



## *First Person-Première personne*, the new Journal of the Champlain Society

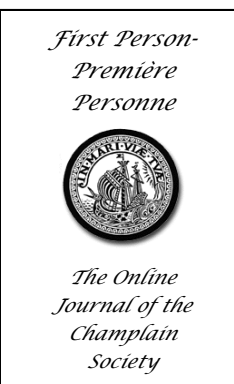
The Champlain Society, long known as the premier publisher of books on Canada's documentary heritage, is undertaking a new venture and deepening its embrace of new technologies: an on-line journal.

In April 2011, the Champlain Society Council ratified a proposal to create a publication for the diffusion of edited primary documents significant to the history of Canada. As founding editor I have been asked to develop this journal, to draw upon the well-established traditions of the Society while embracing the new publishing environment of the twenty-first century.

*First Person-Première Personne* will complement the Society's yearly volume. One key difference between the two types of publications is that the journal will be found entirely online. (Although a paper version will not be produced, the digital pages will be formatted so they can be printed easily.) Much more important will be the substantial difference in the scope of the documents exhibited in the journal. *First Person-Première Personne* will focus on small sets of documents such as single letters or brief exchanges of correspondence, but it will also include sounds, pictures, maps, films, internet material, etc. These notable changes from traditional Society publications will not affect the high quality of transcription, translation and scholarly analysis that readers have come to expect. Similar to a paper-based publication, edited documents will be fixed online and will not be altered or amended. In the Champlain Society tradition, all submissions to the journal will be peer-reviewed to ensure the accuracy of the documents and the integrity of their

analysis.

The title *First Person-Première Personne* was chosen to



reflect our belief in both the importance of primary sources and of the people who created them. The title was conceived in a spirit of inclusiveness that will also guide the editorial policy of the journal. It is

a policy that does not seek to limit the scope of the publication, but instead encourages the submission of a broad range of edited primary sources that reflect the multilingual and multicultural history of this country.

The online technologies of our digital age offer unprecedented opportunities for the presentation of documentary heritage. Publishing on the World Wide Web provides almost limitless possibilities for the diffusion and analysis of textual and non-textual sources. In *First Person-Première Personne* readers will be able to find colour scans of paper documents and easily access annotations and translations at a click of a button. Readers of the journal will also find a greater emphasis on the presentation of photography, cartography, documentary art, sound and moving pictures than was possible in traditional Champlain Society productions.

Indeed, the Internet offers an unprecedented degree of interactivity between readers and subject matter. Readers of *First Person-Première Personne* will be able to access the journal content as well as engage in a

variety of online fora for commentary and debate. It is hoped that a community of users will develop around the journal and participate in a lively dialogue centred on history and the primary source. It is also hoped that *First Person-Première Personne* will reach new audiences, some of whom may not have had any previous familiarity with the Champlain Society, or with Canada's documentary heritage and the rich international network of archives, libraries and museums that hold these collections. *First Person-Première Personne* will create a space for a wide range of groups and individuals that share an interest in Canada's documentary heritage. Society members, family historians, graduate students, historical professionals and scholars are all considered its audience.

Although the journal is only weeks old at this point, it is anticipated that *First Person-Première Personne* will publish twice yearly when running at full capacity. The first issue is expected to go online in December 2011.

-by Micheal Eamon



Dr. Michael Eamon is an historian of British North America. He has worked as the manager of Virtual Exhibitions and Partnerships at Library and Archives Canada, was the former chair of the [Culture.ca](http://Culture.ca) committee and a past editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Scientia Canadensis*. He is a member of the Champlain Society Council.

## A Privileged View on the War of 1812 : An Interview with Carl Benn

In recognition of the bicentennial of the start of the war of 1812, the Champlain Society's upcoming volume will be the re-issue of *The Journal of Major John Norton*, a vivid testimonial of the critical events of that conflict. The text was originally edited by Carl Klinck, who also contributed a biography of Norton. James J. Talman provided the historical introduction. To refresh the volume, the Champlain Society asked Professor Carl Benn, an expert in this era and a new member of the Champlain Society Council, to write a new introduction. Patrice Dutil, the President of the Champlain Society, chatted with his colleague at Ryerson University about this new work.

### PD: Who was John Norton?

**CB:** He was one of the most significant figures among the Iroquois or Haudenosaunee of the Grand River on the North Shore of Lake Erie between the 1790s and the 1820s. Norton (also known as Teyoninhokarawen) was born in Scotland in 1770. His mother was a Scot and his father was a Cherokee who had moved to the British Isles after being adopted as a boy by soldiers during the Cherokee War of 1759-60. Norton came to North America in the 1780s in the ranks of a British infantry regiment. He left the army and lived in several aboriginal communities, and then, in the 1790s, Mohawk leader Joseph Brant adopted him as his nephew after having met Norton several years earlier.

Once integrated among the Six Nations Iroquois, Norton devoted much of his energy towards promoting Haudenosaunee interests. With Brant's death in 1807, Norton replaced his mentor as leader of the anglophile party along the Grand. He played a critical role in maintaining the British-Iroquois alliance during the war of 1812 and led sizeable war parties against American troops during the conflict. Norton promoted agricultural innovation and took a

leading part in translating the gospels of John and Matthew into Mohawk. In 1815-16 he travelled to Britain where he wrote out his long manuscript that we now know as his *Journal*. He returned to Canada, lived along the Grand River until 1823, headed south to the land of the Cherokees, and then disappeared, possibly passing away in 1831 somewhere on the Santa Fe trail.

### PD: What is in his *Journal*?

**CB:** It consists of several discrete elements, all of which are historically important. One describes a journey he made in 1809-10 from the Grand River to the Cherokees (his father's people now living in Tennessee, Georgia, and modern Alabama). Another component presents a history of the Six Nations from an indigenous perspective (based on Euroamerican sources, native traditions, and aboriginal memories). A third section of the book comprises an analysis of the struggles between the United States and the First Nations of the Old Northwest in the frontier war of the 1780s and '90s (in which Norton participated when working in the region's fur trade). The final part records his memoirs in the Iroquois world between 1807 and 1814.

### PD: How does Norton's account of the War of 1812 compare with others of this period?

**CB:** While only about one-third of Norton's 370-page book consists of his wartime memoirs, his account is one of the more detailed narratives we have from any participant in the events of 1812-14, and it certainly is the most extensive one we have from a First Nations perspective. He saw the war up close.

### PD: Why is his account of the war successful?

**CB:** One thing that makes his coverage of the war valuable (and exciting) is the simple fact that he

was present at so many major actions — the capture of Detroit, the battle of Queenston Heights, the attack on the American army at Stoney Creek, and the hard-fought battle of Lundy's Lane to name just a few. As well, he was a major figure in Six Nations politics, so we have access to the internal debates of the community through his *Journal*. Additionally, he was a significant diplomatic figure in Crown-Iroquois relations, and thus we have a rare opportunity through his words to understand the dynamics of that relationship from the native side of the association. He also knew how to tell a good story.

### PD: Is he reliable?

**CB:** I think Norton was a truthful witness. For instance, he was easier



Carl Benn

on his opponents when he described his conflicts with them than we might reasonably expect. He also tended to avoid discussing things he didn't like rather than to make up stories, which helps us read about the events he did describe with a fair degree of confidence.

### PD: His journal was found in Alnwick Castle in England (which was enlisted

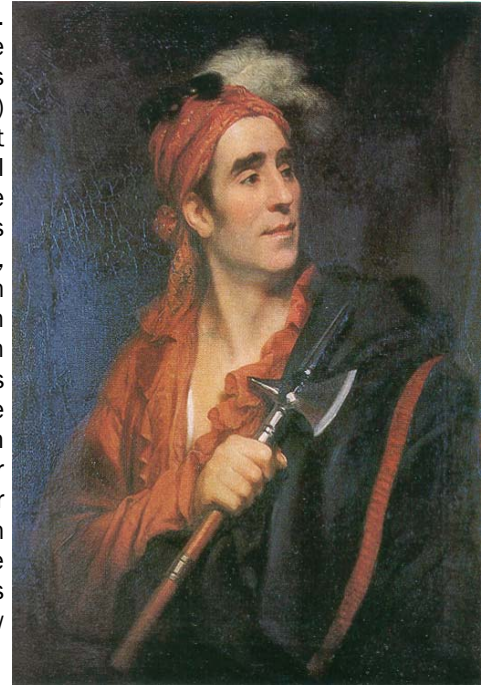
to act as Hogwarts in the Harry Potter movies). How did this journal wind up there?

**CB:** Norton expected his journal to be published when he finished it while in Britain. The second Duke of Northumberland — who initially backed the project — died in 1817 (Norton had returned to Canada). There was no money to publish the work, and the manuscript sat more-or-less forgotten in the Duke's library at Alnwick until the Champlain Society commissioned Carl Klink and J.J. Talman to edit it for publication in the 1960s for release in 1970.

**PD:** Carl Klinck (1908-1990), who taught English at Waterloo College (now Wilfrid Laurier University) most of his life, wrote a long biography in his introduction to this work in 1970. Do we know more about Norton now?

**CB:** I think Carl Klink did a remarkable job of searching for information about Norton, which was difficult because documentation is scattered thinly across North America and Britain. On top of that, period records and later assessments are full of errors. However, Klink did very

well in compiling the Norton story. Since then, we have recovered more details of Norton's life (such as his birth date of 17 December 1770) which flesh out his story quite a bit and close some of the historical gaps. Beyond simply having more facts, First Nations scholarship has changed dramatically since 1970, so we are able to understand Norton and his world with more precision and nuance than was possible when the book came out forty-one years ago. That development makes the re-release of the *Journal* timely with the coming bicentennial of the War of 1812. It fills a need to better understand native participation in the conflict, to say nothing of all the other things Norton has to tell us about the aboriginal world he knew so well.



#### We Mourn

*Olive Dickason (1920-2011)*

Member of the Champlain Society Council from 1997 to 2004.

*John Saywell (1929-2011)*

Member of the Champlain Society Council from 1977 to 1982.

### Champlain Watch: Spring-Summer 1611

Samuel de Champlain returned to Canada for the sixth time in this season four hundred years ago, departing in early March. The trip to the Western hemisphere was harrowing and he did not arrive in Quebec until May.

The trip this time focused on the area of Montreal with the hope of strengthening ties with the Hurons and the Algonquins. In May, he travelled up the St. Lawrence to explore the rapids beyond the island of Montreal, the Lac Saint-Louis and the Lac des Deux Montagnes. He chose a spot on which to found the "Place Royale" and had a wall built around its perimeter (and nothing else). He also noticed a pretty island and called it Sainte-Hélène, in honour of the young girl he

had married only a few months before. After long and complicated negotiations with the Hurons, he made a critical decision. As he had done the year before with the Algonquins, he again dispatched young Étienne Brûlé to live among the Hurons in order to learn their ways. Brûlé, in turn, would be his eyes and ears on the interior of the continent. Unlike other *truchements* (translators), however, Brûlé would stay among the Hurons until his death more than twenty years later.

Champlain returned to Quebec in mid-July to inspect the Habitation and the state of mind of the men who were to stay behind. He boarded his ship in August and returned to France.

### Join The Society's Order of Good Cheer

**Patrons of the "Habitation":** This membership category recognizes annual gifts over \$5,000 that create a strong foundation to sustain the Society's mission and goals.

**Patrons of the "Astrolabe":** This membership category recognizes annual gifts ranging between \$1,000-\$4,999 that enable the Society to "seek out" important documents that enrich our understanding of Canadian history.

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**Patrons of the "Voyageur":** This membership category recognizes annual gifts ranging between \$50-\$99 that support exploration of new approaches to providing access to Canada's documentary heritage.

*Donations can be made online by visiting the Society's website, or by mail. Patrons will receive a tax receipt for their contribution.*

# WHAT'S NEW

## With You?

Are you moving?  
Do you have a new email address?

Send us your new information so we can keep in touch with you. Mail it to the address at the right or email [info@champlainsociety.ca](mailto:info@champlainsociety.ca).

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## With Us!

Upcoming Events  
& Publications

The Society is pleased to present the following schedule for its publications, which may be subject to change as projects unfold during the coming years:

- *The Voyages of Pierre-Esprit Radisson*. Edited by Germaine Warkentin. 2012.
- *O.D. Skelton: The Work of the World, 1923-1941*. Edited by Norman Hillmer. 2013.
- *The Moravians in Labrador*. Edited by Linda Sabathy-Judd. 2014.
- *William Ord Mackenzie: The Canadas during the 1830s*. Edited by Sandra Alston and Cicely Blackstock. 2015.
- *John Holmes: A Canadian in Foreign Affairs*. Edited by Hector McKenzie. 2016.
- *The Halifax Relief Commission: Rebuilding the 'Shattered City,' 1917-1921*. Edited by Paul Sutherland, Shirley Tillotson, and Peter Twohig. 2017.

For more than 100 years, **The Champlain Society** has increased public awareness of and access to Canada's rich documentary heritage. Our goals are:

- to publish Canadian documentary materials edited and produced to the highest standards both for members of the Society and for the public at large;
- to assist the Canadian public to a better understanding of the nation's past through occasional public lectures, seminars, colloquia, conferences and the publication of occasional papers;
- to serve as an advocate on the proper care of and accessibility to Canada's historical records; and
- to increase participation in the work of the Society by enlarging and broadening the membership.



**The Champlain Society**  
[www.champlainsociety.ca](http://www.champlainsociety.ca)

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