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The McDougall Common-place Book
Montreal, Sept 21st 1825

Recently, Mrs Evelyn O'Neill, of Omemee, asked for an assessment of a family treasure. Perhaps, you have something comparable and wonder whether it would have wider interest. This treasure primarily has the form of a common-place book. However, virtually everything has been copied by hand, suggesting that someone else kept the original copy-book. This item has been donated to the Trent Valley Archives, and this report may serve as a finding aid.

One can learn quite a bit from common-place books. They often contain favorite clippings from newspapers and magazines, and the clippings will point to biographical or intellectual pertinence.

1. Tucked into the front of the book is a copy of a survey diagram showing a grant of 3000 acres on the Ottawa River to a Lieut. Col. Robertson in the Township of Chatham. Signed M.A. MD.
2. The transcription of a speech by a Mr Phillip to the London Hibernian School Society, Sligo, 1820. p. 1-5
3. An anecdote about Archbishop Fenelon suggesting that many of Louis XIV's friends only came to chapel to flatter him. p 6
4. An attractive watercolour of two British ships; the rest of the page contains six common sayings arranged in a hexagon. p 7
5. Several short poems, epigrams and other commonplaces, pp 8-32. Some items noted are: a cut-out watercolour image of someone from the back. p 15; an excerpt about George III in 1814. pp 11-2; "The Ladies Thermometer," pp 16-17; "Duration of English Parliaments", p 18; "French Account of the State of Matrimony in England in 1816," p 19; oaths at the Champs de Mars, p 22; hand-tinted litho print of a fashionable lady, p 23. A page devoted to the singularity of the letter "A", p 25; historic anecdotes; an acrostic on Napoleon, p 27; how to answer questions in the House of Commons, p 28; Welsh epitaphs and other sayings; a list of poet laureates from 1598 to 1790, p 31.
6. "North West Expedition," Lieut Parry, 1819, p 33-38; hand drawn coloured map showing passages through the Arctic islands.
7. Poetry, pp 39-43; including "Discovery better than Conquest" p 39; "To a Young Lady" p 39; and "To A Young Married Man," pp 40-42. Note unidentified silhouette, p 43.
8. History items, pp 44-61, including excerpts from the *Annual Register* 1782, pp 44-45; "Horrid Vengeance taken by an Highland Chief," 1814, pp 46-47; "Patriotic Song" [on the defeat of Napoleon] p 48-49; "Prayer of the Heroic Lord Nelson" p 51 accompanying a watercolour of a British ship; predictions, 1788, of M de la Harpe, which were literally fulfilled in subsequent 25 years, pp 52-57; predictions by the Bishop of Arles, 1610, pp 60-61.
9. More commonplaces, pp 62ff, including a vocabulary of fashionable phrases, p 62; "Lucretia Grenville," pp 68-69; "Observations on Time", p 70; Dean Swift's "Days of the Book", pp 71-72; "English Discovery of Madeira, 1544" pp 80-81; "Oliver Cromwell," p 88; "General Wolfe's Death," pp 97-98; "Advice from a Matron to a Young Lady concerning Wedlock," pp 99-100; on tobacco, p 104; altitudes of mountains, depths of lakes, p 108; calculation of distances from Moscow, p 109; Vengeance taken by a Highland Chief, pp 110-111 (cf 46-47); "Lord Byron's Riddle upon the letter I," p 116; "A Turkish Love-Letter," pp

- 120-121; "Murder of Miss McCrea," pp 122-123.
10. The Pavilion at Saratoga Springs, p 140; the Battle of Tallapoosa, 27 March 1814, reported to General Jackson, pp 145-146, including tip-in hand-drawn map of the battle; Spanish Armada, pp 150-151; Moscow deserted, 1812, p 152; "Battle of Chippewa, July 5th, 1814," including hand drawn and coloured battle plan, pp 155-156, 159-161.
 11. Jordan River, p 162; Nahant, Massachusetts, pp 181-183; Ottawa River, p 184; "Beauty's Alphabet," p 204; "The Quebec Fashionables," a poem, pp 208-210; "Reply to the Foregoing Lines: to the author of some scandalous verses lately circulated in Quebec," pp 211-212, by Mr Jolliffe.
 12. Napoleon 2nd, 1 January 1819, pp 216-217; "Scotland," p 220; "Equivocal Verses by a French Republican," p 222; "The Curse of Scotland" [the 9 of diamonds at the Battle of Culloden], p 224; "Poetical Portraits," p 225; "City of Algiers", including two tipped-in hand-drawn and coloured maps, 9 pages, and a surrender of Algiers, [1816].
 13. There are several hand-made artistic valentines, and envelopes that might have carried a valentine. After the title page we have two decorative hand-made envelopes each containing a miniature print clipped from a book about a knight carrying a damsel on his charger. As well, valentine items include: decorative envelope containing pressed something (p 67); Valentine 1823 (p 117); valentine (p 147); decorated envelope (p 149); valentine (p 153); Valentine to Miss Jessie (?), 1823, p 169, including tip-in hand-made valentine; "Genuine Heroism," p 170-171; Valentine, p 177, including the glued in valentine; valentine (p 175); valentine (envelope opening to reveal two verses) (p 177); an angel (p 200); "To others Characters our own" (p 213); "High Winds" envelope opening to different scene (p 227); flowers (unpaged); forest scene with a bridge (unpaged).
 14. There are several fashion cut-outs, usually featuring movable parts: "Asylum Dress" (p 101); "Lucind in the French Costume" (p 107); "The Russian Costume" (p 113); "The Turkish Costume" (p 119); "Circassian Costume" (p 125); "Nun" (p 129);
 15. Other artwork not noted in the foregoing summary included: Sepia wash of a former sea-side battlement (preface); two British ships (p 7); back view a man (p15); fashionable lady (p 23); Dunnolly castle (print from newspaper) near Oban (p 59); Les Grimaces by L. Boilly, lithograph by de Delpeck (between pp 96 and 97) removed from a book; Charmantes fleurs (p 115); "Sketch of the River Santafe Isle of Pines, 1824" (p 131); floral envelope "Trifle" containing an 1850 clipping about the American whale ship "John Henry" taking charge of the "Resolute" which had been abandoned off Melville Island, 1848 (p 134); Two Indians in colourful dress (p 159); a burning ship (p 173); two watercolour scenes, of a village and of firefighters at a burning house (p 185); two scenes, of a horse and sleigh, and of a sail-boat and a fisherman (p 199); riddle envelope creating four men: Mr Orberry, Justin Greedy, Mr Simmons and Baron Munchausen (p 205); "Things as they are!!!" a caricature of two cocks fighting (p 207); "Antithesis" [two churches walking on legs, apparently St Mary's Belleville Crescent and St George's Charlotte's Square] (p 215); "Things as they ought to be" [caricature of two clergymen, apparently Mr Thompson and Mr Gray] (p 219).
 16. Tip-in ALS from Angus Shaw, Newark, 30 October 1827, to Misses McDougall. "My dearest nieces: There is among the fine things which I left in your House a Large Powder Horn with a map of the Route of the British Army which took possession of Montreal in 1760 engraved upon it and which Horn was owned by Lord Amherst who Commanded the Army. This Horn I have given to my old friend Col. McKay, who I have seen here and I request you to deliver it to him. I am obliged to go from home to-day on some Business therefore must conclude in haste. My Very Dear Nieces, your ever Affectionate Uncle, Angus Shaw."
 17. "A Triumphant Ode Sung at the Clear Grit Club Room, Sept 17, 1878 as taken down by the Special Reporter," by B.B.S., loose item.
 18. A later hand, the current owner of this treasure, used blank pages at the end to begin a tasteful scrapbook of stories of common interest around 1939-1940. The pictorial items from *Saturday Night* include FDR and the White House; George VI and Elizabeth; the Dionne quintuplets; Lord and Lady Tweedsmuir (and several related to the funeral of John Buchan). As well, there are a few newspaper clippings from the *Sudbury Star*.

What is it possible to say about the people and the lives touched by this interesting pot-pourri? The easiest point of entry is the letter from Angus Shaw to his two nieces. Angus Shaw was a colourful character in Canadian history.

He was one of the fur trade entrepreneurs who made life difficult for the Hudson's Bay Company until the union of the fur trade companies in 1821. The nieces appear to be the daughters of Duncan McDougall, also a fur trader, and the sisters of George McDougall, who was the executor of Shaw's impressive estate in 1832. We are on the edge of the Beaver Club society, the social elite of Montreal.

The McDougalls and the Shaws did many amazing things. Duncan McDougall, for example, was a founder of Fort Astoria. Angus Shaw led many trips to James Bay and was engaged in efforts to ensure that Hudson Strait was not a private waterway.

It would seem that the artist in the group would be M.A. McDougall, but some of the items point to a second sister, Jamesina. It may be that this is a joint effort, if the two sisters were each trying to have this common-place book.

The next question might be to trace what is the connection between the Sudbury girl of 1940 and the two McDougall sisters of 1825. Perhaps we can learn something of the provenance and genealogy for our next issue.

Somehow that link will take us past B.B.S., and that curious Clear Grit ode of 1878. After reading the ode, the search has to be for a Liberal journalist, just possibly a descendent of Angus Shaw. Perhaps, someone such as Benjamin Sulte.

There are other questions raised by this intriguing common-place book. If we have the right family, what is the connection with the elaborate items related to Algiers? This takes on extra interest since the attack on the World Trade Centre on the 11 September 2001. Algiers was one of the Barbary towns noted for the pirates that plagued the Mediterranean for centuries, and were finally put under control by the two wars with the United States in the years when Britain and France were engaged in the great Revolutionary War. The allusion could also be to all things Turkish, as the 1820s was the decade when Greece fought for its independence. The key article on Algiers reads like an encyclopaedia article, but the two hand-drawn maps of Algiers set it aside.

Also peculiar are the battle plans for the Battle of Tallapoosa and for the Battle of Chippewa, two rather obscure battles related to Tecumseh and the Indians who supported the British during the War of 1812. Armed with more knowledge of the McDougalls and the Shaws we might be able to make the connections.

The common-place book has many tales to tell, if only we can break the codes. This one allows us to make links to a world 175 years ago, and to events that seemed important then stretched back further centuries. Moreover, we are reminded that words can indeed take on life just because someone thought it deserved a note. What a wonderful treasure!