

The Potters' View of Canada: Canadian Scenes on Nineteenth-Century

Earthenware

Elizabeth COLLARD

McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983

194 pp., 172 illus., \$29.95

Elizabeth Collard's long-awaited new book was a greater pleasure to receive than many for, by her earlier *Nineteenth-Century Pottery and Porcelain in Canada* (1967) and numerous articles, Mrs. Collard is known as a meticulous researcher and a crisp and incisive writer.

The Potters' View of Canada is a focussed study of that hotly-collected category of nineteenth-century English and Scottish white-bodied table and serving wares that were decorated with transfer-printed and Canadian-oriented views, motifs and legends, particularly for export to the Canadian market (though they were sold elsewhere as well). The well-known *Death of General Wolfe* transfer-printed jugs and teapots, for the most part based on Benjamin West's famous panoramic painting, appeared first in about 1780. However, these were for a primarily British memorabilia market.

A deliberate Canadian focus (although many non-Canadian scenes were also offered) came only in the 1820's, with the issue by Enoch Wood's Burslem Pottery, Staffordshire, of plates with printed underglaze scenes of Québec, Montmorency Falls and Table Rock at Niagara Falls. From this point on many British potteries began to aim at a specifically Canadian market with numerous scenes printed not only in blue, but in red, green, grey and purple as well.

Through twelve chapters, the author outlines the history and context of the transfer-printed Canadian subject ceramics that were produced by numerous British potteries on into the 1890's. She has iso-

lated and illustrated most scenes and identified many of their origins, often in earlier engravings or lithographs copied for ceramic printing. She has identified as well the makers of each scene or type, illustrated all known factory marks and, largely through examination of early advertising, traced and followed this pottery from the factory to its ultimate Canadian markets. Collard states at the outset that this is neither a catalogue nor a definitive list (since previously unknown examples are still occasionally discovered). However, I suspect the book will be taken as both, and shortly expect to see auction listings citing "Collard No. so and so," or new surfacings as "not in Collard."

A critique of *The Potters' View of Canada* must be concerned more with omissions and exclusions than with included content. As far as it goes Mrs. Collard's research is impeccable, but it is largely from published sources. A noticeable omission is information based on original records (insofar as they still exist) of the producing factories, of British and Canadian mercantile houses, and of Canadian import landings. Thus, little is included on actual production dates of ceramic patterns and forms, on specific printed decorations, on the quantities originally manufactured, on quantities shipped and their destinations, and on landed importations. Such research might be largely nonproductive, for early commercial records are notoriously poor in description. Nevertheless, sooner or later it should be tried. The author does state that there is much work to be done, most particularly in the area of identifying further source illustrations for printed scenes.

"Hard" information on scenes, various pottery forms on which they appear, colours, makers, issue date ranges, etc. is included throughout the narrative text, but is

somewhat difficult to glean for quick reference. Since the book is likely to be used as a catalogue in spite of the author's disclaimer, a checklist appendix, citing such basics in short form, would be a very useful inclusion in the next edition.

As a tightly-focussed study, the book is limited solely to Canadian-subject scenic and motif transfer printed wares. Thus, it does not address identical ceramic forms with British, American and other views and motifs. Neither does it cover a parallel group of British special-order tablewares (common in the later nineteenth century) bearing transfer-printed legends or motifs of Canadian organizations ranging from steamship lines and railways to hotels and churches. Another similar group is likewise excluded: those many *English* export white-wares decorated with either integral relief-moulded or cast and applied Canadian motifs, usually beavers and maple leaves, rather than transfer printing. Further work is badly needed on the latter two groups.

Overall, this is the best new book to appear in some years on either Canadian or Canadian-context ceramics, and though occasional new or variant printed scenes or motifs, or pottery forms, will appear just as the author projects, I doubt the subject coverage of *The Potters' View of Canada* will be superseded for decades to come. For historians and collectors of ceramics, it is an important work, and an essential one.

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EXHIBITIONS / EXPOSITIONS

L'art de l'architecte: trois siècles de dessin d'architecture à Québec/Three Centuries of Architectural Drawings in Québec City

Marc GRIGNON et Luc NOPPEN
Musée du Québec/Université Laval, 1983
293 pp. 232 illus., \$6.00

There are those who claim that the art of building – or architecture – is the beginning of all the arts. Yet in contrast to other arts like painting, sculpture, drawing or photography, architecture does not generally use the museum exhibition as a forum for appreciation. Architecture, in fact, is a public art, accessible outside museum or gallery walls to all who wish to see. A recent phenomenon in the cultural field is the attempt to examine the art of architecture through exhibitions. It raises a number of fundamental questions. How can one adequately examine the theme if the end product, the building, cannot (in most cases) be part of the display? To what extent can architectural exhibitions, inevitably focussed on process, lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the completed masterpiece? Without the principal works, what artifacts can a curator choose in order to explore architectural creativity?

In response to this challenge, Luc Noppen, Marc Grignon and their collaborators (Shelley Hornstein-Rabinovitch and students at Laval University) have opted for a selection of architectural drawings as the means of examining architectural creativity. The drawings run the gamut of building types, styles and even engineering works, with the common denominator that all were made in Québec City and were conceived as part of the creative process leading up to construction. The earliest is a drawing for a mantelpiece (1679) by Claude