

ravant, se sont intéressés aux cultures autochtones. Une grande majorité d'entre eux se sont rendus dans des régions lointaines où ils ont été en contact direct avec ces cultures. Également, les liens qu'ils avaient avec la Compagnie de la baie d'Hudson expliquent souvent, en dernière analyse, la présence de ces objets à Montréal.

Or on ne peut s'empêcher de remarquer que cet itinéraire-type du collectionneur d'artefacts amérindiens et inuits présente de nombreux points communs avec celui du grand-père de Julien Gaudet, Charles Philippe Gaudet. Ce dernier avait quitté Montréal en 1852 pour gagner les Territoires du Nord-Ouest; il y épousa en 1858 une jeune métisse, Marie Houle Fisher, et y occupa successivement divers postes pour le compte de la Compagnie de la baie d'Hudson, dont celui de «Chief Trader» [chef de poste], jusqu'à sa retraite en 1911. Grâce à son petit-fils, la collection revient donc aujourd'hui à Montréal, et dans un musée qui a lui-même accueilli, par des détours assez semblables, des objets de même origine. En s'enrichissant de cette façon, la collection du Musée McCord contribue à parfaire le double témoignage que notre institution est en mesure d'apporter sur, d'une part, la richesse des cultures autochtones canadiennes et, d'autre part, l'ouverture d'esprit de ces gens qui, au tournant du siècle, ont porté sur ces cultures un regard avide d'embrasser une réalité qui les fascinait.

Charles deVolpi – Collector Extraordinary

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1989 proved a significant year for the McCord collections. A number of important additions were made to the Decorative Arts collection; most notably, the acquisition of the deVolpi collection of transfer printed ceramics and weathervanes.

Charles P. deVolpi CM., F.R.P.S.L. (1910-1981) was a Montreal businessman and notable collector of Canadiana. Chairman of the Board of Perkins Papers, he was also Honorary Colonel of the Royal Canadian Hussars. He was married to Margaret Barnhill and they had two sons, David and Thomas. In 1964 they moved from Montreal to St. Sauveur des Monts, Québec, where he had ample space to house his expanding collections. His collecting activities began with philatelics and slowly evolved to many other disciplines including archival documents, prints, ceramics, ethnographic artefacts, folk art, military memorabilia and weathervanes. A methodical collector, deVolpi kept inventories, sales receipts and letters of inquiry for all his purchases. These were given to the Museum in 1981 when his collection of prints and drawings was donated. This valuable source of information helps to document the collections and is a significant research tool for the study of the mid-20th century collector. As an author, Charles deVolpi produced 10 volumes illustrating the earliest prints depicting Canadian views from Montreal, Quebec, Toronto and Niagara to Newfoundland and British Columbia. These have proven to be an essential aid to anyone interested in the visual interpretation of Early Canada.

The transfer printed ceramic collection comprising 444 items illustrates in the main part examples made specifically for the Canadian market during the 19th century by the Staffordshire potteries. However, the fact that much of this pictorial earthenware was widely distributed in its own day, and not made exclusively for the Canadian market, is historical



Earthenware platter, ca. 1835, by Davenport. The view "Montreal" is based on two watercolours by R.A. Sproule, engraved by W.S. Leney and published in 1830 by A. Bourne, Montreal. (Photograph by François Leclair, deVolpi Collection, McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal.)

evidence of the way Canadian scenery seized the imagination and interest of the 19th century. The wares reflected changes in taste—not only taste in the wares themselves (their bodies, shapes and colours) but the changing way of looking at things, from the romantic to the literal. The earthenware links the world of artists, printmakers, and photographers to the practical world of potters whose wares were intended for daily use.

The weathervane collection comprises 80 vanes and whirligigs produced in Quebec and eastern Canada in the 19th and early 20th century. As the most comprehensive private collection in Quebec these new additions make the McCord's weathervane collection a major holding which now totals 117 examples.

The study of "folk art" as an expression of material culture has made significant advances in the past decade. Folklorists practice not only analysis of artifacts, but also behavioural observation and ethnoscientific questioning in order to elicit a folk aesthetic. Objects of material culture may embody not only an artist's conception but also a client's desires. Claude Levi-Strauss used the term "bricolage" to describe the mental process in which an artist partially accepts a new idea, fusing the new with the old.¹

Until now little has been published on Canadian weathervanes and whirligigs which in French Canada followed a separate tradition than that found in the United States of America. With the addition of this collection research can now begin which should result in a better understanding of the craftsmanship and the selection of motifs seen in Eastern Canada during the 19th and early 20th century.

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1. Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Storage Mind* (Chicago, 1969), 16-22.