

**OXFORD HISTORICAL  
STUDIES, VOLUME  
7: LORD SELKIRK'S WORK  
IN CANADA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649220502

Oxford Historical Studies, Volume 7: Lord Selkirk's work in Canada by Chester Martin

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**CHESTER MARTIN**

**OXFORD HISTORICAL  
STUDIES, VOLUME  
7: LORD SELKIRK'S WORK  
IN CANADA**



X  
(O X F O R D  
Historical and Literary  
S T U D I E S

Issued under the direction of C. H. FIRTH  
and WALTER RALEIGH Professors of  
Modern History and English Literature in  
the University of Oxford

V O L U M E 7)

LORD SELKIRK'S WORK  
IN CANADA

By *CHESTER MARTIN*

O X F O R D

At the *Clarendon Press*

1916

295174  
1. 34  
6

VOLUME I. ELIZABETHAN ROGUES AND VAGABONDS AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE. BY FRANK AYDELOTTE.

VOLUME II. ANGLO-ROMAN RELATIONS, 1558-1565. BY C. G. BAYNE, C.S.I.

VOLUME III. THE HOUSE OF LORDS IN THE REIGN OF WILLIAM III. BY A. S. TURBERVILLE.

VOLUME IV. A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SAMUEL JOHNSON. BY W. P. COURTNEY. REVISED AND SEEN THROUGH THE PRESS BY D. NICHOL SMITH.

VOLUME V. HENRY TUBBE. SELECTIONS EDITED FROM THE MSS. BY G. C. MOORE SMITH.

VOLUME VI. KEIGWIN'S REBELLION (1683-4). AN EPISODE IN THE HISTORY OF BOMBAY. BY RAY AND OLIVER STRACHEY.

VOLUME VII. LORD SELKIRK'S WORK IN CANADA. BY CHESTER MARTIN.

VOLUME VIII. WALPOLE BALLADS. EDITED BY M. PERCIVAL.

## P R E F A C E

MANY men of genius less than first-rate have survived only in a 'corner of history'. When the attempt is made to draw them from respectable obscurity, it is not infrequently found that investigation leaves them still undistinguished among those who have been accorded the highest places in the history of their age. Biography tends to become either an apology or a dull inquisition into facts that seldom abound in vital interest. Under such circumstances the tendency to magnify events and to make up the measure of heroic stature by unwarranted panegyric is only less than the temptation to give oneself resignedly to the faithful but depressing pursuit of commonplaces.

The life of the fifth Earl of Selkirk, however, should be redeemed from unattractiveness, even though none would claim for him a place among the first men of his age. Panegyric is impossible, because his gravest mistakes were palpable and self-confessed; while lack of vital interest in the early years of his life may be said to be counterbalanced by a certain dramatic intensity at its close. In a very real sense, moreover, the obscurity to which Selkirk's name has been consigned was unnatural and unjust. His life came to an end in the midst of a bitter conflict. His vindication was not attempted for more than half a century, not because it was uncalled for or impossible, but because it was inexpedient in the light of an enforced compromise at Selkirk's death. The discreet silence after 1821 is the less excusable because it is borne in upon one that a generous mind had been treated with less than justice by those to whom he had a right to look for redress. Another attempt to estimate Selkirk's work anew

may come as a measure of tardy appreciation, even though it may not restore his name to the place which one may hope it would have occupied had his work and life not been cut short by a violent and not very scrupulous opposition.

Even at its full value, moreover, Selkirk's work scarcely lends itself to adequate appreciation. Colonization, however useful and far-reaching in results, can scarcely fail to prove prosaic and uninspiring in the details of its development. Little of the true story of British colonization in the nineteenth century can be considered to make pleasant reading. Success is usually achieved in obscurity and silence, while failure seldom passes without angry comment. The leaders of colonizing movements, as a rule, received much reproach from the thriftless, and no praise from the prosperous settler. The choice of followers in such enterprises was naturally limited. Selkirk in particular found it necessary to work with—and also to contend against—men who fell far below his own level. Wilberforce, who 'never . . . had any misgivings' with regard to the generosity and integrity of Selkirk's original aims, deplored such conflict as that with the North-West Company, where, 'from the nature of the case, we are obliged to avail ourselves of the services of men whose characters we cannot scrutinize very nicely'.<sup>1</sup> It thus becomes necessary to pick one's way through details which are often sordid and ignoble, seldom inspiring, and never far removed, on one side or the other, from sharp practice. It is no small tribute to the integrity of Selkirk's ideas upon colonization that though not undefiled for a time by the ignoble quarrel between two fur-trading companies, they reappear untarnished and with added lustre, in almost the last letter he ever wrote.

<sup>1</sup> Wilberforce to Selkirk, *Selkirk Papers*, 6363.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE . . . . .	8
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	15
II. EXPERIMENTS . . . . .	21
III. RED RIVER SETTLEMENT . . . . .	36
IV. 'ARTIFICES AND MACHINATIONS' . . . . .	53
V. 'THE PEMICAN WAR' . . . . .	64
VI. THE NEW RÉGIME . . . . .	90
VII. 'THE ANCIENT NORTH-WEST SPIRIT' . . . . .	104
VIII. 'THE GREAT MISTAKE' . . . . .	115
IX. THE COMMISSION . . . . .	132
X. 'THE MUD OF THE LAW' . . . . .	141
XI. THE END OF THE SELKIRK RÉGIME . . . . .	160
XII. SELKIRK'S AIMS AND INFLUENCE . . . . .	176
APPENDIXES:	
A. THE HUDSON'S BAY CHARTER, 1670 . . . . .	196
B. THE GRANT OF ASSINIBOIA TO LORD SELKIRK, JUNE 12, 1811 . . . . .	201
C. DISPATCH FROM LORD BATHURST TO SIR J. C. SHERBROOKE, FEBRUARY 11, 1817 . . . . .	215
D. GRANT OF EXCLUSIVE TRADE TO THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AND OTHERS, DECEMBER 5, 1821 . . . . .	218
E. TRANSFER OF ASSINIBOIA BACK TO THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY, 1834 . . . . .	223
INDEX . . . . .	227

## MAPS

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND . . . . .	224
PART OF UPPER CANADA . . . . .	225
ASSINIBOIA AND THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT . . . . .	226

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

### I. CONTEMPORARY MANUSCRIPT MATERIALS.

- The Selkirk Papers, correspondence, diaries, instructions, accounts, journals, &c., 1802-1860. 79 vols., 20,778 MS. pages. Canadian Archives.
- Correspondence of Dunbar, Earl of Selkirk, and his sons. Thomas, Lord Daer, Earl of Selkirk, 1771-1820, in the possession of Captain Hope, St. Mary's Isle, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland.<sup>1</sup>
- Correspondence, Private, St. Mary's Isle, 1817-63, eight volumes.<sup>1</sup>
- Letters from Jean, Countess of Selkirk, to Lady Katherine Halkett, 1808-20, St. Mary's Isle.<sup>1</sup>
- Colonial Office Records, Gov. Prevost and Miscellaneous, 1813, Canada. Canadian Archives, Q. 123.
- Colonial Office Records, Miscellaneous, 1813, Canada. Canadian Archives, Q. 124.
- Colonial Office Records, Public Offices, 1815, Canada. Canadian Archives, Q. 134. 2.
- Colonial Office Records, Canada. Canadian Archives, Q. 293.
- Minutes of Council, Lower Canada, July 12, 1816, to June 29, 1818. Canadian Archives, State, I.
- Minutes of Council, Lower Canada, July 30, 1818, to December 1, 1823. Canadian Archives, State, J.
- Colonial Office Records, Trials between Hudson's Bay Company and North-West Company. Canadian Archives, Q. 329.
- Hudson's Bay Company, Petitions to His Majesty: 1687-1778. Canadian Archives, M. 718.
- Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Notes prises à Terrebonne par François-Hyacinthe Sequin, 1831-33. Canadian Archives, M. 136.
- Macdonell Papers, Selkirk Settlement 1811-12 and various, 1763-1825. Canadian Archives, M. 155.
- Minutes of Council of Assiniboia, May 4, 1832, to March 5, 1861. Canadian Archives.
- Journal of John McLeod, Sr., Chief Trader Hudson's Bay Company, 1811-42. Canadian Archives, M. 201.
- Letters, Orders, &c., to the Surveyor-General, Privy Council Papers. Canadian Archives.
- Land Book, F. Upper Canada, April 2, 1804, to Feb. 27, 1806. Canadian Archives.
- Land Book, E. Upper Canada, June 23, 1802, to March 28, 1804. Canadian Archives.
- Secretary's Letter Book, A, Lieut.-Gov. Gore, 1806-11. Canadian Archives.
- Secretary's Letter Book, C, Upper Canada, Nov. 11, 1802, to July 25, 1805. Canadian Archives.

<sup>1</sup> The author begs to acknowledge Captain Hope's very great kindness in allowing access to these valuable papers.

- Land Book, G, Upper Canada, Feb. 28, 1806 to March 29, 1808. Canadian Archives.
- Masson Papers, M. 733-738. Canadian Archives.
- Bulger Papers, 7 portfolios, M. 149-152, C. Canadian Archives.
- Coltman Papers, 7 portfolios of original MS. relating to the Commissioners, 1816-20. Canadian Archives, M. 778, A-G.
- Collection of documents, accounts, orders, memoranda, &c., relating to the Council of Assiniboia, 1843-69. Manitoba Legislative Library, Winnipeg.
- Census Books, 1832, 1833, 1838, 1840, 1843, 1846, &c. Manitoba Legislative Library, Winnipeg.
- 'Colony Register A.' Copies by James Taylor. Canadian Archives, M. 721, B.
- Askin Papers. (One portfolio relating to Selkirk.) Canadian Archives.
- Census Book, Red River Settlement, &c., 1831, 1834, 1835, 1838, 1840, 1843, 1846. Canadian Archives, M. 399.
- Journal of R. Campbell, 1808-51. Canadian Archives, M. 722, d.
- The Hudson's Bay Company's Minutes of Council, Northern Department of Rupert's Land, 1830-3, 1835-7, 1839-43. Canadian Archives.
- Letters of John Richardson, 1789-99. Copied from the originals in the possession of H. R. Howland, Buffalo, N.Y. Canadian Archives, M. 852.
- Memoirs of Roderic Mackenzie, 1785 to 1820. Canadian Archives, M. 414.
- Red River Correspondence, Confidential, 1845-6-7.<sup>1</sup>

## II. CONTEMPORARY PRINTED MATERIALS.<sup>2</sup>

- Papers relating to the Red River Settlement*, Printed by order of the House of Commons, July 12, 1819.
- Report from the Committee on the State of the Hudson's Bay Company*, April 24, 1749.
- Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company*, together with the Proceedings of the Committee, minutes of evidence, Appendix and Index, July 31 and August 11, 1857.
- The Montreal *Courant*.
- The Montreal *Herald*.
- Canadian Archives Report, 1892*, Notes E and F.
- Report of Trials in the Courts of Canada relative to the Destruction of the Earl of Selkirk's Settlement on the Red River; with Observations*. A. Amos, Barrister-at-law and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. London, 1820.
- Sketch of the British Fur Trade in North America; with Observations relative to the North-West Company of Montreal*. Earl of Selkirk. London, 1816, second edition.
- A Letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Selkirk on his Settlement at the Red River, near Hudson's Bay*. John Strachan, D.D. London, 1816.

<sup>1</sup> My acknowledgement is due to C. N. Bell, I.L.D., F.R.G.S., Winnipeg, for his very kind permission to use this interesting letterbook.

<sup>2</sup> No attempt is made to carry this list beyond contemporary sources.