Governor William B Caldwell's Souvenir

Laura Peers and Anne Lindsay

The extensive collections of the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology include a remarkable object, a decorated and dried human hand.[1] The skin has been flayed to the final joints of the fingers, the fingernails are intact, and it is decorated at the wrist with silk ribbon appliqué and a feather pendant. It is a war trophy, of a kind found across the northern Plains in the context of intertribal warfare, along with scalps, finger-bone necklaces, and other culturally modified human remains. The hand trophy was donated to the Museum in 1907 by Robert Townley Caldwell, Master of Corpus Christi College at Cambridge, who said that it had been given to his father at Fort Garry in 1855.

Long before he became Master of a Cambridge college, Robert Townley Caldwell grew up in the Red River settlement. He was the son of William Bletterman Caldwell[2], a colonial administrator who arrived in Red River in 1848 as commander of a group of Chelsea Pensioners who replaced the 6th Regiment of Foot as a protective military presence in the colony. W.B. Caldwell was also Governor of the District of Assiniboia, a new post created to separate the administration of the colony from that of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). In theory, W.B. Caldwell represented independent and impartial government in a Company-dominated colony. In practice, his salary was paid by the Company and, as W.L. Morton's biography of Caldwell notes, "the settlers continued to regard the governor and the Council of Assiniboia as creatures of the HBC."[3] Caldwell's administration was highly criticized throughout his tenure until his departure for England in 1855.

The hand is a human remain deserving of respect, and a startling cultural object demanding attention, a compelling kind of historical evidence. It is a material form that makes visible the many sets of relationships and meanings around its making and collection. Considered carefully, the hand reveals a great deal about the people who made and collected it, and about the societies in which they lived: it is an object of history, a form of historical documentation, and we need to see it within the cross-cultural contexts from which it emerged.

The hand is especially interesting as a material witness to aspects of W.B. Caldwell's career and personality. Caldwell was neither an admired leader nor, by all accounts, a very good one. Alexander Ross—who, admittedly, was not lavish in his praise for many people—described him as "destitute of business habits, and of the art to govern."[4] Caldwell had the misfortune of being in Red River during a turbulent time in which economic and social change intersected with vicious class and racial prejudice, and he did not rise well to the challenges he faced. He presided over both the Sayer and Foss-Pelly trials, and managed both situations poorly. In the days leading up to the Sayer trial of May 1849—an attempt by the Company to enforce its monopoly on the fur trade—feelings in the Settlement were running very high, particularly amongst Metis who were frustrated with the HBC's monopoly. Reading the mood of the settlers, Caldwell decided not to call out the Chelsea pensioners to maintain order in the court or enforce an unfavourable verdict: as Morton notes, Caldwell sensibly decided there were not enough Pensioners to achieve order by force. On the day, the court was packed with Metis and there was a very real concern that they could not be controlled. The jury found the defendants guilty, but recommended mercy as they appeared to believe their actions were done with the blessing of the Company. The Metis realised that the verdict meant, in real terms, that the Company could not enforce its monopoly. The trial marked the effective end of the HBC's monopoly on fur trading. While he may have exercised some sense in not calling out the pensioners to keep order, "Caldwell emerged from the affair with the reputation of being a weak and ineffectual governor."[5]

Caldwell's leadership was far more inept during the Foss-Pelly trial. In 1850, amid a growing atmosphere of class and racial prejudice at Red River, mixed-blood Sarah McLeod Ballenden was accused of having an affair with W.B. Caldwell's second in command, Captain Christopher Foss. The trial that followed was highly irregular:

> Because all the magistrates in the settlement refused to sit with him, Caldwell was forced to hold court alone. …When the legal complexities overcame Caldwell, he called upon Adam Thom, the recorder, to assist him. Thom, who had advised Foss and Mrs Ballenden before the case and strongly supported them, appears to have taken every opportunity to ensure Pelly's conviction,

including stepping down from the bench to testify on behalf of the plaintiff, before charging the jury. In the end, the court found in favour of Foss, and Caldwell awarded him damages.[6]

Caldwell was so unpopular in the Settlement after the Foss-Pelly trial that some five hundred of the English-speaking settlers petitioned the Company for his removal.[7] He was replaced in most of his duties by Eden Colvile, who arrived as Governor of Rupert's Land in August 1850. Colvile took over as president of both the Council of Assiniboia and the General Quarterly Court, and managed to restore some peace to the community.[8] Despite public sentiment against him, William Bletterman Caldwell remained in Red River as Governor of the District of Assiniboia, and was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in 1854. In August 1855 he returned to England, and retired from the army in 1857.[9] He was called before the select committee of the British House of Commons held in 1857 to investigate the renewal of the HBC license, and gave evidence favourable to the company. He died in London in 1882.

It was in the aftermath of the disastrous events of 1849-50, in the context of public disfavor with Caldwell, and in the knowledge that he was returning to England in 1855, that Caldwell acquired the human hand and took it back to England with him. The story that Robert Townley Caldwell gave to the Archaeology and Anthropology Museum at Cambridge in 1907 when he donated the hand was that it "was given to my father when we were at Fort Garry in 1855, by a friendly Indian, I forget whether a Chipiwyan [*sic*, referring to Chippewa] or Saulteaux who had probably himself scalped the original owner of the hand." It's a nice story: a gift from a friendly Indian, from a "savage" to the governor, in the context of a frontier community. Given Caldwell's weak leadership, though, and his even weaker reputation in Red River, the story seems unlikely. It may have been an attempt by Caldwell, or by his son, to put a different face on Caldwell's reputation. The story about the "friendly Indian" was also recounted decades afterwards by a son who had been 15 years old in 1855, who may not have been entirely aware of his father's reputation or of other ways in which the hand might have come into his father's possession.

Many British people who lived in Rupert's Land acquired souvenirs before going back to Britain. Most of these items were small personal or domestic pieces such as

moccasins, bark baskets, and mittens.[10] The decorated hand is not such an innocuous souvenir, nor were items such as this produced for sale. Given Caldwell's poor relationships with various groups in Red River, it also seems unlikely that a friendly Indian came up to the Caldwell residence and gave this item either as a simple present or as a gesture of respect. The story that Robert Townley Caldwell told is too nice, and we need to look at it critically. As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has demonstrated, exploring the histories and meanings of objects, putting them back into history, provides a concrete way to interrupt the nostalgic gloss we often put on colonial history, making the stories we tell more complex.[11] When he donated the hand in 1907, Robert Townley Caldwell was Master of a Cambridge college. There are many reasons he may have wished to donate the hand to a museum at his university, and to tell a nice story of its acquisition. There are other stories surrounding the hand, however, other meanings and contexts to this powerful item that deserve attention.

In some ways, it should not be surprising that a person such as Caldwell, in a position of public authority, in such a multicultural community, should have acquired the hand. Caldwell was, in effect, the Colony Governor, and although the nature of his position was new, he was taking on aspects of a role in the settlement that had been established by Miles Macdonell as long ago as 1812.[12] From the beginning, Colony authorities had established formal alliances with local Ojibwa people: Peguis was named the Colony Chief during the settlement's early troubles, and given a peace medal by Selkirk in 1817, to encourage his protection of the vulnerable settlers. Annual gifts were also made to Peguis (until his death in 1864) and other signators of the 1817 Selkirk treaty (at least until the 1850s), a custom derived from Ojibwa culture which became part of fur trade practice as a way of renewing alliances between Ojibwa people and the Colony.

The careful, continuous maintenance of these relationships over decades meant that a significant gift, associated with warfare, by an Ojibwa man to the governor of Red River, was unlikely to have been either a simple or a friendly gesture. Such powerful and symbolic gifts—of sacred pipes, of human trophies, of tobacco—were used to create and renew alliances, to wipe away grief, and to remind the recipient of relationships and the responsibilities that came with them.[13] In this context, the gift of the hand might have been a stark reminder that alliances worked both ways. The

Black Man (L'Homme Noir), asked for aid from Macdonell in warfare against Sioux enemies in the settlement's early days, and the colony authorities were pressed for aid with both food and warfare on a regular basis thereafter.[14] The hand trophy might have been acquired by Caldwell from an Ojibwa man as a reminder of the alliance, and a request for aid against the Sioux.

The hand trophy would have had significant meaning in Red River in 1855. Human trophies were a standard feature of intertribal warfare on the northern Plains.[15] Fingers and scalps were the most common human trophies. They were used for rituals on returning from war, and were displayed afterwards in various ways: attached to tent poles, horse gear such as bridles, or to graves. Sometimes necklaces including fingerbones, fingers, dried ears or other body parts captured in battle, were worn by a man who had taken them as a representation of his physical and spiritual power.[16] Scalplocks were also used as fringes on men's war shirts. Scalp dances were painted and sketched by early artists on the northern Plains, including Peter Rindisbacher, Paul Kane, Karl Bodmer, and George Catlin (see Fig. 1, Peter Rindisbacher, "Chippewa Scalp Dance," 1821-23, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature). The taking, production, and display of such trophies appropriated the power of the deceased for the victor. Human trophies were public proclamations of men's physical and spiritual power, as well as the determination of a group to defend its members and to retaliate against enemy attacks.

Human trophies were therefore part of the inter-tribal warfare that characterized the Red River valley and its surrounding prairies and parklands from the mid-1700s until the 1860s. Everyone who lived in the area soon learned that, like crop failures and periodic floods, one of the ongoing realities of life in the area was the hostility between Ojibwa and Dakota peoples, which erupted into raids and pitched battles every few years. At Brandon House in 1816, Peter Fidler reported attacks on Ojibwa and Stone groups in which hands and feet as well as scalps were carried off.[17] John Halkett (in the 1820s) and George Simpson (in 1841) both collected scalps in the Red River area[18]; and Peter Rindisbacher portrayed an Ojibwa scalp dance in the region.

Fig. 1: Peter Rindisbacher, "Chippewa Scalp Dance," 1821-23, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

Writing to Governor Caldwell in 1849, Alexander Ross mentioned Ojibwa with a Sioux scalp.[19] Henry Youle Hind described scalps on Ojibwa graves in Red River in 1857-58, and mentioned fingers of Sioux enemies taken by Red River Ojibwa in the mid-1850s. J.J. Hargrave, writing of an 1866 attack by Ojibwa on visiting Sioux at Red River, noted that "the bodies of the four murdered Sioux were horribly mutilated by their savage enemies in whose estimation the ears, nose, and fingers of a foe are of great price."[20]

Entire hands were less common as trophies than scalps, but the practice of taking trophy hands is well documented for northern Plains peoples generally.[21] The Earl of Southesk recorded "a human hand dried and stuffed" hung over the grave of a plains Cree woman at Fort Pelly in December 1859.[22] In 1850, the Earl of Wharncliffe, like Southesk a gentleman amusing himself hunting and travelling in the west, reported from Kittson's post at Pembina that

> having slept in our tent pitched in the quadrangle, we again went into the Chippewa camp, and Winny [Wharncliffe's companion Wenman Coke] bought a dried Sioux hand of an Indian. It was all skin, and looked as if it was stretched over the bones. The fingers were perfect, and the nails still adhered

> to the flesh. As a sight it was disgusting, but still very curious as this species of mutilation is unusual among the North American nations. I also bought a scalp from the Chippewa; one taken this last summer and it now hangs in my room. [23]

Despite their being recorded less frequently than scalps, trophy hands were powerful symbols, and even imitation human hand trophies could be used to invoke warfare: Frances Densmore reports a hand made from buckskin which was sent as a war summons by Ojibwa people in Minnesota during the nineteenth century.[24]

The intensity of Ojibwa-Dakota warfare, and the taking of human trophies, increased across the nineteenth century. Ojibwa from the Red River area hunted with Metis relatives on the semi-annual bison hunts, and their mixed camps drew Dakota attacks and often led to reprisals. In addition to their association with Ojibwa kin, Metis hunters came under attack by Dakota for their practice of using horses to hunt bison—a technique which Dakota (and other western tribal groups) felt chased the herds away, and which became a serious issue with the dwindling size of the bison herds. By the 1850s, the Dakota were directing hostilities at Metis camps over this issue, whether there were Ojibwa with them or not. The 1850s saw battles every year between Ojibwa/Metis and Dakota groups.[25] Such tensions were heightened by the Indian Wars across the American West in the1850s as well—tensions that built continually in the Red River region until the Dakota Uprising of 1862.

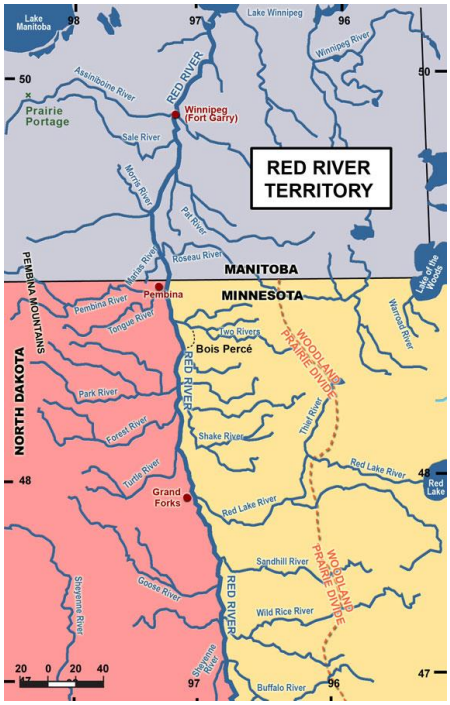
This context of increasing warfare suggests possible meanings for Governor Caldwell's acquisition of the human hand trophy in 1855. Both the documentation and the context of the hand's transfer suggest that it was taken from a Dakota man killed in battle by Ojibwa people. Gifts of such objects across cultures to individuals in positions of power are never politically neutral and never less than deliberate. Caldwell was the "Colony Governor," and in 1855, Ojibwa people were concerned about rising political tensions on both sides of the border.[26] In Red River, Oibwe people were increasingly marginalized, socially and politically as well as economically. Fur harvests had collapsed; land and hay rights were contested in the settlement; the bison herds were obviously decreasing; constant warfare with Dakota—all of these things made for an uneasiness about life in the region. In 1857

and 1859, Peguis felt compelled to dictate letters to the Aborigines Protection Society, insisting that the Selkirk Treaty had been intended as a preliminary move prior to formal sale of that lands and that the Ojibwa had not yet ceded their lands in the area. This was probably informed by the consequences of the 1851 Turtle Mountain treaty on the American side of the border, which was not ratified and resulted in the dispossession of Ojibwa people by settlers.[27] As well, tensions in Minnesota between settlers and Dakota were mounting across the 1850s that would culminate in the uprising of 1862.[28] Troops were also stationed at Pembina in 1855 to attempt to quell warfare between Ojibwa and Sioux, and acting as yet another manifestation of increasing colonial control of the area.[29] This was an unsettled and difficult time in the Red River valley.

Within such broader contexts, the gift of a hand trophy to someone in the position of Governor at Red River might well have carried several meanings: a call to war, a call to defend Ojibwa allies, a reminder of Ojibwa military power and of a tradition of alliance between colony and Ojibwa people. During the summer of 1855, however, when Caldwell acquired the hand, he was in the process of handing over power to his successor. The question of the hand's meanings hinge on the timing of this process: if Caldwell had already given up his office when he acquired the hand, it seems unlikely that the Ojibwa would have given it to him as a reminder of their alliance with the Colony or as an appeal for military assistance.

The timing of Caldwell's acquisition of the hand indicates that it had a different set of meanings, and relationships, however: it was almost certainly not given as a reminder of alliance or as an Ojibwa call for aid against the Sioux. Frances Godschall Johnson became assistant governor of Assiniboia on 19 July 1855, and was appointed governor on 26 November.[30] Sometime between early July and the 4th of August, the battle in which the hand was taken occurred. Reports began to circulate in Red River by 4th August about the battle, and Caldwell and his family, along with the Reverend Abraham Cowley, embarked in the boats for York Factory on the 9th August. Caldwell had already handed over the reins to his successor, and embarked on final packing, when he acquired the hand.[31]

Fig. 2: Map of Red River valley [NB we'll have one drawn for the article if accepted; this one is from http://ndstudies.gov/tm-maps-and-graphics, included because it shows Goose River]



As a last-minute acquisition by Caldwell on the eve of his departure for England, the hand takes on another set of meanings. Remarkably, it features in several archival documents, suggesting that it was considered unusual and unacceptable for Caldwell to collect it. An account by Reverend W.H. Taylor, rector of St. James' church in Red River, to a friend dated 7 August 1855 states:

> I was told on Saturday that Col. Caldwell had bought from a French halfbreed the hand of a Sioux killed in this last affair at Goose River. He was carrying it with him in a preserved state—the skin quite cutere—the nails etc trimmed off with Eagle's feathers--& making an ornament for the top interior of his tent. That any calling himself a Christian should feel any sort of satisfaction in such a thing is shocking.[32]

This must be the same hand: the description matches the object (although it leaves out the silk ribbonwork): it seems unlikely that there were two hands collected by

Caldwell in 1855. Reverend Taylor gives us several pieces of information: that Caldwell *purchased* the hand—a different thing altogether than being given it; that it was acquired not from an Ojibwa but from a Metis man; that it came from a Sioux slain in a battle at Goose River; that it was intended by the maker as an ornament for the interior of a tent; and that Caldwell's acquisition of the hand was considered (at least by Reverend Taylor) as un-Christian and unacceptable behavior. All of this, of course, is rumour rather than observation— "I was told"—but the closeness of the date of the letter to that of the acquisition of the hand, makes the information considerably more reliable than a family memory fifty years later.

There is a final corroborating piece of evidence for Taylor's information. As the Caldwells were travelling from Red River to York Factory to embark for England, Reverend Abraham Cowley, who was travelling with them, wrote on 14 August that

> Yesterday the Colonel shewed me the skin of a Sioux Indian's hand taken as trophy in the late engagement between them & the hunters from the R. River. What a specimen of savage barbarity! The poor fellows who from our part fell into the hands of Sioux were I am told cut to pieces & hurled about in the air in an incredibly short time after the Sioux had rushed upon & taken them. The dark places of the earth are indeed full of the habitations of cruelty.[33]

That Caldwell displayed the hand to Reverend Cowley on the journey suggests that it was accessible in the load, and therefore very recently acquired. Cowley's version of the hand's history also preserves the context of increasingly bloody warfare in the Red River Valley. "This last affair at Goose River" is quite specific. Goose River was an old boundary between Ojibwa and Dakota territory, and as such was a dangerous place: fur trader Alexander Henry noted that his Ojibwa guide refused to cross it.[34] Decades later, it was still a dangerous place, but hunters from Red River were compelled to go there in pursuit of the bison herds. As Taylor described at length in this letter, the summer bison hunt in 1855 was interrupted by an attack made by "Sioux Indians" at Goose River, with "robbery & loss of life."[35] This same battle is also mentioned in a letter written a few days after Taylor's, from John Swanston to William Smith: "…they were attacked by a large band of Sioux, who it is stated killed a couple of our hunters and 4 or 5 Saulteaux Indians besides wounding about as many

more, apart from this the Enemy stole 200 horses and from 30 to 40 [illeg], this unfortunate affair obliged them to abandon the chase…"[36]

That Caldwell is said to have purchased the hand is interesting in several ways. He was about to leave Red River, and his perspective on events and culture in Assiniboia would have been shifting from that of an administrator, actively involved in law and politics, to seeing the place in memory, as a fascinating and exotic part of his former life.[37] As a potential souvenir of his time in Red River, the hand could not have surfaced at a more opportune moment. Like other gentlemen who retired to England and decorated the walls of their studies with exotic souvenirs, the hand trophy offered Caldwell an opportunity to enhance the presentation of his masculinity when he returned to England. Perhaps this was a balm for what had clearly been a disastrous time in Red River. Reverend Taylor was being naïve when he wrote to his friend "That any calling himself a Christian should feel any sort of satisfaction in such a thing is shocking." It was precisely the possession of "shocking" things in "civilized" contexts, separated by time and space, which enabled the construction of certain aspects of the retired colonial officer's identity.

Caldwell's life was lived within colonial army and administrative society and its conventions. His uncle was Major General Sir Alexander Caldwell, who had a distinguished career in India, and one of his sons married the daughter of Admiral Sir Arthur Farquhar. Caldwell would have had an army pension and lived, like many ex-army and colonial officers with whom he probably socialized, in comfortable but modest properties in middle-class neighborhoods in London.[38] His sons did rather better: two became doctors, and a third became Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.[39]

In such respectable English social circles, with their class aspirations, social conventions, and family memories of military life in exotic places, the hand trophy would have been transgressive, a shocking thing in respectable houses, but also a symbol of the kind of shocking thing that such families had experienced in the colonies: a marker of a particular identity for people like the Caldwells. In the context of a London home, it would have represented the danger of the region through which the collector had travelled, and emphasized his masculinity and physical courage. For

a man who had been vilified as weak and ineffectual, being able to display the hand might have been an opportunity to present himself as tougher than his reputation.

Whether using the hand as a claim to masculinity was justified in terms of Caldwell's life is another question, but such "souvenirs" were all the more satisfying for being shocking and exotic. Caldwell displayed the hand to Reverend Cowley en route to York Factory, provoking exactly the sort of gratifyingly disgusted response he might have hoped for. Once in London, the hand would probably have been kept in Caldwell's study, as was usual for such souvenirs of "frontier" life, which served as a savage contrast to the civility of their new surroundings: "I also bought a scalp from the Chippewa," wrote the Earl of Wharncliffe in 1850, "and it now hangs in my room." There is no physical evidence that the hand Caldwell acquired was permanently displayed: its silk ribbons are not faded by light, for instance. It was probably kept in a box, and shown occasionally to male friends.

Reverend Cowley's, and Reverend Taylor's, disgust at the hand and its connotations remind us that it had slipped into yet another set of meanings, vastly different from those it had in its northern Plains context. While northern Plains cultures saw human trophies as a way of communicating male power and competence, colonial society saw such items as the quintessential symbol of "savagery."

These imposed meanings ignored a long history in Britain of state executions and deliberate dismemberment and display of the bodies of traitors. Drawing and quartering, beheading, and displaying the body parts of executed traitors in public places (on pikes on London Bridge; at scaffolds and crossroads), were all part of the enactment of centralized, military-backed power in Britain for centuries. Despite this, Aboriginal human trophy-taking and the ritual display connected with human trophies were used as "proof" of Aboriginal savagery during the colonial era. These practices were often cited as evidence that Aboriginal peoples were less rational, more emotional, less controlled, and less civilized than Europeans. As Reverend Cowley said of the hand, "What a specimen of savage barbarity! The poor fellows who from our part fell into the hands of Sioux were I am told cut to pieces & hurled about in the air in an incredibly short time after the Sioux had rushed upon & taken them. The dark places of the earth are indeed full of the habitations of cruelty." Similarly, the

artist George Catlin stated that “There is no custom practiced by the Indians, for which they are more universally condemned, than that of taking the scalp.”[40]

Such attitudes were part of a larger process of “civilizing” Assiniboia by making Aboriginal production and display of human trophies illicit. As Laura Stoler has noted, training an anthropological gaze on the “policing” activities within colonial societies is productive: the tensions around what is perceived as inhuman, uncivilized, or newly criminalized behavior are part of the ways that colonial relations of dominance are produced, by making some activities and identities and relationships acceptable across racial and cultural boundaries, and others unacceptable.[41] Repugnance and the use of social censure in Red River were a large part of the colonial power structure there which eventually marginalized Metis and Ojibwa people: we need to pay attention to objects such as the hand which elicit strong emotional responses within such colonial situations.

Conclusion

The hand trophy represents some of the more difficult aspects of the past in the Red River valley and the broader northern Plains and Parkland region. Rather than ignoring such things because they are sensitive, however, we can work with them to understand a great deal about the past that we might not otherwise choose, or be able, to see. Treated carefully, the hand trophy forces us to consider the nature of relationships between peoples around Red River: both the differences amongst them, and the dense ties between them. It also allows us to see something of W. B. Caldwell’s character.

The hand trophy emerged in a context of established intertribal warfare between Ojibwa and Dakota peoples into which Metis and non-Aboriginal incomers were drawn, and which they made worse. The Metis technique of hunting bison on horseback, which was thought to frighten away the bison herds, and the more commercial, larger-scale of their hunting, was linked to the demand for pemmican, meat and hides by the settlement and by the trading companies: this was a local ramification of global trading systems.

It was also a manifestation of the problematic cross-cultural relations inherent in such larger trading systems and in the imperial processes of which trade was a part. Objects such as the hand trophy were used by non-Aboriginal people in the process of imposing European worldviews, and racist perspectives, in colonial situations. As Annie Coombes has noted for Victorian museum displays of African objects, the collection and display of ethnographic material, and the popular discourses surrounding it, served to highlight cultural and "racial" difference between British whites and Aboriginal peoples, to confirm the notion of British superiority, and to justify colonialism.[42] Displayed in a middle-class, respectable home, the hand trophy would have been an ideal symbol of exoticism, "primitivism," and cross-cultural difference, reinforcing the popular notion that Aboriginal people were savage and needed to be civilized.

As Daunton and Halpern have noted, "British imperial power might be attained by force, either actual or threatened, but it was sustained by many other means. These might include trade or gifts, education and religious conversion, the incorporations of indigenous structures of authority within an imperial system, or the definition of the tribe as "criminal"."[43] In 1855, all of these processes were at work in Red River, along with the process of exoticising and thus marginalizing Aboriginal cultures. Recategorizing Aboriginal material culture of warfare as exotic souvenirs, not to be taken seriously as works of art or technical skill or powerful demonstrations of masculinity, was yet another means of imposing power. Gentlemens' drawing rooms and studies, and museum displays, framed Aboriginal objects within European intellectual traditions and sociopolitical hierarchies just as surely as the construction of schools and courts did in colonial contexts.

By the fact of their collection and movement, however, objects also demonstrate the dense interconnections between peoples and places. The hand trophy is a layered record of relationships across cultures, across a man's career, across sets of expectations within British colonial society, and across continents. The fact that an object acquired at Fort Garry in 1855 within long-established political and social relationships could end up in a Cambridge museum with an entirely different set of meanings attached to it—imperial, ethnological—says much about the complexity of cross-cultural histories and the movement of items such as the hand which reflect

these. These complexities are reflected again in the history of the hand since it was donated to CUMAA: it has never been displayed. It exists within a small box in a storage area, a difficult, sensitive item within museum contexts that are themselves the product of the histories of British expansion. W.B. Caldwell's acquisition of the hand, R.T. Caldwell's story about it, and the various layers of the hand's history and changing meanings, make it an extraordinary document about its cross-cultural and imperial histories.

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[1] The hand is CUMAA E1907.153.

[2] William Bletterman Caldwell married Elizabeth Townley in 1837 in Kent. They had seven children: William Townley Caldwell (1838-1920); Elizabeth Jeremiah (1839-1923); Robert Townley Caldwell (1843-1914, the donor of the hand trophy); Catherine (1845-1872); Hannah (1848-after 1871); James David, 1849-1854 (b. and d. Red River); Henry Townley (b. Red River 1852). Sources: “England, Marriages, 1538–1973," *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/NND1-KYW: accessed 02 Oct 2012), William Bletterman Caldwell and Elizabeth Townley, 16 March 1837; reference item 3, p.174, FHL microfilm 1835586); “England, Births and Christenings, 1538-1975,” index, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/JW7K-PZX : accessed 02 Oct 2012), FHL microfilm 0375289-0375291. *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1861, 1871, and 1881* (Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK), accessed at: Ancestry.com [online database], 29 April 2013.

[3] W.L. Morton, “William Bletterman Caldwell,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* XI (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), accessed 15 April 2013, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=39532&query= .

[4] Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1856), 366.

[5] Morton, “William Bletterman Caldwell.”

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] J.E. Rea, “Eden Colville,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* XII (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), accessed 23 April 2013, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=40163 .

[9] Morton, “William Bletterman Caldwell.”

[10] There are many documented examples of such purchasing; see, for example: HBCA B.235/b/90, 1843-44, fo.9: Duncan Finlayson, 7-19 June 1843, paid [illeg] Mackay for garnished work, £1 10s; paid Madame Laronde for garnished work, £2 7s; July 18, cash paid Madame Morriseau for bark baskets, 14s; 8 August, paid for a bark basket, 10s.

[11] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the creation of an American myth* (NY: Knopf, 2001), 250.

[12] Macdonell was Governor of Assiniboia, appointed by Selkirk. See: Herbert Mays, "Miles Macdonell," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* VI, accessed 23 April 2013, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=2986 .

[13] Bruce M. White, "'Give Us a Little Milk': The Social and Cultural Meanings of Gift Giving in the Lake Superior Fur Trade," *Minnesota History* 48 (1982): 60-71.

[14] HBCA E.88, "Miles McDonell, No. 3, Journal From 22nd April 1813 to 7th April 1815, entry for 1 February 1815. From microfilm copy in Archives of Manitoba (AM MG 2 Al, "Extracts from the Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk papers," pp.16953-16954).

[15] Douglas W. Owsley et al, "Human Finger and Hand Bone Necklaces from the Plains and Great Basin," in *The Taking and Displaying of Human Body Parts as Trophies by Amerindians*, eds. Richard Chacon and David H. Dye (New York: Springer, 2007), 124-166.

[16] Ibid.

[17] HBCA B.22/a/19, Brandon House Journal, 26 January and 4 April 1816. AM microfilm reel 1M17.

[18] Halkett: Manitoba Museum, HBC 37-96; Simpson, Pitt Rivers Museum, PRM 1893.67.18.

[19] HBCA A.11/95 22 August 1849, A. Ross to Caldwell: "The Indians seemed to have taken a footing on the hostile demonstration made by the Half breeds in the spring; had assembled in considerable numbers at their rendezvous & being joined by some of their companions from the plains, with a Sieux scalp they set to dancing...."

[20] Henry Youle Hind, *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assinniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), 122-3; J.J. Hargrave, *Red River* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1871), 396, re June 1866 attack.

[21] Owsley et al, "Human Finger and Hand Bone Necklaces," 126-7 discusses these practices for the Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Crow, Assiniboine, Cree, Pawnee, and Sioux. Henry Boller also documents a hand set up by the Gros Ventre after a battle in the late 1850s: "The whole party of Yanktons, nine in all, were killed, and their bodies hacked to pieces. … A hand mounted on a pole was set up on the prairie as a thank-offering to the Great Spirit": Boller, *Among the Indians: Four Years on the Upper Missouri, 1858-1862* (Lincoln: Nebraska, 2004), 151.

[22] James Carnegie, Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: a diary and narrative of travel, sport and adventure during a journey through the Hudson's Bay Company's territories in 1859 and 1860* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edmonston & Douglas, 1874), 328-9.

[23] Edward Wortley Wharncliffe Papers, 1850. MNHS Manuscript A/-W553 1 vol.

[Internal page 57], Minnesota Historical Society Archives, referring to incident at Kittson's post at Pembina on 15 September 1850. I am endebted to Mike Dyson for information about this reference, and to Thomas Shaw for transcription.

[24] Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* (St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1979), 133-34, also plate 49 a). Niskigwun, who gave Densmore the object and told her its use, was from the Sandy Lake-Mille Lacs area of Minnesota.

[25] On increasing warfare across the 1840s and 1850s and its general contexts, see: Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780-1870* (Winnpeg: University of Manitoba, 1994), 155-6; David McCready, *Living with Strangers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 12-13. As a brief guide to the broader context of such warfare, see also the index to correspondence on warfare in the west for the 1853-55 period, in Lynda Lassell Crist and Mary Seaton Dix, eds., *The Papers of Jefferson Davis 1853-55, vol. 5* (Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 353.

[26] Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, 157-9

[27] Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, 198, 179.

[28] See, for instance: Thomas McLean Newson, *Pen pictures of St. Paul, Minnesota, and biographical sketches of old settlers: from the earliest settlement of the city, up to and including the year 1857*, Volume 1, p. 275: "… in the winter of 1855 the Indians were very troublesome in the settlement of St. Joseph ...making frequent raids upon the settlers, stealing horses and killing such of the inhabitants as could be found away from the village."

[29] W. A. Gorman, Minnesota Superintendency, St Paul office, to Hon. George Manypenny, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington DC, 31 October 1855: "In regard to the savage warfare that has been going on for so long between the Sioux and Chippewas, it is believed that the presence of the troops lately ordered to Pembina will have a salutary effect." In *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of State 1855* (Washington, 1856), 49.

[30] Clinton O. White, "Sir Francis Godschall Johnson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* XII, accessed at http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=6189 .

[31] On the timing of events: reports of a battle were circulating in Red River by Saturday 4 August: Reverend W.H. Taylor to Reverend E. Hawkins, 7 August 1855, St James Red River: "I was told on Saturday that Col. Caldwell had bought…". in *Reports and letters of the Rev. W.H. Taylor, first rector of the parish of St. James Church, the Assiniboine: Written between November 23, 1852 and August 4, 1859* (Winnipeg: L.F. Schmidt, 1972), 25. Accessed in http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/394/28.html?qid=peelbib|hand|%28peelnum:000394%29|score, 25 April 2013. On 9 August, a letter from John Swanston to William Smith [HBCA A. 11/96] states that "Mr C[hief] Factor B and daughter, and Colonel Caldwell and

family, and Capt Hall, are about to proceed from hence to York on the boats of some one or other of the Freighters, and take their passage from there on the Hon'ble Company ship to England."

[32] Reverend W.H. Taylor to Reverend E. Hawkins, 7 August 1855, *Reports and letters of the Rev. W.H. Taylor*, 25.

[33] Archives of Manitoba, CMS microfilm, C.1/O, Journals of Abraham Cowley (reel A96), 14 August 1855.

[34] Goose River as a boundary: Harold Hickerson, ed. "Journal of Charles Jean Baptiste Chaboillez, 1797-1798." *Ethnohistory* 6(3), 1959, pp. 265-316, n.96 p.313, notes that Alexander the Henry wrote that his Ojibwa guide would not cross the Goose River for fear of the Sioux. Later in the nineteenth century, William Warren (*History of the Ojibway People*, 2nd ed. Theresa Schenck, Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 2009, 260), noted Goose River as a boundary.

[35] Reverend Taylor to Reverend E Hawkins, 7 August 1855: *Reports and letters of the Rev. W.H. Taylor*.

[36] HBCA A.11/96, 9 August 1855. This is probably the same battle reported on 21st August in an account from the Lower Sioux Agency to the St. Paul *Democrat* newspaper (published in *The New York Times*, 17 September 1855; accessed at: http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F60813FC3D55167493C5A81782D85F418584F9), which describes a battle "which took place some time ago" involving "Missouri half-breeds, assisted by some Chippewa Indians, and a band of Yanktonai Sioux." The Yanktonai camp at Goose River was attacked at dawn one morning "by the whole force of the allied enemy." The Yanktonai kept their enemy under fire "so that only a few had time to reach their horses; the rest scattered off in the darkness, leaving in the hands of the Sioux 250 horses and 71 head of cattle." Nineteen Yanktonais were said to have been killed, and the bodies of three Ojibwa and one Metis were found.

[37] Caldwell was prone to emphasizing exoticism: when his wife gave birth in Red River in October 1849, Caldwell wrote that she had "presented him with a young Assiniboine" (HBCA A.11/95, fo.215d, letter from Caldwell to Sir George Simpson, Upper Fort Garry, 28 November 1849).

[38] Caldwell residences: 1861 England census: Lambeth, Brixton, 4 Angell Terrace. 1862 and 1864 Poll Book/Electoral Registers: a terrace house at 24, Richmond (later renamed Richborne Terrace), near Clapham Road, London; and a cottage, "Rupert," in Sudbury (near Colchester in Essex). 1871 and 1881 census: 18 St Stephen Street, Paddington. All of Caldwell's London residences were comfortable London townhouses; the St Stephen house is in an area of large, formal residential terraces. Caldwell's estate on his death in 1882 at the St

Stephen house was some £18,000 and his properties. Sources for Caldwell residences: *UK, Poll Books and Electoral Registers, 1538-1893* record for William Bletterman Caldwell [Ancestry.com]; *England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966* [Ancestry.com.].

[39] William Townley Duncan Caldwell, b. 1838, d. 16 December 1920. Passed his first examination for admission to the College of Surgeons in 1859, at that time living at Harleyford Place, Surrey. Married in 1874. Child born 28 June 1888, at which time his address was given as 284 Kennington Park Road, St. Mark, and his profession given as surgeon. Sources: *Census Returns of England and Wales* [Ancestry.com]; Caldwell's will, 1882: *National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966* [Ancestry.com.].

[40] Catlin, George. 1841. *Letters and notes on the manners, customs, and condition of the North American Indians written during eight years' travel amongst the wildest tribes of Indians in North America, in 1832, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39*. Vol.1. London: Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, p.239.

[41] Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 13-14.

[42] Annie E. Coombes. *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

[43] Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, eds., *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 10.