
Thoughts of Peace and Joy: A Study of the Iconography of the Croscup Room

This article deals with the sources for the iconography of a room painted sometime in the eighteen-forties, with a series of extraordinary scenes.¹ It is known as the *Croscup Room* after the family (figs. 1, 2) in whose house the room was originally located. First discovered by Cora Greenaway in 1963, the room was acquired in 1976 by the National Gallery of Canada and permanently installed there in 1981.² The *Croscup Room* can be classified as folk art, if one accepts the definition drawn up by Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester:

In simplest terms, American folk art consists of paintings, sculpture and decorations of various kinds, characterized by an artistic innocence that distinguishes them from so called fine art or the formal decorative arts. This is hardly a definition: it is necessarily an impression, even a subjective designation.³

One of the most striking features of the Croscup murals is their light-hearted innocence. All of the panels are composites of different scenes, the components of which we have largely been able to identify as wood-engravings from the *Illustrated London News*⁴, the first illustrated newspaper of the nineteenth century.

We commence our investigation of the iconography of the room by a discussion of its original function. The Croscup house is a simple Cape Cod cottage located in Granville Ferry near Annapolis Royal on Nova Scotia's north shore (fig. 3). The room (used to store grain at the time of its discovery in 1963) was originally a parlour.⁵ In the standard Victorian house the parlour was an oasis carefully preserved amidst the hurly-burly of normal domestic life; it was recognized as the leading feminine room of the house, ruling, alongside the masculine dining room, over the lesser chambers of the house.⁶ Although the



(1) Anonymous, **Portrait of William Croscup**, solar print with charcoal. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

Croscup family was a relatively humble one, its owners followed enough of the rituals of Victorian society to devote different rooms within the house to different functions. The parlour was devoted to polite amusements and was probably furnished with small tables, chairs and sofas where the occupants and their guests could engage in conversations, reading aloud, needlework, the inspection of albums of sketches, prints and photographs, musical performances and games of cards. The furniture in the *Croscup Room* undoubtedly obscured some of the murals while the room was in use.



(2) Anonymous, **Portrait of Hannah Amelia Croscup**, solar print with charcoal. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).



(3) **Croscup House**, Granville Ferry, N.S. (Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

Painted rooms are not uncommon in Nova Scotia in this period⁷, and many examples have been preserved in other parts of Eastern North America.⁸ As the patterned wall paper which became popular in the United States after the American Revolution was too expensive for most rural Americans, itinerant painters developed the art of stencilling and painting freehand on walls. Many portraits and scenes of domestic life dating from the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries show interiors with painted patterns on the walls, and often on the baseboards and floors as well. Houses decorated in this way have been found in Québec and Ontario, as well as in Nova Scotia, New England and New York State. Usually the room chosen to be stencilled or painted was the parlour, but bedrooms and public meeting-rooms in inns were often decorated as well.

In the period 1800 to 1850 several manuals were published for lay people, teaching them how to paint their own rooms. Several of these were the work of Rufus Porter, one of the itinerants who produced a large body of authenticated work.⁹ Porter took up mural painting in 1825 and in the year that followed he published his first volume on do-it-yourself decoration, entitled *A Select Collection of Valuable and Curious Arts, and Interesting Experiments* (Concord: 1826). Subsequently, he rewrote and revised his instructions for two journals he founded and edited: *The New York Mechanic* and *Scientific American*. In the first volume of the latter, published in 1846, he gave a thorough description of his techniques for mural painting, claiming that the four walls of a parlour could be completely painted in watercolours in less than five hours, at a total cost of ten dollars. This rapid technique was made possible by reducing the subject matter to the simplest possible. Architectural features were rendered by stencils, while complicated figures or objects like steamboats were done by transfer. Foliage could be rapidly stamped on with a cork bottle stopper or stippled with a brush. Porter most often used every colour in his murals but only examples in monochrome grey, plum and grey-green are extant. The landscapes Porter and his followers produced are often based upon the familiar New England countryside, although he rarely attempted to reproduce an actual view, but made composite scenes, using elements drawn from observation of his surroundings. Other rooms are decorated with exotic tropical views, or with a mixture of the familiar and the fanciful. The *Croscup Room* is an example of the latter, combining, as it does, a picture of Signal Hill, Halifax, deciduous and coniferous trees found in the local forests and roads coloured the exact red of the earth of the Annapolis Valley, with views of London and St. Petersburg.

At this point we must spend a little time examining the significance and influence of the *Illustrated London News*. This pioneer illustrated newspaper was first published on Saturday, May 14th,

1842. As Arthur Bryant states in the introduction to Leonard de Vries' study of the *ILN*:

Viewed in their entirety the volumes of the *Illustrated London News* constitute what is probably the most important single pictorial source for the social history of any age or country... Here is a living contemporary picture, drawn from week to week, of the life of Britain and the British people and of every country with which they were associated in that span of time.¹⁰

The *ILN* was started by Herbert Ingram, a printer from Boston in partnership with his brother-in-law Nathaniel Cooke and Henry Vizetelly who had an engraving and publishing business. The *Illustrated London News* was born March 1842, when a million copies of a prospectus were printed and distributed to the public. The prospectus described a new illustrated paper which would contain thirty engravings of the most interesting events of the day plus forty-eight columns of news. "Engagements have been made," the prospectus continued, "with artists of ability in every important town in England and Paris and other places on the Continent."¹¹ This was not strictly true, for the illustrators did not usually draw directly from nature. John Gilbert, for example, one of the *ILN*'s artists, read the news cuttings about an event, like a fancy dress ball at Buckingham Palace (May 14th, 1842), and using his imagination to draw the figures, completed a picture. Illustrations were also copied from paintings. The christening of Prince Albert in the January 1843 issue was copied from a painting by Hayter.¹² Another method used by the artists was to read the news item about a foreign city, copy the background from a print and draw in the figures illustrating the news item in the foreground. Artists working for the *ILN* included Henry Anelay, Alfred Crowquill, Myles Birket Foster, H.G. Hine and Kenny Meadows. Wood engravers included Ebenezer Landells and Stephen Sly. Both the latter ran large workshops and employed many assistants and pupils; the signatures "Landells" and "S. Sly" appear below many of the engravings.

The *ILN* was a great success from its inception. The sale of the first issue exceeded 26,000 copies, and the average for subsequent issues was 24,000 weekly. The paper was also sold in bound volumes from the beginning of the second year:

Conceived in a liberal spirit of enterprise — conducted with a view to the promotion of National Intelligence, and the more ennobling principles of moral philosophy — presenting a new, beautiful and hitherto un-filled field to the Novelist and Historian — dedicated to Justice and the good of Society, and above all, clasping Literature and Art together in the firm embrace of Mind: — it appeared in a new and comely aspect — commanded admiration almost

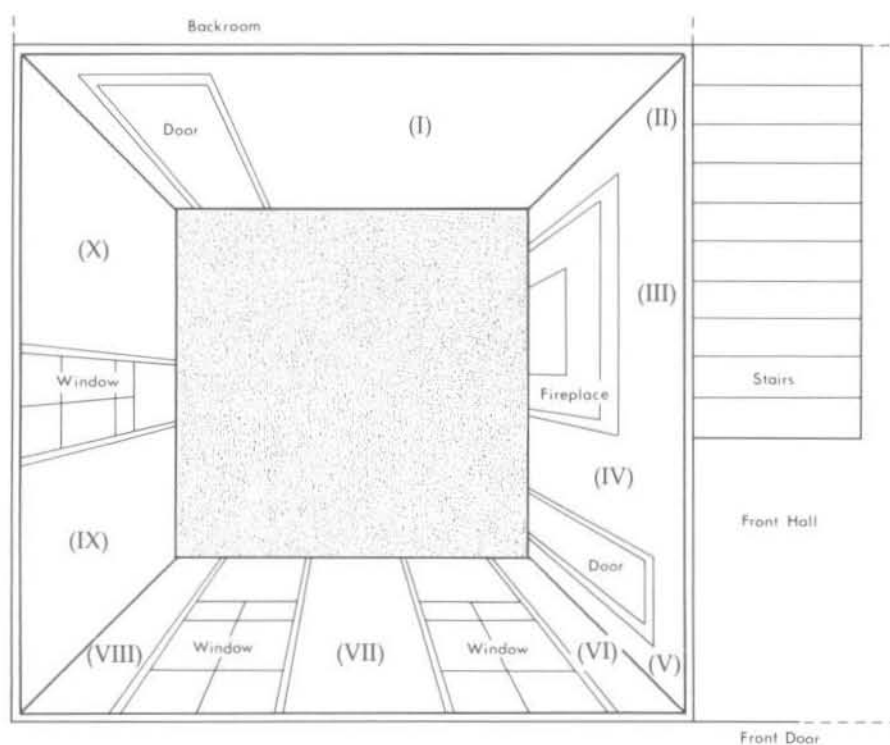
as fast as notice, and won its way into the popular heart with a rapidity and success commensurate with the far spread and kind enthusiasm which it had so suddenly called up.¹³

As the writer remarked, this volume would be an unequalled source for the history of the nineteenth century; if only there had been such a publication to record the Elizabethan age! The Preface concludes with a Dedicatory Sonnet:

To the great public — that gigantic soul
Which lends the Nation's body life and light,
And makes the blood within its veins grow bright
With gushing glory — we this muster roll
Of all the deeds that pass neath its controul
Do dedicate — the page of simple news
Is here adorned and filled with picture life,
Coloured with thousand tints — the rainbow strife
Of all the world's emotions — all the hues
Of war — peace — commerce; — agriculture rife
With budding plenty that doth life infuse
And fair domestic joy — all — all are here
To gild the new, and from the bygone year
Present a gift to take — to cherish and use.

The *Croscup Room* bears witness to the excellent use one artist made of the newspaper. A visitor to the *Croscup Room* quickly becomes aware that the paintings have not been executed at random; they are the result of a very carefully thought out programme (fig. 4). Upon entering the parlour from the front hall, one faces two large murals separated by a window. The mural on the left shows a view of London (fig. 8), while that on the right depicts St. Petersburg (fig. 10). The whole is a *coup d'oeil* of astonishing effect. To gain the full original effect, one must imagine oneself back in time in the little village of Granville Ferry in 1846, walking into this small room and being faced with two seven foot high murals showing in deep perspective the massive civic and religious architecture of two capital cities of Europe. The impression then would have been absolutely overwhelming.

Since the door to the parlour opens on the inside to the right, it is only when one is completely inside that one can see any other mural. The second glance would fall directly upon the vast ship launching scene (fig. 5). If the door next to it were open, a third of that mural would be hidden also; it is only fully revealed when the door is closed. As one progresses to the centre of the room, one is confronted by the panel over the fireplace of Victoria ensconced in her parlour, flanked by two side panels with their large figures (fig. 6). One more turn and one faces the three slim panels between the windows (fig. 7).

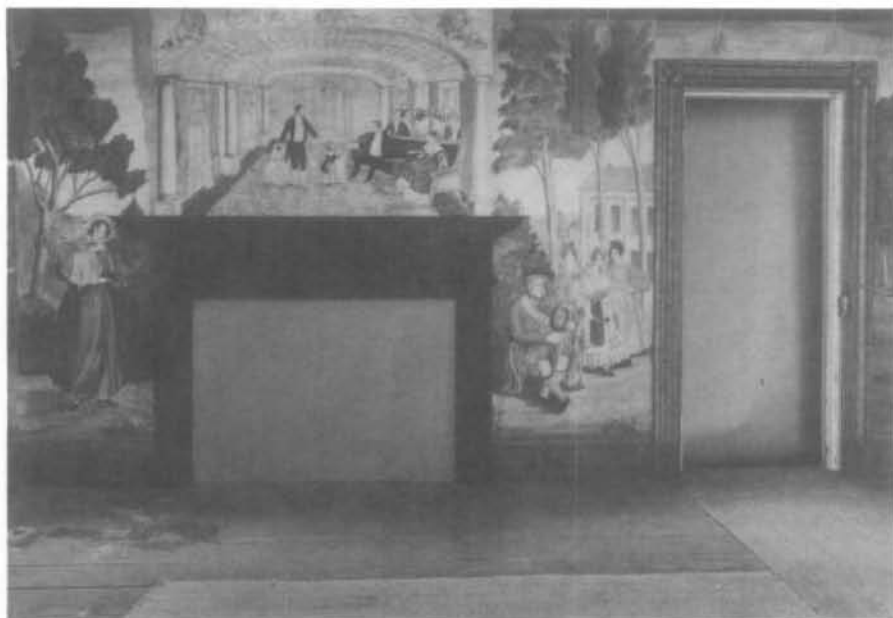


(4) **Croscup Room**, top view as it appeared in the house in Granville Ferry:

(I) **Ship-Launching** (II) **Mother and Child** (III) **Victoria and Albert** (IV) **Piper and Three Elegant Ladies** (V) & (VI) **Micmac Indian Family** (VII) **Hunter and His Dog** (VIII) **Landscape with Waterfall** (IX) **Trafalgar Square** (X) **St. Isaac's Cathedral**



(5) Anonymous, **Ship-Launching**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).



(6) Anonymous, **Mother and Child** (left), **Victoria and Albert** (overmantel), **Piper and Three Elegant Ladies** (right), oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).



(7) Anonymous, **Micmac Indian Family** (left), **Hunter and His Dog** (centre), **Landscape with Waterfall** (right), oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

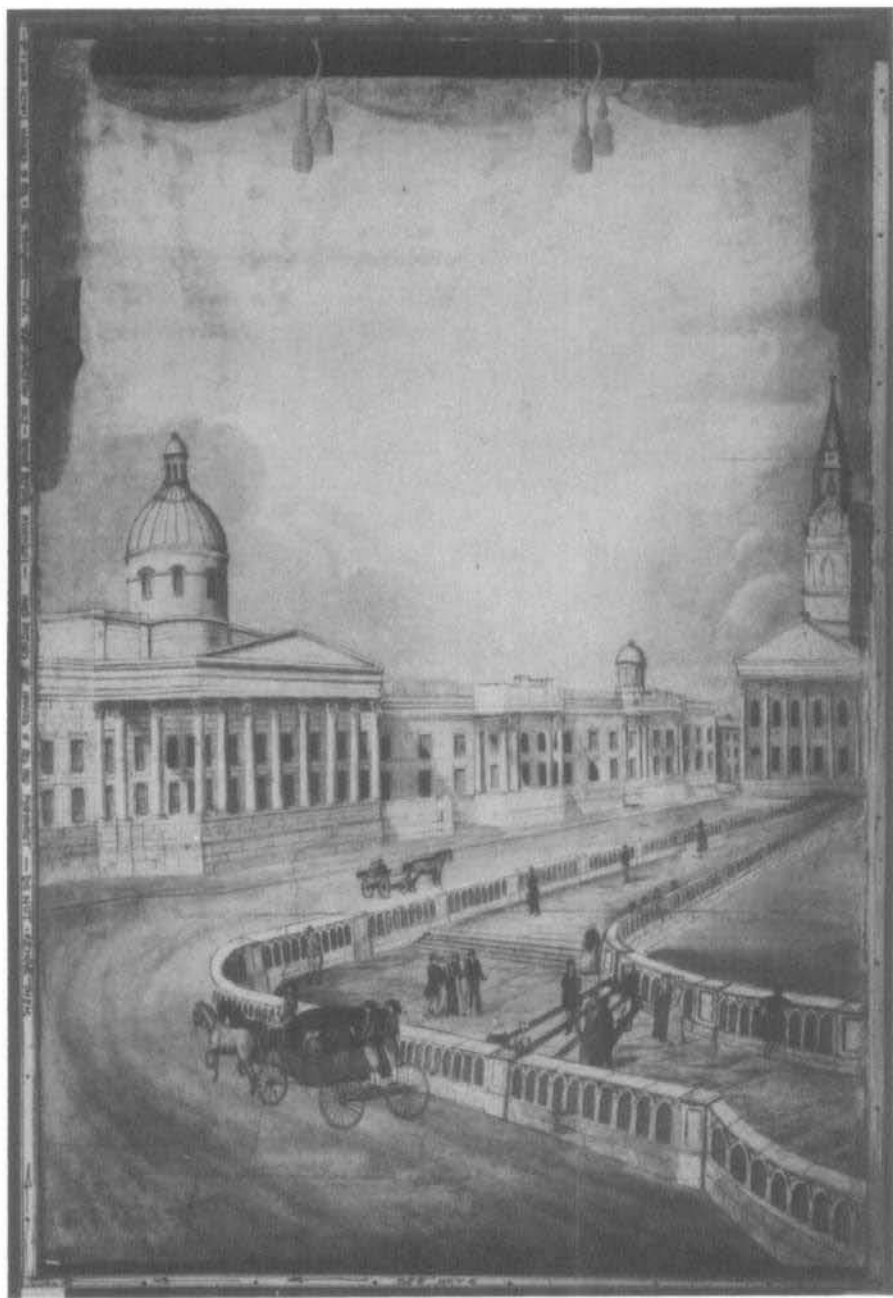
If one enters the parlour through the other door (fig. 4), that is, from the interior of the house, one perceives the room quite differently. One's gaze falls first upon those three tall murals between the windows. Instead of being drawn into a luminous distance, one is confronted by a very shallow space where everything one is meant to look at is right up front. The Micmac Indian family, the hunter and his dog and the tree framing the river and its waterfall are all scenes of local life, comforting and warm in their familiarity. To enter the room fully is to have one's eyes irresistably drawn again to Queen Victoria.

One must always bear in mind that the room was furnished and that parts of each mural must have been obscured by pieces of furniture and that the windows would have been decorously curtained, the floors painted or stencilled, perhaps covered by a rug. The tone of the room *in situ* would be taken from natural light from the windows in daytime and from the soft gentle flame of an oil lamp, candles and firelight at night.

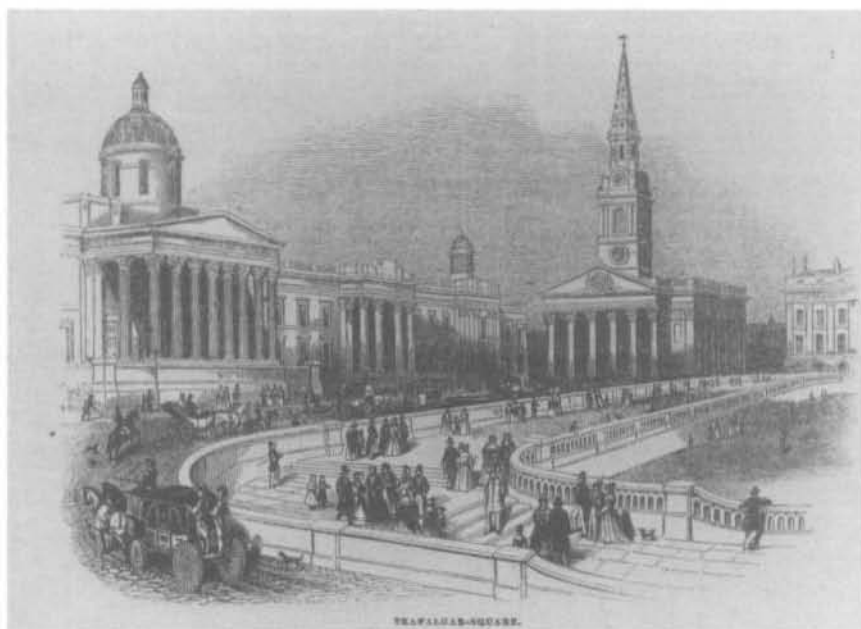
The view of London (fig. 8) showing the National Gallery with the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and the public walk around Trafalgar Square is taken from the Fine Arts section on page 284 of the September 10th, 1842 edition of the *ILN* (fig. 9). The view is quite faithfully copied and painted almost in grisaille with the exception of the pale blue sky and the small dots of colour in the figures and carriage. The scene is very pale, chalky and quite silvery. Great attention has been paid to the way light falls on the building, the shadows being carefully observed and painted. The ethereal quality of the scene seems somehow out of keeping with the richness and earthiness of all the other murals in the room; offering, however, a refreshing contrast. Although the artist may not be familiar with the actual sites, he is informed enough to know that buildings in London remained grey, whereas the architecture in St. Petersburg is brightly coloured, even to this day.

The artist was not interested in keeping the scene as bustling in the painting as it is in the wood engraving. Compared to St. Petersburg, this cityscape is almost barren of figures. All the figures are quite clumsily copied, many are left out, and none added. The stairs and the colonnade at the entrance of the National Gallery, designed by William Wilkins in 1834, are certainly not understood by the copyist and the vagueness of the detail in the wood engraving is freely translated in the painting by the addition of a precise row of windows, leaving no room for the door. The same approach applies to St. Martin-in-the-Fields except that in this case, although arched windows and a door are precisely depicted, such obvious details as the Royal Arms in bas-relief in the pediment are omitted, as are the large circular windows at the base of the tower. To make the walk more interesting, the artist has incorporated the design of the arched balustrade of the interior wall into the exterior one. The people

walking about inside the square in the print have been removed in the painting and the whole square has been filled with water. This rather extravagant gesture of turning Trafalgar Square into a large pool is understood only when one relates it to the view of St.



(8) Anonymous, **View of Trafalgar Square**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).



(9) **View of Trafalgar Square**, wood engraving, *ILN*. (Coll. & Photo: The Metropolitan Toronto Library).

Petersburg and the body of water depicted there. This imaginary body of water in London is a link to the other mural, as is the line of the horizon that sits approximately at the same height in both views. With the deep perspective line of the composition going uninterrupted from bottom left to centre right in the painting and with the huge billowy sky occupying half the picture space, a truly noble impression of grandeur is achieved. It remains obvious that both cityscapes, although remaining quite distinct, separated by a window, are to be seen as forming one unit.

It is interesting to note also that although the artist selected this grand view of London in which the National Gallery figures so prominently, the text accompanying the illustration on page 284 of the *ILN* extols the noble beauty of the square and the buildings around it, "with the exception of the tasteless and ill-devised National Gallery." Our artist seems to have disagreed somewhat or simply ignored the remark, as the composition suited the purpose of his decorative scheme. A far grander view of London was offered weekly as part of the logo to the *ILN* (fig. 12). Rather than having the actual newspaper before him, perhaps the artist was working from a scrapbook of a selection of wood engravings cut out of the *ILN*, leaving the text behind.

The view of St. Petersburg (fig. 10) shows the Isaac bridge spanning the River Neva and leading onto the grand square with St. Isaac's Cathedral at the far end. On the right appears the Senate



(10) Anonymous, *St. Isaac's Cathedral, St. Petersburg, Russia*, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

building. This panel is copied from the front page of the August 27th, 1842 edition of the *ILN* (figs. 11, 12). The wood engraving shows the bridge and the square, containing the famous statue of Peter the Great, crammed with soldiers and onlookers during a military review which was held to celebrate the meeting of the Emperor of Russia with the King of Prussia. From the accompanying text, one learns that this meeting was kept secret, and the writer unabashedly congratulates himself on having gotten this scoop and a "vivid interpretation" of the military review for us. It was customary for the artists employed by the *ILN* to copy the background of their pictures from secondary sources. This view was probably based upon an illustration very similar to that found in Malte-Brun's *Géographie Universelle*, Vol. III (fig. 13). This exact print in this fifth edition, dated 1847, is obviously much too late to have been the very model for the 1842 issue of the *ILN*. But the close congruence between these two images leads us to suspect that a copy of this print was found in another as yet undetected published source and used by the *ILN* artist.



(11) **St. Isaac's Cathedral, St. Petersburg, Russia**, wood engraving, *ILN*, (Coll. & Photo: The Metropolitan Toronto Library).

Fascinating as such speculation undoubtedly is, it can have little relevance, however, to the reason why the Croscup artist selected this particular view. Apart from the aesthetic consideration that the perspective of the St. Petersburg engraving exactly balances and completes that of the London view, the family involvement in the lumber trade was perhaps a significant factor in determining the choice of a view of St. Petersburg and particularly as the Quai Anglais, the Russian centre of the lumber trade with England, was not far down stream.

Just as the quiet, cold, winter scene depicted in Malte-Brun was transformed into a military extravaganza by the *ILN*, our artist transformed the noisy parade into a warm, leisurely summer's day. This composition with its deep perspective line going uninterruptedly from bottom right to centre left of the painting is a perfect counter-balance for the view of London. Together they create an unusually bold recessional effect. Yet although the general composition was respected, the artist also saw fit to eliminate the colossal statue of Peter the Great, perhaps because it prevented the eye from being drawn into the picture space unimpeded as in the London view, or simply because the print did not convey enough detail for the sculpture to be sufficiently understood. The piers of the bridge were also left out, the water level raised and the lamps removed. The crosses on



(12) ILN, August 27, 1842. Title page showing logo and view of St. Petersburg, wood engraving. (Coll. & Photo: The Metropolitan Toronto Library).

the churches in both this view and that of Trafalgar Square are replaced by spheres. On the whole, the architecture was greatly simplified when copied. The end of the Senate building on the extreme right of the mural appears to be straight, but proves to be



(13) MALTE-BRUN, *View of St. Petersburg*, *Géographie Universelle*, Vol. III, Paris 1847-1850, steel engraving. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/ Archives publiques Canada).

going round a corner as a *U* curved structure in the print. Details of St. Isaac's Cathedral are omitted, but the general sense of the monumental is not lost.

The whole cityscape is re-populated with active figures, conveyed in colours that are warm and earthy: light browns, salmon pinks, yellows and bright greens, all beneath a big blue sky. One should remember at this point that our artist is probably copying a black and white print.¹⁴ But, much of the stuccoed architecture of Eastern Europe and Russia is still painted in bright or soft pastel colours. For example, the Winter Palace was originally a bright red and today it wears a soft pale green.

Other interesting details to note in this composition are, first, that the harnessing of the horse is typically Canadian and not Russian.¹⁵ Secondly, the identity of the curious group of people at bottom right remains a mystery. The lady in the dark green coat with bonnet and pale blue scarf is, except for the colouring, wearing exactly the same dress and hat and is holding her scarf in the same manner as one of the ladies in the panel on the opposite wall. She also has the distinction of being the only figure that looks directly at you. Could this be a

portrait? The substitution of the figures for the soldiers in the *ILN* seems to suggest a personal message from the painter. Perhaps they are friends or acquaintances of the Croscup family? Whatever their identity, this view remains certainly an astounding one to find in a home in a small Nova Scotia village.

Opposite these two cityscapes is the hearth, whose overmantel depicts an enclosed room with figures (fig. 14). One of the main problems confronting an artist wanting to paint a definite scheme in a room is how to integrate the architectural features, here the fireplace and its mantelpiece, into that scheme. Our artist chose to isolate the wall space above the mantel from the main theme, which is one of the human figure in open, natural or man-made exterior space to the exact opposite: man in a totally enclosed interior. The artist created the transition by copying the basic structure of the mantelpiece, two columns and an entablature, beneath which he set his imaginary domestic scene. There is a strong suggestion of a proscenium arch and stage set in the overmantel picture, which is definitely not found in the *ILN* source for this image. The illusion is extended further by repeating the oval arch and columns into the receding perspective of the room and by painting the baseboard around the illusory room and the door and wall at the far end exactly the same colours as that in the actual room, also by the use of "marbleizing" on both the surface of the dark actual mantelpiece and the light illusory arches above. He then proceeded to draw the domestic scene.

In October of 1844, Louis-Philippe, accompanied by his son the Duc de Montpensier, returned the visit of Queen Victoria to France in the previous year. Both monarchs treated the visits purely as one of a private nature, and a quiet and intimate manner of entertaining her guests was adopted by Victoria. One of the illustrations reflecting this homey and familial touch is a view of the Crimson Drawing Room at Windsor Castle showing Victoria seated with Louis-Philippe on a sofa, while Prince Albert stands before him with his three children, Victoria, Albert, and Alice, who are being presented. This illustration is taken from page 233 of the October 12th, 1844 edition of the *ILN* (fig. 15). It was selected by the artist of the Croscup room to figure prominently over the mantelpiece (fig. 14), and how appropriate it is that a Loyalist family in Nova Scotia should select a picture of the Royal Family, the epitome of domestic bliss, as the principal image in their parlour. Enshrined above the mantelpiece, the scene becomes an icon of the joys of family life under the British Crown, a theme repeated in the mother and child and the Micmac family elsewhere in the room. The *ILN* regularly published articles and illustrations of the Queen's drawing rooms from the different royal residences. For example, page 5 of the July 5th, 1844 edition has an article with a splendid half page illustration of the Queen's "Yellow Drawing Room" at Buckingham Palace, and page 268 of the April 27th, 1844

edition illustrates the "Tapestry Chamber" used to register guests on their way to the "Queen's Birthday Drawing Room" at St. James's Palace. The figures in the wood engraving selected for the overmantel are copied quite faithfully. But the wood engraving shows a



(14) Anonymous, **Victoria and Albert Presenting the Royal Children to Louis-Philippe of France**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).



(15) **Victoria and Albert Presenting the Royal Children to Louis-Philippe of France**, wood engraving, ILN. Coll.: National Library of Canada/Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/Archives publiques Canada).

close-up of the domestic scene taking place in a very large room, while only suggesting others in attendance in the background amongst a few vaguely sketched-in architectural and decorative details. So, with the use of two other illustrations to the article on the visit, our artist invented a drawing room. The coffered ceiling, windows and draperies are inspired by the Grand Corridor at Windsor Castle, illustrated at the bottom of page 233 (figs. 16, 17). The carpet, back wall, pillars and oval archs are apparently an invention. The Royal insignia, the crown and lion, decorating the "proscenium" arch, were lifted from the decorative border around the print on page 232 (fig. 16), showing Queen Victoria inviting Louis-Philippe to mount the Grand Staircase at Windsor. The crown sits in the centre of the arch and a lion decorates each end; the one of the left being reversed to achieve a certain balance. Both rather benign beasts bear quasi-human features. Again, as in the other views, all the colour is fanciful since the prints being copied were probably the black and white of the original publication.

There are a few peculiar details about the painting that strike one as odd. The *ILN* clearly states that we are in the "Crimson Drawing Room" and one would assume that the colour red would dominate the wall coverings, draperies, upholstery, etc. The only crimson colour in the overmantel, however, is in the foot stools and the one arm rest, while the remainder of the sofa is curiously painted in a dull dark grey. The room is dominated by golden yellows, soft pinks, bright greens and pale blue. Again, is the artist consciously changing the colour of the room or is this a case of his copying the print not from the newspaper with the article before him, but from a scrapbook image without the verbal accompaniment?

Victoria's dress has been drastically altered. The bodice and neckline are changed, as are the sleeves and the fabric of her dress. In point of fact, the artist has changed the dress from a formal gown with an open, low neckline and bare arms to a day dress by adding under sleeves and raising the neckline. In the wood engraving (fig. 15) one feels that she is wearing a very pale coloured dress, a pale silk perhaps. The artist transformed this to a quite heavy and dark purple colour with a sheen to it, a dark satin with white eyelet trim and flounces (fig. 14). This combination of colours and textures with light and dark tones is incongruous with the tastes of the time for one normally would see a heavier dark trim on such a dark, rich fabric. In the print the sleeves are gathered well above the elbow and she wears a bracelet on each wrist; Victoria is often portrayed wearing pearl bracelets with attached miniature portraits of Albert and her children. In the painting the artist has eliminated the bracelets and has extended the sleeves to the wrists with trimmed cuffs. It is interesting to note that Albert, whose waistcoat is given a pale grey floral pattern in the painting, is wearing ceremonial dress with hose, while Louis-

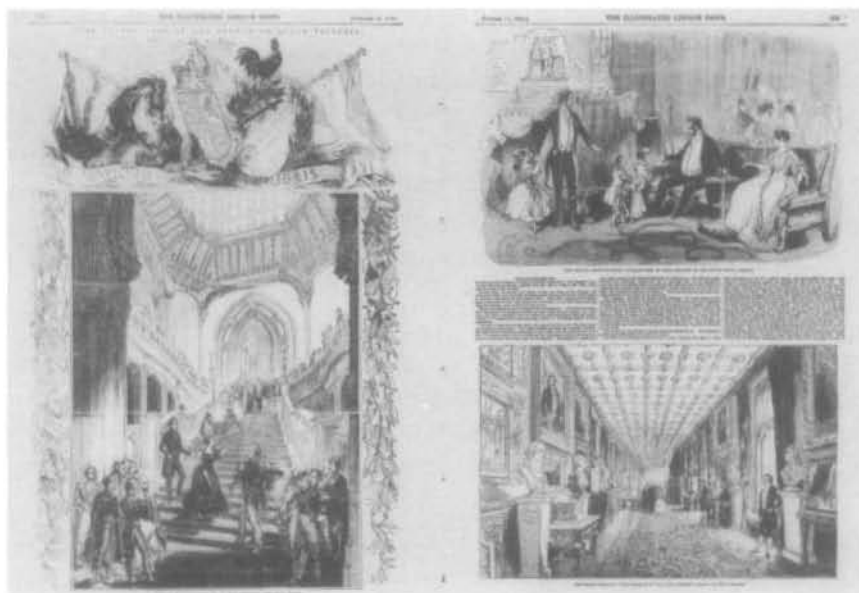
Philippe wears dark trousers. The court in attendance are only vaguely sketched in the background of the print and in the painting they are placed in the impossibly confined space between the sofa and the windows. In the painting the ladies have been given identical formal necklines, the gentlemen blue coats with white facing and gold lace. The figure on the far right in the print and the mural has a more elaborate and ornate gold braiding on his coat and also wears a distinguishing pink sash across his chest. Is he meant to portray the young prince, the Duc de Montpensier, who accompanied his father on this journey to England? The nosegay on the table before Victoria in the wood engraving is notably omitted in the painting.

This recreated drawing room, when compared to the prints, certainly does not give one a sense of the grandeur of a royal residence. Quite the contrary, it is as though the scene was taking place in the confines of a ship or on a stage. The figures are not in proportion to the space the artist conceived for them. But nevertheless it certainly must have been suitably more grand than any of the architecture in the neighbourhood at the time.

A small plate of Staffordshire bone china of 1842 was recently found in Nova Scotia and generously given by the Nova Scotia Museum to the National Gallery of Canada. The centre of that plate shows a quite similar view to the overmantle (fig. 18). The image, a transfer print in purple on white, shows Victoria, crowned, feet propped up on a footstool, left hand holding a nosegay resting on a small table near her, seated with Albert and the royal children, Victoria and Albert standing before them. Above this central image, a vignette in the border of the plate shows little Prince Albert suitably attired, flying a kite, and in the distance the scalloped silhouette of Windsor Castle is visible. In the vignette below, a very young Princess Victoria pushes her toy horse on the patio at Windsor enclosed by a balustrade. The border of the plate is deep blue with hand painted decorations in red and gold. As easily transported to Nova Scotia as an issue of the *ILN*, the plate illustrates how similar images of Royal domestic felicity had entered the iconography of the decorative arts and had been diffused throughout the British Empire.

The three murals discussed so far describe different parts of the great world outside Nova Scotia; now we come to the remaining six murals which depict familiar scenes, most probably those of the Annapolis Valley. On the east wall (fig. 19) we see a vividly drawn ship-launching scene. This, the largest of all the panels has a luminous vitality and vibrates with a great release of energy. This painting is in direct contrast to the confined and constricted cityscapes and the interior view of Windsor Castle, although like the latter, it is an adaptation of three separate prints from the *ILN*. The horses racing along the shore are taken from a wood engraving on page 289 of the May 13th, 1844 edition (fig. 20). The ship being launched and the

steamer in the foreground are taken from page 232 of the April 13th, 1844 edition (fig. 21). The paddle-steamer towing out a full-rigged ship is taken from page 299 of the same issue (fig. 22).



(16) ILN, pp. 232, 233, October 12, 1844, wood engravings. Coll.: National Library of Canada/Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/Archives publiques Canada).



(17) The Grand Corridor, Windsor Castle, wood engraving, ILN. Coll.: National Library of Canada/Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/Archives publiques Canada).



(18) **Staffordshire Bone China-ware**, 1842, showing vignettes of the Royal Family. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery Canada/ Galerie nationale du Canada).

The landscape in which all of these activities take place was possibly inspired by a view of Digby, Nova Scotia from *The Youth Instructor and Guardian*, published in London (fig. 23). This small pamphlet was filled with stories and poems for the instruction and moral education of the young and carried a print of a distant land in each issue. Recently a copy of a small steel engraving, etched in London and published by J. Mason for *The Youth Instructor and Guardian*, was acquired by the Picture Division of the P.A.C. We have not, as yet, been successful in locating the exact issue from which this print was pulled. This small etching was undoubtedly copied from the volume: *No. 1, Views of British-America* drawn from nature and on stone by Mrs. Mary G. Hall of whom very little is known.¹⁶

The wall on the left, separated from the launching scene by a doorway, shows part of a wooden house standing by a road leading off into the distant forest and mountains (fig. 5). The whole is framed by a tall tree in the foreground. These two views are linked only by

the small sky section above the doorway. This tall, thin panel seems to be a decorative filler, based on the principles outlined by Rufus Porter, rather than being taken from a specific print. It is, however, freely invented in keeping with the nature theme of the other murals.

The four separate prints are quite cleverly combined to create an effect of simultaneity. The cohesion of the whole is impressive. The primary idea of the mural is the ship-launching amidst the hustle and bustle of the harbour. A paddle-steamer called "Flirt" in the painting is just moving in, loaded with passengers who want a good view of the event. Other details which were taken from this same print include the row of tops of masts behind the buildings, the crib in front of the vessel being launched and the first boat sailing out to sea just beyond the towing scene. At first glance, it does seem odd to see the two jockeys, whips in hand, go racing along the shore. But such racing was quite common then and interestingly enough, page 234 of the June 29th, 1844 edition illustrates (fig. 24) and describes just such a race as this, called "shore-racing." There is in this composition a great sensitivity to the way light falls into the space and onto the surfaces of shapes. For example, note the large warehouse to the left and how very delicate indeed is the painted surface, the windows in partial shadow and the delicate touch in the green shutters and the open door, as well as the light and dark tones on the beams supporting the whole structure.

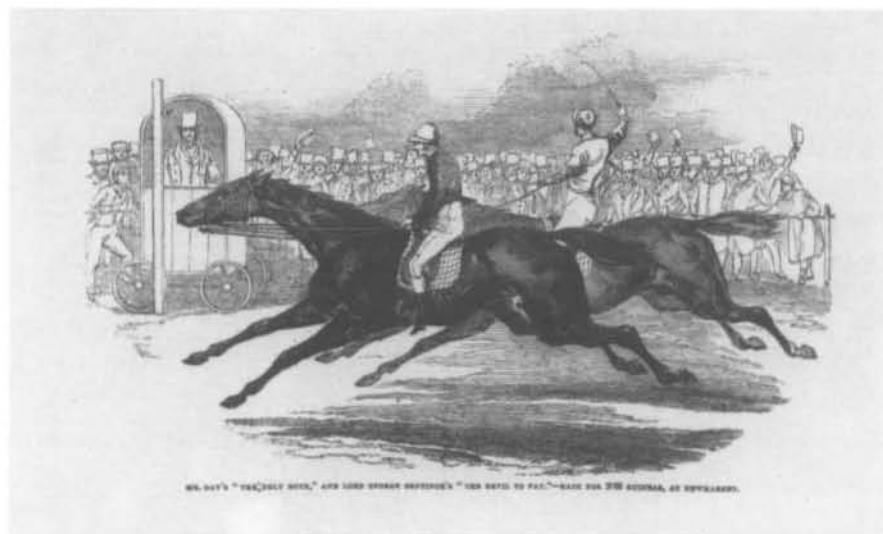
In the wood engraving the towing scene relates to a story about immigration to Sydney, Australia, and the article accompanying the print mentions Canada and the sadness of leaving home. The ship's name is not mentioned in the *ILN*, but the painter named her "Juno" in the mural which is followed by the name "London," indicating that she was built in Granville Ferry¹⁷ possibly for a "London" company. A small but telling detail to note when comparing the prints to the painting is the flags. The artist has observed that they fly in different directions in the separate prints, but once combined in one image they naturally should all unfurl and fly in the breeze in the same direction. The artist, however, forgot to align the flag atop Signal Hill.

The illusion of vast and deep space achieved through a strong use of diagonals throughout the composition is very convincing. The artist uses a fine gradation of hues and tones from the dark and substantial foreground to a hazy and luminous horizon dissolving in the distance. To command such space so proficiently is evidence enough to lead us to believe that the hand of a practised amateur or a professional artist was at work here. The inspiration for this panel may well have come from the shipbuilding interests of the Croscup family.

Although there is no attempt to link the composition of this wall with the adjacent mural of St. Petersburg, an effort has been made to

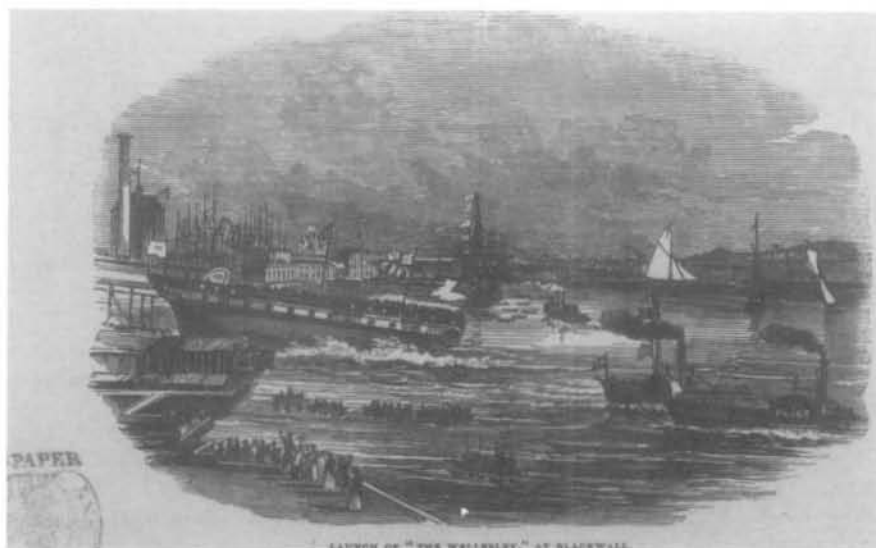


(19) Anonymous, **Ship-Launching**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

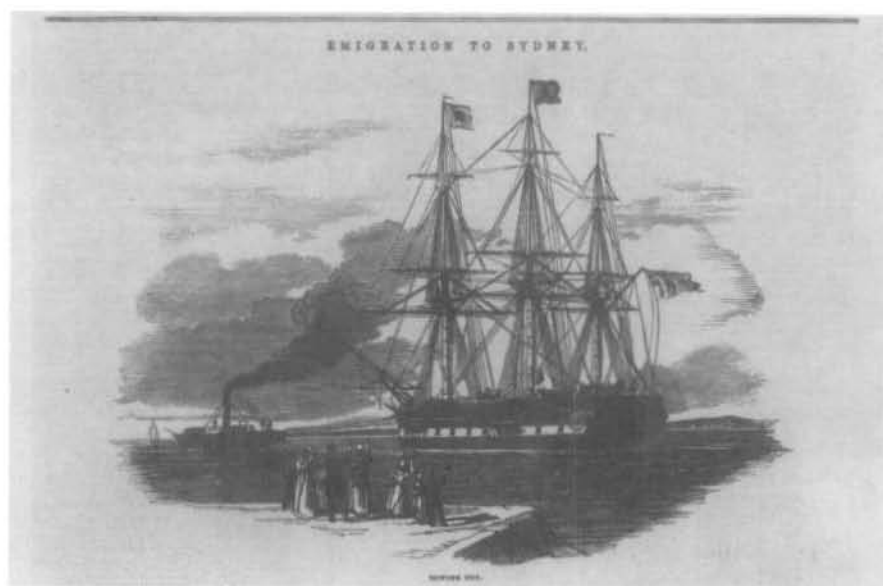


(20) **Shore-Racing**, wood engraving, ILN. Coll.: National Library of Canada/ Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/Archives publiques Canada).

link this scene somewhat awkwardly to the adjacent mural depicting a woman holding a child in her arms (fig. 25). Unfortunately we have not been successful in finding a print from which the mother and child were taken. It is probable that one does not exist, the whole



(21) **Launch of "The Wellesley" at Blackwall**, wood engraving, ILN. Coll.: National Library of Canada/Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/Archives publiques Canada).



(22) **Towing Out**, wood engraving, ILN. Coll.: National Library of Canada/Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/Archives publiques Canada).



(23) Digby, Nova Scotia, steel engraving. (Coll. & Photo: Public Archives Canada/ Archives publiques Canada).



(24) Freistone Shore-Racing, wood engraving, ILN. Coll.: National Library of Canada/Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/ Archives publiques Canada).

being taken directly from nature or possibly copied from an oil portrait. Although the salmon-pink road of the ship launching scene ends abruptly at the corner of the room, the trees and bushes and sky do cross over and link up. So, if one stands facing this corner from the opposite end of the room, one would perceive the strong illusion that both these separate murals were executed on one flat plane. The panel sits to the left of the fireplace and of all the full standing figures painted in the room this one is the largest (fig. 25). It is difficult to see clearly from anywhere in the room except when one stands directly in line with it. At certain angles, the mantelpiece actually obscures the faces completely. No real individual characterization of the figures was even remotely attempted by the artist.

The mother is wearing a simple blue day dress, certainly not the stuff of fashion plates which tended to show the extremes in current fashion with highly elaborate trimmings. The dress has a full skirt, a simple bodice, a high neckline, a wide, white collar and full gigot sleeves. The woman's head is encircled by a halo of fine ruffles from a simple house cap whose ties fall loosely over the front of the shoulders. On her feet, the black shoes she wears seem more substantial than the typically emaciated, pinched slippers in a fashion plate. The child is dressed in exactly the same manner except that its dress is cream-coloured with a yellow waist band and front panel over the bodice. Given the structure of the dress, one can safely date it as being typically worn c. 1832. The stray ringlet slipping onto the mother's forehead gives this figure a more human quality, as opposed to the perfect line of hair on a poised mannequin in a fashion plate.

Both the theme of the family and that of the mother and child is echoed three times in the room. The mother and child we have just considered, whose father is perhaps meant to be represented by the hunter in the panel on the other wall, Victoria and Albert with the royal children in the overmantel and the Micmac Indian family by the shoreline. The room depicts approximately 150 human figures, ranging from a faintly sketched shadow vanishing in the distance of a cityscape to the elaborately described lady in white standing behind the piper. These facts make the room quite unique. Most of the decorative schemes used in rooms on the Eastern seaboard of America used highly stylized patterns and reduced natural scenes to this stylized mode. The *Croscup Room* certainly reflects a more ambitious scheme.

The mural to the right of the fireplace has proven to be the most mysterious of all (fig. 26). In the foreground, seated on a small wooden bench, sits a piper, dressed in the revived Highland dress of the early Victorian era. In the middle ground and in front of a large colonnaded house stand three fashionably dressed ladies. Beside them is a large rose bush. Far into the background, beyond a field,

one can see a house near a wood. The identity of the figures and the meaning of this panel are indecipherable.

Highland dress in its revived forms, with strong military influences, was avidly sought after as a result of Queen Victoria's visit to Scotland in September 1844. The *ILN* covered her journey with great enthusiasm and eventually announced that it would publish Part IV of the journal containing the whole of the Queen's visit to Scotland presented in a beautiful tartan wrapper. One can imagine the impact this would have in Nova Scotia. The figure of the Scotsman was taken from the upper right corner of page 265 of the September 3rd, 1842 edition of the *ILN* (fig. 27). Oddly enough, the painter sat the standing figure of the piper down upon a bench. Although the artist copied the costume in the engraving more or less faithfully, he still does not seem to clearly understand actual Highland dress. The sporran supposedly hanging at the front of the kilt has been strangely expanded to become what for all intents and purposes is a hair skirt! All the tartans are reduced to a general stripe pattern of no particular clan.¹⁸ The coat is red, the plaid (a long piece of cloth worn over the shoul-



(25) **Croscup Room**, Corner where the East Wall meets the South Wall, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

der) is green, the hose are bright yellow tied with bright red garters. The piper's blue Balmoral cap has a spray of black feathers in its diced band and he wears the standard buckled black shoe. A piper never sits to play his pipes and the bag should be carried right under the arm. The section of the bass drone that appears over his head in the print has been omitted in the painting. The more scraggly, square features of the head on the figure in the print have been transformed to those of a plump, round and rosy cheeked young man with long auburn sideburns. Who is he meant to represent? Why is he playing the pipes before these ladies? On the same page in the *ILN* (fig. 27), one should note the interesting scene depicted in the roundel, beside which the piper stands playing. It is somewhat similar in theme to the painted panel being discussed; certainly all the elements of the subject matter are present. Could it have possibly inspired the subject for this mural?

What seems more mysterious than anything else in this mural is the central focus of this composition, the lady elegantly and meticulously dressed in white standing before two equally fashionable lady companions. The possible source for these figures is *Townsend's Monthly Selection of Parisian Costume*, October 1833, No. 106, plates 521, 523 and 524, published at the Parisian Costume Office at No. 16, Great Windmill St., Haymarket, London.¹⁹ The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed the explosion of the fashion plate industry onto the world stage. The 1820's in particular, were prolific years for the appearance of new fashion magazines.²⁰ Vyvyan Holland lists, for this decade alone, at least thirty different fashion magazines which contain only hand-coloured plates, however, there were many more with only black and white plates. The early issues of *Townsend's* were published in a small format, a page was the size of the hand, with one, at most two, figures per plate and the printmaking was very fine indeed. In the 1830's the format expanded to four times that size and the plates such as those which were copied by the Croscup artist face each other and when opened, create a long frieze of six, sometimes seven, elegant ladies standing across the bottom of the pages. In a note to advertisers, Mr. Townsend claims that monthly sales of his magazine exceeded 5000, with a circulation constantly growing. Hence, it is not at all improbable that this issue of *Townsend's* found its way to Granville Ferry probably via Saint John or Halifax.

One naturally assumes the centre figure dressed in white in the mural to be a blushing bride (fig. 26). In fact this figure is copied from the lower compartment of Plate 523 (fig. 28) and the accompanying description for this plate states: "Center-Figure.-Bridal dress of India Muslin. The Mantelet, veil, Volans and Chemisette of imitation Brussels lace." The top centre figure in the upper compartment of this same plate shows a back view of the bridal head dress. The mantle in

the print has a ruffle of lace all around as does the veil, with two tiers of the same lace on the sleeves and skirt. In the painting, the portion of mantle above the waist is totally separated from the two pendant ends below the waist. In the mural the ruffles of the upper part of the mantle seems to be part of the sleeve while the two separate pendants below the waist are joined to form a black apron and although this is what the painting is telling us, upon closer examination one can clearly see that the underdrawing in pencil faithfully copies the print.

In the print,²¹ which is a line and stipple etching, the dress is all in white while such details as her earrings, prayer book and fan are touched in golden yellow. The flowers in her head dress are pink, the leaves are green, her hair a light shade of brown. The cheeks and lips of her finely stippled face are accentuated with a blush of pink. She wears long white gloves, white shoes and the bow at her waist is snow white just as a bride would be expected to wear. In the painting, all is the same except that a section of the flounce at the bottom of the skirt, just above the dog's head, was omitted, as was part of the veil on the left, and the gloves. The shoes are turned to black, the bow to bright pink, the gold details on the book and fan are missing and the lower parts of the mantle were drastically changed to a black apron. The blush on the face was copied faithfully. And there she stands with a ravishing air of self-assurance.

Why was the wedding dress altered? Certainly one cannot entertain the idea that a bride would ever wear a black apron and a large pink bow at her wedding. However, aprons, particularly black ones, were worn as part of Summer morning dress in the fashions of 1832-34, as were small veils. Townsend states in the notes "Modes de Paris" in this same 1833 issue of his magazine that "Black is predominant for every description of Toilette this Winter." The pattern in the Brussels lace in the print is slightly altered from a light spray of leaves and tendrils with a flower to just a plain straight branch with leaves, in the painting, in a manner one usually identifies with eyelet work.

Her unknown companion to the right was copied from the figure on the right in the lower compartment of plate 523 (fig. 28). The accompanying description states: "Right-hand Figure.-A sewed Straw Hat. A silk Muslin Pelisse with the sleeves and front ornamented with ribbons." An original hand-coloured plate examined in New York shows the pelisse to be in a soft cream-yellow. The painter changed this to a deep golden tone, stripped the dress of all its bows but replaced those holding the gathered sleeves with large pink buttons. Both the sash at her waist and the long scarf have been simplified and coloured pink. The top cape is also edged in pink. She now wears a pale blue hat instead of the bright green in the print with the same spray of pink flowers and leaves and knots of pale blue ribbons adorning the crown and falling to the back. Her mauve gloves and handkerchief were also omitted in the painting.

Her equally unknown companion to the left is copied from the left-hand figure in the lower compartment of plate 524 (fig. 29) and the accompanying description states: "Left-hand figure.-A Cap formed of three rows of black blond with lappets. A silk Pelisse trimmed with black tulle and silk bows covered with black net." In the painting this figure is placed behind and to the left of the central figure so that the skirt of her dress and gigot sleeve of her left arm are completely hidden and only the upper part of the torso and the right arm remain visible while all traces of black vanish. Her black cap is removed and she looks out over the central figure's shoulder, wearing her hair in a classic example of a double looped Apollo knot which was *de rigueur* in the 1830's. The head dress in the painting was taken from the left figure in the lower compartment of plate 521 of the same issue (fig. 30). The flowers are removed and delicate strands of gold chain or beads are intertwined through the hair and across her forehead. The small gold earring was also borrowed from this figure. The green colour of the dress is completely changed to its complementary, a dusty-mauve, and the black trim is transformed to white. The brooch is left out.

A print worth noting because it became the subject matter for one of the earliest prints ever made in Canada is the fashion plate engraved by W. Hopwood showing "The Queen of the Belgians in her wedding dress" in the October 1832 edition of the *Court Magazine* published in London. The similarity in parts such as the head dress, the flounce, the ruffles, and general shape of the dress is quite striking. This print was copied and lithographed by Adolphus Bourne in Montréal for the January 1833 edition of the *Ladies Museum*.²² (fig. 31)

We know William Croscup acquired his land in 1845 with or without the house built on it. The room cannot have been painted prior to 1842, when the *ILN* was first issued, since we know the images derive from it. What, therefore, are these three figures dressed in the immediately identifiable height of fashion of the early 1830's doing in a room painted probably around 1846, perhaps as late as 1850? There is a discrepancy of almost fifteen years. By the mid 1840's, fashion had drastically changed. Fashion plates from the '30's are highly stylized without backgrounds. In the 1840's fashion plates sported a new look, as the figures were set in elaborate settings and backgrounds.²³ Our mural seems to present a strange concoction: the stylized figures of the early 1830's displaying their toilettes in an elaborate setting of the mid 1840's. Again, was the artist perhaps selecting his images from prints laid down in a scrapbook and was simply taken by the charm of particular plates pulled from magazines?

These three figures are the only known elements in the compositions in the room to have been copied from coloured models. All the

others come from black and white wood engravings. Yet the painter was not a slave to his model as the artist freely adapted figures and colours to suit a personal preference and taste. Did the artist wish to portray members of the family who occupied the house or was it all done on a whim? The rose bush is the only flower to be seen in the entire scheme of the room apart from the head dress of the ladies.



(26) Anonymous, **Piper and Three Elegant Ladies**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

Again, in another corner of the *ILN*, is a column devoted to floriculture. A different flower is discussed every week. The same 1842 edition featured the rose on pages 292-93 and one line in particular is very appropriate. The writer says about the common wild rose:

Blooming in the sterile waste, this lonely flower is seen unfolding its fair leaves where there is no beauty to reflect its own and thus calling back the heart of the weary traveller to thoughts of peace and joy; reminding him that the wilderness of human life, though rugged and barren to the discontented beholder, has also its sweet flowers; not the less welcome for being unlooked for, nor the less lonely for being cherished by a hand unseen.



(27) **Piper and Vignette of Dalkeith**, wood engraving, ILN. Coll.: National Library of Canada/Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/Archives publiques Canada).

The grand house in the background seems freely invented and is perhaps modelled on Martock, a house near Windsor, Nova Scotia.²⁴ This remarkable house was the centre of great social activity at the time. It was built by John Butler and his son, Colonel Edward Butler, transformed the place into a palatial residence containing all the requisites for entertainment and grandeur that were fashionable at the time. This was when the house received its Ionic portico during the wave of Greek revivalism that swept the U.S. about 1830-40.

How cleverly all of the elements of this composition have been orchestrated to form a harmonious whole whose sources we have finally discovered but whose meaning still eludes us completely. It is interesting to think that perhaps there is a stratum of symbolism underlying the meaning of this enchanting mural.

The last wall to be examined has three individual murals separated by two windows (fig. 7). The panel on the left depicts a Micmac Indian family, the one in the centre a hunter and the mural on the right shows a landscape with a waterfall. Next to the mural of the piper and his three "Graces" is a door leading out into the front hall. Between the door and the corner of the room is a narrow panel approximately thirty-five centimetres wide. The image depicted in this mural is a landscape showing a thick wood near the shore, as seen from the water. The water, shoreline and forest flow past the corner onto the next wall depicting the Micmac family, linking both



(28) Fashion Plate No. 523 from **Townsend's**, steel engraving. (Coll. & Photo: Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



(29) Fashion Plate No. 524 from **Townsend's**, steel engraving. (Coll. & Photo: Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



(30) Fashion Plate No. 521 from **Townsend's**, steel engraving. (Coll. & Photo: Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



(31) **The Queen of the Belgians** in her Wedding Dress, lithograph, **Ladies Museum** January 1833. (Coll. & Photo: The Metropolitan Toronto Library).

compositions, just as the artist painted the other corner where the ship-launching scene merges with the panel of the mother and child (fig. 7). A source has not been found for the Micmac family in the foreground (fig. 32).²⁵ The mother is sitting on a large rock; she wears leggings under a deep blue skirt/dress with surprisingly little decoration. Over her shoulders she has a decorated cream-coloured blanket tied at the front. On her head is the traditional peaked cap trimmed in red and she wears light coloured moccasins. Behind her, stands a small child holding a tiny splint basket or quill box in her right hand.



(32) Anonymous, **Micmac Indian Family**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

To the right stands the tall figure of the father, arms folded. He is dressed in his traditional navy blue leggings and long coat, with red piping at the shoulders, tied around the waist with a pale coloured belt. A silver medal hangs around his neck and he sports a hat with his clay pipe tucked into the hatband. Near the shore in the water, sits a typical Micmac canoe, in fact, half a birch-bark canoe as it would be unacceptable to have painted the other half around the corner onto the merging wall. Behind are three wigwams, the flat, rather regular square pattern deriving from the pieces of birch-bark used to build them. No outer logs show and the doors are unrealistic; a child sits in the entrance of the first one.

In the case of the Micmac Indians the artist has broken with the stylizing approach to the faces of the other figures in the room; an attempt at realism has been made. The structure of the head has been carefully observed: slanted eyes, the broad and prominent cheekbones, the dark hair and skin tone, all attempt to portray a racial type, yet not a specific individual. The drawing of the woman is rather awkward; the disproportion of the hands, feet and head as they relate to the body is obvious. The man seems to have a gentle smile on his face. He stands squarely in an attitude and stance perfectly in keeping with Alicia Anne Jeffery's woodcut of a Micmac man, cut and printed around 1835-37. Could this be the source of the figure in the mural?

The central panel represents a young gentleman out hunting with his dog (fig. 33). The source of this image comes from page 296 of the September 3rd, 1842 edition of the *ILN* (fig. 34). This wood engraving is of none other than his Royal Highness Prince Albert gone "Buck shooting in the Highlands." He stands in the foreground transformed into a rather pale, moustacheless, rosy-cheeked, dreamy-eyed young man. He sports a blue cravat round a high collar of a white shirt, a pale green waistcoat and green tartan trousers. In the print, the trousers are strapped beneath his boots, while in the mural they sit above. His Glengarry cap in the print is transformed in the painting into a nondescript, featherless cap that sits jauntily over a head of long gently curling hair. He carries a powder horn slung over his shoulder and holds his remarkably attenuated rifle before him, butt end down. His left foot is lightly raised onto a mound.

The final panel is of a simple landscape (fig. 35). Such picturesque views appeared quite regularly in the *ILN*, often as a vignette for a column on fishing, such as the one on page 272 of the September 3rd, 1842 edition (fig. 36). In all three panels, although the compositions are basically the same, the trees dominate each with its own character. Another interesting detail is that for every deciduous tree in the foreground there sits behind it a quite distinguished conifer, in perfect balance throughout. The initial reaction to this scheme was that the painter was simply indulging his delight in pattern and

proportion, however, the actual landscape of the region displays a similar mix of trees.

The method used to create the murals consists of a simple coat of lime-plaster keyed onto the lath and well trowelled to a smooth



(33) Anonymous, **Hunter and His Dog**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).



(34) **Buck Shooting in the Highlands**, wood engraving, ILN. Coll.: National Library of Canada/Bibliothèque nationale du Canada. (Photo: Public Archives Canada/Archives publiques Canada).

finish.²⁶ The plaster was found to be of poor quality, badly mixed, even containing large stones, twigs and other organic matter such as tufts of cowhair. Pieces of old wallpaper about five centimetres wide were then pasted along the cracks between the wall and door architraves. The plaster surface appears to have been primed. The design was drawn in graphite, then executed with reasonably good quality oil paint. The whole was varnished several times.

Throughout the room, the drawing and brushwork are consistently irregular and uneven. This is particularly noticeable in the figures of the two cityscapes. The whole seems to have been executed very quickly, the paint laid down quite simply, without hesitation and with only just enough care as to the application. All forms are reduced to their simplest structural features. No area seems particularly reworked or polished, yet some details have received a little more attention than others. Oddly enough, certain details (i.e., outlines of bricks, boards and shingles in the buildings) have been reinforced in graphite over the paint layer. All of this opens up the possibility that perhaps more than one hand was involved. The room, however, has such cohesion that it would seem plausible to conclude that one mind conceived and guided the work with possible assistance in the execution.

All the woodwork in the room is hand-painted in imitation of stained wood grain. The windows and lower panels, the doors and frames are painted to imitate a light blond wood, and the graining is done in a slightly darker tone. The baseboard is stained a darker



^ (36) Anonymous, **Salmon Fishing**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

< (35) Anonymous, **Landscape with Waterfall**, oil on plaster. (Coll. & Photo: National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada).

brown with even deeper brown-red graining. The mantelpiece, in imitation of Egyptian marble, has a black ground and the clouding is formed with various lighter colours.

The whole painted scheme attempts to burst through the confining, solid walls of the room into the world outside. The two features that continually remind one of the illusion are the painted woodwork of the doors and windows and also the baseboard around the bottom of the room. Also at the top, the *trompe l'oeil* painting of the now faded swags of red curtain, with bows of gold cord and tassels tied to a black rod, decorated with small, almost invisible, gold flowers.

Speculation as to the identity of artist(s) is the only method one has for arriving at any conclusion in this enquiry, for no documentary evidence as to the identity of the artist(s) is extant. The oral tradition of the family describes the artist as a runaway sailor,²⁷ but almost all painted rooms where the creator is unknown are described as having been painted either by itinerant sailors, or by prisoners of the War of 1812 or by the local drunkard!²⁸ The authors suggest that it might in

fact have been a local inhabitant and possibly even a woman who painted the walls of the *Croscup Room*.

Recent research has uncovered many artistic activities engaged in by women without much art training in nineteenth-century North America.²⁹ These activities ranged from needlework pictures, quilts and other forms of home decoration, to drawing and water-colour paintings. These women had often received some education in art from ladies' academies or local art schools, but on the whole they worked outside the academic fine arts tradition, yet produced a formidable body of work, largely within the area of the decorative arts. Because their production did not attempt to transcend their domestic role but rather served to reinforce it, they were able to work undisturbed by many of the problems which plagued professional women artists in this period. One of the forms of activity engaged in by amateur women artists was the painting of floors and walls. Ruth Henshaw Bascombe, for example, recorded in her *Journal*, the stages she went through in painting her parlour floor to imitate a carpet.³⁰ Other women are on record as having painted rooms in their houses in early nineteenth-century New England.³¹ A woman who lived in the Croscup house may well have painted the room, given that art education was available to women of the class to which the Croscup family belonged in Nova Scotia at this time.³²

It is necessary at this point to recount a little of the history of the Croscup and Shaffner families.³³ William Croscup, who bought the lot on which the house still stands in 1845, came from a Loyalist family, who had settled in Granville Ferry in the early 1780's. He was a farmer but was also involved in shipbuilding. William married Hannah Amelia Shaffner on August 15th, 1844, when she was 24 years old. The Shaffner (also spelt "Shafner") family had originally come from the Rhine Palatinate in 1751, as sponsored Protestant immigrants. The Croscup and Shaffner families were already interrelated by many marriage and business alliances before the union of William and Hannah Amelia in 1844.

There are other stylistic reasons for believing that the room could have been painted by a member of the Croscup family. The fact that the room was obviously completed within a short period of time, however, is a cogent argument for the theory that it was painted by an itinerant who never returned to polish his work. The theory that we consider most plausible at present is that a family member aided this person in painting the room, as this explains the marked discrepancies in style and skill which we have discovered between the different murals.

The final argument for the production of the Croscup mural by a family member is the discovery in 1980 of another painted room in a house belonging to the same family. The farmhouse originally built by John Shaffner, a relation to Hannah Amelia, now belonging to Mr.

and Mrs. George Parker, has a room painted by a hand much less skilled than the Croscup artist, yet also based upon engravings in the 1842 and 1844 volumes of the *ILN*. Another wall painting came to light, literally, as this article was being written, in yet another house belonging to the Croscup/Shaffner family in Bear River. Only a small section in an alcove of a room was uncovered to reveal a landscape with a road leading up to a mansion surrounded by large trees, and in the foreground a few animals lingering. This view was copied from a wood engraving entitled "Claremont," Queen Victoria's original country residence, on page 540 of the December 31, 1842 edition of the *ILN*. We are all anxious to see what other images lie beneath the wallpaper of the remaining untouched walls of the room in this house and many more houses in Nova Scotia.

Although we have not had the opportunity to examine any other painted rooms in person, we have looked at photographs of a large section of them, and we feel we can say that the iconographic content of the *Croscup Room* is unique. Other rooms were painted as a substitute for wallpaper and are purely decorative. The *Croscup Room* is a treasure house of iconographic significance. As to the Parker/Shaffner house in South Williamstown and the house in Bear River, we look forward to unravelling their mystery.

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Notes:

- 1 The authors wish to acknowledge their debt to Cora Greenaway, who first discovered the room in 1963, and to J. Russell Harper, who drew public attention to it in *People's Art: Naive Art in Canada* (Ottawa: 1973) Cat. No 113- p. 120.
We would also like to thank our colleagues James Burant, Françoise Bouvier, Theresa Rowat, Denys Séguin and Lucie Dorais for the information they have generously shared with us. We are grateful to Douglas Schoenherr, Lydia Foy, Theresa Rowat and J. Burant for reading and correcting the text. Their lucid suggestions were welcomed. For the expert advice on costume we are grateful to Pam Blackstock of Parcs Canada who visited the room with us many times and assisted with the costume descriptions, also to J. Beaudoin-Ross of the McCord Museum and M. Holford of the Royal Ontario Museum.
- 2 *Canadian Antiques and Art Review*, Feb. 1981, describes the discovery and installation of the room.
- 3 Jean LIPMAN and Alice WINCHESTER, *The Flowering of American Folk Art* (N.Y.: 1974), p. 9.
- 4 Hereafter referred to as the ILN.
- 5 Cora GREENAWAY, Unpublished manuscript, 1977, section on Croscup Family History, p. 12. This article is cited with the permission of the author and the National Gallery of Canada.
- 6 Mark GIROUARD, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (Princeton, N.J.: 1978), pp. 233-39.
- 7 Cora Greenaway is compiling a catalogue of these murals.
- 8 Mural painting of this kind is studied in the following volumes: Edward B. ALLEN, *Early American Wall Paintings, 1710-1850* (New Haven: 1926); Jean LIPMAN, *American Folk Decoration* (N.Y.: 1951), chapter 5.; LIPMAN and WINCHESTER, *op. cit.*; Nina Fletcher LITTLE, *American Decorative Wall Painting* (N.Y.: 1972); Robert L. MCGRATH, *Early Vermont Wall Paintings, 1790-1850* (Hanover, N.H.: 1972).
- 9 Porter's extraordinary career has been documented by Jean LIPMAN, *Rufus Porter: Yankee Pioneer* (N.Y.: 1968).
- 10 Leonard de VRIES, *Panorama 1842-1865: The World of the Early Victorians as seen through the Eyes of the Illustrated London News* (London: 1967).
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 *Illustrated London News* Preface to the first bound volume, 1843, p. iii.
- 13 It is probably for this reason that so many copies have been preserved in North America.
- 14 It is possible the prints were hand coloured, but until the originals used by the artist are found we shall never know.
- 15 Mr. J. Gaspard from the Archives Library pointed out that Russian harnessing included the use of a "duga," a kind of prominent loop-shaped yoke placed over the back of the horse's neck. This is omitted in the painting.
- 16 Hall was an amateur who arrived in Canada from England in 1831 and by 1833 had several views of Niagara Falls and the Hudson River lithographed by Pendleton's in Boston. In 1834 she operated a Drawing Academy in Saint John, N.B.
- 17 Glen Wright of Federal Archives discovered in the Ships Register that a brigantine named *Juno* was built in 1839 in Granville Ferry probably by Croscup. It was registered at Saint John, N.B. and later transferred to Belfast.
- 18 *The Scottish Clans and their Tartans*, 37th edition (Edinburgh and London: 1954).
- 19 We are indebted to Madeleine Ginsburg, Assistant Keeper, Dept. of Textiles and Dress, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and author of *An Introduction to Fashion Illustration* (London: 1980) for discovering this possible source for this part of the mural for us in the fashion plate collections of the V&A.
Similar fashion plates depicting wedding and morning dress, also dated October 1833, and only slightly different from Townsend's plates, were subsequently discovered by Pam Blackstock in England.
- 20 Vyvyan HOLLAND, *Hand Coloured Fashion Plates, 1771-1899* (London: 1955), ch. 4.
- 21 Original plates in the 1833 issue were examined in the Thomas J. Watson Library at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- 22 Mary ALLODI, *Printmaking in Canada, The Earliest Views and Portraits* (Toronto: 1980), pp. 94-95.
- 23 HOLLAND, pp. 97-110.
- 24 Arthur W. WALLACE, *An Album of Drawings of Early Buildings in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: 1976), pl. 64.
- 25 Ruth Whitehead of the Nova Scotia Museum, whose advice about the Micmac Indian dress proved invaluable, strongly suggests that this panel might also be original, possibly executed from memory by the artist.
- 26 Ian HODKINSON, "Conservation and Transfer of an Early 19th Century Painted Room," paper given in May, 1979. Professor Hodkinson and the students from the Queen's University Conservation Programme were responsible for the removal, conservation and installation of the room for The National Gallery of Canada.
- 27 GREENAWAY, p. 2.
- 28 MCGRATH, p. 80; LIPMAN, *Rufus Porter*, p. 93.
- 29 C. DEWHURST, B. MACDOWELL and M. MACDOWELL, *Artists in Aprons: Folk Art by American Women* (N.Y.: 1979).

30 *ibid.*

31 LIPMAN, *American Folk Decoration*, p. 96

32 Jim BURANT, "The Development of the Visual Arts in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from 1815 to 1867 as an Expression of Cultural Awakening." M.A. Thesis, Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1979, gives an account of several art schools run by and for women in this period.

33 Material for this paragraph is drawn from Cora Greenaway's unpublished research.

Perception très personnelle de l'origine de l'iconographie des murales du salon Croscup

Entre 1844 et 1850, un salon d'une demeure respectable de la Nouvelle-Écosse a été peint du plancher au plafond par une série exceptionnelle de murales. Des vues de Londres et de Saint-Pétersbourg, d'Indiens Mic-Mac et de dames élégamment vêtues se mélangent avec des paysages fantaisistes, le tout surplombé d'un panneau représentant la reine Victoria et le prince Albert dans un petit salon du château de Windsor. Cette étonnante production est présentée occasionnellement au public à la Galerie nationale du Canada.

Les sources des représentations figurées ont d'abord éveillé notre intérêt pour ce salon. Nous avons appris avec bonheur que soixante-quinze pour cent des images étaient copiées de l'*Illustrated London News*. Toutefois, ces renseignements nous ont révélé qu'il ne s'agissait pas simplement d'une copie, mais d'un soigneux agencement de divers éléments.

Une fois connue l'origine de cette iconographie, nous avons cherché à en savoir davantage sur cette forme de décoration d'intérieur au dix-neuvième siècle. C'est ainsi que nous avons appris qu'il y avait de nombreux salons peints de cette manière, durant cette période, en Nouvelle-Écosse et dans l'est des États-Unis et que des guides et directives étaient fort répandues sur cette discipline. Nos recherches nous révèlent qu'il est possible que le peintre du salon Croscup ait suivi les directives que le peintre itinérant Rufus Porter a exposé dans son ouvrage *The Scientific American*.

Par ailleurs, les descendants de la famille Croscup prétendent que le peintre du salon était un marin fugitif. Un examen attentif de l'iconographie et du style soulèvent d'autres possibilités: il aurait pu s'agir d'un peintre semi-professionnel itinérant, amateur ou professionnel dont la vision particulière s'est imposée. En conclusion, l'article traite de l'identité possible de l'artiste sans toutefois fournir aucune preuve documentaire.

L'article s'accompagne de trente illustrations en noir et blanc.

Gilbert L. Gignac
Jeanne L. L'Espérance