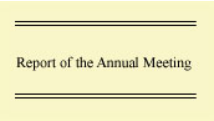
Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association
Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada



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THE BEAVER CLUB

BY

LAWRENCE J. BURPEE

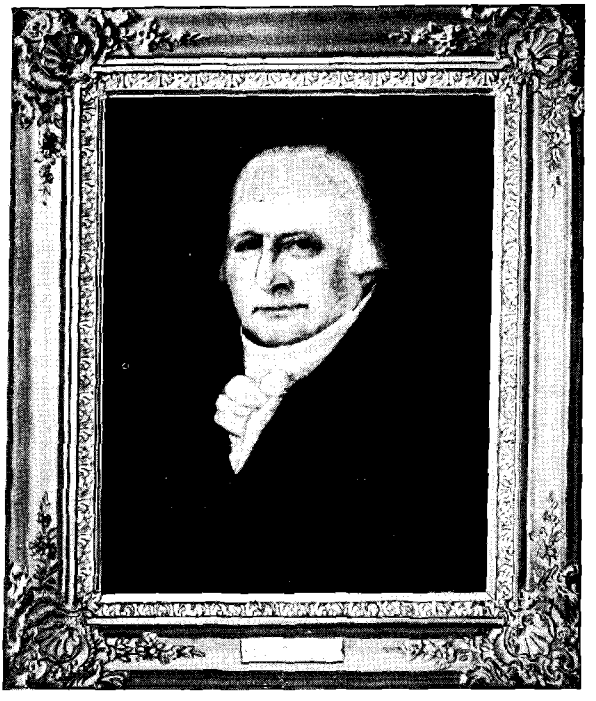
The Beaver Club was established at Montreal in 1785, by the same group of men who founded the North West Company. L. R. Masson, in the Introduction to his *Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest,* describes it as an exclusive organization, to which no one could be admitted who had not passed the test of a winter in the *pays d'en haut* and received the unanimous vote of the members of the club.

I shall not attempt to describe in any detail the historic background of the Beaver Club, which grew naturally out of the coalition of Montreal merchants engaged in the western fur trade. Very soon after the cession of Canada, British traders began to make their way into what was called the Indian country, first to Michilimackinac, then to Grand Portage at the western end of lake Superior, and later to lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan. These independent traders gradually came together in partnerships, but the competition was so severe that the various interests found it imperative to unite in one concern. In 1779 nine distinct firms signed an agreement for one year. This contract was renewed in 1780 for three years, but only lasted two. In the winter of 1783-84, however, a third agreement was signed for five years under the name of the North West Company. The men who thus created the great trading rival of the Hudson's Bay Company, realizing the value of a social medium in welding their commercial interests into one, established the Beaver Club.

Of the original members of the club—nineteen in number—four had made their first trip into the Indian country before the capture of Quebec, that is to say during the French period,—Charles Chaboillez (1751), Maurice Blondeau (1752), Hypolite Des Rivières (1753), and Etienne Campeau (1753). Gabriel Coté had gone west the year of the taking of Montreal, 1760, and Alexander Henry, the first of the British traders, the following year. The three Frobisher brothers, Benjamin, Joseph and Thomas, dated from 1765, 1768 and 1773 respectively; James McGill from 1766 and his brother John four years later. The remainder of the nineteen were Louis Joseph Ainse (1762), George McBeath (1766), James Finlay (1766), Peter Pond (1770), Mathew Lessey (1770), David McCrae (1772), John McNamara (1772) and Jean Baptiste Jobert (1775). Finlay, so far as is known, was the first British trader to get as far west as the Saskatchewan.

One notes the omission from this list of several names of men that were prominent in the fur trade of the period, such as Peter

Pangman, John Gregory, A. N. McLeod, and Alexander Mackenzie. As a matter of fact in 1784, the year before the club was formed, these four had organized a rival trading partnership in opposition to the North West Company. Three years later the opposition was abandoned and these men joined the company. Some of them, however, Mackenzie in particular, were not happy among their new associates, and in 1795 what was known as the X Y Company was estab-



Joseph Frobisher.

lished, largely it is said because of the unpopularity of Simon McTavish. Mackenzie left the old company in 1799 and joined the X Y Company in 1801. The death of McTavish in 1804 once more brought the rebels back into the fold. It was therefore not until some time about the reorganization of the Beaver Club in 1807 that Mackenzie and his associates of the X Y Company became active members of the club, although they had been actually elected some time before.

Another and more curious omission is that of Simon McTavish, who with the Frobishers was mainly instrumental in organizing the North West Company. So far as the records show, McTavish was

never a member of the Beaver Club. Possibly he kept out of it because he disliked to meet some of his associates on a footing of equality, or perhaps he realized that he would be a disturbing element in such a place. Masson, in a footnote to his *Bourgeois*, says: " Mr. Simon McTavish was very much disliked by the majority of the wintering partners who, on account of his haughty demeanour, called him " The Premier", " The Marquis".

Other notable omissions, in later years, were David Thompson and Daniel Williams Harmon, but the obvious explanation in their case is that they were out-and-out westerners who never came farther east than Grand Portage or Fort William until they finally left the Indian country, Thompson after nearly a quarter of a century's service and Harmon at the end of nineteen years. In any event, neither was the type of man to feel at home in a social club.

A word or two about some of the original nineteen, of whom, according to Joseph Frobisher, only six were living in 1807—Charles Chaboillez, Alexander Henry, George McBeath, Maurice Blondeau, James McGill, and himself.

Benjamin, Thomas and Joseph Frobisher were Englishmen who had come to Montreal not long after the cession of Canada, and had engaged in business. There are in the McGill Archives a number of very interesting documents known as the Frobisher Papers, which include a letter book of Joseph Frobisher, 1787-88, and his diary 1806-10. From these we get a good deal of light on the Frobishers and their associates, on the North West Company and the fur trade, and on the Beaver Club. Benjamin Frobisher died in 1787 and Thomas Frobisher the following year. Joseph was the most active of the three, having penetrated west as far as the Churchill river where, in 1774, he built a trading post. The following year he accompanied Alexander Henry up the Saskatchewan. He died in 1810. He had built a home, " Beaver Hall," on Beaver Hall Hill, which was burnt in 1847. It has been described as a long wooden cottage, surrounded by trees, and standing about half way up the hill.

James McGill, born in Glasgow in 1744, emigrated to the United States, and came north to Montreal, where he was a prosperous merchant. He died in 1813, leaving his estate of Burnside with £40,000 to found the university which has since borne his name. He is described as tall, with a commanding figure, handsome in youth, with a tendency to corpulency in advancing years: a frank, social temperament. He sat in the first parliament of Lower Canada 1792, became a member of the Legislative Council, and chairman of the Executive Council, 1812. He commanded Montreal volunteers in the War of 1812.

Alexander Henry was born in New Jersey, and came to Montreal in 1760. He entered the fur trade, and started west the following year. His "Travels and Adventures" describes his experiences for the following sixteen years. He sailed for Europe in 1776, where he made the acquaintance of Sir Joseph Banks, then president of the Royal Society, and had an opportunity of telling the story of his adventures to Marie Antoinette. He had been introduced to the French Court by Abbé La Corne, a brother of the Canadian officer, St. Luc de la Corne. Henry died in 1824. Parkman's account of the Indian massacre of the garrison at Michilimackinac in 1763 is based upon Henry's narrative.

James Finlay had gone west in 1766, but, more ambitious or adventurous than his associates, he had not been content to trade with the Indians at Michilimackinac or Sault Ste. Marie, Green Bay or Grand Portage, but had pushed on toward the setting sun. We have the evidence of Matthew Cocking, one of the early explorers of the Hudson's Bay Company, that Finlay had built a trading post on the Saskatchewan and wintered there in 1767. Eight years afterward we find him mentioned as one of the twelve "most respectable citizens", six English and six French, who drew up the articles of capitulation of Montreal to Montgomery. In 1796 he was warden of Christ Church. He died some time between the latter date and 1807. His son married Gregory's sister.

Peter Pond, one of the most singular of the many remarkable men engaged in the western fur trade, was born in Milford, Connecticut, in 1740. The evidence of his wanderings depends almost entirely on his own maps and occasional references in narratives of his contemporaries, for, although he left a manuscript journal, comparable only to that of Radisson as an example of eccentric spelling, when it was discovered in Connecticut by one of his descendants some years ago, the greater part of it was gone, having been used, it is said, for kindling the kitchen stove. That kind of unintentional but none the less unfortunate vandalism has deprived the world of many an invaluable record of the past.

Pond was a born adventurer, apparently never so happy as when pushing his way into some unexplored region of the far west. He was a man of violent temper, and fought three duels during his eighteen years in the west, in each of which his opponent was killed. One cannot quite picture him as a member of the Beaver Club, and indeed so little of his time was spent in Montreal that he could not have been much more than a nominal member.

As a matter of fact, he had been sent down to Montreal from the west in 1784, to answer for the death of a trader named Wadin. The following year—the year the Beaver Club was founded—he was in

Quebec presenting a memorial to the Governor regarding his western discoveries. He started back the same year, remained in the west until 1788, and then left the North West Company, returning to Milford, where he died in 1807.

These scattered notes may serve the purpose of introducing the group of fur traders who organized the club in 1785. Of the club itself, little is known before the year 1807, when it was, in the language of the minutes, "renewed and newmodeled". From January of that year up to and including the year 1817, minutes were kept by the secretary, and again in the single year 1827. These minutes fortunately have been preserved. It does not appear that any minutes were kept until 1807, nor between 1817 and 1827. The club remained active from 1785 to September, 1804. Between the latter date and January, 1807, it apparently was in a state of suspended animation. Meetings were held regularly between 1807 and 1817, generally once a fortnight from December to April. Internal evidence points to the fact that in 1817 the club gave up the ghost. Ten years later it was made the victim of a belated attempt at resuscitation, but, like some similar efforts in human experience, this one proved abortive. The club, after tottering through three meetings, died again and was decently and permanently buried in March, 1827.

The disappearance of the club after 1817 is not hard to understand. These were critical years in the fur trade. The long period of guerilla warfare between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, punctuated every now and then with such fatal episodes as the Seven Oaks affair, was proving disastrous to both companies. The rival traders were in fact drifting into very rough water, and wisely determined to unite their forces instead of each wasting its energy trying to destroy the other. The union took place in March, 1821.

The spasmodic revival of the club in 1827 seems to have been mainly due to Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, of which the old North West Company was now a part. In a letter from Simpson to Roderick McKenzie, dated Lachine, January 10, 1827, he says: "Your brother and a few North-Westers have promised to assist me to-day in discussing the merits of a roasted beaver; I shall sound them about the plan of renewing the Beaver Club, but fear the season is too far advanced to do anything on it this winter. Accept my best thanks for your attention in sending me the rules."

Something evidently did come of it because we find a meeting of the Beaver Club held eight days later, at the house of William Blackwood. At this meeting Simpson, James Keith and a Mr.

Ferries were elected new members. However, this is telling the story of the Beaver Club backwards, and it may be wise to get back to 1807.

Up to that time nineteen additional members had been added to the original nineteen, now, it will be remembered, reduced to six, and five honorary members. The added members, with their year of election, were: Jean Baptiste Jabeau (1787), Joseph Blakeley (1787), Patrick Small (1789), Nicholas Montour (1790), V. St. Germain (1790), John Gregory (1791), Jacques Giasson (1791), Myers Michaels (1793), Isaac Todd (1795), William McGillivray (1795), Alexander Mackenzie (1795), Angus Shaw (1796), Roderick Mackenzie (1796), Duncan McGillivray (1799), George Gillespie (1799), Jacques Porlier (1801), Alexander Cuthbert (1802), Alexander Fraser (1803) and Simon Fraser (1803). The honourary members were Captains John Edwards, Errol Boyd and Alex. Patterson, of the company's ships, and Captain Daniel Robertson and Major William Doyle, who had commanded the garrison at Michilimackinac.

A very few notes will suffice to identify the more important of these names. A number of them were parties to the reorganization of the North West Company in 1790, that is to say, Alexander Mackenzie, Montour, Small, Gregory, William McGillivray. Gregory was one of the earliest of the fur traders, and for several years shared with McTavish and Frobisher the responsible position of agent of the North West Company at Montreal. Alexander Mackenzie got his first training in Gregory's counting house in Montreal.

Of the great explorer, the man who first traced the mighty stream that bears his name to the Arctic, and first realized the long dream of an overland route to the Pacific, it is not necessary to say anything here. His cousin Roderick McKenzie did notable service in the west, having among other things built Fort Chipewyan, that once famous centre of the fur trade, established the Athabaska Library, and rediscovered the Kaministikwia route. He spent some years gathering material for a history of the North West Company, but the project for some reason fell through. The journals and other material he collected are now in the Public Archives at Ottawa and the McGill University Library. A number of them were published by Masson in his *Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-ouest.*

Roderick McKenzie and Simon McTavish each married daughters of Charles Chaboillez. Other cases of the connection by marriage of North West Company families have been or will be mentioned. In fact we have in the group of men who made up the Beaver Club something much more like a Family Compact than that which was known by the name in Upper Canada.

William McGillivray and his brother Simon were associated with their uncle McTavish in the firm of McTavish, McGillivrays and Company, which succeeded that of McTavish, Frobisher and Company. William McGillivray was one of Selkirk's most determined opponents. Fort William was named after him. He became a member of the Executive Council of Canada, and died in 1825. Duncan McGillivray, who was also at one time a member of the firm, discovered Howse pass in 1800. John McDonald of Garth, in his Autobiographical Notes, says he was " as fine a fellow as ever lived". He died in 1808.

Simon Fraser, the narrative of whose extraordinarily difficult and dangerous journey down the gorge of the Fraser in 1808 is included in Masson's collection, also needs no particular introduction. Patrick Small, according to a manuscript note of Roderick McKenzie, was a nephew of General Small of the 42nd Highlanders. David Thompson, the famous explorer, married his half-breed daughter. Isaac Todd was among the earliest of the British merchants of Montreal. We find him going security in 1767 for the fur trading license of Thomas Curry, who was the first British trader from Montreal to follow Finlay to the Saskatchewan. That Todd was a man of very considerable influence in the councils of the North West Company is made evident by the fact that one of its principal vessels, which supplied the trading posts on the Pacific coast direct from London, was named the " Isaac Todd." It had been sent out in the first instance to oppose Astor's ambitious plans at Astoria. This vessel brought trading goods to the Pacific coast, then sailed with furs to China.

Dr. Atherton, in his *History of Montreal,* mentions a Dr. Daniel Robertson, a retired lieutenant of the 42nd Regiment, who practiced medicine in Montreal about this time, and who no doubt is the Captain Daniel Robertson elected an honourary member of the Beaver Club in 1793.

It will be convenient to discuss briefly at this point the Rules of the club, apparently adopted in February, 1807.

Article 1 provided that the club should consist of not more than forty members and eight honourary members. This number was increased in 1815 to fifty with ten honourary members; and in 1817 to fifty-five, with the same number of honourary members.

The second article provided that no new member should be admitted except with the unanimous consent of all the members present, to be taken by ballot, and proposed at the previous meeting. This particular rule was intended to be like the laws of the Medes and Persians, for the eighth article, while conceding the right of the majority of the members to adopt such further regulations as might be thought desirable from time to time, makes the exception, " but

the rule for receiving a member cannot be altered." Nevertheless it was altered on one occasion, or at any rate ignored, several new members, because of special circumstances, being proposed and elected at the same meeting.

The third article provided that every member should have the liberty of inviting as many guests as he thought proper, on condition that he gave timely notice to the provider, or as we would say to-day the caterer. At one of the last meetings of the club, in January, 1827, this rule was amended by providing that no member should be allowed to invite more than three guests. However, at the last meeting of the club in March, 1827, George Simpson (afterwards Sir George) is credited with no less than ten guests. The saying that club rules are made to be broken evidently has something more than a present-day application.

The fourth article gave liberty to each member to drink as he pleased after the club toasts had gone round, and to retire at his pleasure; and the ninth article set forth the club toasts as: 1st The Mother of all Saints; 2nd. The King; 3rd. The Fur Trade in all its branches; 4th. Voyageurs Wives and Children; and 5th. Absent Members.

By the fifth article, no member might have a party at his house on club days, nor accept invitations, but if in town must attend, unless prevented by indisposition.

The sixth compelled each member to wear his medal on club days, with a ribbon of sky blue, or forfeit one dollar. In January, 1827, it was resolved that every member of the club, out of respect to the memory of William McGillivray and other deceased members, should wear his medal with a black ribbon.

The reference here is to the famous gold medal of the Beaver Club, examples of which are found both in the Chateau de Ramezay and the McCord Museum in Montreal, those in the Chateau having belonged to Robert Henry and Gabriel Coté, and those in the McCord Museum to James McGill and Hypolite Desrivières. There is also one in the Parliamentary Library at Ottawa, somewhat different in character, having been presented to Archibald McLennan in 1792 by the Beaver Club for some act of bravery. He is said to have been elected a member of the club in 1814, but I cannot find any record of it in the minutes.

By the seventh article, the club was to commence its meetings the first week in December and continue once a fortnight to the second week in April. There was also to be what were called Summer Clubs for the captains of the fur ships, who were eligible as Honourary Members. Colonel Landman, in his *Adventures and Recollections,* mentions a house at Lachine owned by the North West Com-

pany, "wherein an abundant luncheon was awaiting our arrival", and Mr. Lynn Hetherington, in an article on the Beaver Club in the "University Magazine," some years ago, suggests that this was the Summer Club maintained for the use of the captains.

If they were all treated here as generously as Landmann, they must have had merry times, for that entertaining traveller tells us that he and his companions, who included Sir Alexander Mackenzie and other members of the North West Company, with officers of the 60th Regiment, made such a night of it that by six o'clock the only two left at the table were Mackenzie and McGillivray, both seasoned Scotchmen; the rest, as Landmannn says, having fallen from their seats; he himself to save himself from being trampled upon, having contrived to draw himself into the fireplace, where he sat up in one of the corners, there being no stove or grate.

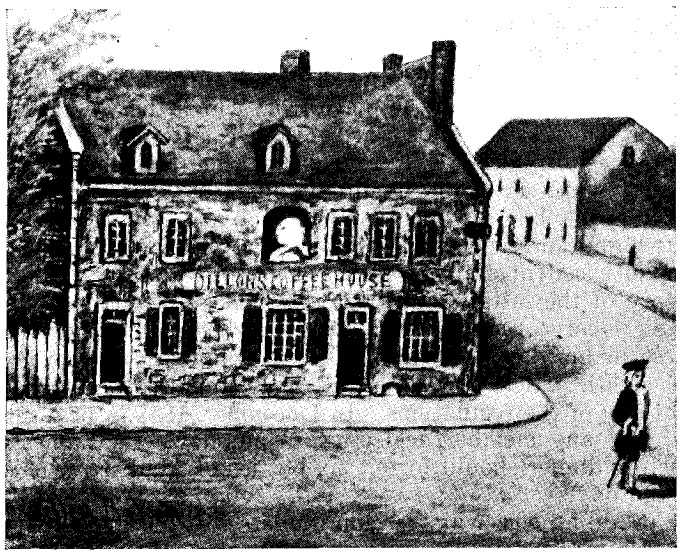
"Lachine," says Adèle Clarke in *Old Montreal*, "was the Hudson's Bay headquarters and the place from which the voyageurs used to start for the west." (This was, of course, after the union of the two companies in 1821). "Every spring they launched a fleet of canoes with seven or eight hundred voyageurs. Chief Factor Sir George Simpson's house stood where the convent now is, and the old storehouses and an ancient log dwelling of a primitive character still stand in an excellent state of preservation on the river bank there. The history of the latter was said to go back two hundred and fifty years. Sir George Simpson, who was the controlling spirit of the Northwest in his day, died in 1860, at Lachine".

The eighth article provided that fines should be imposed for a breach of any of the regulations. In December, 1815, a new rule was adopted, that any member neglecting to put down the names of his guests before dinner should forfeit six bottles of Madeira wine to the club of the day.

The presiding officer at the club dinners was the president, under whom was a vice-president and a cork. A new rule adopted in 1815 imposed upon the vice-president the duty of delivering to the secretary of the club, in the course of the week following each Club Day, the account of the expenses of the day, with the names of the members present and their guests, and imposed a penalty of six bottles of Madeira if this duty were neglected. The unfortunate vice-president also had to make good any deficiencies arising from his neglect.

The president was to name the vice-president as his assistant for the day, and the latter his cork, and these were to succeed in rotation to the chair. All unmarried members having servants were required to bring them to the club.

There is no evidence as to where the Beaver Club met previous to 1807, but that year it made use of the City Tavern, kept by one Wm. Hamilton, in January, February, March, and April; and in November of the same year switched its patronage to Richard Dillon, who kept a hostelry variously known as the Montreal Hotel, Dillon's Tavern, Dillon's Coffee House or Dillon's Hotel. The tavern was on the southwest corner of St. James street and Place D'Armes. It was pulled down about 1858 to make way for the Liverpool, London and Globe Insurance Company's building. Dillon, besides being a shrewd and successful inn-keeper, was also an artist of some ability, as witness his sketches of Montreal in 1800.



Dillon's Tavern.

At the meeting of the club on January 28, 1807, a warm discussion arose over the name of the club, the new members urging that it should be changed to the Voyageurs Club, and the old members objecting. On its being put to a vote, the twelve members present split even, and it was then decided that the question should be determined by the toss of a dollar. If the coin fell head uppermost the club should retain its name; if downwards, it would be changed to the Voyageurs Club. The dollar fell head uppermost, and the secretary remarks feelingly "the club retains its original name as when first instituted in 1785—Beaver Club".

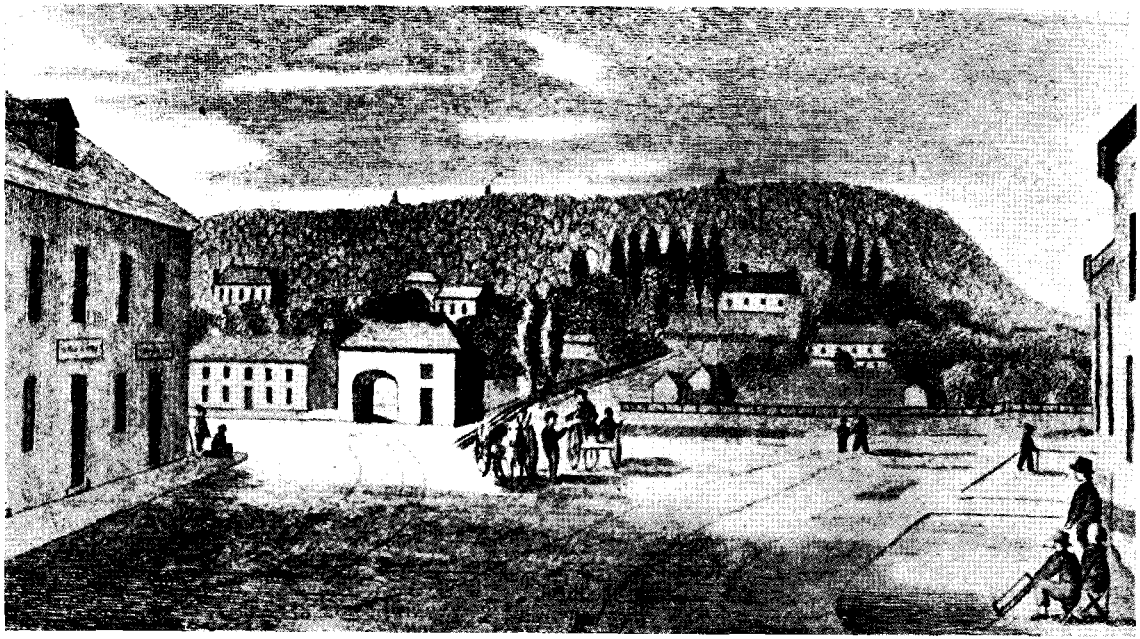
Joseph Frobisher was secretary of the club at this time and it is interesting to compare the entries in his manuscript Diary, 1806-10, with the Minutes of the Beaver Club. And this brings up again the question as to the meeting place of the club. The idea that prevailed for some time that the Beaver Club had a definite and fixed meeting place, or in other words a club house, was of course erroneous. Both the Club Minutes and Frobisher's Diary make this quite clear. The Club held its fortnightly meetings, or at any rate most of them, in one or other of the popular Montreal taverns of the period. As already mentioned, the City Tavern was used in the early part of 1807, and Dillon's Hotel later in the same year, and from that time to the end of 1815, when for some reason the place of meeting was changed to Palmer's Tavern, and the following year to Tesseyman's. At any rate the club bill that year is in favour of one Tesseyman. In 1817 the meeting took place at the Mansion House Hotel, and in 1827 at the Masonic Hall Hotel.

A point arises here as to whether or not the club ever met at the homes of its members. The only meeting of that kind mentioned in the club minutes was on January 18, 1827, when it took place at the house of William Blackwood. That, however, seems to have been only a business meeting to reorganize the club, as distinguished from the regular club dinners. In Frobisher's Diary, under date March 10, 1810, one finds the entry "Dined at home. Beaver Club. Major Loyd and Mr. Burke guests;" and on the 24th of the same month, "Dined at home. Beaver Club." Does Frobisher mean that the club met those nights at his house, that is to say at the famous Beaver Hall on Beaver Hall Hill, or that he deliberately broke the sacred rule of the club and was consequently mulcted so many bottles of Madeira or whatever the fine was at that time? The minutes of the club furnish the answer. Frobisher is entered as ill and therefore is not fined. His guests are entertained at the club.

Frobisher mentions in his Diary a Bachelor Club, which met at Gillis Coffee House in 1807; also a Sociable Club which met at the City Tavern, possibly another name for the Bachelor Club. He notes that the City Tavern was sold at public auction at Gillis Coffee House, April 4, 1808, to David Ross for £1,380 stg.

April 9 of the same year, he notes the death of Duncan McGillivray, and under date of the 11th, he writes: "Duncan McGillivray was buried at the mountain in McTavish Family Vault." That is the old vault half way up Mount Royal, the grounds of which are now in a very dilapitated condition. Mourners: Mr. McGillivray and Judge Reid, Frobisher and R. Mackenzie, Fraser and Hallowell, Todd and Ogden, J. Reid and son, B. Frobisher and Hallowell, Henry

86025—6½



BEAVER HALL HILL

Taken from near McGill and St. James streets, Showing the Hay Market, now Victoria Square, Beevor Hall (note the spelling) near the centre, distinguished by its poplars, the Weigh-House to the left, and on the extreme right a small portion of the American Presbyterian Church.

and Chaboillez, Caldwell and Jo Frobisher. Pall-bearers: Pothier, Blackwood, Wm. McKay, D. Mackenzie, Garden, Thain. April 17 the mourners and pall-bearers attended at Church with their scarfs and hat bands, after the will was read at D. McGillivray's own house.

April 7 Frobisher was one of a party at Lachine to see the canoes off. A similar entry in May, 1809; and in May, 1810, "Dined at Lachine. The N.W. Canoes sett off."

May 27, 1808. "Went to St. Rose to the election of the county of Essengham, with an intention of proposing Mr. Rod MacKenzie, but found the party formed and himself not present and not known to them. I declined. Joseph Duclos and Joseph Meunier both Habitants who could neither read or write was elected."

June 5, 1809. "Public Dinner at City Tavern to celebrate the King's Birthday."

May 25, 1810. "Dined at Mr. McGillivray. Sir Alex. Mackenzie arrived from London by N. York."

June 28, 1810. "The Steam Boat with Governor Gore and his Lady Mr. and Mrs. McGillivray and the children set off at 11 o'clock for Quebec."

But to return to the Beaver Club and its minutes. One learns that in 1807, the club dinners at the City Tavern ranged in cost from £8.4 to £21.17, and the individual expense for the seven meetings from £3.5 to £20.14. It appears from an entry at this time that the gold medals of the Club cost £3.10 each.

When the place of meeting was changed to the Montreal Hotel, in November, 1807, the club made an agreement with Dillon to pay for the dinners 7/6 a head, for Madeira wine 6/ per bottle, and for Port Wine bottled in England 5/ per bottle. Members' bills for the next dinner ran from £1.15 to £3.10. One surmises that wine made up a considerable proportion of the bill. At one of the subsequent meetings John Finlay's dinner cost him £4.1.3.

Dillon's bill against the club for one of their dinners in the 1807-8 season would make the hair of a prohibitionist stand on end:—

To 32 dinners at 7/6	£12
29 bottles Madeira 6/-	8.14
19 bottles Port 5/	4.15
14 bottles Porter 2/6	1.15
12 quarts ale	.8
7 suppers	.8.9
Brandy and gin and negus	5.
Segars, pipes and tob	5.6

One gathers that the conduct of the members of the club was, nevertheless, fairly seemly, as only three wine glasses were broken. A dinner on December 16, 1809, appears to have been marked with

not quite such decorum, as a decanter and four glasses were broken during the evening. But this, after all, pales before Colonel Landmann's dinner with the Nor'Westers, as described in his *Adventures and Recollections*. Although those who made up the party were nearly all members of the Beaver Club, it was not a club dinner, but was given by Sir Alexander Mackenzie and William McGillivray, who were at that time living together in bachelor apartments.

" In those days " says Landmann " we dined at four o'clock, and after taking a satisfactory quantity of wine, perhaps a bottle each, the married men, viz., Sir John Johnson, McTavish, Frobisher, O'Brien, Judge Ogden, Tom Walker and some others retired, leaving about a dozen to drink to their health."

Among these were probably Sir Alexander Mackenzie and his cousin Roderick, William and Duncan McGillivray, Alexander Henry and perhaps Simon Fraser and Isaac Todd, with Landmann and some others.

"We now began in right earnest and true highland style, and by four o'clock in the morning, the whole of us had arrived at such a degree of perfection that we could all give the war-whoop as well as Mackenzie and McGillivray, we could all sing admirably, we could all drink like fishes, and we all thought we could dance on the table without disturbing a single decanter, glass or plate by which it was profusely covered; but on making the experiment we discovered that it was a complete delusion, and ultimately we broke all the plates, glasses, bottles, &c. and the table also, and worse than all the heads and hands of the party received many severe contusions, cuts and scratches. . . I was afterwards informed that one hundred and twenty bottles of wine had been consumed at our convivial meeting, but I should think a great deal had been spilt and wasted."

The very spirited account of the Beaver Club meetings which Dr. C. B. Reed has given in his *Masters of the Wilderness*, was, one suspects, based largely upon this story of Colonel Landmann's, and is therefore more or less of a libel upon that dignified club.

One notes among the guests at the club dinners, officers of the famous 100th Regiment, the 49th, 24th, 41st and other corps. Sir John Johnson, son of Sir William Johnson, and at this time Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, was a frequent guest; as was also Captain, afterward Colonel, John By, who was later to build the Rideau Canal and give his name to Bytown, now Ottawa.

In September, 1808, the guests included General Drummond, afterward Sir George Drummond, who commanded the troops in Upper Canada in 1813-14, and succeeded Prevost as Administrator; Colonel Sheaffe, later Sir R. H. Sheaffe, who succeeded to the com-

mand at Queenston Heights after the death of Brock; and John Jacob Astor. Astor, says Ross Cox, in his *Adventures on the Columbia River,* "made proposals to the North West Company to join with him in forming an establishment on the Columbia river. This proposition was submitted to the consideration of a general meeting of the wintering proprietors, and, after some negotiations as to the details, rejected. Mr. Astor, therefore determined to make the attempt without their co-operation, and in the winter of 1809 he succeeded in forming an association called the Pacific Fur Company, of which he himself was the chief proprietor." The founding of Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia, was one of the results of this movement. As Astor dined at the Beaver Club in September, 1808, it is not too much to conjecture that he was at this time sounding the partners of the North West Company on this very project. He, it must be remembered, had been pretty closely identified with the fur trade that had its base in Montreal, and it is said that he perfected himself in the business in the office of Alexander Henry. Astor's plans, according to Alexander Ross, were extremely ambitious. He "was to have annihilated the South Company; rivalled the North West Company; extinguished the Hudson's Bay Company; driven the Russians into the Frozen ocean; and with the resources of China to have enriched America." If that was his dream, it was not quite realized.

Isaac Brock was a guest of the club in 1808 and again in 1810, with Major, afterward Major-General, Herriot. Herriot served under De Salaberry at Chateauguay. One finds also the names of such well-known Montrealers of the period as Mr. Justice Ogden, Dr. Selby, James Baby, Mr. Justice Reid, later Chief Justice, and Dr. Adam Thom, then practicing law in Montreal, and afterward Recorder of Ruperts Land. Also Colonel John Murray, who led the assault on Fort Niagara, and rose to the rank of Major General, and Colonel Henry A. Proctor, whose name is associated with the unfortunate engagement at Moraviantown in 1813.

Lord Selkirk had been a guest of the Beaver Club in 1804. Thirteen years later, when he was engaged in his ambitious undertaking of planting a settlement on the banks of the Red river, his former hosts, now his bitter opponents, made the serious charge that he had used his privileged position as a guest to obtain information that he used afterward to injure the North West Company. "His enquiries" says the *Narrative of Occurrences,* published on behalf of the North West Company, "were readily answered by these gentlemen, who withheld no information which could gratify the liberal and useful researches of a noble traveller. They remarked at the time,

that these enquiries were more extended than usual," and he is charged in so many words with abuse of their hospitality. Masson accepts the charge as authentic, in the Introduction to his *Bourgeois*; Dr. Bryce, in his *Selkirk* thinks it groundless; and Chester Martin, in his *Selkirk's Work in Canada* demonstrates clearly enough that, whether or not Selkirk made use later of information obtained in Montreal in 1804, there is no reason to suppose that he deliberately misused his privileges as a guest. It was in fact not for some years after that date that he began to interest himself in the possibility of colonizing the Red river country.

It may be convenient to note here certain alleged details in connection with the Beaver Club dinners, that appear to have been first suggested in Dr. Bryce's *Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company,* elaborated in his *Selkirk,* and repeated in Professor Martin's book, in Reed's *Masters of the Wilderness,* and in an article in the *University Magazine* by Lynn Hetherington, " Canada's First Social Club."

Speaking of the members of the Beaver Club, Dr. Bryce says: " The appointments of their club house were notable. On their tables silver and glassware, of a kind unknown elsewhere in Canada, shone with resplendent light at their feasts. . . Bear, beaver, pemmican, and venison were served in the fashion of the posts, song and dance gave entertainment during the evening, and when wine brought exhilaration in the early morning hours, partners, factors and traders, in the sight of all the servants or *voyageurs* who happened to gain admittance, engaged in the " *grand voyage* " which consisted in all seating themselves in a row on the rich carpet, each armed with tongs, poker, sword, or walking stick to serve as paddle, and in boisterous manner singing a *voyageur's* song, " Malbrouck " or " A la Claire Fontaine", while they paddled as regularly as the excited state of their nerves would allow".

Now it is possible that Bryce may have got this story from Selkirk's papers, but he does not mention his authority, nor do any of the others who have followed him. There is, it is true, nothing inherently impossible, or perhaps even improbable, in the story, but one would like to know just how and where it originated.

Both Dr. Reed, and Dr. Atherton in his *History of Montreal,* say that the calumet entered into the proceedings. " The members " says Dr. Atherton, " recounted the perils they had passed through and after passing around the Indian emblem of peace " the Calumet " the officer appointed for the purpose made a suitable harangue."

Another statement, found first in Masson's *Bourgeois,* and repeated by Bryce and other writers, is that there are still to be met

with in Montreal pieces of silverware and glassware formerly the property of the Beaver Club. Mr. Hetherington embellishes this bald statement by adding that these "table appointments, stamped and engraved with their crest of the beaver, were unsurpassed for richness and beauty in crystal, silver and linen".

Mr. Hetherington mentions, in addition to the plate, certain snuff boxes associated with the Beaver Club, which are now owned by some of the Canadian families, and adds that at the last meeting of the club, which he says was disbanded in 1824, the Earl of Dalhousie, who was then Governor-General of Canada, was present, and gave to each of the twenty members a silver snuff-box, with solid gold edges. On the cover was engraved: "The Earl of Dalhousie, to . . . . in remembrance of the Beaver Club, 24th May, 1824".

Dr. Reed makes the sale of one of these snuff-boxes in New York in 1894 the text of his article on the Beaver Club. It was one presented to James Hughes of the North West Company. Dr. Reed tells his story of the club and its environment as coming from a grandson of Hughes, who had it from the old fur trader. Incidentally, he prints in a foot-note the information that Robert McCord (founder of the McCord Museum in Montreal) "inclines to doubt the authenticity of the snuff-box".

I am not quite sure that Dr. Reed was not trying to pull our legs with these alleged reminiscences of Hughes, but if it was serious, the story is not altogether convincing. Hughes is described as one of the pillars of the Beaver Club, and is said to have had Selkirk as his guest at the club again and again in 1809. Now there is nothing in the minutes of the Beaver Club to support the statement that Selkirk was a guest in 1809. As a matter of fact he was then on the other side of the Atlantic, developing his Red river scheme. Hughes was not elected a member of the club until 1813. Selkirk spent the winter of 1815-16 in Montreal, but at that time he was about the last man in the world that would have been invited to the Beaver Club.

"Washington Irving" says Dr. Reed "had sat at the great table of the club on many an occasion. Here he received the impetus and developed the interest which subsequently culminated in those fascinating tales of the wilderness, *Astoria*, *A Tour of the Prairies*, and *Captain Bonneville*.....In 1804 Thomas Moore was the guest of the Club. . . . Hither in due time came the celebrated astronomer, geographer and explorer, David Thompson. . . Later on Sir John Franklin, then a lieutenant, sat with many others in the great hall, brimful of life, buoyant with hope. . . and here he pledged the health of the club while the piercing northern blasts were howling over the brow of the neighbouring Mount Royal", &c., &c.

All this one is rather inclined to take with a grain of salt. Washington Irving certainly was not a guest of the club between 1806 and its final meeting in 1827, as the minutes show. Between 1804 and 1806 he was in Europe, and again between 1815 and 1832. Before 1804, he was a very young man, reading law in New York. There is no confirmation of a visit to Montreal at that time.

Thomas Moore was certainly in Montreal in 1804, and may have been entertained at the Beaver Club. David Thompson, however, could not have been there either as member or guest, as he landed at Fort Churchill in 1789, and from that time until 1812 he was never nearer Montreal than Fort William. There is nothing in the minutes of the club to suggest that he was present after that date. Franklin was in America in 1819-1822, but came and went by way of York Factory, and was never anywhere near Montreal. He made a second expedition to the Arctic Coast in 1825-1827. On this journey he went out by way of New York, and returned in the summer of 1827 by the Ottawa river route to Montreal. Therefore it would be in August, 1827, if at all, that Franklin was a guest at the Beaver Club. But unfortunately, the very last meeting of the Beaver Club was in March of that year. Altogether one is forced to conclude that these reminiscences of James Hughes, as told to his grandson, and reported by Dr. Reed, are not quite authentic.

The minutes of the Beaver Club, though not so picturesque, are at least dependable. The list of members in 1810-11 shows 15 in town, 5 in the neighbourhood, 4 in England and 9 in the Indian country, with 7 honorary members, 40 in all. We find the same total in 1814, with 24 in and about Montreal, 10 in the west, and 6 overseas. Of these, Sir Alexander Mackenzie was in Scotland, Thomas and John Forsyth and Isaac Todd in London. In a letter from Alexander Henry to John Askin dated May 9, 1815, he says, "I received a letter a few days ago from our old friend Todd. He was then at Bath taking the mineral waters, and says if his leg gets better he will return to this country as he has no friends in any other. I expect he will come by New York. He is not the only one whom old age deprives of friends. I must say that I experience every day the want of old acquaintances. They are all dead. There is only one alive in Montreal that was here when I came. I know but very few. What do you think of our Beaver Club which commenced in 1786 and consisted of 16 members (the old man's memory was a little at fault)—and I the only one alive. Our late friend McGill was the last and a great loss he was to Montreal."

Lieut. Col. McKay, who had succeeded Joseph Frobisher as secretary, was himself succeeded this year by George Moffatt. It is noted

that in 1814 the only survivor of the original nineteen members was Alexander Henry.

John Johnston, whose "Account of Lake Superior" is included in the second volume of Masson's *Bourgeois*, and who had been elected to the club in 1808, attended a meeting in November, 1814, where he read the following original composition, which was evidently appreciated, as it was duly spread upon the minutes:—

Ye wanderers o'er Canada's wide domain,
What pleasure here to meet you once again!
Here, to recount the toils and perils past,
Perils and toils still longer doom'd to last.
For soon, again, the base incidious foe
With rage inspired, will strike a second blow,
Renew the sum of pillage, or of fire,
As hatred, envy, or revenge inspire.
Ours then the task, a gen'rous aid to lend
To those that now our Beaver Lodge defend;
And with the Hunter's force, the Hunter's art,
Renew their stores, and cheer each manly heart,
Who bravely suffers in a barb'rous clime,
To raise the British name & character sublime!
Our freeborne Allies too deserve applause—
Faithful to Britain and her sacred cause;
With patience suffering in the arduous strife
Tho' oft deprived of all the sweets of life.
Soon, then, as this portentous storm is o'er,
And peace our traffic shall again restore,
Be it our constant effort to improve
The Indian's comforts, and secure his love.
And may the *Beaver Club* from year to year
In peace renew its social meetings here.

Among the guests in 1814 were General Brisbane, the Marquis of Tweeddale, Mr. Ermatinger and Colonel Talbot. This may have been the same Ermatinger who was a magistrate at Sault Ste Marie in 1814 when Selkirk went through, and who declined to accompany him to Fort William to assist in bringing those responsible for the Seven Oaks affair to justice. Talbot was of course Thomas Talbot of the Talbot settlement in Upper Canada, and author of *Six Years in the Canadas*.

In 1815 there were eleven meetings, for which Dillon's bill was £399.4. The eighteeen members who partook of these meals were out of pocket sums ranging from £4.2.10 to £52.13.2. Imagine paying $250 for eleven dinners, even though this included guests! In December of this year F. A. Larocque, one of the new members, and author of "The Missouri Journal" in the first volume of Masson's *Bourgeois*, was fined one dollar for appearing without his medal. Henry Mackenzie suffered the same penalty in April, 1816. Larocque was elected

Secretary this year. There were 45 members in 1816 with 4 honorary members.

Among the new members elected in 1817 was Dr. John McLoughlin, who after the union of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies in 1821 was to become one of the outstanding figures in the fur trade on the Pacific coast. He had been born near Quebec the year before the founding of the Beaver Club, and married the widow of Alexander Mackay, who had been elected a member in 1809, and perished in the *Tonquin* two years later. Townsend describes McLoughlin as " a large, dignified, and very noble looking man, with a fine expressive countenance, and remarkably bland and pleasing manners," and bears tribute to his invariable and disinterested kindness. McLoughlin's election was one of the last acts of the Beaver Club, before it went into retirement for ten years.

There is very little to record in connection with the meetings of the revived club in 1827. The bill for the February meeting includes £4 for singers, 9/ for a broken chair, and 15/ for broken glasses, so that the dinners were still somewhat lively. The guests included General Gordon, one of the Molsons, a Mr. Heaven and Mr. Dunlop, perhaps William Dunlop of the Canada Company, familiarly known as "Tiger" Dunlop.

And that was the end of the Beaver Club.