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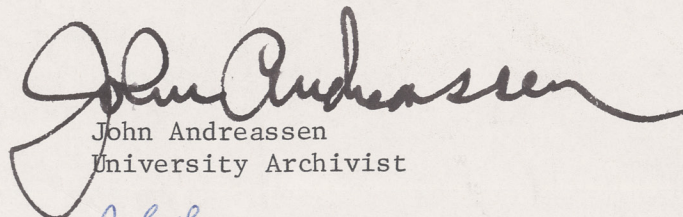
Dear Mrs. Winslow-Spragge:

I enclose the latest letter received from Edward Dawson today for your information. It may be that the last paragraph rings a bell and you may recall something of consequence.

The summer has been a hectic one. I've been down to Cape Breton twice, since 1 July, and that means some 4,000 miles of driving. Mrs. A. is still there caring for her very ill brother.

A copy of this Dawson letter has been made available to Dr. Frost, who tells me he is making progress on the period before Sir William's arrival in Montreal.

Cordially yours,


John Andreassen
University Archivist
J.C.L.

JA:jd
encl.

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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
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4th August 1976.

Ms Lois Winlow Spragge

Mr. John Andreassen,
University Archivist,
McGill University,
Montreal, Quebec.

Dear Mr. Andreassen,

I've just returned from yet another session in the Old Parish Registers in Edinburgh, to look up the data on Mary Rankine, James Dawson's wife, as I promised in my letter of 19th June to you. It was, as usual, more difficult than it seemed, since the Diary has her father as John while William Bell has it as William. The requirements were 1) mother's name Ann, 2) only one sibling, William; there were, of course, dozens of William and Mary Rankines, in various spellings, but the most probable are as follows: 1784 born June 6 bap ? June Mary father William Rankin mother Anne Rankin; 1778 born Febr 5 William father William Rankine mother Ann Rankine witt. Richard Marshal Jas Aitkenhead; no other entries for William and Ann Rankine 1770-1800. It is of interest to note that James born 1789 married a wife 5 years older than himself, which in part explains her earlier death in 1854. The Register doesn't give her place, so we may take it as Sir William p 14 has it: Lonerig, Slamannan, Stirlingshire.

Several features of James' Diary still puzzle me. He tells of his time in Huntly (4,5)[3,4], and Sir William gives a very similar though not identical account, a copy of which I enclose. What really concerns me, however, is that Sir William's quotations pp 8-10 enclosed are not in the Diary at all, though the matter is of some importance. I wonder if you can draw the quotation Sir William gives from his father James to the attention of your staff and ask them to try to trace the source. My feeling is that the Diary you have is but part of James' diary writings, and there is more, perhaps much more, to come; if this is so, I certainly would be most grateful to learn of the further material.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Dawson

Edward Dawson

eminently pious woman, earnest in the careful training of her children. Her maiden name was Mitchell, and she was a daughter of the Laird of Frendeaght, in Aberdeenshire.

My father, James Dawson, was a younger son, and spent his earlier years on the paternal farm, and at the parish school. The oldest son was to continue on the farm, another received a more liberal education, fitting him for the legal profession, but my father had to be content to be apprenticed to a tradesman in the neighbouring town of Huntly. Of his experiences in this position, he thus writes, in a manuscript sketch of his life which he prepared in his later years:—

“Some of my apprentice companions were profligate and immoral, and presented such examples of depravity as I had never seen before, but fortunately for me there were others of an opposite character. These were decidedly pious, and though belonging to different communions, they stood firmly by each other as brothers. Two of them were church members, and besides taking part in conducting a Sabbath school, they met once a week, with some others, in the evening for mutual prayer. To these meetings they invited me. They had a number of religious

books at their disposal, and they freely offered me the use of them. They also invited me to attend their several places of worship on the Sabbath evenings, and of this I availed myself, but I attended the parish church in the forenoon. At the age of nineteen, after much serious reflection, I resolved to devote myself to the Lord, and accordingly, having applied to my minister, was admitted to the communion of the church in the summer of 1809.”

Having thus taken his stand on the side of Truth, he proceeded to improve his mental culture. He spent his savings on books of a high class, and read them with care. At a time when such views were regarded with much suspicion and disfavour, he became a Liberal in politics, and a dissenter in religion—being repelled from the Established Church by the loose and ungodly lives of some of the clergy of the district. When free from his apprenticeship, his love of independence prompted him to emigrate to the New World.

Thus, at the age of twenty, we find him accepting an offer made by the then leading merchant of Pictou, Nova Scotia. He gives a graphic account of his journey of one hundred and eighty miles, on foot, from Banffshire to

his port of embarkation at Greenock. Sending their principal baggage by carrier, he and three other young men, each with a pack of clothes and provisions, set out on their journey.

“For the sake of making a short cut, we were advised to go by a path which took us through the Grampians, by Kildrummy Castle, and which led in a straight line to Perth. We started on the 8th of March 1811, about midday, from Keith, and at night reached a little town or village called Tomintoul. It stands on the left bank of a rapidly running stream, which we could find no means of crossing, as it was swollen with the melting of the snow in the mountains above. After some search we found a ford, and decided to strip and wade through with our clothes on our heads and shoulders. We succeeded in crossing safely, though it took us breast high, and we had difficulty in resisting the rapidly flowing stream. On arriving in the village we found that none of the people spoke English, but one of our party knew Gaelic sufficiently to make himself understood, and we got a comfortable supper by a peat fire, and slept soundly on heather beds. On this, our first day of Highland travelling, we had passed through some fine scenery, had walked

along the eastern base of Cairngorm, and had picked up and pocketed the best specimens we could find of its famous pebbles.

“We started at daylight up a long valley called Glenavon, down which ran the stream we had crossed the previous evening. Our road was a mere sheep-path, which often led us along the face of precipices so steep and high that it seemed a false step might have plunged us into the stream some hundreds of feet below. When near the head of the glen, at the place where we had to leave it and turn off to the left, we found a hut or shelter, where the sweep of the river formed a piece of level or ‘haughland.’ The occupants of the hut—a man, his wife, and a boy—were in a field ploughing. The plough was drawn by a cow, with a horse in front of her. The man held the plough, the boy switched the cow, and the woman went ahead beating the horse. These people, however, were very kind to us. The cattle were turned loose, and we were regaled with hot oat cakes, baked on a stone in the ashes, for which they refused any remuneration. Shortly after leaving these hospitable folks we came upon some wild mountain scenery. For some time we had seen before us mountains covered with snow. We now entered amongst

them, and passed through gorges, with here and there great snow banks twenty or thirty feet high. At the greatest height to which we attained we saw, to our left, what seemed an open quarry in the face of a little hill. We turned aside to look at it, and found it to be a thick bed of marl, composed of what we supposed to be sea-shells of many varieties. The people in the low country had found it, and had been carrying it off to manure their fields. It formed a subject of curious conjecture to us how these shells could come to be there, at so great a height above the sea. Early in the afternoon we began to descend the southern slope of the mountains, and to leave the snow behind us, and we soon entered a forest where we saw a herd of deer. We crossed a river on an old bridge near the ruins of Kildrummy Castle, and passed the night at the Spittal of Glenshee amidst beautiful scenery. This day's journey proved too much for me, for I had no sooner entered the house than I fell down in a fainting fit. We were indeed all so much exhausted that we concluded to spend a day here in recruiting." —

After undergoing other adventures and hardships, the wayfarers finally reached Greenock in safety, but were detained there some time,

as their ship, though advertised to sail on the 20th of March, was not ready till the 11th of April.

After a voyage of five weeks, they cast anchor in Pictou harbour on May 19, 1811. My father was then twenty-two years of age, and had but the proverbial guinea remaining of the money which he had brought from home. On the expiry of his engagement, he determined to remain in Pictou, and with the aid of his savings, to establish himself in mercantile business on his own account. He fell upon prosperous times, and in five or six years found himself in good circumstances, and with every prospect of accumulating wealth, and of becoming an influential man in the community. He was, indeed, no ordinary man! He was ever influenced by a strong sense of duty, ever a firm believer in divine guidance, ever ready to do good as he had opportunity, and too independent to conceal his opinions, or to cringe to men in place and power. This independence of character in some respects interfered with his advancement, and prevented him from obtaining the public recognition which he merited. For, at that time in the North American colonies, partisanship and subserviency to the bureaucracy of the day, were