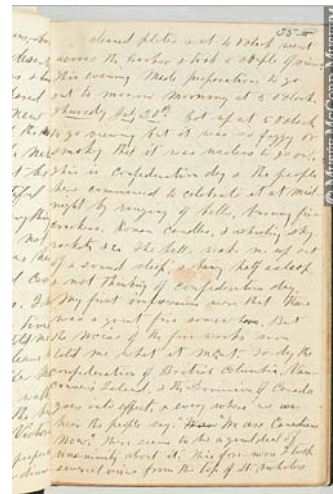


RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE MCCORD MUSEUM WEB SITE

Create a written and visual presentation on this site (a Web folder) by using the database of images as well as other sources of information.

*Journal of a Geological Survey Expedition



To view this image and its description on the Web site, enter this number in the search engine: **N-1983.17**

- **HISTORICAL SETTING:** It's 1871 and a plan to stretch the Canadian Pacific Railway across Canada is in the works – but how will this be done? A route must be found and surveyors are sent to chart the British Columbia interior. William Notman arranges for Benjamin Baltzly, an employee of his Montreal studio, to join the Canadian Geological expedition and capture exotic images of the land with the hope of later turning a nice profit from their sale. Baltzly not only takes photographs, he also keeps a detailed journal...
- **MISSION:** Recreate the 1871 survey expedition into the British Columbia interior with the help of Benjamin Baltzly's journal excerpts and photographs.

Subject: Life on a Survey Expedition.

Place: British Columbia Interior.

Period: 1871.

➤ **LEADS:**

- View the image and its description on the McCord Museum Web site.
- The 1871 Canadian Geological Survey is led by Mr. Alfred R.C. Selwyn (geologist); the expedition includes:
 - Benjamin F. Baltzly (photographer);
 - John Hammond (assistant photographer);
 - John Peterson (packer);
 - Philip Jago (Native, assistant packer);
 - Abraham LaRue (Native, guide);
 - James Dean (cook);
 - Donald McPhail (axe man and general assistant).
- The Geological Survey crew leaves Montreal (June 26) and travels through San Francisco to Victoria, B.C. (July 17-25). They continue up the Fraser River to Kamloops (August 13-19) where they begin opening a trail to the North, along the North Thompson River. They return to Kamloops (November 17) and finally on to Montreal (December 26).
- A second survey crew working for the Canadian Pacific Railroad makes their way up the North Thompson at the same time as the Canadian Geological Survey crew. They are led by Roderick McLennan.

➤ **KEY WORDS FOR FINDING IMAGES (Collections tab)¹:**

- "Baltzly" (Also try using any of the underlined keywords from the journal excerpts below).
 - To more easily locate photographs from the expedition, use the "+" symbol. For example: "+Baltzly +Thompson"
 - To more easily locate documented images select sort order: "Description Present."

➤ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (under Exhibitions/Notman Studio)²:**

- Video: "A Unique Photographic Narrative."

➤ **EXCERPTS from JOURNAL:** Baltzly writes his expedition diary as a series of letters to his wife and daughter. The underlined keywords may help you find Baltzly's photographs in the online collection. (See following pages).

¹ Check out the following address: www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/collection; and choose "Advanced Search", then "Notman Photographic Archives."

² Check out the following address: www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/notman ; and choose "Videos", then "A Unique Photographic Narrative."

*On the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy R.R. 140 miles west of Chicago.
June 28th, 1871, 4:15 p.m.*

Dear wife and daughter,

I will try and write even while the cars are in motion. About an hour after I left you at the Montreal depot in Pullman's Palace Sleeping Car, June 26th, 1871, I laid down to sleep, but it was considerable time before I could sleep. The excitement of leaving on such a long journey kept me awake a long time. In the morning –Tuesday, June 27th, at 8 ½ o'clock we were at Coburg, here we took breakfast. We passed a few very pretty places, among which I might mention Port Hope on lake Ontario, and Gulfs still further west. [...]³

Thursday, July 20

[Victoria, B.C.] Got up at 5 o'clock to go viewing but it was so foggy or smoky that it was useless to go out. This is Confederation Day and the people here commenced to celebrate it at midnight by ringing of bells, burning firecrackers, Roman candles, and shooting skyrockets etc. The bells woke me up out of a sound sleep and being half asleep and not thinking of Confederation Day, my first impressions were that there was a great fire somewhere. [...]

Saturday, July 29

This was a hard day upon me. We traveled 17 ½ miles and encamped at Butcher's Flat. We got up this morning at 4 ½. After feeding on bacon and bread and tea for breakfast I took two pictures of the suspension bridge. This bridge is 350 feet long. The scenery around it is very fine. At 7 ½ we started and passed on 12 miles, without stopping through the grandest scenery on the Fraser. The most majestic and grand is what is known as Hell's Gate. At some points the wagon road is cut in the sides of almost perpendicular rocks. The rocks projecting over the road some 10 feet. About 50 feet above this is the old mule trail also cut along the ledge of this mountain. [...]

Along this dangerous path the mule train used to pass carrying 300 or 400 pounds each. If any of them should stumble sudden death awaited them [...]. It is simply something fearful.

[...] after descending to this river I saw in on my right the grave of an Indian chief, I went up to it and found it to be a great novelty to me. Under the front of a large clapboard shed closed only on the roof and back is a large "black canoe", with white figures painted on the sides.

[...] About ½ mile up the road from this grave is a small Indian village situated at this junction of the Fraser and Anderson Rivers. In crossing the bridge spanning the Anderson I saw quite a number of squaws and their children bathing and swimming. They seem to have but little shame for frequently or I might say in the majority of cases, they are but half clad as well as the men.

Monday, Aug. 28th

We traveled to Salmon River [Raft River], distance 6 miles, arrival at 12 o'clock, [...]. On the way coming I saw to my left a rocky cut in the mountain about a mile away so after we concluded to camp I rode to the place through brush over logs etc. The Salmon River here cut

³ Note: square brackets show editing; commas and capitalization have at times been altered for clarity.

its way through the mountain and rocks and through them runs in a succession of falls and rapids. The scenery I considered very fine. I hastened back[...] We had to find the river and cut part of the trail. But the scene richly repaid us for our trouble. We got four good stereo views of the cascade. [...]

Saturday, Sept. 2

[...] Mr. Selwyn persuaded Mr. McLennan to have all his and our men at work cutting this trail tomorrow –Sunday– pleading it necessary on account of the lateness of the season, and that they stood in danger of being snowed in. [...] As a Christian I felt that I would be far from performing my duty to my Heavenly Master if I did not speak a word against this open violation of the Sabbath [...]

Wednesday, Sept. 6th

[...] I spent the forenoon in washing my clothes. Traveled 6 miles over a better trail than we had yesterday, gradually rising until we struck a small boggy prairie valley through which a nice stream of water passed. Supposed either to be the head of Raft River or one of its tributaries. Went along this for a mile then crossed it westward and went up gradually until we crossed the watershed of this mountain and came to a few small lakes supposed to be the head waters of Mad River. [...] We camped at the lower and smaller lake and took a view of our camp and the lake. The lateness of the evening and the smoke of our campfire spoiled the effect, yet it was thought too good to reject.

Tuesday, Sept. 12th

[...] Miller and Dr. Cheadle⁴ speak the truth when they say, in speaking of this place; “The fallen trees lay piled around, forming barriers often 6 or 8 feet high on every side; trunks of huge cedars, moss-grown and decayed, lay half buried in the ground on which others as mighty had recently fallen, trees still green and living, recently blown down, blocking the view with the walls of earth held in their matted roots; living trunks, dead trunks, rotten trunks, dry barkless trunks, and trunks moist and green with moss; bare trunks and trunks with branches – prostrate, reclining horizontal, propped up at different angles, timber of every size, in every stage of growth and decay, in every possible position, entangled in every possible combination.”

[...] This morning I spent in reading a book by Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle –The North West Passage Overland. Across the river to the east of us is a high peak a little back of this river range of mountains rising high above them. In the direction from this peak, through a deep gorge in the mountain flows a large stream over continuous falls and rapids. [...] I was desirous of obtaining a view of this peak etc. [...] The distance was about a half a mile through the worst wood I ever saw. Logs upon logs, brush in every possible position, aralea, wild goose berry bushes etc. obstructed my passage so much that I at one time was tempted to return to camp. However, I persevered but did not find the view as good from this point as from the camp. Yet my trip was not in vain. At the extreme end of this peninsula, immediately opposite the mouth of the above stream, by the side of a large cedar tree I found a white man’s grave. Here is buried one of the party of the 60 Canadian emigrants who crossed the Leather Pass [Yellowhead Pass] in the Rocky Mountains for British Columbia in 1862. Sad reflections arose

⁴ Dr Walter Cheadle and Lord Milton publish The North-West Passage by Land in 1865, which includes their account of traveling through the North Thompson River area. Baltzly reads this book during the 1871 expedition, referring to it several times.

in my mind while standing beside this grave. Here alone, far away from home or friends, alone in the wilderness he lies to moulder and decay. Alone, and perhaps already forgotten. In a few years the spot will be so covered with grass, moss and fallen timber that the grave will be among the things of the past. Already the headboard is gone. But such is our life. [...]

Saturday, Sept. 16th

[...] This afternoon I measured a large cedar tree about a mile back of our camp. It is 22 feet in circumference. At four o'clock it began to rain very heavy and continued for about one and a half hours when it slackened off a little but is still continuing to rain slowly now, nine o'clock. [...]

Sunday, Sept. 17th

[...] Our train did not move today, nor did our men work. But again there is trouble in our camp. Mr. Selwyn's ways, manner of speaking, actions are such that it is hard at times to bear with them. I fear very much that our packer and his Indian assistant will leave him. If he should leave we will be in a miserable lurch for none of us know anything about packing horses. [...]

Monday, Sept. 18th

[...] This evening he [Selwyn] and I had a long talk about our provisions and our future prospects. They look pretty gloomy for from present indications we will in a few days have almost continual rain for about two weeks and then snow and no doubt we will have to work ourselves through snowdrifts.

Our provisions, as before stated, were only bought for two months [...] I proposed to Mr. Selwyn to take an inventory of the provisions which are left and place them in charge of either myself or Mr. Hammond [...] My proposition pleased Mr. Selwyn very much and said that he would be very grateful if I would take it entirely off his hands and do with them as I saw proper, only try and make them extend over seven weeks according to my suggestion of giving short allowance. [...]

The following is the allowance for our party of eight persons. 70 lbs bacon, 70 lbs flour, 9 lbs beans 3 lbs rice, 2 boxes yeast powder, 1 oz pepper, 4 lbs apples, 7 lbs sugar, 1 ¾ lbs tea, 5 lbs oatmeal, 1 lb coffee, 1 lb salt, 1 qrt bottle pickles, 9 candles, 2 lbs soap.

Friday, Sept. 22nd

Last night it rained very hard. At times it almost poured down. This morning we see the top of the mountain covered with snow and in some places coming down pretty low on the mountainside. This admonishes us that ere long we will have snow here in abundance. Just now – 11 o'clock – an Indian and his squaw came paddling down the river in a canoe. We hailed them and they came to shore and gave us some valuable information. (LaRue being our translator or medium of conversation) with regard to our route. This Indian and squaw are out among these mountains hunting and according to their account were quite successful. They say that they killed 6 grizzly bears, 10 black or brown bears, 28 beavers, etc. etc. during the past three months. How these Indians endure the rain and cold is a marvel to me. This Indian has nothing on him but a torn buckskin shirt and a piece of a dirty blanket over his shoulders. The squaw has evidently nothing on or over her but a single green blanket. They have nothing on their heads or their feet or limbs. Night and day this appears to be all they have. I visited some of their lodges some 70 miles below. I find [them] just as above described. A few fare better

but they are rather the exception. Here among these mountains there are no Indian lodges or camps. The Indians hunting here all have their lodges or homes many miles from here.

Saturday, Sept. 23rd

Last night we had a great deal of rain, at times pouring down, but today we enjoyed a pleasant day, most of the time sunshine. [...] Took one 8 x 10 view of a few snow clad mountains near here, one 8 x 10 negative showing the large cedar trees which grow around this locality. One stereo view of the Canoe Camp after last night's storms and rain. This gives one a good idea of how we live here in the [forest]. We certainly have reason to feel discouraged at times. Last week we were only able to travel 8 ½ miles and this week only 14 ¼ miles. It is evident that we started on this expedition too late. We should have been here at least one month ago and now at Cariboo on our way back. But no one suspected the difficulties we had and have to encounter along the North Thompson River. However, here we are and we have to do the best we can.

Sunday, Sept. 28th

[...] After going about three fourths of a mile through the above bushes, across bear tracks (one evidently very large, judging from the marks of the claws) shooting a grouse with the revolver and passing an old deserted Indian hunter's camp and cache I found [...] I made up my mind to visit the falls so away we went down stream. The [Garnet] river flows very swift so without much paddling it only took us 25 minutes to go down stream. The cascade as seen from the foot of the falls is grand beyond conception. It is by far the boldest and wildest scenery of the kind I ever witnessed. It made my heart throb with wonder and amazement as I stood for a few moments and looked upon this beautiful sheet of water as it dashes and tumbles down over the rocks with a thundering and roaring noise. The height of the falls is altogether about 400 feet. Far above, it runs down a narrow canyon in an angry foaming sheet and then makes a bold leap over a perpendicular rock for many feet down and dashes against a rock which turns its course a little to the right, again it makes another fearful leap, but is again slightly arrested by dashing onto another rock about 200 feet wide at front. [...]

Friday, Oct. 6th

[...] The clouds did not clear away from the top of the mountains till after 12 o'clock, when they revealed to us about as pretty mountain peaks with glacier[s] as I ever saw to be close sufficient to take an effective view. Hammond and I carried our instruments about a quarter of a mile to get a point from which the best view could be obtained and we were successful in making two beautiful views, one 8 x 10 and one stereo. We were just in time for very soon after the peaks were again covered with clouds. It is wonderful to see how the clouds hover and linger around these snowclad mountain peaks. I find it very difficult to get views of them perfectly free from clouds. [...]

Saturday, Oct. 7th

[...] We traveled along the North Branch of the North Thompson, crossed three streams flowing from the west and northwest. [...] I took a stereo negative although it was sleeting and raining a little at the time. This stream I named Beaver Creek. [...]

This is the birthday of my only child Wilma Louisa. She is now eleven years old, and entering upon another year of existence. It is now about three and a half months since I left

home and during that time I have not heard from them. My wife and child. Are they alive, well or sick? [...]

Monday, Oct. 9th

[...] More of [McLennan's] mules died, and only two were left behind, which were unable to go further. [...] It is fearful to look at many of these horses and mules. Their backs are covered with wounds and sores caused by the packs. The stench from some of them is almost unendurable. [...]

[...] My left ankle pains me very much today. What is the trouble I know not. My horse "Dick" is so weak that I have not rode him for the past three weeks. A few times he carried a pack, but mostly walks along with only the saddle, saddlebags and holster. The day was very pleasant.

Wednesday, Oct. 11th

[...] We left camp this morning at 10 ½ and traveled 9 miles. The trail was very good. Soon after we left camp we came to burnt timber [Albreda Lake]. The whole tract of land so far as we traveled today was burnt, apparently at different periods. After traveling about 4 miles we came to a very stony mountainside along which the trail led. Looking southeast from this point of the trail, we saw a few rugged bluffs or rather peaks with a large glacier in a gorge or valley between them. The centre and immediately back of the glacier was covered with clouds. However, I took an 8 x 10 negative of it and also a stereo of mountain scenery southward from the same point. Here the blueberries are in abundance.

Thursday, Oct. 12th

[...] Here [Cranberry Lake] is a little feed so I ordered our train to stop here today and let the horses feed of what they can pick up and by day after tomorrow the trail will be finished to Canoe River or the Lake the then we will try and push through. [...] After I took three stereo negatives. Two of mountain scenery and one of myself as Photographer to the Expedition.

Friday, Oct. 13th

All last night a fearful gale of wind blew from the northeast and this morning it almost blew a hurricane. On the mountains heavy snowstorms raged during the night.

[...] All our hopes of home by way of Cariboo is now gone and the only alternative is for us to return back to Kamloops. Oh! Dear must we again enter the valley of the North Thompson (Black Thompson I should call it) The distance from Kamloops to our camp here on Canoe River is 217 miles. This distance we will have to walk and it will be a dreary and lonesome journey back.

Sunday, Oct. 15th

Last night I had a fearful attack of the diarrhea and perhaps cholera morbus, I suffered all night and more or less today.

Sunday, Oct. 29

Selwyn and McLennan determined to abandon our horses and send them back to Cranberry Lake and winter if they can and all of us go down the Thompson in canoes as I suggested last Friday. It is necessary that we get down the river as soon as possible or else we will be froze in. Already there is considerable floating ice in this river and the weather is

rapidly getting colder day after day. Today most of the men are over hauling McLennan's flour in the cache, as it is quite wet. Four of the men commenced making a canoe and I weighed out the necessary provisions for the time we will be delayed here in building the canoes and getting ready. I also weighed out eight days provisions for our canoe expedition as we expect that it will take that time to get to clear water. [...]

Sunday, Nov. 5th

[...] This morning at the usual time Selwyn called up the men and by 8 o'clock everything in readiness to start. But God does not permit men to violate his commands with impunity without being punished sooner or later. Immediately below last night's camp is a very dangerous rapid [Murchison's Rapids]. The guide took the lead alone in the 'Siwash'⁵ and Philip and LaRue followed in the 'Snowflake'. They got through but the 'Siwash' shipped about one third full of water and the 'Snowflake' about half full and came very near swamping. LaRue and Whooit Pask went back and brought the 'Thompson' through [...] All went well until they got to the lower end of the rapids where was the worst part. There she shipped too much water and capsized. Away went our roll of blankets and my over coat skipping over the foaming water like a feather. Down went the saddle, axes and beans. [...] After both Indians were safe I began to fret about my negatives thinking they were lost. But when the canoe was turned up to my surprise and joy there was the box containing my negatives, alcohol etc. entangled under the cross-piece of the canoe and thus did not fall out. It is a very strange occurrence that everything in the canoe should be lost except the one box which on account of my negatives I value even above my own baggage.

[...] We are now camped at what I call the Upper Gate of Murchison's rapids. [...] The rocks here close in on each side so the river has but a very narrow channel through which it flows. Immediately below this channel or rather in the lower end of it is a large bolder of rock, dividing the water. On each side of it is a fall of about six feet. [...]

To get below this Gate we have to make a portage of cargo and canoes across the bluff for a distance of about one third of a mile. The height of the bluff is about 400 feet. Hammond and I had quite a job drying our negatives and repacking them. I thought much of home today, thought of its Sabbath privileges and prayed that one day I might be there to enjoy them again.

Saturday, Nov. 11th

Last night it was very, very cold and the river is quite full of floating ice and we're in great danger of being blockaded in a few places. We started at daybreak but soon came to rapids, the running of which was the order of the day. In one place we had to make a portage of all the cargo for a distance of about 400 yards, and in several of part. Selwyn, McLennan and Hammond walked past most of the rapids, but by the request of Philip I stayed in the canoe and helped to paddle across all the bad water except at two places. It is very exciting indeed to go down some rapids. Now we turn to the right to evade a large rock. Scarcely are we past this when another is in front of us and the canoe going at a terrific pace, but by the energetic use of the paddle and steering to the left we escape this. So steering right and left we rush past the rocks which show themselves above the water. Now the canoe goes bumping over some unseen boulders. Now we dash into large white capped waves –caused by the water rushing over large boulders of rocks. Now the water splashes into our faces, over us and into

⁵ The names 'Siwash', 'Snowflake' and 'Thompson' were apparently given to the survey's canoes. They are paddled in this passage by the aboriginal guides; Philip Jago, Abraham LaRue and Whooit Pask.

the canoe. [...]

Tuesday, Nov. 14th

This morning I put on moccasins instead of my boots and they served me very well. At daylight we again began to make through the snow. It drifted a great deal during the night and many places it was knee deep. After traveling thirteen miles we came to Raft River. This is about 50 yards wide and at the deepest 3 feet in depth. The water on each side is frozen for some ten feet and the rest of the stream is full of floating ice. The only way for us to get over was to wade across, but before doing so we sat down on the bank in the snow and ate our cold lunch of dry dampers and a little cold or frozen boiled beef.

Friday, Nov. 17th

In Kamloops again! For which I feel grateful to God. This morning we got up early and by daybreak this morning we commenced paddling downstream.

Tuesday, Dec. 26th

Got up at Brockville found the train 2 ½ hours behind time. At Prescott I telegraphed to my wife: “[...] train 3 hours late. Don’t come to the depot.” Arrived home at 1 p.m. It is strange that we were absent exactly six months, leaving on the 26th of the month and arriving home on the 26th. I have brought home with me 37 8 x 10 negatives and 88 stereo negatives. I took orders in British Columbia to the amount of \$400.00 cash. Thus ends my “British Columbia Tour.”

B.F. Baltzly

LINKS TO CURRICULA

AB, Social Studies, Grade 7 (Validation Draft, Sept. 2003)

- **7.2.5** Evaluate the impact of Confederation and subsequent immigration on Canada from 1867 to World War I by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues: In what ways did the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway affect the growth of Canada? (TCC, PADM, ER, LPP).
- **7.S.7** Apply the research process: [ICT] plan and conduct a search, using a wide variety of electronic sources; [ICT] analyze and synthesize information to produce an original work.
- **7.S.8** Demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy: [ICT] Use selected presentation tools to demonstrate connections among various pieces of information.

BC, Social Studies Grade 10 (1997)

- **Application of Social Studies:** It is expected that students will identify and clarify a problem, an issue, or an inquiry; plan and conduct library and community research using primary and secondary print and non-print sources, including electronic sources; generate and critique different interpretations of primary and secondary sources.
- **Environment: Canada from 1815 to 1914:** It is expected that students will identify and describe the physiographic regions of Canada and processes that formed these regions; analyse how geography influenced the economic, historical, and cultural development of western Canada.

Ont, History of Canada, Grade 8 (2004)

- **Inquiry/Research and Communication Skills:** use a variety of primary and secondary sources to locate relevant information about the building of the railway, the settling of the land, and social and cultural life in the developing west.
- **The Development of Western Canada:** Outline the main factors contributing to the settlement and development of the Prairie provinces, British Columbia, and

Yukon, and describe the effects of development on various groups of people in the region from a variety of perspectives.

Ont, Canada: History, Identity, and Culture, Grade 12 (2005)

- **Methods of Historical Inquiry and Communication:** Use methods of historical inquiry to locate, gather, evaluate, and organize research materials from a variety of sources; Interpret and analyse information gathered through research, employing concepts and approaches appropriate to historical inquiry; communicate the results of historical inquiries, using appropriate terms and concepts and a variety of forms of communication.

References

- Birrell, Andrew. *Benjamin Baltzly, Photographs and Journal of an Expedition through British Columbia: 1871*, Toronto, The Coach House Press, 1978.
- Hopwood, Victor George. "WENTWORTH-FITZWILLIAM, WILLIAM, Viscount Milton", Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online [On line]
<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=39436&query=Cheadle> [Page consulted May 2, 2005]
- Letterbook, Baltzly's western trip with the Geological Survey, 1871-1872*, N-1983.1, McCord Museum of Canadian History
- Triggs, Stanley G. *William Notman, the Stamp of a Studio*, Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985.

Credits

McCord Museum: Marc Walker and Dr. Marie-Claude Larouche.