

ST LAWRENCE
AND
ATLANTIC
RAILWAY

CORNELIUS
KRIEGHOFF

Co-incidence: Re St Lawrence and Atlantic Railway. I was chatting with a friend Me Terry Eden an antique dealer here in Hamilton. He asked me a question about my knowledge about the St Lawrence and Atlantic Railway. I thought it was in reference to the "ew" St Lawrence and Atalntic. Then he mentioned Longuiel, Quebec. Oh the old St Lawrence and Atlantic. He had acquired a print of an A. Y. Jackson painting. On the back was an exerpt from A Painters Country. It turns out that A. Y. Jackson, the famous Canadian Painter of the Group Seven, his grandfather was the station agent at the St Lawrence and Atlantic Railway station at Longeuiel.

With Fred Angus I had wrote about an article in Canadian Rail about a small water-colour painting at the Chateau Ramsey Museum in Montreal . The watercolour shows a Scotish 2-2-2 and in this article he questioned that it might be attributed to a John Loye or Thomas Keefer. I wrote to Fred Angus that the same picture appeared in the Canadian Railway and Marine World in 1900. This dated the painting to a much earlier date. Now it appears that A. Y. Jacksons grandfather purchased at least three paintings from the other famous Canadian painter Kreighoff who also lived in Longueuil.

I AM NOT A Canadian art historian but I suspect that painting of the St Lawrence and Atlantic might be by Kreighoff.

I did look at J. Russel Harpers book Kreighoff. He mentions Kreighoff moved from Longuiel to Quebec City, then returned to paint pictures on commission for sale to the engineers building the Victoria Bridge. Well the article in the Railway and Shipping World was about the Victoria Bridge.

Could Krieghoff have painted the water-colour.



ST. LAWRENCE & ATLANTIC R. R.
LONGUEUIL STATION - 1855.

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A.Y. JACKSON

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Early Days

MY GRANDFATHER, Henry Fletcher Joseph Jackson, arrived in Montreal from England in 1846. There he became general agent of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, an early line running between Portland, Maine and Montreal, which later was incorporated in the Grand Trunk Railway. Before the Victoria Bridge was built, the terminus of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad was at Longueuil, and my grandfather lived there until 1854. Krieghoff, the painter, was living in Longueuil at that time. It is probable that my grandfather was acquainted with Krieghoff for he owned several of his paintings. One of them, "The Ice Bridge," was presented by the family to the National Gallery of Canada some years ago.

Before coming to Canada, my grandfather had been to school in Switzerland and he spoke French fluently. In Montreal he married the sister of John Murphy, whose father was the founder of one of the big drygoods stores in that city. In 1854, my grandfather moved from Longueuil to Berlin, Ontario, where he lived for over twenty years. He was the contractor for the section of the Grand Trunk Railroad which was being built between Berlin and Breslau; he was also one of the founders of the Economical Fire Insurance Company, and its first President. Why he left Berlin where he was a successful and very respected citizen, and returned to Montreal, is a mystery. Later, he settled in Brockville where he died in 1894.

My maternal grandfather, Alexander Young, after whom I am named, came to Canada from Scotland in 1834. He was a person of distinguished mind, a quality not held in much esteem in Canada at that time. Most of his life was spent in the Galt, St. Thomas and Berlin

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A PAINTER'S COUNTRY

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

A. Y. JACKSON

with a Foreword by

The Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey, C.H.

Centennial Edition



CLARKE, IRWIN & COMPANY LIMITED

ly in the area around Quebec and in the St Maurice River valley. He portrayed them so graphically and with such appeal that to mention the word 'habitant' still conjures up in the popular imagination a people visually based on Krieghoff's interpretations. The lively Longueuil record, when isolated as a unit, is one of the most introspective documentations of life, society, customs, and topography of any single Canadian village. As the husband of a habitant woman he was able to enter many of their homes, and his unique interpretation is that of an artist privy to the local comings and goings as well as that of a man with a remarkable insight and understanding of the life and customs of the people. Living among them, he was able to experience the warm-hearted intimacy of their life at home, a trait replaced by reserve and impassiveness when they made trips to the city and encountered strangers. As a result, his pictures of them have feeling and a decidedly human quality.

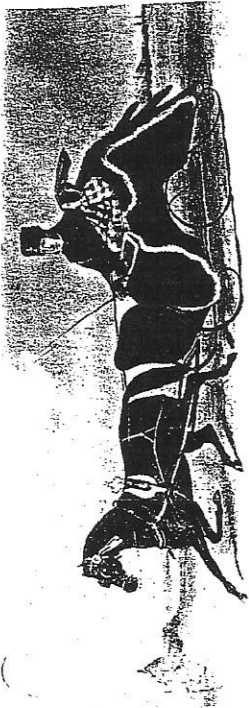
A canvas painted during 1846, the Krieghoffs' first year in Longueuil, foreshadows the intimate look at the people typical of this whole group (fig. 22). In a humble living room a Yankee peddler in checked trousers dangles an attractive print enticingly before the housewife, while others are spread on the table before her and the eager children. Her distraught husband searches for scarce pennies to satisfy her whims, for he knows that failure to purchase will bring whines and recriminations. The painting is clever in several respects: Krieghoff has turned to subject matter that has high narrative value, but at the same time he has sharpened and enhanced its poignancy by freezing the tableau at its height. This is the precise moment when the print seller has poured out his most loquacious charms and honeyed words, it is the moment when the housewife has become the most covetous, and the husband is most wracked by doubts and remorse. The artist has used every trick to enhance the dramatic effect; the turbulence and guile within the house contrast with the serenity of the placid sun-bathed village and church seen through the open door. Krieghoff was consistently a master at isolating and catching such dramatic moments in his Longueuil works, whether painting a young soldier caught at love-making or a slow-witted card player agonized by undetected, if playful, cheating.

bone structure of the head and the massing of muscles, even small paintings. He knew about the use of light and colour, how the effects of brilliant sunshine and bright reds and blues can be accentuated against dark and gloomy patches (he had already used this technique in the portrait of Mrs Williamson). And he knew how to set down each detail to create a cumulative effect. The woman's face is a study in miniature of inner feelings. There are carefully drawn lines of anguish in the husband's worried brow. There is even a puzzled, suspicious look in the stance of the dog's head.

On two occasions Krieghoff painted a family eating forbidden meat at Lent (fig. 23). Father Brassard, the local curé, has walked in unannounced and holds his silver-headed cane like a badge of authority. He dominates the room in his outrage. The housewife tries to hide her serving of meat by turning a plate over the offending food. One member of the family slips his steak to the dog; the animal, quite incredulous at the unexpected generosity, bolts it greedily but not fast enough to escape notice. A young and hungry lad continues his meal, blissfully unaware of the indiscretion. Brassard was no friend of Protestants; years later his assistant at Longueuil, Father Charles Chiniquy, wrote how the priest had spent evenings thinking up ways to harass them.²³ Krieghoff, whose religious roots go back to one of the German Protestant Reformation groups, may have suffered at his hands, and his biting portrayal of the churchman's high-handed action is a measure of ironical retribution. Its satire must have been secretly appreciated by others who had been victims of Brassard's ways.

Emilie, however, must have been much chagrined when her husband made fun of the priest. She probably was equally uncomfortable about another turn of events. Father Chiniquy, then a novice with the Oblate Fathers, was not a conventional priest. He was a turbulent and impulsive individual, just the sort of person Krieghoff enjoyed. Earlier he had scandalized a flock downriver at Kamouraska by what was termed 'licentious living'; at this point he was a confirmed enemy of drink. Krieghoff painted his portrait on the understanding that there would be no talk of temperance during the sittings. The two men seem to have spent much time with Henry Jackson, an engineer on the south shore railway who lived in Longueuil, and future grandfather of A.Y. Jackson of

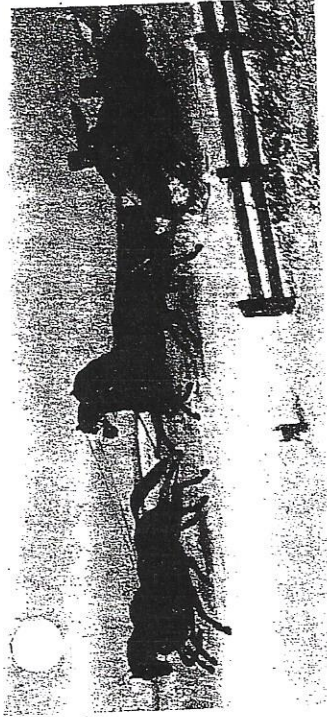
J. Russell Hager. Krieghoff



38 *The Blue Carriage* late 1840s
14 1/2 x 20 1/2 in / 35.9 x 52.7 cm, private collection

to frozen canals with miscellaneous traffic. He also painted intimate studies of the horses, sleighs, and their celebrated drivers, a subject much repeated during his Quebec years. The smart 'English carriages' contrasted with the simple habitant sleighs. Many of the holidaymakers are unidentified, but in one canvas Krieghoff pictured Colonel Augustus Heward, a prosperous Montreal merchant and one of the founders of the St James Club, driving with his wife on the river ice. He also painted the Honourable John Molson whose business enterprises included the south shore railway which ran along the Richelieu and terminated at nearby Laprairie. Molson drove his incredibly elegant team of a bay and chestnut horse tandem-style: red plumes on their heads provide a distinctive note as their sleigh speeded down the south shore road. A particularly fine, if anonymous, example is seen in a painting of a smart blue carriage (fig. 38).

Occasionally four-horse sleigh teams pranced along majestically (fig. 39). Gentlemen drove black, brown, or white horses according to their individual fancies. Lord Elgin, the governor-general, had the most elaborate of all vehicles and indeed it must have been a noble sight to see him approaching Longueuil. In Krieghoff's painting (fig. 37) the vice-regal sleigh resembles a landau on runners; the four horses are highly decorated, a coachman sits in front, and a costly fur



39 *Sleigh with a Team of Four* late 1840s
14 x 21 in / 35.6 x 53.3 cm, private collection

flows out behind. On one seat the governor and Lady Elgin face Colonel and Mrs Campbell on the other. Campbell's seignury nestled below the mountain at Rouville several miles back from the St Lawrence east of the Richelieu. The governor-general visited there on many occasions and the direct route from Montreal crossed the St Lawrence on the ice and climbed the bank at Longueuil. Undoubtedly Krieghoff saw Elgin and his party passing through the village. There is a tale that Henry Jackson's diary makes reference to a day on which he introduced the artist to the governor;²⁹ but such a story cannot possibly be true since the diary was closed the year before Krieghoff moved to Longueuil. Krieghoff's painting of Elgin's sleigh crossing the ice was lithographed as one of his first set of four prints. This was a tactful act since the governor had given the artist permission to dedicate them to him.

Krieghoff retained fond memories of Longueuil and its people after he left there. Though he took a house in Montreal in 1849 he continued to paint themes based on the habitants across the river. He moved to Quebec City in the early 1850s, but returned briefly to Montreal in 1858 to paint pictures on commission for sale to the engineers constructing the Victoria Bridge, the first to span the St Lawrence. He seized the opportunity to record new versions of winter

J. Russell Harper

Krieghoff

fig 39

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