Anecdotes.° 2.°Canada—History—(Miscellanea.° I.°Title.

FC176.G7395 2017°° 0000000000971.002°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°° C2017-900661-4

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Darwin's missing link discovered in Ontario



Portrait by George Richmond (1809-18967), Wikimedia Commons.

If his theory of evolution was true, the world must have “swarmed with living creatures” more than 540 million years ago, Charles Darwin wrote. But lack of evidence of early life remained the missing link in Darwin’s theory for more than 100 years, until discovered in Ontario on the shores of Lake Superior.

A discussion of fossil fuels should start with a discussion of fossils. To begin at the beginning, we need to go back billions of years in search of the missing fossils in Darwin’s theory of evolution. When Charles Dar-

Excerpt from my current work in progress, *Fossil Fire: A social history of the fuels that imperil.*

win published *On the Origin of Species, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* on November 24, 1859 it became an instant bestseller. It also triggered a social upheaval, roiling Christendom ever since. Yet even Darwin acknowledged the missing fossils threatened the credibility of his theory. It took 95 years to find the first recognized missing fossils—at a remote site in Ontario on the northern shore of Lake Superior—and

Darwin was tormented by the challenge to religious belief posed by his theory. He referred to himself as “the Devil’s Chaplain” and said talking about it “felt like confessing to a murder.”

another decade before the discovery was widely confirmed and acknowledged.

At age 22, Darwin clambered aboard *HMS Beagle* at London for a five-year voyage around the world. An embryonic naturalist, he was charged with exploring the flora, fauna and geology of the lesser-known coastal regions of the world, most notably South America, the islands of the Pacific, and, famously, the Galapagos Archipelago. The *Beagle*’s captain, 25-year-old Robert

FitzRoy, was an ardent Christian fundamentalist who hoped the expedition would conclusively confirm the Biblical account of creation. After the voyage, and for the rest of his life FitzRoy was one of the most strident and persistent critics of Darwin and his theory.

Darwin arrived home on the *Beagle* with new botanical and geological insights, including a breakthrough theory on the formation of coral reef atolls, and a bounty of natural specimens—birds, plants, animals, and fossils, among others. Twenty-three more years would elapse before he would publish *On the Origin*. He spent several years sorting and examining his collection, developing his theory of evolution, and penning the first of six drafts of his opus. But for most of the 23 years since his return from the Galapagos, he kept his manuscript under lock and key.

Darwin knew the distress and fury his book would create among millions of devout Christians to whom the Biblical account of creation was sacred. Even most naturalists believed animal life, humans in particular, first appeared on Earth fully developed. Not that the idea of evolution was entirely new; several writers had already thought of it, including his grandfather Erasmus. Edinburgh publisher Robert Chambers, carefully hiding behind an anonymously published book, had suggested that humans were evolved from apes.

Chambers' book caused fury enough. The manuscript that Darwin kept under lock and key would be far more explosive. His book would provide the first fully developed and well-documented theory of evolution, supported by a plethora of scientific evidence. Darwin was “tormented” by the upheaval his idea would create, accord-

ing to author Bill Bryson, since his wife was a devout Christian believer. Darwin “referred to himself as ‘the Devil’s Chaplain,’ and said that disclosing his theory ‘felt like confessing a murder.’”²

Another reason for Darwin’s hesitation in publishing his theory may have been the missing fossils. For at least 2,500 years, people have collected and written about animal fossils, from giant reptiles to the smallest fossilized seashells. All the known fossils found by 1859

***Lack of fossils more than
half a billion years old
“may be truly argued against”
his theory, Darwin admitted.***

once existed as fully developed organisms, whether plants, clams, dinosaurs, or apes. Such complex life forms, Darwin argued, evolved from very simple organisms. The core of Darwin’s theory is that life evolved from primitive, much less developed organisms. Darwin insisted that ancient oceans had once been alive with early, primitive ancestors. But where was the evidence?

Darwin faced the problem in his first 1859 edition of *On the Origin*, and more explicitly in his subsequent five editions:

“If the theory [of evolution] be true, it is indisputable that before the lowest Cambrian stratum was deposit-

ed... the world swarmed with living creatures. To the question why we do not find rich fossiliferous deposits belonging to these earliest periods I can give no satisfactory answer. The case at present must remain inexplicable, and may be truly urged as a valid argument against the views here entertained.”

All known fossils when Darwin wrote came from little more than one-tenth of the Earth’s history. The oldest came from the Cambrian, a brief period from about 540 million to 485 million years ago, marked by the sudden appearance of a wide-ranging great number of marine critters, living on, in, or swimming above shallow beds of the seas. The missing fossils of earlier forms would apparently have to be discovered somewhere in the rocks of the first four billion years of Earth preceding the Cambrian, in the rocks of the Precambrian eon. The search was already underway.

Looking for Precambrian life

The century-long search for Darwin’s answer brims with wrong turns, mistakes, and disputes. One of the first in the field was Scottish-born John William Dawson (1820-1899), a protégé of Charles Lyell, the most famous geologist of his time. Dawson himself later became recognized as one of the world’s leading geologists and scientists, serving as principal of Montreal’s McGill University, the only person to have served terms as president of the Royal Society of Canada, the Geological Society of America, the American Association for the Advancement of Society, and its British counterpart. He was a devout Presbyterian and, like FitzRoy, a staunch believer in the Biblical account of creation. He saw no contradiction between the possibility of Precambrian life and his reli-

gious beliefs, and no reason to suppose any Precambrian life would be the progenitor of a more evolved form of life. He believed simple forms of life may have existed from earliest times, but under the Biblical account of creation, they could not change or evolve.

From the Banks of the Ottawa River, Dawson collected and examined specimens of limestone rock, later determined to be 1.1 billion years old.³ He concluded the unusual green and white thin markings were the first discovered Precambrian fossils, a claim immediately disputed. Dawson stuck to his guns, and expounded his claim in an 1875 book, *The Dawn of Life; Being the History of the Oldest Known Fossil Remains, and their Relations to Geological Time and to the Development of the Animal Kingdom*. Dawson vigorously defended his claim to his dying day, but he was mistaken. “Dawson’s famous and now infamous ‘dawn animal’ was nothing more than a curiously layered mineral deposit formed when hot molten rocks intruded into Laurentian limestone,” J. William Schopf writes in *Cradle of Life*, his first-hand account of the study of Precambrian life.⁴

On the other hand, Charles Doolittle Walcott (1850-1927), “Founder of Precambrian Paleobiology,”⁵ really did find Precambrian fossils, but his discovery was dismissed and ignored for more than half a century. A high school dropout and largely self-educated “rock hound,” Walcott pursued his passion for finding and studying fossils to become the most acclaimed American geologist of his time. He served variously as director of the U.S. Geological Survey, secretary of the Carnegie and Smithsonian Institutions, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the

National Academy of Science, and science advisor to President Theodore Roosevelt. Walcott remains the reputed discoverer, and first major collector, of “the world’s most important animals fossils,”⁶ found high in the Canadian Rockies.

In 1883, Walcott found algae fossils in exposed Cambrian rocks in the Grand Canyon, and in the Montana mountains. Sixteen years later he made a more startling find, also in the Grand Canyon, of small animal fossils in the much older “Precambrian carbon-rich shales... the first true cellularly preserved Precambrian organisms ever recorded.”⁷ The skeptics were quick to pounce. The authenticity of the Precambrian fossils was disputed four years after Walcott’s death, with seeming finality, by Sir Albert Charles Seward of Cambridge University, considered the final authority on the matter. “We can hardly expect to find in Precambrian rocks any actual proof of the existence of bacteria,” Seward wrote in 1931.⁸ Two decades later, it would be up to geologist Stanley A. Taylor and his associates, to prove Seward wrong.

The trail to Schreiber

Stanley Tyler discovered the first fully formed and acknowledged Precambrian fossils—microscopic algae and fungi bacteria—while on a Sunday fishing trip in August 1953. A mineral, or “hard rock,” geologist with the University of Wisconsin, Tyler was funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation to study the geology of a 500-kilometre stretch of Gunflint chert rock, so-labelled because it was once used to spark the fire of ancient flintlock guns. The iron-bearing Gunflint stretched from then active iron mines in northern Minnesota, up 175

kilometres into Ontario along the north shore of Lake Superior to Thunder Bay, with isolated remnants farther east for another 100 kilometres, to the lake shore near the small town of Schreiber, where the “best preserved”⁹ fossils lay waiting.

For his fishing trip, Tyler rented a dingy with an outboard motor, as recounted by Schopf in *Cradle of Life*.¹⁰ As he cast his line near the shore at Schreiber Beach, the jet-black rock of the Gunflint outcrop and the large stromatolites were clearly visible. Tyler scrambled ashore for a closer look. The rock was certainly Gunflint chert but not the red colour that would indicate the presence of iron. The stromatolites interested him, but were they as old as this Precambrian rock? He picked up a few specimens to add to the collection of Gunflint rocks he would soon take back to Madison and the University of Minnesota after completing his season’s fieldwork.

In his Madison laboratory, Tyler used a high-powered microscope to examine his sliced, paper-thin stromatolite samples. He saw that this section of rock somehow escaped millions of years of pressure and heat to remain close to its original condition when laid down as sediment on an ancient ocean bed, thereby “providing a glimpse through the Precambrian metamorphic veil,” as Tyler put it.¹¹ What really astounded Tyler was the presence of tens of thousands of microscopic, dark brown networks that looked like fossils—two-billion-year-old organic fossils. The fossils contained thin filament strands, bulb-shaped at one end and star-shaped at the other.

As a mineralogist, Tyler needed some expert advice from a paleobotanist. He hooked up with Elso Barghoorn at

Harvard University. Tyler and Barghoorn returned to collect more samples at several locations near Schreiber. Barghoorn confirmed these were, indeed, fossils of organisms that lived some two billion years ago. These were primitive blue-green algae, “the oldest structurally preserved organisms... which have yet been discovered in Precambrian sediments,” they wrote in a “preliminary statement” of their findings. As such, they said the fossils were “of great interest in the evolutionary scheme of primitive life.”¹² The world of science shrugged and dismissed them: too much had already been heard about supposed Precambrian fossils. Nothing more would be said about the Schreiber fossils for the next 11 years.

Tyler and Barghoorn prepared a draft for a much more detailed and longer article about their Precambrian fossils. But, preoccupied with one thing or another, they left the draft manuscript, much like Darwin’s *On The Origin of Species*, sitting idle in a desk draw for six years. In 1963, eight months shy of the tenth anniversary of his discovery at Schreiber, Tyler unexpectedly died at age 57. That year 21-year-old Bill Schopf, an honours graduate of tiny Oberlin College in Ohio, with a degree in geology and a burning ambition to find out more about the mysterious life of the Precambrian, entered Harvard as Elso Barghoorn’s student and assistant.

Barghoorn and his new assistant were rushed into reviving the idle manuscript by another geologist, Preston Cloud, head of the Department of Geology at Tyler’s alma mater, the University of Minnesota. In their 1954 preliminary statement in *Science*, Tyler and Barghoorn intentionally omitted a precise location of the Precambrian

fossil bed, other than marking it “near” Schreiber. Their statement even misspelled the name of the town as “Schrieber.” Cloud, however, managed to find the site, and spent three days carefully examining the outcrop. Now he was about to publish a detailed article in *Science* about what Tyler and Barghoorn had found and first examined a decade earlier. Barghoorn and Schopf spent a frantic two weeks preparing the draft manuscript and photos of the fossils for publication in *Science*, in advance of the Cloud article that threatened to steal the recognition of Barghoorn’s and Tyler’s earlier ground-breaking work.

“Micro-organisms from the Gunflint Chert,”¹³ by Elso S. Barghoorn and Stanley A. Tyler was published in 1965 in *Science*, a 10,000-word, 15-page article, with a substantial selection of the enlarged photos. They reiterated earlier claims of their preliminary statement. “These structurally preserved Precambrian fossils from Ontario,” they wrote, “are the most ancient organisms known... of unusual interest in the study of the history of life.” This time the world of science sat up. With the evidence in this article, there could no longer be any doubt about the existence of Precambrian life, and, moreover, life much older than that of the real but unacknowledged Precambrian fossils found earlier in the Grand Canyon and elsewhere by Walcott, as well as possible findings by others. “The Barghoorn-Tyler paper is a classic,” Schopf wrote 40 years later. “For all time it will probably stand as the most important article ever written in the field.”¹⁴

Still older Precambrian fossils were later found, particularly in Australia where Schopf played a leading role

in the discovery and evaluation of larger stromatolites with their algae and fungi fossils—1.5 billion years older, and within one billion years of the birth of Earth. Yet the little-known, isolated and restricted area in the Schreiber Channel Provincial Nature Reserve where the outcrop of Gunflint cherts slopes into the placid blue water of Lake Superior is where the seeds for all life on Earth today were first found. It is difficult to envision a more historic world site than this neglected piece of Precambrian rock, in this isolated corner of Ontario.

— Canada @ 150 —

Paper war on patent medicine

The fact that it relies on patent medicine advertisements for a substantial portion of its revenue does not stop the Toronto Telegram, November 3, 1885 from warning its readers to shun such patent medicine snake oil.

Six patent medicine ads in this four-page issue included those for Putnam's Painless Corn Extractor; Burdock Blood Bitters, which promise "the secret of beauty;" and St. Jacobs Oil, which "relieves and cures," rheumatism, neuralgia, sciatica, lumbago, headache, toothache, sore throat, swelling, cuts, bruises, burns, scalds, and all other aches and pains," for 50 cents a bottle.

They were all mostly useless, the Telegram warned. But people flocked to patent medicine because medical doctors "frequently fail to effect cures." Medical science was said to be "a dark science" groping on "the outskirts of absolutely knowledge."

Scandal. Lady Aberdeen takes tea with servants

Read what happened when the good ladies of Ottawa heard that Ishbel Maria Coutts Marjoribanks Gordon, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, wife of the governor general, progressive reformer, champion of the rights of women and workers, founder of the Victorian Order of Nurses, took tea with her servants, when you purchase your copy of *Unfamiliar History: Canada@150*.

•“Truly excellent work.” Michael Byers , Canada Research Chair, University of British Columbia.

•“...Gray pulls back the curtain on crucial but oft-forgotten aspects of our history.” Robert Bott, Calgary author and historian

•“...priceless vignettes that “tell it the way it was” – with all its triumphs, nostalgia and warts.” Charles Cooper, railway historian <http://www.railwaypages.com>

•“... from the alcoholism problems of the North West Mounted Police to Sir Sam Hughes’s war against the “sinful” Salvation Army to instructions in 1920 on how to winterize your Model T.... a panorama of little-known events of our history.” Graham Taylor, Professor Emeritus, Trent University, Peterborough, Author, *The Rise of Canadian Business, Du Pont and the International Chemical Industry*.

Unfamiliar History: Canada@ 150.

482 pages.133 stories and articles.

Civil Sector Press, ISBN 978-1-927375-44-0.

Holy urine cure

Taken both as a drink and applied externally, urine has been called the world's oldest medicine. A 5,000-year-old religious Sanskrit text, the Damar Tantra, extolled its benefits. British actress Sarah Miles, in a 2007 newspaper interview, said she had been drinking her own urine for 30 years as immunization against allergies, among other supposed benefits. French ladies bathed in it, and the French wrapped around their necks stockings soaked in it to cure strep throat. Chinese bathed baby faces with it to protect their skin. Mexican farmers in the Sierra Madre prepared poultices of powdered charred corn and urine to help mend broken bones. John Strachan, an Anglican priest and future Bishop of Toronto, describes a rare instance of a Canadian prescription for urine, writing in the Kingston Gazette, March 3, 1812.



Ontario Archives

John Strachan, Anglican priest and future Toronto bishop, describes how he prescribed bark and urine for an ailing young woman.

The province [Upper Canada] is overrun with self-made

physicians, who have no pretensions to knowledge of any kind...

I was lately visiting a young woman ill of a fever, the doctor came in, felt her pulse with much gravity, pronounced her near the crisis—She must take this dose, said the gentleman, pouring out as much calomel [a mildly toxic compound of mercury and chloride, once used as a purgative] on a piece of paper as would have killed two ploughmen. Pray what is this, said I, Doctor?

“A schrifudger.”

“Is it not calomel?”

“Yes.”

“You mean to divide this into several doses?”

“Not at all.”

“But the patient is weak.”

“No matter, I like to scour well.”

“Do you not weigh carefully so powerful a medicine before you give it?”

“No, sir, I know exactly.”

As the woman was evidently getting better, I threw the calomel out of the window after his departure, and sent her some bark and urine.

— Canada @ 150 —

Uproar as U.S. seeks “fugitive slave”



Engraving, from “The Story of the Life of John Anderson,” 1863.

John Anderson, an escaped slave in Toronto, wanted by the U.S. in 1860.

“It was an anxious moment, as the Chief Justice produced his papers and began to read. The life or death of a human being hung on a thread; the liberties of hundreds of freeman depended on the opinion of three fallible men. Was this fellow who had, after by desperate adventures, achieved his liberty and enjoyed with his wife the sweets of home for seven years, to be sent back to certain sla-

very, if not death? Were the hundreds of fugitives in the province, who have committed what the slave states describe as felonies in effecting their escape, to be henceforth at the mercy of the man-stealers?" From the *Toronto Globe*, Monday, December 17, 1860.

The *Globe* was clearly sympathetic in its report of Saturday's extradition hearing of John Anderson, an escaped slave from Missouri who, seven years earlier travelled to Windsor on the underground railway, changed his name from Jack Burton to Anderson, and worked as a labourer and plasterer.

Before his escape, Anderson was sold to a new slave owner, and removed 30 miles from his wife, owned by another slave owner. He was on his way to join his wife on their flight to Canada when he was chased by slave owner Seneca P.T. Diggs, and four of Diggs' slaves. Diggs promised his slaves they would share in the reward if they helped capture Anderson. Anderson turned on his pursuers and stabbed Diggs, who died, reputedly of his wounds, "two or three weeks later," according to the *Toronto Leader*.

The year after his arrival at Windsor, the U.S. government requested Anderson's extradition, but Governor General James Bruce (Lord Elgin) refused to issue the warrant. Another six years later, Brantford magistrate William Matthews had Anderson arrested on a charge of murder. He was moved to Toronto for extradition hearings before Canada West Chief Justice John Beverley Robinson, and Justices MacLean and Burns.

Their verdict was to be announced that Saturday at Osgoode Hall, 10 am. A crowd of about 200 awaited the

opening of the court. The possibility that “violence would be resorted to by the less reflecting of the coloured people;” by a crowd inflamed by “designing politicians who hesitate at nothing” to serve “their own selfish ends;” and by “the violent and evil disposed,” was expressed by the Toronto *Leader*, which almost alone supported Anderson’s extradition.

The entire police force of 50 men—20 armed with rifles and bayonets—was on hand outside Osgoode Hall, while a company of soldiers was posted five minutes away, on ready standby.

The judgments were deferred until noon, when Osgoode Hall was again packed to capacity. There was a “profound silence” when the judgments were read, said the *Globe*. “The people could not believe that the judges would decide against the slave.” But Robinson and Burns did. Then, when Justice Archibald McLean finished reading his dissenting judgment, arguing for Anderson’s release, “there was a burst of applause.”

There was no violence. Anderson was escorted from the courthouse to the jail by soldiers with “bristling bayonets,” the police returned to city hall, the soldiers to their garrison, “and the crowd quietly dispersed.”

Yet feelings ran high. Next morning, reported the *Leader*, the “walls of the city” were plastered with an “inflammatory” placard calling on Torontonians to rally to an evening meeting called “to induce the government to prevent Anderson being returned to a state of slavery.”

“Show that you know what British Freedom is, and that no manstealer shall be permitted to defile Free Canadian Soil,” read the placards. “No surrender of a Freeman

at the dictation of Slaveholders. Let death or Liberty be Your watchword.”

St. Lawrence Hall was crowded to capacity for the meeting, chaired by Mayor James Dougall. Twenty prominent Torontonians crowded the platform, five clergymen, the member of Parliament and a city councilor among them. In less inflammatory language, a parade of speakers echoed the call of the placards. The echo reached Britain where the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society obtained a writ of *habeas corpus*, widely denounced in Canada as British interference in the constitutional powers of Canadian courts, even though it was intended to help Anderson’s cause.

Anderson was spared immediate extradition by the court’s statement that it would vigorously facilitate any appeal that might be made to its split decision. William Draper, chief justice of Toronto’s Court of Commons Pleas, ruled on February 16, 1861 on the appeal, discharging Anderson to his freedom.

Anderson went to England that year, spoke before at least 25 anti-slavery meetings, spent a year studying at the British Training Institution, then sailed for Liberia, where “nothing more is known about him,” according to historian Robert C. Reinders.

Two constitutional changes resulted from the Anderson epic. An 1861 Canadian law prohibited magistrates from hearing extradition cases. And an 1862 British law ruled that *habeas corpus* writs could no longer be sent to any British colony that had concurrent legal jurisdiction.

— Canada @ 150 —

The first Canada Day



Queen's University Archives

Reading the Proclamation of Canada, Kingston, Ontario, July 1, 1868. Toronto celebrated with a roasted ox, but in Nova Scotia, a Father of Confederation was burned in effigy, together with a live rat.

As midnight broke on July 1, 1867, there was neither peace nor quiet across the land. From Halifax to Windsor, guns boomed, bells chimed, rifles, pistols, and muskets were fired, bonfires were lit, as millions of Canadians poured out into the streets of towns and villages to celebrate the birth of their new country. Scant hours later, there were parades, military reviews, speeches, picnics, cricket and lacrosse matches, special railway and steamship excursions. In Toronto, a fat ox was

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Ned Hanlan hot-dogs it to world rowing title



Library and Archives Canada C—025309.

Ned Hanlan, Canada's first world champion athlete.

It was the biggest race of his life, and Toronto's Edward "Ned" Hanlan was hot-dogging it. The single-sculls rowing champion of Canada, the United States and Britain, the 5-foot-8-3/4-inch, 150-pound, 25-year-old Hanlan was competing on England's Thames River for the world title against Edward Trickett, the 6-foot-3-inch, 185-pound, 29-year-old Australia champion on November 15, 1880.

Hanlan was born on Toronto Island, a water baby who rowed across the harbour to school and—some say—transported bootleg booze for his hotelier father.

Rowing was a big nineteenth century spectator sport. Six

months before the Thames race, some 100,000 people lined the banks of the Potomac River in Washington, D.C., to watch Hanlan beat the U.S. amateur champion, for the third time. It was also a big gambling sport. Punters swamped London bookmakers to wage “enormous” sums on the Hanlan-Trickett race, the Toronto *Globe* reported.

The London *Times* thought that Hanlan’s “superior skill and science” would “put him on an equality with the greater strength and weight of the Australian.” Trickett’s backers claimed—“perhaps not without good grounds,” according to the *Times*—that Hanlan lacked the strength to keep up on a long race.

After a rain delay, the racers were off at 12:22 p.m. Trickett took an early lead, rowing 40 or more strokes per minute to Hanlan’s 36. But Hanlan’s strokes were longer, and at the one-mile mark he was ahead by a length and a half; after 9 minutes and 35 seconds, he was ahead by 2-1/2 lengths, and “Trickett’s chance of success was evidently hopeless,” the *Times* reported. Hanlan began to hot-dog it, to the laughter and amusement of the crowd. He stopped rowing five times. When Trickett pulled up to within a length, Hanlan began to row again. At one point, he pulled alternately with each scull, “a water frolic which in many cases would lead to a capsized.” The race had now, said the *Times*, “become a mere farce.” Hanlan crossed the finish line at 26 minutes and 12 seconds, with the game but exhausted Trickett 10 second behind.

Hanlan was Canada’s first world champion athlete. He successfully defended his title six times during the next four years, and continued to race for another 13 years. He was, says Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame, “Canada’s most prominent athlete of the nineteenth century.”

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The light of the Great Lone Land

It is “the light that is destined to dispel the gloom that has so long enveloped the Great Lone Land,” Patrick Gammie Laurie promises in the first issue of his *Saskatchewan Herald*, August 25, 1878, at Battleford, a fur-trading post chosen as the capital of the North West Territories because it lay on the planned route of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It was the first newspaper between Winnipeg and Victoria B.C.

Laurie learned the printing trade where he grew up at Cobourg, Upper Canada, later publishing weekly newspapers at Owen Sound and Essex. A job as printer and editor of the *Nor'-Wester*

took him to Fort Garry, soon to be Winnipeg, in 1869, in time for the first Riel Rebellion. With a \$200 reward on his head after he clandestinely printed a proclamation for the embattled Canadian authorities and refused to print for Louis Riel's provisional government, Laurie fled to Ontario, returning after the short-lived rebellion.

When Battleford was proclaimed a capital, 45-year-old Laurie loaded ox carts with press and type and set out



Glenbow Archives NA-1138-1/

Patrick Gammie Laurie hauled printing press and equipment by ox cart across 600 miles of prairie and bush to establish the first Canadian newspaper between Winnipeg and Victoria, at Battleford.

on a 600-mile trek across prairie, bush, streams and rivers. It took 72 days.

The *Herald* first issued from a log building with a sod roof, a four-page, fortnightly paper set in tiny six-point type; “a little sheet,” wrote Laurie, “to do away with everything that would needlessly increase the freight bill” for paper and ink hauled from Winnipeg by ox cart.

Laurie was editor, reporter, printer and salesman. With the second Riel Rebellion, Laurie divided his time between military duties and reporting the war.

“Progress” was the paper’s motto, and for 50 years it ceaselessly promoted Battleford. But progress was arrested when the CPR was built far south of Battleford, not too far from the U.S. border, for better defence from any American invasion of Canada. Five years after publication began, the capital of the North West Territories was moved to Regina. Laurie remained, publishing and editing the *Herald* at Battleford for 25 years until his death in 1903. His son Richard continued until his death in 1938, when publication ceased.

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TALK, TALK, TALK. *The Ottawa Journal, October 23, 1899, notes the political penchant for prolixity.* “Sir Charles Tupper’s speech the other day contained about 25,000 words. Mr. Foster’s three-hour effort held about 17,000, or about as many as the gospel of St. John, which revolutionized the world. It will be observed that some of our political leaders talk many dozens of times as much matter every year as there is not merely in St. John, but in the whole New Testament, yet don’t revolutionize anything.”

Lonesome life of a prairie missionary



Glenbow Archives NA614-21.

An Alberta settler's log cabin in 1898. Settlers were few and far between on the parish of an Anglican missionary that stretched across 100 miles of prairie in southern Alberta..

A young Anglican missionary, 14 months out from England, talks to a *Regina Standard* reporter about the challenges of his parish, a prairie wilderness that extends from Calgary to the American border, September 11, 1891.

“My parish is 100 miles long and forty miles wide, and at least once a year I am expected to visit every person in it,” he says in the interview. “It is a pretty hard life, and sometimes I wish I were in old England again.”

Under a broad-brimmed, black felt hat, he spends much

of his time in his saddle, visiting his few parishioners. He lives alone in a one-room shack with a leaky roof and dines largely on tinned meat. “Sometimes a hunter or an Indian gives me a bit of game, which is quite a treat.”

Few of the settlers in his big parish are Anglicans. “I often travel 10 miles to keep an appointment to preach, and not a soul comes out. Two weeks ago I travelled 18 miles, and only two men came to the meeting house. They said that as no one else had come it wasn’t worth while for me to preach, and so they went away.” His biggest audience was 100 people for a funeral. He had hoped to supplement his \$500 a year salary with wedding fees, but had not yet had a wedding to perform.

Still, he was determined to stick it out, hopeful of better times to come.

“Ranchmen are coming into the country, and its population before many years will be much greater than it is now. I shall not then pine, as I do now, for human society, and as I get better acquainted and little churches are started, my list of friends will increase, and I shall find missionary work more pleasant.”

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COMPULSORY SCHOOLING. There are five thousand children running around the streets of Montreal who never enter a school. It is now proposed that compulsory education shall be enforced in the great centre of mercantile life, and certainly the principle is necessary. These children are to be our future leaders, and they ought to know something. *Toronto Mail*, November 14, 1891.

Last of the saddleback preachers

The passing of the fiery itinerant preachers, who galloped by horse throughout Canada, from hamlet to hamlet, to spread the gospel in the backwoods of nineteenth century, is foretold by Toronto Saturday Night, June 15, 1901.

Methodist Conferences, not only in Canada, but in the United States, are discussing the abolition of the itinerant system as it has been generally remarked that the system which might have been thoroughly well adapted to the needs of Methodism fifty or a hundred years ago, may be quite out of date now. It is wise for the religious denominations to learn from experience with their pet devices that the world changed and new methods must be employed.

It seems strange that none



Glenbow Archives NA-101-13.

English-born Methodist minister Robert K. Peck, Alberta, 1910. "Wearing cowboy clothes, the Reverend Peck used to ride around the country preaching," notes Calgary's Glenbow Museum.

of the virile and splendid specimens of mental and physical manhood who have played such important parts in the itinerary system, have ever written a history of how the communities of today were cared for when the century was young. Churches seem to demand a cultured and entertaining pastor, and are unwilling to tolerate in cities and large town those vociferous and mighty exhorters of the past. Methodism will have to drop into line with Presbyterianism, the Anglican Church, Baptist and Congregational organizations, and obtain and retain pastors who are pleasing to the people who are in the habit of assembling. The thunderous old message of the itinerant preacher is not welcome today, and those who hear it, and who advocate the itinerary system, are, in the course of nature, gone out of fashion.

We cannot believe that the Gospel message itself is tiresome to the listener who is looking forward to an eternity which may be changed for him by the class of preaching he hears, but we must remember that culture and education and the lack of emotionalism which the busy world induces, demand a different treatment from that which was the custom of the rampant orator of the past. A man or woman living in a backwoods who lacked excitement and wished to be carried away by religious enthusiasm, could appreciate the stentorian tones of the old Methodist itinerant pastor, but those who get excitement all day and all week long, and who year in and year out are looking for peace, do not wish to be disturbed by this class of preacher.

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First woman lawyer trumps misogynists



Archives of Ontario, S.17703

Clara Brett Martin, first woman lawyer in the British Empire, challenged the misogyny of Toronto lawyers.

Among the pantheon of leaders who crashed the doors and shattered the glass ceiling that held women back from the professions and business, few have done as much crashing and shattering as Clara Brett Martin (1874-1923) of Toronto. A member of a prominent Anglican-Irish family, Martin was an iconclast even as a teenager. At a time when it was almost unheard for women to enroll in university science or technical programs, Martin won a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics from Toronto's Trinity College, at age 16. Three years later, she petitioned the Law Society of Upper Canada for per-

mission to become a student lawyer. The big wigs ruled that the law did not permit women lawyers. With the support of such people as Lady Aberdeen and Ontario Premier Oliver Mowat, that was changed by a new law passed by the Ontario legislature on April 13, 1892. Martin became a student lawyer. In 1897, she became the first woman lawyer in the globe-spanning British Empire—the trail blazer for probably more than a million women lawyers in more than a score of countries.

Martin's first court case as a student lawyer is told by columnist Faith Fenton in The Empire, Toronto, September 22, 1894.

Miss Clara Brett Martin won her first case one day this week down in that musty old room assigned to the Division Court.

It may not mean much in the eyes of an old lawyer to win a case in the Division Court, but it means a good deal to the young student who is making her first public appearance and conducting her first examination. When the student happens to be the first woman lawyer in the country, it means even more.

The difficulties Miss Martin encountered and overcame before entering upon her law course are fresh in the minds of Toronto citizens. The opposition she met with from high legal lights, who were determined that the law school of Ontario should not be thrown open to women—not because it was wrong, or even especially unfitting, but simply because it never had been, and, therefore, never should be—all this we remember too well.

But having won what was really her first case—and prob

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Angel ushers fluster papa, needle mama

Angelic young ushers are adapt at wheedling extra money from pappas for the offering plate at church, much to the consternation of mamma, notes Kit Coleman in the following item from the Toronto Mail and Empire, January 22, 1898.

The latest fad is Angel ushers. One Reverend already has them. They are charming. They glide around with the plate and stare that man out of countenance who presents them with petty coins. They have killed the waistcoat button. That no longer finds its way religiously into the church coffers.

The most stalwart become weak and flurried into great offerings when the plate is presented by a dear little gloved hand, and eyes brighter than diamonds are cast upon manly, bearded faces. Even pater familias grows flushed and flurried as he fumbles in his vest pocket for a larger coin than the one he had laid there for church offering in the morning.



Wikimedia Commons.

Kathleen (Kit) Blake Coleman, Canada's most popular and most widely read journalist in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

And mater familias does not like it. She is not to be wheedled out of quarters by saucy young things in bewitching fur toques and dainty sables. She presents a stiff and stony exterior when the plate is thrust at her. She will not see it. It is quite enough for pater to burst into religious extravagance. At his time of life, too! She looks at his flushed countenance with a grim eye. Pater will catch it presently. Such goings on in a church! It's not orthodox! It isn't even decent!

But the Angel usher smiles sweetly on mater and winks furtively at pater, and goes on her serene way, sure of shekels.

Irish-born Kit Coleman—Kathleen Blake Coleman, 1864-1915—was Canada's most widely read and influential newspaper reporter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Widowed a second time at age 25, she turned to house cleaning to support herself and two small children before winning a job as a reporter with the Toronto Mail (later Mail and Empire). She wrote first about the domestic and social matters that editors deemed to be the only issues of interest to women, before winning her argument that women were just as interested in such matters as politics, science, business, and religion. In 1898, she covered the Spanish American war in Cuba, as the world's first accredited female war correspondent. But Kit Coleman never lost her ability to write about everyday life with a sharp eye, keen perception, and eloquence.

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Fox hunting on the Saskatchewan prairie



Painting courtesy railway artist Bill Hobbs.

Didsbury mansion at Cannington Manor, Saskatchewan, where English gentlemen learned how to farm, when they weren't busy with such playtime as fox hunting.

The *Moosomin Spectator*, October 13, 1898, provides an account of fox hunting on the Saskatchewan prairie at Cannington Manor. One rider falls in a well, two tangle with barbed wire, and a lady rider falls in a muddy field.

Cannington Manor, 25 miles south of Moosomin, is, at this time, a village of 200 people, the heart of a 2,600-acre colony with an agricultural college intended to teach affluent English gentlemen bachelors how to farm. It includes a church, hotel, general store, flour and grist mills, sawmill, meat packing plant, two cheese factories, and a two-storey 26-room stone mansion with hand-carved mantle fireplaces and gilt-framed oil paint-

ings, ballroom, billiard room, and servants' quarters.

Farming was sandwiched between the activities of theatrical, literary, musical, and art societies, and cricket, polo, tennis, football and fox hunting. The hounds were imported from the Isle of Wight, while thoroughbred horses were housed in a fieldstone stable with mahogany stalls and brass nameplates. Hunters set out with correct top boots, breeches and red hunting coats. Still, it wasn't quite like England; the foxes were actually coyotes, referred to by the *Spectator* as wolves.

At a Monday hunt, two hunters were observed "running into their wolf in Mr. Daniel's pasture, where they killed him in the open after a well-hunted run of something like two hours' duration. Several casualties are reported, one eager and presumably thirsty sportsman being rescued with difficulty from the bottom of an old well. Two gentlemen of suicidal turn of mind forced their unfortunate gees at a gallop through Mr. Gruggen's barbed wire fence, and the mud-plastered condition of a lady's habit suggest a complete cropper in a soft spot."

On Saturday, hounds, horses and hunters trampled the brush on one farm. "In the end our friend saved his brush," said the *Spectator*, "but it must have been a sadly bedraggled one."

Cannington Manor did not prosper. In 1900, when the CPR by-passed it by seven miles in building a new branch line, Cannington Manor became a ghost town, less than two decades after it had been founded. Today, it is a provincial park. The sound of the hunter's horn no longer echoes on the prairies,

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Canada's father of modern human rights



Photo, John Peters Humphrey Foundation.

John Peters Humphrey.

Three-and-a-half years after the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco, the nations of the world met in General Assembly in Paris to lay a foundation stone, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*. It is “the international Magna Carta of all mankind,” in the words of U.S. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. “One of humanity’s most shining achievements,” in the words of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay. Principal drafter of Canadian law rights advocate, John Peters Humphrey, “the father of the modern human rights system,” in the words of Nelson Mandela. Born in the small New Brunswick town

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Spies, smugglers, bribes forge Can-Am free trade



Illustrated London News, 19 May 1849. Library and Archives Canada C2726.

Burning the House of Assembly at Montreal, 25 April 1849. Britain's adoption of free trade caused economic collapse in Canada, rioting in Montreal, and demands for union with the United States.

A secret agent armed with bags of money to bribe politicians and newspaper publishers, lavish entertainment, and gunboat diplomacy—including the seizure of 400 American fishing boats—were among the means used to secure the first Canadian-American trade agreement, in 1854.

But long before this, the stage was set by the liberal economists, social reformers, politicians, and

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