

THOMPSON (DAVID) PAPERS

Collection contains holograph manuscripts and copies of manuscripts by David Thompson (1770-1857). Includes two holograph drafts for Thompson's projected book, a narrative account of his explorations in western America from 1784 to 1812. This work remained unpublished until it was edited by J.B. Tyrrell. In 1916 it was published by the Champlain Society, under the title: David Thompson's Narrative of his explorations in western America, 1784-1812.

Collection also includes several sketches of mountain elevations, some of which were published in J.B. Tyrrell's edition of the Narrative, and several other fragments of holograph manuscripts by Thompson. In addition the collection contains typed transcripts of David Thompson's journals (originals in the Archives of Ontario), and photostats of other original Thompson material held elsewhere.

Tyrrell's research notes on Thompson and papers relating to his edition of the Narrative are in the J.B. Tyrrell Papers (Ms. Coll. 21). Additional research materials on Thompson are also in the National Archives of Canada (MG 30 D 49; 9 boxes/vols.)

Extent: 11 boxes/items.

Provenance:

The holograph manuscripts of the Narrative remained in possession of David Thompson's family after his death in 1857. One of his sons sold the manuscripts to Charles Lindsey of Toronto. J.B. Tyrrell purchased them from Charles Lindsey in 1895 and donated them to the University of Toronto Library in 1939. The other holograph material was probably included with the manuscripts Tyrrell purchased from Charles Lindsey and was donated by him to the Library at the same time.

The typed transcripts of the journals in the Ontario Archives came to the Library as part of J.B. Tyrrell's collection of books and papers which were bequeathed to the University at his death in 1957.

The photostat material (accession numbers AR3673 and 476884) was donated by Hugh N. Wallace in 1958 and at an early date.

MS.
COLL.
21

THOMPSON (DAVID) PAPERS

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Restrictions:

The original manuscripts of the Narrative are not available for use, due to their fragility. Xerox copies or microfilm (Mfm.Dup. 300) should be used.

Revised May 1995
K. Martyn

CHRONOLOGY

- 1770 Born April 30, London, Eng.
- ca.1777-84 Attended Grey Coat Hospital, Westminster, a charity school established for poor children of Westminster. Enrolled in the mathematical school and received a rudimentary education in navigation.
- 1784 Apprenticed as a clerk to the Hudson's Bay Company for seven years.
- 1784-88 Served his apprenticeship in a variety of posts including: Fort Churchill under Samuel Hearne; York Factory under Humphrey Marten and others; Manchester House, under William Tomison; Hudson House, near Bightholme, under James Tate.
- 1789-1790 Sent to Cumberland House in the spring of 1789 to recuperate from a broken leg. Spent next winter there under Philip Turnor. Studied surveying and map-making with Turnor, the HBC's official surveyor. Spring of 1790 Thompson sent down to York Factory.
- 1791 Finished his apprenticeship. Offered three year contract as clerk at 15 pounds a year. His request for surveying instruments granted.
- 1792-97 Worked as a surveyor in the Athabasca region
- 1794 Appointed HBC surveyor at 60 pounds a year.
- 1796 Explored Black River route to Lake Athabasca.
- 1797 Broke with the HBC and joined the North West Company as a surveyor.

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- 1797-99 Surveyed for NWC in the upper Red River Valley, the Mandan Indian villages on the Missouri River, the sources of the Mississippi River, Fond du Lac and Rainy River regions.
- 1799 Appointed a trader for NWC in the northwestern regions of Canada. Married Charlotte Small, mixed-blood daughter of NWC partner, Patrick Small.
- 1799-1806 Continued his surveys as other responsibilities permitted.
- 1800-1801 Three surveying expeditions into the Rocky Mountains
- 1804 Became partner in NWC
- 1804-1805 Served as wintering partner managing the trade in the Muskrat country
- 1806-1811 Set out to survey trade routes from the Rockies to the Pacific. Explored the passes west from the Saskatchewan and Athabasca Rivers, building posts and mapping the uncharted Columbia River basin from its source to the Pacific.
- 1811 July Reached the mouth of the Columbia and completed his survey of the river from source to mouth.
- 1812 Wintered at Saleesh House. Returned to Montreal in the spring and retired from active service in the NWC.
- Settled at Terrebonne, Que., with his family and began to prepare maps and write up his observations for the NWC.
- 1813 Completed a large map of western Canada for the North West Company. A copy hung in NWC post in Fort William. Published in 1816 by NWC without credit.

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- 1814 Completed a more perfect version of the map of Western Canada for the NWC. (This was later sold by one of his sons to the government of Upper Canada and was published in 1857, without credit to Thompson. It became the basic map used in the next half century. Original now in the Archives of Ontario.)
- 1815 Purchased a farm at Williamstown, Glengarry Country, Upper Canada, and settled there with his large family.
- 1816-1827 Appointed British surveyor and astronomer for the International Boundary Commission set up under the Treaty of Ghent to determine what is now the Ontario section of the boundary between Canada and the United States. Managed the field operations of the survey crews, 1819-22.
- 1826 Forwarded a revised set of his maps to the British Government (now in the British Library)
- 1833-37 Suffered financial reverses. Assigned his lands to his creditors to avoid bankruptcy. Returned to surveying. Eventually gave up his home in Williamstown and moved to Montreal. Carried out surveys for Lake St. Francis, areas in Eastern Townships near Sherbrooke, eastern and southern boundaries of Upper Canada.
- 1837 Mapped Muskoka Lakes country and surveyed a canoe route from Lake Huron through Muskoka district to the Ottawa River.
- 1838 Surveyed Lake St. Peter
- 1837-1845 Surveying work became increasingly difficult to find and his circumstances worsened.

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- 1843 Sold his completed his maps of western Canada and the Oregon country to the British government for 150 pounds. Used by Arrowsmith in his maps without acknowledgement. (Originals in Public Records Office, London)
- 1844 Began writing his Narrative.
- 1845 Penniless, he and his wife had to move in with his daughter and family in Montreal.
- 1850 Moved with daughter and family to Longueuil.
- 1851 Became completely blind and could not finish his Narrative.
- 1857 Died at Longueuil.
- 1916 David Thompson's Narrative, edited by J.B. Tyrrell, was published by the Champlain Society.
- 1962 New edition of the Narrative, edited by R. Glover, published by the Champlain Society.
- 1971 Another edition edited by Victor G. Hopwood under title: Travels in Western North America 1784-1812 published by Macmillan, Toronto.

CONTAINER LIST

Boxes 1-2 David Thompson's Narrative of his explorations in Western America, 1784-1812. ca. 1844-1851.

Holograph drafts. Two versions exist for most of the narrative, here designated as Version A and Version B. J.B. Tyrrell's edition of the narrative was based chiefly on Version A.

As described in early library lists, there appear to be four separate manuscripts, numbered I-IV. The listing below follows the early library listing.

Original manuscript is not available for use. Instead use xerox copies in Boxes 3 and 4 or Microfilm Duplicate 300.

Box 1

Folder 1 Mss. I. [Arrival at Hudson Bay, Churchill and York Factory] 12 p.

With 2 additional leaves headed: "Travels &." and "Notes".

Folder 2 Mss. II. [Athabasca Pass to the Pacific and return] p. 233-262.

Folder 3 Mss. III. "Index to my travels." p. 1-10.

Folders 4-14 Mss. III. [Narrative: part one. Version B] p. 45-193 (incomplete)

Folders 15-28 Mss. III. [Narrative: part two. Version A] p. 194-324.

Published in J.B. Tyrrell's edition of 1916 as part two of the Narrative.

Folders 29-30 Mss. III. "Appendix No. 1"- "No.18". 18 p.

CONTAINER LIST

- David Thompson's Narrative of his explorations in Western America, 1784-1812.
- Box 1
Folders 31-40 Mss. IV. [Narrative: part one. Version A] p. 1-110.
- Box 2
Folders 1-19 Mss. IV. [Narrative: part one. Version A] p. 111-312.
- This version was published as part one in J.B. Tyrrell's edition of the Narrative in 1916. Thompson's holograph index to this version is in the Archives of Ontario.
Accession no. 364501.
- Boxes 3-4 David Thompson's Narrative of his explorations in Western America, 1784-1812. ca. 1844-1851.
- Mfm. Dup. 300 Xerox copies of original manuscript. (See also Mfm. Dup. 300)
- Item 5 Original sketches of profiles of western mountain ranges. Watercolour and ink. 5 profiles. 10 sheets. In case.
- These profiles appear to have accompanied Mss. III of the Narrative and to have been donated by him to the Library in 1939. Three profiles were reduced and reproduced in J.B. Tyrrell's edition of the Narrative.
- Folder 1 "Saleesh Mountains South of the Lake." 2 sheets.
- Folder 2 "South of the Saleesh Lake No. 4." and "Rocky Mountains ... south of the Saleesh Lake No. 5." 2 sheets.
- Published by J.B. Tyrrell as: Mountains south of Saleesh or Flathead Lake, Montana.
- Folder 3 "Nelson's Mountains South." 3 sheets.
- Published by J.B. Tyrrell as: Nelson Mountains west of the head of the Columbia River.

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- Item 5 Original sketches of profiles of western mountain ranges.
- Folder 3 "Nelson's Mountains. No. 3 from the Hoard." 1 sheet.
- Folder 4 "Great Mountains east side of and near the Kootanae Lake." and "Great Mountains near the Kootanae Lake, east side." 2 sheets.

Published by J.B. Tyrrell as: Rocky Mountains east of the head of the Columbia River.
- Folder 5 Proofs of two mountain elevations reproduced in J.B. Tyrrell's edition of the Narrative (Toronto: 1916).

Proofs are stamped Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh, 6 Oct. 1914.
- Box 6 Four original holograph manuscripts by David Thompson. Undated.

Listed as accompanying J.B. Tyrrell's donation of the Narrative in 1939.
- Folder 1 [Essay on water] p. 11-14. (4 leaves)
Incomplete.
- Folder 2 [Essay on the natives of North America] 10 leaves.
- Folder 3 [Essay on mountains] 9 p. (5 leaves)
- Folder 4 [Description of aurora borealis] 1 leaf.
Incomplete fragment.

CONTAINER LIST

Box 6

Folder 5 Typed transcript entitled: "Account of an attempt to cross the Rocky Mountains, by Mr. James Hughes, nine men & myself, on the part of the N.Wt. Company in order to penetrate to the Pacific Ocean, 1801." Xerox of typescript. 16 p.

David Thompson's name appears at end. Addressed to Messrs. William & Duncan McFillivray, Agent of the N.Wt. Company. Original manuscript in Vancouver Public Library.

Item 7 Photostats of four manuscripts by David Thompson.

No source for the originals identified. Donated in 1958 by Hugh N. Wallace. Accession no. AR3673. In portfolio.

"A Meteorological Journal at the Forks of the Peace River. 1803." 10 p.

Covers Jan. 18 to June 5.

"Journey from Peace River to the Lesser Slave Lake, Dec. 11, 12-13, 1803." 3 p.

Journal. June 5, 1803-Feb. 28, 1804. 24 p.

"Journey from the Forks of the Peace River to the Rocky Mountain House. 1804. NWCy." 22 p.

Items 8-10 Typed transcripts of David Thompson's journals. 3 vols.

Original journals are in the Ontario Archives. These typed copies were made for J.B. Tyrrell by Miss E.I. Gilby in 1913. Note by A.V.W. [Arthur Veitch White]. Bequest of J.B. Tyrrell. Accession nos. AR3283-5.

