

*THE DRAWINGS OF JAMES
PATTERSON COCKBURN: A VISIT
THROUGH QUEBEC'S PAST*
Christina Cameron and Jean Trudel
Gage Publishing, Toronto, 1976
176 pp., 163 ill., \$24.95

Within the Canadian topographical landscape tradition, the artistic production of James Pattison Cockburn ranks with that of Thomas Davies (c. 1737-1812) and George Heriot (c. 1759-1839). Cockburn deserves a monograph and catalogue *raisonné*. However, lest the title build unrealistic expectations, the authors forewarn the reader that this is not their intent. Rather they state two purposes. First, the authors attempt to provide a broad summary of Cockburn's career and social position and to explore briefly the extent to which these factors may have influenced his perspective of Quebec society. Second, this book is to function as a historical guide to modern day Quebec and its environs through a systematic arrangement of Cockburn's views with explanatory texts.

Obviously well acquainted with Quebec of today and the 1820's, Cameron and Trudel have organized Cockburn's drawings logically under the headings of General Views of Quebec, Waterfront, Lower Town, Upper Town, and Suburbs and Environs. The pictorial selection provides a generous sampling from public and private collections. Explanatory texts include handy cross-references to other illustrations related to the same place or person. The texts are at their best when discussing architectural and commercial history; they often intermingle the authors' and contemporary narrative to convey factual and fanciful observations in balanced proportions. The footnotes to Chapter Three are numbered to correspond to the illustrations and are unfortunately, at first glance, a confusing digression from those to Chapters One and Two.

While the book does not pretend to be

a monograph, this admission does not excuse the authors' failure to search out thoroughly and to cross-check primary and secondary sources for accuracy. Regrettably conjecture and errors sometimes replace sound historical conclusions. The most blatant example of shallow research is the reliance on a single document (Chapt. I, n. 1) to justify the name change from the traditionally accepted "Pattison" to "Patterson." A review is not the place to list all the sources untapped by the authors, however when these sources are studied collectively they prove conclusively, to this reviewer, that Pattison is indeed the correct name. Let it suffice to state the most indisputable source, the last will and testament of James Pattison Cockburn (PROB 11/2055, f 332, Public Record office, London). Incidentally, following the first appearance of this undocumented yet intriguing tidbit in the authors' article, "Québec vu par Cockburn" (*Vie des Arts*, Vol. XIX, 76, automne 1974, pp. 55-57), at least one major gallery jumped early onto the "Patterson" bandwagon as evidenced by *The Ontario Community Collects* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1975).

Had their research been more exhaustive, the authors would have avoided the hesitancy in recognizing Col. John Cockburn, Royal Artillery as J. P. Cockburn's father and the erroneous conjecture that he probably married a Miss Patterson in New York (Chapt. 1, n. 2); errors in the birth dates of J. P. Cockburn's sons, James (31 May 1810) and Charles Vansittart (28 August 1812); and discovered that Cockburn first arrived in Canada in October 1822 not 1821; the name of his wife to be Elizabeth Johanna Vansittart not "Miss Vansittart" (p. 10); and the author of *A Voyage to Cadiz and Gibraltar...* (London: 1815) to be Sir George Cockburn (1763-1847) not J. P. Cockburn (p. 11 and Chapt. I, n. 7).

A succinct discussion is given of J. P. Cockburn's precision and meticulous attention to detail as being a reflection of

his military training in draughtmanship. Cockburn's awkwardness in portraying figures in a landscape setting to the point where they sometimes border on caricature, is a valid observation. As an educated English gentleman, Cockburn had a predilection for the then vogueish "Picturesque" so aptly advocated by Gilpin and by what one can judge, his perception of nature and customs was in keeping with his upper class station in Quebec society. There is a recurring, somewhat oblique suggestion that Cockburn's elevated social status caused him to be selective in whom and what he portrayed, at the near exclusion of the working classes within their everyday environment. This claim is quite unsubstantiated if a statistical comparison were made. One could also dispute the opinion that the on-the-spot pencil drawings, several of which in my view were possibly taken with a *camera lucida*, were necessarily intended "to be transformed later into water-colours" (p. 12). There is one drawing of the General Hospital (no. 145) signed *E D* which may possibly be more properly attributed to Elizabeth Durnford, daughter of Lt.-Gen. Elias Walker Durnford (1775-1850), then Commanding Royal Engineer in Canada. She is known to have kept an album of Quebec views that included several by Cockburn with whom she may have sketched and exchanged pictures.

A minor omission is that nowhere does the text state that the measurements of the drawings are given in inches and centimetres, height preceding width. The book design with its hardcover, large format, and texts deliberately placed in the gutter all contribute to make the book of the "coffee table" variety rather than the purported practical historical guide. One marvels at the complete absence of maps to assist the tourist in his rambles. Another oversight is the lack of cross-references accompanying the black and white reproductions to indicate which ones are also reproduced in colour. There are a meagre

nine colour plates of poor quality and 154 black and white illustrations of fair quality sometimes making it difficult to pick out in the image what the authors are describing. The disappointing, mediocre quality of the plates and cumbersome format must be ascribed solely to the publisher and the design staff.

In summary, Cameron and Trudel have made a sensitive selection and commentary on Cockburn's drawings which is marred slightly by some suspect research. The authors together with the publisher have provided a rational organization to the drawings and texts. However, an overpriced "coffee table" volume does not a "guide-book" make.

W. Martha E. Cooke
International Programme
National Museums of Canada
Ottawa, Ont.

CATALOGUE DES OEUVRES PEINTES CONSERVÉES AU MONASTÈRE DES AUGUSTINES DE L'HÔTEL-DIEU DE QUÉBEC

Marie-Nicole Boisclair
Québec, Ministère des Affaires
culturelles, Service de l'Inventaire des
biens culturels, dossier 24, 1977
194 p., ill. hors texte. Gratuit, sur
demande écrite.

Les catalogues des institutions, musées et collections privées sont des publications extrêmement rares au Canada. Combien de temps encore sera-t-il possible de se dispenser de ce genre de répertoire si l'on veut constituer "l'histoire" de l'art canadien? Gérard Morisset avait déjà marqué la voie en repérant dans les collections des institutions religieuses, des communautés, des fabriques, les oeuvres des peintres, sculpteurs, orfèvres, sans cependant les publier de façon systématique. Mais en