

Beamish Murdoch: Nova Scotia's National Historian

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Beamish Murdoch: Nova Scotia's National Historian

THE WORK OF BEAMISH MURDOCH, asserted D.C. Harvey in 1938, inaugurated a new phase in Nova Scotia's intellectual history. Motivated by the "search for truth and the preservation of history for its own sake", he brought modern historiographical tenets to bear on what, till then, had been an exercise in colonial boosterism.¹ In the decades separating the War of 1812 from the 1860s, Nova Scotia was transformed; economic growth and diversification combined with expanding civil liberties and political autonomy to inspire a sense of achievement and local patriotism. The writing of the colony's history was an especially important tool in transforming attitudes. Historians, journalists, essayists and politicians directed their efforts towards this goal, monopolizing historical writing with patriotic accounts and *apologia*. Murdoch's historical writing, however, reflected a new-found maturity and confidence, and ushered in a new era in historical writing. His *History of Nova-Scotia, or Acadie* (3 vols., Halifax, 1865-1867), was among the principal manifestations of Nova Scotia's "Golden Age" and a major contribution to the reformulation of provincial historiography. Gone were the days when the province's writers generally shared T.C. Haliburton's view "that there is in fact no history of Nova Scotia to relate".² Gone, too, was the old notion that the duty of historians was to urge their countrymen towards collective betterment or, as Judge Peleg Wiswall put it, "that state of society in which the greatest possible state of earthly happiness will be attained to".³ History based upon original research, free of overt bias and polemical tone, yet useful and inspirational: this was the ideal, and Murdoch was its champion.

To appreciate Murdoch's contribution to the study of his province's past, his work must be viewed within the more general context of 19th century historiography.

- 1 D.C. Harvey, "History and Its Uses in Pre-Confederation Nova Scotia", *Canadian Historical Association, Annual Report* (1938), pp. 5-16.
- 2 T.C. Haliburton to P. Wiswall, 7 January 1824, "Haliburton-Wiswall Correspondence", *Report of the Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, for the Year ending 30 November 1945* (Halifax, 1946), app. C, p. 38.
- 3 P. Wiswall to S.G.W. Archibald, 14 March 1818, reproduced in D.C. Harvey, ed., "A Blue Print for Nova Scotia in 1818", *Canadian Historical Review*, XXIV (December 1943), p. 400.

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This age of radical change in historical consciousness witnessed both the rise of history as the principal yardstick of human evolution and its decline in the wake of the crisis of historicism. Murdoch sat astride this movement, in what is called the “Middle Period”.⁴ While sharing some of the assumptions of their predecessors, Murdoch and his contemporaries approached their writing with new and different goals in mind. Interested in historical generalization, they produced massive narrative accounts in the hope of creating an objective perspective on events. Their legacy was one of unprecedented mastery of detail, and equally unprecedented failure to grapple with large-scale problems and structure. Marked by narrative construction and a propensity for highlighting self-evident causes, this was a genre which focused on political, constitutional and biographical history. Robert Christie, the historian of Lower Canada, said it all. He warned his readers that his books were “dry and heavy, if not a veritable penance”. His goal, after all, was “to record, for future information, the various and important sayings and doings, parliamentary and political, that have taken place in Lower Canada”.⁵ Of the numerous works in British North America patterned after Christie’s history, Murdoch’s tome was the first notable one; together, they served as models for the first comprehensive histories of Newfoundland, the North-West and British Columbia.⁶

Murdoch was born in 1800 in Halifax, grandson of the first Church of Scotland missionary to Nova Scotia and, on his mother’s side, descendant of a well-to-do merchant family.⁷ His own childhood was, however, darkened by his father’s seven-year jailing for debt; separated from his parents, he was brought up by a maternal aunt. Schooling in Halifax, followed by an apprenticeship to R.J. Uniacke and admission to the Bar in 1822, provided the foundation for a distinguished legal career and a life devoted to the common weal. A member of “The Club”, Murdoch contributed to the colony’s periodicals; for a time, he edited the *Acadian Magazine or Literary Mirror*.⁸ In 1826 he was elected to the

4 For the general picture, see R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London and New York, 1968); for the North American scene, see J.S. Basset, *The Middle Group of American Historians* (2nd ed., Freeport, N.Y., 1966).

5 Quoted in K.N. Windsor, “Historical Writing in Canada to 1920” in C.F. Klinck, ed., *Literary History of Canada. Canadian Literature in English* (Toronto, 1965), p. 221. Because of space considerations, references to some standard works have been eliminated.

6 See J.M. McMullen, *The History of Canada from Its First Discovery to the Present Time* (Brockville, Ont., 1855); Charles Pedley, *The History of Newfoundland from the Earliest Times to the Year 1860* (London, 1863); Alexander Begg, *History of the North-West* (Toronto, 1894-1895); Alexander Begg c.c., *History of British Columbia from its Earliest Discovery to the Present Time* (Toronto, 1894).

7 For biographical references, see K.G. Pryke, “Beamish Murdoch”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X (Toronto, 1972), pp. 539-40; obituary, *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 11 February 1876; “Notes on Murdoch-Godfrey Letters”, MG 100, vol. 59, no. 1a, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS].

8 J.S. Cunnabell, “Nova Scotians at Home”, *Morning Herald* (Halifax), 15 August 1884.

House of Assembly as a member for Halifax, and, as a Tory reformist, was embroiled in the debates which rocked the 13th General Assembly. Advocating the primacy of the House in revenue matters and finances while adhering firmly to the principle of the Crown's prerogative elsewhere, and lending support to the cause of Catholic emancipation and to the Pictou Academy while resisting other reform causes, Murdoch tried to steer a middle course. Caught between the Halifax merchant class and the reformers, he fell victim to the Great Revenue debate; this and two unsuccessful attempts at re-election doomed him to political oblivion and to a public and private feud with Joseph Howe.⁹ Nevertheless, his occasional clashes with the establishment were more a symptom of the rapid evolution of the body politic than of real dissidence; certainly, he was no more vilified than Haliburton or Howe. Murdoch remained a respected member of the Halifax establishment, as demonstrated by his long tenure as secretary of the Central Board of Education and his selection as orator at the centenary celebration of the founding of Halifax.¹⁰ Aside from tutelage under his spinster aunt Beamish, conversion to the Established Church and his life-long celibacy, there were few outward signs of distinctiveness. Notable, however, was his apparent disinclination to leave Nova Scotia; he spent his entire life in Halifax save his last years, in retirement, in Lunenburg, where he died in 1876.

Murdoch's first historical publication was his 1825 narrative of the Great Fire of the Miramichi.¹¹ Within weeks of the event, he had gathered enough information to write a lively and complete description of the disaster and its consequences. This was followed by an essay on the Debtor's Law,¹² a subject naturally close to his heart. The most pressing need at this time was a provincial history, but Haliburton was already embarked upon such a project. Murdoch, therefore, decided to write a history, not just of Nova Scotia, but of all of British North America. Styled as "Historical Memoirs of the British North American Provinces Since His Present Majesty's Accession", this study was constructed in imitation of Christie's work on Lower Canada.¹³ Meant to reply to metropolitan misconceptions, it chronicled the constitutional grievances of the people of British North

9 Duncan Campbell, *Nova Scotia in Its Historical, Mercantile and Industrial Relations* (Montreal, 1873), pp. 268ff., and J.M. Beck, *Joseph Howe, Vol. 1, Conservative Reformer, 1804-1848* (Montreal, 1982), pp. 242-51.

10 See *Celebration of the Centenary [sic] Anniversary of the Settlement of the City of Halifax, June 18th, 1849* (Halifax, 1850).

11 *A Narrative of the Late Fires at Miramichi, New Brunswick: With an Appendix containing the Statements of many of the Sufferers, and a Variety of Interesting Occurrences; Together with a Poem entitled "The Conflagration"* (Halifax, 1825).

12 *An Essay on the Mischievous Tendency of imprisoning for Debt* (Halifax, 1826).

13 Haliburton wrote *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova-Scotia, in two volumes. Illustrated by a map of the province and several engravings* (2 vols., Halifax, 1829). For Murdoch's "Memoirs", see Beamish Murdoch Papers, MG 1, vol. 726, PANS.

America. Although based on a wide reading of sources, it was severely chronological and lacked a unifying theme. Indeed, the "Memoirs" amounted to little more than a scrapbook of press clippings.

Until the 1860s, Murdoch made no further attempt to gain recognition as an historian, but devoted himself to legal scholarship. He published a four-volume compendium of colonial and English Law, the *Epitome of the Law of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1832-1833), which earned him the epitaph "Nova Scotia's Blackstone".¹⁴ History, though, was never far from his mind. His opportunity came with the founding of the provincial archives, the Record Commission of Nova Scotia, in 1857. Its first commissioner, T.B. Akins, Murdoch's cousin and a former student in his law offices, was a close friend. Akins' work in the archives was essential in the evolution of provincial historiography.¹⁵ He sought out papers and documents of all kinds, in repositories in Canada, Europe and America. From London came the correspondence of governors and other officials with the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State; from Quebec, the French records, transcribed in Paris, dealing with Acadia in the period prior to the Conquest. As early as 1859, Akins believed that he had collected enough papers for the publication of a selection related to the English regime and to the deportation of the Acadians.¹⁶ By 1864 the Record Commission had prepared 211 volumes and 37 boxes of documents, the whole of the public record extant in Nova Scotia, or at least that portion of it which was, in Akins' view, worthy of preservation.¹⁷ Murdoch would make good use of this vast array of sources, the first historian to do so.¹⁸

In retirement, in 1860, Murdoch turned again to the writing of history. Now, decades after the publication of Haliburton's *Account*, he could construct a thoroughly modern version of Nova Scotia's past, one grounded in solid archival

- 14 See D.C. Harvey, "Nova Scotia's Blackstone", *Canadian Bar Review*, XI, 5 (1933), pp. 339-44. As Recorder for the city of Halifax, Murdoch prepared a compendium of municipal by-laws and of the provincial statutes pertaining to the town: *The Charter and Ordinances of the City of Halifax in the Province of Nova Scotia with the Provincial Acts concerning the City, collected and revised by Authority of the City Council* (Halifax, 1851).
- 15 See C.B. Fergusson, "The Public Archives of Nova Scotia", *Acadiensis*, II, 1 (Autumn 1972), pp. 71-81; J.P. Edwards, *The Public Records of Nova Scotia. Their History and Present Condition* (Halifax, 1920); B.C. Cuthbertson, "Thomas Beamish Akins: British North America's Pioneer Archivist", *Acadiensis* VII, 1 (Autumn 1977), pp. 86-102.
- 16 Akins, comp., *Selections from the Public Documents of the Province of Nova Scotia. Published Under a Resolution of the House of Assembly Passed March 15, 1865...* (Halifax, 1869).
- 17 Report of Committee on Record Commission, *Journals of the Legislative Assembly* (Halifax, 1864), app. 40, p. 1.
- 18 For the list of available sources, see *Catalogue of List of Manuscript Documents Arranged, Bound and Catalogued Under the Direction of the Commissioner of Public Records, Together with a List of Books of Entry Consisting of Minutes of His Majesty's Council, Letters, Registers of Crown Grants of Land, Commissions, Orders of Government...* (Halifax, 1877).

research. "The great amount of materials for history which the provincial assembly have collected and preserved by means of the Record Commission, were powerfully tempting to me", he wrote in the preface to the first volume of his work, "and my prepossessions as a Novascotian making strong impressions on my mind of the value of my country and the interest of its early history, I commenced...the collection and arrangement of this narrative" (I, iii). His *History* had two objectives: to remind his contemporaries of the attributes of their ancestors and to demonstrate the value of Nova Scotia's records. The first goal was conventional. He had seen, he wrote, "many shining and noble qualities" in the people who had, in turn, occupied Nova Scotia — the Micmacs, the French and the English (I, iv-v). He trusted that his work would "prove useful as a record of the varying events that...have made Nova Scotia a happy, free and intelligent province, progressive and prosperous" (I, iii). His second and foremost aim was, however, less traditional: "my primary idea", he stated, was "to rescue from destruction those monuments of earlier times that were fast becoming obliterated" (III, xiii-xiv). "The task of collecting and reducing into annals facts of interest", he explained, "must naturally precede the more ambitious course of history" (I, v).

The combination of these two goals made for a new kind of history. Murdoch's work would be annalistic in form, characterized by the inclusion of numerous and lengthy extracts from his sources, presented chronologically and in neutral fashion. It would not much resemble what was then traditional historical narrative. Murdoch was an historicist; he sought truth in documents. For the readers of his second volume, he took pains to explain this approach:

I have endeavoured to reduce the materials I had collected into a brief space, but there were many things that tended to exhibit and illustrate the peculiarities of the place, the times and the people, and some biographical particulars, that I felt were worth preservation. I might have followed a stricter, perhaps more classical model; but it seems to my mind that as the varied details of Gothic or Saracenic architecture produce a powerful effect in their combination, so the chronicler may, by diligence, unite many smaller features and occurrences, that, taken separately, might be disclaimed by some, as below the dignity of history to record, and by this mode transport the reader, as it were, back to the actuality of past times, and make our forefathers live and move again as in life, by rendering us familiar with their ideas and habits....I feel justified in the endeavour to re-produce the past, as far as possible, in its own forms and colors and language, and, whenever I can, to make the very expressions (*ipsissima verba*) of the men who lived before us, exhibit their opinions and show their natures...(II, iii-iv).

Murdoch felt obliged to take special measures to safeguard the vestiges of the

province's past. "Some periods of our history", he explained, "afford but little matter for connective narrative. At other times interesting transactions occur which do not form part of the regular sequence of events. In such cases I have preferred to place them in appendices to the chapters, instead of omitting them entirely, as I am anxious to preserve everything of genuine interest that I have found in my enquiries" (I, v). These extensive addenda, often containing material reproduced nowhere else, included press clippings and extracts from colonial literature, the *Royal Gazette*, social calendars, almanacs, shipping records, necrologies, censuses and the *Journals of the House of Assembly*.

Not everything could be assigned a place in Murdoch's *History*; reluctantly he was compelled to set limits. The letters of the French governors, the Journal of Villebon,¹⁹ "gave the most vivid impression...of the times and the people they described"; the correspondence of Mascarene and Pichon, the Journal of Witherspoon, were "exceedingly interesting".²⁰ But space considerations prevented him from incorporating them into his *History*. In like vein, he recommended to his successors the works of Charlevoix, Champlain, Denys and Lescarbot; they "would supply most agreeable studies for years, to those who wished to learn much of the natural history, geography and early events of...these maritime provinces"(III, xiv). More than documents had to be condensed, relegated to appendices or left out. The "necessity of compressing the affairs of two centuries within some moderate compass" caused Murdoch to refrain from treating in detail the long struggle between France and England for supremacy in America or the "history of the progress of religion in these provinces" or the geography of Nova Scotia (III, ix). Thus, although he admired Williamson's history of Maine, he was more disposed to follow the example set by Hutchinson and Belknap.²¹

Sources were what made Murdoch's *History* useful to his compatriots and necessary to historians. The once meagre libraries of Windsor and Halifax were now stocked with a decent collection of primitive works and contemporary

19 Governor Villebon's Journal and the other papers were published, in translation, in J.C. Webster, *Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century: Letters, Journals and Memoirs of Joseph Robineau de Villebon, Commandant in Acadia, 1690-1700, and other Contemporary Documents* (Saint John, 1934).

20 Governor Mascarene's and Thomas Pichon's correspondence was held by the Nova Scotia Record Commission. Most of the former's correspondence was reproduced in Akins' *Selections*, the latter's in J.C. Webster, *Thomas Pichon "The Spy of Beausejour". An Account of His career in Europe and America. With many original documents translated by Alice Webster* (Sackville, N.B., 1937). For Witherspoon, see extracts in "Journal of John Witherspoon", Nova Scotia Historical Society, *Collections*, II (1881), pp. 31-62.

21 Murdoch to J.E. Godfrey, 22 February 1869, in A.R. Stewart, J.B. Vickery, E.S. Kellogg, eds., "A Nova Scotia-Maine Historical Correspondence", *Acadiensis*, XIV, 2 (Spring 1985), p. 116. William D. Williamson, *The History of the State of Maine...* (2 vols., Hallowell, Me., 1832). Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and the Province of Massachusetts-Bay from 1628 to 1749* (2 vols., Boston, 1764); *Continuation...from 1749 to 1774* (London, 1828); Jeremy Belknap, *The History of New-Hampshire* (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1784-1792).

studies, including chronicles, early histories, scholarly journals, periodicals and compilations of historical documents;²² archival collections were available as never before. Murdoch's use of such sources transformed historiography in Nova Scotia. His *History* was the most well-researched of all the syntheses written in the 19th century. He was convinced that he had overlooked nothing. Addressing prospective readers via the Haligonian press in April 1864, he wrote: "Every available source of information has been investigated closely, to obtain full materials from original and authentic documents, both printed and manuscript, so that everything valuable connected in any way with our early history might be preserved".²³

In the use of primary sources, Murdoch did indeed excel. He scoured the journals of the Council and the Assembly, the letterbooks of the government, grant books, the correspondence of the French and English administrations and the register books of Port-Royal (1700-1718). He combed the numerous papers of the French régime, collected and copied at the behest of the various governments of Quebec, as well as the collection of the Quebec Literary and Historical Society. The Record Commission had amassed many of these documents; others were available in published collections, still others in the form of transcripts from the Archives de la Marine.²⁴ Many more documents were consulted, some in the archives in Halifax, some in histories and in *compendia*. These included Edme Rameau de Saint-Père's *La France aux colonies...* (Paris, 1859), the first French-language history of Acadia, which, Murdoch informed its author, gave him "grand plaisir & avantage".²⁵ This work included a sweeping study of Acadian censuses, yet to be bettered. He also consulted O'Callaghan's collection of New York documents, the Pennsylvania Records and the Rhode Island Colonial Records.²⁶ Other documents came from the publications of the *Société historique*

22 See, for example, a compilation of T.B. Akins' collection: S.I. Stewart, *A Catalogue of the Akins Collection of Books and Pamphlets* (Halifax, 1933).

23 *The British Colonist* (Halifax), 2 April 1864.

24 For the contents of the Quebec archives at that time, see J.-E. Roy, "Les Archives du Canada à venir à 1872", Société royale du Canada, *Mémoires*, 3e série, vol.4 (1910), section 1, pp. 57-123. Of the several pertinent compilations available from Quebec, one was especially important: *Edits, ordonnances royaux, déclarations et arrêts du Conseil d'Etat du Roi, concernant le Canada...* (3 vols., Quebec, 1854-1856) (Reprint of the original edition of 1803, 1806). For the Literary and Historical Society's published collection see F.C. Wurtele, *Index of the Lectures, Papers and Historical Documents published by the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec and also the Names of their Authors, together with a List of the Unpublished Papers read before the Society, 1829-1891* (Quebec, 1891).

25 ...*Études sur le développement de la race française hors de l'Europe. Les Français en Amérique, Acadiens et Canadiens* (in two parts). Murdoch to E. Rameau, 27 April 1865, Fonds Rameau CEA 2. 1-7, Centre d'études acadiennes, Université de Moncton [CEA].

26 E.B. O'Callaghan, comp., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York Procured in Holland, England and France* (15 vols., Albany, N.Y., 1856-1887); Samuel Hazard,

de Montréal, the Maine Historical Society and the Massachusetts Historical Society.²⁷ He studied, as well, the New England compilations of Hutchinson and Hazard and the memorials of the English and French commissaries.²⁸ Only the important collections of the religious orders that had been active in Acadia escaped his exhaustive investigations.²⁹

Murdoch consulted the same French and Anglo-American chroniclers and historians as had Haliburton and others before him, including the standard works on North America of Lescarbot, Charlevoix, Hutchinson, Douglass, Smollet, Belknap, Holmes, Minot and Wynne. In addition, however, he turned to writers thus far little used in Acadian and Nova Scotia historiography: Garneau and Ferland on Canada; Haliburton, Rameau, Gesner, Cooney and Williamson on Acadia; Keith, Mather and Grahame on American colonial history.³⁰ Besides these authors he used a wide variety of others. Hakluyt's *Voyages*, de Laët's *Novus Orbis*, the chronicles of Champlain and Denys and the Jesuit *Relations* provided information on exploration and early settlement.³¹ He

comp., *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, from the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government (1683-1775)* (16 vols., Harrisburg, Pa., 1838-1853); J.R. Bartlett, comp., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England (1636-1792)* (10 vols., Providence, R.I., 1856-1865).

- 27 The Maine Historical Society *Collections*, which included many articles bearing on Old Acadia, was especially useful. From the *Mémoires et documents relatifs à l'histoire du Canada*, the publication of the Montreal Society, came biographical details on French vice-rois and governors. Boston furnished the oldest existing record.
- 28 Thomas Hutchinson, *A Collection of Original Papers Relative to the History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay* (Boston, 1769); Ebenezer Hazard, *Historical Collections: consisting of State Papers and other authentic Documents intended as materials for a History of the United States of America* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1792-1794); *The Memorials of the English and French Commissaries concerning the Limits of Nova Scotia or Acadia* (2 vols., London, 1755).
- 29 Abbé Henri-Raymond Casgrain was the first to really exploit these collections for Acadian historiography, particularly in his *Les Sulpiciens et les Prêtres des Missions-étrangères en Acadie (1676-1762)* (Quebec, 1897).
- 30 François-Xavier Garneau, *Histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu'à nos jours* (4 vols., Quebec and Montreal, 1845-1852); J.-B.-A. Ferland, *Cours d'histoire du Canada* (2 vols., Quebec, 1861, 1865); Abraham Gesner, *New Brunswick, With Notes For Emigrants. Comprehending the Early History, An Account of the Indians, Settlement, Topography, Statistics, Commerce, Timber, Manufactures, Agriculture, Fisheries, Geology, Natural History, Social and Political State, Immigrants, and Contemplated Railways of that Province* (London, 1847); Robert Cooney, *A Compendious History of the Northern Part of the Province of New Brunswick, and of the District of Gaspé, in Lower Canada* (Halifax, 1832); Sir William Keith, *The History of the British Plantations in America* (London, 1738); Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana; or, The Ecclesiastical History of New England from the Time of its first Planting in the Year 1620 unto the Year of our Lord 1698; In Seven Books* (London, 1702); James Grahame, *The History of the Rise and Progress of the United States of North America till the British Revolution in 1688* (2 vols., London, 1827), and *Continuation...to 1776* (4 vols., London, 1836).
- 31 Of interest to historians of Acadia was père Pierre Biard's contribution to the *Relations*:

studied the works of Lahontan and Dièreville, important witnesses to the end of the French régime in Acadia. Sir Walker's *Journal* and Pichon's *Lettres et Mémoires*³² provided similar testimony concerning various aspects of the English régime. The *London Magazine* for the years 1735-1780 provided the metropolitan view while the *Royal Gazette* of Halifax for the years 1775-1800 furnished the colonial perspective. Akins and his colleagues in the city and legislative libraries, the editors of the *Acadian Recorder* and others assured a constant supply of newspapers and periodicals. Murdoch gained access to privately held manuscripts and specialized information, such as the current state of the Micmac population or the characteristics of some of the province's natural resources. Joseph Howe and Charles Tupper provided moral support, while J.G. Bourinot, H.J. Morgan and Abraham Gesner helped with suggestions and the "search for information" (I, iii-iv; II, v; III, xv).

Clearly, then, on the basis of his wide-ranging research alone, Murdoch distinguished himself in his use of sources. Nearly always he conducted a thorough review of existing literature and known documents. His account of the short-lived Scottish colony (1613-1632) is an example of the kind of exhaustive research that set him apart from his contemporaries (I, chaps. 8-9).³³ So is his coverage of the Acadian civil war, which provided the first generally comprehensive and accurate account of that period (I, chaps. 10-5). The same was true of his story of Louisbourg, a topic which had been ill-served by earlier Nova Scotia historians.³⁴ Writing of the Amerindians, whose bleak image³⁵ he sought to

Relations de la Nouvelle-France, de ses terres, naturel du Pais & de ses habitans, item, du voyage des Pères Jésuites ausdictes contrées, & de ce qu'ils y ont fait jusques à leur prinse par les Anglois (Lyon, 1616).

- 32 *Nouveaux voyages de Mr. Le Baron de Lahontan dans l'Amérique septentrionale...* (2 vols., La Haye, 1704); *Relation du voyage du Port Royal de l'Acadie, ou de la Nouvelle France...* (Rouen, 1708); Sir Hovenden Walker, *A Journal, or Full Account of the Late Expedition to Canada* (London, 1720); Thomas Pichon, *Lettres et Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire Naturelle, Civile et Politique du Cap-Breton, depuis son établissement jusqu'à la reprise de possession de cette Isle par les Anglois en 1758* (La Haye, 1760).
- 33 Murdoch examined all the colonial sources, including relations, chronicles and histories as well as compilations, to which he added English and French histories, such as Charles Coote, *History of England to 1783* (9 vols., London, 1791-1798); Isaac de Larrey, *Histoire de la France sous le règne de Louis XIV* (9 vols., Liège, 1723); the pertinent contemporary documentary collections, and a number of Scottish papers dealing with the contested claim to the title of the Earl of Stirling. He studied what was available in scholarly journals, went through much of the pertinent correspondence from the *Archives de la Marine* and called upon the expert advice of genealogists.
- 34 On the limitations of Haliburton's account see M.B. Taylor, "Thomas Chandler Haliburton as a Historian", *Acadiensis*, XIII, 2 (Spring 1984), pp. 61-2.
- 35 See J.H. Cauthers, "The North American Indian as Portrayed by American and Canadian Historians, 1830-1930", Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1974, and M. Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theories* (New York, 1968).

revise, he contrasted unflattering American histories with the descriptions of annalists of the colonial period and with the studies of early ethnologists and anthropologists, just then beginning to be published. His chronicle of political events, the usual stuff of Maritime historiography, was much more detailed than in the works of other historians. Without fashioning a thorough socio-demographic inquiry, he made the case for a quantitative analysis of historical evolution based on census results.³⁶

Murdoch was rigorous in his use of sources, generally employing the original (or the most complete) editions of the works he consulted; when the use of reproductions proved unavoidable, he found the better ones.³⁷ He took extensive notes from Charlevoix, and transcribed extracts from the original editions of Denys' and Lescarbot's writings as well as from several others.³⁸ But he sometimes had difficulty obtaining important works, and his limited knowledge of French caused him some hardship. He did not read Denys' and Dièreville's works until the greater part of his first volume had already been printed (I, 535-42). And although he thought himself "pretty familiar with old French authors and perhaps may hit off their meaning better on that account", lack of a suitable dictionary³⁹ or dependence on others sometimes resulted in mediocrity. He used inadequate translations of Lescarbot's *Nova Francia* and Garneau's *Histoire du Canada*.⁴⁰ These shortcomings, however, were minor in view of the advances Murdoch made in historical method.

Murdoch set a new standard for historians in his adherence to the critical method. Balancing competing and contradictory views, summing up the debate, making frequent precise reference to sources, he consistently based his interpretation on a thorough reading of what was available. In recounting the early voyages of exploration having some bearing on Acadia, he discussed the debate over the

36 See Murdoch, *History*, I, pp. 150-2, 159, 166-7, 168-72, app. 4, pp. 176-7, 240. Murdoch found some census results in manuscript, but he got the bulk from Rameau. See Rameau, *Une colonie féodale en Amérique, L'Acadie (1604-1881)*, II (Paris and Montreal, 1889), apps., 5e série, "Recensements", pp. 393-4.

37 For Champlain and the Jesuit *Relations*, for instance, he employed modern critical reprints (1830 and 1858).

38 This is evidenced by the narrative, footnotes and appendices of the *History*, and by the still extant and immense wad of blackened foolscap Murdoch left to posterity. See T.B. Akins Collection, MG I, vol. 1331D, PANS.

39 Murdoch to J.E. Godfrey, 27 February 1869, "A Nova Scotia-Maine Historical Correspondence", p. 120.

40 Pierre Erondelle, translator, *Nova Francia: Or the Description of that part of New France, which is one continent with Virginia...* (London, 1609), reproduced in Ownsham and John Churchill, *Collections of Voyages and Travels* (4 vols., London, 1704); Andrew Bell, translator, *History of Canada: from the time of its discovery till the union year (1840-1841)*. Translated from "L'histoire du Canada" of F.-X. Garneau, Esq., and accompanied with illustrative notes etc., etc... (3 vols., Montreal, 1860).

date of de la Roche's visit to America, adopting a neutral position, taking into account both the causes of the controversy and the date itself (I, 6-7, 12 app. 6). He cautioned against rash conclusions. Only a "full and accurate investigation" could determine the implications of Cape Breton's restitution to France by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (II, 136). Similarly, he warned that care was needed in evaluating the role of Bigot, Vergor and others about whom the historical record appeared unreliable. Knowledge of military matters was required to judge their work at Beauséjour (II, 271-2). As well, Murdoch advised readers of the need to view events in the proper context using, as an example, the circumstances in which the House of Assembly first demanded political reform (II, 541-5). He had made the same point in his account of Anglo-Indian conflict during the years immediately following the founding of Halifax, explaining that "It is not the duty of the historian to aggravate and color darkly the errors, the severities, or even the crimes he relates" (II, 308). And he did point out the conjectural nature of some of his own assertions. He recognized that his judgmental narrative of the Acadian civil war was built on surmise: "The circumstances...and the causes...are not sufficiently explained to us by the records that remain, to enable us safely to measure out to each of these combatants his just allotment of praise or of censure" (I, 98-9).

A critical use of sources derives from an historian's judgement of their worth; this rule Murdoch applied to historians themselves. Although Williamson was "perhaps too much disposed to attend to minutiae", he was Murdoch's principal source for *Acadie Occidentale*; Williamson's book was an "excellent store house of facts".⁴¹ Rameau's history, Murdoch remarked, "is a work of value for it's [sic] facts & good sense". Of Garneau, in contrast, he concluded that "without denying his talents & eloquence, I think his prejudices against English rule have blinded him".⁴² Charlevoix and Hutchinson, he thought, were great historians: to the first we owed much of our knowledge of early New France (II, 401), while the second, in his history of Massachusetts, had established "an imperishable monument of his industry and sound judgement" (II, 452). Lescarbot, a writer universally acclaimed by historians of Acadia, was Murdoch's "chief original authority for the events attending on the settlement of Acadie, whether great or small". The Jesuits' *Relations* merited the "same praise for simplicity and truth...The descriptions it offers of the climate and country — of persons and events, are marked by high intelligence, good sense, and obvious integrity" (I, 43).

Murdoch did occasionally query the accuracy of even his most valued sources. He concluded that Lescarbot's contention that winter fatalities at Port-Royal were due to the drinking of brook water and to ill-drained buildings was based

41 Murdoch to J.E. Godfrey, 6 and 22 February 1869, "A Nova Scotia-Maine Historical Correspondence", pp. 113, 116.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 116-7.

on mere “hearsay and conjecture” (I, 27). He was equally critical of Hutchinson’s account of the New England expedition against père Rale’s mission at Norridgewock, considering it a justification of bloodthirsty conduct (I, 414-5). Despite his own extensive use of French colonial correspondence, he questioned the worth of that correspondence which “all seem to originate in the jealousies and rivalries that arise in a small and isolated community” (I, 257-8, 268). Acadia’s more controversial chroniclers, notably Raynal,⁴³ Lahontan and Pichon, likewise earned some negative comment but were, nonetheless, essential to his account of the last years of French rule in Old Acadia, the fall of Beauséjour and the career of abbé Jean-Louis Le Loutre. He exploited Lahontan’s memoirs in his condemnation of French governors, administrators and clergymen, yet admitted that its irreligious spirit and prejudiced outlook made it sometimes less than authoritative.⁴⁴ He made even greater use of Pichon’s papers and book, while recognizing that Pichon, “soured with his own nation, and an open scoffer at the Priesthood, ...was prone to believe any *canards* he heard that tended to disparage French authorities or religious men” (II, 343). In other instances, Murdoch was less circumspect, as when he employed anonymous works critical of the French clergy.⁴⁵ And, in accepting the Jesuits’ account of things during their tenure, especially their report of their falling-out with Biencourt and their version of the events surrounding Argall’s destruction of Port-Royal and of the colony on Ile Mont-Désert, he abandoned his usual scepticism (I, chap. 7).

While Murdoch brought to Maritime historiography new methods and a new conception of history as a discipline, his view of past events was less novel. Although not marked by the overt jingoism of most of its predecessors, Murdoch’s *History* still espoused liberty, loyalty and progress as the leit-motiv of Nova Scotia’s past; for periods when these elements were missing, little, he believed, was worth recording. He paid little attention to the war in the American colonies: “while it created bustle at Halifax, and no doubt afforded to some persons an opportunity for gain, [it] did not tend to promote the agriculture, fisheries, or

43 *Histoire Philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (6 vols., Amsterdam, 1770).

44 This opinion was shared by French Canadian historians. See S. Gagnon, *Man and his Past: The Nature and Role of Historiography* (Montreal, 1982), pp. 23-6.

45 Murdoch employed two anonymous works to a great extent: “Mémoires du S. de C. contenant l’histoire du Canada, durant la guerre, et sous le gouvernement anglais”; and a manuscript entitled “From a ms. by a person who served at Louisbourg from 1750 to 1758”, a copy of which was held in Halifax. And although he did admit that he had “derived our information...from sources not friendly to priests” (II, 271), he should have heeded the signals given by other historians. The Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, which printed the two documents in *Historical Documents*, 1st series (Quebec, 1838) and *ibid.*, 2nd series (Quebec, 1866), identified the author of the first as de Vauclain or the chevalier Johnstone, and indicated that neither inspired confidence. See, also, Aegidius Fauteux, “Le S...de...C enfin démasqué”, *Les Cahiers des Dix*, V (1940), pp. 231-92.

advancement of the country” (II, 605). The destitution of the garrison at Annapolis and the hunger and sickness experienced by the American victors of Louisbourg evoked sad reflections which “belong rather to the moralist than to the writer of annals” (II, 161).

Undoubtedly Murdoch’s interests and perspective reflected the great issues of his youth: the struggle for the progress of his province and for the strengthening of ties with the Mother Country. The state of relations with Great Britain was as much a matter of concern to Murdoch as it had been for his predecessors. The story of Nova Scotia since the founding of Halifax had been one of “unlimited and unstinted favor and support” from the metropolis, meaning an influx of capital and readiness to “secure and enlarge our civil and political liberty”. To the question of “whether the benefit has been reciprocal”, Murdoch replied that ships, colonies and commerce comprised the “indispensable elements in the dignity, success and security of an empire” (III, iii-v). Yet the tomes devoted to the French régime and to the English regime in the period prior to the American Revolution offer an alarming cautionary tale of the consequences of chronically short-sighted colonial policies. Murdoch castigated both France and England for regarding their colonies as “valuable only in proportion to the immediate commercial profits that attended them”. Neglecting the pursuit of agricultural settlements and the defence of existing installations, the imperial governments’ energies were “directed with the distinct aim of increasing the returns to Europe in the shape of furs and fish”, despite the fact that safe, prosperous colonies provided ready-made markets for imperial manufacturers (I, 189-90). The French were condemned for their lack of zeal: Acadia, at the end of a century’s effort, was composed of desolate or abandoned settlements. English invasions had discouraged development, but so had the “contests and discords of ambitious leaders” (I, 176-7). The English, once masters of Acadia, showed no greater propensity for action. Summing up decades of English rule, Murdoch wrote that Nova Scotia was:

a government without citizens or subjects to whom it could look for support, — a fortress whose ramparts and lodgings were tumbling down or washed away..., — a province without any revenue and but little commerce, and a garrison whose supplies...were scanty and precarious, — and a small military community, perched upon a strip of land, environed by races hostile in many respects, and themselves not too friendly or confiding in each other (I, 497).

The temporal divisions of Murdoch’s *History* underline the extent to which his analysis of the historical development of the province had been dictated by the perceived need to promote local patriotism. Except for 1605, when the colony of Port-Royal was founded, all the dates Murdoch identified as turning points are linked to English rule. Indeed, referring to the first volume, devoted

essentially to Acadia and to French Nova Scotia, Murdoch was apologetic: it had “less to engage the attention of some readers” than had the second and the third. In these, “our history begins to have an English aspect, and actors appear upon the stage whose names are familiar”. In the former, “emigration draws in skill, talent and industry, and by almost imperceptible degrees the people acquire habits, sentiments and pursuits suited to the land in which they live...and thus the Nova Scotian character is gradually developed” (II, iii). The latter lays out the “progress made by this country during the wars of Napoleon and the second American war, gradually but certainly advancing in the march of intellect and industry” (III, iii). There is no better testimony to Murdoch’s attachment to traditional sensitivities than his treatment of the most intolerable of metropolitan transgressions: plain ignorance, the “fountain head” of so many of Nova Scotia’s problems (II, 99).

Yet despite his own views concerning the significance and centrality of the British tradition, in one essential regard Murdoch’s *History* did not depart from Haliburton’s model: more than half was devoted to the colony’s history prior to the Treaty of Paris and most of this was given over to the French. “It would...be”, he explained to his readers, “a very defective history of Nova Scotia which omitted to give a distinct and clear view of the adventurers of 1605, and of all of the French who were actively connected with Acadie” (II, 314). Unlike Haliburton, Murdoch did not believe that Nova Scotia’s history following the fall of Canada was insignificant, but, like his predecessor, he found little of interest in events after the American Revolution. The third volume of his *History* begins with 1782 and is, like the previous two, strictly chronological. But the redeeming qualities of the first two are absent in the third: chronicling the innocuous, day-to-day work of progress, it did little besides eulogize Nova Scotia’s devotion to enterprise. Its tone is typified by the introductory and concluding paragraphs: opening with the governor’s New Year’s list of appointments, it closes on the scene of the 1827 New Year’s Eve supper and ball at Government House. Neither the Loyalist influx nor the War of 1812 elicited much interest.

Yet Murdoch’s view of the past, depicted in all three volumes, was not entirely conventional. Along with an original approach to the discipline of history came fresh perspectives. For example, the discussion of the Amerindian in Murdoch’s *History* was especially pathbreaking. True, the two centuries of struggle between the Indians and their French and English usurpers emerged as a tale of colonial perseverance and the progress of civilization in the face of seemingly interminable Indian aggression. Yet Murdoch sought to do more: to rehabilitate the “Redman” who had been, in his view, much maligned by popular culture and by the historian. He praised the “genuine pictures” of Denys and Lescarbot which, “if translated and republished among us, would go very far to place our brethren of the darker skin in a better attitude to claim a share in our esteem and affections”. “The manners, customs and language of the Micmacs”, he wrote, “form a subject in itself of great interest to the philosopher and the philologist”. He

commended the works of such writers⁴⁶ (III, vii-viii) and made his own modest contribution to the study of native languages.⁴⁷ More important to an assessment of Murdoch as an historian, he avoided the facile racism common among his successors, who were much given to a crude form of anthropometry. In short, Murdoch brought to Maritime historiography the moral concern of people like the philanthropist Walter Bromley⁴⁸ and the empirical attitude of early American social scientists. He chided his predecessors for their use of the term “savage”, arguing that the natives’ adaptation to their environment, their fine crafts and their complex languages demonstrated that “they had long been a civilized and thinking race of people”. Indian warfare was not “unlawful or immoral” so long as it obeyed Indian logic. Viewing scalping from the perspective of social custom, he pointed out that some European misdeeds were, in fact, more revolting. He believed the present-day depressing spectacle of “indolent, miserable” Indians “addicted to intemperate drinking habits” gave a false impression; a “fair and liberal review...would lead to more kindly and favorable conclusions” (I, 39-41; II, 308-10; III, vii-viii).

Murdoch was equally innovative in dealing with the long struggle between d’Aulnay and Latour in that period of Acadian history stretching from the foundation of Razilly’s colony (ca. 1635) to the second English conquest (1654). By shedding light on the Civil War, he gave life to what would become, next to the Deportation, the single greatest source of controversy and fable in Acadian historiography. Because of a dearth of documentation, the story of Acadian fratricide had, until Murdoch’s *History*, been left largely untouched. Murdoch’s predisposition for this era was linked to his indictment of imperial misadventure, but he also sought to restore Latour’s reputation, which had been greatly tarnished by New England historians and chroniclers.⁴⁹ Murdoch considered Latour the first “Great Man” of Acadian history, claiming that “perseverance, activity and talents are remarkable in every part of his career” (I, 112-3). D’Aulnay,

46 He especially singles out Silas Tertius Rand, *A Short Statement of Facts relating to the History, Manners, Customs, Language and Literature of the Micmac Tribe of Indians in Nova Scotia and P.E. Island* (Halifax, 1850); and George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the manners, customs and condition of the North American Indians* (New York, 1841) and *Catlin’s North American Indian Port-folio. Hunting scenes and amusements of the Rocky mountains and prairies of America...* (New York, 1845).

47 Among his papers is an extensive lexicon of Micmac vocabulary in his own hand in the margin of which is written: “finished 13 March 1864”. See Beamish Murdoch Papers, MG 1, vol. 727A, no. 1, PANS.

48 See J. Fingard, “English humanitarianism and the colonial mind: Walter Bromley in Nova Scotia, 1813-1825”, *Canadian Historical Review*, LIV, 2 (June 1973), pp. 123-51.

49 See Winthrop, *The History of New England from 1603 to 1649...* (2 vols., Boston, 1825-1826); William Hubbard, *A General History of New England from the Discovery to 1680* (Cambridge, Mass., 1815); Hutchinson, *Massachusetts-Bay*; and Williamson. Denys was the chief source of d’Aulnay’s bad reputation; his view was taken up by Haliburton, Garneau, Ferland and others.

in contrast, was portrayed as “haughty, fierce and vindictive”, the man who “stopped the progress of civilization in Acadie” (I, 114, 130). The cult of Lady Latour also had its origins in Murdoch’s work.⁵⁰ Nova Scotia’s historians had found their own Evangeline in a woman who, inspired by love of husband, family and followers, went “beyond the usual boundaries, which nature and custom seemed to have prescribed for the fair sex”(I, 110-1). Again, Murdoch’s work was influential. Soon Parkman, along with Rameau, Célestin Moreau and James Hannay, would follow his lead.⁵¹

In his study of the role of the French clergy under the English regime, Murdoch established another kind of model for future historians. Previous historians had viewed Roman Catholic clerics with suspicion, perceiving them as instigators of both the Indian wars and the Acadian resistance to English rule. Murdoch went further, condemning the clergy as materialist, licentious, meddlesome and dangerous. He described the activities of the clergy in great detail, especially those of abbé Le Loutre who, largely as a result of Murdoch’s analysis, became a central figure in Acadian and Maritime historiography.⁵² The abbé was portrayed as the “most persevering and implacable foe to the English that ever was in this country” (II, 10, 271-2). Blaming Le Loutre for the killing of the emissary How, Murdoch branded the priest as a murderer. Drawing information from sources, some of them anonymous, about which he discreetly voiced uncertainty, he accused the missionary of having engineered the murder, and concluded: “What is not a wicked priest capable of doing?” (II, 192-3). So convincing was his account that, for a time, even French Canadian historians accepted it.⁵³ And when its weakness

50 Even the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire had no qualms in endorsing, for use in Canadian public schools, a flattering biography of this French Catholic. See Mabel Burkholder, *Madame La Tour* (Toronto, n.d.). For a recent view, see M.A. MacDonald, *Fortune and La Tour: The Civil War in Acadia* (Toronto, 1983).

51 Parkman added this story to the fourth volume of his *France and England in North America: The Old Regime in Canada* [Boston, 1865], basing his account on the d’Aulnay manuscripts. See *ibid.*, “Note to revised edition” and chapters 1-3. Moreau, in his *Histoire de l’Acadie française (Amérique septentrionale) de 1598 à 1755* (Paris, 1873), had one goal: “venger la mémoire” of d’Aulnay. Rameau, in his second Acadian history, *Une colonie féodale en Amérique, L’Acadie (1604-1710)* (Paris, 1877), did much the same thing. Hannay devoted many writings to Lady La Tour, including *The Heroine of Acadia. The Romantic Story of the Life of Frances Marie Jacqueline [Françoise-Marie Jacquetin], Wife of Sieur de La Tour...* (Saint John, 1910).

52 See G. Finn, “L’Abbé Jean-Louis LeLoutre vu par les historiens”, M.A. thesis, Université d’Ottawa, 1972.

53 H.-R. Casgrain, a strong defender of the French clergy, at first adopted Murdoch’s point of view, but changed his mind on receipt of new correspondence. See Casgrain, *Un pèlerinage au pays d’Evangéline* (2nd ed., Quebec, 1888) pp. 135-6, and *Une Seconde Acadie, l’île Saint-Jean — Ile du Prince-Edouard — sous le régime français* (Quebec, 1894), p. 298. Edouard Richard, in *Acadia: Missing Links of a Lost Chapter in American History*, I (New York and Montreal, 1895), pp. 257-68, was similarly contradictory: he was critical of Parkman’s opinion of the cleric — identical to Murdoch’s — while voicing the same view.

was finally exposed, it was Parkman who bore the brunt of criticism.⁵⁴

Murdoch also contributed to an historiographical debate which had meaning for all Nova Scotians: the deportation of the Acadians. Like many of his contemporaries, he had been distressed by the interpretation of those French and American writers typified by Henry W. Longfellow, whose epic poem, *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadia* (Boston, 1847), encapsulated and revitalized a notion already well-established: holocaust.⁵⁵ The fate of the “Neutral French” had been a source of controversy for many years. It had been the cause of some disquiet in Haliburton’s days,⁵⁶ but not until the 1860s did Nova Scotia historians begin to tackle this issue. Their goal was best described by Akins, in the preface to his *Selections*: “until lately it [the fate of the Neutral French] has undergone little actual investigation, and in consequence, the necessity for [the Acadians’] removal has not been clearly perceived, and the motives which led to its enforcement have been often misunderstood”.⁵⁷ Akins’ choice of documents was meant to provide the needed light. Instead, he was accused of having doctored the documents.⁵⁸ The controversy over the expulsion would pit historian against historian: Nova Scotians defended their ancestors, who, according to French Canadians and Acadians, were guilty of having sought the destruction of the Acadians; Anglo-Americans lent their weight to both sides. Among the protagonists were virtually the entire corps of historians interested in Acadia’s past.⁵⁹ But

54 Murdoch overlooked all the contemporary documents contradicting Pichon’s account of Le Loutre’s activities. See A. David, “L’Affaire How, D’après les documents contemporains”, *Revue de l’Université d’Ottawa*, VI, 4 (octobre-décembre 1936), pp. 440-68. In their haste to blame Parkman for the whole affair, Casgrain and Richard pardoned Murdoch his use of Pichon. See *Pèlerinage* (1888), p. 505, app. 1; *Missing Links*, I, pp. 273-4, 279-80.

55 Longfellow used Haliburton’s copious notes on Acadian mores borrowed from Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique*, and along the lines of already published works (notably “Mrs. Williams”, *The Neutral French; or, The Exiles of Nova Scotia* (Providence, R.I., 1841)), devised a tale that took on a life of its own. See J.E. Cowan, “Outcast from Paradise: The Myth of Acadia and *Evangeline* in English and French”, Ph.D. thesis, Université de Sherbrooke, 1983; M.B. Taylor, “The Poetry and Prose of History: ‘*Evangeline*’ and the Historians of Nova Scotia”, *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’études canadiennes*, XXIII, 1-2 (Spring/Summer 1988), pp. 46-67.

56 Haliburton had found no trace of the deportation in the records of the Secretary’s Office at Halifax, and concluded that “the particulars of this affair seem to have been carefully concealed”. See *Account*, I, p. 196, n. This note sparked a new interest in the Acadian deportation on the part of 19th century historians. See Rameau, *Colonie féodale* (1889), II, pp. 163-4; *La France aux colonies*, pp. 82-3, 150-1, n. 19; Casgrain, *Pèlerinage* (1888), p. 54; Richard, *Missing Links*, II, pp. 144-6.

57 Akins, *Selections*, p. ii.

58 See Cuthbertson, “Thomas Beamish Akins”, pp. 94-101. French-language historians of Acadia believed that Akins had purposefully attempted to divert attention from the guilt of his ancestors by excising pertinent passages and damning papers. See Rameau (footnote 79); Casgrain, *Pèlerinage* (1888), pp. 56-7; and Richard, *Missing Links*, I, pp. 13, 76-9; II, pp. 175-81.

59 On the side of Nova Scotia’s honour spoke: R.G. Haliburton (T.C.’s son) in *The Past and*

102 *Acadiensis*

Murdoch was the first to present the Nova Scotia point of view in a thorough and exacting fashion, which sought to account for necessary cruelty.

In a private moment, Murdoch revealed that he had been pained by stories of the avarice and perfidy of British Nova Scotians. Two years after the publication of the final volume of his *History*, he reminisced:

I was led into the labor & execution of my book, by a desire to throw the light of truth, if possible, upon the merits & demerits of the expulsion of the French Acadians from this country in 1755 — The abbé Raynal, — Bancroft,—⁶⁰ Longfellow, &c had given popularity to a view of this transaction so disgraceful to the British name and nation, that we of Nova Scotia, who knew traditionally something of the truth, were annoyed at the reiteration of such severe charges against our nation. A friend urged me to undertake the task of vindication. I replied, that the only just course to pursue, would be to write the history of Acadie from it's [sic] first discovery, in order to shew the true position of these Acadians at the time of their removal — and as our government had obtained at some expense authentic copies of all official correspondence connected with this province, both under the French & English rule: and I had ready access to all our archives, I set to work at the beginning viz — 1603....⁶¹

In attempting to furnish a correct and just historical inquiry he succeeded in establishing a new paradigm for the study of the English regime and the Deportation.

Present of Nova Scotia: An Address on the 113th Anniversary of the Settlement of the Capital of the Province, Delivered by R.G. Haliburton, by request of the Anniversary Committee (Halifax, 1862); Adams George Archibald, president of the Nova Scotia Historical Society and attorney general of Nova Scotia, in "The Expulsion of the Acadians", *Nova Scotia Historical Society, Collections*, V (1886-1887), pp. 11-95; William Kingsford in *The History of Canada*, II (Toronto and London, 1888), chapter 6; W.O. Raymond in "Nova Scotia under English Rule; from the Capture of Port Royal to the Conquest of Canada, A.D. 1710-1760", *Royal Society of Canada, Proceedings and Transactions*, 3rd series, vol. 4 (1910), pp. 55-84; Archibald MacMechan in "Nova Scotia under English Rule, 1713-1775" in Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., *Canada and its Provinces*, XIII (Toronto, 1914), pp. 69-124; and Hannay. Parkman, of course, lent his prestige to the English side; his nemesis was Philip H. Smith, author of *Acadia: A Lost Chapter in American History* (Pawling, N.Y., 1884), with whom he sparred in the press. Placide Gaudet spoke for the Acadians in "Acadian Genealogy and Notes", *Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905 in Three Volumes* (Ottawa, 1906), II, part 3, apps. A-N, and *Le Grand dérangement, Sur qui retombe la responsabilité de l'expulsion des Acadiens* (Shédiac, N.B., 1922); as did Rameau, Casgrain, Richard and others.

60 He refers here to George Bancroft, *The History of the United States from the Discovery of the Continent to the Present Time* (10 vols., Boston, 1834-1835 and revisions).

61 Murdoch to J.E. Godfrey, 22 February 1869, "A Nova Scotia-Maine Historical Correspondence", pp. 114-5.

Reviewing contradictory evidence regarding the Acadian presence after 1710, Murdoch stressed the French reluctance to remove their subjects rather than the British interdiction on the sale and removal of chattels and real property (I, 334-7, 341-4). As to law, he expressed the English view: once the country was in English hands the inhabitants, *ipso facto*, were held to allegiance. Professed neutrality was a sham (I, 342-4). Anglo-Canadian historians accepted these arguments; indeed, a century later, they still retain some favour.⁶²

Murdoch took a hard line on the expulsion, but he was not without compassion. He knew the Deportation had been a messy affair. Referring to the round-up and embarkation of the Acadians, he admitted that “the scene...has very remarkable features of a distressful character”. But he would not condemn British officials for what, in context, was proper, “for France was aiming to drive a million English settlers out of this continent, and to become mistress of America and ruler of the ocean” (II, 291-2). A long litany of breaches of the law on the part of Frenchmen, Acadians in particular, set the tone for his explanation of the Deportation. He concluded that it would have been

the acme of absurdity to go on...with a province, the chief part of the population feeling either a hostile sentiment, or at least indifferent to the success and progress of its rulers, and closely attached to a foreign power.... and while the measures adopted were severe and harsh, and in some particulars cannot be justified, it would be difficult to point out any other course that would have consisted with the safety of the English (II, 286-7).

Finally, Murdoch sought to establish responsibility for the proscription of the Acadians. The decision was taken in collegial fashion, he concluded (II, 282-3), emphasizing as much the active part played by New Englanders as the honourable intentions of Governor Charles Lawrence and Whitehall.⁶³ In his correspon-

62 Akins fully adopted these opinions (*Selections*, pp. 263-7, n.), as did Campbell and Hannay. Parkman, too, followed Murdoch's lead, although he later changed his mind. See Parkman, *France and England in North America* (New York, 1983) II, pp. 474-5, 690-1, 906-11, 1026-7. Murdoch's arguments were attacked by his French-language successors; but most important was the discovery of new documentation, collected for the most part by Casgrain, in London and in Paris, and presented in Casgrain, *Pèlerinage* (1888), pp. 58-74; “Collection de documents inédits sur le Canada & l'Amérique”, *Le Canada-Français*, I (1888), pp. 109-20; and Rameau, *Colonie féodale* (1889), II, pp. 21-59; II, apps., 4e série, “Question de la Neutralité”, pp. 351-67. For a recent revival of Murdoch's thesis, see D.H. Brown, “The Foundations of British Policy in the Acadian Expulsion: A Discussion of Land Tenure and the Oath of Allegiance”, *Dalhousie Review*, LVII, 4 (Winter 1977-1978), pp. 709-25.

63 While English-language historians accepted Murdoch's view that the decision to expel the Acadians was backed by Nova Scotia, Massachusetts and Britain, their French-language colleagues thought that Lawrence, alone, was responsible for an act which the Home government had, at worst, accepted *post-factum*. See Casgrain, *Pèlerinage* (1888), pp. 161-9; Rameau, *Colonie*

dence with J.E. Godfrey, Murdoch condemned Bancroft and Longfellow who “not only blame the act, but endeavour to fix the odium of it on the British government & people”. And, while he commiserated with the Acadians for a “mode of removal [in] every way *inhuman*”, he argued that neither “low motives of gain” nor “mere malice” had had any part in the event for which New Englanders must share the blame.⁶⁴ Murdoch again showed the way, for his interpretation still appeals to contemporary historians of Nova Scotia and of *Acadie*,⁶⁵ as does his ode to Acadian magnanimity and diffidence. It is, he wrote in his concluding remarks for the year 1755, “some consolation to know that very many of the exiles returned...to their native land, and...became an integral and respected portion of our population, displaying, under all changes,...the same modest, humble and peaceable disposition, that had been their early attributes” (II, 298-9).⁶⁶

In all, Murdoch spent seven years working on his *History*, not signing the preface to the final volume until January 1867. The three volumes were published in each successive year from 1865 to 1867, each tome being a collation of a series of monthly publications stretching over two years. Initially Murdoch had not intended to extend his narrative past 1756.⁶⁷ Later he thought to conclude with Wentworth’s administration (1808) (III, xiii), but, in the end, he completed his account to 1827, as good a turning point as any other and one that left his own public history to others. With the publication of the third volume, he declared his intention “to await awhile the public judgment on the utility of my labors, before increasing the bulk of these volumes” (III, vii). All along he had advanced unsteadily. In March 1864, in a notice in the local press, he had stated that his history-to-be would “probably be extended to three volumes” and that the first volume, ready for the press and meant to cover the period 1605-1710 (in fact, it extended to the end of 1739), would only be printed “if a sufficient number of

féodale (1889), II, pp. 155-7; Richard, *Missing Links*, II, pp. 97-108. For a nationalist perspective, see Gaudet, *Le Grand dérangement*, and Henri d’Arles, *La Déportation des Acadiens* (Montreal, 1918).

- 64 Murdoch to J.E. Godfrey, 22 February 1869, “A Nova Scotia-Maine Historical Correspondence”, pp. 115-6.
- 65 It was at the core of G.A. Rawlyk’s revisionist interpretation, in *Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations, 1630-1784* (Montreal, 1973), of what he called J.B. Brebner’s “neutrality paradigm” in *New England’s Outpost: Acadia before the Conquest of Canada* (New York, 1927). Brebner recognized New England’s “expanding energies” as the cause of the Déportation; Rawlyk disagrees, arguing that it is upon London and its Nova Scotia agents that the responsibility must be placed.
- 66 Naomi Griffiths has given new life to what some have called a Maritime form of *ententiste* federalism. See *The Acadians: Creation of a People* (Toronto, 1973), and Michel Roy’s critique, *L’Acadie perdue* (Montreal, 1978).
- 67 Murdoch to J.E. Godfrey, 22 February 1869, “A Nova Scotia-Maine Historical Correspondence”, p. 115.

subscribers can be obtained to justify the expense”.⁶⁸ The hypothetical fourth volume, designed to prolong the chronicle through to Confederation, would, he realized, entail considerable toil (III, xiii). Nonetheless, he went to work and by February 1869 had completed the final manuscript to 1842.⁶⁹ In the end the final tome was not published.

Murdoch’s synthesis attracted little acclaim from his immediate successors who liked neither his neutral approach nor his unpretentious narrative style. Some found the substance of the *History* wanting: Murdoch had neither given the lie to the authors of the Deportation nor provided a revised, and rallying, “Statistical Account”. As was true for Akins and Haliburton, Murdoch’s reputation was damaged by the Deportation controversy although, in his case, it was his middle-of-the-road approach which was in question. Those who sought to justify the Deportation were content to ignore his opinion, while defenders of the Acadians, especially abbé Henri-Raymond Casgrain and Edouard Richard, proved schizophrenic in their reactions. Casgrain congratulated Murdoch for the care he took when considering manuscript and printed sources dealing with Catholic clergymen, *Le Loutre* in particular.⁷⁰ Richard pointed out, however, that this very cautious use of sources made him a shield, a “respectable name” behind which dishonest historians — Parkman and his acolytes — hid their artifices, as in “Pichon cited by Murdoch”.⁷¹ Moreover, Murdoch had, in Richard’s view, been remiss in refusing to explore the underlying causes of the expulsion; he lacked the “sagacious acumen of Brown and Haliburton”.⁷² Like Duncan Campbell and James Hannay, Murdoch had accepted the “unproven and interested accusation” of Governor Lawrence *et al.*, although, in his case, only because he had not been in a “position to penetrate the motives” of the perpetrators, namely the confiscation, for personal profit, of the Acadians’ chattels and land.⁷³

The Deportation aside, Murdoch’s book had, in the eyes of some of his

68 *The British Colonist* (Halifax), 2 April 1864.

69 Murdoch to J.E. Godfrey, 6 February 1869, “A Nova Scotia-Maine Historical Correspondence”, p. 114.

70 *Pèlerinage* (1888), p. 505, app. 1; *Seconde Acadie*, pp. 229-30, n.

71 *Missing Links*, I, pp. 279-80; I, chap. 16.

72 *Ibid.*, II, pp. 173-4. Rev. Andrew Brown, a Scottish Presbyterian minister who resided in Halifax from 1787 to 1795, had gathered together many documents relating to the English regime and had transcribed information culled from men who had witnessed the Deportation. This testimony was essential to the French revision of Nova Scotia’s history. See Dr. A. Brown’s Mss. Papers relating to Nova Scotia, 1748-1757, Add. Mss. 19,072ff, British Museum (copies are held at PANS and elsewhere). Extracts were published in Casgrain, “Collection de documents inédits sur le Canada & l’Amérique”, *Le Canada-Français*, I-III (1888-1890), in appendices; and in “The Acadian French”, Nova Scotia Historical Society, *Collections*, II (1881), pp. 129-60.

73 *Missing Links*, II, p. 158. French-language historians shared the belief that Lawrence and

contemporaries, a fundamental flaw. His *History* had been too matter-of-fact. Campbell, whose own work followed on that of Haliburton and Murdoch, while praising the “genius” of the former, assessed the legacy of the latter as “a work containing... a body of facts, in chronological order, which will continue to be consulted in coming generations as a valuable literary deposit”.⁷⁴ Hannay’s comments were the most telling. He described Murdoch’s work as a “wonderful monument of industry and research”, a guide to “all future historians to the sources of the history of Acadia”, but he chided its author for having limited his endeavours to “collecting and reducing annals, facts of interest”. For this reason, Hannay felt free “to attempt to weave into a consistent narrative facts which [Murdoch] had treated in a more fragmentary way”; indeed, he wrote, referring to his own *History of Acadia... (1879)*, had his predecessor done more “this book would never have been written”.⁷⁵

Such critiques were not altogether unfounded. Whereas Murdoch’s predecessors had neglected primary sources and underestimated the importance of historical research, he made the mistake of disregarding the requirements of literature. While for Haliburton and his various successors, narrative and literary techniques of pathos, drama and theme were essential to their enterprise, for Murdoch, authentic re-creation and conservation were the guiding factors. In short, his work suffered from what can be called source-syndrome, an incapacity to construct an analytical synthesis. His history of Nova Scotia is marred by its strict chronology and the emphasis placed upon the uncritical reproduction of state and early documents. The narrative is a summary of details, an introduction to documents and a paraphrasing of them. The appendices and the addenda are often no more than miscellanea. Constantly the recorder and interpreter of documents, Murdoch adopted a passive, interposed form of narrative (thus, such and such is said by so and so to have transpired). The resulting *History* is a chronologically ordered relation of events augmented by documents. His description of the French régime is largely based upon a paraphrasing of early chronicles, supported by documents where available. The narrative of English and colonial régimes is often built around documentary evidence linked together as summaries of the great events of the day.

This slavery to chronology was so exacting that his *History* advances year by year, virtually day by day, the heading of each page giving the date of the matters

others had enriched themselves through the Deportation. See Rameau, *Colonie féodale* (1889), II, pp. 157-69; Casgrain, *Pèlerinage* (1888), pp. 123, 530-5, app. v; Richard, *Missing Links*, II, chap. 32. The disappearance of documents bearing on the Deportation, including Lawrence’s correspondence with the Secretary of State and the Lords of Trade for the years 1755-1756, was the presumed cause of Murdoch’s alleged ignorance. In fact, Murdoch knew of the purportedly damning evidence, but he took the governor at his word (II, 283-4, 296-7).

74 *Nova Scotia*, p. 3, preface.

75 ...from *Its First Discovery to Its Surrender to England by the Treaty of Paris*, pp. vi-vii.

treated therein. Whole chapters are devoted to a single year, each event within that year being carefully ordered chronologically. Occasionally, events conspire to overcome scrupulous chronology; Louisbourg, for instance, is treated in topical fashion. The siege of 1745 is a case in point: to it is devoted a whole chapter (II, chap. 5). Paradoxically, the sense of time is lost. Even simple chronological causality, the logical substance of traditional political histories, is missing, for such rigid adherence to a chronological ordering of events generally prevents the establishment of even the most evident causal linkages. All the same, Murdoch brought to the historiography of Nova Scotia what it most needed: an objectivistic perspective.

Moreover, not all historians were put off by Murdoch's dull narrative and lack of polemic. The best historian of Acadia, Rameau de Saint-Père, did not share Hannay's view. Moulded by the intellectual and historiographical currents of modern France and well-versed in the techniques of sociology and demography, philology and social history,⁷⁶ he thought most highly of Murdoch as an historian. The two had met in Halifax in 1860 when, in the absence of Akins and over the objection of clerks fearful of French spies, Murdoch had arranged for Rameau to have access to the provincial archives.⁷⁷ They had briefly corresponded, Rameau writing in glowing terms of his colleague's contribution to historiography.⁷⁸ In his book, Rameau described Murdoch's *History* as being of an "[é]rudition peu commune dans les travaux anglo-américains", a work which had permitted him, at least partially, to remedy what Richard would call the problem of the "missing links".⁷⁹ Murdoch was, he wrote to Valentin Landry, editor of *L'Évangéline*, the only Anglo-American writer "qui ait eu une connaissance et une appréciation suffisantes des hommes et des choses du 17ième siècle".⁸⁰ Following Murdoch's death, Rameau wrote to Akins: "j'appris la mort de cet excellent homme que je regrette autant pour sa bienveillance envers moi, que pour les services qu'il a rendus et qu'il aurait pu rendre encore aux sciences historiques. Son livre en effet qui unit à une profonde érudition un cachet particulier d'originalité, est aussi agréable à lire que curieux à consulter; et je le parcours encore fréquemment

76 See P.D. Clarke, "Rameau de Saint-Père, Moïse de l'Acadie?", *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* (forthcoming); also P. and L. Trépanier, "Rameau de Saint-Père et le métier d'historien", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, XXXIII, 3 (décembre 1979), pp. 331-55.

77 See Rameau, "Voyages au Canada", *Revue de l'Université Laval*, IV, 1 (1949-1950), pp. 76-8. See also E. Rameau to T.B. Akins [1859?], Thomas Beamish Akins Papers, MG 1, vol. 1504, no. 48, PANS; Murdoch to E. Rameau, 27 April 1865, Fonds Rameau, CEA 2. 1-7.

78 E. Rameau to Murdoch, 18 May 1865 (rough copy), Fonds Rameau, CEA 2. 1-7.

79 Rameau, *Colonie féodale* (1877), "Sources", pp. xxxi, xxxiv. Rameau believed that the *Selections* were highly partial. See Rameau to H.-R. Casgrain, no date, reproduced in *Pèlerinage* (1888), pp. 55-6.

80 E. Rameau to V. Landry, May 1889, Fonds Valentin Landry, CEA 7. 1-4

pour aider mes propres recherches".⁸¹

From the larger audience had come even greater accolades. Murdoch was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Laws by King's College, and he was elected a corresponding member of the Maine Historical Society. The House of Assembly also made known its satisfaction by instructing the Department of Education to purchase three hundred sets of the *History* to be offered as prizes in province-wide competitions in the public schools. Neither its relatively steep price, seven dollars a set, nor its bulk, prevented it from becoming, for a time, a best-seller. On a single day in 1867, 900 volumes were sold.⁸²

The best measure of Murdoch's success is not the reception given his work by contemporaries but the long-term legacy of his *History*. If his contemporary, Haliburton, was the founder of provincial historiography, Murdoch brought Nova Scotia historiography into the modern era. Murdoch's work initiated the second phase of Maritime historiography, that of comprehensive political history as contrasted to the statistical and journal-like model which had prevailed until that time. And it revealed to historians the breadth of the archival resources to be exploited and the breadth of the history of Nova Scotia and Acadia. In the process, it unobtrusively nourished generations of historians. In Nova Scotia, it became staple reading for historians, the backbone of many county histories written in succeeding years.⁸³ On the Canadian scene, Murdoch's talents surpassed those of Christie and others who constructed comprehensive historical syntheses for other provinces. He had avoided the pitfalls common to this genre, popularizations or mere compilations. And he had avoided the obsessive attention to the Conquest and to the struggle for government reform, the impulsive attack on French and Catholic absolutism and the infatuation with imperialism so typical of Canadian Whig history. His *History* was less nationalistic and better researched than most.⁸⁴

Murdoch had had high hopes for his *History*. In his view, success would be assured, "if my narrative obtains the esteem of my compatriots, as a useful repertory of the past affairs of Acadie, and if intelligent and thinking men shall hereafter compare my work with the histories of Hutchinson, Belknap and Williamson, of New England, and with Garneau, Ferland, and Christie, of Canada, and assign me a place by the side or at the feet of those venerable

81 E. Rameau to T.B. Akins, probable date 18 October 1882 (rough copy), Fonds Rameau, CEA 2. 1-20.

82 *The British Colonist*, 24 August 1867; "Friday the Thirteenth", *Journal of Education*, XV, 5 (May 1966), pp. 23-4.

83 See M.B. Taylor, "Nova Scotia's Nineteenth-Century County Histories", *Acadiensis*, X, 2 (Spring 1981), pp. 159-67.

84 See C. Martin, "Fifty Years of Canadian History", *Royal Society of Canada: Fifty Year Retrospect; Anniversary Volume 1882-1932* (n.p., n.d.); G.M. Wrong, "The Beginnings of Historical Criticism in Canada: A Retrospect, 1896-1936", *Canadian Historical Review*, XVII, 1 (March 1936), pp. 1-8.

writers" (II, iv). Murdoch was perhaps not far off the mark. H.P. Biggar, then head of the Canadian branch of the Public Records Office, placed Murdoch in the pantheon of Canadian historiography, in the company of Charlevoix, Garneau, Ferland, Faillon, Smith⁸⁵ and Christie. "La Nouvelle-Ecosse", he wrote, "a trouvé son historien national dans Beamish Murdoch".⁸⁶ And W.S. MacNutt reserved for Murdoch's work what he applied only to J.B. Brebner and to the Maritime components of the "Government of Canada" series — a short critical note. It was a "narrative of events that can be most useful", he wrote.⁸⁷ Murdoch's reputation among the general public is likewise solid, judging by Nova Scotia school teachers' centenary tribute to his *magnum opus* in 1966: "Annals they are; but Murdoch's hope for a worthier successor has not yet been fulfilled, and it is to these volumes that we still turn, after a century, as our first *general secondary* reference for the early history of Nova Scotia".⁸⁸

85 Etienne-Michel Faillon, *Histoire de la colonie française au Canada* (3 vols., Montreal, 1865-1866), and other works; William Smith, *History of Canada from its First Discovery to the Year 1791* [sub-titles vary] (2 vols., Quebec, 1815).

86 "Canada", *Histoire et historiens depuis cinquante ans, Méthodes, organisation et résultats du travail historique de 1876 à 1926* (2 vols., Paris, 1928), II, pp. 489-90.

87 *The Atlantic Provinces: The Emergence of Colonial Society* (Toronto, 1975), "Bibliography", p. 294.

88 "Friday the Thirteenth", p. 23.