

Art in Halifax: Exhibitions and Criticism in 1830 and 1831

Jim Burant

Volume 8, Number 2, 1981

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1075003ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1075003ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (print)

1918-4778 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Burant, J. (1981). Art in Halifax: Exhibitions and Criticism in 1830 and 1831. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 8(2), 119–136. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1075003ar>

Article abstract

À cause de sa population, de sa richesse et de son statut de centre gouvernemental, militaire et naval, Halifax était, dans la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, le centre de l'activité culturelle et artistique dans les colonies maritimes de l'Amérique du Nord britannique. La période qui s'étend de 1800 à 1850 en fut une de grande animation dans les domaines politiques, sociaux et économiques de même que dans le domaine des beaux-arts.

En 1815, peu de chose laissait croire que Halifax deviendrait un centre de vie artistique, mais en l'espace de quinze ans deux expositions y eurent lieu. Il y a plusieurs raisons à cela : la reprise de l'économie après l'ère napoléonienne; l'établissement d'une institution d'éducation non confessionnelle, le collège Dalhousie, au centre de la ville; l'arrivée d'artistes de talent, en particulier William Valentine et W.H. Jones; la présence de fonctionnaires ainsi que d'officiers militaires et officiers de marine ouverts et éclairés; et enfin la formation d'une ambiance intellectuelle réceptive grâce aux journaux et autres publications.

Il faut surtout mentionner la présence du dynamique William Harris Jones, un Américain qui vint enseigner l'art au collège Dalhousie en 1828. Au début des années 1820, il avait organisé des expositions à Baltimore et Boston, avant d'organiser en mai 1830 au collège Dalhousie la première exposition publique d'oeuvres d'art à Halifax et dans l'Amérique du Nord britannique. Au printemps de 1831, une seconde exposition, encore plus ambitieuse, organisée à nouveau par Jones sous le patronage de Lady Sarah Maitland, l'épouse du lieutenant-gouverneur, était présentée au collège Dalhousie. Des chroniqueurs locaux virent l'établissement d'expositions annuelles comme un pas dans la bonne direction pour former la jeunesse et déclarèrent : « ... nous devrions encourager les arts libéraux presque autant, que la Moralité et la Religion ».

Malheureusement le départ de W. H. Jones à l'été de 1831 causa un arrêt subit des expositions annuelles; mais ses efforts ont encouragé d'autres artistes, principalement une de ses élèves, Maria Morris, et William Eagar, à enseigner les beaux-arts aux habitants de Halifax et à exposer leurs oeuvres. Pour bien comprendre l'impact des expositions de 1830 et 1831 sur la population locale, il faut lire les longs comptes rendus parus dans le *Halifax Monthly Magazine* en juin 1830 et juin 1831, qui sont reproduits dans les appendices à cet article.

Art in Halifax: Exhibitions and Criticism in 1830 and 1831

JIM BURANT

Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the focus of artistic and cultural development in the Maritime colonies of British North America was Halifax, Nova Scotia. As the region's chief political, commercial and military centre, it could rely on several factors to provide the setting necessary for the appreciation of artistic enterprise: its relatively large size; its position as a provincial capital, with attendant benefits in terms of money and in attracting men of talent; its close connections by sea with both the European and American communities; and a strong British military presence, with both Army and Navy units on hand. More importantly, favourable commercial developments after 1784 encouraged the growth of an affluent merchant class¹ which combined with the official colonial elite to provide the financial patronage to attract and hold professional artists. There was also the presence in Halifax of a strong Loyalist community, largely made up of wealthy expatriate American Tories, which brought cultural sophistication, but little else, with it to the city after the Revolution.²

The period between 1800 and 1867 was an exciting one for Nova Scotia in terms of political, social, and economic advances, and in the formation of a character peculiar to Nova Scotia. The historian D.C. Harvey has attempted to explain the concept of 'Nova Scotian consciousness', noting that:

... during the first four decades of the last century, Nova Scotians were becoming increasingly conscious of themselves, both of their shortcomings and their talent ... between 1837 and 1867 they were alert, hopeful, ambitious, a self-conscious people eager to know the extent and variety of their intellectual and economic resources, to make the richness and value of these resources better known to Great Britain, and to play their part in the world of affairs.³

In these years talented men such as Joseph Howe, Thomas C. Haliburton, and Samuel Cunard made their reputations and careers in Halifax, but they were only the best-known of many who were to be found in the capital.⁴ Other historians have analysed the achievements which took place in the spheres of literature, commerce, politics, culture and social development;⁵ as well, some attempts have recently been made to examine the situation in the development of the visual arts.⁶

1 A good study of this group is G.F. Butler's 'The Early Organization and Influence of Halifax Merchants,' *Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections*, xxv (Halifax, 1942), 1-16.

2 The best study about the Loyalists in Nova Scotia is Margaret Ells' 'Settling the Loyalists in Nova Scotia,' *Canadian Historical Association Report* (1934), 105-109.

3 See D.C. Harvey, 'The Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia,' *Dalhousie Review*, xiii (1933-1934), 1-22; 'The Spacious Days of Nova Scotia,' *Dalhousie Review*, xix (July 1939), 133-142, esp. 133 here cited.

4 The biographies of many of the men of the period have appeared either as books, or as articles in such publications as the *Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections* or the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, particularly ix: 1861-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

5 See for example J.S. Martell's two articles in the *Journal of Education for Nova Scotia*, vii (1936), 589-596, 'Some General Remarks on the Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotians,' and 1021-1023, 'The Progress of Nova Scotia after 1815.' One should also make note of the superb contribution of W.S. MacNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces: The Emergence of Colonial Society* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965).

6 In this regard, see Jim Burant, 'Pre-Confederation Photography in Halifax, Nova Scotia,' *Journal of Canadian Art History*, iv (Spring, 1977), 25-44; and 'The Development of the Visual Arts in Halifax, Nova Scotia from 1815 to 1867 as an Expression of Cultural Awakening' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1979). Two recent exhibitions, together with their respective catalogues, have done much to explore the topic of the visual arts in Nova Scotia: Mary Sparling's *Great Expectations: The European Vision in Nova Scotia, 1749-1848* (Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, 17 October - 23 November 1980); and *Robert Field, 1769-1819* (Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, 5 October - 27 November 1978), a retrospective of this impressive and important artist's work.

More study, however, of particular problems in the development of the visual arts in the Maritimes is needed. For instance, one of the high points in the early history of the fine arts in Canada was the art exhibitions which were opened to the Halifax public in 1830 and 1831. Work of not only recognized European masters but also of local professionals and amateurs was shown, which represents the first major attempt in any British North American community to carry out such a scheme. As such, it deserves further analysis in order to discover why such events took place, what they meant to the community, and how they were accepted among the members of the cultural elite. While not meant to be exhaustive, this essay will attempt to answer some of the questions surrounding these two art exhibitions, as well as reproducing two of the earliest pieces of art criticism to appear in Canada.

In 1815, Halifax's prospects in the fine arts seemed small, as befitted the character of a minor provincial capital which was about to lose its most proficient artist, Robert Field.⁷ How then was it able to hold in 1830 a major art exhibition, only fifteen years later? D.C. Harvey again points the way towards the answers:

The establishment and growth of a progressive press, the large-scale infusion of money during the War of 1812, the increased facilities for non-denominational education, and the emigration of talented men to the province were all factors in changing Nova Scotia's essentially immature pre-War character into one of self-confidence and optimism.⁸

The War of 1812 did transform Halifax from a raw and relatively small colonial outpost into a busy cornerstone of the Second British Empire enjoying unheard-of prosperity,⁹ but the post-War period brought its own share of problems. Farmers and merchants found that their markets for food, goods, and services had collapsed after

the peace, as the withdrawal of large portions of the Army and Navy garrisons spelled the end of lucrative government contracts. Crop failures followed in 1816, with the recovery of American commerce further impeding economic recovery between 1815 and 1820. What finally saved Nova Scotia was the large amount of money which had been accumulated during the War, thereby allowing the merchant class to weather the economic storms until British commercial policy began once more to favour colonial trade, making Halifax a free port in the 1820s.¹⁰ Economic recovery, with all of its attendant benefits, certainly had a hand in creating and nurturing the aspirations of the intellectually-inclined towards a greater appreciation of the fine arts. Another important factor was the construction of a non-denominational university, Dalhousie College.¹¹ Lord Dalhousie, Lieutenant-Governor from 1816 to 1820, pressed the local Establishment for such an institution to halt the sectarian bickering over the distribution of educational funds. He was able to apply the Castine Funds, totalling £11,000, to the construction of the new institution; by 1820, a stone building designed by John Elliott Woolford¹² was rising on the opposite side of the Parade from Saint Paul's. Though the College (Fig. 1) would not be fully operational for a number of years, it provided not only a centre for intellectual advancement, but a physical facility for use in the future.

Such a facility, however, was useless unless people were prepared to meet the challenge which it presented. In the fine arts, Halifax benefited a great deal from the post-war migration which flowed from Europe, and more particularly Great Britain, to North America. Between 1815 and 1830, numerous professional and itinerant artists made their way to Nova Scotia, some to settle down, with others remaining only for a brief time. Among the many artists who came were men such as John Acres, silhouette and miniature artist who worked in the province from 1815 to 1828, claiming the patronage of Lord and Lady Dalhousie;¹³ Joseph Partridge, who between 1819 and 1821 taught drawing at the National School on the Parade and executed miniatures;¹⁴ the Scotsman, Robert Foulis, shipwrecked on the shores of the province in 1818, who remained for two years teaching landscape and commercial drawing at the English Commercial Academy before moving on to Saint John, New Brunswick;¹⁵ George Thresher and his wife, Elizabeth, who taught art in Halifax throughout the 1820s before removing to

7 See above, as well as Harry Piers' *Robert Field* (New York: Frederic F. Sherman, 1927).

8 Harvey, 'The Intellectual Awakening ...', 15-16.

9 J.S. Martell, 'Halifax during and after the War of 1812,' *Dalhousie Review*, xxiii (1943), 289-304.

10 MacNutt, 155-156, 170-172.

11 *Ibid.*, 167.

12 See Donald Mackay, 'John Elliott Woolford,' *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, ix: 1861-1870, 849-850.

13 See J.R. Harper, *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 2, as well as the *Acadian Recorder* (Halifax, Nova Scotia), 8 November 1817.

14 Harper, 244.

15 See Charles MacKinnon, 'Robert Foulis,' *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, ix: 1861-1870, 277.

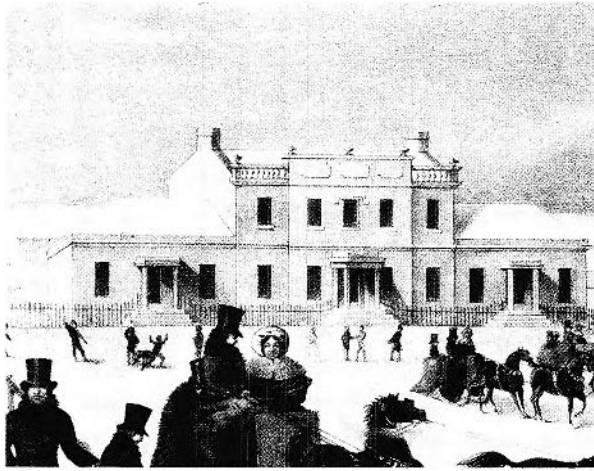


FIGURE 1. William Eggar, *Tandem Club Assembling in front of Dalhousie College*, lithograph of 1837. Detail of upper left quadrant showing the College facade. Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Charlottetown, P.E.I.;¹⁶ or John Poad Drake, who, while on a North American tour in 1819-1820, carried out portrait commissions in the city.¹⁷ Most important of all of the emigrant artists, however, was William Valentine, who arrived in Halifax in 1818. In partnership first with James Bell, and later with men such as William Eggar, J.S. Clow, and Thomas Coffin Doane, Valentine, in addition to introducing photography to the Maritime province,¹⁸ was to dominate the Halifax artistic scene for the next thirty years. Many others also came and went during this period, one of whom, William Harris Jones, was of pivotal importance to the 1830 and 1831 exhibitions.

The Halifax press of the period also played an important role in developing both a general intellectual atmosphere as well as a popular acceptance of artistic developments. To name but a few, men such as Anthony Holland, the publisher and editor of the *Acadian Recorder*, George Young, son of 'Agricola' John Young and first owner of the *Novascotian*, and Joseph Howe, Young's successor in 1828,¹⁹ provided leadership in the form of open-minded and optimistic outlooks upon Nova Scotia's future prospects. In their editorials, choice of news items, and other selections, they sought to stimulate the public in all aspects of the future of the province.²⁰ Although it was difficult to comment on intellectual pursuits during times of economic hardship, the improving situation of the mid-1820s provided the opportunity for the press to encourage the arts. As early as 1822, the *Recorder* was commenting favourably upon such things as the return of amateur theatre to the city, or the activities of the engraver Charles W. Torbett.²¹ In the fine arts, the *Novascotian* took a forthright and patriotic

approach to native endeavours, taking especial care in 1826 and again in 1829 to review and run stories on the career of Gilbert Stewart Newton, '... a native Nova Scotian, who is succeeding well in Great Britain.'²² Another article, 'Freedom and the Fine Arts', by George Young, in the *Novascotian* of 1827, included extracts from a book called *Rome in the Nineteenth Century*. It traced the connection between freedom and the arts in Athens and Rome in ancient times, Florence and Venice in the Renaissance, Holland in the seventeenth century and England in the eighteenth, with the implication being that the fine arts ought to be encouraged in any free society.²³ The *Novascotian* also published during this period articles concerning the development of the arts in Québec,²⁴ as well as about Raphael's works in the Vatican.²⁵ After Joseph Howe took it over, the *Novascotian*, particularly in the 1830s, was to become the most vociferous supporter of the concept of fine arts as a reflection of the maturity and image of society.²⁶

Of course, the press was not alone responsible for intellectual development. Halifax was fortu-

16 Harper, 309.

17 *Ibid.*, 93-94.

18 See Burant, 'Pre-Confederation Photography ...', 27-29.

19 J.M. Beck, *Joseph Howe: Voice of Nova Scotia* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964).

20 Both Harvey and J.S. Martell deal extensively with the early press in Halifax.

21 *Acadian Recorder*, 30 January 1819, 13 October 1821, 5 January 1822 and 30 March 1822.

22 *Novascotian* (Halifax, N.S.), issues of 5 October 1826 and 14 May 1829.

23 *Novascotian*, 10 May 1827.

24 *Novascotian*, 17 July 1828.

25 *Novascotian*, 16 September 1829.

26 Of especial interest are a series of articles on Nova Scotian artists published in the *Novascotian* issues of 13 July, 20 July, 31 August, 7 September and 28 September 1836.

nate that men such as John Young, founder of the Nova Scotia Agricultural Society, Thomas C. Haliburton, future author of the *Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia* as well as the *Clockmaker*, Clement H. Belcher, bookseller and publisher, John H. Thompson, author and editor, and Dr. William Grigor, one of the founders of the Mechanics' Institute, all formed part of the intellectual life of the community.²⁷ It was perhaps partly owing to the influence of some or all of the aforementioned men that Dalhousie College took the step in 1828 of hiring William Harris Jones (active c. 1825-1850s) as a painting and drawing instructor. Jones was probably an American-born artist who was noted as having been an art teacher and educator in Baltimore and Boston in the 1820s.²⁸

Whatever his origins, Jones was a necessary catalyst for the times. William Valentine (1798-1849), although talented, possessed neither the energy nor the initiative to force the fine arts into prominence in the community,²⁹ but the more egotistical and short-tempered Jones had the capacity and know-how to make the public take notice. From the outset, he attracted large numbers of students to his classes, including Lady Mary Fox, Elizabeth Piers, Maria Morris, and other members of the middle- and upper-class female gentry.³⁰ He was at the same time gauging the interest of the local intellectual community in the arts; finding them favourable to his work, he exhibited in the fall of 1829 a painting of the destruction of Jerusalem based on a literary work entitled *Salathiel*.³¹ This display, and his previous experiences with art exhibitions in the United States, was to result in the planning for a major art exhibition to take place in the spring of 1830 at Dalhousie College.³²

²⁷ Many of these men were founding members of the Mechanics' Institute. See Bruce Fergusson, 'Mechanics' Institutes in Nova Scotia,' *Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia*, 14 (Halifax, 1960), 1-39.

²⁸ I am indebted to the Boston Athenaeum, who gave me access to the notes of the former director, Charles Boulton, who was in the process of compiling an artists' dictionary at the time of his death.

²⁹ Harper, 176.

³⁰ A description of Jones' character is to be found in a later *Novascotian* article (7 September 1836) about Maria Morris.

³¹ *Novascotian*, 11 November 1829.

³² See the *Novascotian*, 11 February 1830.

³³ Great Britain, *Army List*, 1829 (London: John Murray, 1830).

³⁴ See K.G. Pryke, 'Beamish Murdoch,' *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, x: 1871-1880 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 529-540.

³⁵ *Novascotian*, 11 February 1830.

³⁶ *Novascotian*, 7 April 1830.

³⁷ *Novascotian*, 11 February 1830.

The idea was probably broached to a selected group of influential friends and patrons in the winter of 1829, with tangible results. In the *Novascotian* of 11 February 1830, an article appeared entitled 'Exhibition of Pictures'. In it, Joseph Howe regretted that the pursuit of politics had prevented him from 'enjoying the purer pleasure of the arts', and went on to mention that he now had the opportunity to indulge his desires, in as much as Mr. Jones was attempting to organize an exhibition in his Rooms at the College. It was stated that Jones had already had experience in organizing such events in Boston and Baltimore with the aid of some of the more wealthy and respectable citizens. It was hoped that similar plans could be made for Halifax. Howe added that this

... would have the effect of bringing all of the pictures in the town, which are now only known to the small family circles of the possessors, under the inspection of the whole community – thereby conveying much innocent gratification, and possibly encouraging a taste for the art, by a mere display of its beauties ...

The organizing committee reflected an attempt by Jones not only to generalize the impact of his scheme, but also to include all of those who could assist in collecting the pictures necessary for the display. Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Ogle, and Colonel Norcot, the senior Naval and Army officers, were to be the Patrons of the Exhibition, while Colonel Fox, Lady Mary's husband, Lord Charles Russel, and Captain Maitland, all from the Garrison,³³ were on the management committee. Another patron was the President of the Legislative Council, Michael Wallace, while Beamish Murdoch³⁴ and Jones represented the community.

The exhibition was to be held in the Rooms at the Northwest End of Dalhousie College, with temporary partitions providing space for three separate areas: the entrance area would contain watercolour and pencil drawings, the centre room, oil paintings and other works by the pupils of Jones' drawing classes, while the Main Room would hold the principal works, estimated to be about one hundred and thirty in all.³⁵ While many Halifax families were asked to contribute works to the exhibition, being assured that 'careful persons will be employed to fetch and return the pictures without any expense to the owners ...',³⁶ the majority of the pictures, including drawings by the Lieutenant-Governor, were to come from *public* collections.³⁷ Opening was on 10 May 1830 and closing day on 29 May, the price

of admission being 2s.6d. each *for the season*, or 1s.3d. for a single admission. The organizers warned that 'No Sticks, Umbrellas, or Parasols, will be permitted to be Taken into the Room(s)', and offered a catalogue to the public at a cost of 7½d.³⁸ Regrettably, none seems to have survived.

While it seems that the proposal for a 'Halifax Exhibition' was the result of William Harris Jones' imagination and exertion, one must also look to the spirit of the age in order to see the proposal in its proper context. Other studies have examined the phenomenal rise of provincial art institutions in England in the period between 1800 and 1830, caused primarily by the inability of artists to make a living in the larger metropolitan centres of London and Bath.³⁹ Such smaller English towns as Carlisle, Plymouth, Whitehaven, and Norwich all held exhibitions of art in the 1820s or earlier, as well as supporting academies where local artists were able to hone their talents. Just as the concept of the Mechanics' Institute (begun in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1829) spread rapidly, arriving in Halifax by 1831, so was the concept of provincial art exhibitions also rapidly disseminated.⁴⁰ The Halifax intellectual community was well aware of English developments, and acted quickly when ideas with a high degree of feasibility presented themselves.

A more salient influence, one with a more direct bearing on Jones' experience, was the inauguration of the Boston Athenaeum's annual art exhibitions in 1827.⁴¹ These displays were derived largely from the many private and family collections in the Boston area, as well as from the Athenaeum's own collection, which was augmented by annual purchases. The close proximity and the many ties between Halifax and Boston at that time leave no doubt that a large measure of the popular enthusiasm for a Halifax exhibition was due to the knowledge of the success of the American event. Jones himself had helped organize and owned no less than five works which had been displayed in the 1827 Athenaeum exhibition. A further four works belonging to him were displayed in 1828.⁴² When he arrived in Halifax in 1829, he brought all nine works with him, which all eventually became important parts of the 1830 and 1831 exhibitions.

The Exhibition met with popular response from the press during the month that it remained open, with the *Novascotian* in particular advising those who had not yet seen it to go, while other readers were urged to see it a second or third time.⁴³ To learn more about its contents and

public reaction to the display, one must turn to the pages of the *Halifax Monthly Magazine*, edited by John S. Thompson (1795-1867), third in a succession of literary and philosophical periodicals to appear in Halifax since the city's foundation. The first Canadian-published periodical had been the *Nova Scotia Magazine*, which had appeared from 1789 to 1792. A second, called the *Acadian*, had been published from 1826 to 1828.⁴⁴ Coincidental to the first art exhibition held in the city, the *Monthly Magazine* published a twenty-page review in its first issue, dated June 1830. (This review is reprinted in its entirety as Appendix I of this article.)⁴⁵

The author of the review was undoubtedly John Thompson, who demonstrated a well-developed understanding of the fine arts. He attempted to impart to his readers an appreciation of the values and mysteries inherent in painting, which, unlike the other 'liberal' arts, poetry and music, was stated to be well-adapted for exhibition and most easily appreciated by the general populace. He went on to explore the nuances and philosophy of painting, attaching to it a romantic sensibility then so prevalent in the arts. In the final paragraph to the four-page introduction, he noted with pride the benefits which would accrue from the Exhibition:

... With those views of the fine arts, and feeling a confidence that the taste for them raises a community, and gives a dignity and an elasticity to every other enterprise, we of course rejoice at the first exhibition of paintings in Nova Scotia. We had little hope that such a treat could be presented, for another half century in this part of British North America; – but we now see no reason why the school which has just been formed,

³⁸ *Novascotian*, 7 April 1830

³⁹ The most important of these is by Trevor Fawcett, entitled *The Rise of English Provincial Art: Artists, Patrons, and Institutions Outside London, 1800-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

⁴⁰ See note 27 *supra*.

⁴¹ Three studies of this institution should contain much further information relating to Halifax's art scene: Robert F. Perkins and William J. Gavin III, *The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index, 1827-1874* (Boston: Athenaeum, 1980); Mabel Munson Swan, *The Athenaeum Gallery, 1827-1873* (Boston: Athenaeum, 1940); and Pamela Hoyle, J.P. Harding and Rosemary Booth, *A Climate for Art: the history of the Boston Athenaeum Gallery, 1827-1873*, (Boston: Athenaeum, 3-29 October 1980).

⁴² Perkins & Gavin, 208.

⁴³ *Novascotian*, 21 May 1830.

⁴⁴ The full title of the periodical was *The Acadian Magazine or Literary Mirror*. See Pryke, 539.

⁴⁵ The review reprinted at the end of this article is from the copy preserved in the Public Archives of Canada.

FIGURE 2. Benjamin West,
*Chief Justice Benjamin
Strange*, 1798. Oil painting
approximately 244 × 152
cm. Halifax County Court
House, Halifax, Nova
Scotia.



FIGURE 3. Robert Field,
*Lieut.-Gen. Sir John Coape
Sherbrooke, G. C. B.*,
c. 1815. Oil painting,
244 × 152.5 cm. The
Halifax Club, Halifax,
Nova Scotia.

joined with occasional helps, should not form something like a steady periodical exhibition – in our opinion, it is not altogether the voice of enthusiasm which says, that this era will be remembered in our provincial metropolis; and that a number of youth will now take a step forward in existence, and assume a higher grade of intellect than they imagined a year previously. If so, their after lives may be expected to be the more virtuous, dignified, and useful; and the place of their residence will increase in honour and strength.⁴⁶

The review then continued by examining the works which were on display, commenting on their content and the philosophical and emotional reactions which they engendered. Most of the European and British works, as well as a few from Nova Scotia, were hung in the great Room. Among the ninety-three paintings on display which caught Thompson's eye were: an *Interior*, attributed to Gabriel Metz; a Pieter de Hoogh; several English landscapes; *The Corn Market, Brussels*; and *The Wife of Barneveldt*, attributed to Rubens.⁴⁷ A portrait of 'the late Judge Stewart and his sister' was particularly noted as 'a memoir, a history on canvas; an incentive to perseverance, to rectitude, and to pious humility; – the exhibition was rich to the Halifax community if it contained no other pictures.'⁴⁸ Undoubtedly, many of the works by Robert Field, John Poad Drake, and Benjamin West, which can still be

found in Nova Scotia public collections (Figs. 2-5), also graced the walls of the exhibition rooms.⁴⁹

Moving on to the Small Room, the reviewer excused himself in noting that all of the works therein were by pupils of Jones who had not, until recently, painted in oils, and who may not therefore have been thought of as fair objects of criticism. The remarks made by the reviewer were, then, to be considered not as criticism, but as 'useful hints'. As he said, 'We would also premise that those brief notices are not made by one professing even an amateur's knowledge of the art, but one who admires original beauty, and its successful mimicry, and who expresses with freedom, the impressions made on his mind by the exhibition ...' Remarks on a number of the works followed, including some harsh comments and much constructive criticism; praise was given to several amateur efforts, but the artists were regrettably not identified.

The review concluded with an all too brief notice of some of the sketches in the Corridor, including two miniatures, 'which from their contrast attracted our attention ...' And Thompson ended by noting that

... we have devoted more than a due space to the Exhibition, on account of its own very interesting character, and its being the first enjoyed by the people of Halifax... We cannot conclude without adverting to the praiseworthy conduct of those, who not wanting amusement themselves, contributed their talents and exertions to the interest of the exhibition. We would also remind the young students in the delightful art that if they have already attained such honour and pleasure by their almost premature productions, how much may be expected after the great corrector Time has improved their hand and their judgement.

Thompson clearly shows a sophisticated and

46 *Halifax Monthly Magazine*, 1, n^o 1. (Halifax, N.S., June 1830), 4.

47 *Ibid.*, 12.

48 *Ibid.*, 11.

49 Mention was made of this fact in the *Novascotian* of 11 February 1830. The *Monthly Magazine* review notes Benjamin West's *Portrait of Chief Justice Strange* (printed in 1798), now hanging in the Halifax County Court House, as n^o 14 in the Exhibition.

FIGURE 4. Robert Field, *Sir John Wentworth, Bart.*, c. 1810. Oil painting, 107.8 × 87.2 cm. Government House, Halifax.



FIGURE 5. John Poad Drake, *Chief Justice Samuel Salton Blowers*, c. 1820. Oil painting, approximately 244 × 152 cm. Halifax County Court House, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

optimistic view of the possibilities for the fine arts as represented by the Exhibition, and an appreciation of its moral and philosophical effects. Though one might in hindsight legitimately question the mentality behind cultural ideals which praised efforts by native artists to copy European originals (since most local work did consist of such works) instead of looking within for inspiration, one must recall that painting was as yet a novelty to most of the students, as well as to most of the visitors to the Exhibition. The community-wide appreciation of the event, evident in the notices which appeared in various newspapers during the month of May, as well as in the *Halifax Monthly Magazine*, can also be looked at as an indication of the growth of cultural awareness and development. Such awareness did not spring up overnight, but the 1830 Exhibition was the first large step in its serious development and later consolidation.

The evident success of the 1830 Exhibition, and Jones' continuing presence as the drawing-master of Dalhousie College, pointed the way, as Thompson's review suggests, towards another art display in the succeeding year. Perhaps learning from the mistakes of the previous year, the organizing committee made several changes in the planning for the new Exhibition, summarized in the *Novascotian's* relation of March 31st, 'Second Exhibition of Pictures, In Dalhousie College, Under the Patronage of Lady Sarah Maitland.' The committee members, whose names, unfortunately, were not given, had agreed that an exhibition be held for one week commencing Monday, 25 April, and be 'illuminated' for three evenings during the week. A season ticket would now cost 5s., with the single admission remaining at 1s.3d. The Rooms were to be open from 10 A.M. to

5 P.M. and from 8 to 10 P.M.; no one was to be allowed into the Exhibition Rooms prior to the opening.

The April 14th issue of the *Novascotian* stated that 'the Exhibition will be in no degree inferior to the former one; as some excellent pictures have since been brought into the Province which were not here during the past season – others have been placed at the disposal of the Committee which were unknown when the other Exhibition was arranged – while the Large Rooms will be entirely occupied by the productions of Jones' pupils ...' On April 29th, a number of other articles made their appearance, for the display had been open for several days. An advertisement noted that the Rooms would be splendidly illuminated that evening and that the Band of the 8th Regiment would 'attend in the great room, and perform a number of soft and delicate airs.' A second advertisement mentioned that Mr. Jones would 'By particular desire ... deliver a lecture on painting, and the advantages resulting to a community from the cultivation of the Fine Arts, on Monday, May 2nd, in Dalhousie College.' The admission price for this lecture was 5 shillings – the price of the season ticket – and an editorial note was subjoined:

Press of matter prevents our inserting a long critique on the Exhibition of Pictures, which closes on Saturday. The collection is principally composed of works executed by members of our own community, and as such are highly interesting. Several large parties are we understand, made up to attend the next time it is illuminated, and as it will be the last time a great crowd like that of last year, may be anticipated.

Halifax thus enjoyed the spectacle of a second art exhibition, which had come about largely as a result of community effort.

A copy of the *Halifax Monthly Magazine* review of the 1831 exhibition has recently been located, with the result that it can be reprinted as Appendix II of this article.⁵⁰ In it, John Thompson again alluded to 'the belief that liberal studies cannot be adopted and persevered in, without generally exalting the students, and through them, in a certain degree, the community in which they live.'⁵¹ Further proof of the theory that a certain emulation of English provincial art exhibitions was general to the intellectual community can be found in remarks on page 28 of the *Magazine*:

This last exhibition seems to us eminently creditable to Halifax; and we very much doubt whether any third or fourth rate town in the old country could produce so many and so good specimens, the produce of the place of exhibition. We say third or fourth rate town, because Halifax in point of population cannot rank higher, if so high; it has been fashionable to make light of the society and productions of our own metropolis, but we imagine that the satirists compare it with standards which are too exalted. Divide the 1500,000 of London into portions of 13,000 each, giving each section a share of the common talent, and we should have no fear of pitting the 13,000 of Halifax against any one section, either as respects, spirit, or general ability; particularly if the opportunities of each are taken into account.

The second review may be of greater value to Canadian art historians because the artists' names are identified with the works on exhibition. Such interested amateurs as Dr. and Mrs. Grigor,⁵² Lieutenant Ford⁵³ and Thomas B. Akins (later

⁵⁰ That a copy of this rare review was still extant was pointed out to me by Scott Robson, of the Nova Scotia Museum, whose invaluable assistance both in supplying photographs and in making suggestions for further areas of research are gratefully acknowledged.

⁵¹ *Halifax Monthly Magazine*, II, n° 13 (June 1831), 27.

⁵² References to the work of both Dr. and Mrs. Grigor in this review are in fact the first which this author has ever come across. Dr. Grigor did lecture on a number of art-related topics to the Mechanics' Institute in the 1830s, most notably in 1836, when he delivered a lecture on 'A Philosophical View of Painting' (republished in its entirety in the *Novascotian* of 13 July and 20 July 1836).

⁵³ There were no less than three Lieutenant Fords in the Royal Engineers at this time, William, Charles Erskine and Edmund T. The Ford alluded to in the review could have been any one of the three. Great Britain, *Army List for 1831* (London: J. Duckworth), 332.

⁵⁴ W.S. Wallace, ed., *The MacMillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1978), 6.

⁵⁵ Harper, 145-146.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵⁷ Sparling, 57-58.

⁵⁸ *Halifax Monthly Magazine*, II, n° 13, 36.



FIGURE 6. William Valentine, *Portrait of a woman*, 1827. Oil painting, 43.2 × 38.1 cm. National Gallery of Canada.

the founder of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia)⁵⁴ are mentioned, along with more familiar names as Maria Morris, Jarvis Hanks,⁵⁵ Lieutenant Henry Davis⁵⁶ and Alicia A. Jeffery.⁵⁷

Finally, there is also mention of William Valentine, of whom Thompson remarks:

Of pictures not by pupils, some portraits – excellent likenesses – by Mr. Valentine, are worthy of most honourable mention. Perhaps his complexions are too made ... the fact of having adopted this standard complexion, has partly occasioned the picture of Andromecha – where a departure was necessary – to be so lifelessly insipid. A resident artist of Mr. Valentine's abilities is no small honour to Halifax; we believe that many with less talent as portrait painters, have arisen to much note, and very profitable employ in older communities ...⁵⁸

Although none of the works by Valentine which appeared in this exhibition can be securely identified, two portraits dated 1827, now in the national Gallery of Canada (Figs. 6 and 7) demonstrate the peculiarity of complexion that typifies Valentine's early work.

Thompson concludes his review by stating that 'man was not intended to be a mere eating, drinking, and sleeping animal; every proper grasp at intellectual refinement is becoming his noble grade in creation ... If we wish that intelligence and intellectual enjoyment, should keep sordidness and sensuality in check, we should encourage the liberal Arts next to Morality and Reli-



FIGURE 7. William Valentine, *Portrait of a man*, 1827. Oil painting, 43.2 × 38.1 cm. National Gallery of Canada.

gion.' Once more, the allusion is made to the fine arts as a morally uplifting element in the community, with greater directness than before. Even leaving that aside, the 1831 exhibition still remains an impressive effort on the part of the Halifax community.

The presence of the British garrison certainly facilitated efforts to make the 1830 and 1831 exhibitions the success they were, but the catalyst was William Harris Jones. One finds no further references to him in Halifax after May 1831; indeed, there were no reviews of his May 2nd lecture in any of the local newspapers. Of his subsequent career, only a few details are known. He probably left Halifax sometime in the summer of 1831. (One finds a note of a *Mr. Jones*, passenger on board a ship in the 10 August 1831 *Novascotian*.) He apparently was back in Boston in 1842, and in San Francisco between 1850 and 1853.⁵⁹ The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco owns two works known to be by his hand.⁶⁰ Jones' departure signalled an abrupt end to the annual exhibitions, but his talent and ability had aroused and enlivened the Halifax community and created a greater interest in the fine arts than ever before.

The fact that Jones had proven that such exhibitions could be carried off successfully was immensely important to future developments. One of his prize pupils, Maria Miller (née Morris), would succeed him as the pre-eminent art teacher in the community. In 1833, she would

hold another exhibition, this time of the works of her pupils and herself.⁶¹ The 1830 and 1831 Exhibitions were also the inspiration for Jones' spiritual successor in the Halifax art scene, William Eagar (c. 1796-1839), another man of energy and ability.⁶² Eagar's 1838 Exhibition echoes Jones' efforts in its amalgamation of works by foreign artists, local professionals (Eagar and Valentine), and of art students. The 1838 exhibition catalogue has been reproduced in its entirety in a recent publication.⁶³

All in all, the two art exhibitions organized by William Harris Jones at Dalhousie College are a culmination of an initial period of artistic development in Halifax after the War of 1812. In fifteen years a group of resident artists and critics had somehow coalesced and were prepared to nurture the city's, and the region's cultural needs in the fine arts. For the next twenty years, Halifax's indigenous artistic community would be as strong, if not stronger, than anywhere in British North America. Several factors had brought this about. Recovery from economic depression had supplied both the financial means and the leisure time necessary to achieve and cultivate an understanding of the fine arts even as the emigration of men of talent from Great Britain and the United States stimulated and supplemented the intellect and skill of native Nova Scotians. Finally, Halifax's position as the provincial capital and as a British garrison town made it more attractive as a centre for patronage and in terms of cultural sophistication. In this, however, it was no different from Québec City or Fredericton. Thus the implication is that Haligonians themselves, their skills, their intellect and their interest, were the real reasons for the rapidity of cultural developments. As the years after 1830-1831 were among the liveliest in Nova Scotia's political and social history, so too were its artistic and cultural developments equally lively, with profound and lasting effects on the entire region of the Maritime provinces.

59 Perkins and Gavin, 299, note that one of the works owned by Jones in 1828 had passed into the hands of another owner ten years later. The notes of the former director of the Boston Athenaeum, Charles Boulton, have been used to trace Jones' subsequent career.

60 National Collection of Fine Arts, *Inventory of American Paintings Executed Before 1914* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1976), item nos 71063618, 71064186.

61 *Novascotian*, 19 June 1833.

62 Alexandra Carter, 'William H. Eagar: Sensibilities of No Common Order,' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, 1979).

63 Sparling, Appendix II, 81-84.

The Halifax Monthly Magazine, Vol. 1, No 1,
June 1, 1830

EXHIBITION OF PICTURES.

At Dalhousie College.

Of the three Arts generally called liberal, painting seems best adapted for exhibition; and although demanding deep research, and great mental power in its execution, it is certainly easiest appreciated by the generality of people. Of Music, the simple melody, or full choral harmony, will more readily than Painting lead captive the mere perception; but Music is so impalpable in its nature, so fleeting in its existence, that we are pleased we know not why, care not wherefore, and little beside mere pleasure is gained. It is formed of air, and created by mystical touch and motion, and is so much of a phantasmie, that in the opinion of some, it scarcely imparts a single idea. Beside, in the exhibition of Music, a second party is always requisite; and so far, it is inconvenient for abstraction, or close examination. – Poetry, to many is not more approachable; the reciter, who can throw sound and life into the bard's written thought, will indeed be listened to, as to the voice of a god; and will despotically convey his enraptured auditors wherever his finger points. But without this assistance, to numbers of his fellow men, how flat, stale and unprofitable is the poet's labour. The delicacy and strength of reason beautifully expressed; the vivid colouring of figurative language, are lost to many, as the sunset glory is to the mole. The hidden veins of rich ore which the philosophic bard draws from the material and immaterial world; the harmony with which he imbues the granite masses of the mountain top, and the flowers of the valley's recess; all the mysterious toil by which he subdues, and settles, and hands over to his fellows, the sacred fire which animates his own breast; all is lost to myriads of his race, as though the language of heaven and the gods were shut by edict from their dull souls. – Painting speaks more widely – its first efforts gave an universal speech, and the savage to whom hieroglyphics were nonsense, acknowledged the artist's mimicry, and understood his intent. The peasant who delights in the morning sky, or stands on his garden cliff, enamoured of the white ship's progress through the waves; – the mechanic who wanders from the city to gaze delightedly refreshed on the grove and lake of the interior; each can appreciate the outlines and tints which give again what so charmed them in real life. To the excellencies of music perhaps their ears are deaf; the spirit of poetry may be to them a sealed letter; but painting is an art which excels in fidelity and similitude; and a portion of whose value, all can feel, who admire the works of God.

It is true than in the best works, whether of landscape, portrait or historical painting; there is a certain mystery which almost confounds those learned in the science. That from the canvas and pallet, rough unpromising materials, such beautiful creations should appear, is almost miraculous. The touches of the artist seem not delicate or critically exact; yet there is an effect produced in a single picture, which may form a delightful study for years. There is also a tact necessary in fully relishing those productions, which is either the particular gift of nature, or the tardy fruit of close study. Fidelity to its subject is not alone the source of admiration in a choice picture; the poetry of nature is there, and it requires a gifted mind to give it a voice; the artist's spirit is embodied in several

delicate, unobtrusive traits, and it requires a kindred soul to feel their expression and beauty. Still there is much for those who run, to read; and the man of simple life, to whom the lute were voiceless, and 'Childe Harold' a blank; can gaze amused, instructed, and for the moment refined, on the more palpable spirit of beauty which the painter gives to his generation.

These remarks lead the mind to a passing notice of persons, who not knowing what they do, profess, nay, glory in, their deadness to those human aspirations after excellence! It requires not the serpent's more deadly slime over the flowers of life, to tell of man's fall – those degrading feelings are sufficient to demonstrate it. Their heaven seems either gross as that of the beast that perisheth; or vague as the Paradise of fools. What is the second Eden to them? they have too much common sense to admire its trees of health, and rivers of life. Will they be weak enough to admire the New Jerusalem, its uncreated light, gates of sapphire, and streets of gold? They despise every approach to its similitude here. – Those who decry the creations of music, poetry, and painting, say more plainly than words can speak, – we are of a very inferior order of rational creatures; we have no perceptions for the best part of God's works; and we admire not the godlike aspirations of our fellow men, who endeavour piously, to find out, to copy after those hidden beauties; and even to call into existence glorious things themselves.

We imagine Heaven to be a place, where every sound is music; every vision an ethereal study, if we may so speak of outline and tint; every thought poetry, for there the common-places of life find no room. And yet the phlegmatic devotee turns indignant from the glimpses of those essences of Heaven, which he may obtain while on earth. The Merchant in his toils to accumulate wealth, sometimes affects to scorn, those delectable and cheap delights; and yet the wealth of either Ind could go no further, when the sordid appetites were satisfied, than to procure its possessor the refined enjoyments, which in civilized life may be tasted by the poorest. The sensualist, who scorns the lights of life, while the spirit of the ape and the swine animates him, needs no answer; but we could scarcely treat of the subject without noticing the pretended wise, who are such arrant fools, as to hug the casket without deigning to look on the gems within.

With those views of the fine arts, and feeling a confidence that a taste for them raises a community, and gives a dignity and an elasticity to every other enterprise; we of course rejoice at the first exhibition of paintings in Nova-Scotia. We had little hope that such a treat could be presented, for another half century in this part of British America; – but we now see no reason why the school which has been just formed, joined with occasional helps, should not form something like a steady periodical exhibition. – In our opinion, it is not altogether the voice of enthusiasm which says, that this era will be remembered in our provincial metropolis; and that a number of youth will now take a step forward in existence, and assume a higher grade of intellect than they imagined a year previously. If so, their after lives may be expected to be the more virtuous, dignified, and useful; and the place of their residence will increase in honour and strength.

NOTICE OF PICTURES IN THE GREAT ROOM.

No. 2 *Cleopatra* – is a fine soft painting; representing the imperial courtesan applying the adder to her breast. The

naked bust is beautifully coloured, and the eye shrinks instinctively, at the mark of the adder-fang in the warm lusty flesh. The figure grasps the adder firmly in the right hand, and holds it to the bosom; the reptile has just drawn blood from the region of the chest, and turns as it were intoxicated at its banquet, to choose the next rich morsel. The left hand of the figure holds the drapery delicately down, exhibiting the entire bust to the writhing destroyer. The head of the figure is turned glancing to the right, and the imagination supposes the sound of Antony's announcement as disturbing the guilty queen. The countenance is rather florid and coarsely voluptuous; it seems wanting in the feminine charms which so often led the conqueror captive, and in the melancholy dignity which the royal suicide might be supposed to indulge in at the awful moment. Yet it is a spirited and striking picture, and one possessed of much of the fascination with which the memory, the imagination, and the judgment invest historical pictures. While we gaze, the story arises to the mind – we regret that such charms should have been but the foul siren's lure – that the diadem on the head should have been so disgraced by the beautiful wearer. We admire the guilty magnanimity which saw the climax of degradation and wretchedness, and would live no longer; and we feel a sympathy almost tearful, despite our judgment, at the last interview of the imperial lovers; at the last proof of their fidelity to each other, although leprous with falsehood and dishonour to all else.

No 6 *An Interior*, (Painted by Metz, about 200 years ago.) This is a small, pleasing picture – it has that unobtrusive grace, that nameless delicacy, which so strongly characterize many old master-works. It represents a male and female figure seated in a plain apartment; little animation is visible, yet the painter-poet has, if we mistake not, told a long tale in a few expressive touches. The male figure sits behind a table on which rests a music book, his eyes are bent on its page and he strikes the notes timidly from a guitar. His long locks flow on his shoulders, and his downcast, unmusical glance, seems to have had a more gentle inspirer than Apollo to give it expression. The female, with the trim head-dress, and rich beautifully painted drapery of Dutch costume, seems a fine counterpart to the musician. On her right hand a parrot is perched, but though she seems pleased with her brilliant favourite, she looks not at it, nor at the musician; nor yet with the tell-tale diffidence of coquetry on the ground; but looks mildly forward, gazing on vacancy, and insinuating with the most modest air imaginable, that her bird is forgotten, the music unheard, and that some sweet chords in her soul make her best melody. – The old painters seem to have well understood the tact, of arousing the imagination, and leaving it something to perform; not running it down with agony after agony, as some moderns do; or pointing it to a stagnant pool, which it abhors to people from its own resources.

No. 8 *The Sick Chamber*, (Painted by P. de Hooge in the 17th century.) This is a most characteristic picture – repose seems its one intent, and the eye cannot rest on it unsoothed, or the mind study its expressive tinges, without imbibing the spirit aimed at by the painter. No picture not professedly of still life could have less of animation than this. An attendant is seated beneath a high lattice, but her back is to the spectator, and her long eared cap hides even the outline of her neck and head from view. Optical deception is well exemplified in this painting; a green cloth covers a piece of furniture, it is mistaken for drapery over a sick cradle, and the hand is almost stretched forth to raise it, in order to discover the young invalid who is supposed to rest below. On a nearer scrutiny, the real nature

of the drapery is understood, and the eye looks beyond the frame, as through a casement, to discover the sick bed in the opposite direction. Finding that the 'Sick Chamber' alone is portrayed, and not the sick bed, the eye again reverts to the exquisite keeping of the picture. The female figure holds a book on her lap, poring over which she seems to be whiling away her watch. The high latticed window admits no landscape view, it is fronted by another building, and the rays of the mid-day sun looks almost directly down on the narrow alley. The sun-beams falling on the window frame, on its little sill, and on the floor close by the side of the reading figure, is exquisitely tinted, it gives a light which indeed seems as if it could be felt. The high heeled red slippers are unoccupied on the foreground, that the attendant may go about more noiselessly. On the old fashioned chair a dish of fruit is laid, to court the appetite of the invalid; a green silk cushion for the praying visitor, has slid off its place gently as a feather, and rests partly on the ground; while the massive black picture frames, and the little vacant mirror, suspended on the walls, help the sombre and religious air which it was the artist's study to create. Repose, palpable and full, rests on this sweetly painted scene; it is an excellent pictorial antidote for the fever of passion. The angry man who could gaze for five minutes on this silent, but not voiceless representation, without imbibing a share of the feeling which the painter wished to convey, should beware of himself. He will most likely hate 'music, bread, and the laugh of a child –' and be dull to the singing spheres, if the sick chamber can convey no calm to his rebellious spirit.

No. 11 (*Windermere, Westmoreland*), is one of the charming scenes of mountain and flood, comprised within England's merry glades; – and they leave few wishes, except among gaping virtuosi, for foreign scenery; Italian, Swiss, or Alpine. The broad round expanse of water; the light and almost airy piles of broken mountain; the placid depth above and below; the deep grove and tumbling brook which break the foreground, all form, not perhaps a rich, but a hallowed, sainted scene; which cools the brow, and imparts its thin air to the delighted breast. Some cattle are well introduced into the picture; a group on the foreground look down a cleft, seemingly attracted by its coolness; there is no appearance of a rill being below, but we know such must be the case from its proximity to the lake, and we do not wonder that the happy inhabitants of the scene leave the stream which bubbles in the light, to seek the cool, densely shaded wanderer of the chasm. A second group of cattle, are small, beautifully painted things; represented as dotting the surface of the lake in its brightest part. They seem fit to graze amid the groves of Arcady; and the lake on which they stand, reflects a sky, beautiful enough to enshrine the summit of Olympus.

No. 23 *A View of Ross, Monmouthshire*. This is one of those beautiful home scenes which address all our gentler feelings. Sea scenes may impart sublime ideas, but they are wanting in individual interest, they are the common property of most men; or if a Briton feels more proudly in looking on ocean's expanse than others, yet he must share his pride with every subject of the Imperial islands. Lake and mountain scenery are lovely to the citizen of the world, and to the universal amateur; but they are great, glorious masses, amid which the gazer feels himself a speck in creation. Here, in this shaded dell, the spectator himself, would form an object of importance; in that cottage shaded by the old trees, his evening of life might glide away; and in the little church opposite, his weekly worship might be most placidly offered. It is an

attractive scene, representing a woody dell, through which a road winds to a partially seen village. The gazer finds a pleasing individual interest in its study; banks, such as he has sported on in childhood, gathering primroses and chasing butterflies, rise to the right; while on either side majestic trees, such as he is often gone nesting under, tower, and throw a deep shade, finely contrasting sunny gleams which cross the path. A group characteristic of the simple country in which the scene is laid, is on the road. A small white horse draws a rugged cart, which is in charge of two females, who are vividly delineated; a third female figure in the hat and red cloak common in Wales, pauses by the cart, in conversation with the drivers; the outline and colouring of the last figure is peculiarly bold and graceful. The full tint of the trees gives the home of the linnet and goldfinch strongly to the mind; a shaded mound to the right is evidently the villager's holiday evening seat; the little church spire is in sweet keeping with the retired, warm cottages to the left; and all impart that mellow, satisfied, domestic tone, which more splendid scenes seem to despise. No speck of ocean is here visible, to disturb with its ideas of vastness the sheltered comfort of the dell. Mountains are visible, but they are so airy and distant, they merely intimate that such things are, they intrude not on the soft, home scene. To the old countryman, this scene in Monmouthshire renews what his youth loved, and tells him a mournfully pleasing tale of times gone by. To the Nova-Scotian it is a sample of old country scenery, and of that kind of it, which pleases many best – soft, unassuming, and beautifully rural. Those who are acquainted with the habits of the Welsh peasantry, their simplicity, extreme probity, and industry; the originality which limited intercourse with other parts give their character, and the bravery and love of liberty which distinguish them even among Britons – those so acquainted, will find a peculiar charm in renewing their impressions from this fine picture.

No. 35 *Lago Maggiore*, well repays a musing hour – its figures, forest scenery, serpentine expanse of water, and beautifully tinted mountains – are finely depicted on the canvas.

No. 36 *The Corn Market, Brussels*, forms a very pleasing contrast after so many rich portraits of mere nature. It represents the 'city full,' its accommodations, bustle, industry and importance. The sun beams coming obliquely over the red tiles of the houses, and gliding along the walls of a distant tower, seem to imply that the time of the picture is evening. The streets and dim alleys, adorned with trees, are more picturesque than the regular perspectives of British towns; while numerous stands for petty merchandize, groups of buyers and sellers, the abstracted strut of the rich citizen, and the wild gambols of youth; give good scope for the depicting of expression and costume. If pictures of ocean, wood and vale give rapturous mementos of God's works in the irrational creation; city miniatures remind strongly of the power and skill of his creature man. They are likenesses of the places where 'merchants congregate,' around which the holy seventh-day bells send their tones; – the Artist and Prince have their dwelling there, each bears sway over a lower multitude, and a portion of their influence is attached to the place with which they connect their names.

No. 37 *Kenilworth Castle*. This picture is rather too light, airy and beautiful for the subject. The solitude which evidently reigns amid the dismantled, ivy-crowned towers, is rendered too elegant, to be fully effective. It is very well sometimes to 'bathe our wings in light;' but the shattered wreck looks more majestic in a grosser element.

No. 61 *The late Judge Stewart and his Sister*. We pass over a number of fine pictures to notice this most interesting one. It represents the late Judge Stewart and his sister in infancy. The scene is laid in a grove, and the children are portrayed in the act of collecting fruit from the ground. The recent death of our greatly respected townsman, Judge Stewart, gives this picture of his days when life revelled to the brim, deep attraction. The grove, the summer day of the painting, is involuntarily contrasted, with the desolate snow-covered scene, amid which his remains were followed to the tomb. The ruddy, plump features, and artless smile of the infant – is compared with the wrinkled front and glance of care, which are so regularly the lot of age. Widely different as the employments are, and great as the time is which intervened, those who have witnessed his late Honor charge a jury with the clearness and energy which distinguished his manner; can easily recognize in the infant boy of the picture that peculiar expression of eye and of lip, which so strongly marked the features of the Judge. The time here represented, is indeed that balmy season of playing amid the grass, of red shoes and bright ribbons, and of the mingling of the cherubs of both sexes, freely and innocently, as if fiery passions belonged not to the human breast; – but that passed rapidly away – the gambol on the grass, and the scramble for fruit, were exchanged for the study of cobweb tomes and for the wrangling of the courts; – the bench, and the council-chamber brought their dignity and their toil, and at length, full of honour and of years, the man passed away to an eternal state. Were it not for the faithful canvas, who in thinking of Judge Stewart's life, would revert to so sunny a scene as this? but here is the memento which contrasts the gay simplicity of childhood, with the melancholy dignity of later days. It is a memoir, a history on canvas; an incentive to perseverance, to rectitude, and to pious humility; – the exhibition were rich to the Halifax community if it contained no other picture.

No. 62 *Alpine Scenery*. This appears far from being a pleasing, characteristic picture. If taking a number of bushes, rocks and hills, and mixing them up in a green blue chaos, be Alpine scenery, here it is indeed to the life. We, though not proper judges of the subject, were wont to believe that sublimity, vast beauty, vividness and spirit, marked Alpine scenes; if we were right, the picture is wrong.

No. 64 *Valle de Glace*, is somewhat similar to 62. Take any valley in Nova-Scotia, place your head in a bush, and you have either and both scenes before you.

No. 68 *An Old Lady Knitting* is a beautiful whole length miniature; the features and drapery are clearly painted, and the clean, sharp delineation, with much richness of colouring, render it peculiarly vivid. There is a visible effort to produce effect about this else superior picture, which rather injures it. The old lady is sitting with one knee over the other; the upper knee projects exactly from the centre of the picture, reminding the spectator of a shallop's bowsprit; – this attitude shows the painter's art is foreshortening, but perhaps it says little for his tact and delicacy of taste. The old lady's countenance seems wanting in particular expression; every thing is trim and neat, as if she were fully aware of sitting for her picture. On a dark back ground, a flush of light is introduced, immediately behind the neat old lady, to shew her well up; – it has the effect intended; but the spectator wonders where the light proceeds from, he cannot think, although so it appears, that the old lady is more luminous behind than before; and like the sun shows herself by her own rays.

No. 81 *The wife of Barneveldt by Rubens*, is a specimen of this great master's vividness and power on a rather dry subject.

No. 84 *A Town in Holland*, and 89, *A Village Scene*, have much of that clear, delicate style of painting so necessary to depict architectural grouping with effect.

Several other pictures of much beauty and value are in this room. But want of time and space prevent our noticing them. We have taken those very hasty sketches of a few, which more particularly attracted our attention.

SMALL ROOM.

With some diffidence we enter on an examination of pictures in the small room. The feeling is occasioned by the pieces being all painted by pupils, most of whom have not until recently, painted in oil. If so, they may be thought not fair objects of criticism; – they shall be noticed therefore in a very cursory manner – premising, that some of the young artists would give little thanks at being so shielded; also that free discussion even in such matters, is for the good of all parties; and that the pictures are not treated as the productions of pupils, in this view they are exceedingly respectable, but as paintings thought worthy of public exhibition. Free remark is by many thought the best incentive to exertion, except among those whose delicacy is too easily hurt, and who would fain reach the mountain summit, without passing over the broken ground at the base. We would also premise that those brief notices are not made by one professing even an amateur's knowledge of the art; but by one who admires original beauty, and its successful mimicry; and who expresses with freedom, the impressions made on his mind by the exhibition. If the recital fails to convey useful hints to those concerned; it will at least illustrate the catalogue; and add some interest, to this already very interesting occurrence. There being 93 Pictures in the Great Room, the first in the Small Room is No. 94.

Welsh Mountains. There is a possibility to feel as well as to see Welsh mountains – one who had ere now 'beat the hoof' on them from 'rosy morn to dewy eve,' mentally exclaimed on seeing this picture; – 'flinty, mosscovered, heath-clad, Welsh mountains; depicted by heaps of unpressed curds! If that does not seem literally a land flowing with milk and honey, there is no mud in Glamorganshire.' – It certainly does appear a very milky representation of nature.

No. 96 *View on Lake Kusnacht*, is a calm clear scene – the lake, the cottages, castle and mountains, are depicted with a neatness and precision not common to the touch of young painters in oil. We would merely remark, that an indifferently painted boat on the lake, has a sail which seems stiff as a deal board, and shaded so as to convey the idea that it is lined with black. The neatness of other points in the picture make trifling defects more apparent. A hasty view prevents many excellencies from being noticed.

No. 97 *A View on the North West Arm – original*. – The latter need scarcely be added; few painters worth copying would select such a scene from our Arm. There are spots on the piece of water, called the Arm, which approach the sublime; others eminently beautiful and strongly marked; and some of as pretty home scenery as need be sought for. This view represents none of these. Take a piece of rather well coloured water; surround it with brushwood; launch a couple of shallops going astray on your water; place a few Indians, with features dimly seen, in a position where they should not be; and some sportsmen, with their backs purposely turned to you, where they never are; and you have a 'View of the North West Arm.' – A painter having executed a portrait for a rich man, a

dispute occurred respecting the price; 'never mind,' said the painter, 'I will place a tail to the figure and sell it for a monkey;' this produced a conclusion of the bargain. If the painter of the North West Arm, calls his Indians, monsters, he may name his brushwood and water, after any few acres in his Majesty's dominions. – These remarks are made, because no good cause appears, why characteristic traits are not introduced, when the scene presented them numerous and beautiful. Could the large picture by West, No. 14, be called a likeness of our former Chief Justice, if the scarlet robe, and white wig, were alone pourtrayed? We are inclined to understand landscapes similarly. – In concluding our remarks of 97 we would state, that it presents a mild, very pleasing tone of colour; a just idea of unity, in this respect, seems to have been entertained by the artist. In it there are no competition of tints, one destroying the effect of the other; but all harmonise very pleasingly. The warm well painted sky, is reflected in the water, and the land has a corresponding glow. The painter seems to have a bold perception of his art; but his figures are very objectionable; their grouping, and outlines, are harsh, while their colouring is almost another name for smearing.

No. 98 *Kenilworth Castle*, is rather a difficult study for a young painter. Much of the extreme elegance which we imagined in its original No. 37 is rejected from 98; but we doubt whether there is corresponding dignity gained, except in the cattle; they seem the very types of 37, only, as if being longer at grass, they are more retund than in the *elegant* picture.

No. 99 *An Italian Scene*, has a beautifully painted group of sailing boats, on a piece of water which is so green that it reminds one of a dye vat. There is much brilliancy of tint and delicacy of touch in this picture; its sky is a happy effort of the artist.

No. 100 is a copy from No. 56, a *View in Jamaica*. – No. 56 is a picture, in which outline and tint, seem intended to convey a feeling of great solitude. At the head of a little bay, or arm, an ornamented tomb appears; rocks, not high enough to give the energy which as it were ennoble solitude; but bold and gloomy, rise above the tomb. The dark ledge goes shelving off to some distance, forming a little head land to the bay; and throwing its shade on land and water, shrouds all within in the clear sombre tints well adapted to pourtray the melancholy of landscape. A few paces from the tomb, a figure appears; the head reclined on the breast, as in a fit of deep abstraction; and wandering by the dark mysterious water, as if unconscious of all outward existence, and only intent on mental imagery. The gloomy cape, and a flat of land, inclose the dark bay, while beyond a more lively scene appears. The airy looking and beautiful hills; the sea joyous and bright as it is wont to be, in the distance; well contrasts the silence, melancholy and death, of the dense fore ground. These distinguishing features of

No. 56, are in a great degree rejected in No. 100. The rocks, water and tomb, of the copy are livelier, and more in accordance with shell work taste; while the figure has not a veil thrown over it to avoid difficult expression; but is removed out of the way altogether! – No. 100 is more lonely, but less solitary than 56. Most of the delicate traits introduced into the latter, to give dignity, interest, and incident to rather a common-place scene, are wanting in 100; which gives its subject a barren appearance. A great mystery of the fine arts, and which distinguishes originals from copyists, seems to be – that the delicacy, nerve and system of the master, are unseen by the imitator; who imagines that his own pretty deviations improve, while they often destroy the spirit, and of consequence the merit of the composition. One is as rough gold;

the other polished copper; brighter perhaps – but how inferior in value.

No. 101 *The Falls of Niagara*, is indeed a daubing of nature with untempered mortar. It excites involuntary irritation, to find pencils which should be happy if they succeeded in a farm-yard, or stable-door draught, attempting the most sublime themes; and throwing nature's rare works into ridicule by their unintended caricatures. 'Fools rush where angels fear to tread.' Niagara never fell so profoundly before – here is the representation of its mighty burst, and 'cock robin's bow arrow' would be fully as exciting. Superfine resin rocks, and a cataract as imposing, and finely coloured as if coming from a washing tub, is nick-named the 'Falls of Niagara.' The very title is inspiring, but the spray of No. 101 is a *damper* for the wildest enthusiasm. A great error in this picture seems to be, that it attempts to give a near view of the mighty cataract – but how preposterous to give a near whole length of Niagara on about eight or ten inches of canvas! A painter sketching a giant would not go close to his great toe to do so; he would most likely take a distant position, and represent the monster with accompaniments which should contrast his proportions and strength. Want of judgment something like this, in 101, has pinned up Niagara, until it seems tumbling from a gilt frame at one side; and a rock straight and majestic as a walking stick at the other.

No. 103 *Mountain Scenery*, should perhaps be called pallet scenery – every tint in the painter's catalogue is thrown into the cauldron, yet the effect is not witching. It reminds a spectator of a May day procession, every peak seems vying with its fellow in gaudy robes, and smiling at the sublimity which little mortals attach to high places. It is well for some, that inanimate giants cannot prosecute as others can, for publications tending to bring them into contempt. The figures in the foreground of this picture, should have been placed on the top of one of the mountains, the farther off the better.

No. 107 *An Italian Landscape*, is a very neat, clear little picture. The painter imagined her subject well, and did not resort to smearing, and affected freedom, in order to avoid delineation. Every thing intended is neatly and fully expressed; and with a few more mellow and less sharp touches in the centre and distance, it would be a very superior sketch.

No. 109 *The Attierrri Landscape*, seems conspicuous, for well painted trees, and general boldness of touch, in outline and colouring.

No. 110 *An English Cottage*, is a light, free, pleasing picture. The tiled cottage, warm wood scene, windmill, distant spire, and boats are pretty characteristics of English scenery. Something like delineation in back ground objects might have been attended to; there also seems too much dirty yellow in the landscape.

No. 111 *Dutch Peasants and Cattle*, implies much promise in the artist. Vigour of pencil and of thought are visible, in the principal group, in the pretty water scene to the right, and in a high sheep walk in the opposite direction.

No. 112 *A Night Scene*, is a pleasing free sketch, rather coarsely executed; and of too regular a design. Water flows through the centre, the land on each side curves regularly out, and the sides nearly meet like ends of semi-circles in the centre distance; the clouds accomodate themselves to the land in similar lines; the moon appears in the most effective place; and a few boats also in the centre, most obligingly add to the picturesque by just appearing in the moonbeam's track.

No. 113 *Ruins in a Landscape*, has much of that superior tone in its colouring, which we noticed in No. 97, by the same hand. This is particularly visible in the upper part of an old castle, and the sky. The water, and rocks are indifferently coloured; and a starved looking cow in the foreground, stretching its neck painfully forward to gain a nip at some verdure, excites a wonder why it does not take another step.

No. 114 *Moonlight* – has much of poetry in its composition, although coarsely executed. The moon gleams out from amid broken clouds, its pale light on the distant sea, and again on the near tumbling waves, is very effectively introduced. The waves tumble on a gloomy beach, on one side of which a musing figure wrapt in a mantle appears; the very graceful, yet firm and appropriate outline of the figure is particularly attractive. We would merely ask, why is the light which appears ashy pale on sky land and water, of a fiery red on the figure?

No. 119 *A Musical Party* – is a copy from No. 91. Here again the copy deviates from the original without gaining any thing by it. In the original an attendant who presents articles on a salver to one of the party, seems struck with the music mania; she joins in the song, and her upturned eyelids show her rapturous emotions; but she glances rather downward, as is necessary for the duty which she is engaged in. The principal sitting figure who helps himself from the presented salver, looks on the attendant, and seems to enjoy and join in her raptures. In the copy the attendant gazes profoundly up, and finds her way along the ground by instinct; while the other figure helps himself in the same manner, and instead of accompanying and enjoying her song, looks unmusically enough forward at the silent untransported spectators.

No. 126 *Sunset on the North West Arm* – reminds strongly of the tints in composition ornaments for mantle pieces. It has the faults of non character mentioned of 97, without its redeeming harmony of colouring. Every chocolate colour streak in the sky, and in the water; each rosy blush, and deep green shade, seems nearly as independent of blending and tint, as if they were patches taken from every hour in the day to make a mosaic work sunset. The glorious orb of day, resembles a dot of putty, and his most direct beam, seems most opaque.

No. 132 *Burgomaster and Peasant* – in its figures, animal and human; its light cool sky and back ground, which naturally and beautifully relieve the group is excellent. We would almost hazard the idea, that it would not lose by a comparison with its original No. 10.

No. 136 *A View on the Rhine* is in composition and execution very attractive. The labyrinth formed by obtuse conical mountains; the repose of the deeply sheltered water, boats, and houses; and the fine, well employed opportunities, of expressing and contrasting light and shade; all make this a very romantic sketch.

No. 139 *An Italian Landscape* excels in beautifully painted trees, and a cool clear tone of sky.

No. 140 *St. Alban's Cathedral*, has an exquisitely drawn, and coloured sky; representing a squall. The Cathedral tower catching a sudden gleam, beautifully contrasts the more solemn tints of the atmosphere. The foreground is a line of shrubbery well coloured, and effective without glaring attempts at making it so. It is altogether a simple, characteristic, and superior composition; and in its expression and colouring well contrasts the brilliant picture beneath which it is suspended.

Want of opportunity and space occasion the brief notice taken above of the small room. Similar reasons oblige us to pass over the Corridor altogether unnoticed, except by remarking the following original sketches as particularly meritorious. No. 150, *a Street in Venice*, is really an exquisite little picture. No. 199, *Windsor Castle*, has rich mellow colouring, but is wanting in some of the fine pencil touches of No. 150. No. 143, *one of the Horatii*, 203, *Falls of Niagara*, 157, *Belisarius*, 145, *Cattle Group*, 208, *Dog and Rat*, are excellent in their different styles, and with several architectural and other sketches, deserve a lengthy and particular notice. There are two beautiful miniatures in the corridor, which from their contrast attracted our attention: 172, *Titian's mistress*, and 173, *Lady Ruthven*. One has the sweetest, softest, most feminine, dove-like expression imaginable; and is folding her beautiful hair as if shy of her own charms. The other is a bold, bright beauty, with her hat slouched to one side, and an amazon glance darting from beneath its deep shade. In conclusion we remark that we have devoted more than a due space to the

Exhibition, on account of its own very interesting character, and its being the first enjoyed by the people of Halifax. We have noticed only a few of the works, because want of space is an insuperable obstacle to paying attention to the entire. We perhaps have omitted some of the best, and mentioned those which accident made prominent; such errors are attendant on a hasty view, and inconvenience of taking notes. If we have been any where too severe, our taste was excited by the more beautiful specimens; and if on some we have been flattering and prolix, it proceeds from our early enthusiasm in the art, however deficient we may be in rules and technicals. We cannot conclude without adverting to the praiseworthy conduct of those, who not wanting amusement or employment themselves, contributed their talents and exertions to the interest of the exhibition. We would also remind the young students in the delightful art – that if they have already attained such honour and pleasure by their almost premature productions, how much may be expected after the great corrector Time has improved their hand and their judgment.

APPENDIX II

The Halifax Monthly Magazine, Vol. II, No 13,
June 1831

EXHIBITION OF PICTURES.

Dalhousie College – 1831.

In commencing our volume for 1830, we had the pleasure of noticing a first exhibition of Pictures in Dalhousie College, Halifax: in this first number of our second volume, we have the additional satisfaction of recording, and remarking on, a second exhibition at the same place. The pleasure we feel arises, not so much from the excellence of the specimens, and the delight which such subjects impart to lovers of beauty, as in the belief that liberal studies cannot be adopted and persevered in, without generally exalting the students, and through them, in a certain degree, the community in which they live. To become painters requires a perception and a taste, and a nurturing of ideas, which are all at variance with vulgarity of mind or action: when so many youth then, in so small a community, have simultaneously courted the lovely art, and have shown themselves not unsuccessful wooers, may we not hope that the impulse will not be lost, that the generation which is about to fill active places in society will be more refined, in the best sense of the word, than those who resign their posts to them; and if so, will not the good be visible through a thousand ramifications, as a stone cast into water occasions a multiplicity of circles, each wider and less distinct than its forerunner, but all beautiful and receiving existence from the central impulse? This last exhibition seems to us eminently creditable to Halifax; and we very much doubt whether any third or fourth rate town in the old country could produce so many and so good specimens, the produce of the place of exhibition. We say third or fourth rate town, because Halifax in point of population cannot rank higher, if so high; it has been fashionable to make light of the society and productions of our own metropolis, but we imagine that the satirists compare it with standards which are too exalted. Divide the 1,500,000 of London into portions of 13,000 each, giving each section a share of the common talent, and we should have no fear of pitting the 13,000 of Halifax against any one section, either as respects, spirit, or general ability; particularly if the opportunities of each are taken into account.

We proceed to notice the exhibition, briefly; in doing so we will pass many worthy of remark, and dwell on those which most attracted our attention; we may give our slight meed of praise to some which were excelled by others, for we intend not to judge by comparison; and we may presume to find fault, when perhaps if all the circumstances were known, we should encourage and commend. We may offend a few by our strictures, but such sensitiveness neither argues wisdom, nor proper confidence: if the remarks are just, the amateurs of painting should benefit by hints coming from any quarter; if they are not just, they will not be like nails stuck in sure places; they will not alter the opinion of judges of the art, and will not lessen the value of the articles remarked on: in any case, whether we presume to censure or praise, whether our remarks be right or wrong, their intention is pure, and their object good.

No. 7. *MACREADY AS MACBETH*, seems a paltry composition, whatever its value as a portrait may be. Recollect the picture which Shakespeare draws of the tyrant: – Macbeth driven to desperation in the battle, and tempted by the disastrous position of his affairs, thinks of falling on his own sword, but discards the suggestion, and resolves to deal his blows the more fiercely on his enemies. In this mood he is encountered by his great antagonist, Macduff, and being urged to single combat, or else to yield and 'be the gaze and show o' the time,' he exclaims in a paroxysm:

'I'll not yield,
To Kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
Tho' Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou opposed, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last: before my body
I throw my warlike shield: lay on Macduff;
And d – d be him that first cries, hold, enough.'

How has the painter embodied this fiery conception of the poet? why Mr. Macbeth is as tame looking a gentleman as need be; his lips are pursed up like those of an offended coquet, instead of being apart, and foaming like those of the unfuried and thundering hero; his eyes are raised as if he were going to attack a bird, not a man; the stalworth monarch has a bust too diminutive for a well made spinster; and to fin-

ish the blundering study of a floundering brain, he has no shield before his *warlike* body! and his sword is *undrawn* amid the heat of his last battle!! Think of the energetic attitudes and expressions of Kean or Macready, while representing the tyrant in his extremity – his life set upon a cast, and he at once defying natural and supernatural powers, and flinging his whole soul into the combat – think of this, and then look on No. 7, and you can easily appreciate the abortion. We speak of it as a painting from Shakespeare, not as the likeness of a demure, smock-faced, big-headed and no-bodied elderly gentleman: it may be *good* in its latter capacity; it is superlatively bad according to its pretensions. – JAMES FOREMAN, Esq., by *Dr. Grigor* (No. 8), gave much pleasure, it was universally acknowledged an excellent likeness, with *perhaps* too much of caricature quaintness in its expression. – THE CASCATELLES OF TIVOLI, by *Miss M. Morris*, (No. 11.) is a very difficult subject, executed in a manner highly creditable to the pupil. The trees, sheet of water, and ruins, exhibit much neatness and command of pencil, with a very pleasing appropriate regard to delicate delineation. – A CRUCIFIX, by *J. Hanke*, (No. 12) although good in many particulars, conveys no idea of a dead body being the subject. In foreshortning the thigh, the leg is allowed to be of full dimensions, which gives a clumsy appearance to the figure. – VUE DE SKERVIN, by *Mr. Davis*, (No. 16) is a clear clean characteristic picture of the sea coast. – FORMING A TREATY, by *Mr. Davies*, (No. 18.) This reminds of the picture from which it is copied, and which was exhibited last year; and well as we can recollect, it is so good a copy that the original is scarcely wanted. – DEAD GAME, by *Miss Bowman*, (24), exhibits much art and taste, employed on a bad subject; one which neither addresses itself to the fancy or the memory; the only excellence of which it is capable is tame imitation. Dead Game and Fruit pieces, perhaps, should be painted by those only who can paint nothing else. – PRESIDENTS OF AMERICA, (No. 26 to 30.) Five ogres called after republican worthies. They appear like unnaturally large heads, carved on unnaturally large pumpkins; things forced in a hot house, sappy and spongy! and on which you could make nothing but a distorted likeness of the human face divine. – A MULATTO BOY, by *Lieut. Davis*, (No. 33.) An acknowledged good likeness, but why make the back ground, sky and all, mulatto too? The spot on Lady Macbeth's hand, to her imagination, could make the green sea one red – so Mungo's face in *Mr. Davis's* eye, makes the blue heaven one brown. – WINDERMERE LAKE, by *Mrs. Grigor*, (No. 36.) The charming picture of which this is a copy is well supplied by it; to those who recollect the exhibition of last year this will be apparent, and sufficient. – CLEARING UP OF A SHOWER, (No. 37) lessens the character which the young painter had acquired by her beautiful pencil-sketches: it shows the folly, either, of attempting too much, or of exhibiting failures. Who that recollects the spirited pencillings of animal life by the same hand, but regrets that she lent her name to the overgrown mutton which sketches itself on the foreground of 37? The land and sky, as illustrating the title is all a whimsie, but the fair copiest, perhaps, is not to blame for this. – RABBITS, (No. 39.) A copy we imagine from the spirited pencilling 223, and a failure. – MOONLIGHT, *Mr. Davies*, (No. 42.) A design full of poetry, executed by a painter: 'how soft the moonbeams sleep, on tower, and sail and sea.' Has not the mass of cloud overhead, too much the character of the drop curtain of a theatre? – THE APOSTLES, (No. 48 to 59.) The epistles and gospels would read just as well if the imagination had not these helps, particularly the displeasing caricature called St. Peter. – CHIZENCOOK, by *Mr. T. Akins*, (No. 63.) This picture was not well situated for examination. It is no small addition

to its excellencies, and no weak excuse for its defects, to say, that it is a study from nature by a young pupil. The colouring of the back ground, land, water and sky, is particularly pleasing and chaste; the foreground is too heavy and monotonous; of a bad colour and very deficient in animation. A heavy heap of dirty earth, which rises without reason or use, is a sad introduction to a light and elegant scene beyond: the old masters knew this, and avoided it; look on any of their productions and the fact will appear strongly. Had the rising foreground been of a better green, or of a green at all – had it, even with its present gamboge colour, been enlivened by any thing animate or inanimate, it might be a help, not a clog, to the very delicately tinted scene in the distance: as it is, the landscape appears to as much disadvantage, as a beautiful female should, if she were seen leaning over a 'dry stane dyke,' instead of a marble balustrade. While alluding to what we suppose defects, we would mention the composition of the picture as a whole, its appearance to a quick glance of the eye, and in this respect, is there not a too formal and displeasing division of the canvas, one half being devoted to the earth, the other to the sky? The want of balance in the landscape, introduces stiff unpicturesque corners, formed by the horizon and the frame; which seems the reverse of graceful composition: in support of this opinion, we would again refer to those masters, whose productions are acknowledged standard models. These remarks are bestowed on this painting, not to depreciate it, or to offend the painter, but because its general excellencies attracted more particular attention, and being an original study errors were more easily avoided, or more easily fallen into, according to the education of the eye, than in following a copy. This Painter seems particularly happy in the delicate tinges of his sky and water and distant land; there is a charming harmony in those parts of his pictures; he colours generally well, and he knows how to lay by his pencil when enough is done; there is little, if any, appearance of straining at effect, in his painting; and a further and strining proof of his good taste is, that its own compositions exhibit his excellencies, more strongly than his copies from the works of others. – THE CRUCIFIXION; *Mr. Davies*, (No. 65) An original composition, on a large scale; it represents the hill of Calvary, and the city of Jerusalem, at the time when 'there was darkness over all the land,' when 'the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.' The magnitude of this subject will be readily allowed, and will excite expectations not easily satisfied. Perhaps this composition might be considered bold and poetic, did not our imaginations of the scene surpass all attempts at imitation; did not the cavalier freedom with which those most sublime subjects are treated, occasion offence. On a shelving rock in the foreground, is represented the group of women who followed the Saviour in his sufferings; among them, we know the Virgin Mary is intended, and this mysterious personage, who has had the best pencils of earth devoted patiently to her service, is *not* at all depicted in No. 65! a few loose touches give a distant group of women, and the Virgin Mary is one of these! Jerusalem, also, of which we imagine such glorious things, does not, nor could it be expected in such a composition, bear out our anticipations of the city of David: while the matchless temple of Solomon, appears a slender and confused heap, not far from Golgotha, and in full view of that accursed hill! And what is the appearance on Calvary, that most intense part of the scene, the crucifixion, where a *God* is raised in torture between heaven and earth? – Why from a multitude of coarsely painted and party-coloured *specks*, after some examination we discover, that three miniature crosses arise! and on one of these

we are to suppose that the Saviour is suspended! for, the picture is entitled *the crucifixion!* – Each of those particulars would form a study in itself, a study which a profound master alone should attempt; when massed together by an amateur, by a pupil, that a partial failure is the result need not surely be wondered at. We would also remark, that the sky seems not in good keeping with the scene, the distant clouds are stupidly dense, not exhibiting the fearfully animated gloom of the tempest and the earthquake: while the scud overhead is jagged and torn, but still stiff, reminding one strongly of the tattered sails on the spars of a wrecked vessel. Neither is the sun obscured enough to allow the lightning its full effect: by the bye, if there were darkness over all the land, would the sun have been so visible? If the sun were as visible as here represented, could the scene below be so indistinct and gloomy? to have the great luminary of day visible amid darkness, may be a new thought, we question whether a vulgar every day world are prepared for its reception. A sun much less obscured than it is in a Nova Scotia fog, clouds of darkest midnight, and a city scene only illuminated by lightning, is a bold conception; but we expect that freedom in painting as well as in politics may sometimes run into licentiousness: if the painter of the Crucifixion doubts the wild luxuriance of his genius, we would ask him ‘what is his Moonlight like, No. 107?’ – A VIEW OF HALIFAX FROM THE N.E., by Mr. Akins, (No. 66) This picture has the excellencies and defects of No. 63. Its defects are chiefly in its foreground, which is too yellow, ungraceful, and tame. The view is taken from the rear of the windmill below Dartmouth; why not choose the mill and its adjacent cottages, well delineated, as a bold foreground for the picture? During the summer months a richer or prettier home scene need not be sought, and could hardly be found; yet we here find its richest capabilities, as an adjunct to the distant view, completely lost. The grace and delicacy of the scene in the distance, is characteristic of this young gentlemen’s excellent style of colouring such parts; a want of finish and harshness of touch may be visible in the depicting of Halifax and the Islands, but the picture, as 63, was removed too far for accurate inspection. The general taste displayed in the sketches from nature, by this pupil, induce more lengthy and critical, perhaps hypercritical, remarks than we would else make. [We would in extenuation of our probable inaccuracies, mention, that it is from memory *alone*, now nearly a month after the exhibition, that this and the following pictures are noticed.]

We would glance most favourably, in passing, at No. 67. THE PORTRAIT OF A HORSE – 69, THE SICK CHAMBER – 79, A CALM, but when we arrive at 82 we pause. HEADS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, (No. 82 to 86.) Here are five sheets of drawing paper spoiled, by disgusting libels on the personal beauty of the Royal family of England. That a boy might make such misshapen caricature copies from good engravings, may be readily imagined; but why exhibit the melancholy malformations, and label them with the most respected names of English modern history? ‘The talented young artist’ (as his own advertisements have it!) should have laid those hasty exercises of his pencil, one on the other, and then applied his scissors must unsparingly right and left to the mass: in doing so he would have saved if not added to his cutting fame, and he need not fear in dissecting his heads, that he should mar a line which belong to the Royal Family, any more than to any five stupid looking sots which might be chosen from any community under the crown. No. 89, A PORTRAIT, appeared an exceedingly clever copy of a picture exhibited last year. 91, A FRIGATE very pleasing. 93, GREENWICH HOSPITAL, a chaste clear, clever painting, but disappoints as a *view* of the splendid retreat of

the veteran tars of England. 97, A bad imitation of three prettily dressed wax dolls, placed in attitudes; named after three young ladies – why? THE GOLDEN AGE, Mr. Hanks, (No. 99.) A very animated picture which pleased much: but how could a naked infant playing with golden fishes in an arbour, be assimilated to Miranda, cheering her father with her smiles, when they were abandoned to a wild sea in a leaky boat? To this passage in the ‘Tempest,’ the lines, appended to the picture in the catalogue, refer. ‘Oh! a cherubim thou wert,’ &c. – A LANDSCAPE, by Miss Foreman, (No. 108.) Singularly good copy of a picture by Titian; the antique mellow appearance of this fine painting excited much remark. – A BURGHOMASTER’S WIFE, by Miss Bowman, (No. 118.) An excellent copy, in which the spirit of the original is well preserved. EVENING, by Mr. Akins, (No. 120.) In the catalogue the following lines are annexed to this painting: –

‘And on the happy shore a temple still,
Of small and delicate proportion, keeps,
Upon a mild declivity of hill,
In memory of thee; beneath it sweeps
Thy current’s calmness.’

Painters who embody poetry must be judged in some measure by the model which they choose. In the above lines we have a picture by Byron, of the bank of a favorite river. In 120, the temple, of small and delicate proportions, dwindles into a clumsy portico, which scarcely gets room to appear at the extremity of a marshy flat; the mild declivity of hill may be sought for from half a dozen abrupt eminences; and the current which ‘tells its babbling tales’ to the water lilies, is represented by a lakeish looking piece of dull water. There must be a portion of Shakespear’s or Milton’s or Byron’s spirit, in those who successfully give ‘form and pressure’ to their written pictures. Masters in poetry cannot be made foils to their copyists, any more than masters in painting; yet quotations seem frequently taken merely to heighten the effect of a picture, and to supply thoughts which the painter felt himself weak to express with his pencil. In painting from the page or the canvass of masters, your model must be in some measure repeated, renewed, else the spirit of the original will continually haunt the copy, condemning it by the comparison which is thus induced. THE CRADLE, by Mr. Davis, (No. 122.) A finely worked, and well finished copy from Rembrandt; it represents the interior of an ancient Dutch edifice, where two women sit over the cradle of an infant. A PHILOSOPHER IN HIS STUDY, by Mrs. Harris, (No. 127.) would form an excellent and worthy companion to ‘the Cradle,’ or to the ‘Forming a Treaty,’ No. 18. A SEA PIECE, by Miss Richardson, (No. 128.) A very characteristic and neatly touched scene, the water seemed particularly well painted. Passing by some good originals, in the *Small Room*, we come to a picture in water colours – CONWAY CASTLE, by Lieut. Ford, which is exceedingly pleasing, chaste and picturesque; with every design of the artist fully expressed. SUNSET IN NOVA-SCOTIA, and the ENCHANTED ISLAND, seem a couple of fantasies embodied. The card-rack figures in the latter add little to the painter’s fame. ROSS IN MONMOUTHSHIRE, by Miss Jeffrey, is a good copy, of a difficult subject, from a beautiful picture which was exhibited last year. – A COTTAGE, by the same hand, fully bears out our opinion of last year respecting a small picture, by Miss Jeffrey. The same – or increased – clearness, neatness, vividness of colour (perhaps to an extreme) and gracefulness of detail which pleased before, are visible in this. PORTRAITS OF DOGS, by Mr. Davis, is well painted, but badly grouped, we would advise that the old garment – which is suspended over one of the dogs, and

which at a short distance seems to unnaturally elongate his figure – should be taken down speedily as possible. – Several other pictures by pupils demand attention and applause, but we are forced to close our remarks, having merely as we stated at first, noticed those which happened to attract most, and the peculiarities of which were best stamped on the memory. Of pictures not by pupils, some portraits – excellent likenesses – by Mr. Valentine, are worthy of most honourable mention. Perhaps his complexions are *too made*. The portraits of Mr. West, and Mr. Scott – which might be known the length of a street distant – have equally vivid clear complexions; Venus, rising from the sea might be content with a skin similarly transparent. Perhaps the fact of having adopted this standard complexion, has partly occasioned the picture of Andromeda – where a departure was necessary – to be so lifelessly insipid. A resident artist of Mr. Valentine's abilities is no small honour to Halifax; we believe that many with less talent, as portrait painters, have arisen to much note, and very profitable employ in older communities. – COWS, by Fisher, MADAME DE

VALENGER, CROSSING THE BROOK, and an ANGEL'S HEAD, seemed to us beautiful original specimens of the art.

We congratulate Halifax on the improvement of its taste as developed by this second exhibition. We would fain hope that the metropolis and the Province will advance regularly and rapidly, careful, while the staples of life are pursued, to secure as much of the *rational* elegancies and graces of existence as opportunity may allow. Man was not intended to be a mere eating, drinking and sleeping animal; every proper grasp at intellectual refinement is becoming his noble grade in creation, and helps to expand and mature that soul, the education of which, we are told, will advance during the ages of eternity. How many are insensible to the value and properties of this mysterious creation in their own breast! and who live and act, as if the mere animal frame were the alpha and omega of their existence. If we wish that intelligence and intellectual enjoyment, should keep sordidness and sensuality in check, we should encourage the liberal Arts next to Morality and Religion.

RÉSUMÉ

À cause de sa population, de sa richesse et de son statut de centre gouvernemental, militaire et naval, Halifax était, dans la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, le centre de l'activité culturelle et artistique dans les colonies maritimes de l'Amérique du Nord britannique. La période qui s'étend de 1800 à 1850 en fut une de grande animation dans les domaines politiques, sociaux et économiques de même que dans le domaine des beaux-arts.

En 1815, peu de chose laissait croire que Halifax deviendrait un centre de vie artistique, mais en l'espace de quinze ans deux expositions y eurent lieu. Il y a plusieurs raisons à cela: la reprise de l'économie après l'ère napoléonienne; l'établissement d'une institution d'éducation non confessionnelle, le collège Dalhousie, au centre de la ville; l'arrivée d'artistes de talent, en particulier William Valentine et W.H. Jones; la présence de fonctionnaires ainsi que d'officiers militaires et d'officiers de marine ouverts et éclairés; et enfin la formation d'une ambiance intellectuelle réceptive grâce aux journaux et autres publications.

Il faut surtout mentionner la présence du dynamique William Harris Jones, un Américain qui vint enseigner l'art au collège Dalhousie en 1828. Au début des années 1820, il avait organisé des expositions à Baltimore et Boston, avant d'organiser en mai 1830 au collège Dalhousie la première exposition publique d'œuvres d'art à Halifax et dans l'Amérique du Nord britannique. Au printemps de 1831, une seconde exposition, encore plus ambitieuse, organisée à nouveau par Jones sous le patronage de Lady Sarah Maitland, l'épouse du lieutenant-gouverneur, était présentée au collège Dalhousie. Des chroniqueurs locaux virent l'établissement d'expositions annuelles comme un pas dans la bonne direction pour former la jeunesse et déclarèrent: «... nous devrions encourager les arts libéraux presque autant que la Moralité et la Religion».

Malheureusement le départ de W. H. Jones à l'été de 1831 causa un arrêt subit des expositions annuelles; mais ses efforts ont encouragé d'autres artistes, principalement une de ses élèves, Maria Morris, et William Eagar, à enseigner les beaux-arts aux habitants de Halifax et à exposer leurs œuvres. Pour bien comprendre l'impact des expositions de 1830 et 1831 sur la population locale, il faut lire les longs comptes rendus parus dans le *Halifax Monthly Magazine* en juin 1830 et juin 1831, qui sont reproduits dans les appendices à cet article.
