



fig.1 Florence Ayscough, New York, 1917-1918. Private collection.
(Photo: De Strelecki, N.Y.)

FLORENCE WHEELOCK AYSCOUGH'S NIGER REEF TEA HOUSE

Seventy years ago, an editorial in the 20 February 1932 issue of the Saint John, New Brunswick *The Telegraph-Journal* reflected upon the relative lack of appreciation for the “genius” of Florence Ayscough among “her own countrymen in New Brunswick.” Noting that she had recently been described in the *New York Herald-Tribune* as “the quintessence, the finest flowering of the Old China Hand,” the Canadian writer promised Ayscough a rosier future in the province: “all things come to those who wait — and read — and the full flowering of her acclaim will be the Indian summer of the next generation.”¹

Time has not been nearly so kind to Florence Ayscough, who was once regarded as a leading female sinologist in the English-speaking world (fig.1). Her death in Chicago in 1942 elicited a generous array of obituaries and memorials, but New Brunswick has yet to fully acknowledge the local and international achievements of its part-time resident. This process took one step forward in the summer of 1999 when the Civic Trust of the town of St. Andrews re-opened the Niger Reef Tea House, donated in 1926 by Ayscough as a chapter house and fund-raising vehicle for the Passamaquoddy Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) (fig.2). Interestingly, it was not Ayscough's connection to the tea house that saved the 20' x 30' wooden structure. Calls for its preservation emerged in 1996 when local residents began to recall the functions held there during the forty years it had been owned by the IODE. Its rescue was then virtually guaranteed by the discovery of four of the five murals made for the tea house by the American artist Lucille Douglass in the summer of 1926 (fig.3).²

In this article the log-faced cabin, containing murals of the land and seascapes of the Passamaquoddy Bay region, will be firmly inscribed as Ayscough's project, one that speaks to the significance of her presence in New Brunswick. Such an approach is not meant to cast the work of Lucille Douglass into the shadows. Quite the contrary: the painter of the tea house murals was an important part of the sinologist's life and an artist whose career Ayscough took a decisive role in shaping. Douglass' participation in the tea house project is one of the most obvious layers which can be discerned in a reading of the building as the “personal geography, almost an autobiography” of Ayscough.³ Less apparent are other “ghosts,” fragments of Ayscough's several personae, inhabiting the structure. Together they construct a richly autographed entity that deserves a prominent place in the cultural landscape of St. Andrews.



fig.2 Niger Reef Tea House, St. Andrew's,
NB, 2000, exterior. (Photo: the author)



fig.3 Niger Reef
Tea House, St. Andrew's,
NB, 2000, interior.
(Photo: the author)

A surprisingly complex aesthetic ensemble, the Niger Reef Tea House is also a monument at odds with the way in which the history of St. Andrews was constructed in the second half of the twentieth century. Andrew Sackett has demonstrated forcefully that the marketing of St. Andrews as a tourist site has focused on the legacy of the exiled supporters of the British side in the American Revolutionary War who founded the town in 1783. This marketing strategy has served to obscure many other lives.⁴ Among the neglected in the fiction of "Loyalist" St. Andrews are the women of the community. The Niger Reef Tea House, once a woman's space, built by and for women, is now operated to raise funds for the St. Andrews Civic Trust. It can — indeed should — function as a powerful, albeit small site of contestation.

Florence Ayscough and New Brunswick

Florence Ayscough spent half her life in Shanghai. The daughter of a second-generation "New England planter," Thomas Reed Wheelock (1842-1920) of Annapolis, Nova Scotia, and a Bostonian, Edith Haswell Clarke (1848-1913),⁵ Florence was born in Shanghai c.1875-78. Her wealthy father, who had been in China since 1861, headed a number of enterprises concerned with the on- and off-loading of cargo in China.⁶ In 1889, he moved his family to Boston so the children might receive a "regular" education.⁷ During a family visit to Shanghai in the winter of 1897 Florence became engaged to a British businessman, Francis Ayscough, whom she married a year later.⁸ Shanghai was home for the couple for the next twenty-five years and Florence later returned to the city several times. Francis Ayscough died in 1933 and when Florence re-married two years later, Shanghai was again a dominant theme. Her second husband, whom she had met decades before in Shanghai, was Dr. Harley Farnsworth MacNair (1891-1947), Professor of Chinese History and Institutions at the University of Chicago.⁹ In their Chicago residence, "The House of the Wu'tung Trees," they entertained sinologues and supporters of China from around the world amidst the Chinese objects and books both had collected over the years.

If Shanghai, as place and as memory, was at the centre of Florence Ayscough's life, St. Andrews gave the "Paris of the East" some very stiff competition. Ayscough had strong connections to the town which developed as a fashionable summer resort in the late nineteenth century. Her paternal aunt, Isabella Wheelock, had married Charles Gove, Collector of Customs in St. Andrews from 1870 to 1897, and her grandmother, Mary Eliza Wheelock, had lived with the Goves for many years prior to her death in 1883.¹⁰ Hence, Ayscough was always more than a tourist or summer resident. St. Andrews was her Canadian home.¹¹

Florence first visited St. Andrews in 1878,¹² brought from China so her Canadian grandmother could see the first of four Wheelock grandchildren. Other family trips followed, and in 1897 her father established a large, "charming

[summer] cottage" on what is now King's Road.¹³ Marriage and residency in Shanghai did not bring an end to Ayscough's contact with St. Andrews; she made long treks back to the cottage several times before becoming its principal occupant in 1923. Most of those visits served a dual purpose: providing the opportunity to see family members and to escape the stifling summer heat of China. Some of the trips are worth looking at more closely as they also set the stage for Ayscough's later activities in New Brunswick.

One of these was a summertime visit to St. Andrews in 1910 when Ayscough solidified her friendship with Amy Lowell (1874-1925) whom she had met as a young girl in Boston.¹⁴ At the time Lowell was a fledgling poet still somewhat overshadowed by the reputations of her illustrious older brothers.¹⁵ Eleven years later she and Ayscough would collaborate on *Fir-Flower Tablets*, a well-known if not universally applauded translation of selected works by Li T'ai Po, Tu Fu and other early Chinese poets.¹⁶ By then, the cigar-smoking Lowell was a prominent and controversial advocate of imagist poetry in the United States and her participation in the book helped project Ayscough further onto the international stage.

An awkward situation brought Ayscough to North America from Shanghai for another important stay, from the autumn of 1917 until mid-August of the next year. The compradore of her husband's firm, Scott, Harding and Co., had embezzled funds and she hoped to sell off his collection of Chinese paintings for recompense.¹⁷ A hectic schedule included at least three visits with Lowell in Boston, a failed attempt to have Charles Freer look at the art collection,¹⁸ an exhibition of the paintings and scrolls at Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's Studio (fig.1), and another at the Art Institute of Chicago in June 1918.¹⁹ Ayscough lectured on China in New York and Boston, she wrote an article on Chinese painting for *The Mentor*, a New York magazine,²⁰ and, during a brief respite in St. Andrews in the summer of 1918, made the first of her public presentations in New Brunswick. She spoke to the local branch of the Red Cross on the subject of Chinese painting. A "pretty full report" of her illustrated lecture, delivered in the Casino of the Algonquin Hotel, was printed in the St. Andrews *Beacon*. The newspaper delayed other news in order to publish a densely packed historical study that identified leading painters of each dynasty and cited a number of European and Japanese authorities on Chinese art and philosophy.²¹

Somewhat to Ayscough's surprise, Chinese textiles and artifacts as well as poetry proved be of great interest to the "audience of country women from the real depths of the woods" whom she encountered during her first lengthy stay in New Brunswick as an adult from July to October, 1921. She returned to St. Andrew's from China to attend to family affairs²² and to work with Lowell on the translations for *Fir-Flower Tablets* but she also supported the endeavours of one of her childhood friends from the town, Grace Helen Mowat. Better known today as the historian of "Loyalist" St. Andrews,²³ Mowat had established the business,

Cottage Craft in 1913 to revive local needlework, rug-hooking and weaving crafts and to create both a substantial source of income for herself and a home industry for the women of the area.²⁴ Urging the women to depict “your own fir trees, your little white cottages by the sea, your sandstone, [and] your grey barns with their red doors,” and to avoid embroidering “lotus flowers and birds of paradise,”²⁵ she established the thriving enterprise that continues today from a harbourfront location in St. Andrews. On 21 September 1921, Ayscough met with Mowat’s craftswomen:

Miss Mowat.. saw a piece of embroidery I had the other day and said that she wished her women could see something like that. So I scraped together all the Chinese things in the house to make a little exhibition of them and then talked about the life of the Chinese — and read some of the simplest poems. Then we had tea and they asked numberless questions. One woman said “I had to drive five miles to come but I would gladly drive ten times as far” — and they were all thrilled. They really were.²⁶

Ayscough’s first husband retired in 1923, and the couple decided to make major changes in their lives. The St. Andrews cottage, “Topside,” (fig.4) would be their primary residence, offering proximity to Boston and facilitating further collaboration between Ayscough and Amy Lowell. Winters were to be spent in the United Kingdom or China, with a small home in Shanghai built for the anticipated returns there. These retirement plans did not work out well; Amy Lowell died in 1925, and four years later Francis Ayscough became seriously ill with what was diagnosed as neurasthenia, an umbrella term for the nervous disorders for which, ironically enough, St. Andrews was thought to have curative powers.²⁷ The search for effective treatment took the Ayscoughs to Switzerland, Austria and finally Guernsey, where Francis died in 1933.

However, prior to her permanent abandonment of the St. Andrews home in 1929, Ayscough became involved in the cultural and social life of the Passamaquoddy region with the same intense energy that she brought to every place she lived. Her “summers” in the town from 1923 to 1929 often extended from May to December and saw her continue to work on her scholarship, an undertaking she successfully confronted despite her lack of a university education.²⁸ Although Ayscough’s exclusion from the halls of learning is not startling when viewed in the context of the times, she probably faced sharper constraints than many of her sex. Her great-uncle, highly influential in the upbringing of her mother, was Dr. Edward Hammond Clarke (1820-1877).²⁹ In his 1873 *Sex in Education, or a Fair Chance for the Girls*, he outlined his opposition to emerging identical patterns of education and careerism for women, on the basis of their unavoidable damage to physical and psychological health. Clearly Ayscough ignored his admonitions; from 1907, when she was appointed Honourary Librarian to the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in Shanghai, she pursued and supported



fig. 4 Florence Ayscough, *Topside*, c.1924, St. Andrews. Private collection.
(Photo: photographer unknown)

various forms of scholarship.³⁰ In 1921 the Society bestowed on her an honorary membership — the first ever given to a woman. In May 1927, Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia awarded her an honorary D. Litt and she used the title with pride for the rest of her life.³¹ It is worth remarking on the wonderful irony of her engagement with Maritime education and institutions. Edward Clarke's praise of the "firmer step, full chest, and ruddier cheek of the Nova-Scotian-girl," as positive products of the province's lack of educational opportunities for children, was based on the "quiet, sturdy unharassed" faces in "the little town of Wolfville."³² Undoubtedly Ayscough was more encouraged by the accomplishments of Clarke women who were educators and writers.³³

But whatever drove Ayscough to seek a place in the scholarly world, the move to St. Andrews proved amenable to her intellectual interests. She worked on several major publications in her book-lined home and used it as a base from which to educate New Brunswickers about China. She loaned part of her art collection to the Natural History Museum (now the New Brunswick Museum) in Saint John in the winter of 1926/27 and, between 1923 and 1929, made at least ten formal presentations in the province on aspects of Chinese life. These often included readings from the poems she and Amy Lowell had crafted together, one of Ayscough's contributions to a conscious campaign to have their unique approach to translation accepted in North America.³⁴ Maritime Canada was not unfamiliar with China, having sent forth its share of missionaries, seafarers and businessmen. Ayscough found large audiences and ample newspaper coverage for her talks in St. Andrews and neighbouring St. Stephen and in Saint John. Her lectures were generally concerned with establishing the nature of the Chinese mind by looking at traditional accomplishments in art, poetry, and architecture. Her subjects ranged from general commentaries on China to focussed discussions on Chinese houses and gardens. According to a newspaper account, her first major venture in Saint John, a "splendidly dramatic" speech for the Women's Canadian Club on 22 November 1923, was delivered wearing a "gown of scarlet silk with beautiful embroideries" that was, she explained, "such as those worn by the Japanese of today and exactly similar to the gowns worn by the women of China in 700 A.D., the period at which the poet Li T'au-Po lived." She proceeded to reflect upon the nature of Chinese poetry, reading one poem in English translation and "then chanted it in the sing-song way in which the Chinese read poems." *The Telegraph-Journal* newspaper concluded that: "the address gave an entirely new meaning to China and things Chinese."³⁵ In her several addresses to New Brunswick audiences and whether the subject was "Old" or "New" China, Ayscough reinforced many of what are regarded as stereotypes and broke with others. Her interventions were made all the more powerful by the effective performing strategies she had developed over time, these most likely encouraged by the example of Amy Lowell.³⁶



fig.5 Chinese Garden, 1927, designed by Florence Ayscough.
Pamela Goold collection. (Photo: photographer unknown)

Ayscough also imported some of the friends she had made in China to the province, including Anna Carrere, a landscape designer who had been one of Ayscough's companions on a trip up the Yangtze river in 1922.³⁷ In the summer of 1927 they motored to Goold's Nurseries in Sussex to consult on the construction of a miniature Chinese garden, one-thirtieth in scale and populated with "little people dressed in real Chinese material cut according to Chinese fashion." It was displayed first in Saint John and then at the St. Stephen Exhibition, where the garden (fig.5) (and Ayscough's printed commentary) was considered a major attraction amidst the farm produce and animals.³⁸

Through Ayscough's efforts, a small section of New Brunswick thus received fairly intense exposure to what at the time were highly respected perceptions of Chinese culture. It is wrong to assume that Ayscough merely imposed her China onto a community into which she did not seek to integrate herself. Rather, she developed a strong interest in the history of the region³⁹ and established a friendship with the Shediac-based historian of Acadia and Eastern Canada, Dr. J. Clarence Webster.⁴⁰ As with her lectures on China, she sometimes ventured into the modern world; as a member of the New Brunswick Author's Association she supported moves to create literature from such contemporary regional realities as hydro-electric power.⁴¹ Ayscough also forged a place for herself in the St. Andrews community as a hostess of note, inviting groups of up to fifty people for tea at her King's Road residence, "filled with curiosities from China and Japan," or for picnics on MacMaster's Island, a small Passamaquoddy Bay island she had purchased to save it from being logged.⁴² Often these gatherings were held for the local organizations to which Florence belonged; at other times they were held so that friends in St. Andrews could meet her international acquaintances such as Margaret Deneke, Choirmaster of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University, who visited in 1927.⁴³ The island, which Ayscough called "the Island of the Immortals," served as the site of her most prestigious social event, a picnic for Lord and Lady Willingdon that took place during the much-heralded mid-July 1927 visit to the region of the new Governor-General and his wife. The Willingdons had travelled to China the previous year where Lord Willingdon acted as Chairman of the delegation mandated to restructure Boxer Indemnity payments to Great Britain. Lady Marie Adelaide had already begun to install their Chinese treasures in Rideau Hall.⁴⁴ A photograph from the summer of 1927 (fig.6) suggests that a highly prominent Royal also visited the island: in the centre background is a figure identified by Ayscough as the Prince of Wales.⁴⁵

Circumscribed by the practices of her class and continuing some of her activities in Shanghai, Ayscough entered the arena of social responsibility. Her talks to the Women's Canadian Club, of which she was a member, included one on child welfare,⁴⁶ and she displayed a marked concern for the education of local children, ensuring they were invited to public lectures and gave them personal prizes.



fig.6 Royal Visit to St. Andrews, Summer 1927. Private collection.
(Photo: photographer unknown)

Ayscough seems to have been especially dedicated to the IODE which granted her membership in 1923. Having been a major figure in Shanghai-based war work, she was drawn to the organization to which Grace Mowat and other friends belonged; however its involvement in promoting education and in funding the district nurse programme was just as strong an attraction. Several of her lectures were delivered to raise funds for the IODE and in the summer of 1925, she was the major sponsor of an IODE tea room set up in "Red Cliff," a harbourfront home still in existence. Shortly afterwards, she determined that she would build her own chapter house for the IODE; it would be used to hold meetings and would also be opened up to townsfolk and tourists to raise funds for its "educational and welfare programmes." Land was leased from the town on a site adjacent to the Block House of 1813, overlooking both the harbour and the stretch of water that meets the shores of Maine. By 6 May 1926, the structure was complete and Ayscough announced to her IODE colleagues who were assembled in the new building that "her friend, Miss Douglass, would come to St. Andrews and paint suitable decorations on the walls."⁴⁷

The "Opalescent Lady" and Lucille Sinclair Douglass

In calling upon the services of Lucille Sinclair Douglass (1876-1935) (fig.7), Ayscough went "faraway nearby," turning to the Alabama-born artist she had met in Shanghai and who now made New York City her home base. Douglass had been in St. Andrews at least twice before (1924, 1925) and her return was another thread

in a tightly-woven friendship and working partnership that eventually spanned three continents and brought together a woman of substantial means with another whose financial position was anything but certain.

The two had become acquainted during Ayscough's final years of permanent residency in Shanghai. Douglass, a daughter of two shattered Confederate families living in Tuskegee, had acquired a Bachelor's degree in art from the Alabama Female College in 1893. She had managed to earn enough money to study from 1909 to 1913 with several American and French artists in Europe, the best known of whom were Richard Miller (1875-1943) and Lucien Simon (1861-1945).⁴⁸ She arrived in China in the late summer of 1920, hired by the China Centenary Movement to establish a professional slide-colouring operation.⁴⁹ This employment was structured to allow her to train "Chinese women both because of her constant interest in the feminist movement and because of the limited occupational field hitherto open to women of the East."⁵⁰ Douglass' work with the young graduates of the McTeiry School in Shanghai caught the attention of at least one prominent American feminist, Grace Thompson Seton. Seton's 1924 *Chinese Lanterns*, written after her first visit to China, carried the news of Douglass' slide-colouring unit back to the United States. This was one of the few references to the artist's involvement with the missionary movement to appear in print in North America.⁵¹ Once the China Centenary Movement wound down, Douglass stayed on in Shanghai as a member of the editorial board of the British-owned *Sunday Shanghai Times*, sometimes travelling deep into Western China to do research for art, travel and political pieces for the newspaper. Although Douglass exhibited her art only once during her three and a half years of continuous residency in Shanghai, she was described in the city's newspapers as an accomplished artist.⁵² Also reported at length was a talk she gave in November 1921 to the American Women's Club during which she told of "her [pre-War] studio... in the garden of the Alhambra."⁵³

Florence Ayscough attended this AWC lecture, probably meeting Douglass for the first time during the social hour that followed. The artist quickly set about hand-colouring lantern slides for Ayscough's lectures, a collaboration that continued for many years and was mentioned in newspaper accounts of the presentations. In fact, it was through such work that Lucille Douglass came to the attention of New Brunswickers a year before ever setting foot in the province. The report of Ayscough's 1923 lecture in Saint John noted that "the coloring of the slides was exquisite and was the work of a close friend of Mrs. Ayscough's, Miss Lucille Douglas [*sic*], of the *Shanghai Times*, who is a talented New York woman."⁵⁴ In China, Douglass had reversed the word-image relationship, employing Ayscough's photographs to illustrate an article she wrote about the island of Putoushan, a devotional site for Kuan Yin, the Chinese Buddhist goddess of compassion.⁵⁵

Soon after Douglass returned to North America in the summer of 1924, she travelled to New Brunswick to visit the woman she would later publicly describe as "the Opalescent Lady."⁵⁶ From 1924 to 1935, Florence Ayscough appears to



fig.7 Lucille Douglass, c.1929. Private collection.
(Photo: photographer unknown)

have done everything within her power to foster a North American audience for this self-supporting artist. In St. Andrews she persuaded Douglass to try her hand at book illustration, the results of which first received wide distribution in Ayscough's *A Chinese Mirror: Being Reflections of the Reality behind Appearance*, published in the United States and Great Britain in the mid 1920s. The book began with an extended account of the building of Ayscough's final Shanghai home that she called "The Grass Hut by the Yellow Reach," and continued with what was essentially a revised compilation of papers Ayscough had delivered or published in China. Several dozen reproductions of Douglass' drawings were included in this immensely popular volume; some were based on photographs supplied by Ayscough and others clearly related to pastels the artist was exhibiting at the time (fig.8).⁵⁷

A Chinese Mirror was the first of the four books on which they collaborated. Royalty payments were almost always split evenly between author and artist, an arrangement insisted upon by Ayscough.⁵⁸ She also helped translate Douglass' Shanghai reputation as an artist into public performance in North America by writing a small pamphlet for the exhibition *Waterways of China*.⁵⁹ Douglass' first-ever solo exhibition was held at the Anderson Galleries in New York in March 1925; her pastels and etchings received a number of favourable reviews. *The Art News* of 4 April, for example, commented on "the delightful glimpses of upstanding junks..., with embowering vegetation and pinnacled roof trees above." Following a showing in St. Andrews a few months later when she also lectured to the Women's Canadian Club,⁶⁰ *Waterways* was exhibited briefly in the Green Room of Montreal's Ritz-Carlton Hotel on September 23 and 24, 1925 and again met with appreciation. S. Morgan-Powell, writing in *The Montreal Daily Star*, noted how rare it was for artists to step outside of Peking and applauded Douglass' ability to "visualize the spirit of a place in the simplest of scenes," and especially her approach to "the notes and moods of nature," finding her "thin group of half-bare pines soaring against the sky" to be "a gem in its mastery of line."⁶¹ Ayscough who knew several people in Montreal, may well have been instrumental in securing the Quebec venue, which preceded showings in Chicago, Newport and Milwaukee.

To enhance her income and her reputation as an artist, Douglass also began to lecture on Chinese subjects throughout the United States. Once again Ayscough was of great assistance. Looking to further publicize her book *A Chinese Mirror*, she urged her American publisher, Robert Linscott of Houghton-Mifflin, to write to the prestigious Pond Agency and suggest Douglass be taken on as a speaker. An audition was obtained for November 1925,⁶² and its success led to a decade of well-organized lecture tours for Douglass who became known as a compelling speaker, noted for her use of superb hand-coloured slides and moving pictures, and — like Ayscough — for appearing in dramatic apparel, most notably matching turbans and walking sticks.⁶³



Lucille Douglass

fig.8 Lucille Douglass, etching of "The Grass Hut" based on drawing for *A Chinese Mirror*, 1926. Private collection.



fig.9 Lucille Douglass, autographed plate for *New Journeys in Old Asia*, 1927. Private collection.

During the late spring and summer of 1926 Douglass made several trips to St. Andrews, working on illustrations for Ayscough's *Autobiography of a Chinese Dog* as well as painting the Niger Reef Tea House murals. Now popular with dog breeders, the charming *Autobiography* was "written by" Yo Fei, the Lao-tze that Ayscough had named after the 12th.-century warrior who defended China against foreign Jurchen invasions.⁶⁴ Douglass was probably more comfortable with her next project, begun in the fall of 1926: the illustration of Helen Churchill Candee's *New Journeys in Old Asia*.⁶⁵ Candee and Douglass took a six-month voyage through Bali, Java and Cambodia, visiting Ayscough in Shanghai on their way home in April 1927.⁶⁶ Response to Douglass' etchings for Candee's book (fig.9) was enthusiastic, leading to an exhibition in Washington at the Yorke Galleries under the patronage of the French Ambassador Paul Claudel as well as a commission from the French government to produce a set of larger etchings of Angkor Wat for the 1931 *Exposition Coloniale* in Paris.⁶⁷ Another trip to Cambodia (1928-29) resulted in exhibitions at the Milch Galleries in New York and the Casson Galleries in Boston,⁶⁸ and dramatically expanded her lecture schedule. In the midst of this busy professional life, including active memberships in both the American Woman's Association and the Society of Women Geographers, Douglass continued to work with Ayscough as an illustrator. She contributed a few new drawings to *Firecracker Land* (a book for young adults, published in 1932), and all of the etchings for *Tu Fu: Travels of a Poet* (1934). Douglass was probably working on the prints when she made her final visit to St. Andrews in the summer of 1929, and she also lectured to the Women's Canadian Club on Angkor Wat, with Ayscough "help[ing] with the pictures."⁶⁹ In the years that followed they would work together in Guernsey, but the two women last saw one another either in Boston or New York in the summer of 1935. Douglass was preparing for another winter expedition to Angkor Wat, which was cancelled because of illness; Ayscough was on her way home to Guernsey after a lengthy trip to the Far East where she had been continuing the research for what was to be her last major publication, the 1937 *Chinese Women Yesterday and Today*.

Douglass, who died in December 1935, is said to have arranged for her ashes to be buried under a mango tree on the Angkor Wat site,⁷⁰ a small measure of how far she had gone in fulfilling her childhood goal of seeing as much of the world as she could. Her professional achievements were marked by at least three memorial exhibitions in New York City in the five years following her death. Douglass credited Ayscough with responsibility for her success: "whatever has come to me — for she has made me see that what I did — no matter how dissatisfied I might be with it — was of some value to the world."⁷¹ Undoubtedly an exaggeration, and ignoring the effect the artist may have had on Ayscough's confidence and success as a "popular" author and lecturer, this tribute nevertheless does help explain why Douglass was prepared to undertake in St. Andrews, her only known mural project.

The Tea House: A Directed Collaboration

On 17 June 1926 a large gathering celebrated the official completion of what was the first IODE chapter house ever constructed. The event was attended by representatives of several local organizations and presided over by Mrs. W.F. Todd, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick. She praised the dedication of the donor: "The building was not only a gift from Mrs. Ayscough. It was almost a part of herself. Mrs. Ayscough had taken such a personal interest in its erection. It almost seemed as if every log had had to pass her critical inspection before it was allowed to become part of the chapter house."⁷²

Lucille Douglass was not at the opening, although Todd noted that "much of the charm of the interior of the building was due to the exquisite decoration... of handpainted vistas of pine trees and sea," and each attendee took home a photograph of a section of the murals. Nothing suggests that the townspeople of St. Andrews were aware that Douglass had begun to acquire a name for herself in American art circles by the summer of 1926. Rather, she was almost always described as merely a decorator as stated in the June 10th. *Saint Croix Courier*: "Mrs. Ayscough has had the walls beautifully decorated by Miss Lucille Douglass and it is certainly a very delightful place." Later that summer Douglass' exhibition *Waterways of China* made a repeat visit to the town and was presented in the Niger Reef Tea House, but it passed without comment in the local newspapers.

The private workings of partnerships are difficult, often impossible, to reconstruct. Given their close friendship and shared interests, Ayscough and Douglass would certainly have thoroughly discussed the tea house project. Nevertheless, a perusal of the books the two women produced together argues for Ayscough's occupation of the driver's seat during their collaborations. She often supplied photographs from which Douglass made illustrations, but the artist's textual contribution to *Firecracker Land* illuminates the nature of their working relationship:

this... absolute undeviating devotion to the truth... on her part and my artistic impressionism often brought me in sharp contact with unexpected corners. This same divergence of viewpoint was introduced when I was painting the slides for her lecture on Tu Fu. I looked at them from the pictorial angle, she from the point of the incident she wished to illustrate.⁷³

What kind of text did Ayscough ask Douglass to illustrate in the log cabin? Ayscough was an unabashed maker of scenes, not just words. Her books were carefully wrought objects, sometimes battled over with her publishers, and she functioned as architect for several of her homes and gardens, places that served both her private life and her public personae as scholar and author. Buildings and their embellishments operated as much more than accumulations of materials; hence the Niger Reef Tea House is unlikely to have been a haphazard production.

The reasons for Ayscough's choice of a log cabin are not immediately obvious. One might have anticipated a structure that played insistently upon her connections

with China, perhaps a Canadian equivalent to the "Chinoiserie" tea pavilion constructed in 1914 for Alva Vanderbilt Belmont on the grounds of The Marble House in Newport. A building known as the "Japanese Tea House" had operated in conjunction with the St. Andrews Art Shop in the early years of the century and could have paved the way for the acceptance of an exotic cultural anomaly. Alternatively, Ayscough could have drawn upon well-established local models — the predominantly plainboard structures of the Loyalist period or the more recently added shingle-style buildings of Edward Maxwell, of which Ayscough's own residence, "Topside," itself was a mundane precursor.⁷⁴ Instead she chose a very different example, one which allowed her to forge a direct relationship between the tea house and her favourite spot in New Brunswick and one which, in my view, carries other personal inferences.

On the most accessible level, the Niger Reef Tea House recalled Ayscough's MacMaster's Island retreat; the island, with its log cabin as refreshment point, was private property she eagerly put on display and was also a memory she tried to keep alive after she left St. Andrews. Entering the second of her New Brunswick log cabins, visitors to the tea house were instantly transported to a simulated island, created by the murals that covered the four walls of the seating area. There, as if from a slight promontory, they could appreciate airy, expansive renderings of rocky land and quiet seas, impeded only by the pine trees in the foreground; representations of trees which Ayscough had saved when she prevented the logging industry from harvesting the Island.

Other Ayscough "places" were also embedded in the tea house, most obviously the "Grass Hut by the Yellow Reach" which had figured so prominently in the recently published *A Chinese Mirror*. In contrast to the "American style" of her other residences in China, this final home in Shanghai had confronted the growing modernity of the city with a meticulously-researched building programme belonging to the older agrarian history of the delta region.⁷⁵ Four years after its completion and thousands of miles away, Ayscough again turned to the past. Using one of the forms of architecture popularly associated with the early life of Europeans in North America,⁷⁶ she created an appropriate companion for the St. Andrews' Block House that she incorrectly understood to date from 1783 "as protection against Indians."⁷⁷ Telling indeed is an image of the Niger Roof Tea House by Lucille Douglass (fig.10), whose watercolour of St. Andrews (fig.11) recorded the town as it appeared c.1926. In the image, the IODE chapter house is turned some 90 degrees from its actual location and moved closer to the water, resolutely isolated from any relationship with the town and its harbour and thus serving as another hut, another kind of island, linked only to the past and to the sea.

The pine trees are striking features in Douglass' murals (fig.12): some are over five feet in height, their trunks articulated in browns and blues and crowned by thick clusters of dark green needles. Of course, they made eminent sense in the



fig.10 Lucille Douglass, Niger Reef Tea House, 1926. Houghton-Mifflin collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.



fig.11 Lucille Douglass, postcard with reproduction of watercolour View of St. Andrews, circa 1926. Private collection.

New Brunswick setting and acknowledged the artist's recognized abilities with the motif. They might even have been made with a knowing nod towards contemporary Canadian art. However, pine trees, which in China were considered symbols of immutability,⁷⁸ had also been an important part of Ayscough's Shanghai residence, the "Grass Hut." In *A Chinese Mirror*, she described the care with which her language teacher selected and pruned a pine tree for the principal courtyard, and she recorded the poem he had written for the walls of her study: "Because of the moon, I break the paper window. / There is no wind — pine trees alone murmur."

In a previous issue of *The Journal of Canadian Art History*, Marilyn MacKay established that the practice of designing murals which used the figure of the Native as a foil for asserting the material progress of the new nation, was fairly widespread in Canada from 1895 to 1939.⁷⁹ The Niger Reef Tea House murals have no traditional indices of human presence. The heart of the tea house was, I would argue, a different form of human development, the "adventure of the spirit" guided by nature, gentled by the enduring murmur of pine trees. The interior murals run behind thin vertical bands of wood creating the appearance of an enclosing screen or, alternatively, the open walls of a pavilion. Both interpretation invite comparisons to Chinese landscape painting and the Chinese garden. These art forms were based on the belief that artificial landscapes, like landscapes themselves, were more than pleasing vistas, an attitude which Ayscough shared. As she had explained to a St. Andrews audience in 1918, the "boon of the [Chinese landscape] painter's art" was its ability "in the midst of care and toil... [to] liberate the mind and bring it into the august presence of nature." According to Ayscough's musings in *A Chinese Mirror*, the gardens of China were small spaces that replicated the country retreats where male members of the "aristocracy of the brain" retired to "let their hearts — which are of course regarded as the seat of thought — beat in unison with the rhythmical pulse of Nature herself." Such peaceful enclaves were necessary for the educated man to retain balance and to enjoy the seven Fine Arts; they were also especially important for "the women of China [who] were debarred by the social system in vogue, from ever enjoying the experience of an actual sojourn in desolate places."⁸⁰ The absence of bamboo, one of the four essential components of the Chinese garden, confirms that the tea house murals were not intended in any way to simulate an actual Chinese garden. Rather, the references to her MacMaster's Island retreat, her Shanghai home, and the *raison d'être* of two important Chinese art forms, help to articulate the Niger Reef Tea House as a contemplative place. Whatever else took place in the IODE chapter house, the log cabin and its interior offered visitors the opportunity to use nature as a means of considering the accomplishments of the mind/heart and their relation to a larger realm of being.

In North America the use of the log cabin as a symbol of or vehicle for productive retreat was not unusual. Through her visits with Amy Lowell in



fig.12 Lucille Douglass, Niger Reef Tea House, detail from interior.
(Photo: the author)

Dublin, New Hampshire, Ayscough may well have been aware of the one-room log cabin that had been constructed in the early 1900s for Edward MacDowell at the nearby MacDowell Colony.⁸¹ However, far more strongly lodged in the North American popular imagination was another simple log cabin from which nature was contemplated for its many lessons: Henry David Thoreau's Walden Pond residence in Concord, Massachusetts. Thoreau, one of the leading figures of American Transcendentalism and having recently translated a large number of passages from the writings of Confucius,⁸² lived in the cabin from 1845-47, at which point it was turned over to Ralph Waldo Emerson. Might the Niger Reef Tea House be thought of as a latter-day version of that structure? On a general level, the answer is *Yes*, but even on a much more specific level it may also be in the affirmative.

The points of contact between the Clarke family — Ayscough's maternal ancestors — and the American Transcendentalists were many. Maria Stimson Clarke, one of Ayscough's great-grandmothers, had briefly corresponded with Mary Moody Emerson who is now recognized as an important influence upon her nephew, Ralph Waldo Emerson. A great-uncle, John Jones Clarke had been a close friend of Dr. George Putnam, an early member of the Transcendental Club, while a great-aunt, Abby Clarke Stimson, was well-known to the Transcendentalists. In her Providence home Stimson entertained such luminaries as Emerson, Frederick Henry Hedge and Margaret Fuller, as well as members of the Brook Farm commune. A Stimson daughter was a lifelong friend of Emerson's daughter, Ellen.⁸³ Further cementing connections with one of the leading intellectual traditions of nineteenth-century New England were the friendships of Ayscough's controversial great-uncle: eulogies for Edward Hammond Clarke were delivered by Cyrus Bartol, a major transcendentalist theologian⁸⁴ and Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., the physician/writer who championed Emerson. Perhaps most significantly, Ayscough's maternal grandfather, Manlius Stimson Clarke, had known Thoreau when both were at Harvard and graduated together in 1837.⁸⁵ It is not hard to imagine that Ayscough, who was familiar with Emerson's notion of intuition, "remembered" the Transcendentalists in her tea house. Her pride in and affection for her maternal antecedents, as well as her parallel interests in "the Orient" and the place of nature in self-understanding, strongly supports a transcendentalist reading.

Situating the Niger Reef Tea House

The IODE Chapter House was constructed and embellished at the peak of the North American tea house movement, when the "exoticized" had joined earlier streams of domestic and historicized environments.⁸⁶ Ayscough's project can be considered a curious hybrid of diverse orientations: the exterior is both historical and domestic, and the tea house envelopes a space in which a privately-owned

locale is substituted for more traditional signs of domesticity and rendered transcultural. As the "Loyalization" of St. Andrews progressed in its intensity, the tea house spoke for larger horizons.

One way of situating the Niger Reef Tea House in the social landscape of St. Andrews would be to designate it as a public "folly" constructed by a wealthy woman desirous of a prominent place for herself in local society.⁸⁷ Although this is not entirely inappropriate, much of value is lost if such a critique causes the tea house to be quickly set aside. It was, on one level, a blissful, heavily-classed retreat from the everyday. At the same time it was a part of the "women's sphere," still as undervalued in St. Andrews as it is elsewhere. The project was realized for a women's organization that sought to advance education and health in the community. It was conceived by a woman who, having performed her way out of the expected into an internationally recognized position as a scholar, sought to continue those efforts by creating a special place owned and controlled by a group of women. To do that, she turned for assistance to a woman negotiating her own way in a world that continued, discursively, to constrain the independence of women. A hasty overwriting of these attempts at public agency, discomfiting as some of their attributes undoubtedly are, seals off considerations of how relatively privileged women — singly, in small working partnerships or in large groups — tried to effect change for themselves and for others.

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Notes

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1 The editorial refers to a 1931 *Herald-Tribune* article by James Bennett and is reprinted in Harley MACNAIR, ed., *The Incomparable Lady: Tributes and Other Memorabilia Pertaining to Florence Wheelock Ayscough MacNair* (Chicago: Privately printed, 1946), 59-60.

2 For a lively account of the rescue project, including the discovery of the murals under wallboards, see Pam STUART, "Secrets of a tea house: Murals by famous artist hidden for 30 years in St. Andrews," *The Telegraph-Journal*, 10 Apr. 1999. The murals were painted in lean oils on unprimed beaverboard in 8' x 4' panels: Adam KARPOWICZ, *Condition Report/Recommendations: 188P* (Sackville: Owens Art Gallery, 20 May 1997). There was a fifth "free-standing" mural that had been moved to an exterior location in 1967 and disintegrated.

3 This phrase derives from Elizabeth COATSWORTH, *Personal Geography: Almost an Autobiography* (Brattleboro: Stephen Greene Press, 1976).

4 Andrew SACKETT, "Doing History in the 'Great Cyclorama of God'. Tourism and the Presentation of the Past in Twentieth-Century St. Andrews, New Brunswick" (Kingston: Queen's University M.A. Thesis, 1995), 126: "No blacks, Natives, Irish, women or workers need apply for 'significance' in St. Andrews."

5 For further information, see Edward Manning Banks WHELOCK, *The Wheelock Family in Nova Scotia* (Privately printed, 1987) and Louise DIMAN, *Leaves from a Family Tree* (Privately printed, 1941).

6 His career in China is outlined in H.W. DICK and S.A. KENTWELL, *Sold East: Traders, Tramps and Tugs of Chinese Waters* (Melbourne: Nautical Association of Australia Inc., 1991), 272-75. The move to China by Thomas and his oldest brother John may have been prompted by an uncle, Joseph Wheelock, a merchant and ship owner: Elizabeth Ruggles COWARD, *Bridgetown, Nova Scotia: Its History to 1900* (Bridgetown: Mailman Publishing Co. Ltd., 1955).

7 Florence AYSCOUGH, *Firecracker Land: pictures of the Chinese world for younger readers* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1932), 20.

8 *Ibid.*, 24. Francis Ayscough had been in Shanghai for a number of years prior to 1897, working for a mechanical engineering firm and occupying a series of positions in the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club: see Charles N. DAVIS, *A History of the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club, 1863-1930* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1930).

9 MacNair met Ayscough in 1916, while teaching at St. John's University in Shanghai; see Maurice PRICE, "Harley Farnsworth MacNair," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* (Nov. 1948): 45-64.

10 Obituary for Isabella E. Wheelock Gove, *The Saint Croix Courier*, 30 April 1914; for Charles M. Gove, *ibid.*, 21 May 1903. I wish to thank Ruby Anning, St. Andrews, for sending me a copy of Mary Eliza Wheelock's obituary in *The Bay Pilot*, 21 June 1883.

11 Ayscough appears to have been especially close to two St. Andrews Gove cousins, Bessie and Kate, who married brothers, respectively W. C. Hazen Grimmer, a member of the Supreme

Court of New Brunswick, and Frank Howard Grimmet, first Secretary of the St. Andrews Land Company, an American-backed group responsible for developing St. Andrews as a summer retreat for the wealthy.

12 *St. Andrews Standard*, 4 Sept. 1878.

13 The cottage, renovated and enlarged, survives today as The Kingsbrae Arms. Consistent with the general "masculinization" of St. Andrews' history, the enterprise is marketed on the internet as the former home of "a sea captain involved in merchant trade with Shanghai."

14 For the most detailed account of the friendship between the two women, see Harley MACNAIR, ed., *Florence Ayscough & Amy Lowell; Correspondance of a Friendship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945). Also see: S. Foster DAMON, *Amy Lowell: A Chronicle with Extracts from her Correspondance* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1966).

15 Amy's brothers included Abbott Lowell, President of Harvard University, and Percival Lowell, a noted Japanophile and founder of the Lowell Observatory.

16 *Fir-Flower Tablets* was published by Houghton Mifflin, the company whose principal editor was fascinated by the Lowell family: see Ferris GREENSLET, *The Lowells and their Seven Worlds* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946).

17 MACNAIR, *Florence Ayscough*, 18. Amy Lowell helped alleviate the strain of Ayscough's unsuccessful attempts to sell the works.

18 I wish to thank Elinor Pearlstein of the Art Institute of Chicago for information on Ayscough's contact with Freer.

19 Unsigned, "Chinese Modernists at the Whitney Gallery," *American Art News* 16, no. 21 (12 Mar. 1918): 2.

20 Florence AYSCOUGH, "Chinese Painting," *The Mentor* 6, no. 20 (2 Dec. 1918): 1-11.

21 "Chinese Paintings," *The Beacon*, 10 Aug. 1918.

22 Ayscough's father had died in Shanghai the year before, as had her brother Geoffrey, who had been convalescing in Boston prior to an intended return to China. Lengthy obituaries for Thomas Wheelock appeared in Shanghai newspapers, including *The Celestial Empire*, 10 January 1920.

23 Mowat's book, *The Diverting History of a Loyalist Town* (St. Andrews, N.B.: Charlotte County Cottage Craft, 1932), revised in 1954, is held by SACKETT, *Doing History*, 84-96, to have figured largely in the "Loyalization" of St. Andrews.

24 *Ibid.*, 59-76, offers a critical analysis of the Cottage Craft enterprise and Sackett establishes that it gave Mowat a personal income of over \$10,000 in 1920.

25 Lucy DOYLE, "Charlotte County Women Famed for Beautiful Art Work," *The Standard* (Montreal), 4 Feb. 1922.

26 Letter, 11 Sept. 1921, to Amy Lowell: MACNAIR, *Florence Ayscough*, 152. Some of those artifacts, which we presume Mowat accepted for their technical achievements are now in the Charlotte County Museum in St. Stephen. A special room contains the Chinese collection of Thomas Reed Wheelock that would have been in the St. Andrews home in the summer of 1921.

27 Andrew SACKETT, "Inhaling the Salubrious Air: Health and Development in St. Andrews, N.B., 1880-1910," *Acadiensis* 25, no. 1 (Autumn 1995): 54-81.

28 The men in her maternal family line had attended Harvard since the late eighteenth century. The first of the Harvard Clarke graduates was Ayscough's great-grandfather, Pitt Clarke (1763-1835), who became pastor of the First Congregational Church of Norton, Massachusetts, see Edward Hammond CLARKE, *et. al.*, *Memorial of Rev. Pitt Clarke...and Mary Jones Clarke*

(Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1866). Pitt Clarke had been privately tutored into Harvard by Hannah Adams, allegedly the first American woman to earn her living through writing. See Michael W. VELLA, "Theology, Genre, and Gender: the Precarious Place of Hannah Adams in American Literary History," *Early American Literature* 28 (1993): 21-41.

29 Dr. Clarke, for many years Professor of Materia Medica at Harvard, was identified as Ayscough's grandfather in an otherwise carefully researched account of her life: unsigned, "Florence Ayscough Grew Up 'En Route'," *The Providence Sunday Journal*, 7 July 1935.

30 AYSCOUGH, *Firecracker Land*, 36-37: "One of the great advantages of living far from the centre of things is that one has all sorts of opportunities denied to people who live where professionals can be turned to at any moment."

31 Ayscough received the degree on 25 May (*The Acadian*, 19 May 1927) and returned in the autumn to deliver a lecture on "The Purple Forbidden City, Peking" for the Fine Arts course, at which time it was announced that she would offer a prize of \$100 to the student "who writes the best essay on the international aspects of the Chinese situation" (*ibid.*, 20 Oct. 1927). Unfortunately, Acadia University's Archives do not contain the degree citation, nor any information on the nomination procedure.

32 Dr. Clarke's arguments, presented in seventeen editions of *Sex in Education; or, a Fair Chance for the Girls* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873) are assessed in Sue ZSCHOCHÉ, "Dr. Clarke Revisited: Science, True Womanhood, and Female Collegiate Education," *Historical Studies in Education* 29, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 545-69. His comments on Nova-Scotian girls are to be found in Part V of the original publication, as reprinted by the Arno Press, 1972.

33 Her great-grandmother Mary Cordis Lemist Clarke had helped her sister-in-law Susanna Haswell Rowson, author of the first American best seller *Charlotte Temple*, to run one of the earliest academies in the United States offering post-elementary education to young women. For further information, see: Patricia L. PARKER, *Susanna Rowson* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986). The poetry of another great-grandmother, Maria Stimson Clarke was noted by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. Holmes' comments on Clarke's poems can be found in Edward H. CLARKE, *Visions: A Study of False Sight* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1880), xv.

34 For a brief account of the defense of the translations, see Donald A. PRECOSKY, "'Make Ezra Pound and the Whole Caboodle of Them Sit UP': Florence Ayscough and the Lowell-Pound Feud," *FOUR DECADES of poetry 1890-1930* 2, no. 4 (July 1979): 204-209.

35 "Says Secret of Permanence of Chinese Civilization is Revealed in Poetry of Land," *The Telegraph-Journal*, 24 Nov. 1923.

36 Melissa BRADSHAW, "Outselling the Modernisms of Men: Amy Lowell and the Art of Self-Commodification," *Victorian Poetry* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 145. Bradshaw calls Lowell the "Liberace of modern poetry."

37 *The St. Croix Courier*, 25 Aug. 1927; her father was John Mervin Carrere, architect of the New York Public Library.

38 A discussion of the garden is found in "All Set For Exhibition," *The Saint Croix Courier*, 8 Sept. 1927. I am extremely grateful to Pamela Goold, proprietor of Goold's Nurseries and granddaughter of Arthur Goold who constructed the Chinese garden, for the photograph of the exhibit.

39 Ayscough's concerns extended as far back as the sixteenth-century explorations of the region made by Portuguese navigators: Maxwell VESEY, "In Remembrance of Florence Ayscough MacNair, Litt. D.," *The Saint Croix Courier*, 14 May 1942.

40 One of Webster's visits to St. Andrews is recorded in *The Telegraph-Journal*, 23 Aug. 1924 and *The St. Croix Courier*, 4 Sept. 1924.

- 41 *The Telegraph-Journal*, 18 June 1929, 13: discussion of themes for a "Canadian" literature took place at the annual convention of the Women's Press Club, when Ayscough also lectured on Amy Lowell, "the Creative Muse."
- 42 According to VESEY, "In Remembrance," Ayscough abandoned her idea of renaming the island after an early explorer "when she found that the Loyalist town would not be willing to relinquish the old name of MacMaster belonging to Loyalists prominently connected with the founding and upbuilding of the town and district."
- 43 *The Saint Croix Courier*, 20 Oct. 1927.
- 44 Sir Freeman Freeman-Thomas, 1st Marquess of Willingdon of Ratton, was appointed Governor-General on 5 Aug. 1926, not long after a three-month visit to China, see *Peking and Tientsin Times*, 28 May 1926. For a brief account of Lady Willingdon's installation of their Chinese collection in the Long Gallery, as well as the recent Chinoiserie 'restoration' of the Gallery, see Gerda HNATYSYHN and Paulette LACHAPELLE-BELISLE, *Rideau Hall, Canada's Living Heritage* (Vanier: Friends of Rideau Hall, 1995).
- 45 One photograph of the Willingdon visit is P174 #1, Charlotte County Archives, St. Andrews. Edward, Prince of Wales visited Canada for the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation and, while his presence in St. Andrews has been confirmed by several members of the St. Andrews Civic Trust, his attendance at the Willingdon picnic has not.
- 46 *The Saint Croix Courier*, 29 Oct. 1925.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 20 May 1926.
- 48 This brief summary of Douglass' life until 1920 is derived from a number of sources, including: documents from Mary Ann Pickard, Archivist of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church; STUART, "Secrets;" (Douglass' obituary) *The New York Herald Tribune*, 27 Sept. 1935; and Douglass' undated letter to Blair Niles, Archives of the Society of Women Geographers, Library of Congress. While I have been able to independently document many of the facts given here, Douglass was also known to play with facts pertaining to her background, perhaps most notably when she listed, in three successive applications for the Guggenheim Fellowship, her birth date as 1892. My thanks to G. Thomas Tanselle, Vice-President, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, New York.
- 49 "China's Centenary Program Gathers Speed," *China Christian Advocate*, 20 Oct. 1920. The article indicates that Douglass had done similar work for American missionary movements in the United States from 1918-1920 (in Nashville and New York), but I have been unable to confirm this.
- 50 A lengthy article on Douglass' work for the China Centenary Movement in the Shanghai-based *North China Herald*, 20 May 1922, reported that the unit had been able to produce 6000 hand-coloured slides over the previous nine months. The artist hoped that the unit would "dignify labour and show women of the East that productive employment is not belittling, but emancipating and cultural."
- 51 Grace Thompson SETON, *Chinese Lanterns* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1924), 212-13.
- 52 Douglass' political journalism is referred to in her letter to Blair Niles. The assertion that she wrote on art is confirmed by the British printmaker Elizabeth KEITH in the preface to her *Eastern Windows: An Artist's Notes on Travel in Japan, Hokkaido, Korea, China and the Philippines* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1929), 13.
- 53 "An Artist Abroad in Europe," *North China Herald*, 19 Nov. 1921.
- 54 *The Telegraph-Journal*, 24 Nov. 1923.

- 55 Lucille Sinclair DOUGLASS, "The Island of the 'Little White Flower,'" *The China Journal of Science and Arts* 1 (Jan.-June 1923): 149-53.
- 56 Lucille DOUGLASS, "Florence Ayscough, opalescent lady: a writer who is deeply rooted in the thought and culture of the Far East," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 10 May 1930.
- 57 A cache of 91 letters from Ayscough to various editors at Houghton Mifflin and Company, held by the Houghton Library, Harvard University (*bMS Am* 1925 86), contains invaluable insight into both the chronology of Douglass' visits to St. Andrews and the degree to which Ayscough fostered her career. Ayscough had planned to have woodcuts made from her own photographs for *A Chinese Mirror*, but upon Douglass' arrival in St. Andrews in August 1925, they decided to use drawings: see letters to Ferris Greenslet of 18 May, 4 June and 4 August 1925; Florence AYSCOUGH, *A Chinese Mirror* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926), 23-100.
- 58 MACNAIR, *The Incomparable Lady*, 41.
- 59 The catalogue by Ayscough is mentioned in *The New York Times*, 5 Apr. 1925.
- 60 *The Saint Croix Courier*, 24 Sept. 1925.
- 61 S. MORGAN-POWELL, "China Revealed in a Series of Pastels by Miss Lucille Douglass," *The Montreal Daily Star*, 23 Sept. 1925; and it was anonymously reviewed in "Records in Pastel Bits of Old China," *The Gazette* (Montreal), 25 Sept. 1925.
- 62 Letters from Ayscough to Robert Linscott, 13 June and 1 Sept. 1925, Houghton Library, *bMS AM* 1925 (86).
- 63 *The New York Herald Tribune*, 27 Sept. 1935, Douglass' carrying of "a slim cane colored to match...a brilliantly colored turban" was, perhaps, more than a stage prop. In "First Person Singular," *Bulletin of the American Woman's Club in Shanghai* 11, no. 9 (March 1932): 19, she wrote that "because of an accident, I was woefully lame [as a child]."
- 64 Florence AYSCOUGH, *The Autobiography of a Chinese Dog edited by his Missus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), 100. Ayscough's *A Chinese Mirror*, contained many references to the warrior Yo Fei, "to me, one of the most sympathetic characters in Chinese history" (31-32).
- 65 Helen Churchill CANDEE, *New Journeys in Old Asia: Indo-China, Siam, Java, Bali* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1927), contained 26 full-page reproductions of etchings by Douglass.
- 66 Candee was a survivor of the Titanic disaster and lifeboat companion of "Unsinkable" Molly Brown. For an account of Candee's life, see her obituary in *The New York Times*, 24 August 1949, and innumerable internet sites on the Titanic disaster.
- 67 "Lucille Douglass Show," *The Washington Post*, 15 Apr. 1928. Douglass' commission was undoubtedly facilitated by Candee, who had received an award from the French government for her book, *Angkor the Magificent, the Wonder City of Ancient Cambodia* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1924). Several of Douglass' etchings were reproduced in L.J. ROBBINS, "Fabulous Angkor Reveals Its Secrets," *The New York Times Magazine*, 2 Mar. 1930.
- 68 Her New York showing was reviewed in *The Arts News*, 8 Nov. 1930, and a subsequent Knoedler Gallery exhibition (24 Jan.-14 Feb.) by Eleanor Jewett, in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 Jan. 1931.
- 69 *The Saint Croix Courier*, 12 Sept. 1929.
- 70 Stated in a 27 March 1936 letter from Gerald Steiner (Florence Ayscough's personal secretary) to his parents and generously sent to me by John Lipscombe, Esq.
- 71 Undated letter to Blair Niles, Archives of the Society of Women Geographers.

- 72 *The Telegraph Journal*, 18 June 1926; *The Saint Croix Courier*, 24 June 1926.
- 73 Lucille DOUGLASS, "About Florence Ayscough," in AYSCOUGH, *Firecracker Land*, xii-xiii.
- 74 For Edward Maxwell's shingle-style architecture in St. Andrews, see France Gagnon PRATTE, *Country Houses for Montrealers 1892-1924* (Montreal: Meridian Press, 1989), 132-70. Willa WALKER, *No Hay Fever & A Railway* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 127, identifies David McRoberts as the builder of "Topside," completed a year before Maxwell began working in St. Andrews.
- 75 The "Grass Hut" was a careful adaptation of a Kiangsu hut that Ayscough claimed the poet Tu Fu had built in Chengtu more than a thousand years earlier.
- 76 The log cabins used by Loyalist founders of St. Andrews are documented in Theodore HOLMES, *Loyalists to Canada. The 1783 Settlement of Quakers and Others at Passamaquoddy* (Camden: Picton Press, 1992), 154 and their association with "pioneer days" was well-known.
- 77 This statement is found on the Houghton Library copy of the photograph of the interior of the Niger Reef Tea House given out to those who attended its official opening; the Block House had actually been built in 1813.
- 78 Lucille Douglass articulated this view of the pine tree in an interview in "Essence of China Found in Pastels," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 8 Nov. 1925. My thanks to L. Elizabeth Schmoeger, Librarian and Archivist of the Milwaukee Art Museum, for locating the article.
- 79 Marilyn MCKAY, "Canadian Historical Murals 1895-1939: Material Progress, Morality and the 'Disappearance' of Native People," *The Journal of Canadian Art History* XV, no. 1 (1992): 63-83.
- 80 AYSCOUGH, *A Chinese Mirror*, 213-56.
- 81 *Community of Creativity: A Century of MacDowell Colony Artists* (Manchester, N.H.: The Currier Gallery of Art, 1996), 22. Amy Lowell's association with the Colony is mentioned in DAMON, *Amy Lowell*, 365-66.
- 82 Hongbo TAN, "Confucius at Walden Pond: Thoreau's Unpublished Confucian Translations," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1993), 276-303.
- 83 DIMAN, *Leaves from a Family Tree*, provides material on the large Clarke family.
- 84 Cyrus A. BARTOL, *The Man and the Physician: A Sermon Preached in the West Church, Boston* (Boston: A. Williams & Co., 1878).
- 85 See Kenneth CAMERON, *Thoreau and His Harvard Classmates* (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1965).
- 86 Cynthia BRANDIMARTE, "'To Make the Whole World Homelike': Gender, Space, and America's Tea Room Movement," *Winterthur Portfolio* 30, no. 1 (1995): 1-19.
- 87 It is tempting to argue that Ayscough sought to emulate or compete with Adeline Van Horne, the daughter of Sir William Van Horne, who hosted similar large entertainments for summer visitors and townspeople at her home on Minister's Island in Passamaquoddy Bay.

LE NIGER REEF TEA HOUSE DE FLORENCE WHELOCK AYSCOUGH

St. Andrews, Nouveau-Brunswick, petite ville sur les rives de la baie de Passamaquoddy, abrite de nombreux bâtiments historiques associés à sa fondation par les Loyalistes, en 1783. Si la mercatique de cet héritage dans un but touristique a négligé d'autres populations, d'autres histoires, la restauration et la réouverture récente du Niger Reef Tea House, par le St. Andrews Civic Trust, laissent entrevoir pour le futur une lecture plus généreuse de l'histoire. Elles fournissent certainement l'occasion de réfléchir sur la présence au Nouveau-Brunswick, jusque-là négligée, de Florence Wheelock Ayscough (1875/78-1942), considérée comme un important sinologue de langue anglaise. Elles soulignent aussi la place des femmes dans l'histoire culturelle de St. Andrews, car le salon de thé avait été construit et, pendant quarante ans, géré par des femmes.

La cabane originale de bois rond, ornée de peintures murales représentant les paysages terrestres et maritimes environnants, a été construite en 1926, pour servir de salle de réunion au chapitre de Passamaquoddy de l'Ordre impérial des filles de l'Empire (Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire - IODE), et de lieu pour les activités de financement des programmes éducatifs et de bienfaisance de l'ordre. Ayscough s'était jointe au mouvement peu de temps après avoir quitté Shanghai pour St. Andrews en 1923. Pendant une grande partie des six années qui suivirent, elle était installée dans la maison d'été dont elle avait hérité de son père qui avait fait fortune en Chine dans le déchargement des navires marchands.

Pour «décorer» le salon de thé de murales, Ayscough fit appel à Lucille Sinclair Douglass (1878-1935), une amie proche dont elle contribua de manière décisive à forger la carrière. Elle avait rencontré l'artiste originaire de l'Alabama quelques années auparavant, à Shanghai où Douglass travaillait comme directrice du service de coloriage de diapositives d'une entreprise missionnaire. Les deux femmes avaient déjà collaboré à St. Andrews, puisque Douglass avait illustré le populaire récit d'Ayscough *A Chinese Mirror: Being Reflections of the Reality behind Appearance* (1926) au cours de l'été 1925. Ensemble, mais sous la ferme direction d'Ayscough, elles travaillaient maintenant à un projet étonnamment complexe, réunissant les intérêts personnels et les affiliations de la sinologue. De fait, le salon de thé peut être vu comme une déclaration autobiographique, qui aurait été comprise par beaucoup de néo-brunswickois, car Ayscough s'était bien fait connaître dans la région par ses conférences sur ses sujets préférés et par d'autres activités.

Au plan le plus accessible, le Niger Reef Tea House rappelait une visite avec Ayscough sur l'île McMaster, une propriété de la baie de Passamaquoddy qu'elle avait achetée pour préserver les pins de l'exploitation. L'île, avec sa cabane de bois rond comme lieu de repos, était une propriété privée qu'elle s'empressa de faire visiter, et beaucoup, à St. Andrews, ont directement connu cette retraite. En entrant dans la seconde de ses cabanes de bois rond, les visiteurs étaient immédiatement transportés sur une fausse île, créée par les murales qui couvraient les quatre murs. De là, comme d'un léger promontoire, ils pouvaient apprécier des paysages étendus, aérés, de terre rocheuse et de mer tranquille, brisés seulement au premier plan par des pins, représentations de ceux qui avaient été sauvés par Ayscough.

D'autres propriétés de Ayscough ont été intégrées au salon de thé, notamment le «Grass Hut by the Yellow Reach» qui figurait en bonne place dans *A Chinese Mirror* publié quelques mois auparavant. La «hutte de paille», sa dernière demeure en Chine, qui devait servir à de futurs séjours dans la ville où elle était née, avait défié la modernité croissante de Shanghai par un projet de construction méticuleusement préparé appartenant à l'ancienne histoire agraire de la région du delta. Quatre ans après sa construction et des milliers de miles plus loin, Ayscough se tourna de nouveau vers le passé. Utilisant une des formes d'architecture associée généralement à l'installation des premiers Européens en Amérique du Nord, elle construisit un pendant au bâtiment adjacent, le «blockhaus» qu'elle croyait, à tort, avoir été construit en 1783 comme «protection contre les Indiens». Une représentation du salon de thé par Lucille Douglass, sur laquelle le siège du chapitre de l'IODE est tourné à 90 degrés et rapproché de l'eau, est très révélatrice. Il est résolument isolé de tout rapport avec la ville et son port, comme si c'était une autre hutte, une autre sorte d'île, uniquement reliées au passé et à la mer.

Les pins sont un élément frappant des murales de Douglass. Certains ont plus de cinq pieds de hauteur, leurs troncs définis en tons de brun et de bleu et couronnés d'épais bouquets d'aiguilles vert foncé, comme d'autres rappels de la chère demeure d'Ayscough à Shanghai. Ils étaient, naturellement, tout à fait à leur place dans un cadre néo-brunswickois, et montraient l'habileté de l'artiste à utiliser le motif. Mais les pins, qui, en Chine, symbolisent l'immuabilité, avaient aussi été un élément important de la «hutte de paille». Dans *A Chinese Mirror*, Ayscough avait décrit avec quel soin son professeur de chinois avait choisi et taillé un pin pour la cour principale, et reproduit le poème qu'il avait écrit pour le mur du bureau de son élève.

Marilyn MacKay a montré la pratique assez largement répandue au Canada, de 1895 à 1939, de peindre des murales où les autochtones servaient de repoussoir au progrès matériel d'une nouvelle nation. Le Niger Reef Tea House se situe en dehors de ce modèle: son intérieur rejette absolument tout indice traditionnel d'une présence humaine. Le cœur du projet était une autre forme de développement humain, «l'aventure de l'esprit», guidé par la nature, adouci par le doux murmure

des pins. Les murales intérieures courent derrière de minces bandes de bois verticales, créant l'apparence d'un espace clos ou encore des murs ouverts d'un pavillon. Elles invitent à la comparaison avec la peinture de paysages et les jardins chinois. Ces formes d'art étaient fondées sur l'idée que les paysages artificiels, tout comme les paysages eux-mêmes, étaient plus que des panoramas agréables. Comme l'expliquait Ayscough, dans une conférence à St. Andrews en 1918, le «bienfait de l'art du peintre [de paysage chinois]» était son habileté à «libérer l'esprit et à le conduire devant l'auguste présence de la nature.» D'après les réflexions de Ayscough sur «l'idée du jardin chinois», il s'agissait de petits espaces qui reproduisaient les retraites campagnardes où les membres masculins de «l'aristocratie de l'esprit» se retiraient pour «laisser leur cœur...battre à l'unisson du rythme du pouls de la Nature elle-même». Ces enclaves étaient particulièrement importantes pour les Chinoises qui étaient bannies de ces rituels. L'absence de bambou, l'une des quatre composantes essentielles du jardin chinois, confirme le fait que les murales du salon de thé n'étaient pas destinées à reproduire un véritable jardin chinois. Elles servaient plutôt à définir le salon de thé comme un lieu de contemplation, créé par des références à la retraite de l'île McMaster, à la maison de Ayscough à Shanghai, et à la raison d'être de deux formes importantes d'art chinois. La cabane de bois rond et son intérieur permettaient aux visiteurs d'utiliser la nature comme moyen de considérer les réalisations de l'esprit et du cœur et leur rapport avec une plus grande dimension de l'être.

L'utilisation de la cabane de bois rond comme symbole ou véhicule d'une retraite productive n'était pas inhabituelle. De fait, une certaine cabane de bois rond d'où la nature avait été contemplée pour ses nombreuses leçons — la demeure de Henry David Thoreau à Walden Pond, Concord, Massachusetts — occupait depuis longtemps une place importante dans l'imaginaire populaire nord-américain. Thoreau, une des figures maîtresses du transcendentalisme américain et traducteur de passages de Confucius, a habité cette cabane de 1845 à 1847. Il y a fort à penser que le salon de thé pourrait être une version postérieure de cette icône américaine.

Les points de contact entre des générations antérieures de la famille Clarke, les ancêtres maternels de Florence Ayscough, et les transcendentalistes américains étaient nombreux. Ayscough, fière de ses ascendants maternels et partageant des intérêts parallèles pour l'«Orient» et la place de la nature dans la compréhension de soi, justifie une lecture transcendentaliste. À l'origine conçu comme une retraite sereine loin du quotidien, le Niger Reef Tea House est maintenant un petit rappel, dont St. Andrews a bien besoin, des efforts de quelques femmes pour intervenir dans la sphère publique et provoquer des changements pour elles-mêmes et pour les autres.

Traduction: Élise Bonnette