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Furs in Fashion as Illustrated in the Photo-Portraiture
of William Notman in the 1860's

Jana Bara

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

December 1986

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Abstract

Furs in Fashion as Illustrated in
the Photo-Portraiture of William Notman in the 1860's

Jana Bara

This thesis studies the importance of fur as a feature of fashion in clothing through the extensive evidence provided by William Notman in his photo-portraits of Montreal residents during the 1860's.

In the period selected for close analysis, 1860-1870, significant trends and new departures in photography and fashion can be isolated and illustrated, together with the cultural and technological factors that influenced their development.

The study examines the photographs vis-à-vis the fashion-plates of the period and complements the documentary record of fashion, captured in these Victorian photo-portraits, with references to local costume to be found in the letters, diaries and travel-logs of individuals who lived in Canada in the 1860's.

Overall, the study represents a preliminary incursion into a vast but neglected field of art history and underlines the significance of photographic records as a unique source of historical record.

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Introduction

In the English-speaking world of the late Victorian era, taste, style and fashion were functions of the value-systems operating in the materialistically-oriented society whose standards they moulded and mirrored. Progress was a keyword. The term at once described and justified the expedients and the processes set in motion by the Great Powers, which shaped the history of the world during a fortunate constellation of circumstances that had put Britain into a position of world dominance.

Britain was fortunate to possess great riches in natural resources and materials for the heavy manufacturing industries that combined with entrepreneurial endeavour kept the wheels of the Industrial Revolution turning. She used her advantageous economic situation, geographic position, and consequent political influence, to develop further her holdings, and to confirm and extend her international importance.

In complaisant accord with the weekly readings from the Book of Common Prayer, God, who was clearly an English gentleman, was busily engaged in setting the bounds of the Empire wider still and wider, and making the Land of Hope and Glory mightier yet, all in tandem with the Royal Navy that ruled supreme over the Seven Seas. Britain's trade, and her wealth were secure within the holds of her merchant

fleet and her territories were equally safe, under the vigilant guard of the gun-muzzles of her ever-present iron-clads. "The sun never sets on the British Empire" was the motto, while the March of Empire, to the tune of "Rule Britannia", went on.

The Age of Progress produced drastic changes in the traditional class structure, and society underwent major upheavals. By 1870, the shift from agrarian to urban industrial economy was nearly complete in the leading nations of the Western World, and the effects on the lower echelons of society were devastating. It was an age in which fortunes in Europe and America were made or lost overnight; an age in which the stratification and the rules of middle-class society became solidified and codified; an age in which a monied, artificial, upper class manifested their taste in a heavy-handed ostentatious show of wealth. A whole class hierarchy shifted, and the combination of urban squalor, colonial development, and economic pressures, resulted in extensive emigration from Great Britain to the Colonies.

The Colonies seemed to hold answers to many situations and problems. While eighteenth-century colonial policies relied on exploiting dependencies with a minimal use of British manpower, the nineteenth century saw the exodus of shiploads of thousands of hopeful emigrants.

In Upper and Lower Canada alike, society in the second

half of the nineteenth century was profoundly influenced by this major exportation of men and ideas from the British Isles. The immigrants, discontented with unstable economic conditions in the mother-country, left to start a new life in Canada, bringing with them as part of their intellectual baggage the idea of progress, an idea which found its richest articulation in Victorian England. Many of these immigrants landed in Montreal.

Montreal, in the 1860's, was a business centre, a nodal point for trade routes, that grew rapidly in importance and prosperity. The city's population increased from 57,715 in 1852, to 91,006 in 1861¹ and this influx of immigrants brought in scores of enterprising and dynamic British colonists transplanted from their native habitats by a complex of political, social and economic imperatives.

Long before this time, Montreal had joined the important fur centres of the world such as St. Petersburg in Russia, Canton in China and New York in the U.S.A. In the 1860's, when fur trade between the American West coast and China all but came to a halt, the output of the East coast rapidly intensified.²

Fur merchants who had settled in Montreal during the previous decades fared very well and by the 1860's, a number

¹ McKay's Montreal City Directory, 1861-1862, (Montreal: Mrs. R.W. Stewart-McKay, 1862) n. pag.

² Paul Chrisler Phillips, The Fur Trade, Vols. I & II, (University of Oklahoma: Norman, 1961) 106-107.

of furriers had successfully established themselves in the city, with no less than ten establishments being registered in MacKay's Montreal Directory for 1860-61, listing seven at addresses along Notre Dame Street, thus making it the street of furriers par excellence.³

Since the Conquest of New France in 1769, Montréal had hosted a British military garrison and one steady source of business was represented by contracts to supply the officers of the regiments which were required, under Army Regulation on dress and equipment, to lay out substantial sums on fur-trimmed winter outfits.⁴

Raw fur-pelts at the time were shipped to Britain, to be processed and fashioned into articles of clothing, and then re-imported into Canada, where, because of the expenses involved in transportation, their retail price was well above the levels prevailing in London.⁵

But, expensive as they were, furs and a great variety of fur garments were widely advertised in the press in Montreal, as were buffalo-skin sleigh robes, hats, caps and Victorines made of local or imported furs such as astrakhan, mink, German mink, mock sable, otter and stone marten. The

³ MacKay's Montreal Directory, 1860-1861, n. pag.

⁴ F.S. Senior, British Regulars in Montreal, (Montreal: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1981) 198.

⁵ Mary C. Holford, Assistant Curator Textile Department, letter to the author, (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, December 18, 1984) 1.

constant recurrence of the newspaper advertisements suggests a substantial and steady trade for furrier enterprises.

Originally, in the 1840s and 1850s, these merchants had been listed as "Hatters and Furriers", which was a great improvement over an even older English expression that labelled them as "Skinners".⁶ Later, reflecting the shift in emphasis, they described themselves simply as "Furriers". From being craftsmen, working on a small scale in a narrow range of clothing accessories, they advanced to become an important part of the fashion scene.⁷

The furriers of Montreal integrated early into the city's social life. A notice in The Montreal Herald for January 21st 1864, advertised "The first social ball of the furriers of Montreal" to be held at Nordheimer's Hall on Tuesday, January 26th. The hall was to be decorated appropriately with choice furs.⁸

The furs that from the earliest days of colonisation had helped to build Montreal into an international commercial centre were always treated as a major asset of commerce. At once beautiful, useful, and expensive, they represented one of the more constant and important elements of supply and demand feeding the flow of lucrative trade between Canada

⁶ Phillips, Vol. I., 4.

⁷ Elizabeth Ewing, Fur in Dress, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1981) 105.

⁸ The Montreal Daily Herald, January 21, 1864, (Montreal: E. Goff Penny & A. Wilson, 1864) n. pag.

and the rest of the world that proved so attractive for fortune-hunting adventurers and merchants alike.

Chapter I

Photographer to the Queen

One of the colonists who was destined to leave his mark on the country and society of his adoption was the hard-working, shrewd, able newcomer, William Notman. (Fig.1. no. 41522-BI, 1869, William Notman)

William Notman was born in 1826, in Paisley, Scotland, just as Great Britain was undergoing the Industrial Revolution. Amongst the many discoveries to emerge from this inventive ferment was photography, which was eventually to become the focus of William Notman's life.*

At the turn of the nineteenth century, some initial attempts at photography had been produced in England by Thomas Wedgwood, but were abandoned for lack of means of making an image permanent, and the general public remained largely unaware of the process. In France, in the year of William Notman's birth, Nicéphore Niépce, after years of trial and error, produced the first permanent photographic image on a pewter plate, a view of the courtyard from the upstairs window of his house. Another thirteen years went by before Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre and William Henry Fox-Talbot announced to the world in 1839 their separate systems for producing a durable image using light as its source.

* Stanley Triggs, William Notman: The Stamp of a Studio, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario and McCord Museum, 1985) 15.



Fig. 1. no. 41522-BI, 1869, William Notman

In the beginning, portraits could not be attempted until a way had been found to reduce the exposure-time from hours to minutes, and it was not until 1841 that the camera could portray a sitter who had the fortitude to spend two minutes completely immobile in bright sunshine. André Adolphe Disidèri (1819-1890), the French photographer, realised that multiple pictures on one plate could proportionately cut the cost of labour and materials, while the small size of the image would have the additional advantage of cutting out the need of expensive retouching. He patented his device in 1854, which was to lower the price of prints by almost 90 %. At last the working classes, as well as the more affluent, could obtain a good and durable portrait-likeness.¹⁰ Photography, as one of the numerous innovations introduced by the Industrial Revolution, mechanized, democratized and eventually vulgarized the process of image-making which before 1839 had been largely an elitist artistic enterprise.

The applications of the new invention came early to the North of Britain. Scotland was in constant scientific and cultural exchange with both England and France, where the formative experiments in fixing the light-image had taken place.

By 1841, Edinburgh painters of miniature portraits began

¹⁰ Madeleine Ginsburg, Victorian Dress in Photography, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publ. Inc., 1983) 14.

to make daguerrotypes to supplement their incomes, and in March of the same year, John Adamson of St. Andrew's College made the first calotype in Scotland. Later, in 1843, he formed a partnership with his brother Robert. Their calotypes received great public attention and praise.¹¹ William Notman, going through his formative years in this period, must have been aware of their endeavours and possibly had seen examples of their work. In 1856, because of business problems, William Notman emigrated to Canada. On arrival in Montreal in August 1856, he immediately found employment with Ogilvy & Lewis, a wholesale dry goods firm. Later in the same year, he opened a photographic studio, established at No. 11 Bleury Street.¹² The choice of his métier and his timing were nearly perfect. His previous background of training and experience as an amateur photographer, and his studies in the art of painting were the foundation of instant success.¹³ His photographs were showered with extravagant praise, orders for portraits came pouring in and, within a year, he was well established in his business.

In the beginning, he worked alone, perhaps with an assistant to help with the heavy equipment. Initially, he

¹¹ Triggs, 19.

¹² Triggs, 23.

¹³ Notman Photographic Archives, Memoires of Charles Notman, 1951, 1.

even completed the colouring of portraits himself, offering this service in his earliest advertisements.¹⁴ His wife Alice and infant daughter arrived before the end of the year.¹⁵ Later, in 1857, Notman became a wholesale agent and supplier of photographic materials, and by late 1859 his business was showing such good returns that he was able to convince the rest of his family to join him in Montreal. It was not long before the volume of work became too much for him alone, and he began to build up a staff of experts and promising apprentices.¹⁶

In 1860, he hired a number of full-time artists, headed by John A. Fraser, a new and highly talented immigrant from England.¹⁷ Their duties were various; they retouched the negatives and produced the great range of painted backdrops used in the photographic studios, and later they were also involved in the painting-in of the backgrounds in composite photographs.

At first, Notman's livelihood depended on portrait creation and his early production contains cartes-de-visite of Montreal's citizens and members of the British military garrison. As his fame grew, everyone of any prominence, be

¹⁴ The Montreal Daily Argus, 10. Nov. 1858, (Montreal: W. Bristow, 1858) n. pag.

¹⁵ Triggs, 24.

¹⁶ The Montreal Daily Argus, 10. Nov. 1858, n. pag.

¹⁷ Triggs, 24.

they local inhabitants or visitors to the city, came to his studio to have their pictures taken.

Notman skilfully manoeuvred his business affairs and while working his way up, in a very short time he achieved prominence in municipal life and society, and established himself and his family in comfort.

Almost immediately upon his arrival in Montreal, he aligned himself with important men, and while he himself did not attempt a political career, these established affiliations helped in the advancement of his business. The names of his new acquaintances, given prominence in the pages of newspaper reports on the city's commerce and politics, reappear in Notman's photo books with marked frequency. Many of them were Scots.

Scots played an important role in the development of Montreal. They were hard-working and ethnically cohesive, and their native loyalties and commercial alliances contributed to their pre-eminence in the city's commercial circles. In 1861, there were only 3,235 Scots in Montreal, but they did so well in business, that the listings of the city merchants in the McKay's Montreal City Directory resembles the roll-call at a Gathering of the Clans.

Contributing to the increase in Notman's business was a commission he received in 1858 from the Grand Trunk Railway to photograph the construction of the Victoria Bridge.¹⁸

¹⁸ Triggs, 24.

This assignment he undertook and executed with marked success.

The visit of the Prince of Wales in the summer of 1860, for the official inauguration of the bridge, as Stanley Triggs describes:

...was perceived by Notman as an opportunity to promote the growing popularity of his work before an international audience. He made a selection of twenty-six photographs (10 x 12 inches), and two hundred and seventy-nine stereographs of the Victoria Bridge works, and the cities and major geographical attractions of Canada, East and West. The selection also contained prints from what were stated to be "ten of the largest sized single plates yet taken in Canada". These mammoth plate photographs (18 x 24 inches) included views of Montreal, Quebec City, Niagara Falls, and the Victoria Bridge. Mounted on fifty-four large cards, they were placed in two leather-bound portfolios with solid silver clasps, which were then enclosed in a bird's-eye-maple box fitted with silver mountings. The whole was a masterpiece, combining the art of the photographer, the skill of the bookbinder, and the craft of the silversmith, as a fitting gift to royalty.¹⁹

William Notman, far-sighted businessman that he was, aware of the publicity value of this presentation, had had two versions of the Maple Box made; the second to be displayed in his studio.²⁰ The only difference between the two portfolios was in the choice of photographs. According

¹⁹ Triggs, 24.

²⁰ Notman Photographic Archives, Item in archival inventory.

to Triggs:-- "Notman family tradition holds that Her Majesty was so delighted with the gift that she pronounced William Notman Photographer to the Queen".²¹ As can be seen from his photographs, a new, impressive Grecian-style portico was added to the studio entrance in 1862, proclaiming the distinction of Royal patronage.

It remained fashionable for years among the more affluent to have their photographs taken, in carriage or sleigh, in front of this studio, with the portico confirming the royal attribution serving as a background. This location, together with the display of the fine carriage-horses, sleighs lined with precious furs, and fur-clad wives holding the reins, was the indisputable proof of ultimate success.

²¹ Triggs, 25.

Chapter II.

Photo-Portraiture

Photography was immediately and enthusiastically accepted and adapted to the needs of members of Montreal's successful Victorian society, preoccupied with the reproduction in portable and permanent form of their portraits and likenesses. The desire to render an image is as old as art itself, yet portrait photography, as it is known today, is a product of the nineteenth century. (Fig. 2. no. 14647-BI, 1865, Miss Stevens dressed as "Photography".) The initial enchantment was caused by the ability of the photograph to capture a moment in time and to fix it, with unmatched fidelity, on a two-dimensional surface, thus immortalizing the sitter and his surroundings. Photographs copied reality faithfully, and it was this characteristic that soon precipitated the perpetual dilemma between flattery and truth, and the consequential changes in photo-portraiture.

From the beginning, portrait photography was always a delicate matter, demanding great patience and tact on the part of the photographer. Where tact was not enough, other means had to be adopted. No sooner had the early photographers mastered their camera techniques, than they began to manipulate the photographs, and through the ambiguous testimony of these doctored photographs, history



Fig. 2. no. 14647-BI. 1865. Miss Stevens dressed as "Photography".

itself has been somewhat distorted, with varying degrees of success.

The introduction of the carte-de-visite format of photographs (2 1/4" x 3 1/2"), about 1860, which greatly popularised portrait photography, resulted in a form of "cartomania" to which all kinds of Victorians, including Royalty, succumbed, and which was to last until the end of the decade. In the mid-1860's this style was supplemented by the larger "cabinet" size version (4" x 5 1/2"). From Queen Victoria downwards, everyone began to collect photographic keepsakes and remembrances, both of their friends and of the famous.

A wide spectrum of subjects was covered, but cartes-de-visite usually served the double demand for sentiment and publicity. People wanted to have their photographs taken, in order to exchange them with their friends and to express social standing.

For many sitters, the contradiction between the camera's objective way of seeing reality and their own self-image was too intimidating. They were accustomed to flattering representations, whether life-size or miniature, produced at the hands of a portrait painter, who could flatter his sitter and soften any irregular features. By contrast, the new-fangled camera mercilessly recorded the imperfect likeness with menacing permanence.

Photography had to reform. Reform it did, and lines

between Victorian painting and photography became closely intertwined. This was the period in which the exuberance and emotional excitement of artistic Romanticism became codified, restricted and unnatural, and the repression made itself felt in both graphic forms. It was a period in which the values of the Establishment insisted on the display of opulence, to the exclusion of any features of beauty or simplicity.

Any product of a complex creative process is in danger of being misinterpreted through misconceptions that could equally be caused by a deception on the part of the artist or, more often, by ignorance on the part of his public. Photography, particularly photo-portraiture, is a good example. It is the general lack of knowledge of the technology involved in the creation of early photographs which has produced the widespread but erroneous modern belief that all our Victorian forebears were reserved, serious people who never smiled. Of course they did, as is revealed by the surprisingly bawdy sense of humour in the contemporary literature. There were two good reasons why a smile in photo-portraits was literally non-existent. One was the social prerequisite of gravity and dignity and the other was a technical problem.

At this point in history, exposure-times were up to 60 seconds in length, especially for larger print formats. It was this lengthy exposure that resulted in the need to

immobilize the head and hands of the sitter and the use of the posing stand therefore became a practical necessity. This must have been confining and intimidating, and it resulted in the sometimes defiant and long-suffering expressions of many uncomfortable clients who braved the discomforts of the photo-studio session in order to have their likeness captured.

These richly-dressed sitters, all striving for the appearance of well-to-do citizens of some prominence, were in fact concerned with establishing a new human relationship: the collaboration and dialogue between photographer and subject. This relationship was conditioned by the photographic process and involved a third party, - the ultimate viewer, whose interests were always considered. Image-maker, sitter, and potential observer became involved in a triangular process of stimulus and response, and images whose qualities are above all human ones, became timeless.

Notman's interest in the formal qualities of a subject was reflected in much of his portraiture, not the standard portraits produced by his Montreal staff by the thousands annually, but in the portraits to which he himself gave individual attention. The photographs taken between 1856 and 1860 can safely be attributed to him, since he worked alone. In those photographic renditions that can with certainty be attributed to him, the reflections of his early artistic training are prominently expressed in his interest in line

and form, in the abstract shape of objects, and in the monumentality of a human head or figure. This approach lends an heroic quality to his sitters,²² which he reinforces by a careful choice of backdrop and accessories, that in themselves often provide a clue to the social eminence, professional standing or personal preferences of the subject. (Fig.3. no. 19360, Cariboo Hunting, 1866, Col. Rhodes.)

Understandably, the sitters wished to appear at their best, in a process designed to defeat the perennial human problems of space and time, and attempted to project the desired image through their dress and immediate surroundings. According to the fashion conventions of the Victorian era concerning ladies' clothes as well as the decor of interior settings, the emphasis was on excessive, heavy decoration and unlimited trimmings. It is often merely the elaborate attire, in combination with the opulent photo-studio surroundings and accessories used to create the convincing illusion of abundance and richness, that deceives the eye of the modern viewer.

These already enveloping and overdecorated women's clothes were coloured with the overpowering aniline dyes developed in the 1850's. Fashionable outfits often featured clashing combinations of gaudy hues that only added to the

²² Triggs, 31.

general appearance of garishness of an age that, have nevertheless, come down to us muted and dignified in black-and-white photographs which were originally in fact created in tones of sepia and off-white.

Notman relied for his financial success on the mass appeal of high quality portraits, delivered for a reasonable price. The Notman photographic enterprise has left a volume of photographs estimated at 400,000 for the Montreal studio alone; about two-thirds of these are portraits. However, the ne plus ultra in the photo-portraiture at this period was the hand-coloured portrait, for which Notman made the best use of the employees of his art department, and some extraordinary examples of painted photo-portraits were created. (Fig.4. no. 23532-BI, 1867, Master Hugh Allan; Fig.5. no. 23532-BI, 1867, painted photograph, Master Hugh Allan.) In this photograph the boy portrayed underwent a process of artistic metamorphosis projecting a wide-eyed child into the future Master Allan. This hard-faced and tight-lipped individual with innumerable future responsibilities no longer holds an ordinary boy's fishing stick but the rod symbolising the right to rule his estates.

Notman's business grew and new assistants were hired, and because the later photographs were issued under the name of the studio, the differentiation of the photographs taken by Notman himself and those completed by his staff photographers becomes more difficult. It is likely of



Fig.3. no. 19360, Cariboo-Hunting, 1866, Col. Rhodes.



Fig. 4. no. 23532-BI, 1867, Master Hugh Allan



Fig. 5. no. 23532-BI, 1867, painted photograph, Master Hugh Allan

course, that he favoured the more prominent clients of the Montreal community with his personal attentions.²³

The links between Victorian painting and photography were close. Artists and public were as one in admiring a reality painstakingly recreated, preferably with moral overtones, and a work of art was respected in proportion to its attention to detail. Studio photography thus took its inspiration from the portrait-painting of the previous centuries, and the compositions and surroundings favoured by the ancient aristocracy.

Notman's approach to photo-portraiture found its roots in the English portraitist tradition that dates back centuries, and includes such eminent artists as Holbein, Van Dyck, Raeburn, Reynolds, Gainsborough and others. In 17th- and 18th-century England, the conventions required that members of the ruling class be depicted amid the symbols of their might, surrounded by gold and jewels, wearing silk and velvet clothes and swathed in furs, posed in fine landscapes, in front of stately buildings, with horses, and exotic animals. A great deal of attention was given to personal adornment, which classifies these examples of English art as the icons of possession, of pride of ownership, of expansive and comfortable domesticity.²⁴ An

²³ Triggs, 11.

²⁴ Bernard Denvir, The Eighteenth Century: Art, Design & Society, 1689-1798, (London, New York: Longman, 1983) 22.

attempt to recreate a similar atmosphere is obvious in many a Victorian photograph, and the sumptuous portraits of the previous centuries were imitated in the photo-portraits of the members of the new merchant aristocracy that patronized the Notman's studio. This trend was reinforced by the wide circulation of photo-portraits of members of the world's ruling families, celebrities and famous personalities.

The members of the nouveau-riche class in Montreal were individuals who realised that possession of Canada entailed the "exploitation" of her resources. Their accomplishments were often brought about by the work of their hands, frequently combined with shrewdness and business acumen. Many prominent Canadians were photographed by Notman and in 1865, he made use of the available material and published a book, "Portraits of British Americans" in cooperation with a longtime member and Treasurer of the Legislative Council - Fennings Taylor, who in his notorious saccharine-and-vitriol style, composed the biographies which accompanied Notman's photographs. (Fig.6. Portraits of British Americans, book cover)

The colonial immigrants whose endeavours had been crowned with success were slow to develop any independent or revolutionary set of values, and inevitably, they returned to the codes established by the society from which they had peremptorily distanced themselves. The development of wealth went hand in hand with snobbery. Progress soon became



Fig.6. Portraits of British Americans, book cover

synonymous with excess, and the "colonial mentality" was only one of its results.

Victorian Canada was derivative and colonial, and the Canadian imitation often exceeded the model of the British original. According to Morton: "...the need of a new country was not to be original but to prove the old possible in the new; to re-affirm accepted modes in new conditions. The task was not creative, but re-creative."²⁵ This pattern applied in the arts as well. The aesthetic level of taste prevailing in the new country was that of the new patrons of its arts—the intellectually insecure middle classes. Art was not intended or expected to show any creativity or originality, and the use of an old and proven symbolism was a re-affirmation of accepted modes in new conditions. The attitude of colonials towards culture was reflected in Canadian literature, architecture, painting, sculpture and ultimately, in photography. The essential was to reproduce; the triumph was not to alter.²⁶

The now affluent representatives of the middle classes were anxious to have their moments of triumph and exaltation, as well as their advanced position in society, immortalized and recognized by the family members and friends left behind in Britain, and photography was to serve

²⁵. William Lewis Morton, Shield of Achilles, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1968) 328.

²⁶ Morton, 330.

as the medium for their apotheosis. One picture, inscribed "When this you see, remember me" and included in a letter to the mother-land, was indeed worth a thousand words, with a substantial saving in postage, and the immediate availability and duplicability of a photograph became its forte.

In the photo-portraits created in the 1860's in Notman's studio, the new merchant princes stand determinedly, bracing up to the camera with an air of grave dignity about them. Nevertheless, the stance adopted as a pose was not in itself sufficient to express the importance of their achievement, and the heavy, rugged, fur overcoat became the symbol of many a man who had carved his empire out of the wilderness with his own two hands. This pride was often well-derived, and if in Notman's portraits, the shaggy "coat of success", was not featured as an item of clothing, it was reverently displayed on a pedestal or a chair within the frame, just as the precious furs and similar symbols of achievement had been used in the composition of paintings of the famous and successful in previous centuries. (Fig. 7. no. 36458-B1, 1868-69, Mr. Judah)

To call attention to something by elaborately concealing it is a commonplace device of social psychology. Mid-nineteenth century Victorians added conspicuous consumption to the practice, with heavy drapery, carpeting, cramming every square inch of space with souvenirs and trimmings,



Mr Judah
36438

Fig.7.. no. 36458-BI, 1868-69, Mr: Judah

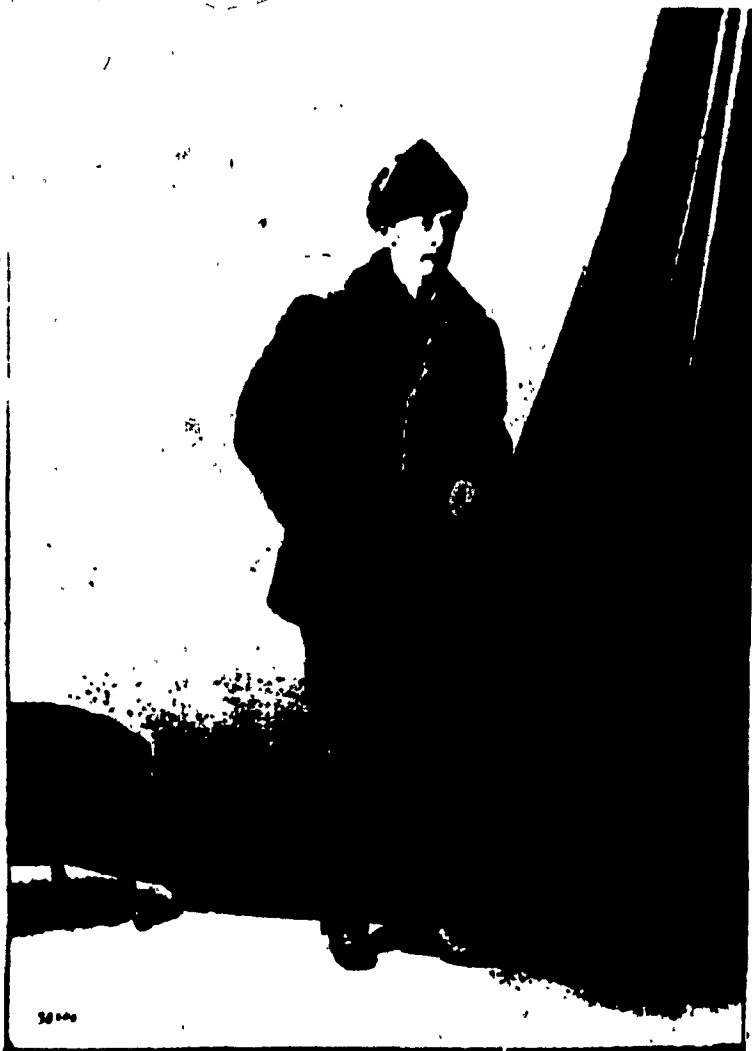
thus creating a style of interior (complete with decorative and decorous ladies) that was a tribute to the prevailing ambiance of the desired principles of opulence and public prudery.²⁷

Although backgrounds and accessories, in the early 1860's, were simple and few in number, later in the second half of the decade the quantity of stage properties used in the Notman's studio escalated and varied, to please all tastes, and comprised over a hundred items such as carved parlour furniture, books, heavy curtains, lamps, plants, mirrors, baskets and all kinds of knick-knacks. The desired atmosphere of prosperity and envy-inspiring, comfortable interiors was recreated in the atelier. Studio accessories and backdrops were important components in creating this illusion.²⁸

In each decade there was one accessory that appeared repeatedly in the portraits. In the 1860's this was a voluminous brocade or plush curtain, so popular that in 1867, out of ninety-four portraits in the BI series (#26670-BI to #26982-BI) fifty-one show it in use. The fluted column and the display of books, were used with similar frequency. Men usually posed with their hats and walking sticks in hand, while women held onto various

²⁷ Anne Hollander, Seeing Through Clothes, (New York: The Viking Press, 1979) 69.

²⁸ Notman Photographic Archives, Inventory of Studio Accessories Card File.



Alfred Seymour
30500

Fig.8. no. 30500-BI, 1868, Alfred Seymour

articles of furniture.

Attempts to hide the posing stand in the portraits from the 1860's are often obvious, and in a large number of the early portraits the heavy background drapes were adjusted with this function in mind. (Fig. 8. no. 30500-BI, 1868, Alfred Seymour) Drapery was a typical and inevitable element in decor in nineteenth-century-photo-portraits, world-wide. The pictorial convention of a cloth hung behind the subject of a portrait has its origins in the use of an hanging blazon depicted behind the throne or place of honour occupied by rulers and dignitaries. This Cloth of Honour had also been adopted by Christian artists as an appropriate backdrop for an enthroned or standing Madonna. Its appearance behind a prosperous citizen was logical, and a satisfactory pictorial, if not symbolic, extension of its former use.²⁹

If "the camera could not lie", it could certainly be made to prevaricate, and prevaricate it did. The practice of "improving" original photographs was typical of the period; and minor details, such as flowers and vases, were sometimes painted into the negatives. This practice soon ceased as these accessories became available through suppliers. Vases, urns, flower-pots, baskets, book-stands, as well as tables, bases, columns and painted backgrounds, were offered regularly in the photo-trade journals. An advertisement in

²⁹ Hollander, 29.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ACCESSORIES.

While we would deprecate their promiscuous use, without the display of good taste or good judgment, as practiced by many, we believe the introduction of neat, tasteful, and appropriate accessories into the picture, adds much to its beauty and attractiveness, gives the photographer a wider scope for the invention of graceful positions, and pleases the customers. A new chair or a new table has been known to make a considerable increase in the business of its owner, by its happy introduction into one picture. It seemed attractive and beautiful, and others wanted the same thing.

Having had several years active experience in the picture business, and being closely connected with it still, we believe we are able to judge of what would be neat, attractive, and appropriate for accessories, and have endeavored to carry out our ideas partly, in the production of our articles of manufacture in this line. A photograph of a few styles will be found on the other side, which please examine. How well we have succeeded, the reader must judge, and assure us of by his orders.

For standing figures, the *Salomon Column* and the *Restlinger Pedestal* are entirely new in this country in this shape, and their advantages will readily be seen. We name them after the artists who use them. They are of proper height for many beautiful styles of posing, for male or female subjects to stand by, to lean upon, or to help make up the composition of the picture in other ways. The four sides of the *Restlinger Pedestal* differ from each other, as will be seen in the picture.

The *Vases or Urns* on top of them, add much to their finish, and properly go with them, though they are sold separately. The sides of the vases differ whenever we can make them so.

The *Kneey Table* is in use by a number of photographers already, who all express themselves greatly pleased with it. It is made so as to present three entirely different styles of ornamentation, and may be varied in many ways. We make other and smaller tables of various styles.

The *Kneey Base* is also known to many, and is very useful for posing children upon,

single or in groups; for breaking the folds of the curtains; and can be introduced prettily very often.

The smaller cases, we make in great variety, and will send a card of twelve styles to those who anticipate a purchase, free. We have introduced several new styles, carved out so as to make place for a flower-pot, as will be seen in the pictures. It will also be observed, that the introduction of flowers very often increases the effect of the composition.

The above are all substantially made, well-strengthened by iron where needed, and yet they are light and easily moved about, thus differing from the clumsy and unhandy furniture commonly used. Parties who wish to favor us with their orders, will find the names and numbers under the several styles in the picture, by which they may order. Several new styles are under way. We intend keeping a list of those who purchase hereafter, and will habitually send them photographs of the new patterns we introduce. We shall also be glad to send pictures to all who apply with the idea of purchasing, and shall be pleased to show our goods to any who will favor us with a call.

We have made arrangements with *George Wunderlich, Esq.*, the celebrated scenic artist, to paint backgrounds for us; one of which, made to suit our purpose, will be seen in the picture. Any design painted to suit the purchaser. Several new styles, after Paris fashions, under way.

We have been at great expense of thought, time, labor, and money, in the production of these accessories, and we hope to receive the encouragement of the artists of good taste all over the country.

We have just removed to our new and commodious store and factory, No. 523 Arch Street, where we have one of the finest establishments in America, and invite all who can, to come and see us, and examine our goods. Our stock of regular photographic goods is, by far, the largest in our city, and we endeavor to keep only the best and the most reliable. Our prices are as low as any published schedule for the same goods. Please read our regular advertisements, and share your patronage with us.

WILSON, HOOD & CO.,
 No. 523 (formerly 525) Arch Street, 1st floor,
 PHILADELPHIA.

Fig. 9, Wilson, Hood & Co., Advertisement in The Philadelphia Photographer, July 1868, n. pag.



Mr. Fuller

Fig.10. no. 035, 1861-62, Mr. Fuller



F. Jefferson
1862

Fig. 11. no. 1612, 1862, F. Jefferson, 16th Reg.

The Philadelphia Photographer³⁰ offered the four-sided "Reutlinger Pedestal" of the type which begins to appear in Notman's photographs early in 1861. (Fig.9, Wilson, Hood & Co., Advertisement in The Philadelphia Photographer, July 1868, n. pag.) It was truncated (the base could be separated from the top) and it appears frequently, showing different views of all its four sides. Such a stand provided the service so invaluable to any Victorian photographer - of ensuring the sitter's immobility, while he leaned against it, and it also gave opportunity to some sitters to drape and display their furs upon it. (Fig.10. no. 035, 1861-62, Mr. Fuller; Fig.11. no. 1612, 1862, F. Jefferson, 16th Reg.)

Despite its evident utilitarian value, this studio aid outlived its usefulness within some three years, and disappeared completely from Notman's portraits by 1864.

Notman used his backgrounds and accessories in an imaginative way, cleverly giving them the appearance of novelties for a long time. His practice was to combine details of his backdrops with permutations of his inventory of furniture and accessories, and crop the photographs to show assorted viewpoints of this mélange.

He subscribed to The Philadelphia Photographer monthly magazine, to which he also contributed his photographs and

³⁰ The Philadelphia Photographer, July 1868, (Philadelphia: Benerman & Wilson, 1868) n. pag.

ideas. His work was frequently praised in its pages.³¹ In return, Notman shared his ideas with other subscribers.

In one of his articles in the magazine, Notman gave a description of a well-equipped studio that could have been his own:

...The studio or rooms in everyday use, ought not only to be carpeted, but abound in suitable pieces of furniture and choice ornaments, such as are usually seen in drawing or sitting rooms. If possible, let such be real, and so arranged that sitters may have somewhat of a home feeling.³²

The commercial photographers of the day strove for the tasteful with their minds on profit, and this practicality could be seen everywhere: in the four-sided pedestal, the fancy table that was made to present three different sides of ornamentation, and even in the vases or urns that were fashioned with different side decorations. The versatility of these products was always stressed, and the texts of advertisements abounded in superlatives about their adaptability and durability.

The advertisements for "fancy backgrounds", accessories and furniture in The Philadelphia Photographer were detailed. They were accompanied by illustrations of the properties on of ~~the~~ and a thorough specification, with a

³¹ Triggs, 30.

³² The Philadelphia Photographer, Dec. 1867, Benerman & Wilson, Philadelphia, 1867, p. 399.

NO. 822 ARCH STREET.



Small Column, \$10 00	Fancy Dress, \$15 00	Table, silver and gold to 4 ft	Revolving Pedestal, \$15 00
30 Lvs., 10 00	No. 1 Case, No. 2 Case, each 2 00	for 4 ft. \$15 00	4 ft. 6 in. round pedestal, 10 00
		No. 4 Case, No. 10 Case, 2 00	No. 10 Case, 10 00

Photographs by Brewer & Hotel, Philadelphia.
 Wash in French Sarsaparilla Backgrounds, 20 cents per foot.

We would call the attention of Photographers and
 ers, to the above Photograph of a few of our *new pat-*
terns of accessories and furniture, and prices underneath.
 ing paid more attention to the wants of Photogra-
 in this direction than any other house in the
 try, we hope to be encouraged by the trade. We
 a endeavored to make our furniture *neat, beautiful, and*
of proper color, and so as to make *one place answer*
several changes, so light, so to be easily moved about,
 so *assist the artist in securing graceful positions and*
beautiful pictures.
 We are constantly adding to our variety, and will
 usually send photographs of any thing new to those

who buy our goods. Photographs of other types, columns,
 pedestals and cases, sent on application, free, to those
 who anticipate purchasing.
 We have removed from 626 Arch Street, to our
 elegant new first-floor store No. 822 Arch Street,
 where we shall have enlarged facilities for man-
 ufacturing, and where we shall be able to serve customers, new and
 old, better than ever before. *Our stock of Photographic*
Goods is the largest and best in the city.
 Please see remarks on other side.
WILSON, HOOD & CO,
 No. 822 (formerly 626) Arch Street,
 PHILADELPHIA.

Fig. 12. Wilson, Hood & Co., Advertisement, The Philadelphia Photographer, July 1868, n. pag.

note of caution warning against "promiscuous use, without the display of good taste or judgement..."³³ (Fig.12, Wilson, Hood & Co., Advertisement, The Philadelphia Photographer, July 1868, n. pag.) These were the matters of great concern, and a crusade to improve the artistic quality of backgrounds was conducted in the columns of The Philadelphia Photographer, to achieve more and more tasteful effects. Frequently, many backgrounds and accessories of objectionable taste were constructed by ambitious photographers themselves, and even more often they were produced by local carpenters. The impossible was being demanded once again - such scene-setting materials were to be "artistic" - and photographers were urged to employ the artist, not the carpenter, to create their backgrounds. This suggestion must have been very unattractive, especially when the backdrop sold at a mere 30 cents per foot.³⁴

According to the principles of propagating good taste, an increased integration of art into photo-portraiture was sought.

In 1868, to offer some guidance to professionals, The Philadelphia Photographer printed a series by the editor, E. Wilson, entitled "Art principles applicable to photography".

In an article in the April issue for that year (1868)

³³ Wilson, Hood & Co., Advertisement, The Philadelphia Photographer, July 1868, n. pag.

³⁴ Wilson, Hood & Co., Advertisement, The Philadelphia Photographer, July 1868, n. pag.

Pyramidal Composition



Fig.13. Illustration, Pyramidal Composition, W. Notman, Fig.4, The Philadelphia Photographer, April 1868, Benerman & Wilson, 1868, n. pag.

entitled "Pyramidal Composition", three of the illustrations were based on works of the eighteenth-century portraitist Sir Thomas Lawrence, and the fourth came from the drawing of a photograph by William Notman himself.³⁵ (Fig. 13, Illustration, Pyramidal Composition, W. Notman, Fig. 4, The Philadelphia Photographer, April 1868, Benerman & Wilson, 1868, n. pag.) This photograph first appeared in Notman's copy book for 1865 (#18989-I, 1865).

The theories and observations of renowned artists, art critics and authorities such as Sir Joshua Reynolds and John Ruskin appeared in the monthly series. Their ideas were repeatedly quoted and paraphrased, with the laudable intention of elevating photo-portraiture to the status of an art form. Such attempts were unrealistic and fore-doomed, of course. The aim of bringing the new and highly-commercialized practice of photography up to the levels of social acceptance and aesthetics so hotly debated for academic painting, was ambitious beyond the limited abilities of the majority of Victorian technocrats. Two prominent topics dominated the pages of The Philadelphia Photographer in the late 1860's.

About 1868, the subject of chiaroscuro in photo-portraiture became a matter of professional debate and was soon referred to as "Rembrandt". This new style was

³⁵ The Philadelphia Photographer, April 1868, (Philadelphia: Benerman & Wilson, 1868) 118.



Fig. 14. no. 5267. Cariboo Hunting. 1866. The Camp Fire

characterized by the application of strong light and deep shadow and it was this accentuated contrast that became the issue of contention. The arguments of protagonists and antagonists soon got out of hand, and the "la guerre" concerning "Rembrandt" turned pages of the monthly into a battle-field. The "Rembrandt" faction prevailed to the extent that their style reigned supreme in all photo-studios until well into the 1870's. So great an emphasis was laid on the imitation of "painterly" rendering of light-and-shade in portraits that backgrounds were overlooked. This style was favoured by Notman long before the "Rembrandt" controversy had developed. It even crept into his outdoor settings, in which he successfully combined open-air pioneering subjects with the "Rembrandt" chiaroscuro, for example, in his photograph of a group of hunters huddled around a magnesium fire in the cold autumn night re-created so realistically in his studio. (Fig. 14. no. 596, Cariboo Hunting, 1866, The Camp Fire)

The second important subject of concern, that evolved side by side with the "Rembrandt" debate was a new, larger photograph called the "cabinet photo", in which all the mistakes committed against accepted canons of good taste became only more obvious, and thus the backgrounds gained new importance.

The aesthetic values of the time were discussed and described in the pages of The Philadelphia Photographer in

the hope of improving artistic style, and the aspiration to have photography accepted as a form of Art made an early appearance. Notman did not seem to have had any artistic dilemmas, as he was a trained artist himself and was involved with The Art Association of Montreal, (as well as other technical, religious and sports groups in the Montreal community,) and he effortlessly outstripped the photographers of his time, both as a practising professional and as a respected theoretician.³⁶ To remain abreast of new developments, he cultivated a wide variety of contacts in the artistic and photographic communities in the U.S.A. and Europe.³⁷ He collected the latest art books and subscribed to various journals that treated some aspects of the artistic and literary culture of his day.³⁸

Inspired artist that he was, he soon ventured into fields beyond photo-portraiture. This new departure was genre photography.

³⁶ Triggs, 143.

³⁷ Triggs, 143.

³⁸ Triggs, 143.

Chapter III

The Making of a Cliché

Through the photographs of the period, the psycho-social spirit of the age itself can be identified, with all its virtues and shortcomings. In that age of migration and exploration, photographs of far-away places ranked in popularity second only to portraits. If the two could be combined, then the ideal form of souvenir could be created.

Such a style of photograph did emerge as the travellers posed proudly before some visible proof of their distant voyage. Alas, not everyone could have a picture taken in front of an instantly recognizable monument such as a pyramid, an obelisk, a fountain or a palace, or, as was fashionable, in front of a picturesque ruin. Suitable monuments were therefore created in the studios. However, in Canada, where the major monument was Nature itself, the obvious need to represent the realities of the long Canadian winter resulted in the early development of new techniques and backgrounds: snow-covered sporting and hunting scenes that were to become the hallmark of the Notman studio.

British Canadians were representatives of an Empire which led the world in industry and science. They were self-assured and aggressive, and their dominant philosophy can only be termed the Cult of Manliness.³⁰ By upbringing and a

³⁰ Morton, 321.

traditional code of conduct the Victorian British Canadian was a masculine, athletic, outdoor man, independent of mind and trained in the habit of authority. This combination resulted in the emergence of the stereotype of the British Canadian as explorer, mighty hunter, fearless pioneer and sturdy frontiersman.⁴⁰ Manliness was simply the expression of the perceived drive to prove oneself in an individualistic and competitive society, and to do so with some style and éclat.⁴¹ Once established, the status had to be confirmed and maintained. All this was to be achieved, on the stage generously provided by Nature itself.

As it happened, the Victorians amalgamated the lingering remnants of eighteenth century philosophical ideals, based on concepts of the wilderness as the Earthly Paradise, with the noble savage as its innocent inhabitant. These were developed into the full-blown Romanticism that saw the Canadian bush as the prototype of God's original creation, - untamed, untouched, unspoiled, virgin.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, in North America, the terms of "God" and "Nature" were often used interchangeably.⁴² This idea, persisting into the second half of the nineteenth century, similarly projected an image

⁴⁰ Morton, 321.

⁴¹ Morton, 321.

⁴² Barbara Novak, Nature and Culture; American Landscape and Painting 1825-1875, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) 3.

onto the Great Outdoors as the Garden of Eden, and on the pioneer as Adam before the Fall. This perception explains the powerful hold that Nature had on the public imagination throughout the century.⁴³ Nature was admired and lauded in poetry, literature, painting - and photography.

Silence and solitude were the natural complements of that type of sublimity closest to the Creator, and the themes of stillness, isolation and innocence, variously interpreted, run through Canadian art parallel to the theme of the wilderness as an expression of God. Aspects of the sublime could as easily induce an atmosphere of peace, as of fear, but since most immigrants were men determined to succeed, and only a minority had any adequate education or sense of refinement to inhibit them, it was a materialistic drive for profit and not a poetic desire for illumination that led them into the wild. Only after their monetary gains were safely deposited in a bank did the memories of past experience in the wilderness resurface, haunting many a man who had wrested his riches from the Canadian backwoods.

It was not only the members of the exclusive Beaver Club who enthusiastically re-enacted their past adventurous expeditions during their reunions. Frequently, successful Canadian entrepreneurs desired a more permanent reminder of the days of their recently acquired and now idealized "glory." The alchemy of memory transmuted the baser

⁴³ Novak, 4.

elements of everyday danger, discomfort and profit-motivated expeditions in the bush into a vision of splendid, near-religious experience in the majestic cathedral of divine Nature.

However, Divine Nature in Canada is snowbound for much of the year. To reflect this, in genre photography, a change of style was necessary, and realism, rejected in the beginnings of photo-portraiture, now made its re-appearance. Tamed, safe, and controlled in the clumsy backdrops of studio settings, life in the Canadian landscape was re-constituted in the "realistic" props and "real-life" activities which the sitters simulated, with all the straight-faced artificiality of their era.

The full-scale representation of winter "outdoors", in Notman's studio, began with tentative suggestions of the season, in portraits that were posed in a parlour setting, but which featured a pair of skates or snow-shoes included somewhere in the composition.

In 1861, simulated "snowy" scenery appeared, and on the original negatives the note "in snow" (Fig.15. no. 1881, 1861-62, Major Lowe in snow) is handwritten on the bottom of the plate. The wintry atmosphere was created with the use of salt or flour strewn on the floor of the studio, while the



Fig.15. no. 1881, 1861-62, Major Lowe in snow

painted backdrop remained neutral in colour and design.⁴⁴

As the genre of outdoor winter scenes gained acceptance, such portraits became more frequent, and gradually improved in quality.

Though the devices developed in Notman's studio to simulate winter scenes were very simple, they were used with artistry and care, and created a convincing illusion. The effect of deep snow in the second half of the 1860's was produced by the use of white fur in combination with wool in the foreground, (Fig.16. no. 19362, Cariboo Hunting, 1866, Octave the Guide) and fallen snow on clothes or branches, was actually a sprinkling of coarse-grained salt. The frozen pond over which skaters glide so gracefully, and curlers throw their gleaming stones, was in reality a sheet of polished zinc. The effect of wind-blown snow was created by spraying white paint into the air and passing the glass plate negative through the cloud as the droplets fell.⁴⁵ (Fig.17. no. 42792-BI, 1869, Capt. Hon. Fox Porveys) A new, handpainted backdrop, depicting a winter landscape complete with snow-covered trees and a fence, was introduced into Notman photographs in 1862 and remained in use until 1870. Notman prudently patented his techniques and periodically

⁴⁴ Notman Photographic Archives, W. Notman's patent, 28 January 1867, art.1, 4.

⁴⁵ Notman Photographic Archives, W. Notman's patent, 28 January 1867, arts. 2, 3, 4., 4-6.



Fig.16. no. 19362, Cariboo Hunting, 1866, Octave the Guide



Fig.17. no: 42792-BI, 1869, Capt. Hon. Fox Porveys



Young Canada
24434

Fig.18. no. 24434-BI, 1866, Young Canada

advertised them in the local newspapers.⁴⁶

In his advice concerning the simulation of outdoor scenes in an article to The Philadelphia Photographer he specified that:

...the floor need not be carpeted, but covered with some such stuff as Kamptulicon (a coconut-fibre floor covering) which looks so brown and shabby to begin with, that you never fear spoiling it, but as occasion requires, with perfect freedom, pile cordwood on it, build cottages, form sandy beaches with boats drawn up, erect tents, plant trees, crowd solid blocks of ice, form snow-wreathed plains, or, introduce a frozen lake or stream, on which the skater might appear to glide".⁴⁷

He introduced his "Skating rink at Notman's" in The Montréal Daily Herald of January 30th 1867.⁴⁸ Smooth integration of the painted background and the natural trees, bushes and rocks in the middle-ground, together with appropriate winter clothes, produced highly realistic and convincing scenes that Notman used to illustrate his patent dated from the same month. (Fig.18. no. 24434-B1, 1866, Young Canada)

Realistic as they were, the images both of Canadian pioneer and an untamed, yet bountiful Nature, ran counter to

⁴⁶ Notman Photographic Archives, Advertisements File.

⁴⁷ The Philadelphia Photographer, Dec. 1867, 398.

⁴⁸ W. Notman's Advertisement, The Montreal Herald, 30 January 1867, (Montreal: E. Goff Penny and A. Wilson, 1867) n. pag.

the arriviste aspirations of the new elite who favoured seeing themselves depicted in a cultivated formal English park or a furnished parlour, mimicking the attitudes and the clothes of their social superiors. When, in time, the murmuring pines and hemlocks were exploited as a commercial asset, the merchant elite, who might have been embarrassed by this image as a reminder of their early struggles may well have been gratified by its tacit acceptance by souvenir-hunting visitors.

The Victorian taste for play was stimulated by a popular revival of costume and fancy-dress parties, masquerades, tableaux-vivants and balls, that were complemented by the popularity of story or genre photographs in the second half of the 1860's. These forms of entertainment and popular art were often designed to appeal to well-established sentiments in the minds of those in attendance, and Notman, following a general trend, combined the eighteenth-century English painterly tradition of conversation pieces with the make-believe of Canadian adventure to create his "Hunting and Trapping Series" in 1866.



Fig.19. no. 598, 1866, Caribou Hunting

Notman managed to give his own convincing flavour of *Canadians* to his genre work, and in this now famous photographic series he created pictures depicting groups of men around camp-sites, in traditional back-woodsmen's attire, and with the indispensable accoutrements and accessories of the frontier, such as guns, axes, tents, snow-shoes, not forgetting the local guides.

The studio thus became a stage, with everyday tools and utensils converted into symbols endowed with magic powers of suggestion. Tents were associated not only with military camps but also with the exotic way of life of the Middle-East; so they lent themselves to visualizations of both Biblical scenes and the heroic, legendary events of Classical themes.⁴⁰ The tent featured in "Sunday in the Bush" (Fig. 19. no. 598, 1866, Caribou Hunting) as background for a semi-nude man, symbolically cleansing himself, charges this picture at once with a quality of the innocent Adam in communion with the Nature-God of the Canadian wilderness. The attempt to recapture a human view of a lost paradise and the high-flown attempt at moralism in this photograph is in marked contrast with the realistically contrived representation of the disorder and isolation of a hunting camp.

This photograph, as does the entire series, reflects the changes that were taking place in art after the initial

⁴⁰ Hollander, 26.



Fig.20. no. 21952, 1866, Trapping - The Lynx

richness and expansiveness of Romanticism had been overtaken by the pressures of an excessive materialism, and conflicted with the avant-garde artistic and intellectual interest in realism and social change. Realism, the new art form made its appearance, and eventually grew into disturbing proportions in Notman's photographic oeuvre.

The axe, one of the double-edged symbols of progress, was the instrument of building, as well as of destruction, and the paradox of this relationship was pointed up in some photographs of the series. The same axe, that cut wood to build the camp and to keep the fire going, was used to destroy timber and trapped animals in a way that had nothing to do with the sublime, or spiritual. (Fig. 20: no. 21952, 1866, Trapping - The Lynx)⁵⁰. The combination of a brutal reality with the deliberate theatricality of the tableaux, failed to communicate any profound philosophical thought. Notman created the scenes with groups of hunters gathered around a dead moose or caribou, in the staged and duly documented kitsch death of Nature itself, attempting a depiction of life in the bush, as he saw it. The business sense of the owner of a flourishing commercial establishment prompted him to satisfy the demand and taste of his clientele, but this profit motive conflicted with any artistic aspirations he might have had.

Curiously enough, there is not a single picture of

⁵⁰ Novak, 73.



Wm Notman



Prince Arthur

Fig.21. no. 41505-BI, 1869, Prince Arthur, and Fig.22. no. 41522-BI, 1869, William Notman

Notman himself in a role that he propagated. On the contrary, it is in the pose of Prince Arthur, his sovereign paradigm, that the famous creator of the "Hunting Series" is pictured for his contemporaries, and for posterity. The aura of contentment is depicted in the portrait of Notman as he strikes the identical posture that Arthur Prince of Connaught had adopted on the same day in his studio. (Fig.21. no. 41505-BI, 1869, Prince Arthur, and Fig.22. no. 41522-BI, 1869, William Notman) These two examples symbolically link the two Princes, one of royal blood and the other of commerce. While at the centre of interest in the Prince's portrait, one finds a symbol of power and prerogative - the sword, Notman in his portrait brandishes only a carte-de-visite - the weapon that he himself employed so admirably in carving his own empire out of the wilderness of his photographic studio. The pose, a private statement about Notman's status in society, has not been recorded before or after this session and in its exclusivity Notman's version of "the colonial dream come true" with its obvious symbolism was projected.

Regardless of how he felt about himself, Notman successfully achieved some kind of compromise between portraiture and the evocation of the opulent Victorian scene, while at the same time maintaining a reasonable measure of artistic quality, in terms of contemporary taste. His style in portraiture and genre photographs became known

for its Canadian characteristics as well as for its artistry, and today, it can be regarded as a faithful documentary record of the ambiance of the period. It is a significant testimonial to his originality, inventiveness and resourcefulness that it has deservedly earned him his unique place in the history of Canadian photography.

Part II.

Chapter IV

Swathed in Furs

Kings, aristocracy, clergy and the wealthy in general, have always longed for the comfort and luxury of furs.

The satisfaction of their demand for fine skins created a trading network of major international importance and the control of fur-producing territories became the object of complicated diplomacy as well as the cause of countless confrontations and even bitter wars. Furs contributed to the building of fortunes in Europe and America, and proved instrumental in creating new political systems. Furs furnished motives for exploration and colonization. In the New World they influenced governmental policies towards native peoples and territorial allocations, which all left their mark on the state of the world as we know it today.⁵¹

The fur trade, was the paramount economic interest of Canada, and it was the most important element in determining their allegiance for Canadians. Within the British Empire they had an assured market for furs; outside, the Navigation Acts closed other commerce to them without an adequate replacement. Thus the situation influenced the Canadians to maintain their ties with Great Britain.⁵²

⁵¹ Phillips, Vol.I., 3.

⁵² Phillips, vol.I., 639.

Montreal was the site of a trading post in which furs were a staple of commerce as early as 1611. The English Conquest of Canada in 1769 resulted in a completely new direction for the fur trade, and the city became the centre for a new business group competing with the Hudson's Bay Co., that had until then, invoked the terms of its Royal Charter to establish a virtual monopoly in the procurement, processing and trade in Canadian furs for the benefit of absentee English shareholders.

The new upstart rivals, who were contemptuously nicknamed "The Pedlars" by Hudson's Bay traders, soon penetrated to the Arctic Ocean, crossed the Rocky Mountains, and built forts on the Pacific Coast. They were ambitious, and ruthless in their opposition to the Company of Adventurers trading into Hudson Bay. "The Pedlars" were mostly private traders, some with their own capital, some backed by Montreal merchants, in the quest for a "gold-bearing fleece of the North". By 1779 these toughened survivors of harsh winters, disease, and the hardships of the unmapped wilderness, banded together to form their own organization.

These were "Nor-Westers", the hardy wilderness traders of the North-West Company. As they prospered, their home base - Montreal - flourished along with them. When in 1821 the "North-West Company" finally amalgamated with the long-established "Hudson's Bay Company" a new era in,



Fig. 23. no. 6231-BII, 1874, St. Jean-Baptiste



Fig. 24. no. 6605-BII, 1874, St. Jean-Baptiste

the Canadian fur-trade was introduced.

After the Great Exhibition in London (1851), where the main exhibitor of furs was the Hudson's Bay Company, the importance of furs in trade and fashion became even more marked. The pelts and skins of beaver, bear, fox, lynx, marten, mink, otter, racoon, seal, wolf, and other animals in the displays were all of Canadian origin.⁵³

Furs, especially the long-haired varieties, carry suggestions of the luxurious, the comfortable and the exotic at any time, and the Victorian age, concerned as it was with world-wide travel and exploration, viewed the rare furs used in abundance for interior decorations as the symbol of a certain sophistication. This attitude was reflected in the output of the fashionable photo-studios.

In Notman's photo-portraits, taken in studio parlour settings, many sitters, both men and women, were pictured with a large dark bear-skin underfoot, or artfully draped over a chair or pedestal as a decorative accessory. In the portraits of children, a similar fur was used to cover a low artificial mound.

The combination of decorative and practical aspects in this arrangement becomes obvious in the preliminary photographs that were the first stage in creating one of the popular Victorian art-forms, - the painted photographs.

The long-haired, tactile fur could be easily overpainted

⁵³ Ewing, 102.



Mr Coulson
30552
Reg. Broken

Fig.25. no. 30552-BI, 1868, Mr. Coulson



Missie Graham
51303
January 31st 1879

Fig.26. no. 51303-BI, 1879, Missie Graham



Miss De Yongh
47403

Fig. 27. no. 47403-BI, 1868, Miss De Yongh

35306



W. J. Taylor & Co.

33.316



Fig. 29. no. 35325-BI, 1868, Mr. Dodds Sleight

and so converted into the appearance of grass. (Fig.23. no. 6231-BII, 1874; St. Jean-Baptiste; Fig.24. no. 6605-BII, 1874, St. Jean-Baptiste) A felt-lined bear-rug appeared frequently in portraits of men reclining in quasi-exotic costumes. (Fig.25. no. 30552-BI, 1868, Mr. Coulson)

White skins were sometimes used to simulate snow in Notman's "out-door" photographs. The taste for exotica struck his studio in the late seventies; and to the rustic Canadian bear-skin that was frequently used to simulate grass, rocks, or turf-covered mounds, doubling as a simple floor cover, was added the extra resource of a leopard-skin. This distinctive hide symbolized aspects of oriental splendour as Victorians perceived it, but it represented an element of pure luxury that could not be used in the way of the native bear-skin for any other picture-dressing functions. (Fig.26. no. 51303-BI, 1879, Missie Graham) Furs were everywhere, and a version of "live fur" in the form of an uncomfortable-looking feline is being "hugged to death" in the flattering portrait of Miss De Yongh (Fig.27. no. 47403-BI, 1868, Miss De Yongh).

Among the variety of props in Notman's studio-settings from the late 1860's was a sleigh, in which befurred ladies pretended to ride, with caribou blankets drawn across their laps. (Fig.28. no. 35306-BI, 1869, C. Boyer & Lady)

The harness-sleighs, so frequently photographed in front of Notman's Neo-Classic Greek portico, showed a rich



Fig.30. no. 30530-BI, 1868, Mr. Wallace - Horse & Sleigh

assortment of bear-rugs, and buffalo or caribou aprons, as well as sumptuous wolf or fox blankets, with trailing tails of animals fringing these expensive, but necessary winter coverings. (Fig.29. no. 35325-BI, 1868, Mr. Dodds Sleigh)

The resulting impression is of the Victorian "layer-look" with furs on furs. Passengers in sleighs, bundled up under fur blankets and muffed in fur-trimmed over-coats and hats were photographed in pyramidal compositions that echoed the fashion dictated triangulate outline for women's dress of womens' crinolines, pagoda sleeves, tent-like short jackets and sloping shoulders.

In the photographic composition, this convention extended itself horizontally across the gleaming hides of high-mettled horses, until it tapered out in the fur-bedecked liveries and head-pieces of grooms and lackeys who usually held the bridles, or simply stood dutifully in attendance as an attestation of their master's wealth. (Fig.30. no. 30530-BI, 1868, Mr. Wallace - Horse & Sleigh)

A novelty now appeared in the world of fashion in the 1860's and after: fur garments increasingly worn with the fur outside. Historians of costume connect the phenomenon to the rising prosperity of the middle classes and their taste for ostentation. Status was equated with money, and wealth was flaunted in a show of expensive clothing.

The pride of middle-class achievers was boundless and blatant. Everything they owned was to be recorded,



Wigston's Servants
34933

Fig.31. no. 34933-BI, 1868, Wigston's Servants

documented, confirmed, and admired. The list of personal assets was extensive, starting with spouse and offspring, live-stock, and means of transportation, together with valuable thoroughbred horses, dogs, down to the decorous house-hold staff. Even the domestics of the prosperous man were expected to maintain an impressive appearance, in order to enhance their employer's status.

The master's prestige was expressed in the furs of his ostentatiously uniformed grooms. Their cockaded astrakhan hats and astrakhan-trimmed coats reflected his social standing and his buying-power, as well as becoming an integral part of his public display of conspicuous consumption. This form of vicarious consumption as Thorsten Veblen points out, in The Theory of the Leisure Class, dates from the earliest days of civilisation, and the nineteenth century continued the tradition with renewed enthusiasm.⁵⁴ (Fig.31. no. 34933-BI, 1868, Wigston's Servants)

In the graphic images of the second half of the nineteenth century, the display of status through attire and personal possessions grew more and more important and the artistic goal of indicating inner character became secondary. Generally, portraits from this period represent only a superficial description of the sitter's features, clothes and accessories. Nevertheless, an artistically-

⁵⁴ Thorsten Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class, (New York: The Viking Press, 1934) 83.

minded craftsman like Notman skillfully combined these elements in such a way that they offer clues to the sitter's personality, enriching the image psychologically and visually.

In Notman's portraiture, a concern for recording the sitter's features is balanced by the attention given to the show of fashionable clothes. The massive display of furs in the studio pictures provides testimony to the universality of furs, as fashionable winter wear in Montreal. These photographs represent a unique guide to the general use and the quality of furs worn by Montrealers.

The severe Canadian winter climate, so dissimilar to that of the British Isles or continental Europe outside of Russia, necessitated the adoption of adequate forms of clothing.

For the unwary newcomer, there was a heavy price to pay for lessons in survival. Lysons describes Capt. Jack Saville of the 7th Hussars as wearing an English top hat, kid gloves, and common leather boots for his ride over the ice from Laprairie. Upon his arrival at Quebec Gate Barracks he attempted to get out of his sleigh and was unable to move. "Both his hands and feet were frozen, and before he recovered sufficiently to be invalided home to England, he had lost several fingers and toes."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Sir Daniel Lysons, Early Reminiscences, (London: John Murray, 1896) 103.

Originally, protective fur garments were fashioned with the fur-lining turned inwards towards the body, but in Canada, where long-haired furs were commonplace, the form of early fur coats as they are shown in Notman's photographs, was imposed by technical difficulties in cutting and styling, such as the methods of shaping sleeves and armholes.

Pelts of wolf, fox and racoon were used to fashion these rugged garments. The bulkiness of the skins also dictated a fundamental styling devoid of decorative detail except for the "frogs", or Brandenburg cord-closures for fastenings, before buttons came into general use.

The appearance of the heavy fur coats went well with the imposing and often corpulent Victorian male ideal. Clothing, by adding to the apparent size of the body, gives an increased impression of power, a sense of extension of the bodily self - ultimately by occupying more space and this extension of the overall silhouette confers a certain dignity upon the wearer.⁵⁶

The Canadian variation on the theme of body extension expressed the spirit of expansion, while communicating the wearer's own importance and the general pioneer spirit which, in time, receded as did the boundaries of the untamed wilderness.

⁵⁶ H. Lotze, Microcosmus, n.p., Fourth American Edition, (1892) 592-595.



Fig.32. no. 1312, 1861, Mr.Reekie, with legend "Fur top coat"

Fur is featured in the clothing worn by Notman's male clients from the earliest portraits extant, dating from 1861. (Fig.32. no. 1312, 1861, Mr. Reekie, with the legend "Fur top coat") Contemporary references to the use of furs by men and women in Canada are abundant, as for example in the observations in 1852 by Colonel Landmann.⁵⁷ He bought a large black bear-skin muff and prized it in his writing: "A muff, under (such) circumstances, is a most excellent and very important addition to our comfort, particularly in travelling against the wind, sheltering our faces from the severity of the cold, in short, is equivalent to an additional great-coat." He noted, however, that he used it "only after dark or when travelling."⁵⁸

Since the everyday means of transportation in the Canadian winter was an open, horse-drawn sleigh, heavy fur coats were worn by sleigh or calèche drivers and their passengers, as a protection on longer trips in the sub-zero temperatures.

To ride in the frozen air of the Canadian winter one had to be dressed for the occasion. The driver's hands needed stout protection that could only be provided by sturdy gloves with gauntlet cuffs. These gloves were fashioned, lined and decorated with fur, and occasionally as many as

⁵⁷ F.C. Landmann, Adventures and Recollections of Colonel Landmann, (London: Colburn & Co., 1852) 266.

⁵⁸ Landmann, 65.



Fig.33. no. 40854-BI, 1869-70, Lut. (Lieut.) Bourly & Bridges

three varieties of fur, would be used in one article. The Costume Collection in the McCord Museum contains a pair of gauntlets (M969.1.22C.1980) that are lined with lambskin. The wrists, however, are lined with sealskin, while the external shell is decorated with an appliqué of black astrakhan. According to Colonel Landmann, this type of hand-covering contained a layer of flannel between the outer and inner skins to ensure additional protection, so essential when driving in the open.⁵⁹ It must have been an unusual, if not unknown article in England, since the available literary sources concerning the 1860's neglect to mention it. The sitters in Notman's winter portraits from this decade show numerous examples of this type of glove, too prominently and consciously displayed for their inclusion to be casual or incidental. (Fig. 33. no. 40854-BI, 1869-70, Lut. (Lieut.) Bourly & Bridges)

An entire wardrobe of protective clothing had to be donned before venturing outdoors, as W.H. Russell, who was the famous reporter for The Times of London, discovered in Montreal in 1861-62, when a friend drove him out to an early dinner:

It was a matter of some ceremony to get forth; a fur cap with flaps secured over the ears and under the chin, a large fur cloak, and a pair of moccasins

⁵⁹ Landmann, 65.

(sic) for the feet, had to be put on;...⁶⁰

This information is useful, as illustrations of men's fur caps worn in the manner described by Russell are rare. Nevertheless, there are many photographs depicting children of both sexes thus protected. Fortunately, winter street scenes together with the current fashions were observed and described in numerous letters, diaries and books, providing ample corroboration.

The reality of winter fashions as depicted in Notman's photographs is once again confirmed by a description of the Montreal street scene in 1861-62, as seen by the observant W.H. Russell:

The streets were piled with snow; and at the front of the hotel, sleighs, driven by Irishmen, such as are seen managing the Dublin hacks, wrapped up in fur and sheepskins, were drawn up waiting for fares, to the constant jingle of bells, which enlivened the air: It was too early (breakfast time) and too raw and cold for many of the ladies in Montreal to trust their complexions to the cruelties of the climate, thickly veiled though they might be; but now and then a sleigh slid by with a bright-eyed freight half buried in fouurrures, and some handsome private vehicles of this description reached in their way as high a point of richness and elegance as could well be conceived.⁶¹

In societies where the possession of wealth is a matter

⁶⁰ W.H. Russell, Canada, its Defences, Conditions, and Resources, (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1865) 69.

⁶¹ Russell, 68.

of pride, and a means of obtaining power and respect, monied individuals have often sought to proclaim their distinction through the splendour of their costume.⁶² Canadian colonials were no exception and in the second half of the 1860's, the refining effect of newly-acquired wealth and prosperity was reflected in the finer quality and the cut of their fur garments.

While some men maintained the rugged image on hunting or military expeditions in Canada, new, more sophisticated fashions were adopted by city gentlemen, and those who aspired to the gentry.

The second generation of the new merchant élite began to cultivate a well-bred image that was reflected in the choice of furs they wore. The leisured class, whose members could well afford expensive gentleman's garments, showed their rank and status by the use of articles of clothing made of expensive astrakhan lamb, otter, or Alaskan seal furs. These furs were favoured by the professional classes - clergymen, doctors, lawyers, academics and artists, who were often photographed wearing fine-quality winter fur garments made of valuable short-haired furs, styled with a new emphasis on line and decoration. (Fig. 34. no. 25120-BI, 1867, Mr. and Mrs. Waddell)

There were some extremes in sophistication that tended

⁶² J.C. Flugel, The Psychology of Clothes, (New York: International United Press Inc., n.d.) 32.



Fig. 34. no. 25120-BI, 1867, Mr. and Mrs. Waddell



Fig.35. no. 36423-BI, 1868, Mr. Callander's Sleigh

more towards opulence if not ostentation, such as the example of Mr. Callander (Fig.35. no. 36423-B1, 1868, Mr. Callander's Sleigh), who was photographed in front of his house, sitting in his fur-lined sleigh, clad in a white fox fur coat and a matching hat with a fox's head for ornament. Such a presentation was the exception rather than the rule, and it was the tough archetypal image of the pioneer, that was usually sought in photo-portraits by visitors, local sportsmen or soldiers. This was the likeness they preferred to send home as a souvenir of their sojourn in Canada, and as it seems, this was also the representation that helped to build the cliché image of Canada, with snow, bears, moose, furs, snow-shoes and Indian country, that has endured for more than a century.

In their adoption of local garb, Montréalers revealed a practicality of outlook unusual inside the Imperial protocol of convention and required behaviour.

The dress code for the colonial Britisher regularly emphasized the retention of the clothing and the styles favoured in the Mother Country, however unsuitable and outlandish these might appear in their context overseas.

The peculiarities of costume served, in fact, as a constant visual reminder of the distinction between the right-minded values of the dominant incomers, and the inferior outlook of the Others - the denizens of the Wilderness beyond the Pale, to whom the missionary envoys of

the Queen were introducing the benefits of civilized living.⁶³

Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to read into the heritage of the Notman photographic record some foreshadowing, in the dress of his subjects, of the special status of the territory that was in time to be dignified with the unique and favoured title of the Dominion.

⁶³ Hayden White, "Archeology of an Idea", Tropics of Discourse, (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 178.

Chapter V.

Men's Furs

Central to the growing importance of the city of Montreal in the 1860's was its crucial strategic position on the St. Lawrence river, only some sixty miles distant from the border with an always restless United States.

A deterrent military presence was therefore essential: progress depended upon the peace and security of this corner of the Empire. To attain these objectives, it was necessary for Canada to avoid a conflict with her southern neighbour and at the same time to retain the protection of the Royal Navy in the event of war.

There was a delicate diplomatic balance to be maintained here, and an elaborate fiction was devised for the authorities in Washington, that has lasted into recent history, of a Canada that was merely a reactionary, backward and unprogressive British dependency, not worth the risk of another war against the British Crown and Empire.⁶⁴

The close proximity of a powerful neighbour influenced Canadian life and politics: Canadian politicians, long before Confederation in 1867 and well after that date, proved their talent for playing effortlessly by American or

⁶⁴ L.S.Fallis, "The Idea of Progress in the Province of Canada", Morton, 175.

British rules, as the situation required.⁶⁵

Canadians of the 1860's, eclectic and pragmatic as they were, accommodated the sentiments of Americans embroiled in the Civil War of 1861-1865 as readily as in the previous decade they had supported England during her constant series of military adventures in the Crimea (1854-1856), in India (1857) and China (1858-1860) and borrowed impartially whatever suited their political, intellectual or practical needs from the U.S.A. or Britain.

The ties that bound Canada to Great Britain were both sentimental and practical. Britain furnished the bulk of the immigrants necessary to the growth of the population, as well as the military resources for national defence. British garrison regiments were usually stationed in Canada for a tour of duty of three years, and the shortness of this spell of residence created a market for souvenirs of all kinds.

Souvenirs were one of the temptations irresistible to the spirit of the age, and a photographic form of souvenir inevitably resulted. Large numbers of transient officers and men of the British garrison created an appreciative clientele for the typical Canadian souvenir photograph.

Photo-portraits of the Queen's loyal soldiers swathed in furs, and trudging through snow-banks on their snow-shoes, were created by the dozen. Men of the garrison, far away from their loved ones, flocked to Notman's studio to

⁶⁵ Morton, 317.

have their pictures taken, to send forget-me-not tokens "back home". A well-composed photograph was what was needed. Notman was only too happy to oblige.

Military men also liked to be recorded in all the splendour of their full-dress regimentals. Styles of uniform worn by victorious armies tended to influence fashion worldwide. After the French victories in 1859 against the Austrians in Italy (Magenta and Solferino) uniforms in all armies reflected the French model.

The military trend ultimately influenced the cut and decoration of civilian clothes as well. Frogs or Brandenburg braided loops were used for fastening military great-coats and cloaks, as well as for civilian winter coats and mantles, and fringed shoulder decorations on ladies' apparel were reminiscent of the epaulettes of contemporary naval formal dress.

Regardless of these few embellishments, male clothing in the nineteenth century was little varied and sober. The style in men's hats and caps imitated the peaked French Képi, and women took to forms of hat ornament derived from military originals. Fur hats were often decorated à la militaire, with buttons or cockades in the form of small ornamental flashes or patches of brightly coloured cloth or ribbon. Men wore their fur hats peaked, according to the French style, or, after the Crimean War in 1856, switched to simple Cossack hats.

Notman's military clients frequently turned up for studio sessions in their number one garrison rig-out. Uniforms were trimmed with fur, and the officers of the Royal Canadian Rifles serving in North America in 1867 wore, in accordance with winter clothing regulations, a Busby hat of black astrakhan or other fur, with flap covers for the ears. Their uniform coats were of grey cloth, double breasted, with horn buttons, and trimmed with astrakhan fur. To complete their outfit, they wore fur gloves and Canadian boots. (Fig.36. no. 25423-BI, 1867, Capt. Hood) These uniforms, trimmed with the short-haired fur of a very young Russian lamb named after the city of Astrakhan (today Baku, USSR), were in accord with the contemporary civilian North American winter fashion that often featured furs, especially astrakhan.

Gray and black astrakhan were not much adopted for clothing before the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. It was, however, known much earlier to the English-speaking world. The first literary mention of this fine soft skin occurs in 1764, when the Earl of March referred to "my black silk coat, lined with astrakhan".⁶⁶ In time, its popularity advanced and in the 1860's astrakhan, together with the equally valued sealskin, became preferred furs in the winter fashions for men and women alike.

⁶⁶ Ewing, 102.



Capt. Hood X
25423

Fig.36. no. 25423-BI, 1867, Capt. Hood

Outfitting an army man was expensive, but the expenses brought their rewards. The military uniform of the time was designed as much to enhance the masculine appearance of the wearer, as to be serviceable under campaign conditions. A tall hat or cap gave greater apparent height, epaulettes added to his width across the shoulders, and high boots lent his legs some measure of slender elegance.

The ensemble also produced an impressive figure for photographs, and there are many portraits of Her Majesty's soldiers and officers posing in their dress uniforms, as well as in local blanket-coats or bundled up in heavy furs and in fancy costumes.

As mentioned above, the Victorian taste for play was reflected in numerous masquerades, tableaux-vivants and fancy dress balls that were very popular at this period and were staged as a popular form of social entertainment. The clothes used in these colourful fantasias were often bona fide costumes brought back from exotic regions overseas.

Costume is drama, and a role-player is recognized and identified by the garb adopted, and the symbols presented, which communicate in visual rather than in verbal terms.

A wide variety of prototypes was available in the 1860's for carnival dress-ups. The archetypes of "good" and "bad" were soon joined by "exotic" and eventually, a form of "everyday hero" appeared.

This "everyday hero" became in time a Canadian

prototype. Back-woodsman, trapper or hunter, a man searching for a lost paradise in the unsullied, snow-covered Canadian landscape - this was the image Notman sought to promote, and the clothing selected by his subjects confirmed it. Clothes make the man, and the costuming of Notman's male subjects indicates that they fancied themselves in the role of Nimrod the mighty hunter. (Fig.37. no. 34794-BI, 1868, Mr. Rivis)

The primeval appeal of facing a danger, real or imagined, proved to be a powerful enticement for such clients as Prince Alfred, Earl Dunraven, General Bissett, and Colonel Rhodes, the last turning the whole of Canada into his own private hunting ground when he later became Minister of Agriculture.

The call of the wild was simulated in the studio. General Bissett (Fig.38. no. 36016-BI, 1868, General Bissett; Fig.39. no. 36027-BI, 1868, General Bissett) in one portrait happily struck a pose of "roughing it in Canada", in huge fox overcoat, while for a second plate in the same studio session, he returned to reality in the black astrakhan-trimmed coat with matching Képi and gauntlets of an officer-and-gentleman of the Regular Army.

Not even men of the cloth were immune to the seduction of furs, as can be seen in a portrait of the Anglican Bishop Oxenden, posed with his coat opened wide so that the fur lining can be seen. (Fig.40. no. 45139-BI, 1869, Bishop Oxenden)



Mr. Rivis
34794
Rivis

Fig.37. no. 34794-BI, 1868, Mr. Rivis



General Bissett



General Bissett

Fig.38. no. 36016-BI, 1868, General Bissett
Fig.39. no. 36027-BI, 1868, General Bissett

45139



Bishop, Oxenden
45139 X

Fig. 40. no. 45139-BI, 1869, Bishop Oxenden



Mr. A. M. Hayne
✓ 4883-11 114883



Capt. Godwin
✓ 40759 65404

Fig. 41. no. 4883-BI, 1870, Mr. A.M. Hayne
Fig. 42. no. 40759-BI, 1869, Capt. Godwin



Mr. Esconrra

60905



R. Wolff

Fig. 43. no. 60905-BI, 1870, Mr. Esconrra
Fig. 44. no. 24576-BI, 1867, R. Wolff

The extensive amount of Notman's photographs from the 1860's depicting men dressed in an identical, oversize, long-haired over-coat suggests the probability of Notman actually keeping a furry coat in his studio wardrobe for improvident customers who did not bring their own, or possibly had not acquired such a prestigious item for their self-aggrandisement. (Fig.41. no. 44883-BI, 1870, Mr. A.M. Hayne; Fig.42. no. 40759-BI, 1869, Capt. Godwin; Fig.43. no. 60905-BI, 1870, Mr. Esconra; Fig.44. no. 24576-BI, 1867, R. Wolff)

Evidently, fur was a popular feature of the photo-portrait. Not only did it immediately identify the Canadian setting of the picture: it also enhanced the bearing and importance of the sitter. Above all, it inspired in the viewer an impression of respect for the enviable affluence of the fortunate wearer who visually proclaimed his importance by the casual assumption of what had become a universally-accepted symbol of success, wealth and social standing.

Chapter VI.

Women's Furs

In contrast to their menfolk, who preferred sombreness in civilian attire, Victorian women had no inhibitions concerning clothes. In the Western world the decade of the 1860's was a period of transition in costume fashion. It witnessed a great development in informal clothes. The stylish woman's silhouette changed considerably, most notably in the skirt. Early in the decade, skirts were dome-shaped and worn over a circular hooped crinoline. They gradually developed into an oval shape, flatter in front and over the hips, with the bulk pushed backwards to a fullness at the rear, falling off into a train. Peplums, (short pieces of fabric added at the waist of the bodice or attached to a belt), or longer over-skirts were often added. Soon after, the overskirts were drawn up to form a pouf behind until the crinoline was abandoned completely and the bustle replaced the pouf late in the decade.⁶⁷

The dress of the well-to-do Canadian woman followed the model of her exemplar, the style conscious grandes dames of Europe. To look comme il faut, to be "turned out well", and to "wear the right thing" was one of the concerns of the colonials. Anything new in apparel or accessories that came

⁶⁷ Norma Morgan, "Fashion Plates: Sources for Canadian Fashion", Journal of Canadian Art History, vol. 5., (1981): 101.

out in England arrived on the next boat in the colonies, or via the United States, and English visitors to Canadian shores at once noticed the appearance of novelties.⁶⁸

For those women who relied on the skills of their own dressmaker, fashion-plates were the inspiration. The sexes were separately treated once again, and men's fashion magazines featured men's fashions only. Fashion magazines that directed their content to smart Victorian women, seldom included male figures except as escorts or background figures. A noticeable exception is to be seen in Italian fashion plates (Fig. 45. Mode di Prigi), but the Continental family atmosphere evoked in such a plate would have probably been considered in Great Britain to convey a plebeian ambiance.⁶⁹

The fashion-plates studied by Montreal women of the 1860's arrived from a variety of sources. Some magazines available in the city came from England, such as The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine, that featured fashion plates from the French magazine Le Moniteur de la Mode, published in Paris, and London Illustrated News published in London. There were Demorest's Monthly Magazine and Harper's Weekly published in New York, U.S.A.. Other fashion publications available at the time in Montreal were Godey's

⁶⁸ Gerald Craig, Early Travellers in the Canadas 1791-1867, (Toronto: The Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1955) 250.

⁶⁹ Vyvyan Holland, Hand Coloured Fashion Plates 1770-1899, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1955) 96.



Fig.45. Mode di Prigi

Lady's Book and Peterson's Magazine, published in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Some of these publications arrived by steamers from Europe.

By the 1860's sea communications between Montreal and the homeland had become reasonably good, and steamships providing weekly transportation and mail service between Montreal and British ports brought cargoes regularly from Britain during the shipping season.⁷⁰ This regularity suffered, of course, when the St. Lawrence River channel iced over in late November, to re-open again in the following April, but in summer, fashions spread almost as quickly and widely as any other piece of important news from home.

The previous decade of the 1850's had witnessed important innovations affecting the fashion industry that continued far into the sixties and after. The introduction of the treadle sewing-machine, with its features of rapid and regular production of chain-stitch and lock-stitch, soon increased the number of dressmakers at home and in workshops. The discovery of aniline dyes in 1857 meant that in a few years the colour taste of the public had been radically changed. The subtle hues of the old vegetable dyes were discarded in favour of a bright rainbow of new colours such as magenta and solferino, a strong peacock blue, the equally powerful, dominating viridian green, and a spectrum

⁷⁰ Morgan, 106.



Fig. 46. no. 28048-BI, 1867, Miss M. Livingston

of overpoweringly garish oranges and yellows. Sometimes all these new colours were incorporated in one outfit.

The early sixties were even more important when it came to innovations in fashion, and in the second half of the decade a style of dress expressly designed to enable women to take active exercise - the so-called "Walking Dress" - was introduced.

The Sixties also ushered in the first sports costumes, designed ad hoc to enable the wearer to indulge in outdoor sports such as archery, lawn tennis or badminton. The croquet dress and bathing costume were the best examples of these dresses that signalized the beginning of a new era of Physical Emancipation for women.⁷¹

In Quebec, winter brought a round of social visits, balls, sports, and outdoor amusements. Snowshoeing, tobogganing, and skating were popular with young girls and women, who were eager and skillful participants, as witness Notman's portraits, in which many are depicted carrying snow-shoes or holding them as an accessory. (Fig.46. no. 28048-BI, 1867, Miss M. Livingston)

A new approach developed towards winter sports and was reflected in the fashions of the period. Looped-up, straighter and narrower skirts that revealed the petticoats, appear in Notman's portraits in the second half of the

⁷¹ C.W. Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, (New York: Chanticleer Press Inc., 1948) 30.

24574



Mrs. Coleridge

24574

Fig.47. no. 24575-BI, 1868, Mrs. Coleridge



Prof. Lloyd
36626
36627
3/6/628

Fig.48. no. 36628-BI, 1869, Miss Loyd

decade.

At first, women's winter garments were merely lined and decorated with a thin trim of fur. Only gradually did the fur trim on the hems and sleeves of the short coats widen, until it eventually covered and dominated the whole outer surface, so becoming the all-fur outer garment that has come down to us. (Fig. 47. no. 24575-BI, 1868, Mrs. Coleridge) The fur lining was then replaced by a quilted form. (Fig. 48. no. 36628-BI, 1869, Miss Loyd)

The short fur jacket that was so suitable for outdoor activities became a leading fashion item for women, who frequently appear in the Netman's photographs clad in furs, whether linking arms with their male escorts, or in solitary splendour posed against the standard studio backdrop or in a snow-scape. A great many obviously would not be separated from their cherished furs, even when they chose a domestic interior for the studio setting, and could not resist showing them off, draped across a handy chair. (Fig. 48. no. 36628-BI, 1869, Miss Loyd)

The fur jacket was often fashioned from imported astrakhan or from local seal-skins dyed to a dark brown. Sealskin, in fact, was the first type of skin to conquer the fashion world as a material for fur coats, with other varieties following closely. This silky short fur with a surface resembling velvet, so popular at the time, could be cut and fashioned with ease, and worked into elaborate

articles of clothing.⁷²

Pardessus was the general term for an immense variety of wraps, mantles, mantlets, visites, pelisses, and other garments that all resembled each other.⁷³ Jackets of varied lengths, reaching to the waist, the hip, or the knee, were usually tent-like and loosely cut, to conform to the pyramidal silhouette of the crinoline period.

Walking dresses were often trimmed with bands of chinchilla or other short-haired fur such as astrakhan. Cloth fabrics simulating coveted varieties of flat lambskin, such as Persian fur, astrakhan and broadtail lamb, appeared in this period.⁷⁴ Sea-otter was also used extensively as the trim on fur jackets and hats, and the demand for this beautiful, lustrous fur was so great that silk plush dyed as otter replaced it after the animal became nearly extinct.⁷⁵

Among the affluent, mink became popular and the price of articles of clothing made of mink was determined by the number of dark stripes, representing the number of skins used in its creation.⁷⁶ Fashionably styled furs were in demand, and Montreal furriers eagerly seized their

⁷² Ewing, 102.

⁷³ F. Alison Gernsheim, Victorian and Edwardian Fashion, (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1981) 30.

⁷⁴ Ewing, 202.

⁷⁵ Ewing, 14.

⁷⁶ Godey's Lady's Book, Feb. 1868, (Philadelphia; Godey Publishing Co., 1868) 202.

FIRST PREMIUM FUR ESTABLISHMENT.

113

**A. BRAHADI,****FASHIONABLE****HAT, CAP & FUR
ESTABLISHMENT,****Wholesale and Retail,
113 NOTRE DAME STREET,***Third Door West from the Court House, Montreal,*

Would respectfully inform his numerous Customers, Country Merchants, Strangers visiting the City, and the Public at large, that he has made such arrangements with his Agents in Paris, London, Germany and the United States, as will insure his receiving regular supplies of the latest and most fashionable styles in HATS of every description, also specimens of the latest fashions in Fur Goods. He will manufacture first-rate goods on the same patterns, under his own special supervision, so that he can guarantee that whether as to style, quality, material or finish, his Fur Goods, Hats, Caps, &c., cannot be surpassed in America.

Those who are particular as regards securing a *First-Rate Article on Moderate Terms*, are invited to call and examine his extensive stock, previous to purchasing elsewhere.

N.B.—Cash and the Highest Price Paid for Raw Furs.

Fig.49. A. Brahadi's Advertisement, McKay's Montreal City Directory, 1859-1860, 1859, 220.

Patronised by H. R. H. the Prince of Wales and Prince Alfred.



McIVER & CO.

Military Hat and Cap

MANUFACTURERS,
LADIES AND GENTS' FURS OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.

ALWAYS ON HAND

A Large Assortment of Indian Bark Work,
FIRST PRIZE FURRIERS,

No. 291 Notre Dame Street,

MONTRÉAL.

249.

Wholesale and Retail.

A. BRAHADI,
FIRST PRIZE
Furs, Hat & Cap
ESTABLISHMENT,
Corner Notre Dame and St. Lambert Streets,
MONTRÉAL.

MR. STRANGERS who pay for orders in pro-
ceed (BIOCK FURS) are invited to call and examine
the extensive Stock of

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN'S MANUFACTURED FURS

A. B. was awarded Four Medals at the Provincial Industrial Exhibition at
Montreal during the visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of
Wales on the 28th of August 1868.

Fig.50. A. Brahadi's Advertisement, McKay's Montreal City Directory, 1869-1870, 1869, n. pag.

opportunity. Well-established firms such as A. Brahadi advertised both wholesale and retail services and offered "best price for raw furs." (Fig.49. A. Brahadi's Advertisement, McKay's Montreal City Directory, 1869-1870, 1869, 220.; Fig.50. A. Brahadi's Advertisement, McKay's Montreal City Directory, 1859-1860, 1859, n. pag.)

This firm claimed agents in France (Paris), England (London), Germany, and the United States, and guaranteed regular supplies of the latest and most fashionable styles in hats of all descriptions, as well as "specimens of the latest fashion in Fur Goods." Brahadi offered to "manufacture first-rate goods on the same patterns, under his own special supervision, so that he can guarantee that whether as to style, quality, material or finish, his fur goods, hats, caps & c., cannot be surpassed in America."⁷⁷

This proud boast was lavishly illustrated in his Press advertising with the conventionally fearsome images of a lion and a tiger, together with pictures of gloves, muffs, men's hats, ladies' Victorines and a lady's fur coat decorated with a fringed hem.

However, such printed records as the Brahadi advertisement unfortunately provide relatively little detail as an illustration of the development of fashion in fur, as

⁷⁷ A. Brahadi's Advertisement, MacKay's Montreal City Directory for 1859-1860, (1860) 220.

Patronised by H. R. H. the Prince of Wales and Prince Alfred.



McIVER & CO.

Military Hat and Cap

MANUFACTURERS.

LADIES AND GENTS HATS OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.

A Large Assortment of Indian Bark Work.

FIRST PRIZE FURRIERS,

No. 291 Notre Dame Street.

MONTREAL.

Fig.51. McIver & Co. Advertisement, McKay's Montreal City Directory 1869-1870, 1869, n. pag.

the printing-plate used for vignettes of his fur articles remained unchanged from 1859 until 1869. The wording of the printed text changed, however, after the award to Brahadī of four medals, in competitions—during the Provincial Industrial Exhibition organized for the visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on the 25th of August, 1860.

Patronage by visiting members of the British Royal Family was a prime source of publicity for city merchants. The proprietor of the fur firm, McIver & Co. recorded that his establishment was "Patronised by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales and Prince Alfred" and adopted the princely three-feathered crest as an element in his newspaper advertisements. (Fig.51. McIver & Co. Advertisement, McKay's Montreal City Directory 1869-1870, n. pag.)

Styling of fur garments closely followed the cut adopted for modish garments in cloth. The vogue of Gothic angles was drawing to a close, and by 1864 angles had almost disappeared: the day sleeve no longer presented a huge funnel opening at the wrist. The new "coat sleeve" for women was copied from the male lounge-suit jacket which had made its appearance, being uniform along its length and loosely shaped to the arm, with a reversed cuff. It was a far more serviceable feature, as it allowed the arm considerable freedom of movement.⁷⁸

The inclusion of the reversed cuff provided yet another

⁷⁸ Cunnington, 36.

opportunity for decoration on coats and jackets, which was not overlooked. Opportunities to display wealth were sought as an underlying factor in design and fashion throughout the 1860s, and simplicity and understatement were rejected outright.

Plain surfaces were considered "common" and female dress presented to the eye a "picture of depth", composed of layer upon layer. This effect was reinforced by using a variety of materials and an ever-increasing multiplicity of colours, so that the wearer attracted and held attention through the time-span necessary for an admiring inspection and critical inventory of the elements in her outfit. The picture was too complex for a cursory glance.⁷⁹

The mechanization of textile production that followed in the wake of the Industrial Revolution released a superabundance of trimmings of all kinds for fashion designers. Everything was decorated. In architecture, horticulture, domestic interiors, painting, music, and in personal display, embellishment became the leitmotif. And so, for the affluent ladies in Montreal in the 1860s who aspired to be seen as trend-followers or even trend-setters, an eye-catching and envy-inspiring exuberance of beads, braids, bobbles, bugles, embroidery, feathers, silk and other artificial flowers, fringes, furs, jewels, lace, piping, pleats, ribbons, ruffles, ruching and tassels, was

⁷⁹ Cunnington, 39.



Fig.52. no. 33909-BI, 1868, Mrs. Burgoyne



Fig.53. no. 34785-BI, 1868, Mr. and Mrs. Mooss



Fig. 54. no. 1243, 1860-61, Mr. Neit & Lady

imperative. This emphasis on decoration gave to garments an appearance akin to the overstuffed, overtrimmed furniture of the period. "Excess in all things" was the slogan, and the ladies, disregarding the high closed necklines that were not well-suited to the display of jewellery, forced the point and sported their colliers and rivières of pearls, jet, amber and coral over their fur jackets, as certain of William Notman's photo-portraits faithfully reveal. The preoccupation with the ornate in clothing tended to produce a conflict of the opposing social forces of prudery and exhibitionism. Sometimes an equilibrium was precariously achieved. More often, it was not. (Fig.52. no. 33909-BI, 1868, Mrs. Burgoyne)

The Victorian age was characterized by an obsession with experimentation and novelty-seeking in costume by permutation and combination of contrasting materials, textures and colours. Trimmings and accessories made for an attractive element of colour-contrast in the winter garments of fashionable Montreal women. The ermine Victorines, (oversized detachable collars with long ends in front, often ending in a triangular shape) muffs, hats and trim, are prominent throughout the 1860s. Even the thrifty wife of a tradesman or a merchant could now afford to bedeck herself in ermine, the distinctive white fur punctuated with black markings, that once had been jealously reserved by sumptuary laws to the exclusive identification of the socially exalted



Miss H. Prior
V 43756 X

Fig.55. no. 43756-BI, 1869-70, Miss H. Prior

- royalty, senior nobility, princes, prelates of the church and judges. (Fig.53. no. 34785-BI, 1868, Mr. and Mrs. Mooss; Fig.54. no. 1243, 1860-61, Mr. Neil & Lady) In the same spirit of experimentation with contrasts of colour and texture many a lady's or child's winter garment was made of white or gray lamb-skins and a variety of these soft, pliable, pelts were imported to Canada from abroad.

There are some references to Russian and German connections with the Canadian fur business during this period. "Russian lamb caps", "Astrakhan", and "German lamb caps" are advertised in the contemporary press, side by side with caps made from South-Sea Seal, otter, nutria and muskrat, North Shore mink Victorines and muffs, an assortment of fur coats, and a splendid stock of buffalo and fancy robes.⁸⁰ Russian furs are frequently specified by name in the texts, and an extensive Russian fur trade was involved in the supply of astrakhan trim for Army uniforms and fashionable civilian clothes in the 1860's.

Russian and German contacts in the Canadian fur trade were noted by a nineteenth-century German traveller J.G.Kohl, who in 1860 was puzzled by this Canadian-Russian-German exchange and commented:

... One would certainly suppose Canada had enough of this article, and needed not to buy it from Russia and Germany. In Russia I had been formerly struck by

⁸⁰ Avertisement, The Montreal Gazette, Dec 5. 1862, n. pag.

the fact that they import and highly esteem the furs of Canada, and that the Hudson's Bay Company find Russia, herself so rich in furs, its best customer. Perhaps the explanation may be found in this, that though the wearing of furs is in these countries a necessity, it is also a matter of luxury and taste; and that two fur-producing countries may value and wish to possess each other's goods, just as two others may desire to exchange their respective productions in literature and art.)⁸¹

Furs of all descriptions were made up into coats, muffs, collars, and hats. Head-gear, as a highly-visible topping to the fashionable confection that was the outward presentation of the elegant Victorian lady, was as a rule lavishly decorated. Winter hats were slightly less flamboyant than summer ones, although, the hat of Miss H. Prior (Fig. 55. no. 43756-BI, 1869-70, Miss H. Prior), having been most probably part of a fancy dress-up, could hardly be categorized as common-place, in any period of fashion history.

In the adornment of the fashionable lady of the 1860's, demands were made on the resources of local and foreign flora and fauna. One method of expressing unity and harmony with God and His Creation was to include in the make-up of a stylish ensemble a flower, or even an animal, dead or alive, and photographs of dogs alone or with their masters abounded. As lifeless form lent itself more easily to manipulation, Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine for 1865, by way of example, featured a novel little collar,

⁸¹ J.G.Kohl, Travels in Canada, vol. I, (London: George Manwarig, 1861) 206:



Miss Gordon's group
18649 X

Fig. 56. no. 45549-BI, 1869-70, Miss Gordon's Group.

described as consisting of "a straight band (of) entire skin of mink or ermine", with the head buttoned over the tail, to achieve the look of "the little animal comfortably curled round the neck." This novel fashion accessory was described as "very cunning and exciting universal admiration."² Ladies in Montreal would have responded to this recommendation by joining the vogue and acquiring their own animal choker. (Fig.56. no. 45649-BI, 1869-70, Miss Gordon's Group)

The advertisements of prominent furriers such as A. Brahadı, John Henderson and George Melver carried announcements for hats, caps, and furs, and were published consistently throughout the 1850's and 1860's.

Not all ladies' hats were merely respectful recognitions of the severities of the Quebec climate; many winter fur hats and caps closely resembled those of men.

Some were small, round pill-boxes that were reminiscent of the popular embroidered cap named after the revolutionary Italian politician and patriot Garibaldi. Others, as mentioned in connection with male headgear, were decorated with colourful cockades that bespoke a military association.

Women wore their hats low on the forehead, to accommodate large chignon coiffures. These hats were often secured with a narrow band that ran under a generous

² Godey's Lady's Book, Feb 1868, (1868) 202.



Fig. 57. no. 30388-BI, 1868, Mr. Mercer & Lady



Capt Molyneux
& Lady

24980

Fig.58. no. 24980-BI, 1867, Capt. Molyneux & Lady

postiche or "pillow" of false or artificial hair.⁶³

From the development of practical but fashionable head-coverings for women in sub-zero Canadian winter temperatures emerged the creation and refinement of a local accessory par-excellence - the "Cloud". Newcomers and visitors to Montreal erroneously refer to this article as a veil. In reality, it consisted of a very light, knitted woollen scarf, often over two meters long, usually terminating in tassels or pom-poms. The "cloud" came in every colour of the rainbow, and added a touch of brightness to the otherwise drab winter costume. It was worn wrapped over the head, covering and concealing in its decorative folds the fur or cloth cap with all its ornamental indiscretions. (Fig.57. no. 30388-BI, 1868, Mr. Mercer & Lady.)

Victorines, tippetts and capelettes were worn over jackets, often creating the "fur on fur" effect. Fur adornments ranged from short neckpieces to sumptuous, elaborate overlays and appliqués. (Fig.58. no. 24980-BI, 1867, Capt. Molyneux & Lady) If the lady could not lay hands on a whole animal skin, the appendages of fur-bearing animals would suffice, and fur tippetts and other shoulder-covers were often decorated with the paws and tails of squirrels or other small hapless animals. Hats and neckpieces usually formed part of a set with a matching muff

⁶³ Turner Wilcox, The Dictionary of Costume, (New York: C. Scribner & Sons, 1969) 227.



Fig.59. no. 42040-BI, 1869, Miss Brydges

to complement the fine kid-leather gloves that were de rigueur for women to protect their hands from the winter cold. At the beginning of the 1860's muffs were barrel-shaped, frequently decked out with dainty rosettes and small tassels. These muffs rarely exceeded ten to eleven inches in length. Only after 1865 did large, flat, muffs appear, suspended from the neck on a shiny, silk cord finished with the ever-present tassels. These muffs contained a pocket for small change or for a handkerchief. The new shape was described as a "haversack" in Godey's Lady's Book for 1865 and the description included a detail dear to Victorian females of all ages. The front flap was decorated with the head of an animal, which, when raised, disclosed yet another pocket.⁸⁴ (Fig.59. no. 42040-BI, 1869, Miss Brydges)

There are frequent observations in the literature of the times to the beauty, usefulness and costliness of the fur articles supplied by local entrepreneurs. F.E.O. Monck in her book "My Canadian Leaves" refers to such items in her wardrobe, and describes a shopping expedition in 1860's:

I paid some visits, and I did not really feel cold as I wore my velvet bonnet for the first time and two veils, a warm knitted cape, a velvet coat, and my astrakhan trimmed cloak; besides we had our bear skin robe and an apron in the phaeton. We drove to the racquet court to meet the G.G., who with Mr. G. followed us to Henderson's, the furriers. I there chose a beautiful velvet and seal skin cap which costs 10 dollars, about two sovereigns

⁸⁴ Godey's Lady's Book, Feb. 1868, (1868) 202.

English. The G.G. is very kindly giving me a present of it. Dick (Colonel R. Monck) ordered a handsome buffalo sleigh robe, which is to be trimmed with a rim of brigade colours. You must have two robes to cover you in a sleigh...⁸⁵

A profusion of protective garments was needed⁸⁵ in winter, and the difficulties in achieving the "right look" in sub-zero temperatures are well described in the diary of Lady Dufferin, who wrote in 1867:

...The drawback of going out here is the amount of dressing one has to do to prepare for it. There are over-stockings, over-boots, over-etc. of all descriptions to be put on; there are fur caps with woollen clouds tied over them as becomingly as possible, fur coats, fur gloves, muffs etc., etc...But once out it is delightful, and most exhilarating.⁸⁶

If matrons enjoyed winter activities, how much more keen must have been the pleasure of the younger generation. No period of life was so exalted in nineteenth-century art and literature as childhood. Considered to be as yet untouched and uncorrupted by worldly experience, the child was identified with moral innocence and believed to be in harmony with God and Nature. Although this concept was to change before the end of the century, it enjoyed a

⁸⁵ F.E.O. Monck, My Canadian Leaves, (London: n.p., 1891) 155.

⁸⁶ Lady Dufferin, My Canadian Journal, Ed. G. Chantler Walker, (Canada: Lohgman's Canada Ltd., 1869) 39.



Fig.60. no. 35952-BI, 1869, Miss R.P. Rees

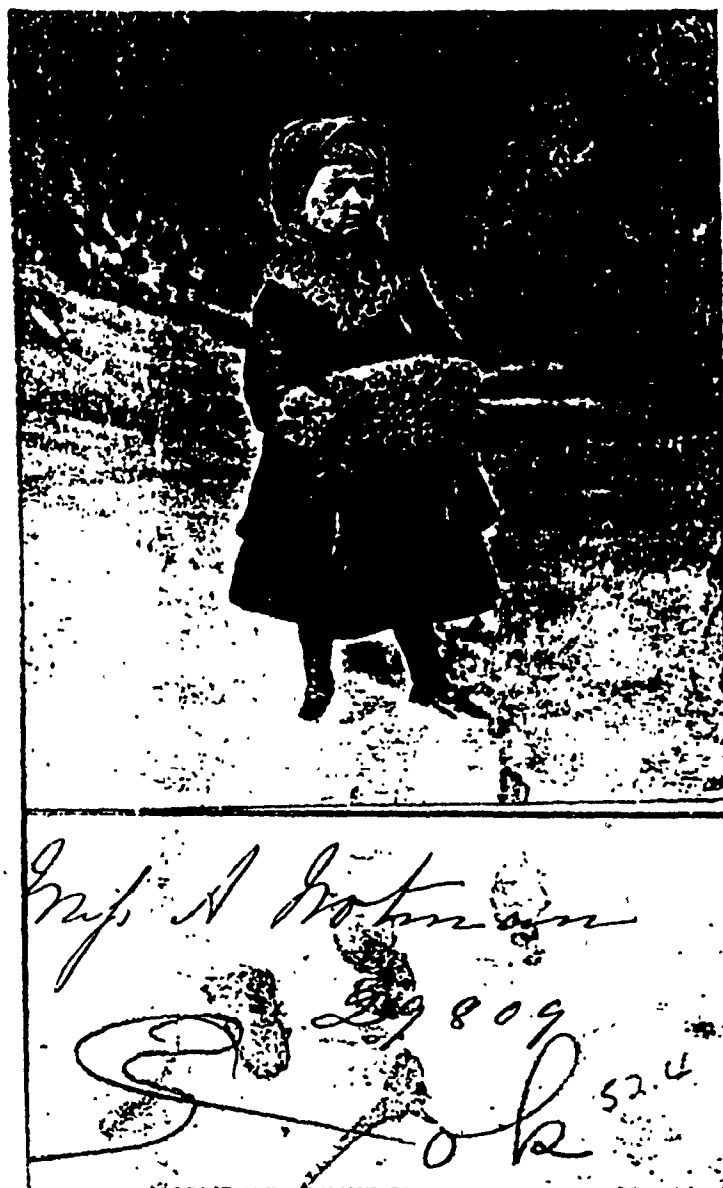


Fig.61. no. 29809-BI, 1867, Annie Notman



Fig. 62. no. 42622-BI, 1869, Mrs. and Miss Oxenden



Mrs. Bower's Group
30542

Fig. 63. no. 30542-BI, 1868; Mrs. Bower's Group



Fig.64. no. 34738-BI, 1868, Mrs. Molson

popularity of epidemic proportions during the mid-century decades and was often sentimentally celebrated in poetry and prose, paintings and sculpture.⁹⁷

This outlook was also reflected in photographs from the period. Notman's sensitive photo-portraits frequently depict the natural shyness of early childhood (Fig.60. no. 35952-BI, 1869, Miss R.P. Rees) in marked contrast to the pert self-assurance of his own befurred niece Annie. (Fig.61. no. 29809-BI, 1867, Annie Notman)

Children's furs from this period were scaled-down versions of their parents' fur garments, copied in soft, pliable furs of coney (rabbit), ermine or astrakhan. (Fig.62. no. 42622-BI, 1869, Mrs. and Miss Oxenden) Little Montrealers wore their tiny fur caps with the flaps over their ears to ensure a maximum of warmth, further reinforced by the addition of the cloud. (Fig.63. no. 30542-BI, 1868, Mrs. Bower's Group)

Correct dating of furs proves difficult, because of their durability, and it is not surprising that their styles did not change with the same rapidity as that of less expensive cloth garments. As witness to this are the "old-fashioned" muffs such as the one in Mrs. Molson's portrait. The muff in question was of ermine, but not of the fashionable haversack shape, that was the dernier cri in

⁹⁷ Lois Fink, "Children as Innocence from Cole to Cassatt", 19c., Nineteenth century, winter 1977, vol.III, no.4, (Philadelphia: The Victorian Society in America, 1977) 71.

muffs at that time. (Fig.64. no. 34738-BI, 1868, Mrs. Molson)

The same fur garments were worn year after year. They were well-kept, and too valuable to be quickly discarded, therefore remodelling was an answer to the demands and social pressures for changes in fashion. In accessories, this need was effortlessly met by simple alteration or the addition of new decorative elements, but when it came to coats, jackets and mantles, the expertise of a professional was necessary, and that professional, once more, was a furrier. A rare example of Victorian thrift is represented by a seal-skin jacket from the Costume and Textiles Collection in the McCord Museum (M967.12.5.) This short bolero, conforming to the style of the late 1860's, was an example of the Spanish-inspired fashion introduced and popularized by Alexandra, Princess of Wales, - an admired and much imitated female arbiter of fashion in her time. The so called "coat sleeves", rounded off hem-corners, the abundance of detailed thread decorations, and the remains of the lining that survived the Holt-Renfrew restyling from c. 1910 nevertheless confirm the dating, of this garment to the 1860's with a satisfactory degree of accuracy.

This surviving example of actual fur garment is unusual because of the fragile quality of fur. The evidence in the form of literary descriptions, fashion plates, book illustrations, paintings and above all, the most dependable

documentation - the photographs collected in Notman's meticulously organized and dated picture-books, are an invaluable source for the study of fashions in Montreal as actually worn in the 1860's.

Conclusion

The Notman Photographic Archives represent a rich store of documentary records for a study of the history of the applied arts in the Canada of his era. Of particular interest and importance is the objectivity and impartiality essential to the photographic technique. Despite the intrusion of any editorial comment or manipulation by its creator, the final photographic image stands timeless and incontestable.

In the period studied, (1860-1870), the clothing selected for their self-presentation by clients of the Notman's studio is highly revealing through the insights it provides into contemporary aesthetic and social value-systems.

Initially the fashion, style, cut and finish of town-wear, for both men and women - were copied in a desire to emulate European metropolitan models. In the Colonial setting, this was only to be expected.

However, the dictates of the distant arbiters of taste, concerned only with social display in an urban setting of formalised sophistication and organized amenities, needed modifications in the context of the way of life followed by the patrons of the Notman's studio.

The local way of life had to adapt to the hardships of the Canadian winter, and furs were included in the general

wardrobe as a practical necessity, long before the taste for display and ostentation turned furs into one of the symbols epitomizing conspicuous consumption.

These factors produced a unique compromise between the caste-conscious desire for an appearance of smartness and modish display, and the practical necessities of self-preservation. Toques, mukluks, blanket coats, overshirts, hats, muffs, gauntlets, and fur coats combined with ceintures-fléchées and clouds, extended the winter wardrobe of Canadian Colonials.

Visitors to Montreal recorded in their memoirs the hard-learned savoir-vivre of the local residents, and vaunted themselves on their own pretensions as tough survivors of the hazards of the receding wilderness which represented the Canadian Imperial frontier.

The local materials they adopted underwent a process of refinement and styling that elevated them to some level of haute mode, and effectively became the basis for a recognizably individual Canadian style of dress.

The combination of clothing, accessories, accoutrements and settings for Notman's Hunting Series, and frequently for his photo-portraits, produced archetypal and stereotyped images that gained circulation and acceptance by the possibility of infinite mechanical reproduction, and which still affect Canadian life to-day. The sturdy male image was, - and still is - , part of the stereotyped Canadian

persona, which has become universalised through its multiplication and dissemination in literature, painting, graphic art, and folklore, and the modern media.

Fur articles of every description featured in the apparel of all classes in the period.

Fur-trim gradually took over and dominated the exterior surface of outer wear: the fashion fur as it exists today was in the process of development.

The fur became the typical item of national dress and eventually it came to represent the casual, under-played display of achievement and success by all classes in an energetic, pragmatic and extravert society, self-assured of its inner resources on the frontiers of Empire.

Simultaneously, it symbolized the acceptance, domination and adaptation to the requirements of a settled and self-conscious orthodoxy, of the life-styles discovered in the Wilderness.

Fur in short, as shown in the Notman prints, had become one of the typical elements for the declaration and identification of the emerging Canadian identity.

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Appendices

1 William Notman's Patent on photographic simulation of snow, dated January 28, 1867.

2 Personal letter to the author from the Royal Ontario Museum, dated December 18, 1984, with data on supply and pricing of items of fur clothing.

To His Excellency the Governor General
of British North America, &c. &c. -

The Petition of William Notman, of the City of Montreal,
in the District of Montreal, in the Province of Canada. Photographic.

Humbly Sheweth - That your Petitioner is a British
Subject, and a Resident in the Province -

That he hath invented a new and useful Art of
taking Photographic Pictures, representing winter scenes,
by artificial means, with or without figures, not known or
used in the Province by others, before his invention thereof, and
not, at the time of the application, in public use or for sale
in the Province, with his consent or allowance - Drawings,
Descriptions and Specifications thereof in duplicate, have
been deposited in the Bureau of Agriculture, pursuant to the
Statute in such case made and provided -

Your Petitioner, being desirous of obtaining an ex-
clusive property therein, therefore humbly prays that Your
Excellency will be pleased to direct that Your Majesty's
Letters Patent may be granted to your Petitioner, for the said
invention, for the term allowed by law, and your Petitioner,
as in duty bound, will ever pray -

Montreal January 23^d 1867 -

William Notman

Declaration

Province of Canada }
District of Montreal }
Loquit }

William Notman of the city of
Montreal, in the Province of Canada,
Photographer, hereby solemnly declares

and swears, that he verily believes he is the true inventor
of the art of taking photographic pictures, representing
winter scenes, by artificial means, with or without figures,
for which he solicits a Patent by his Petition to His Excellency
the Governor General, dated January 23rd 1867 -

Signed and Declared
before me this twenty third
day of January, A.D. 1867,
at Montreal.

William Notman

Alfred P. [Signature]

for the District of Montreal }

FIAT.

Crown Law Department of Canada,

Ottawa, July 28. 1867

LETTERS PATENT ^{is} under the GREAT SEAL of the Province in favor of William Notman, of the City of Montreal, photographer for the invention of a new and useful art of taking photographic pictures, representing winter scenes, by artificial means, with or without figures.

The said Letters Patent is of the form and tenor of the Draft furnished by the Attorney General of Lower Canada, under the 32th Chapter of the Consolidated Statutes of Canada, and recorded in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture, the said Letters Patent contains a brief description of the said Invention as before, and a copy of the Specification and Drawings to it, thereunto annexed, conformably to the provisions of the said Act.

Wm. Notman for the
Att. Genl.
for Lower Canada

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

... the invention consists in taking photographic pictures, representing winter scenes, by the use of artificial means, such as salt, lime, wood, or other analogous substance, and fine particles, either in a dry or liquid state, blown or thrown into the air, and also by retouching the negative and washing with colours or any opaque substance and representing ice, water &c. by the use of fine lines or any polished or semi-polished glass &c.

Specification and Description -

To all whom it may Concern -

Be it known that I
 William Notman, of the City of Montreal, in the District of
 Montreal, in the Province of Canada, Photographer, have
 invented a new and useful art of taking photographic
 pictures, representing winter scenes, by artificial means,
 with or without figures, and I do hereby declare that the
 following is a full and exact description thereof -

In the ordinary art of photography, it is imprac-
 ticable, in giving winter scenes, to represent fallen or falling
 snow, in a suitable or artistic manner - It also frequently
 happens, that persons require photographic likenesses in skating
 or winter costumes, with the natural accessories of ice, snow,
 &c, represented - and as it is inconvenient, and in many cases
 impossible to take the same in suitable localities, in the open
 air, during all seasons of the year, the present invention has
 in view the practicability of obtaining the desired results in
 the artist's studio, irrespective of the objections and difficulties
 which surround the ordinary mode of taking out door winter
 scenes -

The art discovered for the accomplishment of the foregoing,
 maybe briefly sketched as follows -

1st - The back side or fore ground of the picture maybe made to
 represent fallen snow by the use of salt, flour, wood, furs, or
 other analogous substances, properly arranged on the floor or side
 of the room, to produce the artistic representation required.

The effect produced by this arrangement may be seen in figures 1 & 2

Fig 1 & 2

2^d - Ice, or frozen water, maybe represented by the use

glass, or any transparent or semi-transparent substance.

In photograph No. 1 the figure on skates, is shown standing on glass ice - this ~~artificial~~ representation of ice is actually caused by a sheet of polished zinc, on which the skater sits and from which shadows &c are reflected in a natural manner - and reproduced in the photograph - an artificial representation of open water can be produced by zinc glass &c by suitable arrangement of the same

3^d - Falling snow may be beautifully represented in a photographic view, by blowing or otherwise throwing into the air, a series of fine particles, either in a dry or liquid state, and while the particles are in motion, passing the negative of the picture, through the same, allowing as many particles to adhere to the negative as required to produce the effect desired, when the same is printed - By holding the negative in a sloping direction, the slanting course of the falling snow, in a storm, will be beautifully brought out -

4th - The effect or representation of snow in a photographic picture, may also be produced, by retouching the negative and masking, with colour or any opaque substance -

Having thus described my invention, to which I have given the name of "Notman's Art of taking photographic pictures representing winter scenes, by artificial means, with or without figures", and the mode of carrying the same into effect, I beg to state that I do not confine myself to the precise details herein set forth, as they may be varied to suit the peculiar circumstances of each individual picture or view; but what I claim as my invention, and wish secured by letters patent, is -

1st - The art of producing in a photograph a picture, the appearance of fallen snow, by the use of artificial representations,

1st - such as, dirt, flour, wood, fur or other analogous substances, separately or in combination, substantially in the manner described.

2nd - The art of representing ice, water, &c in a photographic picture, by the use of tin, zinc, or any polished or semi-polished surface; glass, or any transparent or semi-transparent substance, separately or in combination, substantially in the manner described.

3rd - The art of representing falling snow, in photographic pictures, by blowing or otherwise throwing into the air, fine particles, either in a dry or liquid state, and passing the light through the same, when falling - substantially in the manner described -

4th - The art of representing snow, either fallen, or falling, in a photographic picture, by retouching the negative, and masking with colors, or any opaque substance, separately or in combination, substantially in the manner described -

5th - I claim the art of taking photographic pictures, representing winter scenes, by artificial means, with or without figures, by the foregoing process, either separately as claimed, or by combining two or more together, as may be desired to give the effect required in the picture -

Montréal January 23rd 1867 -

Wm. Notman

signed in the presence of
Charles Lipp
Frank Reynolds

48 Street St James St
Dundee July 25/67

Air:-

Send you herewith the
papers in connection with an effort
for better letters for Am and of letters
photographs; letters of anti-fundamentalism
as mentioned by the Dundee press
city, which should will be found
correct. It is not known whether
drawing are required in the series are
written and two photographic illustrations
photos mounted -
Serials 820, the name for -
if found correct, will you kindly
forward the photos to the Dundee press
as little delay as possible -
I am, Dear Sir,
A. J. Cambie Esq
100, The Old Bank
Dundee City
Chas. H. Hogg
Dundee

48 Street St James St
Dundee July 25/67

Learn in result of your
former letter that the Dundee office
has had a copy of the Dundee press
and requesting the Dundee press
for the Dundee office -
The Dundee office will please do as in the
course for copies of the Dundee press
please find the Dundee press
large enough for your purpose; they
Dundee press the Dundee office
to send the Dundee press for the Dundee office
desired - Dundee office Dundee office
and on the Dundee office Dundee office -
I am, Dear Sir,
A. J. Cambie Esq
100, The Old Bank
Dundee City
Chas. H. Hogg
Dundee

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BUREAU OF AGRICULTURE,
ENHORATION AND STATISTICS,
(United Department)

Patrol, Jan 1861

Mr. McGowan
Jan 29 1861

25th January, 1867.

1867 - Party of 2000
Patrol on receipt of
Jan 29 1861 - 1000

Report - include
photographic
120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200

Station, January 29 1861

Report to the Bureau
of Agriculture

Patrol

1867

Patrol



Fig 1

Compare with the drawings referred to in the
inserted & opposite hereto annex

Montreal January 23rd 1867

William Robt.

Agent in the Province of

Chile by

Franklin



Fig 2

Photographs illustrating
Notman's Art of producing
Winter Scenes
by artificial means

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1867