

Drawing on the Land: The New World Travel Diaries and Watercolours of Millicent Mary Chaplin, 1838-1842. Edited, with an Introduction, by Jim Burant

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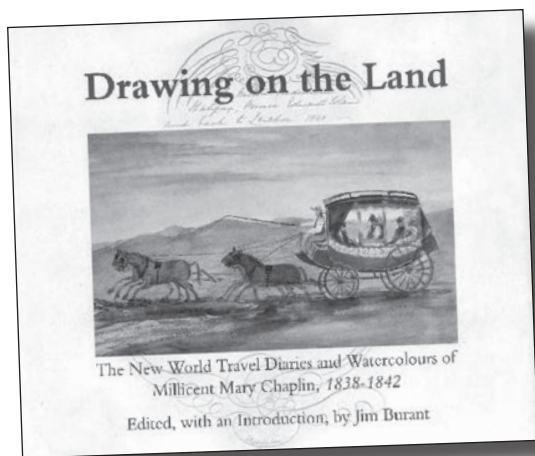
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wider connotations of contemporary Canadian life. Purists might note that the mercury wash referred to in Grosse Isle did not come into operation until twenty years after the Famine arrivals, and in reference to Irish dioceses, Carlow is mistaken for

Kildare and Leighlin. But these are minor quibbles about a biography that is substantive and independent in content.

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Drawing on the Land:

The New World Travel Diaries and Watercolours of Millicent Mary Chaplin, 1838-1842.

Edited, with an Introduction, by Jim Burant. Manotick, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 2004. 166 pp. \$39.95 softcover. ISBN 1-894131-61-4.

Scrapbooks became a rage among the Victorian leisured classes but are undervalued by descendants, archivists, and researchers, and may face the ignominy of dismemberment by those interested in just one picture or entry. Editor Jim Burant rescues from such a fate the travel writings of Millicent Mary Chaplin, the middle-aged, childless wife who accompanied her officer husband to Canada in the wake of the 1837 Rebellion. Burant supplements the text with some ninety of Mrs. Chaplin's watercolours and his own well-researched endnotes, explanations of historical context, and information on travel and botanical writing in the Canadas. The illustrations are mainly of scenes in and around Quebec. Their value is limited, since the best of Chaplin's work has been previously published, and in general it boasts neither artistic merit nor precision. However, the illustrations and explanations complement an engaging but slim set of travel diaries, resulting in a book

of considerable interest.

Married to a highranking officer in the Coldstream Guards, Millicent Mary Chaplin moved in the best circles, chaperoned by the Family Compact in Toronto, invited to Governors' and Bishops' mansions across the land, befriended by Samuel Cunard in Halifax and by American academics on her travels. In calling her an anglophile xenophobe who 'put the classes in their place,' the editor seems too hasty. Certainly Chaplin was a product of her time and place, a Lincolnshire Anglican who arranged shipboard services and balked at questions such as "The Queen, what sort of bird is she?" She shared the usual English distaste for the American habits of public spitting, asking strangers personal questions, and frantic dining (fast food is not new). She wondered though, if the gobbling arose from poor implements such as two-tined forks. More importantly, she was not standoffish about conversation with coach driv-

ers, servants, and immigrants she met along the way. She noted that the democratic spirit caused servants to be relatively well treated and averred that “Americans do not mean to be other than civil. Their manners arise from considering everybody on an equal footing.” Noting many blacks in American and Canadian jails, she laid it down to lack of education rather than anything innate.

What does this volume add to the bookshelf of colonial women’s diaries? One picks up Susanna Moodie for an impassioned rendering of character and incident, Catherine Parr Traill for serene practical advice, Anna Jameson for early feminism. Millicent Mary Chaplin’s account, while briefer, has a wider scope, recording travels through New York, New England, Upper and Lower Canada, and the Maritimes. A refreshing change from Victorian invalids, this fifty-year-old stays on her feet in a squall. One day she rises at five a.m. for a four hour coach ride, then a hike in the Catskills, dines with forty people at a lodge, then off to a waterfall in a coach “outstretched hands holding on to each side to prevent being shaken to pieces,” back in a wagon when other tourists commandeered her coach, then downriver to Manhattan trying to sleep on a bench on the deck. The society too moves at a fever pitch; she frequently passes through bustling villages that did not

exist ten years earlier, and notes the wagons of westbound immigrants. The stars are still vivid above Manhattan, the peaches already divine in St. Catharines. She clucks over callous Gaspé ladies weeding their gardens in silk stockings and lace gloves snatched from shipwrecks when they should have been rescuing the survivors instead. She arrives at Saratoga when banished *patriote* Louis-Joseph Papineau and future Canadian statesmen Louis Lafontaine and George-Etienne Cartier are there, the latter already having second thoughts, telling her newspapers exaggerated the disturbance. She compared “freedom and ease and smart appearance” south of the border to the “more homely but respectable and respectful manner and demeanour” north of it. Here is a well-read and judicious commentator on Canada and the northern United States circa 1840. Historians of travel and leisure and students of penal institutions will be particularly interested in her detailed descriptions of hotels, conveyances, attractions, and of practices at Kingston and American penitentiaries. With much to say about class, race, gender, imperial attitudes and daily life, the book will intrigue the general reader and the historian alike.

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The Canada Company and the Huron Tract 1826-1853:

Personalities, Profits and Politics.

By Robert C. Lee. Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2004 303 pp. Illustrations. \$26.95 softcover. ISBN 1-896219-94-2.

The origin of the Canada Company is well known. In the 1820s, the reserve lands established by the Constitutional Act of 1791 were proving

politically embarrassing, and there was a need to produce revenue to conduct the business of the state, specifically to compensate people for losses during the War