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“I SAW THESE THINGS”: THE VICTORIAN COLLECTION OF EMMA SHAW COLCLEUGH

BARBARA A. HAIL

Abstract. The personal Victorian collection of Rhode Island journalist and traveler, Emma Shaw Colcleugh, purchased by Rudolf Haffenreffer in 1930, is examined for what it reveals about late nineteenth century attitudes and collecting habits, as well as about the degree of acculturation in the Native communities where it was collected. Included are such factors determining the make-up of collections as “suitcase-size,” gender of maker and of collector, collector’s access to community, length and purpose of visit, personal preferences, and degree of understanding of collected objects’ functions within the community.

Introduction

Victorian era collections of Native arts in anthropology museums frequently suffer from uneven documentation. The last quarter of the nineteenth century represented the great period of ethnographic collecting, in which newly formed museum departments of ethnology vied for possession of complete inventories of Native material culture field-purchased by specialists (Stocking 1985; Cole 1985). However, it was also the era in which “tourism” to far corners of the world became popular, due to increased leisure and ease of transportation. The products of personal collecting by such travelers frequently found a place first as household decor, arranged in “cozy corners” or “curio cabinets” and serving as reminders of their trips (Lee, this volume and Fig. 1). Later, many of these objects were readily accepted by museums, with or without accompanying documentation. Often these two kinds of collections exist side by side within museums.¹

One such personal collection, made in the 1880s and 1890s by Emma Shaw Colcleugh, a Rhode Island teacher and newspaperwoman, is located in the Haffenreffer Museum of An-

thropology, Brown University (Fig. 2). Colcleugh, who chose to venture into unknown lands as a professional journalist and in the personal pursuit of adventure, was sponsored in her travels by New England newspapers to which she sent descriptive and anecdotal reports. Her major travels took place in successive trips “into the North”: the North American Subarctic and Arctic and the Northwest Coast. In later years she traveled to the Pacific, the Caribbean, Africa, and South America. In addition to recording her impressions of these little known regions, she gathered objects of both utility and beauty, made by Native peoples, in most cases carefully noting where she acquired them and from whom.

In 1930, her collection of 218 objects from the Americas, Oceania, and Africa, including 68 from the Subarctic, 29 from the Arctic, and 47 from the Northwest Coast, was purchased by Rudolf F. Haffenreffer Sr. Because her collection notebook and her numerous newspaper and magazine articles on the subject of Native crafts, Native women’s lives, and personal collecting experiences provide unusually good documentation for most of the objects, her collection became, in 1989, the focal point for an exhibition and catalogue of the sub-

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Figure 1. Mrs. Colcleugh's den in Providence, Rhode Island, arranged as a "cozy corner," with objects from Alaska, Labrador, the Mackenzie River, the Pacific, and Africa competing for attention. Note the pad saddle from Athabasca Landing serving as footstool to a babiche-seated chair from Fort Good Hope, on the back of which hangs a Haida twined hat. On the wall are model snowshoes, a shaman's rattle, beaded tobacco pouches, and octopus bag from the Mackenzie River area, and a pipe bag from Athabasca Landing. On the desk are an argillite carving and miniature totem pole. On the floor are a birchbark container from Fort Chipewyan, hair seal from Labrador and white arctic fox from Fort McPherson. A table covering of caribou skin with porcupine quill-wrapped fringe was made by the Loucheux. Fijian tapa cloth serves as a curtain (Colcleugh Papers, Vol. I:78).

arctic collections of the Haffenreffer Museum, Brown University.

Although it is assumed here that even scientific collections were not without bias, it is the purpose of this paper to examine the idiosyncrasies of the Victorian personal collection. I should like



Figure 2. Emma Shaw Colcleugh as photographed for *The Northwest Magazine* in January 1895 (Colcleugh Papers, Vol. III:46).

first to discuss Emma Shaw Colcleugh's experiences as a female Victorian-age journalist and traveler, quoting from her own journals and newspaper articles. Then I shall turn to the art and artifacts she collected, discussing their place within the society from which they came, either functional or created in response to demand from outside. I will examine the factors influencing her selection, including personal preference, "suitcase size," cost, access, availability, gender (of maker, user, and collector), and Native expectations. Finally, I will look at her awareness as a collector: of the activities of other collectors; of the quality of the aboriginal arts of her time, based on her investigation of the techniques and materials in their manufacture; and of the meaning of those objects she collected to the Native craftsperson. In all, I will treat this collection as an artifact in itself, representing the collector, the Victorian times, and the nature of the society from which she collected.

A Victorian Lady Traveler

Emma Shaw, born in 1846, was descended from distinguished New England ancestors, among them Stukely Westcote, one of the original purchasers of Providence Plantations, and Thomas Hooker, founder of Hartford, Connecticut in 1636. She grew up in the small town of Thompson, Connecticut, where she attended local schools and, in her teens, began her professional life, teaching in primary school. Until her retirement at age 84 she was a working woman. Teaching was a career that Victorian women of good family could properly enter, but journalism was only beginning to open its doors to women. By the last quarter of the century, women journalists had formed the New England Women's Press Association, with Emma as a member (Hail 1989:42).

Women's rights were becoming a much publicized political and social issue and women's clubs across the nation became a forum for the expression of the female viewpoint. In becoming the Club Editor of the *Providence Journal*, Emma was at the center of the active women's movement. She covered club meetings throughout Rhode Island in her column "Among Women's Clubs," and during her travels, always made it a point to visit other clubs. She belonged to the American League of Women's Press Clubs, the National Geographic Society, and the Short Story Club of Rhode Island. In addition to her position on the *Providence Journal*, she was a regular contributor to the *Boston Transcript*, *Boston Herald*, *Scranton Republican*, *Scranton Tribune*, *Chataqua Magazine*, *American Kitchen*, *The Ladies' World*, and the *Journal of Education*, and was also published in the *Boston Globe*, *The Northwest Magazine*, *Traveller*, *The Overland Monthly*, *Recreation*, and *Outing*. She authored two small books, *Alaskan Gleanings* and *World Wide Wisdom Words*.

In traveling to little-known regions and sending back her reports to newspaper readers, Emma Shaw Colcleugh was one of a small group of nineteenth century women who pushed the frontiers of personal fulfillment and adventure. The roles of discovery and exploration had traditionally been played by an all-male cast. But as steamship and rail routes expanded, it was possible for a few women of independence and curiosity to join in. These "traveling ladies" have been identified in a growing body of literature.² Many endured hardships and danger to reach remote areas of the world, and they vied with one another for the most unusual adventure. Possibly the tight strictures of Victorian society created a desire to explore and romanticize the spectacular landscapes of far lands and the unfamiliar social customs of other people. Emma, like many other Victorian travelers, seemed intent upon experiencing every sensation that a

country could offer her, and responded to the thrill of possible, yet not too fearsome, dangers that could be retold to delight her readers. About to leave for Australia in 1897, Colcleugh said:

How many miles have I traveled? I wish I knew, but I don't. I have in the past decade gone to Hawaii, the Yosemite, to the Yellowstone twice, to Alaska 3 times, up the Saskatchewan 1000 miles, to the headwaters of the Columbia, down the Mackenzie and to Labrador and Newfoundland.

Most of these trips were bristling with what would have been hardships and discomforts to most people, but I am a born nomad. . . . I have been cast ashore upon an island in the south Pacific, when a single mat constituted my camp outfit, and the tossing fronds of a cocoa palm furnished my only shelter. Night has found me in the midst of a muskeg, skirting the Athabasca River, where a rubber sheet spread upon a rock served for not exactly a couch of luxury, but a place to spend the night. With equal interest I have watched deft-handed Tahitians evolve from sea and forest the meal for the white stranger among them, and listened to the rollicking songs of the halfbreeds of the far north, as they flitted hither and yon before the big camp fire, preparing a nocturnal feast from a just killed moose (*Chicago Chronicle*, 20 April 1897, Colcleugh Papers Vol.I:102).

Like most other Victorians, she looked upon the indigenous people encountered in these journeys enthusiastically, but distantly, as "natives." Victorian travel writing was personal, with the impression of the author freely expressed in narrative form, usually followed by a description of "people and customs." Modern ethnography continues this sequence, although separating and subordinating personal narrative to detached scientific observations (Pratt 1986:35). The very title of Colcleugh's 1932 retrospective of her travels, "I Saw These Things," indicates the priority of the personal narrative, putting the author in the forefront as a kind of participant-observer.

In those days, when tourists were few, enthusiastic reception within a host country by people at the highest levels was almost assured. In Hawaii, Emma was received by King Kalalaua and his sister who later became Queen Liliuokalani. She presented the king with a Sioux "peace pipe"; he, in turn, remarking on the strange American interest in collecting curios, brought out the magnificent royal feather cloaks for her to admire. In Tonga, she interviewed the young king, George Tobou II. In Fiji, she was the guest-of-honor at a royal feast given by Princess Andi thakambau.

With a forceful personality, good health, high spirits, and a sense of humor, Emma made friends wherever she went. Self-confidently she called upon leading people in all fields, including heads of state, and among her good friends were Sir Donald Smith, Lord Strathcona, Governor of the

Hudson's Bay Company; John Muir, naturalist; Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, founder of the Labrador medical missions; the Reverend Sheldon Jackson, commissioner of education for Alaska; and Captain Bartlett, skipper of the *Kite* when it sailed on the Peary Relief Expedition of 1895.

Colcleugh enjoyed her role as an adventurous woman treated as an equal by adventurous men. She was clearly proud of her reputation for daring the rapids of the Saskatchewan River in a birchbark canoe in 1888:

Several days were spent at the post [Grand Rapids] above the rapids, while the supplies our steamer had brought were transferred by a primitive tramway. As I waited for the arrival of the river steamer I was interested in watching the [Cree] Indian women (whose embroidery on caribou skin I have rarely seen equalled) and looking out at the mad whirl of waters before us. Suddenly the chief, as one of the young braves flashed by in a birch canoe, said, 'You shoot 'em?' I had heard that he used to be famed for his dexterity in shooting those rapids but did not do it any more. So I replied, 'Yes, if you take me.' Neither of us could back out after that and!! 'Nine mile,' he said, and I only know it was the swiftest nine miles I ever went in fifteen minutes. Wonderful!! it was, but I never wished to repeat it, and when, years later, I visited Grand Rapids I saw the old chief and learned that it was the last time he ever made the mad trip (Colcleugh 1932:6 September).

Upon her return to Winnipeg she found that people had been teasing the local newspapermen for letting, not only an American, but an American woman, take a trip that no Winnipeg correspondent had taken. This story followed Colcleugh throughout her life, establishing her role as one of the "new women" of her times.

Into the North: The Mackenzie River Trip, 1894

Having supported herself as a single professional for nearly a quarter century, Emma left Rhode Island in 1893 to live in Winnipeg as the wife of Frederick William Colcleugh, a member of the Manitoba Provincial Parliament. Before long she was giving lantern-slide lectures on her three Alaskan trips to enthusiastic Winnipeg audiences. Prominent among the gentlemen she met were the officers of the "Honorable Hudson's Bay Company," headquartered in Winnipeg. At the invitation of the chief officer of the company Emma set off in 1894, unaccompanied by her husband, for a three-month journey as a passenger on a company supply trip, visiting posts on the Athabasca, Peace, Slave, and Mackenzie rivers (Fig. 3). Small paddle-wheel steamers were introduced to these rivers in 1886; these, with smaller open boats to navigate the rapids, carried the season's supplies to numerous

river posts, bringing back the year's fur catch. The furthest post on this 4000 mile round trip was Fort McPherson on the Peel River, north of the Arctic Circle (Figs. 4a,b,c).

Even dauntless Emma had some moments of doubt as she began her trip at Athabasca Landing:

Early evening found us at camp on the Sturgeon River. Supper had been eaten, my tent put up and the men had taken the horses down to the river. As I was left alone on that wilderness hill-side, I never felt so remote from civilization, so much as if I had cut loose from all my former world. Behind me lay friends and news of friends; before me, far to the northward, lay long leagues of untraveled lands, and months of separation from all I had known in life. "Into the North" had, in those few lonely moments, a power of meaning I had never dreamed (Colcleugh 1932:10 September).

Here Emma has defined herself in the image of the castaway, familiar in travel writing, and continued in ethnographic writing, as in Malinowski's *Argonauts*: "Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight" (1961:4). The authority of the castaway, who has lost control over his future and is forced to live in another culture and adapt to other lifeways, is far greater than that of the mere traveler who passes through a country and can leave at will. It has been suggested that castaways and captives in many ways realize the ideal of the participant-observer for ethnographers (see Pratt 1986:38).

On her travels she encountered subarctic peoples—Cree, Chipewyan, Slavey and others, all Algonquian or Athapaskan speakers whose lives, centered on fishing and hunting, had been complicated for decades by fur traders, missionaries, and others who introduced a market economy, new prescriptive cultural codes, and devastating diseases. She also met Métis, people of mixed descent, at every trading post. At Fort Chipewyan, Colcleugh commented: "Of interest to me was the mission school, where sweet-faced sisters cared for little Indian waifs" . . . and, at Fort Providence . . . "I could only celebrate by taking a few snapshots of the little Indian girls drawn up to meet Bishop Grouard, adding by request the Mother Superior and some of the sisters. This school, established somewhere in the sixties, affords a home for 40 dusky converts. It is in charge of sisters from the Grey Nunnery at Montreal" (Colcleugh 1932:10 September).

Everywhere, she collected objects and wrote her impressions of people and communities. In an interview published in the December 1896 edition of *The Ladies' World*, she noted that she would have had a better opportunity of studying the everyday life of the Native northerner, had "Steamer-Day"

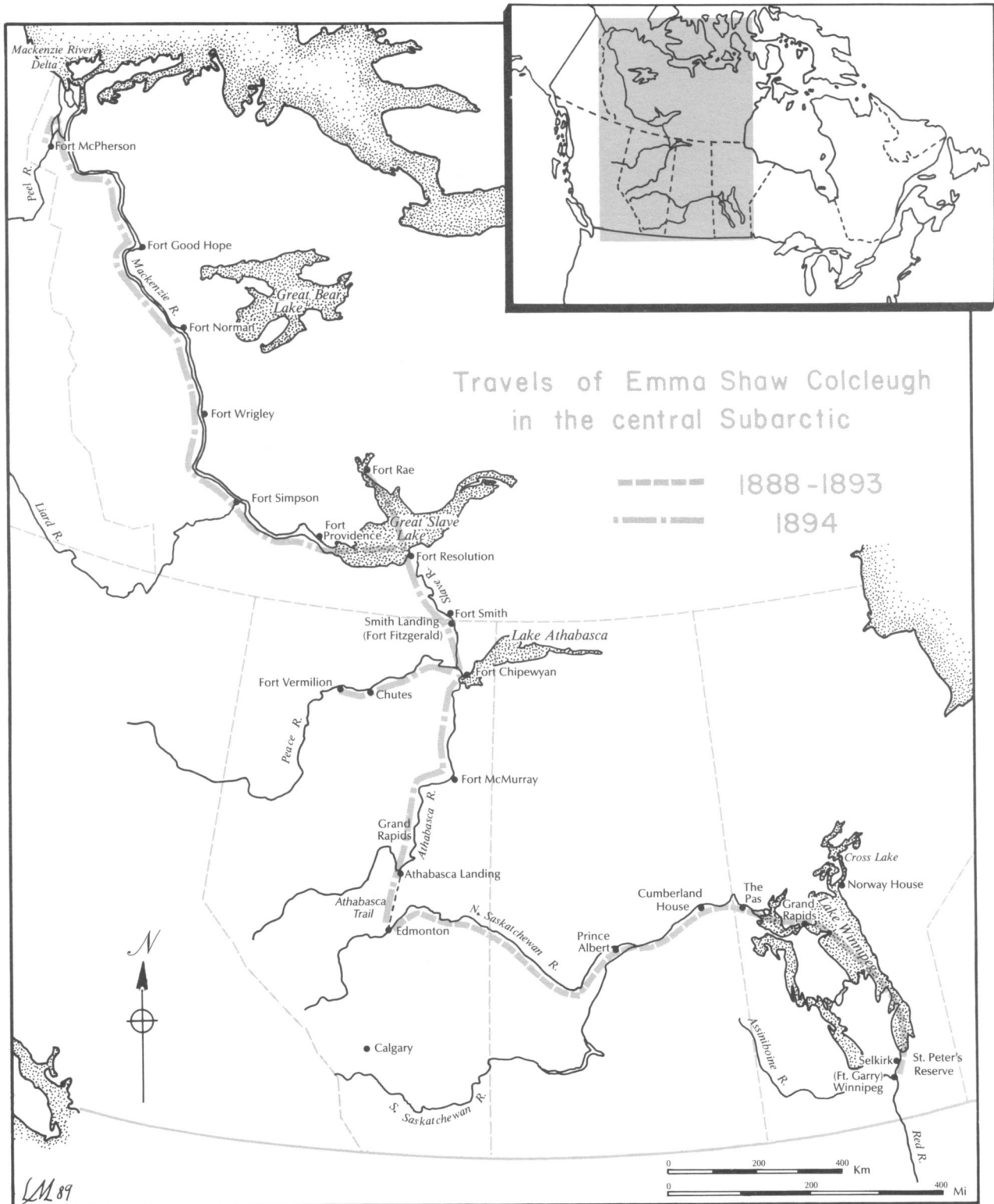


Figure 3. Map of Colcleugh's travels in the central Subarctic between 1888 and 1894. (Map drawn by Lyn Malone.)

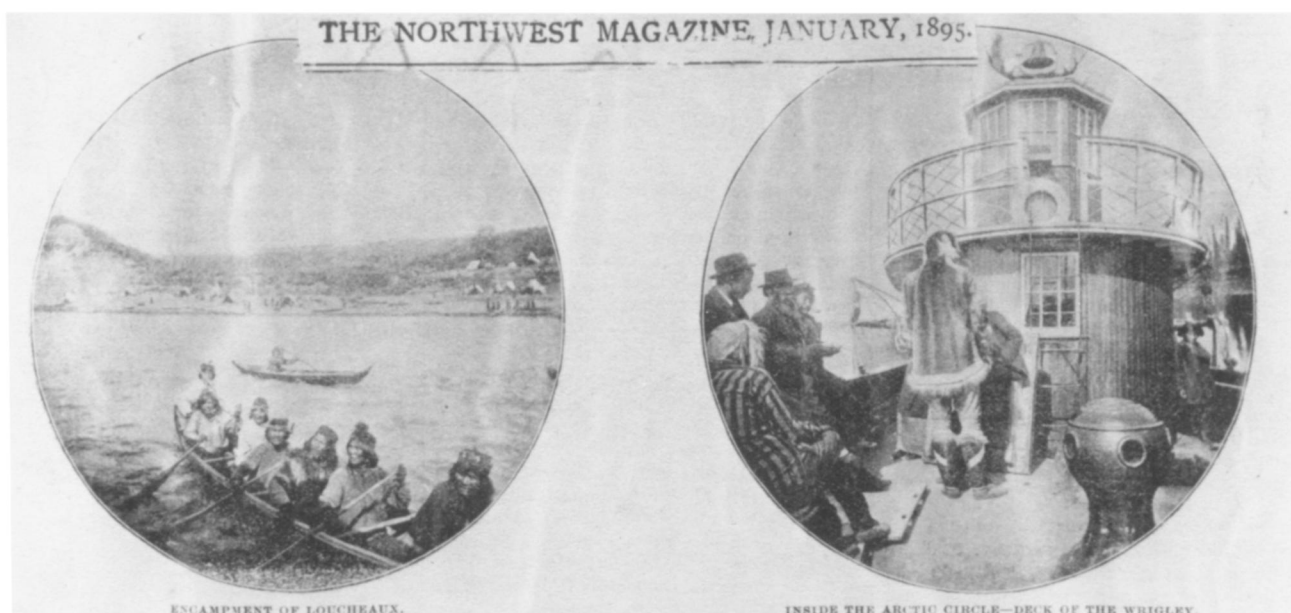


Figure 4 a,b,c. Photographs taken by Emma Shaw Colcleugh in the Mackenzie River region in 1894. Colcleugh took hundreds of photos with her Kodak camera and used them to illustrate her lectures and articles. (a) It is likely that Colcleugh is the female figure seated in an ox-cart about to undertake the 16 mile portage from Ft. Fitzgerald to Ft. Smith, around the rapids of the Slave River. (b) Loucheux (Eastern Kutchin) men approaching the steamer S. S. Wrigley “in the mouth of the Arctic Red River, but a little south of Point Separation, the beginning of the Mackenzie delta. The steamer’s approach is always the signal for a grand rush to board her, if possible, and beg ‘tea and tobacco.’” (c) On the deck of the S. S. Wrigley, at anchor in Peel River, off Fort McPherson, “most northerly post of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Esquimo chief trying to drive a bargain for a gun with Mr. Camsell, the chief factor of the Mackenzie River district. The Esquimos were much larger than expected, some having fine figures and being very good-looking” (*The Northwest Magazine*, January 1895. Colcleugh Papers, Vol. III:47).

not been always a holiday, "with everyone sallying forth in his best 'bib and tucker,' the women donning with great pride some one exquisitely beautiful article of dress, upon which weeks and perhaps months of the most patient labor has been spent. A finely embroidered belt, bag or a pair of the daintiest moccasins will be worn with garments that have not been changed for months" (Colcleugh Papers Vol.I:62).

Although a few white women had come to different posts in the North to work as mission teachers, Colcleugh was only the second woman adventuress to travel the steamer route to the delta of the Mackenzie. The first had been Elizabeth Taylor, who had made a similar journey in 1892 (Taylor 1894–95). Emma was aware of her predecessor. In telling of the humorous reaction of two Eskimo boys at Peel River to her height, she said: "Miss Taylor, daughter of the late (American) Consul Taylor, was the only white woman they had ever seen before. They described me as being 'Oh, so long—long! Never eat enough'" (Colcleugh Papers Vol.II:30).

The few prominent white male adventurers who had preceded her on the Mackenzie water system were, for the most part, naturalists or sportsmen who were seeking the excitement of observing or hunting wood bison and musk-ox.³ Among them were Hugh Lowther, fifth Earl of Lonsdale, a British sportsman, who made the trip in 1888; Count de Sainville, an explorer who spent from 1889 to 1894 in the lower Mackenzie region; geologists J. B. and J. W. Tyrrell, in 1893; and Frank Russell, a natural scientist whose 1893–94 expedition to collect natural specimens was sponsored by the University of Iowa.

Colcleugh had read accounts of some of these previous Mackenzie River travelers. She quoted Lord Lonsdale's remarks about his surprise at the height of the Mackenzie Eskimos, some measuring 6'4" and almost all larger than himself. She learned of Frank Russell's zoological explorations while at the little Hudson Bay post of Fort Rae, on Great Slave Lake.

Three or four great cases, directed to Iowa State University, attracted my attention. After that, at each post I saw some box awaiting shipment, and heard many an anecdote relating to his sometimes futile attempts to procure curios from the natives . . . and of the big price received for an old deerskin suit, "so old it was no good," never dreaming that its very venerableness was its chief charm. On one point . . . natives and Hudson Bay officials were all agreed—that his pluck and endurance were rarely if ever equalled. . . . So much did I hear, that I was quite disappointed when we arrived at Fort McPherson to find that both he and Count de Sainville had left. . . . We collected all his boxes on our return, and when the time came for our voyage up the rapids of the Athabasca—thirteen days in open

boats, with sundry portages, I had grown to feel quite an interest in their safe arrival. As I looked out for my own precious collection of curios, I kept an eye out for his . . . I discovered at one place a big break in the box containing musk-ox bones. I lost little time in hustling about to find a Hudson Bay officer to secure it before the native "packers" had decided to prevent the ill-luck which, according to their superstition, follows the removal of a carcass from its haunts. I like to flatter myself that, perhaps, I helped the gallant young explorer a 'wee bit', by thus watching over his belongings (*Boston Transcript* 22 December 1894; Colcleugh Papers Vol.II:32).

After her Mackenzie River trip Colcleugh returned to Rhode Island during a lecture circuit that also included Toronto, Montreal, and Boston. The following summer she again accompanied a Hudson's Bay Company steamer, this time supplying posts in Labrador. She had learned of the work of Dr. Grenfell in providing medical services to seamen's families and to the Native population there, and her letters about the trip carried detailed descriptions of the work of the missions at Hopedale and Nain.

Later Years

While her career as a travel journalist developed, so did her reputation on the lecture circuit. Her most popular lectures—"Through Hawaii with a Kodak," "Up the Saskatchewan," "Alaska and the North Pacific Islands," "From Ocean to Ocean," and "Inside the Arctic Circle under the Hudson's Bay Company's Flag"—were presented both in the United States and abroad, at women's clubs, the YMCA and YWCA, teachers' meetings, church meetings, and occasionally in academic settings (Figs. 5a,b). In 1895, lecturing in New Brunswick on her upcoming trip, she told her audience that her purpose was to go "north along the Labrador coast as far as the mail steamer runs to acquire pictures and impressions with which to make the real state of the island, its people and their avocations familiar to the American people." The *Herald* described her as "tall and erect of form . . . with . . . that courteous self confidence, business assertion, and solid firm expression indicative of a master mind . . . The lecturer delivers her thoughts incisively and precisely, and weaves into her lectures much of history, some romance, statistics, and a great deal of practical and useful information" (*St. John's Herald* 6 June 1895; Colcleugh Papers, Vol. II:33–35).

In 1897 Emma and Frederick William Colcleugh were divorced, and she returned to New England. Emma was given newspaper assignments, in later years of increasing social and political significance. At the close of the Spanish-American War in 1898 she was sent to Cuba to investigate

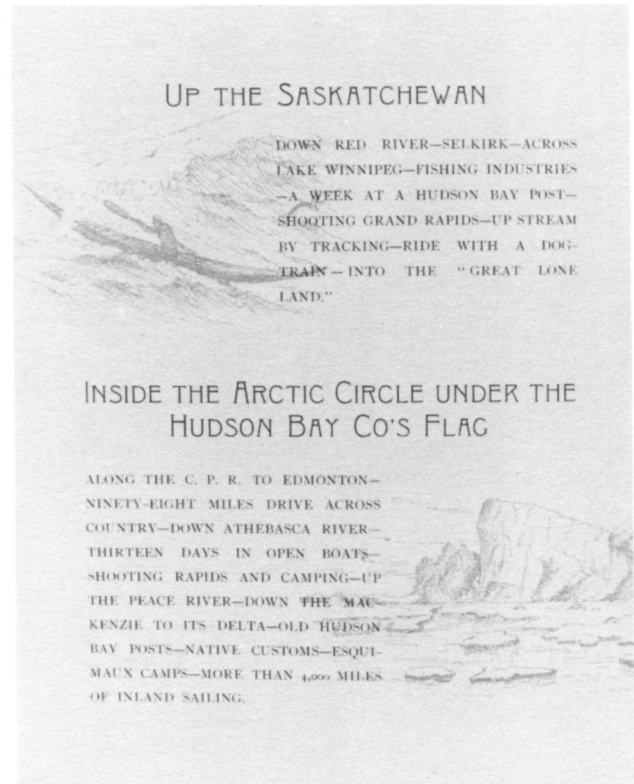
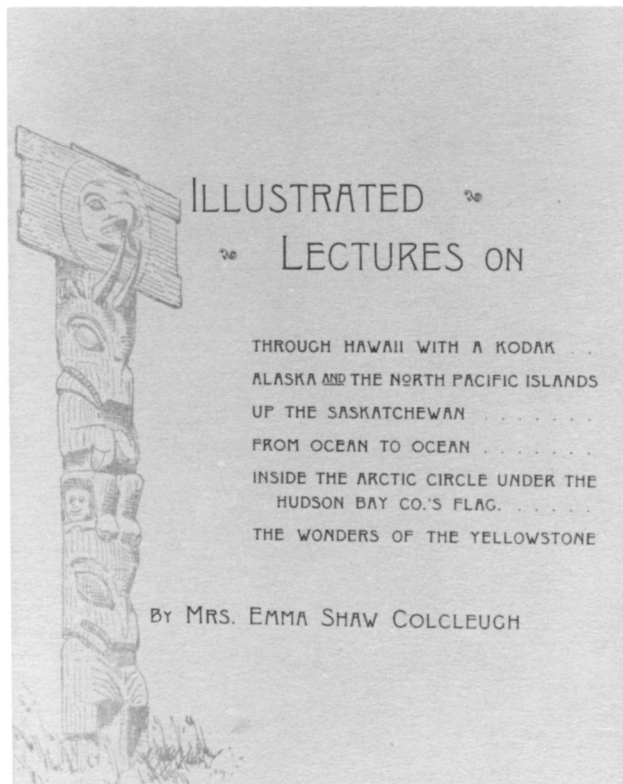


Figure 5 a,b. Pages from a lecture flyer put out by Syndicate Press (Colcleugh Papers, Vol. I: left inside cover).

poor health and living conditions. A few years later she was in Puerto Rico reporting on the aftermath of a disastrous hurricane. In 1902 she was asked to be a passenger on the first train over the Uganda Railway, from Mombasa, British East Africa, to Wyanda, Uganda. During her three month African tour she contracted a fever that recurred in succeeding years and kept her from further rigorous adventures.

In 1932 Colcleugh culled earlier notebooks and letters to recall highlights of her travels in a series of articles written for the *Evening Bulletin* of Providence, entitled “I Saw These Things.” Clearly some of her attitudes and language, especially when referring to Native people, reflect her times rather than ours, and are typical of Victorian-era travelers (see Krech 1989). However sensitive she was to other cultures, she still carried with her the unspoken assumption of superior cultural attainment. In some of her comments, however, she displays insights rare for her times. With greater worldliness came greater cultural modesty. As she grew older she changed from “sightseer” to “insight seeker” (see Marien 1989:13). At the end of her Mackenzie River journey she was able to say: “Replete with interest was every minute of the stay at Peel River, where we visited the Eskimos, and from their strange comments on the unusual two white women (Colcleugh and Mrs. Julian Camsell,

wife of the chief factor of the Mackenzie District, who had joined the ship at Fort Simpson), had an opportunity to see ourselves as others see us” (Colcleugh 1932:10 September).

She retired from the *Providence Journal* in 1932. Then, in 1940, she made another trip; characteristically traveling alone, she took the train to Florida for a vacation, and there died. Her death ended a life as teacher, traveler, collector, poet, and journalist spanning almost a century.

The Subarctic Collection of Emma Shaw Colcleugh

A study of the Colcleugh collection raises some questions about late nineteenth century northern Native arts and culture and the extent to which materials in museum collections today accurately reflect the range in Native life in particular times and places. Outside influence in both materials and techniques was clear. For example, in the central Subarctic—the region to which this discussion is primarily directed—the highly decorated materials provide evidence of the importance of ornamentation to nineteenth century Cree, Ojibwa, Athapaskan, and Métis people. The skillful combination of purchased goods such as glass trade beads, silks, and velvets, with a continued use of natural mate-



Figure 6. Loom-woven porcupine quill bands, Loucheux or Slavey; collected on the Mackenzie River by Emma Shaw Colcleugh in 1894 (HMA 57-278 d,e,f).

rials such as babiche, porcupine quills, dentalia shells traded from Puget Sound, and moose and caribou hide, shows great Native innovation and imagination; as does the combination of aboriginally practiced techniques such as quill-weaving and birchbark biting with newer skills such as silk-thread embroidery learned in mission schools. The Colcleugh subarctic collection contains 68 objects; among them are decorated personal gear (14 objects beaded on wool or velvet, 19 silk-thread embroideries on hide, 15 objects of woven or plaited porcupine quills on hide, two undecorated leather items of personal gear, four carved stone pipes), household equipment (eight birchbark containers), objects related to hunting and fishing (two quilled gun cases, two babiche game bags, one pair of babiche snowshoes), and a babiche and wood chair obtained in one of the missions. Skewed by gender or personal interest in having more decorated personal and household objects than hunting and fishing equipment, it represents a microcosm of central subarctic Native and Métis women's—but not men's—art of the late nineteenth century.

Collections of northern Native arts gathered by Victorian travelers such as Colcleugh contained objects integrated to varying degrees within a Native community (see Hail 1989:61–63). Some objects were functional within the traditional community; they had long been made by the society for its own use before being noticed by outsiders. In the Subarctic, this group included bows, arrows, quivers, drums, pipes, firebags, tobacco pouches, snowshoes, moccasins, mitts, leggings, shirts, moss bags, hoods, bark containers, stone and wood utensils, and tools. Examples of these objects from the Colcleugh collection, made of indigenous materials and decorated with aboriginal geometric designs, are babiche game bags, snowshoes of babiche and wood, birchbark containers, gun cases of caribou hide with porcupine quill decoration,

woven porcupine quill bands (Fig. 6), moccasins of caribou hide and porcupine quill, stone pipes, and a tobacco bag made from a swan's foot.

Examples from the Colcleugh collection of traditional objects which, by the 1880s and 1890s, incorporated introduced materials and floral designs, are summer wraparound moccasins of caribou hide with silk-thread embroidery in floral patterns on the vamps (Fig. 7), and small tobacco bags of velvet or wool, decorated with glass and polished iron beads in floral designs.

Certain objects functioned well in the historic era to bridge the gap between Native and non-Native in the community. A highly ornamented firebag or jacket might be commissioned by the local Hudson's Bay Company factor for his own use, or a beaded altar cloth might be made as a gift for a resident missionary. These objects often stayed within the community, reinforcing the maker's pride and pleasure in creativity. Such an item from the Colcleugh collection is the beaded firebag (Fig. 8) which was made in 1870 for a Hudson's Bay Company trader in the Mackenzie River region and worn by him for 24 years before he gave it to Colcleugh in 1894.

Yet another group of objects provided a means for the Native artisan to participate in a cash economy. Made in quantity for tourist sale along the more traveled routes, this group, in the Subarctic, included elaborate, silk-thread embroidered purses (Fig. 9), picture frames and greeting cards, glasses cases, card cases, place mats, napkin rings, and embroidered, slipper-type moccasins. In the late nineteenth century there were more such centers of trade in the Lake Winnipeg area than further north. In the more isolated areas of the North, along the Slave, Athapasca, Mackenzie, and Peel rivers, tourists were so few that their purchases had little effect on the types of objects made, which continued to be those useful within the community. However, the

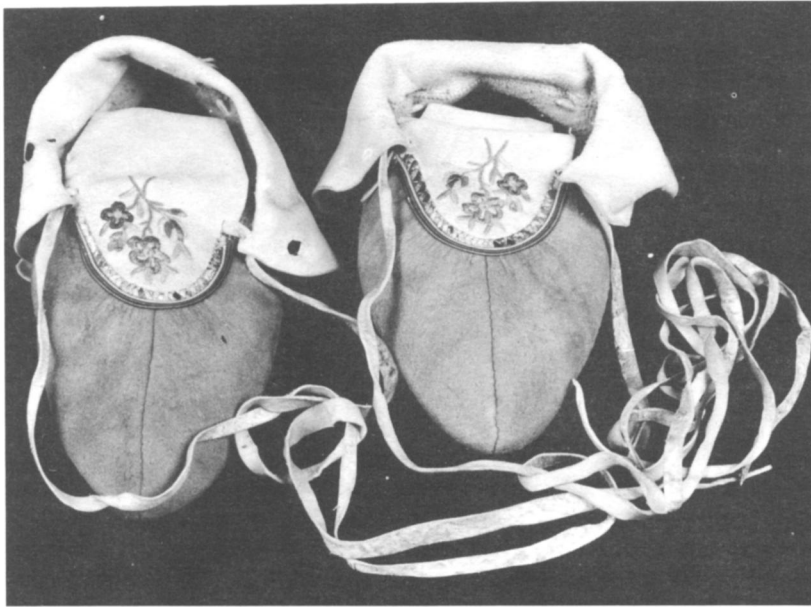
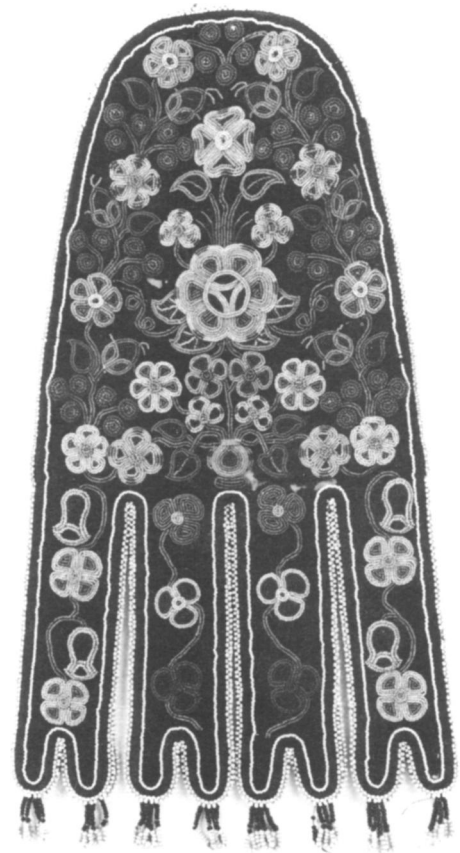


Figure 7. Caribou hide moccasins, porcupine quills, silk-thread embroidery, wrapped horse hair; collected at Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River by Emma Shaw Colcleugh in 1894 (HMA 57-581).

Figure 8. Octopus bag or firebag, glass beads on wool broad-cloth, Great Slave Lake—Mackenzie River region Athapaskan type, used by men for carrying flint and steel and later for shot and sometimes tobacco; given to Emma Shaw Colcleugh in 1894 “by an old Hudson’s Bay Company trader for whom it was made by an Eskimaux woman 24 years previous” (HMA 57-462).



activity of the river transport system encouraged movement of goods and Native-made items by way of the men—most of them of mixed Native and European ancestry—who worked on the river as porters, trackers, helmsmen, and as general crew for the sturgeon scows and small steamships. Hence, beaded and quilled objects from Great Slave Lake and even further north might be found in southern centers of commerce such as Winnipeg and Edmonton. One such bag, illustrated in Figure 10, was collected by Colcleugh at St. Peter’s Reserve, Red River, but is beaded in the floral convention characteristic of the Great Slave Lake-Mackenzie River style.

Gender is of some interest in studying collections. Some objects were made by Native women and used by both men and women: for instance, moccasins and other items of clothing, and pouches and wall pockets for storing household items. Some objects, such as sewing bags, were made by women for use by women, while others were made by women for use by men. Among the latter are firebags, gauntlets, quivers, babiche game bags, and dog blanket sets. Snowshoes were made and used by both men and women, the men responsible for the frame and central section of widely spaced

babiche lacing, the women fabricating the delicate hexagonal babiche weave of the front and rear sections. Drums, bows, arrows, and stone pipes were made by men for their own use, although small stone pipes were also made by men for women’s use. A complete nineteenth century collection from the Subarctic includes a combination of these art expressions.

Factors in Selection

The Colcleugh collection was highly personal. Like that of Lord Lonsdale, it was a reflection of the collector’s interests rather than a well-rounded cultural inventory. However, as King (this volume) states, even anthropologists collecting in the Subarctic for major museums during the period prior to the end of World War II had more interest in portable and collectible artifacts than in fragile and hard-to-transport items such as fur clothing and hide lodges. Colcleugh collected only summer clothing, as she was a summer visitor, and this too is typical of European collections of this period. She also collected models, probably because she was a teacher and recognized the explanatory value in such miniaturization and simplification of type. Models were also prevalent in professionally made



Figure 9. Purse, probably Saulteaux, silk thread on caribou hide; collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh, Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1888–94 (HMA 57-332).

collections of this period, such as those of Speck, Emmons, and Teit (King, this volume).

Although Colcleugh, like Lonsdale, was not a systematic collector, both collections were documented; her notebook and published articles, like his diary and letters, provide context and provenance for the artifacts. Their collecting conditions differed in that she was more limited in what she could acquire, being a single woman with no entourage to pack and care for her luggage. Her acquisitions had to be “suitcase-sized” for ease of travel. Lonsdale, on the other hand, was accompanied by a personal valet (for part of the time) and a cook, and also hired numerous guides and porters during the course of his journey. He was able to bring back and send much greater volume in both ethnographic and faunal materials, the latter even including two musk-ox heads.

A third collection from the Mackenzie River area, made by Frank Russell in 1893 for the University Museum of the University of Iowa, contains examples similar to those in the Colcleugh and Lonsdale collections, but with a wider range of types of objects, and more balanced representation of those made and used by both men and women.



Figure 10. Firebag, “half-breed,” glass beads on velvet, Great Slave Lake, Mackenzie River region Athapaskan type; collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh at St. Peter’s Reserve, Red River, Manitoba, 1888–94 (HMA 57-453).

Unlike Colcleugh and Lonsdale, whose collections reflected their personal interests, Russell was consciously attempting to collect in a scientific manner for a university museum, in order to present a fairly complete representation of late nineteenth century Mackenzie River material culture.

Lack of funds also restricted Colcleugh’s purchases. In a newspaper account, she described Loucheux costumes of pure white leather embroidered with quillwork as “marvels of daintiness, the value of which was so well realized that, not being prepared to exchange all my belongings for one, I was forced to relinquish my purpose of obtaining it” (Colcleugh Papers, Vol. I:77).

Access within the community is another factor determining the make-up of collections. While one-fourth of Lonsdale’s collection represents hunting and fishing tools, related to his interests and the objects’ availability through his association with male guides and hunters, nine-tenths of Col-

cleugh's subarctic collection is composed of decorated personal gear and household utensils, probably because these were objects which interested her and to which she had access. Traveling as the invited guest of the Hudson's Bay Company, she was confined for the most part to shipboard or to lodgings within missions, and was dependent upon Company and mission hospitality. When she found an opportunity to make the acquaintance of Native women, however, she did so, and studied their techniques of manufacture with great interest. Since the objects she obtained from the Mackenzie Eskimo and from Alaskan and British Columbian coastal peoples represent a greater proportion of men's equipment than of women's, it may be that her collecting in the Subarctic was determined as much by accessibility as by preferences relating to gender.

Native expectations sometimes determined a collector's selections. Certain objects may have been offered to a man, and others to a woman, according to Native perceptions of the collector's interests. Colcleugh may have been offered especially fine bead and silk embroideries because, like other women, she was assumed to be an embroiderer herself, or because she expressed particular delight in their beauty, and spent time with the women observing the process of making the embroideries. A man, on the other hand, might only have been offered an embroidery if he mentioned that he wanted it for a female relative. Although a feminist of her period, Colcleugh was an individual in a world sensitized to differences in masculine and feminine tastes, and her large collection of female-related objects may reflect this.

Emma Shaw Colcleugh as a Collector

In time, Colcleugh became a sophisticated traveler and connoisseur of Native arts. She was well aware of the "collecting fever" of the period which, while not yet reaching the central Subarctic, was raging high in southeastern Alaska. She understood the eagerness of collectors to produce those artifacts most clearly representing the past, which were considered therefore the most authentic and untainted by European contact.

Northern Native materials were sought not only by private collectors, but also by major American museums with ethnology departments. Most notably, the Smithsonian Institution, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Field Museum of Natural History mounted large-scale collecting expeditions in the second half of the nineteenth century. From comments in her articles describing trips to Alaska and British

Columbia in 1884, 1885, and 1888, it is clear that Colcleugh was aware of the frantic rush to "plunder" Northwest Coast artifacts (see Cole 1985). She commented on the difference in both the amount and quality of Native arts available in 1884 and 1888:

Great as was the change effected during the time which elapsed between my first and second visits, it was little in comparison to that which confronted me when I, the third time, went curio-hunting in Alaskan villages. The tourist of today can know little of native life as it appeared to me in 1884. . . . the visitor desirous of seeing any trace of aboriginal life cannot long delay his visit (Colcleugh Papers Vol. II:59-62).

In the *Boston Globe* Colcleugh (1889) writes of the Haida at Skidegate, Masset, and Gold Harbor, and warns that "the totems are falling, the escutcheons being bought by greedy curio hunters, and the ethnologist who would study these people and their customs should hasten to the rich field awaiting his investigations at Queen Charlotte Islands."

Colcleugh discussed the decline of quality in Native crafts in an article on "Primitive Basketry":

The beautiful, time-mellowed tints have been succeeded by the gaudy magentas and purples of the aniline dyes, and coarse, hasty work is palmed off upon the uninitiated curio hunter. It is quite possible that the habit of scorching baskets, in order to produce the look of age desired by connoisseurs, may explain to some buyers why their baskets, as one expressed it, "fall all to pieces." The only baskets obtainable today are evidently made to sell and not to figure as heirlooms. . . . There may be a few who hold yet the baskets made before the days of cheap crockery and omnipresent tin cans, but the number is fast diminishing, and with the demise of these old timers will disappear much of the high art basketry of the American aborigine (Colcleugh Papers Vol. I:97).

Although she decried the curio fever decimating Native material culture, Colcleugh herself succumbed to it. She was, at least in her more youthful travels in Alaska, one of those intrepid Victorian tourists for whom direct contact with the Other was part of the travel experience (see Lee, this volume), and, as the following extract illustrates, she brings the reader along with her as she boldly enters Native homes and bargains for household possessions:

Into one of these houses may I ask my reader to accompany me, stooping a little as he enters the opening in the totem-pole, which often is represented as the yawning mouth of some mythological figure. . . . Descending the flight of steps which will bring us to the family hearth—or hearths, for several families occupy one establishment—we greet the inmates with 'Kla-how-ya,' or 'How do



Figure 11. Slipper uppers, Cree or Cree-Métis, caribou hide, silk-thread embroidery; collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh, Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1888-94 (HMA 57-327-8).

you do?’ in the Chinook jargon, which is the Volapük of the Pacific coast Indians . . . [Soon Colcleugh discovered the location of] the quaint trunks which contain the festal garments, stores of blankets and other family treasures. It did not take me long to learn to follow along the platform until I came to these storehouses, and many a Kloshe spoon have I inveigled them into producing after they had repeatedly said ‘Halo’ (none). (Colcleugh 1889).

Later, Colcleugh was able to reflect on her participation in the curio craze, and to mock herself and others in verse:

Each landing made, the tourists run
From hut to hut, scouring each one,
Striving by nod and knowing look—
Helped out with broken, poor Chinook—
To make their wants and wishes known,
To claim quaint curios for their own.
Wanted, by all, “A big horn spoon,”
It is the universal tune.
The Klootchmen search their treasures o’er.
Revealing sure a motley store
Of mats and baskets neatly made,
Which they for coin will gladly trade.
From out a pot of steaming fish
(With them an omnipresent dish)
The spoons they snatch, and try to clean—
Thinking their actions all unseen.
They hold them up and name the price;
The good ones vanish in a trice,
‘Mid “Oh’s!” and “Ah’s” of all the crowd
And lamentations long and loud,

That no more good ones can be found,
Though all the town is searched around . . .
(Colcleugh Papers Vol. IV:26).

By participating in direct encounters with Native people and recording her impressions, she preserved data. Her collecting activities, accompanied by journalistic reports, completed the two halves of the nineteenth century salvage paradigm: the Native past simultaneously destroyed, as artifacts were removed from context, and preserved for the future, through the reports of eye-witnesses, and especially of anthropologists like Franz Boas who recorded ceremonies, myths, language, and art forms (Berlo 1991).

Colcleugh was aware of the importance of process. She collected parts of objects (Fig. 11), and she described craft techniques in a variety of articles, including “Indian Women’s Needlework,” “Maori Housekeeping,” “Clothmaking in the South Seas,” “Body Decoration,” and “Primitive Basketry.” Between 1888 and 1893 she made several trips on the Saskatchewan River in a stern-wheel steamer (see Fig. 3). Taking advantage of the long wait at a Cree village at the mouth of the river, she had “an opportunity to become acquainted with the Indian women . . . after a while they had so far satisfied their curiosity respecting the strange ‘white squaw’ as to resume their ordinary work.” Colcleugh obviously recognized that she was the Other to the Cree women, and sat with them as participant-observer:

When I was finally admitted to a place in their ‘sewing circle’ it was with surprised admiration that I watched their work. Whether ornamenting with beads the covers to moss bags, in which the Cree infants spend the greater part of the time, making fine the buckskin shirts for their liege lords, fashioning moccasins of smoked moose-skin or dainty slippers of the thinner caribou-skin, the work was alike excellent.

Never, even in the art stores of our great centres, have I seen silk embroidery upon leather that equalled in fineness and finish that accomplished by some of those aboriginal workers. Upon a finely dressed, snow white caribou skin as a foundation the worker traced her pattern with a porcupine quill, dipped in the expressed juice of some berry or plant. Now and again she looked at the leaf or blossom of the plant, the counterfeit of which she desired to produce, or which she proposed taking as the unit of some conventionalized design. When complete she covered the entire pattern with a larger piece of leather, in which was cut an opening of sufficient size to show a single unit of the pattern. Through this opening she worked, keeping carefully covered each finished portion and so changing the position of the covering leather that when all was done the leather was perfectly immaculate in its whiteness in spite of surroundings which would tend to produce an opposite result (see Fig. 12) (Colcleugh Papers Vol. I:77).



Figure 12. Wall pocket, Cree or Cree-Métis, Lake Winnipeg country, caribou hide, silk-thread embroidery; collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh in 1888–94 (HMA 57-329).

Colcleugh collected data as well as objects. Her interest in details of construction and technique and her comments on work conditions provide valuable information about women's arts, of a kind not frequently found in reports by male observers. Although Colcleugh did not specifically mention mission school teaching as the original inspiration for floral embroidery motifs, her use of the term "conventionalized design" suggests awareness of it. Her interest, though, is in the artistic innovation possible when Native artists were drawing from nature, which individualized the interpretation of floral conventions.

She provides useful information on the ethnicity of the women artisans. Since much floral embroidery in this region and period has been attributed to the Métis, it is noteworthy that she does not use that term here, but specifies "aboriginal workers," "Cree," and "Indian women." Elsewhere, in identifying objects such as the silk-thread embroidered mittens from Fort McMurray, she has specified "half-breed mittens" (Fig. 13). She recognized regional differences in design:

When I continued my journey by slow stages up the Saskatchewan, the frequent stops, two and three days at a time, gave opportunity for studying fur-

ther the details of work. I learned that to one acquainted with the peculiarities of the different tribes the design upon any article would reveal the locality where it was made. At that time no Indian costume was considered complete which did not include a 'firebag.' This name was applied to certain long, narrow bags of smoked moose or caribou skin which, slung to the belt of the wearer, contained not only pipe, tobacco and 'kinnikinick,' with which most northern natives adulterated their meager supply of the weed, but flint and tinder as well. In one section nothing but geometrical designs were ever seen upon these bags; in another it was the equally unvaried fashion to use only floral patterns for their adornment. With the latter the fringe is entirely plain, while on the former bands of bright colored straw [sic; porcupine quills] divide into sections the upper part (Colcleugh Papers, Vol. I:77).

Colcleugh was attuned to seek the meaning and function of an object within the community. She collected a "very old beaded dog blanket" (Fig. 14) from the Great Slave Lake region, and described its significance:

Upon all winter expeditions—"tripping it" is the local expression—there is great rivalry between the dog drivers relative to the magnificence of their respective outfits, and wives and sweethearts vie with one another as to which shall present to her gallant the most elaborate dog blanket, the finest leathern tunic, or the handsomest mittens or leggings (Colcleugh Papers Vol. I:77).

From a Cree village near the mouth of the Saskatchewan River Colcleugh provides information on the cultural significance of the decorated moccasin to its makers:

Upon the moccasins the greatest care was expended, these being considered a proper vehicle of regard from one Indian to another. They are the maiden's first gift to her Indian lover and with a married woman they not only stand as an indication of the excellence of her handiwork, but also of the degree of her regard for her husband. It is a common saying that an Indian's moccasins are a walking advertisement of his standing at home (Colcleugh Papers Vol. I:77).

She was also conscious of the passing of older forms and decoration, and like everyone else, she lamented this evidence of acculturation. About the babiche bags of the Dogrib, she said, "It used to be customary to ornament these broad, shallow bags with parallel rows of tiny tassels, made from cut leather wound with colored straws or quills, but even at the time of my visit, only a few of the old ones could be found and the modern ones had tawdry worsted tassels" (Colcleugh Papers Vol. I:77). See Figure 15 for the old game bag Colcleugh found.

Colcleugh commissioned some objects for herself, among them:



Figure 13. Mittens, Cree-Métis, or Chipewyan-Métis; collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh at Fort McMurray, Athabasca River in 1894 (HMA 57-542).

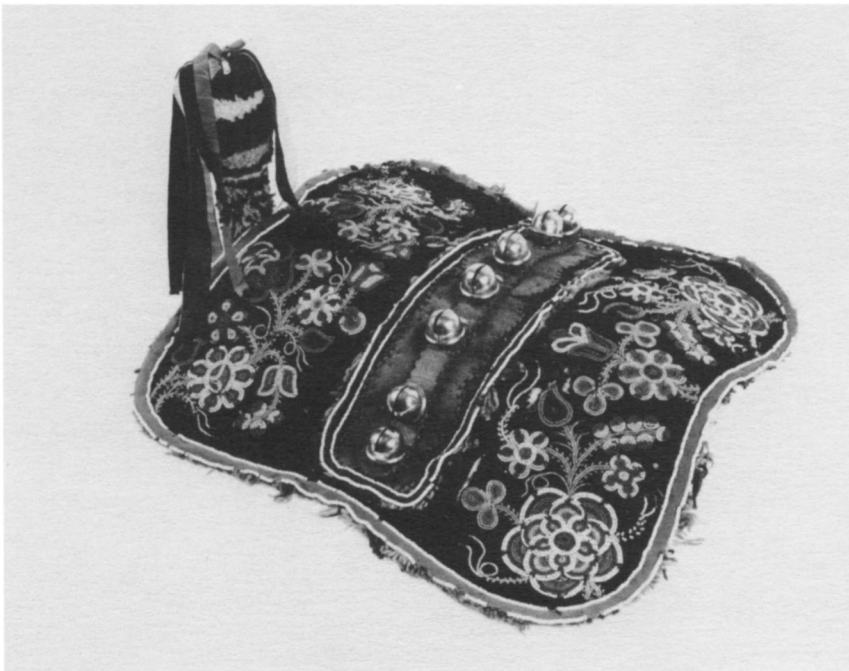


Figure 14. Sled dog blanket, "very old . . . like those in use through all the Mackenzie district," glass beads on wool, sleigh-bells; collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh at Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River in 1894 (HMA 60-4527).

a pair of slippers [Fig. 16] made for me by an Indian girl whom I met more than a hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle. The body of the slipper was of reindeer skin, which, white at first, she had with a preparation of bark colored a pale, yellowish terra cotta. About the top, the edge cut like tiny battlements, was a border of white leather on which she had embroidered some buds of the wild rose, which grows there luxuriantly, and a small blue flower, with which I was unfamiliar (Colcleugh Papers Vol. I:77).

However, Colcleugh never noted by name the Native people from whom she purchased or com-

missioned goods, thus was not a participant in the trend that was occurring in the Northwest Coast and the Southwest toward individualizing artists. This trend was supported by museum anthropologists who wished both to identify collections more closely and to provide encouragement for individual craftspeople; it was also encouraged by traders as a means of raising prices.

Reflections

Colcleugh was a champion of the creative skills of Native women, and ceaselessly praised their artis-

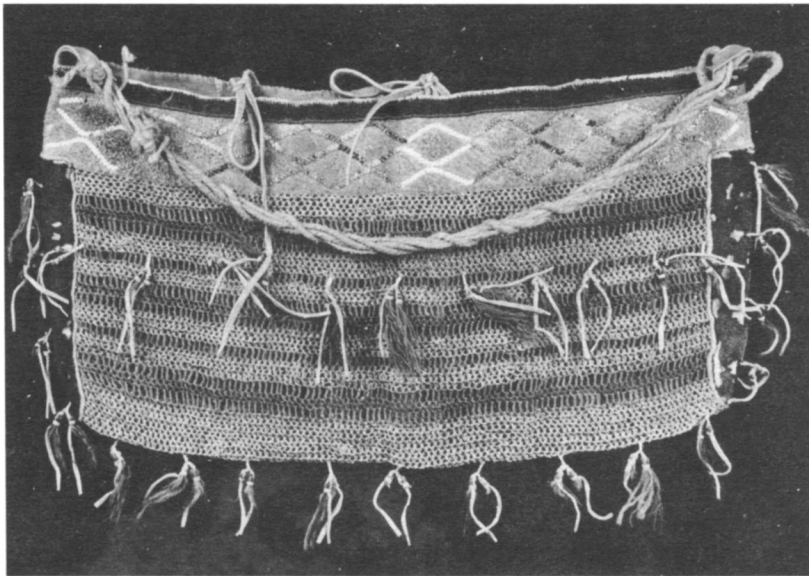


Figure 15. Game bag, Dogrib, babiche, porcupine quills, broad-cloth; collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh at Fort Rae, Great Slave Lake, in 1894 (HMA 57-514).

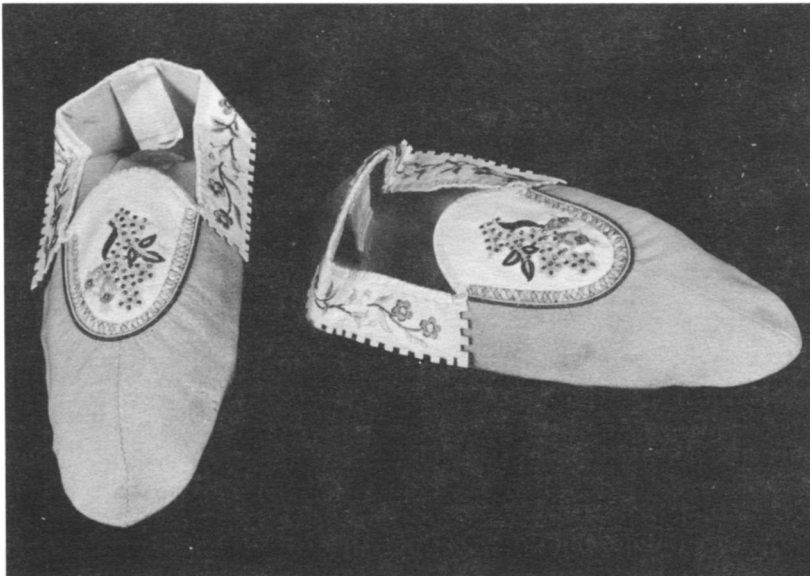


Figure 16. Moccasins, Dogrib, caribou hide, silk thread, porcupine quills, glass beads; made for Emma Shaw Colcleugh by the wife of the trader at Fort McPherson, Peel River, in 1894 (HMA 57-537).

tic abilities: “It is quite true that the primitive people have much to learn of us, but it is equally true that from them we might take many a lesson with profit” (Colcleugh Papers Vol. I:77). In her direct interaction with the Others she met, her frank appreciation that they must find her as strange as she found them, she was anticipating the views of recent ethnographers that the subjective and objective are intertwined, with the Self in discussion with the Other, indeed, seeing itself as Other, rather than considering the Other as an object of detached scientific inquiry (Clifford 1986:23).

The Colcleugh collection may be viewed as an artifact in itself, shaped by the aesthetic tastes, particular interests, and gender of the collector, the

purpose and duration of her visit, the degree of acculturation of those from whom she collected, her relations to and within the community and their view of her within her own culture, and the portability and durability of the objects available for her to collect. All of these factors determined the composition of this and other Victorian personal collections, and should be kept in mind when viewing exhibitions of personal collections with the expectation of gaining an overview of the material culture of a particular people at a particular time and place.

Furthermore, even in collections made systematically and with self-conscious use of “scientific process,” objects have been removed

from their original settings within a community. As they move from their original cultural context to their new contexts (be they a woman's cozy corner or a man's trophy den), then on again to their museum context, the objects assume different meanings and are assigned different values. In studying these material expressions of culture, or simply viewing them, we need to keep in mind the inherent bias in all attempts to recontextualize a people's culture in another time and place.

Endnotes

1. This article is based on a paper presented at the symposium "Out of the North," held at the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, 20 October 1989. It incorporates material from chapter two of Hail and Duncan 1989, plus additional information recently made available through the courtesy of Emma Shaw Colcleugh's family (Colcleugh Papers 1875-1940), as well as insights gained from the above symposium, from the papers in this volume, and from other works.
2. See Olds 1985 for stories of other "traveling ladies," including another Rhode Islander, Annie Smith Peck, the "queen of the climbers," who scaled the Matterhorn, Orizaba in Mexico, and Huascarán in Peru, the last at age 60. See also Middleton 1965 and Russell 1986.
3. For late nineteenth century Mackenzie River visitors see Comfort 1974. See also Pike 1892, Tyrell 1893, Russell 1898, and Krech 1989.

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