

The Pictured and the Posed:
Nineteenth Century Touristic Images of the Lachine Rapids

Mireille M. Eagan

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Abstract

The Pictured and the Posed: Nineteenth Century Touristic Images of the Lachine Rapids

Mireille M. Eagan

The collection of Lachine Rapids images studied in this thesis are hybrid and innovative. Ranging from paintings to postcards, they represent a time where major social, technological and economic changes were occurring.

Acting as natural barrier to water travel, the Lachine Rapids were a significant factor in Montreal's development as an economic powerhouse-- a midway point for goods transferred to and from inland. Despite the development of Montreal as an industrial center (including the building of the Lachine Canal as a method of circumventing the rapids), there occurred a substantial increase in "nature tourism." Traveling in large steamships used specifically for the journey through the rapids, tourists would safely experience nature as "untamed."

The improvement of the camera, the increase in disposable income for the middle class and the rise of a romantic concept of nature were crucial for the growth of this tourist movement. All combined to promote the consumption of the Lachine Rapids and by extension, Montreal, as a natural visual commodity. Catering to what was popular—tourists arguably sought to purchase images that represented to them an "authentic" portrayal of their voyage through the rapids. The daytrip to the rapids was travel as performance thus transforming the images into an embodiment of the performative experience.

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Introduction

Montreal is both an accident and a beneficiary of its geography. By creating a natural barrier to water travel, the Lachine Rapids were a major factor in Montreal's development as an economic powerhouse-- a midway point for goods transferred to and from inland. Strangely, as Montreal grew more industrial, canals were built to circumvent the natural phenomenon and the Lachine Rapids became a hub for "nature tourist" travel. From the mid 1800s to the mid 1900s¹, ships left daily from the city, or intentionally traveled through the rapids on their way downstream to the east. As one guidebook described it:

"The Lachine Rapids are just below (Montreal), and to avoid the swift and wild current here, a canal 9 miles long has been constructed. All the commerce between Montreal and the West (by water) passes through this canal. Sometimes the water is too low on these rapids to enable steamers to descend them, but when well covered it is a favourite trip of the Montrealers and their guests to take the train to Lachine and return via the rapids. Lachine is the starting and landing place for the R & O Line of steamers for Kingston and Toronto. They leave daily at noon during the summer season."²

This thesis is an inquiry into the role and function of images of the Lachine Rapids from the mid nineteenth century to early twentieth century, during which time there occurred an abrupt and considerable increase of such representations. It takes into consideration the complexities inherent in these visual objects, which acted concurrently as communication agents, propaganda vehicles, objects of desire and catalysts for memories. The images will be used as a continual touchstone, the core of this study formed by an exploration of the images' roles in the conception of place, its significance,

¹ Trips through the Lachine Rapids declined suddenly around the 1930s, due to insurance issues with tourist transport. It was not until the early 1980s that tours were conducted once more, this time using speedboats. Since then, travel through the rapids has gained in popularity, with daily tours organized during the summer months.

² Charles G.D. Roberts. The Canadian Guide-Book. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1891) 50.

its associations, and its diverse meanings and contradictions.

The images of the Lachine Rapids are symbolic indicators for the period of time from which they are derived, acting as material evidence of historical changes. As part of the growing movement of mass-produced visual objects, the images were published in journals, guidebooks, or could be purchased in postcard form. They were produced explicitly for public consumption, ideologically imbued and commercially charged. They were both cultural object and cultural practice.

This approach exposes a number of practical and theoretical dilemmas related to representation. With its implicit correlation to the material world, the images raise questions about what constitutes the real, what is valuable is its purported authenticity. Equally significant is whose vision is being represented and how it has been interpreted. I intend to show that the images and accompanying text, where applicable, prescribed the experience of traversing the rapids by providing standardised imagery for public consumption, and yet were modified according to context and user. Undertaken as a way of acting on consciousness, travels performed in a particular manner did not merely reflect views of reality but created and confirmed them. They involved the deliberate constructions of arguably fictive time, space and character. The daytrip to the rapids was travel as performance thus transforming the images into an embodiment of the performative experience.

Nature as landscape is itself a historically specific social and cultural construction. Landscape has been included in visual imagery from the beginning of art history, whether in decorative or functional senses. This extends to marine paintings,

images of boats at sea, which use the natural environment to portray an atmosphere and often created a narrative for events surrounding the ships through the "personality" of the natural environment. With the rise of Romanticism and the Picturesque, the landscape became a form of interest in itself. Aesthetic standards still held true, where the images adhered to prescribed qualities about how nature should be represented.

Self-designated picturesque travelers of the nineteenth century deliberately transposed aesthetic theory developed in academies of painting to the new sphere of landscape appreciation. However, these painted works were expensive, and as a result were often unavailable to the middle and lower social classes. With the development of new less costly means of visual representation, such as the photograph and the postcard in the mid 1800s, more levels of western society were able to purchase landscape images. Around 1850, lithographed images became prevalent in mundane publications. In Canada, by the late nineteenth century, the use of picture postcards reached such unprecedented proportions that they became a primary source of landscape imagery for the middle classes. The "Golden Age" of the postcard, from 1900 to 1915, saw the medium used as a method of acquiring imagery rather than just for communication purposes. Soon a large proportion of urban centers had postcards with views of their city, or touristic guidebooks with a collection of images representing important landmarks.

The postcard, in particular, achieved such relevance in part because it fulfilled the need for communication as people became increasingly mobile. The Western world was at the height of colonial expansion. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the rapid development of more efficient means of transportation enabled mass migration of people

between countries, between cities and from rural areas to new urban centers. Tourism became a recognized economic force as it developed into a major industry in many countries. These movements, in the literal sense, brought with them a desire to keep “in touch.” The postcard was an inexpensive and readily available vehicle for both the sender and the receiver, providing the sights associated with places and people. It enabled people to send not only brief personal communications but also images that could represent place. The image became an integral part of the message sent between sender and receiver.

The role played by the images in the conception of Montreal as a place, how it mediated and was mediated by culture and its experience, requires an investigation starting with the objects and moving outward. Looking at the images as mass-produced objects, they can be regarded simply as commercial commodities. However, the imagery they bear conveys values which society invests in both landscape and its representation.

This thesis casts the images as cultural objects embedding landscape representation in a multi-faceted communicative practice. This requires consideration of the conceptualization of a place and its meaning. As discussed, the social history of tourist culture in the late 1800s through the early 1900s, particularly in Montreal, will provide the methodological framework for my investigation.

The lack of art historical consideration of mass-produced landscape imagery is reflected in the amount of literature produced-- very little. Pointed analysis may be found for the most part in theses. Carole Scheffer's PhD thesis concerning architectural postcards contains an extensive analysis of popular imagery in the representation of

place. Ann Thomas' Masters thesis, entitled *The Role of Photography in Canadian Painting 1860-1900: Relationships Between The Photographic Image and a Style of Realism in Painting* provides discussion of the development of photography and landscape imagery, but does not provide enough cultural analysis for the purposes of this thesis. There are a handful of publications dealing with the rise of photography in Canada, but once again there is very little which extends to the postcard or the published image. A wide array of existing literature pertains to romantic tourist culture in Canada and elsewhere, yet there is almost nothing concerning the effect of the Lachine Rapids as a site for such activity. Furthermore, the texts that do approach these issues lack a critical edge toward the visual consumption of the Lachine Rapids for Canada and Montreal in particular. As an examination of the social history of the Lachine Rapids, this thesis will shed light on a previously narrow approach to examining the relationship between visual representation of nature and public consumption of place within Canada.

In order to bring together a representative inventory of images, I have explored the holdings within a variety of libraries and institutional archives. Of particular note are the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, the Canadian Center for Architecture, and the McCord Museum. The McCord's collection was substantial, and provided the base for most of the images examined in this thesis. The National Archives of Canada, as well as the Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archives, were invaluable online resources in terms of a consolidated and well-catalogued collection of images. Strangely enough, so was EBay. Although not well documented, the collection of images was substantial and was useful for expansion on works found within institutional archives.

In order to place the objects within a theoretical framework, I have found the writings of John Urry and Rosalind Williams to be quite applicable. The theory of John Urry has been insightful in providing a meta-historical examination of the rise of tourism and the visual consumption of landscape. Rosalind Williams is particularly interested in the technology that accelerated and prescribed visual consumption during the nineteenth century.

It is difficult to adequately delineate what or who produced the images studied in this thesis, as what is presented is often dictated by interrelated factors. Artists, particularly commercial artists, are influenced by the movements of the time. In this manner, they cater to the audience who will purchase their product. In addition, the audience is influenced by what is produced; the images mitigate their experience when visualising events using the imagery as references. Furthermore, the landscape is itself in relationship with the technology available (where a photographer may stand, for instance), which comes into play when determining the type of image possible for capturing.

Chapter One deals with the images themselves, as an introduction to the corpus. It begins this inquiry by examining the different types of images concerning the Lachine rapids, and quickly considering how they have been used and interpreted, highlighting their role in mediating cultural experience. The images will be grouped in terms of similarity, using particular works as examples.

Chapter Two will focus on this tourist industry, which both supported and was influenced by the images such as those of the Lachine Rapids. The works were brought to

tourists by the same market forces, the same industrial growth that both allowed them to experience nature and which they desired to avoid. The theory of John Urry, with its emphasis on the “tourist gaze” and the act of visual consumption, is of particular importance to this aspect of the dissertation. Finally, the chapter considers the role of the audience—what these images would say to those who would look at them. The majority of these images are postcards, which means that the user would modify them upon purchase. Several of the postcards have been written upon. The words explain the images to those who read them, further dictating their interpretation. The images thus act as a forum for understanding in pair with textual narrative.

Chapter Three brings the discussion to the concept of “place-myth.” Place images helped areas such as the Lachine Rapids develop as a distinctive region, one that was easily recognisable when mass-produced. The images align with, conflict, or contradict the dominant ideas that emerge about the “essence” of a place. The relationship between the rapids and the city of Montreal is of particular interest. Although the rapids are separate from the city both in terms of distance and as foil to its industrial character, it is an intimate and integral part of the city’s image. Assessments within this chapter will explore the inherent national values and the larger political and economic process played out in relation to this “natural” setting.

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially though daydreaming fantasy, of experiences either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices such as film, literature, and magazines

which construct and reinforce the mass gaze of tourism. Promotional narratives promise adventure, personal enrichment and unique cultural experiences. Images of the Lachine Rapids, mostly photographs, tend to be modified beyond the capabilities of the camera, attempting to portray a sense of movement or drama. Chapter Four asks why such a representation was necessary. The chapter examines the concept of the “authentic” experience, the interrelationship between medium and an “accurate” portrayal of a trip through the rapids. Employing the works of Rosalind Williams, with emphasis on his studies of cinematographic simulations of reality, the chapter explores the concept of projecting one's self into a simulacrum, a representation of an experience. The abilities of technology, presented at the Worlds Fair in 1900 promoted inventions such as the panorama, which mimicked movement and allowed the visitor to project themselves into an ultimately theatrical creation. The chapter also focuses on the concept of memory, of relived experiences using the images as a stage for doing so.

Chapter One

The Lachine Rapids are a natural phenomenon—a series of large waves caused by water flowing over rock formations on its way to the sea. Yet, how the rapids are perceived changes according to who sees them. For early explorers, the rapids were a geographical impediment to further travel upriver. Although disputed, the naming of the rapids is attributed to Jacques Cartier, who was unable to pass the rapids during his effort to reach China in 1535.³ As a result, he named the rapids *La Chine* (China) after his elusive goal. For several centuries after Cartier, few managed to pass through the rapids, with numerous travelers perishing in the attempt. It was necessary to portage, carrying all possessions over land, in order to circumvent the dangerous waves. With the development of more capable technology such as steamboats, and the construction of a series of canals, the rapids were still a formidable but less fatal natural force. Tourist ships passed through, traveling from Kingston eastward; they became a source of entertainment. The corpus of works we are examining is visual evidence of the different perceptions held by those who have encountered the rapids.

To create an artwork necessitates a frame, a choosing of how and what to portray. These methods of representation are informed by the time period in which they are created, the technology that helps the artist to portray what they see, and what is considered important to communicate to an audience. The style of a work is often comparable to the artistic movements of that time period, echoed throughout the society that produced them. The medium in which the artist works creates limitations to what the

³ Various sources also attribute the name as given by René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle.

artist could represent.

In this chapter, we will consider examples of images concerning the rapids, selected from a collection of approximately 150⁴. The methods by which these images are portrayed include paintings, photographs, glass slides, postcards and assorted items such as spoons. However, the majority of images are postcard representations, centered around 1880-1910. For the most part, the objects were intended for purchase in the general public sphere. Otherwise, the images were published in newspapers and journals with textual accompaniment. We will pursue both a quantitative and qualitative examination of the images, looking at the progression of representation in chronological fashion. Ultimately, we will examine what is portrayed and how.

Maps

The earliest available images of the Lachine Rapids are in map form. Created for navigational purposes, they attempt a verisimilitude that would allow others to travel the same landscape effectively. As Samuel de Champlain states in his 1632 *Treatise on Seamanship and the Duty of a good seaman*: “[A seaman] should know how to make charts, so as to be able to recognize accurately the lie of the coast, the entrances to ports, the harbours, roadsteads, rocks, shoals, reefs, islands, anchorages, capes, tide currents, inlets, rivers and streams.”⁵ Champlain was an educated cartographer who carefully documented all areas where he traveled. His maps were paired with written reports documenting the trials and successes of his travel throughout New France. When

⁴ Please consult the list of figures for a representative survey of what is available.

⁵ Samuel Eliot Morison. *Samuel de Champlain: Father of New France*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972) 356

Champlain encountered the Lachine Rapids, he and his crew were traveling in order to map out territory for the fur trade, as well as find a direct route to China. The rapids, which he titled “The Grand Sault St. Louis,” brought a full stop to Champlain’s voyage up the St. Lawrence River in 1603.

Champlain’s journal recounts the death by drowning of his friend Louis, after whom the rapids are named. “My hair stood up on end to see such a horrible site,” wrote Champlain, “It was impossible to pass seven to eight falls of water that descend by degree and degree... and there was the most horrible place with a sound so loud that you would have thought that it was thunder.”⁶

His map, “Le Grand Sault St. Louis” (fig. 1), represents a “God’s eye” view of the rapids. The perfectly manicured landscape, with evenly laid out trees representing large areas of forest, contains very few figures save for a small number of “savages” in the woods shooting arrows at what is assumedly a white man on the other side of the St. Lawrence. Finally, two drowning figures may be seen at the base of the rapids—Champlain’s friend Louis and his aboriginal guide. The individuals are clearly marked, as are the geographical aspects. The figures are double the size of their surrounding forest, which is represented by evenly spaced single trees. This presentation follows European standards of the time.

The map is quite stylised, representing a landscape where proportion is disregarded in exchange for narrative. For Champlain, the geographic phenomenon was a formidable foe as well as part of the story of the New World, retold for those back in

⁶ Samuel de Champlain. “Journal très fidèle des observations faites lors des découvertes de la Nouvelle-France, 1613.” Éric Thierry (ed.). *Voyages en Nouvelle-France (1604-1611)*. (Cosmopole, Paris, 2004) 248.

Europe. Drawn in a formal vocabulary with which Europeans were familiar, the image acts as a visual accompaniment for a series of events as well as for navigation.

By comparison, other maps from later periods mostly omit the rapids. If they are included, they tend not to be labeled. Even in present time they are usually eliminated from the maps. It is possible that as technology allowed greater freedom of travel, the rapids lost importance as a prominent feature for most Montreal maps.

Paintings

Although only two examples have been found which directly concern the Lachine Rapids, these provide valuable insight as to how the medium of painting allowed considerable variance in presentation. Methods of formal arrangement modify in accordance with standards of the time, as well as focus of narrative. Henry Frances Ainslie's "Boat Descending the Lachine Rapids," painted in 1843, is based in topographical representation, and tells the story of military exploits. By comparison, Frances Anne Hopkin's "Shooting the Rapids," created circa 1879, is a more romantic retelling of Hopkin's personal travels through Canada.

Topographic studies grew out of 16th-century Europe's interest in specific views of places and their details. Precision was important, either for reasons of pride and record taking, for strategic purposes, or for evocation of poetic views. In Canada, the richest period for topographic views was the late 18th and 19th centuries. It was a time when the art of draftsmanship and painting in watercolour flourished, pursued by professionals and amateurs alike. Among the British soldiers and civilians stationed in Canada during this

period, many were topographic painters. Such paintings or drawings were sometimes produced as engravings and published, and in such a capacity helped to disseminate the imagery elsewhere in British North America. Yet, the works were far removed from the more serious concerns of living.

Henry Francis Ainslie's watercolour image, "Boat Descending the Lachine Rapids," (Figure 2) was part of a sketchbook entitled "Views in the Canada's." Ainslie was a British military officer stationed in Canada from 1838-1843 and depicted a variety of scenes such as the Rideau Canal, St. Lawrence River, and the Falls of Montmorency.

"Boat Descending the Lachine Rapids" portrays a vessel of the 83rd Regiment traveling on May 23, 1843. The soldiers sit in an orderly fashion; the boat is not in trouble. The Lachine Rapids do not seem dangerous in any way. In fact, the river seems to guide the boat into the rapids and helpfully maneuver it forward. The wind pushes the boat onward as the dark clouds decrease to the back of the painting. Standard formal techniques are employed. Diagonal linear elements in the water and sky create a sense of movement, while the horizontal lines provide further sense of depth—foreground, middle ground and background. Two vertical figures rest behind the boat, a church and a steamboat, providing a sense of depth and visual interest. The clouds allow for the sail to stand out prominently.

The rapids may be read as a positive depiction of the successful military endeavours of the 83rd regiment and the British colony. In a move which is historically significant, the 83rd regiment boats downriver from Upper Canada toward Montreal. Originally from Dublin, the regiment served in Canada from 1834 to 1843. In 1843,

growing tension garnered the increase of several different military organizations. The arrival in Montreal of the 83rd Regiment gave the army the men and the resources they needed to march on Saint-Eustache, the headquarters of the French militia. The battle was a success for the British, with the opposing forces subdued.⁷

The images are largely propagandistic. Although the narrative behind the image is unknown to majority of twentieth century viewers, one may assume that the connection between the regiment, the date, and the inclusion of the Lachine Rapids would be easily recognisable to contemporary viewers.

“Shooting the Rapids” by Frances Anne Hopkins, is a large oil painting that depicts the artist’s trip through the rapids in 1863 (Figure 3). In 1858, Frances Anne Hopkins (1838-1919) married an official of the Hudson Bay Company. She traveled North America by voyageur canoe along fur trading routes. While traveling, she sketched extensively, recording scenes and activities. She is perhaps best known for her large paintings of the voyageurs and their canoes, based on her sketches, which place herself in the seat of the canoe along with her husband and the paddlers.

Hopkins’ painting style has been described as “realism.” However, Hopkins has utilized the medium of paint in order to romanticize the artist’s experience in the retelling. In so doing, she inadvertently displays both aesthetic and socio-political prejudices of the time.

As this image is a visual story of her travels, it focuses on the scene and its figures. The painting clearly shows the eleven-meter Montreal canoe, as well as its

⁷ Papineau, Amédée. Journal d'un Fils de la Liberté réfugié aux États-Unis par la suite de l'insurrection canadienne, en 1837 Vol. II. (Montreal: Étincelle, 1978) 46-47

sixteen voyageur paddlers. The artist, her husband, and her friend are seated in the center, surrounded by Mohawk canoe guides from Kahnawake. The work is divided into approximately two-fifths sky, three-fifths water. Although the waves are on prominent display, most of the emphasis is placed on the boat and its passengers. The canoe is shown at the top of the rapids. It enters on a diagonal, coming toward the viewer. Such a positioning of the viewer would be impossible in real life, as it places the audience within the waves. However, as permitted by the medium of paint, it is an excellent vantage point for “watching” what is presented.

The use of a canoe for her tourist excursion, accompanied by a large number of hired aboriginal guides, belies a romantic perception of Canada and its people. It was not necessary to travel by canoe at this time, as indicated by the example of the wooden ship found in Ainslie’s earlier work. Therefore, the use of the canoe presents a voyage through the rapids that is somewhat nostalgic. In addition, the hiring of aboriginal guides is based upon notions of them as primitive individuals conversant with their natural surroundings. Such actions speak to the romantic undertones of touristic travel in Canada, as well as to aboriginal-settler relations.⁸

Guidebooks

The late 1800s saw a dramatic increase in the amount of tourists traveling Canada. This was due to a number of factors, including the growth of the middle class and their disposable income. As well, changes in transportation technology allowed for greater

⁸ For further information on Frances Anne Hopkins, please consult Janet E. Clark’s exhibition catalogue, published in 1990 with the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, entitled Frances Anne Hopkins, 1838-1919.

numbers of people to travel from cities to the countryside. The world became a little smaller as steam ships and trains grew in numbers and thus affordability. Consequently, tourism became a lucrative business for cities. Montreal began to publish tourist guides for purchase, which generally involved images of landmarks that were believed to represent Montreal.

Of approximately thirty Montreal tourist guides consulted,⁹ deriving from approximately 1880 to 1930, the Lachine Rapids are regularly included. There tends to be only one image of the rapids, often near the back of the book. The only other natural landmark is Mont Royal, which features prominently in all the tourist guides, generally with a multi-page panoramic view of the city. Other landmarks tend to be architectural. All the images are drawings, and are most likely based on photographs. The rapids are usually omitted after 1930, only appearing in more recent publications as advertisements for rafting. This coincides with the general popularity of trips through the rapids during this time.

Two images, taken from guidebooks, adequately represent this grouping. They are typical of the images used to represent ships traveling through the rapids, yet are distinctive as they are coupled with aboriginal steamship captain Jean Baptiste Rice (“Big John”). Figure 4, published in *New Album of Montreal Views* in 1884, is of the steamship *Corinthian* traversing the rapids. The viewpoint places the drawings in the Lachine area, on the island of Montreal. In the foreground, a rock is included which parallels the diagonal layout of the *Corinthian*. This indicates that the drawing was most likely done from shore. The rapids are once again relatively calm-- the only indication of any

⁹ Consult bibliography for list of guidebooks that were found to contain images of the Lachine Rapids.

possible danger is seen with the unusual angle of the boat itself. The flags shown include one of the Richelieu and Ontario Company, the managers of the steamship line. A steamship and a sailboat may be seen in the background.

The second set of drawings (Fig. 5) is of the Spartan, paired once again with Jean Baptiste. Archivists state the image is derived from the year 1890, and was published in a later version of the *New Album of Montreal Views*. The images are remarkably similar in layout, yet there are notable differences. In Figure 4, one will see two islands, with no city line behind them. In Figure 5, the islands are considerably larger and a city line has been included. The rocks are the same, which provide a touchstone for the viewer to recognize the similarities and differences. Figure 5 is therefore based on Figure 4, but has been modified. I argue this point simply to highlight the imaginary “recreation” of the landscape for aesthetic purposes. From my visits to the Lachine Rapids, I have noted the skyline and islands as portrayed in the images do not match up. Although changes have taken place in the topography of the rapids, whether natural or manmade, the juxtaposition of city line and islands are not possible and are largely for visual effect. The introduction of a Montreal skyline may be to provide a greater sense of location and contrast for viewers of the images.

The river pilots who navigated the Lachine Rapids were often Mohawks from Kahnawake (also known as Caughnawaga). In fact, for a time insurance companies requested that an aboriginal captain all boats in order to travel the rapids. The changeover would occur several miles upriver. As *The Canadian Handbook and Tourist's Guide*, published in 1867, describes:

The steamer will lie in opposite Caughnawaga for two or three minutes, waiting for an Indian pilot to come on board. As great nerve and force and precision are required in piloting, few but Indians can be had willing to undertake the perilous task, which, however, is to them a matter of every day occurrence; use is second nature, and so with them; the hawk's-eye glance of the pilot, when at his post, and the stern determination on his features, are a picture that want the pen of a Cooper to describe them.”¹⁰

What is included in the image become symbols. A viewer may look at an image and recognize the symbols as part of a familiar vocabulary. In the first image (Fig 6), created approximately 1868, Baptiste sports typically western wear. A simple cap and vest complete his outfit. However, in the second image (Fig. 7), made in 1890, Baptiste has donned a feather headdress—decidedly more token in its representation. Although not certain as to why this was done, it is certainly quite palatable to a romantic and nostalgic tourist sensibility. There is a nostalgic representation of aboriginals, leaning on romantic ideals of the “noble savage” in tune with nature.

The “Big John” Series

On January 1, 1878 thirty-seven year old aboriginal pilot Big John Canadian steered a thirty-foot wooden boat through the Lachine Rapids. He carried two passengers, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Bond of the Prince of Wales Rifles and G. L. Holm, an artist for *Frank Leslie's Weekly*, a strongly patriotic New York illustrated magazine. Big John Canadian would shoot the Lachine Rapids in a 30-foot long rowboat on New Years Day. For several years, up to 200,000 people lined the north shore of the river to watch him do so.

¹⁰ Small, H. Beaumont. The Canadian Handbook and Tourist's Guide: Giving a Description of Canadian Lake and River Scenery and Places of Historical Interest with the Best Spots for Fishing and Shooting. (Montreal: M. Longmore and Co., 1867) 73

In the image (Figure 8), Big John wears similar “Western” dress to the photograph of Jean Baptiste. Two rowers sit in the front, with their backs to the viewer. The other two passengers, the journalist and Lieutenant Colonel, are obviously concerned for their well being as they tensely observe the passage of the boat through the rapids. Nonetheless, they show comfort and respect for the pilot’s abilities. Big John himself stands comfortably at the back of the canoe. He is the tallest figure, accented by the severe angle of the canoe as it descends the rapids.

The images of this trip were published in several locations. Often entitled “Big John and party shooting Lachine Rapids,” they were sold as a postcard series, and published in public forums such as the *Canadian Illustrated News*. Presently, one may see it at the Lachine site itself on tourist placards.

The work is the result of several images pasted together and finally photographed as one, resulting in what is called a composite. The photograph of the boat and occupants was taken in the yard behind William Notman's studio, with the boat cocked up on a sawhorse. Notman's son sat in for the journalist, who had returned to New York. The waves were then painted in by one of the many trained artists that Notman employed in his studio. It is a mixture of technology and geography that does not permit such an image to be created without several layers of modification. The camera was unable to take photographs of fast-moving objects, where an extended exposure was required. As well, the inability to “zoom in” would not allow an image that would satisfactorily capture the event for the eventual audience.

William Notman

William Notman was a prominent business photographer in Montreal, whose career spanned from approximately 1860 to his death in 1891 at which his sons assumed point the business. Over his career, Notman built up the largest photographic franchise in North America, establishing seven studios in Canada and expanding into the northeastern United States. For the purposes of this thesis, Notman's images of the Lachine Rapids trace the development of the photographic process over time. It is the most complete collection of such imagery by a single artist. However, at around fifty in number, the images comprise a very small fraction of the thousands of photographs produced by Notman and his sons. Of this larger collection, the majority are single portraits and group photos, his main sources of income. Employing them for journals such as *Canadian Illustrated News*, Notman also created documentary images, photographing important events such as the building of the Victoria Bridge and the arrival of the Great Eastern to Montreal. There is a small collection of composites in his catalogue, such as group photos and action images.¹¹

The Lachine Rapids photographs were commissioned and distributed by shipping companies, with the majority in postcard form. However, they are also found in a variety of media, including newsprint, stereoscopic images, and glass slides. The collection may be divided into two distinct groups: composite images and non-composites. Composites are several distinct images pasted together and then photographed to create a final image.

¹¹ There are number of publications on William Notman one may read in order to flesh out the information provided here. These include Roger Hall's "The world of William Notman: the nineteenth century through a master lens" (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993) and several books published by Stanley Triggs with the McCord Museum.

Often, elements such as waves were painted before the final photograph. The group defined as non-composites refers to photographs that do not undergo this process.

Subject matter is quite different for each group of Lachine Rapids images. The composites tend to be recycled representations, using the same image repeatedly to represent different boats. The other photographs are varied in that each image is of a different ship and is labeled as such.

When one speaks of standards that an audience expects, one may make a strong assumption that William Notman was informed of such preferences. The images Notman produced were no doubt based on what would sell, whether in newsprint or purchased by individuals. Notman's photography shows a definite adherence to standards of marine visual representation. These methods of laying out the images are a mixture of technology, aesthetics, and pure practicality. In order to include the mast of a ship in a portrait, the proportion of ocean and sky is generally one-fifths and four-fifths respectively. Without mast, as with steamships, the boats tend to be placed directly in the center of the image. The result is a half and half split of sky and sea as horizontal elements.¹²

In terms of perspective, the boat tends to be viewed either directly from the side or at a forty-five degree angle with the viewer facing the bow of the vessel looking toward

¹² These statements are based on personal observation. I would recommend the reader consult the following books for points of reference: David Cordingly's Marine Painting in England, 1700-1900. (New York: Crown Publishers) 1974; William Gaunt. Marine Painting : An Historical Survey. (New York: Viking Press) 1975.

the stern. These angles tend to remain constant whether the boat is the main focus or is placed as part of a larger scene.

Often, boats in the foreground or background will be used to provide a sense of depth. This may occur through repetition, with the position of the boats mimicked. Other methods of visual accent occur in features such as landscape. Clouds are often integral to highlighting the shape of the boats through contrast, as is the colouration in the water. These natural features are at the same time effective in providing a sense of movement, and in turn a sense of narrative. They give a feeling of atmosphere, of the predicted outcome of battles, or of the character of a particular ship.

The ability to modify the elements of a work for aesthetic purposes was a quality of marine paintings or drawings. With photographs, it was difficult to provide adequate visual interest. Although William Notman kept up-to-date, contemporary camera technology did not allow for action photography. Cameras required a tripod, and thus a sturdy surface on which to work. The Lachine images are mostly taken from land, usually from the same location. Some images are taken from the ship, of the rapids. In order to create a sense of movement, rather than the quite staid images of the ships that technology could produce at the time, one either had to accept a blurred image or do as Notman did and employ the composite photograph.

In 1878, Notman Studios made a composite photograph of the Corsican traveling through the Lachine Rapids (Figure 9). Although the ship itself is from an actual photograph, all other aspects such as the waves are painted. Artists in Notman's studio most likely did this. According to research, the image appears several times as the

Corsican in several different media: a 1876 version as a stereo view, 1891 as a photograph, around 1902 as a glass lantern slide, and in 1904 as a postcard. Each has different waves and cloud formations, becoming more defined over time. The colouration also modifies, beginning with the two-toned stereoscopic image, moving to a two-tone but considerably more dramatic contrast in the photographs, to the postcard that is fully colourised. A rock formation in the foreground confirms this consistency of landscape. The ship itself, when examined closely has the same passengers in each image.

In 1911, the same boat was placed in a similar image but labeled as “The Rapids King” (Figure 10). A glaring discrepancy lies in the fact that the Rapids King was not a paddlewheel ship; the boat in the image is the Corsican. Differences lay in the painted aspects--the waves are larger and fuller, as well as the smoke emerging from the stacks.

Notably, the boat is used once again. This time it is labeled as “The Magnet.” Once again, the Magnet was not at all similar, as it had a walking beam engine. The shipping company, Richelieu and Ontario, were notorious for recycling their images at the detriment of factual representation. This may have been for purpose of cost-efficiency, but also shows an assumption on the company’s part that people would purchase these misrepresentations.

If one compares the postcard images that have just been shown, with the guidebooks images (both drawings) examined earlier, there is a striking similarity in terms of layout. The placement of the rock in the lower right corner, the islands in the background, the angle of the boat itself and the inclusion of a small vessel on the horizon—all are the same.

Later photographs are not composites, and bring in a different level of capability for the image. The boat is placed in the center of the image, half sky and half water. This is dictated by distance permitted by placement of the camera; to give the usual one-fifths water four-fifths sky layout would create too much sky for the size of the boat, which is farther away than in paintings or composites. The camera tends to take the photograph as a three-quarter view of the ship of the port side of the boat. Due to the ability or, rather, lack of ability of the camera, the clouds are generally without texture. Rocks in the front tend to provide a sense of foreground, with the ship as middle ground. A single tree on an island, regularly found in the photos, creates a sense of background and provides a regular touchstone for the researcher to realise the regularity of Notman's position when taking a photograph.

The first image (Figure 11) to be used as an example is that of the Rapids King, a large steamship. The image dates from 1901. The photographer has captured the vessel as it travels down through the rapids, giving us a forty-five degree angle view of the ship's port side. The image is half water and half sky, with a thin line of horizon punctuated by a single tree and some land. The ship is placed slightly back of center, with waves coming in from the left hand side. This provides a sense of movement into the waves. One may also notice that the clouds are not well defined, as in other images.

The second image (Figure 12) is of the S.S. Brockville, taken in 1906. It is also a steamship, and contains the same visual elements as the prior image save for a slight wall of stone in the water. This may provide a more horizontal series of levels for the eye.

There is very little emphasis on the rapids, however. Instead, the inclusion of a stone element draws more attention to the ship itself.

Household Items

Illustrations of the Lachine Rapids were incorporated with utilitarian objects commonly found in the household. These included cups, candlestick holders, plates, and souvenir spoons. Figure 13a presents an image of the Lachine Rapids as embossed in the bowl of a spoon. A steamer is shown traveling through the rapids. A rock is placed in the foreground. At the bottom, the large embossed text reads “LACHINE RAPIDS.” At the top of the handle is an image of the Notre Dame Cathedral, itself embossed with the text “Notre Dame” (Figure 13b). Other details include windmills and flowers—presumably included for decoration.

The image is similar to the majority of works discussed in this thesis, particularly the composites and painted or drawn works. Much like those images, attention has been given to portraying the waves, boat, and steam. The horizontal levels are four-fifths water and one-fifth sky. The ship is placed at a slight angle, with its steam heading towards the stern to indicate forward movement. The waves appear quite large, equivalent in size to the ship’s hull. This is to highlight the important natural characteristics of the location, and may also serve to emphasise that the boat is a steam ship.

The function of these household objects has not been completely eliminated by its ornamentation, but has been substantially reduced. As decorative items, they were not intended to be placed in the family silver chest or to be relegated to the kitchen. Often,

the objects were placed on display as part of a collection, and took on a new function as an *aide de memoire*, or conversation piece.¹³

By comparing the catalogue of objects available to us, we see a development of presentation that is dictated by purpose, technology, and societal standards. The constructed narratives of the images allow a glimpse into the society that produced them, both employing and modifying the medium portrays the trip through the rapids. In addition, the images provide insight into socio-political issues such as French-English and Aboriginal-Settler relations.

¹³ George Basalla. "Transformed Utilitarian Objects." Winterthur Portfolio, Vol. 17, No. 4, (Winter, 1982): 183.

Chapter 2

The Tourist Gaze: I came, I saw, I sent a postcard

If one takes a walk on a sunny, summer afternoon along the Lachine Rapids, what will one see? The weekend fisherman, perched on rocks or shoals along the waters edge, is very aware of the water. Its eddies and pools are where his elusive prey dwells. He sees the rapids as a barrier which he ‘reads’ as he tries to catch his evening meal. Others around you may appear oblivious to the rapids as they concentrate their attentions on their companions with whom they are sharing a meal or simply time together. The rapids for them are a source of soothing white noise, although the fast-moving waves are located within arms reach and without barrier. Some of the visitors may be people out for a walk enjoying the gentle breeze and the panoramic view across the Saint Lawrence River. The view and roar of the rapids provides a visual and aural backdrop to a pleasant stroll in a beautiful place of nature, an oasis in a civilized world.

This is in sharp contrast to the perception that the early explorers and settlers of Montreal had when they saw the rapids. The waves were an obstacle to progress both physically and economically. Nature and specifically the rapids represented something wild, something to be feared, something that needed to be tamed and domesticated.

Great efforts were made to “tame” the rapids. Canal systems were built to circumvent its dangerous waves. Powerful steamships, instead of sail ships and canoes, were employed as sturdier and safer methods of travel. In time, the rapids came to be

considered a charming natural phenomenon, a tourist attraction. Tourist ships would depart daily from Montreal, traveling up the canals and then running the rapids to return, as one ad stated “just in time, and with a good appetite, for breakfast.”¹⁴ Other vessels traversed the rapids as part of their route downstream, despite the option of using canals, as a form of entertainment to their passengers. The rapids, once a formidable barrier to river traffic, became the equivalent of a natural roller coaster ride— dangerous but amusingly so.

In this chapter, we will investigate why such a drastic transformation occurred in how individuals viewed the Lachine Rapids. To answer this, we will place the images of the Lachine Rapids within a larger social and economic context. We will further trace the history of tourism and technology, focusing on the twin development of these movements from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries.

In particular, we will examine the relationships of tourist and landscape. Standing behind individual perceptions of the Lachine Rapids are more systematic discourses of landscape, scenery and sight, which have authorized and legitimated particular activities and ways of seeing.

Often, these mass-produced images were methods of accumulating public interest and therefore revenue. Through the production of postcards depicting the landscapes and monuments of a progressive nation, picturesque yet definitely modern, governments and railroad companies sought to renovate the rustic, unsophisticated image of Canada.

¹⁴ Quote is from McCord website, associated with most of the Lachine Rapids images found in the online collection

Parallel to the creation of a picturesque cityscape in Canada, postcard manufacturers chose to publish photographic postcards that represented another side of the progressive nation—a romantic portrayal of its natural assets. However, the images conformed to a manner of representation that the intended audience would have considered attractive.

We will consider why certain aspects of the nature experience are not included or are de-emphasized. Omission is a part of portrayal. Whether creating or simply viewing an object, the “author” creates a frame. They focus on and/or disregard certain aspects. What is left out, what informs those choices, gives the “reader” insight into the social and aesthetic guidelines in which the individuals existed.

Such discourses and their related place myths are not unchanging. Seeing, appreciating and attaching a societal value to nature is something that is learned. It is socially constructed, a development of desire for particular kinds of landscape.¹⁵ Places and people are made and reinvented as tourist objects, often involving active participation by the inhabitants as a promotion of palatable sites/sights to be viewed. When visitors seek an “authentic” experience, their conception of authenticity is based upon a relationship between the visual experience and their given historical period; environments will be visibly consumed if they appear consistent with the constructs of that time. With this knowledge in mind, historians must consider the consumption of the images as inseparable from the time period from which they derive. We must ask, “What time is this object?” or rather, “What time is this environment?”¹⁶

¹⁵ John Urry. *Consuming Places*, (London: Routledge, 1995) 213

¹⁶ *ibid*, 189

We will consider the act of framing; a construction of what visitors to touristic locations were supposed or to perhaps even desired to “see.” Concepts, embedded within the objects, were sold and purchased. Placing the images into the era from which they are derived helps us to answer questions as to why they were created.

Transportation and Tourism

To be a tourist in present day, to look on landscapes with interest and curiosity, has become a right from which few in the “West” are formally excluded. However, the mass movement of tourism has only been in play since the mid 1800s. Before this time period, the ability to travel “afar,” particularly for pleasure, was available to a small elite and was considered a mark of status. It would not have occurred to most people to travel to the countryside for “leisure.”

Between 1780 and 1830, the western world changed remarkably. The relentless force of steam powered the Industrial Revolution, and became so widely used that the period was heralded “The Age of Steam.” Before the 1700s, most factories depended on wind, water or muscle to operate. Steam power generated invention in many areas; ships, railroads, mills and mines, to name a few. It allowed for greater methods of transportation, as trains and ships made forays into areas of the world that were previously expensive and difficult to reach. Steam-powered vehicles remained the prominent mode of transportation until about 1940, at which time the steam locomotive became mostly obsolete.

Before the mid 1800s, the most common aim of travel to particular destinations was for trade purposes, for acts of war, or as pilgrimages to holy sites. Greater ease of movement was provided for the moneyed folk. From approximately 1660 until the arrival of mass rail transit in the 1820s, The Grand Tour developed as an educational rite of passage for young British upper-class men, with stops to several of Europe's major cities. Similar trips were made by the wealthy of other Northern European nations. The primary value of these 'tours' lay in the exposure both to the cultural artefacts of antiquity and the Renaissance and to the aristocratic and fashionable society of the European continent.¹⁷

With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, populations migrated from farms to cities as the latter became places of opportunity and personal development in ways that had never been possible in the previously closed and socially static rural society. This provided an escape from the poverty trap; the cycle of low income, low consumption, low demand and low production found in agrarian society. The subsequent rise of skilled professionals and merchants yielded a new, large middle class endowed with a high degree of literacy, economic power, political influence and capital.

The completion of long tracks of railroads in the United States, Canada, and much of Western Europe, previously inaccessible places were suddenly in reach, and mass travel became a reality. By the later nineteenth century the middle class was becoming increasingly mobile, traveling not just to nearby spa towns or seaside resorts, but also to

¹⁷ Michael G. Brennan (ed.) The origins of the Grand Tour : the travels of Robert Montagu, Lord Mandeville (1649-1654), William Hammond (1655-1658), Banaster Maynard (1660-1663), (London : Hakluyt Society, 2004) 4

distant countries. Tourism became an integration of transportation, accommodation, and entertainment.¹⁸

In Canada, convenient and cost-effective methods of travel rapidly developed. Previously, the ascent of the St. Lawrence had been an epic of navigation. Travelers employed specially constructed boats and frequent portages. The journey was often slow and hazardous.

The first method of transportation used to haul large groups of travelers was the “bateau,” followed by the Durham Boat in the early 1800s. This was an open flat-bottomed craft about 40 feet long and 6 to 8 feet wide, and was usually built from pine boards. Depending on conditions, the vessel was propelled using oars, setting poles, grappling irons, and a lugsail or two. In such crude vessels thousands of immigrants, mostly from Western Europe, laboriously worked their way up the St. Lawrence. At the head of the Lachine Rapids the passengers took to smaller boats, which were aided by sails through Lake St. Louis. There was a small lock at the Cascades, but if traffic was congested the boats would be dragged along the shore, while the immigrants aided in the towing.¹⁹

The opening up of the Western frontiers would have been difficult without steamboats, which were small, light, fast and inexpensive. The “Steam Revolution” in

¹⁸ John Urry and Mimi Sheller (eds.). Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 175

¹⁹ Edwin Clarence Guillet. “Chapter 17: Ascending the St. Lawrence.” The Great Migration: The Atlantic Crossing by Sailing Ship since 1770, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963) 164

North America began on the Hudson River in the spring of 1807. Two years later prominent businessman John Molson and his partners launched the *Accommodation*, introducing steam to Montreal industry.²⁰ The upstream run from Quebec City was difficult for sailing vessels but ready-made for steamboats. Over 100 steamboats were launched between 1809 and 1837.

Demand for steamboat engines was on the increase. Before 1838, independent foundries specializing in marine engines helped define the nature of the “Steam Revolution” in the Canadas, with a definite bias toward local engine builders.²¹ As a result, the Montreal foundries dominated the market between Quebec and Niagara before 1830.²²

As the 1830s dawned, emigration to Canada boomed, and profits for the steamers' owners swelled. Traffic was dominated by Molson's St. Lawrence Steamboat Co. and, until the two companies merged in 1833, the Torrance family's Montreal Tow Boat Co. Those able to afford traveling on many of the steamers (rather than on barges towed behind) found comfortable, and often luxurious, quarters.²³

The Richelieu and Ontario Company was one of the first companies to institute a steamboat passenger service, operating ships on the St. Lawrence River for both general commerce as well as travel purposes. The company began in 1845 when its parent, La

²⁰ John Molson also introduced the first railway in Canada, built in 1832. For more information, read Shirley E. Woods, Jr. *The Molson Saga: 1763-1983*. (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1983)

²¹ To some degree, this may have been the product of the tariff on finished iron products, which made British engines far too costly.

²² Walter Lewis. "The First Generation of Marine Engines in Central Canadian Steamers, 1809-1837," *The Northern Mariner*. Apr 1997: 15

²³ John Kalbfleisch, "The cruel destiny of the John Bull steamboat" *The Gazette* [Montreal] 11 Sept. 2005: A16

Compagnie du Richelieu introduced a steamboat service on the Richelieu River in Quebec. Thirty years later, following the merger of the Quebec company with the Canadian Steam Navigation Co., Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Co. implemented passenger service from Toronto to Montreal. This route became so popular that the company was forced to add two large passenger boats to the fleet.

In 1913, the R. and O. and several other shipping companies amalgamated under the name Canada Steamship Lines. This new company continued passenger boat service throughout the Great Lakes as well as in Quebec, where the company also plied the tourist trade with the popular *Manoir Richelieu* and *Hotel Tadoussac*.²⁴

The relative ease and convenience of travel by steam attracted growing support. However, as with any new technology, there was still some trepidation. With reports of explosions of high-pressure boilers on the Mississippi scattered through the newspapers, public opinion in the Canadas was to be somewhat fearful of the expansive use of steam. One correspondent of the *Montreal Gazette* wrote: "After all the improvements which (were) promised are made, the fact will still remain, that the use of steam of a high degree of tension is, and must ever be dangerous...for the strength of all materials used in the construction of boilers, put them in whatever form you please, is limited, and no limit has been found to the expansive power of steam...fewer persons are in the vicinity of the boiler and those are not liable to be drowned after being scalded..."²⁵ Another letter to the

²⁴ Filey, Mike. "End of the Fleet," *Toronto Sun*. 07 Aug, 2005.

²⁵ "A Friend to Genuine Improvement" *Montreal Gazette*. Apr. 1832.

editor claimed: "I should as willingly embark in a steamboat carrying two or three barrels of gunpowder as one propelled by a high pressure engine...."²⁶

To encourage individuals to think otherwise, promotional images sought to portray travel as safe and yet exciting. They took the form of lithographs, postcards, and photographs, such as those found in the collection of available Lachine Rapids imagery. These images were readily available to a broad societal spectrum and ubiquitous in distribution. They were published in journals and mass-produced inexpensively for purchase, and were largely distributed by shipping companies such as Richelieu and Ontario Co, as part of an initiative to convince upper and middle class individuals to consume the region's natural and cultural wonders.

Photographs, postcards, lithographs, and stereoscopic works were among the varieties of formats available. In particular, both government and the railroad companies used the postcard as a tool for the marketing and promotion of a new sense of Canada, recognising the potential of the new media to communicate identity and place. As Caroline Scheffer states in her thesis on architectural postcards: "as part of a system of signification... (the) postcard form contributed to the marketing of "essential" features intended to create abroad positive national, regional or urban personae."²⁷

Tourist advertising is an integral part of the packaging and selling of "pseudo events," depicting caricatures of real events to fit the provincial expectations of tourists,

²⁶ "Caution" *Canadian Courant*, 15 June 1832.

²⁷ Carole Scheffer. *Architectural Postcards and the Conception of Place: Mediating Cultural Experience*. Thesis (PhD)-- Concordia University, May 1999: 131

substituting standardized images for authentic experiences.²⁸ As consumer items for tourists, correspondents and collectors, images of the rapids would have been widely available in the city. Postcards, for example, would have been obtainable in the Grand Trunk Railway's Bonaventure Station as well stations on major lines connecting to the city.²⁹ In addition, rapids images would have been sold in photographic shops such as Notman's, as a method of drawing people in to support Notman's main source of income—portrait photography.³⁰ Beyond the city, the images were published in journals, newspapers, tourist guides, and books.

Although ultimately for corporate benefit, the success of the images lay in their romantic portrayal of Canada's natural landmarks. Postcards were tools for the fabrication of a commercial and ideological image, and visual objects such as those of the Lachine Rapids aptly illustrate this purposeful engineering of the image. In these images, a trip through the rapids is distilled into a simple image of a steamship safely traveling through waves, both as an attraction for visitors to Montreal and Canada, and as a magnificent symbol of technological advancement.

²⁸ Daniel J Boorstin. The image : a guide to pseudo-events in America. (New York : Harper & Row, 1964, c1961) 5.

²⁹ Postcards were first introduced in Austria in 1869. They were presented as an inexpensive alternative to stamped and sealed letters. Quickly adopted by postal agencies across Europe, the postcard became extremely popular as a means of communication. In Canada, the Federal Post first published postcards in 1871. Six years later, the Canadian government relinquished its monopoly and private printing businesses began to produce the cards. The most popular images were of cityscapes and "characteristic" architecture. Souvenir postcards quickly became much more than a simple means of communication, rather it was the imagery that people were interested in sending, receiving, exchanging and collecting. This movement ensured that postcards largely mediated popular understanding of foreign places during the late 19th and 20th centuries (see Carole Scheffer's PhD thesis for further information)

³⁰ Jacques Poitras. La carte postale Québécoise, une aventure photographique (Laprairie: Editions Broquet Inc, 1990), 44-45; Roger Hall, Gordon Dodds, Stanley Triggs; foreword by Robert MacNeil. The world of William Notman : the nineteenth century through a master lens. (Toronto : McClelland & Stewart, c 1993)

The development of mass-produced imagery therefore brought with it series of palatably picturesque tourist landscape representations. However, the Lachine Rapids were a very small portion of what was available in terms of Canadian landscape imagery. One of the most popular sites to visit, as well as to portray, was Niagara Falls. Much like the Lachine Rapids, the Niagara Falls were a substantial blockade to water travel. Despite (and maybe even because of) this fact, the location was thoroughly palatable to picturesque standards. The Falls became a regular place of pilgrimage for picturesque tourists who wished to experience the sublimity of a natural phenomenon that, although existing in harmony with man, could not be overcome.

If one compares the manner of representation for both these sites, one will recognise patent similarities. This is evident with examples from each medium. Signs of civilisation are rarely marked, the only indication of technology being the ubiquitous steamship that powers through. Further, the people are small and indistinctive, if present at all.

Published in 1899 by J. Beers and Co., Figure 14 shows both the American and Canadian Falls from the American side. The majority of the photograph is taken up by the expanse of the waterscape, with the falls located at the top half of the image. In the bottom half one may view the launching site for the "Maid of the Mist," as well as the ship herself. The clouds above mimic the mist rising from the American falls, which is overpoweringly large in comparison to the slight amount of steam emitted from the ship as it heads toward the falls. There are no passengers in view.

In Figure 15, dated 1906 and entitled “General View, Niagara Falls,” a colourised postcard shows the Falls from a similar angle as the previous image. A series of horizontal levels are provided for the eye. At the base, the “Maid of the Mist” is docked at the American port, loading passengers. Further up, the other “Maid of the Mist” arrives from the voyage to the tourist attraction, and has been artificially darkened to draw attention to its presence. The light pastel colours of the Falls, as well as the sky, create for the viewer a scenic backdrop for the boat.

The final image (Figure 16) for comparison, taken by Notman about 1860, is a photograph from a park at the top of the American falls looking out to both falls. Notman has divided the image into halves, placing the falls and park in the bottom half of the photograph. Once again there are no people to be found; the emphasis upon the scene itself. Finally, the waves appear to have been painted by hand,

These are all notably similar to the Lachine Rapids images, as discussed in the previous chapter. By highlighting the more picturesque aspects of the scenery, the viewer is provided a pleasant visual touchstone. Little to no emphasis is placed upon human figures. The presence of people is implied by including technology such as ships, which move without difficulty through the landscape scene. Natural features such as clouds and waves become the primary focus, framed or hand-painted to accentuate pleasing aesthetic relationships between them. These circumstances present the dramatic convention of framing, which were arguably influenced by picturesque standards of representation as well as changes in imaging technology.

The Picturesque Vantage

At the center of the marketing of mass-produced images lays the transformation of land into landscape, a transformation recorded in detail in the prevailing discourses of photographic practice. Beginning in the 1880s, important trade journals like *Anthony's* or the *Philadelphia Photographer* made ever-increasing references to the word *scenery*, eventually seeming to supplant *nature* with this inherently visual term.³¹

Visual consumption is a large part of construction, building a physical environment as a "landscape" not primarily for production but embellished for aesthetic appropriation. As urban centers flourished and industry continued to permeate, the "leisure" movement into the areas around the cities became rampant. The tourists went out not only to be in the landscape, but also to see it. With them, the individuals brought "visual baggage," previous points of reference that were rooted in the time period from which the individual derived, the visual encyclopedia with which they have become accustomed.³² The eye turned to nature, but this was the eye of the visitor not the scientific enquirer. It was the eye that sought out places partly in term of myth and image. It established a discursive structure for seeing and experiencing nature that was then taken as appropriate for reading and experiencing many other landscapes.³³

As tourists were exposed to other landscapes, so their visual vocabulary expanded. A cosmopolitanism of visual consumption developed as more individuals,

³¹ Steven Hoelscher. "The Photographic Construction of Tourist Space in Victorian America." *Geographical Review* 88. No.4 (Oct., 1998): 558.

³² John Urry. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. (London, Newbury Park, and New Delhi: SAGE Publishers, 1990) 174

³³ *ibid*, 196

now able to travel to distant and exotic places, returned with souvenirs of their voyages. Now, instead of seeing locales only by way of paintings or lithographs, the tourist was able to physically inhabit foreign locations.

The tourist gaze became more of an act of signposting, creating reference points in time and space. Souvenirs became markers that identified and prioritized things and places that were worthy of their gaze.³⁴ The wistful gaze at the “authentic” became a generic principle of much travel experience.

According to Buzard, the concept of a truly fulfilling tourist experience has several motifs—*stillness*, which applies to a profoundly satisfying lack of interruption or distraction in the traveler’s contact with scenes bearing a particular historical or emotional charge; *the dreamlike*, which refers to situations felt to be so extremely foreign to modern daily life that they seem unreal; and *saturation*, which names the quality some sites appear to possess of being so drenched in significance that everything is full of meaning or power.³⁵ Embracing all these motifs is *the picturesque*, which by the 1820s had worked its way beyond landscape studies of the eighteenth century and into the wider public world. To most nineteenth-century travelers, the most satisfying places conformed to this particular aesthetic approach.

The picturesque is an aesthetic ideal first introduced by William Gilpin in *Observations of the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to*

³⁴ *ibid*, 139

³⁵ James Buzard. "A Continent of Pictures: Reflections on The 'Europe' Of Nineteenth-Century Tourists." *PMLA* Vol. 108.No. 1. (Jan., 1993): 32.

Picturesque Beauty; made in the Summer of the Year 1770. The publication was a practical instruction for England's leisured travelers, urging them to examine "the face of a country by the rules of picturesque beauty." William Gilpin's *Essay on Prints* defined picturesque as "... a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture."³⁶

Rooted in the eighteenth century, and based in the works of Gilpin, the picturesque enjoined travelers to seek "amusement" in the natural landscape.³⁷ Gilpin's work was a direct challenge to the ideology of the well-established Grand Tour, showing how exploration of rural Britain could compete with classically oriented tours of the Continent. He promoted the "amused eye" of the picturesque tourist to look upon nature and to those places that had previously repelled visitors—the countryside and its poor (although viewed at a safe distance and highly romanticized). Picturesque tourists in particular flocked to the Lake District, made popular by poets such as Wordsworth. The idea of purely scenic pleasure touring began to take hold.

Individuals were also encouraged to sketch their surroundings. The use of a Claude Glass was prevalent, a tinted portable mirror that one drew from, using the darkened reflection as more pleasing representation of the nature that surrounded one.³⁸ To create a picturesque image was to yield not only an object that "looked like" a

³⁶ William Gilpin. *Essay on Prints* (5th edition) (London: A. Strathan, 1802) xii.

³⁷ Judith Adler. "Travel as Performed Art." *The American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 94.No. 6. (May, 1989): 1366.

³⁸ James Buzard. "A Continent of Pictures: Reflections on The 'Europe' Of Nineteenth Century Tourists." *PMLA* Vol. 108.No. 1. (Jan., 1993): 44.

painting but a *scene*, balanced and complete. For picturesque tourists, the whole they earnestly sought relied on some measure of strategic omission. Everyday features of the visited place either fell clean away from the view or arranged themselves as part of the spectacle. For the founders of the tradition, picturesque seeing amounted to an art of vision, capable of correcting and completing what the landscape held forth.

Purportedly “authentic,” picturesque travel ignored non-aestheticised people, places and things. It chose instead to view the people as graceful ornaments-- harmonious little figures in the middle distance. It viewed, and in a sense, captured places that it deemed unpolluted, inevitably omitting what it deemed the more unpleasant aspects, such as cityscapes, that were inconsistent with this gaze.

The promise of time travel became standard fare in commercial tourism, and fell wholly in line with the concept of the picturesque. Many tourist destinations were featured as surviving remnants of an earlier, or even “timeless,” way of life.³⁹ Travel landscapes, once left behind and frozen in memory, were more suitable for idylls than were the spaces in which daily business occurred. The Lachine rapids were treated as highly idyllic, providing in essence a trip backwards in time provided by shining examples of modern transport technology.

Most notably, the romanticisation of the rapids occurred by highlighting both the contentious history of traveling through the rapids and a nostalgic representation of aboriginals. In the minds of the passengers, the tradition of having an “Indian” pilot the

³⁹ Adler, Judith. "Travel as Performed Art." The American Journal of Sociology Vol. 94.No. 6. (May, 1989): 1375.

boats was essential for safety. Captain Joseph Ouellette, who captained the boat through the rapids in the early 1900s, recalls the events that occurred:

“As it was the tradition publicly encouraged by the steamship company's (sic) that only Indians could safely pilot ships through the rapids, the steamers would still stop at Caughnawaga where a tall Indian in full regalia, called John Nine, so called because he had only nine fingers, would step aboard from the canoe and proceed right up to the pilot house where he took his place at the wheel, although he knew nothing about the rapids. This ceremony fully reassured the thrilled and excited passengers. After going through the rapids John Nine would come down among the passengers and would sell his picture for \$1.00. That was the payoff.”⁴⁰

Although there were several aboriginal captains who were familiar with the rapids, such as “Big John Canadian,” what is most important is the ideal of the aboriginal captain as “in touch” with the dangerous natural phenomenon. The trip through the rapids was a live theatre of the picturesque.

For the tourist gaze, things are read as signs of themselves. They are understood not as given bits of the real but as suffused with ideality. The reality is figural rather than literal. Yet, as Urry states, “Those who value solitude and the romantic tourist gaze do not see this as merely one way of regarding nature. They consider it as ‘authentic’... although the notion of romantic nature is a fundamentally invented pleasure.”⁴¹ This is an attempt to “feel” a place, to experience the “essence of the whole for which it stands”.⁴² Central to this consumption is to look individually or collectively upon aspects

⁴⁰ Maurice Smith. “Sail & Steam Captain Responsible for Piloting Ship Through Lachine Rapids,” The Whig – Standard, 14 Aug, 1987, 21.

⁴¹ John Urry and Mimi Sheller (eds.). Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 139

⁴² James Buzard. “A Continent of Pictures: Reflections on The “Europe” Of Nineteenth-Century Tourists.” PMLA Vol. 108.No. 1. (Jan., 1993) 33.

of landscape that are distinctive, particularly to the senses.⁴³ The emphasis for this method of approaching a landscape is on a semi-private, quasi-spiritual relationship with the signifiers of 'nature.'

The gaze is visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards, and films, enabling it to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured.⁴⁴ This is what Urry defines as the concept of 'a present image economy,' where objects and images are 'looked at, predominantly if not exclusively, as potential mental souvenirs, as camera material, and as memorable sights.'⁴⁵

The collapse of interest in the Lachine Rapids around 1930 shows the rapidly changing social and cultural processes involved. Due to rising insurance costs,⁴⁶ changes in the river, and the rise of the automobile, steamship tourist travel sharply declined.⁴⁷ For several decades, interest in the Lachine Rapids was a pale shade of what it had once been. In modern times, however, there has been a considerable resurgence in tourism surrounding the Lachine Rapids. Organized speedboat excursions offer daily trips in the summer. Kayakers and surfers consider the Lachine rapids to be among the best waves in the world. Many of the ads in the Quebec Tourism Department's campaign feature rafting and jet-boating on the rapids.

⁴³ John Urry and Mimi Sheller (eds.). *Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 132

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 133

⁴⁵ *ibid*, 190

⁴⁶ The cause of rising insurance costs is uncertain. Research has shown that shipping accidents were common, but has not shown any direct correlation between these occurrences and insurance rates.

⁴⁷ Mike Filey. "End of the Fleet," *Toronto Sun*. 07 Aug, 2005

In 1985, a \$2-billion plan was developed to divert about eighty per cent of the water from the rapids and direct it into a hydroelectric generating station. Titled "Projet Archipel," the construction of a hydroelectric dam would have severely modified the rapids. In addition, and of main concern, the popular tourist expedition through the rapids was to be negatively affected. Due to this considerable backlash, the dam was eventually rejected.⁴⁸

The area around the Lachine Rapids was developed into parks with didactic panels informing the visitor of the rapids' history. Plaques with quotes from Champlain and Cartier were built at a viewing platform, and picnic benches were placed a mere meter away from the fast moving waters.

I have spent several hours at the Lachine Rapids park sites, viewing how people react to their surroundings. Some stand and stare into the waves. Some take photographs. Others fish. One individual even howled. However, when one approaches, visitors halt their activities or quiet themselves until the intrusion has passed. Whether the white noise of the waves provide a pleasant backdrop for a conversation, or whether the scenery provides a location to simply be alone and think, the concept that one retreats from the hustle and bustle of urban life to a romantic location is nonetheless prevalent.

Lying behind individual perceptions of the Lachine Rapids are more systematic discourses of landscape, countryside, scenery and sight that have authorized and arguably created ways of seeing. The touristic appeal of the location has been reinforced by the

⁴⁸ Linda Masse. "Dam would leave Lachine Rapid's tourist appeal on rocks." The Gazette. Aug, 1985: A3

combined influence of marketing strategies and visual paradigms. The site has become contained wilderness-- both in its transition from dangerous obstacle to pleasant daytrip, and its placement within the frame of the visual objects studied in this thesis.

Chapter 3

The Lachine Rapids as a “Reverse” Montreal

“Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result.”⁴⁹

The history of nineteenth-century Montreal and the Lachine Rapids is a study of the dynamic interplay between a metropolis and its hinterland. As this chapter will explore, the natural phenomenon was treated as the contrasting medium that threw the urban into sharp relief. It was (and still is) “wilderness” easily accessible to, but visually separated from, Montreal.

The images of the rapids studied in this thesis provide the iconography through which the relationship between the urban center and its natural surroundings can be understood. Instead of focusing on rural experience, the images presented aspects of urban culture played out in a wilderness setting. It was as though the visual objects formed a repository of ideals through which urban experience was perceived, providing urban industrial culture with its myths and counter myths.

As the visible material surface of places, landscapes can evoke powerful images and sentiments. Issues of ideology, identity, and representation are central to an analysis of the manner in which places have come to be “packaged” as a product to be sold.⁵⁰ Each culture has its own image and imagined geography of a place. People construct their tastes and prejudices into the land itself, playing a central role in the performance of

⁴⁹ Carl O. Sauer. 1925. “The morphology of landscape.” University of California Publications in Geography 2: 19.

⁵⁰ Philo, C. and G. Kearns (eds.). “Culture, History, Capital; a Critical Introduction to the Selling of Places.” Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993)

place-based social identities and distinction.⁵¹ Landscapes, and the imagery that surrounds them, serve as positional goods⁵² charged with an aura of the particularity of place.⁵³

To expand upon this, this chapter will examine the socio-cultural situation in nineteenth century Montreal, as well as briefly move further “outward” to national and international trends concerning nineteenth century society’s relationship with the natural world. As industry permeated, and greater numbers of people became confirmed city dwellers, the natural world came to be perceived as a counterbalance for the metropolises. The shifting meanings show how the natural came to be progressively divorced from quotidian experience.

Nature, conceived through landscape imagery, became a multi-faceted symbol. It was constructed by urbanites as both a retreat and a fortification of the particular location’s identity. It represented the triumph of civilization over wilderness, but at the same time was celebrated as a repository of a “true” way of life, of an authenticity of experience, which modernity was perceived to have abandoned. At all times, however, the view of wilderness was a created concept, molded to suit what was required. The Lachine Rapids, once considered a formidable foe, was now only playfully alluded to as such.

To further expand upon the use of landscape as a keystone for self-identity, this chapter will incorporate a discussion of how the newly formed nation of Canada

⁵¹ D. Lowenthal. “British identity and the English landscape.” *Rural History* 2: 1991: 205.

⁵² F. Hirsch. *Social limits to growth*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976)

⁵³ Walter Benjamin. “The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction.” *Illuminations*. H. Arendt (ed.). (New York: Schocken, 1969)

perceived itself, and strove to be perceived, as the offspring of its natural landscape. Its people were touted as a “race” positively molded by its natural environment. By associating itself with the wilderness, the “nation” attempted to generate a sense of homeland and sacred territory among the members of a population and its visitors.⁵⁴

When viewing the Lachine Rapids imagery as residue of a culture’s perceived dialogue with its landscape, we must reflect on the contemporary myths that were used to establish identity and distinguish from other cultures. Whether we use the term “culture” as being indicative of a “particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general” or “as a reference to the works or practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity,”⁵⁵ culture is commodified. It is bought and sold. Imaging strategies are typically conscious attempts to seduce potential visitors and/or settlers. They seek not only to develop something that is attractive to these individuals, but also to package specific representations of a particular way of life or lifestyle for consumption.⁵⁶ To accomplish this, landscapes incorporate literary and artistic associations that have become symbolic images of their respective cultures.

In the case of urban re-imaging, marketing practices such as branding rely upon the commodification of particular aspects of place-- exploiting, reinventing, or creating place images in order to sell the place as a destination product for tourists or investment. Branding is a way of adding value to commodities by creating distinctiveness in the

⁵⁴ Eric Kaufmann. “‘Naturalizing the Nation’: The Rise of Naturalistic Nationalism in the United States and Canada.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 40, No. 4. (Oct., 1998): 667

⁵⁵ Raymond Williams. *Keywords*. (London: Fontana, 1983): 90

⁵⁶ C. Michael Hall. “Packaging Canada/Packaging Places: Tourism, Culture, and Identity.” *The Canadian Distinctiveness into the XXIst Century*. Chad Gaffield and Karen L Gould (eds). (University of Ottawa Press: Ottawa, 2003): 199

marketplace. As Pawson has noted in *Branding Strategies and Language of Consumption*: “It is an investment in product quality at the same time as seeking to create more illusory associations to appeal to specific groups of consumers in the local spaces of globalised capitalism. Both branding and advertising are inherently spatial practices, used by producers in the expansion and differentiation of markets.”⁵⁷

Through this process, the ways of living particular to a place may become commodities in order to transform them into commercial product or a specific dimension of a place promotion that can be experienced by the consumer. Such actions clearly have implications not only for how the external consumer sees a place but also for how the people who constitute a place are able to participate in making both the collective and individual identity and the structures that sell the place.⁵⁸

It is therefore apparent that the desires of those who consume have to be accorded far greater prominence to any “real-world” unpleasantness of the community. In this context, images of Montreal in the late 1800s and early 1900s tended to celebrate the achievements of the colonial. This is epitomised by the prevalence of steam ships, the Victoria bridge over the St. Lawrence, and prominent architecture. The use of new conventions of seeing, introduced by camera and film, may also be considered a nod to the progressive.

In the 1850s, Canada was a British North American colony known as the Province of Canada, formed by the union of Upper and Lower Canada. Quebec City was the

⁵⁷ E. Pawson “Branding Strategies and Language of Consumption.” *New Zealand Geographer* 53 (2): 17.

⁵⁸ C. Michael Hall. “Packaging Canada/Packaging Places: Tourism, Culture, and Identity.” *The Canadian Distinctiveness into the XXIst Century*. Chad Gaffield and Karen L Gould (eds). (University of Ottawa Press: Ottawa, 2003): 201

Provincial seat of government and Toronto was a growing settlement, which served as a base for future western expansion. Montreal was strategically located on a large island in the middle of the St. Lawrence River, downstream from the outflow of the Ottawa River and the Great Lakes. As such, it was the centre of transport for the fur trade and timber business in addition to being the first major Canadian port of call for water traffic. The city offered several advantages to European and American businessmen who began to establish themselves as prominent members of Montreal's social, commercial, and cultural community. The influx of Scottish, Irish, German, and American expatriates was so great that by 1860, Montreal, originally a predominantly French-speaking centre, was comprised of approximately equal numbers of Anglophone and Francophone citizens.

Transportation and technological advancements were flourishing. By this date the city had completed an all-season rail link to the ocean port of Portland, Maine. This was to overcome Montreal's single greatest geographic disadvantage-- as a freshwater harbour it was icebound several months of the year. The inauguration ceremony of Victoria Bridge spanning the St. Lawrence River between Montreal and Longueuil (the western terminus of the Canada-United States line leased by the Grand Trunk Railway Company) held in August of 1860. The festivities marked the joining of Canada's expanding markets to the American Northeast, as well as the ready access of commercial traffic to Montreal.⁵⁹

The first major fine art exhibition ever was held in the Province to commemorate this event. "The Great Exhibition," as it was called, was organized under the auspices of

⁵⁹ Allan Pringle. "Robert S. Duncanson in Montreal, 1863-1865." American Art Journal Vol. 17, No. 4. (Autumn, 1985): 29

the newly founded Art Association of Montreal. Although very little Canadian art was included, what was shown addressed itself “preeminently to landscape . . . the poetry of nature.”⁶⁰ Excerpts from the essay accompanying the Art Association of Montreal's 1865 *Conversazione* catalogue extolled the virtues of the new Canadian realism and the quest for a national vision of the landscape.⁶¹

On the photographic front, a large portion of the prominent Montreal photographer William Notman's work paralleled or involved landscape. Scenic attractions received extensive photographic coverage by Notman, most notably Niagara Falls and the Quebec City region (Montmorency Falls, Chaudiere Falls, the St. Anne River, and Lakes Beauport and Charles). In his “bread and butter” genre, the portrait, Notman would often incorporate painted landscape as the backdrop. Although the Lachine Rapids comprise a very small portion of Notman's actual catalogue, his images of the rapids often show traveling steamships powering through the rapids—connecting both Montreal's natural and technological assets.

In the popular sphere, such as journals and tourist guidebooks, Montreal images tended to be of the architecture and parks found throughout the city. When the Lachine Rapids are shown, they tend to be located to the back, often paired with images of sporting activities. Nonetheless, the mere fact that they are included in the books, or often titled “The Lachine Rapids (near Montreal)” shows an integral relationship between the two for intended viewers.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, 30

⁶¹ As far as research has indicated, no images of the Lachine Rapids were shown.

The Lachine Rapids were often presented as a setting for technological and political events. Early examples, such as Ainslie's work as discussed in Chapter One, present the arrival of the British army to Montreal. Over time, emphasis was placed on the travel of steamships through the rapids. This eludes not only to the substantial development of steamships in Montreal, but also to the city as a destination or launch point for the ships.

In written accounts, the Lachine Rapids are discussed either on the way to or from Montreal, often grouped with the city in description. For example, as Harvey J. Philpot wrote in 1871 for the *Guide Book to the Canadian Dominion, Containing Full Information for the Emigrant, the Tourist, the Sportsman, and the Small Capitalist:*

As we are leaving Montreal the first object of our admiration is the great Tubular or Victoria Bridge, thrown over the river like a gigantic gun-barrel two miles in length. Through this the trains of the Grand Trunk Railway are shot over into American territory not many miles from the opposite bank. This line extends down to Portland in the State of Maine, the great winter harbour for ships from English ports. Passing under this magnificent work of art we ply our paddle up stream. As we ascend the river we find the current is already becoming very strong: we are in fact getting within the influence of the Lachine Rapids, nine miles above Montreal, opposite a village of the same name. As we near the Rapids we find the stream too strong for the efforts of our frail skiff; we will therefore paddle ashore, and enter the Lachine Canal, built purposely to permit of ships circumventing the Rapids, having arrived at the other end of which we emerge upon the water of the St. Lawrence, pausing only to admire the beautiful scenery of the river. (27)

It was important to an expanding tourist and settlement industry that the environment be considered tame and safe, even if it was marketed as remote and wild. The landscape itself was portrayed as an opportunity for various forms of sport and leisure activity. It was recreated as a white, western playground.⁶²

⁶² Any interactions were organized to involve fusions and exchanges with romanticised aboriginal traditions. Individuals such as "Big John," a Mohawk from Kahnawake, would arrive at each ship before the rapids, often as part of a small ceremony where he would often wear a feather headdress.

Such desires were actively catered to when urban places and spaces were created for them to consume. Influencing travelers to visit Montreal as a particular city destination was achieved by conveying the essence or image of a city as well as the specifics of what there was to see and do. The city was created as a site of spectacle, a “dreamscape of visual consumption.”⁶³

As I have argued, landscapes play a central role in the performance of place-based social identities, in large part by mobilising cultural capital in the form of landscapes thought to communicate taste and lifestyles. Interpretations of the past and popular conceptions of national cultural identity are inextricable. All contributed to the emergence and propagation of the “imagined communities.” These preferences modify over time.⁶⁴

In the nineteenth century, nature went through a transition. Where first viewed as a horrid wasteland, it came to represent a source of national regeneration and authenticity.⁶⁵ However, the blatant celebration of wilderness did not occur until the latter part of the century. In general, therefore, treatment of the Canadian landscape in the early nineteenth century was traditionalist in tone; it viewed nature as a challenge to be overcome.

Transcontinental explorers David Thompson, Samuel Hearne, and Alexander Mackenzie, in their travel journals of the late eighteenth century, described the

“Big John” would also hold yearly events whereby he would travel the rapids by canoe. Several thousand people would arrive to watch the spectacle.

⁶³ S. Zukin. *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*. (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 221.

⁶⁴ Nuala C. Johnson. “Where Geography and History Meet: Heritage Tourism and the Big House in Ireland.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 86, No. 3. (Sep., 1996) 551

⁶⁵ Eric Kaufmann. ““Naturalizing the Nation”: The Rise of Naturalistic Nationalism in the United States and Canada.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 40, No. 4. (Oct., 1998) 679

“convulsion(s) of nature” they found. They wrote of the desolation and barbarity of Canada's Northwest.⁶⁶ Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852) and Catharine Parr Traill's children's book, *Canadian Crusoes* (1852), even extended this tradition to the more settled context of pioneer agriculture of Upper Canada.⁶⁷

This conduct began to change by mid-century as Romantic ideas spread to Canada from Britain and the United States. From the beginning, this new sensibility involved an emphasis on the environment and its uplifting effects. William Kirby, a staunch Loyalist intellectual, declared in 1846 that the old country might renew its contact with the landed traditions that made it great by finding new life in Canada. In a similar vein came the idea, in the 1850s, that the Canadian Loyalists were “a superior breed of loyal Briton.” Carl Berger sums up this aspect of Canadian distinctiveness as follows: “Because of the inevitable deterioration that was creeping over the urbanized and industrialized Englishman, cut off from the land, Canada was to be a kind of rejuvenator of the imperial blood.”⁶⁸

From the beginning of confederation in 1867, the new nationalism looked to Canada's northern climate and location for inspiration. For example, Canada First associate Robert Grant Haliburton proclaimed, in an 1869 address to the Montreal Literary Club that “we are the Northmen of the New World.” The essence of Haliburton's argument was that Canada's cold climate and forbidding terrain would develop a

⁶⁶ W. H. New. *A History of Canadian Literature*. (London: MacMillan Education, 1989) 43-45

⁶⁷ Eric Kaufmann. “‘Naturalizing the Nation’: The Rise of Naturalistic Nationalism in the United States and Canada.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 40, No. 4. (Oct., 1998): 680

⁶⁸ Carl Berger. “The True North Strong and Free.” Peter Russell, ed. *Nationalism in Canada*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966): 17

“healthy, hardy, virtuous, dominant race.”⁶⁹ Continuing onward from Haliburton's work for the 1871 inaugural address of *Canada First*, William Foster further wrote, in a conscious attempt to distinguish Canadians from Americans, that “the old Norse mythology, with its Thor hammers . . . appeals to us- for we are a Northern people- as the true out-crop of human nature, more manly, more real, than the weak marrow-bones superstition of an effeminate South.”⁷⁰

Cast now in a new Darwinian vocabulary, such statements illustrate the close association that Romanticism had begun to foster between Canada's northern wilderness and its new national identity. From this history, “as determined by zoological methods,” was drawn several “comforting conclusions as to the future of Canada.” For one thing, the Canadian must be “the conquering type of man,” and this included the “French-speaking fellow countrymen who, so far as they are of Norman descent, belong to the same race.”⁷¹ This “race” was that of the Nordics, or Aryans.

While Canada's northernness implied desirable racial and health advantages, it also underlined the fundamental unity of the French and British Canadians. Genealogists confirmed the common racial origin for French and British Canadians, stating that “there is no real or vital difference in the origin of these two races, back beyond the foreground of history they were one.”⁷² That the “Norman blood” was a positive unifying force in Canada was emphasized. In 1925, G.M. Wrong, historian, wrote that “There is in reality no barrier of race to keep the English and French apart in Canada: the two peoples are

⁶⁹ *ibid*, 6.

⁷⁰ Foster, William Alexander. 1888. *Canada First [microfilm]: an address* [s.n.], Toronto: 25

⁷¹ Carl Berger. “The True North Strong and Free.” Peter Russell, ed. *Nationalism in Canada*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966): 12

⁷² *ibid*, 13

identical in racial origins.”⁷³ In this manner, the wilderness was utilized as both a reason and a setting for promoting the concept of a unified Canada.

This social atmosphere provides a setting in which to place the images of the Lachine Rapids. As visual objects, they carry with them associations that both reinforce and derive from the popular sentiments of what constitutes wilderness. Rather than exalt the civilization or familiarization of settled nature, this conception inverted the traditional pattern, praising the uncivilized, primeval quality of untamed nature and stressing its regenerative effect upon civilization. The Lachine Rapids reinforce the nationalistic sentiments as described; they propagate the natural world as closely associated with the urban experience.

Although relatively unmatched in its nationalistic fervor, the preference for the natural was not particular to Canada. States one researcher: “Its advantages were being touted in a growing literature of country life and natural history written by middle-class intellectuals who preached the gospel of the holy earth to those who would never till its soil.”⁷⁴ Throughout the western world, magazines and arcadian essays grew in popularity, composed by those who “communed with nature at their writing desks.”⁷⁵ Designs derived from nature dominated the decorative arts for a generation. Natural themes pervaded art, literature, and décor.

The wilderness loathed by the early settlers began to be considered a precious gift and source of aesthetic inspiration. Going back to nature, however, did not mean “going

⁷³ G.M. Wrong, “The Two Races in Canada, a Lecture delivered before the Canadian Historical Association.” Montreal, May 21st, 1925: 4-5

⁷⁴ Peter J. Schmitt, “The Arcadian Myth.” *Forest History*. Vol. 13, No. 1/2. (Apr.- Jul., 1969): 22.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, 22

back to savagery nor to barbarism nor to any pestilential past; it only means opening the doors and windows,” Canadian-born Bliss Carmen wrote from New York City; “We go back to nature every time we take a deep breath and stop worrying.”⁷⁶ Some of these city dwellers felt sure they needed only a few weeks or months in the country to be of benefit.

“Nature lovers,” as they called themselves, believed their urban vantage point provided them a special sensitivity to the world around them. Many called themselves “sportsmen” and turned to camping, hunting, and fishing in an effort to recapture by temporary immersion in wild nature what wilderness-lover Robert Marshall once called “the ecstasy in non-intellectual adventure.”⁷⁷

Wilderness became widely considered the quintessential embodiment of nature, and the visual consumption of nature was seen as culturally enriching. Such alienated sentiments were enabled by the spatial separation of the wilderness, which were seen as a refuge from the urban centers. Cronon notes in his book, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*:

“Wilderness came to embody frontier myth... The irony, of course, was that in the process wilderness came to reflect the very civilization its devotees sought to escape. Ever since the 19th century, celebrating wilderness has been an activity mainly for well-to-do city folks. Country people generally know far too much about working the land to regard unworked land as their ideal... [O]nly people whose relation to the land was already alienated could hold up wilderness as a model for human life in nature, for the romantic ideology of nature leaves no place in which human beings can actually make their living from the land.”⁷⁸

The answer to the question posed in the title of the essay, “What’s Wrong with Plastic Trees?” is that by contemporary standards there is nothing wrong with plastic

⁷⁶ Peter J. Schmitt. “The Arcadian Myth.” *Forest History*. Vol. 13, No. 1/2. (Apr. - Jul., 1969): 21

⁷⁷ *ibid*, 19

⁷⁸ W. Cronon (ed.). *Uncommon ground: Toward reinventing nature*. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995) 42.

trees. They are simplified imitations, just as the stereotypes in landscapes imagery are caricatures of a complex natural world.⁷⁹ If there is collective agreement that the landscape is an aesthetic resource, then it is so. The way is thus cleared for landscape to be counted, catalogued, and manipulated.⁸⁰

Given this prospect, it may be wise to reiterate that “tourism is not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it is also an ideological framing of history, nature and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own needs.”⁸¹ As Laurier observed: “To build binary opposites is to make one dependent on the other, and so there cannot be consumption without production ... it is apparent that they merge in many places and that each process certainly does have effects on the other.”⁸² We therefore come full circle: places try to seduce, and people want to be seduced when they consider their destination options.

In both instances, one goes beyond facts to images. As has been discussed, texts written on postcards with rapids imagery often have nothing to do with the rapids. Writes one woman to her American friend: “Hello Rita/ This is all the way/ from Canada. It/ is an elegant place/ but a little cold/ just now/ Flora.” On the front of the postcard is an image of a steamer traveling the rapids. Despite the fact that the Lachine Rapids were marketed as anything but elegant, the image is weighted with signs and symbols into which various meanings are condensed. Flora may have traversed the rapids, and most likely visited Montreal, but she has boiled her description down to a quick retelling of her

⁷⁹ Martin Krieger. “What’s Wrong with Plastic Trees?” *Science*. Vol. 179, 1973. 446

⁸⁰ Paul Shepard. “Place in American Culture.” *The North American Review*. Vol. 262, Fall, 1977: 31.

⁸¹ D. MacCannell. *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*. (London: Routledge, 1992) 4

⁸² E. Laurier. “Tackintosh’: Glasgow’s Supplementary Gloss.” *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present*. G. Kearns and C. Philo (eds). (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993) 272

experiences. She conflates her description of traveling Canada with the visual accompaniment found on the postcard. From whatever images available to her, Flora has chosen this one, and therefore alludes to others the atmosphere in which she sees herself.

Imagery alone cannot mold nature. Yet, in a very real sense, the images studied in this thesis created the Lachine Rapids themselves. Much like the waves of the Lachine Rapids, influences and perceptions modify according to the underlying current. During the nineteenth century, the rapids were effectively “used” as a touchstone for place-myth, both for Montreal and for Canada as a whole. Treated as a foil for the industrial developments happening en masse, the concept of “untamed wilderness” was propagated as a constructed perception of identity. Visual tropes reinforced such ideals, celebrating the natural landscape as opposite to, and yet innately part of, the local topography.

Chapter 4
Of Truth and Beauty, Movement and Memory

“Don’t you think that a fiction can suggest a truth?”⁸³

Images give shape to travel. They inform the viewer how they should see, and afterwards how they should remember. In this chapter, we locate the images of the Lachine Rapids as objects that allowed tourists to put their body into play both during the voyage through the rapids and afterward as objects of remembrance. Of course, places are extremely complex sites where there is no single experience, changing with each individual. Movement, however, both of the senses and of the body, provides the uniting element for the varieties of landscape experiences. This includes all the different tourist forms of “taking it in”: to traverse it, pass through it or past it, to dwell in it, sense it, and to be part of it.

As one guidebook writer put it, leisure means “to fix in the mind the beauties that are to be carried away for future reflection.”⁸⁴ The images were physical manifestations of this activity. Each acted as a token of remembrance, an *aide de memoire*. The objects allowed the experience to be relived or imagined. They enabled the visitor to simultaneously look at the picture and plunge into sensation.

Just as pleasure travel expanded significantly in the late nineteenth century to include the emerging middle classes, so did the imagery surrounding it. Mass-produced, low cost images such as the tintype, the *carte de visite*, and the stereograph included a far

⁸³ Larry Sultan. Pictures from Home. (New York : Abrams, 1992)

⁸⁴ Frederic William Maitland. Township and borough : With an appendix of notes relating to the history of Cambridge (Cambridge : University Press, 1964) 37

greater range of geographical subjects. With this “democratization of sight” and increasing mechanization came the contradictory—but mutually reinforcing—drive to produce more artistic and composed images of nature.

Repetition, or sameness, forms an essential part of this chapter. The views of the Lachine Rapids were routinely produced in a variety of formats for a large and diverse audience. Similarities in the form of the image remain staunch throughout the catalogue. The details themselves, however, change drastically. In some instances, waves and sky are greatly embellished to provide a more dramatic atmosphere.

Strangely, the arrival of the camera, in coalition with the rise of cinema, described and prescribed an experience that was supposed to mimic reality as closely as possible. Yet, the purpose of the materials was not to express their own character. Despite a purported factuality, they tended to be heavily modified. Increasingly they served as diminished illustrations of written text, which fantastically recalled the individual’s voyage through the rapids. More than the scene itself, which became scarcely more than an icon, the impression on the viewer assumed chief importance.⁸⁵ The story was all.

A useful method for grasping the practices that create representations is to unearth moments of tension and disjuncture.⁸⁶ These include the development of new visual technology and a subsequent mutation of visually based tourism. Although the concept of projecting one’s experience upon an object is not new, the new types of objects created arguably modified this activity. The nineteenth century brought with it entirely new methods of visual representation. Among these were the photograph and a variety of

⁸⁵ Hoelscher, Steven. “The Photographic Construction of Tourist Space in Victorian America.” *Geographical Review* 88, No.4 (Oct., 1998): 563.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, 562

cinematic representations.

Born in the Victorian era from a seemingly perfect marriage of science and art, photography appeared to be the ideal medium to copy nature with utter accuracy and exactitude. One reason had to do with the perceived nature of photography itself. Photographs of geographic phenomena, when compared with other media, seemed objective, true, and uncluttered by the whims of artists or the dictates of ideology.

Yet, if the earliest generation of photographers sought to suppress the artificial character of photograph itself and thus provide an unencumbered window on nature, individuals such as Notman and his contemporaries focused on photography's conformity to the rules of art and laws of composition. With a powerful set of techniques for controlling the look of the resulting image—a repertoire of which included choice of lenses, exposure duration, and the angles of light and camera perspective, photography nonetheless cloaked this artificial conversion with the medium's reputation for scientific accuracy.

It is the very persistence of this popularly held idea in the face of counterevidence that makes it so compelling, for the depths of conviction implies that landscape photography's myth of verisimilitude speaks to deeply felt concerns and tensions. It was precisely the artifice of the picture, its stage and "picturesque" quality that, although appearing to be "natural," also suggested ultimate human control over nature.

Through the deep space of the stereo view, photographers carefully traced the tourists' path from sight to site. They recorded and created picturesque sensibility. Foregrounded elements—rocks conveniently added, tree branches neatly trimmed to

coincide with the photograph's margin, a steamboat paralleling the river's rocky bank—their presence conveyed the message that this leisure landscape could be experienced safely, and therefore inspirationally.

Replacing the hostility of the rapids with a frequently whimsical hospitality, photographers tended to create a playful landscape that confirmed Victorian notions of gentility. A place of leisured retreat, locations such as the rapids and Mont Royal were meant to edify and enlighten. The genteel charm of this landscape invoked notions of place where inspirational nature could be encountered within the middle-class terms of control, safety, and uplifting recreation. The sublimity with which tourists were struck during their encounters melted into a picturesque and semi-wild playscape.

The images reflected and promoted a nineteenth-century tourist aesthetic based on the belief that nature could be exploited not only for its extractive resources but also for its recreational and restorative potential. The Montreal region, after all, had already witnessed a half-century of intensive use and alteration. The surrounding countryside had become well integrated into a vast, urban-focused network of railroads, markets, and capital. The frontiers of white settlement and of timbering had long since passed, turning a zone of intercultural conflict into an increasingly modern, transportation-laced region. Anchored to the great metropolis of Montreal, the Lachine Rapids became that city's recreational hinterland. This new kind of space—as novel to the Victorian experience as the exploding metropolis itself—relied on the rich combination of pseudo-wild scenery and a cultured life in semiformal dress.

The advent of mass consumption represents a pivotal historical moment, both

material and mental. Nineteenth century society as a whole found itself confronting a style of consumption unlike any found prior. Never before had there been such remarkable and simultaneous change in the way people lived. The quantity of consumer goods available to most people had previously been quite limited; essential goods were often obtained through barter and self-production, and only the richer individuals could afford to spend time in stores. The consumer revolution opened up pleasures of discretionary consumption to the masses. For the first time in history, people had considerable choice in what to consume, how, and how much, and in addition have the leisure, education, and health to ponder these questions.

The onslaught of technological changes simultaneously lowered the cost of existing consumer goods and provided entirely new ones. After 1850 many notable inventions were consumer products themselves: the bicycle, chemical dyes, the telephone, electric lighting, the phonograph, and photography. Mass consumption became prevalent. It was a radical division between the activities of production and of consumption, as well as the occurrence of standardized merchandise sold in large volume.⁸⁷

A perfect indicator of the cultural change during this time is embodied in events such as the Paris expositions. These occasions were forums for showcasing the new method of consumption. There, visitors viewed luxury automobiles, couture, and the latest cinematic techniques. This was a “crucial juxtaposition of imagination and

⁸⁷ Williams, Rosalind H. Dream Worlds, Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 3

merchandise, of dreams and commerce, of collective consciousness and economic fact.”⁸⁸

The expositions, in fact the entire consumer revolution, showed an exploitation of imagination by commerce, inviting consumers to experience a fantasy world of pleasure, comfort and amusement.

The exposition of 1900 provides a scale model of the consumer revolution. Over the decades, the dominant tone of the expositions altered from instructing the visitor on the wonders of science and technology to entertaining them. The cultural changes working gradually and diffusely throughout society were there made visible in a more overt and concentrated way.⁸⁹

Nineteenth-century technology developed far more effective ways of creating an illusion of voyage to far-off places, techniques that were dynamic and cinematic rather than static and decorative. They proved so popular that they increasingly became amusement attractions. At the 1900 exposition twenty-one of the thirty-three major attractions involved a dynamic illusion of voyage.⁹⁰

Michel Corday, a contemporary journalist wrote an article describing the exhibits, which he entitled “Visions Lointaines” or “Visions of Faraway Places.” He placed the twenty-one exhibits into five categories, ordered by increasing sophistication: “ensembles in relief,” panoramas in which the spectator moves, those in which both move, and moving photographs. One of the more primitive exhibits, falling into the second category, was the World Tour: where the ‘tourist’ walked before a rotating canvas painted with different parts of the world such as Asia, India, and Spain. Costumed individuals would

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 12

⁸⁹ *ibid*, 64

⁹⁰ *ibid*, 73

perform in front of the painted image of their homeland. Another, the Trans-Siberian Railroad, put the spectator into an actual railway car and moved past painted images to represent a trip across Siberia.⁹¹

Even more impressive to Corday was the *Cineorama*, where it was not canvases but rather photographs that moved. The “experience” could convey the sense of ascending in a balloon, using a series of photographs that decreased in size to show the balloon moving away from the earth. At the same time, the spectators were placed in a balloon basket as a place of viewing.⁹²

It is this concept of a theatrical experience masquerading as fact allows us an interesting perspective by which to approach the images of the Lachine Rapids. The introduction of the consumer revolution to Canada was slightly behind the European movement, but was still decisive. With it arrived “visual experiences” such as the panorama and the cinema.

In Montreal, panoramas showing the city became popular in the mid-1800s. Most place the viewer on Mont-Royal, and show a sweeping view of the metropolis. These were often included as foldouts in guidebooks, with architectural landmarks labeled for the viewer’s reference. The majority of guidebooks studied in this thesis include such a panorama.

The cinematic experience, however, did not arrive until June 27th 1896, when Parisian Louis Minier presented the first filmic show in the history of the city at the Théâtre Palace on 78 St. Laurent. A dozen films were shown, each less than a minute.

⁹¹ *ibid*, 73

⁹² *ibid*, 74

The event was attended by journalists and dignitaries, and was quickly publicized in local papers. The following Fall, itinerant cinematographers became popularized in the city, selling their different types of cinematography: Animatographie, Kinematographie, Theatroscope, Phantascope, and others. In the summer of 1897, Allan May in cooperation with *La Presse*, projected the first Montreal film. Allan May was American, and in fact Americans created the majority of Montreal films at that time. The presentations ranged from actual films to simple postcard images in movement. The titles included: "Skating in Montreal," "Victoria Bridge Montreal," "Pompiers de Montreal sur la rue Cherrier," and "Foule au marche Bonsecours." Local views were the main sellers, and gained immense popularity.⁹³

Although there are no known films of the Lachine Rapids, possibly due to difficulty capturing such an experience with the equipment of the time, the parallel evolutions of the media are cause for consideration. Cinematic qualities were arguably incorporated into the presentation of the photographs. Composite images, highly modified, are perfect examples of this possible influence.

Figure 17 shows a composite image of the Corsican traveling through the Lachine Rapids. The ship has been cut from a photograph, while all other aspects have been painted. By modifying works beyond the capabilities of what the medium could produce, and focusing on particularly dramatic aspects, the creator both caters to and constructs the experience of riding the rapids. One must consider the action of relating to the images as cinematic. The photographs referenced the original experience; called for the suspension

⁹³ Marcel Jean. "Un Siècle de Cinéma à Montréal." *Le Dictionnaire du cinéma québécois*. (Les Éditions Boréal: 1988) 109

of disbelief by the participant. The objects were projected upon, the memory or fantasy of the experience playing with the available imagery. It was “the snapshot as memory; the camera as storyteller; photography’s ability to ‘capture’ time and extend the experience of the moment.”⁹⁴

As previously mentioned, the images increasingly went hand in hand with textual accompaniment.⁹⁵ This created an additional layer of narrative, which tends to be quite thrilling when describing the Lachine Rapids:

“Suddenly a scene of wild grandeur bursts upon the eye; waves are lashed into spray and breakers of a thousand forms by the submerged rocks which they are dashed against in the headlong impetuosity of the river. Whirlpools, a storm lashed sea, the chasm below Niagara, all mingle their sublimity in a single rapid. In an instant you are in the midst of them. Now passing with lightning speed within a few yards of rocks, which, did your vessel but touch them, would reduce her to an utter wreck before the crash could sound upon the ear; did she even diverge from her course-- if her head were not kept straight with the course of the rapid, she would be instantly submerged and rolled over and over... Before us is an absolute precipice of waters; on every side of it breakers, like dense avalanches, are thrown high into the air. Ere we can take a glance at the scene, the boat descends the wall of waves and foam like a bird, and in a second afterwards you are floating on the calm unruffled bosom of ‘below the rapids.’ Unlike the ordinary pitching and tossing at sea, this going down hill by water produces a peculiar sensation, which, as the vessel glides from ledge to ledge of rock, feels like settling down. The traveler who runs the rapids for the first time, is almost sure to involuntarily hold his breath at this feeling.”⁹⁶

Another example, taken from George Waldo Browne’s *The St Lawrence River of 1905*:

“Thus the quickening current again speaks of rapids, of the running of a swift and furious race with fate, as if the elements were forever fleeing from gaolers that would bind them in fetters of granite. The water is whipped into serpents of foam, coiling about the rocky heads thrust above the surface, betraying with added ferocity the rage they would seem to

⁹⁴ Martha Langford. Suspended Conversations: Private Photographie Albums in the Public Collection of the McCord Museum of Canadian History. Thesis (PhD)—McGill University, March, 1997: 29

⁹⁵ After approximately 1930, discussion concerning the Lachine Rapids changes to hydro-electric possibilities and geographical surveys. It is not until the late 1900s that tourism once again focuses on the Rapids as a tourist venture.

⁹⁶ H.B. Small. The Canadian Handbook and Tourist's Guide. J. Taylor (ed). (Montreal: M. Longmoore Co., 1867) 73-74.

conceal. Borne on once more solely by the current, the boat settles under our feet as if it were slipping from under us. The thrill, the exhilaration, the excitement, the hazard, the fury of the eddies, the foam of the surf, the twists and mazes of the turgid stream that tend to bewilder the onlooker, the efforts of the man at the wheel, the watchfulness of the pilot, the anxiety of the captain—and we have run the famous rapids of Lachine!”

The images become silmulacra: replications of originals more real, or hyper-real, than the original. As stated by Raymond Williams: “Fantasy which openly presents itself as such keeps its integrity and may claim to point to truth beyond everyday experience... when they assume concrete form and masquerade as objective fact, dreams lose their liberating possibilities as alternatives to daylight reality. What is involved here is not a casual level of fantasy, a kind of mild and transient wishful thinking, but a far more thoroughgoing substitution of subjective images for external reality.”⁹⁷

Out of technological and capitalist change came new alliances between culture and visual media. Tourism responded to new aesthetic representations, and the substance and ideology of tourist space took on quite different meanings. Newer developments allowed creators and consumers to employ these forms of media as a basis for comparison. At the same time, these representations were constructed in the interest of “accuracy” as it related to the experiential. To have a staid representation, truer to the capabilities of the camera, did not do justice to the “moving” and dramatic experience of travel through rapids.

⁹⁷ Williams, Rosalind H. Dream Worlds, Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 65

Conclusion

The images we have examined are evidence of a shifting conversation between medium, maker and audience. Whether in the form of postcard, painting, stereoscope, photograph or linocut, the nature of the images studied in this thesis is such that they are both experiential and performative. All works have been effectively “framed:” the maker must choose what to portray, and they do so in accordance with what their technology will allow. At the same time, their decisions are informed by what they deem most pleasing according to contemporary standards—what the intended audience is believed to prefer. Separate entities are interacting, engaged in a continual exchange of sending and receiving. Associated with the relay of information, the images act as visual accompaniment to travels or stories performed by individuals.

The images of the Lachine Rapids are valuable as historical objects. In our time, they tell us a story of the past. However, as this thesis has discussed, the images are modified. In this thesis, we have questioned why such modifications were necessary. As images produced by a specific group of people, they are reflections upon the culture that created them. However, although a tourist’s experience is largely constructed, there is no real memory to counter to the supposedly false memory of the visitor. No one person will have the same reaction to an image, and those personal interactions are impossible to record.

This thesis begins at the most obvious and preliminary point—the objects themselves. By examining formal qualities of the works, one may note similarities and

differences, trends that may modify over time. In Chapter One, we examine the objects face to face. Choosing examples that were most representative of what was available, the chapter traces the chronological lineage of formal portrayal. For the most part, the images are laid out according to consistent formal standards, modifying in accordance to the technology used to create them. Noting such trends in representation, the chapter has laid out particular questions as to why such choices were made. Considering technological capabilities, comparing with similar images from the same time period, and by investigating potential political agendas associated with each image, the chapter has fleshed out formal qualities.

Using this chapter as a base, the remaining chapters placed the works within the time from which they derive. If an individual chooses a postcard with the Lachine Rapids on it, the symbolic value of the image must be taken into account. That is to say, the choice is motivated, not arbitrary. The answer as to why these motivations exist lies with the intended audience-- what visual language did they speak?

Chapter Two places the images within a cultural context that explores major sociopolitical changes during the time that the images were created, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Significant developments in technology, communication, and social hierarchy created an environment that allowed such imagery to develop. As was discussed, the nineteenth century was a period of major social and technological upheaval. The Industrial Revolution brought with it a new social class with disposable income. As well, the development of the steam engine allowed for readily available and relatively inexpensive methods of travel. Tourism flourished. At the same time, mass

produced imagery came to the forefront. Individuals were not only able to visit a greater variety of locations, they were able to collect visual representations of their travels.

These travels were place-based; relating to a specific location. Therefore, Chapter Three devotes itself to a study of how the Lachine Rapids developed as a wilderness location in relationship to Montreal. Of particular importance was the dichotomy of urban and natural. The paired terms signify an inseparable condition, a belief that the landscape is both the product of cultural forces and a powerful agent in the production of culture. The landscape representations become important documents for understanding the development of national, social, and personal identities.

The study further investigates how images were modified and why. To do so, it considers the use of the images as a mirror for projecting the memories and experiences of riding through the rapids. To modify the works after production, as with the composites, allows the images to move toward a more imaginary representation of the Lachine Rapids experience. Yet, this representation is arguably more “real” for the viewer than in circumstances where they would view relatively staid images as are found later in the catalogue. Geared toward tourists, and deriving from a romantic aesthetic background—the images are modified to what would be considered more acceptable. To compound this study, the final chapter looks at developments in imaging technology that were occurring at that time—mainly the use of film-like devices that were to be found at world fairs, eventually making their way to Montreal. The modification of the image is a desire to move beyond the capabilities of the available medium, to capture an experience.

As an object-based study, one must begin with the objects themselves and move outward. However, as with any work, limitations are necessarily imposed. These boundaries may be voluntary or involuntary. Unfortunately, during research it is entirely possible to have completely missed images of the Lachine Rapids. It is my suspicion that several more works exist beyond what I have been able to find. I invite others to expand upon my catalogue, and would recommend moving into other periods of representation other than those covered in this thesis. Several works may be found in the form of modern day Internet videos and photos of speedboat rafting, as well as kayaking excursions.

Another unavoidable aspect of writing is the interference of my own personal act of framing. When I approach the works, I bring my own personal biases as a 21st century Western researcher. Despite my attempts at remaining objective, it is impossible to write a history that is not modified by my own personal perception. Quite obviously, I was not present at the time these images were created. I cannot say how people viewed these images, I can only build an argument based on research.

Several aspects of this thesis merit more thorough investigation. This thesis has focused on 19th century works, centering on the activities of a mostly Western, white population. I believe it would be of great interest to pursue more deeply representations of aboriginals in relation to these images, with further inquiry into the concept of the “Noble Savage.” In addition, I recommend a more in-depth look into the more philosophical aspects that this thesis has only touched upon—the concepts of the real, and of the experiential.

The Lachine Rapids are a constant geographical companion to nearby Montreal. The history of their relationship alternates between one of struggle and one of amity. At first a considerable barrier to travel, this same natural obstruction helped Montreal to develop as a major point of distribution for shipping. The introduction of a canal system, coupled with developments in shipping technology, made it so that the rapids could be easily passed. This did not lessen the value of the site. Rather, it encouraged a perception of the location as having an inherently aesthetic and romantic value. The landscape became a mirror onto which were projected concepts of place, beauty, leisure, and commerce. Images of the rapids embodied, reinforced and catered to these sentiments.

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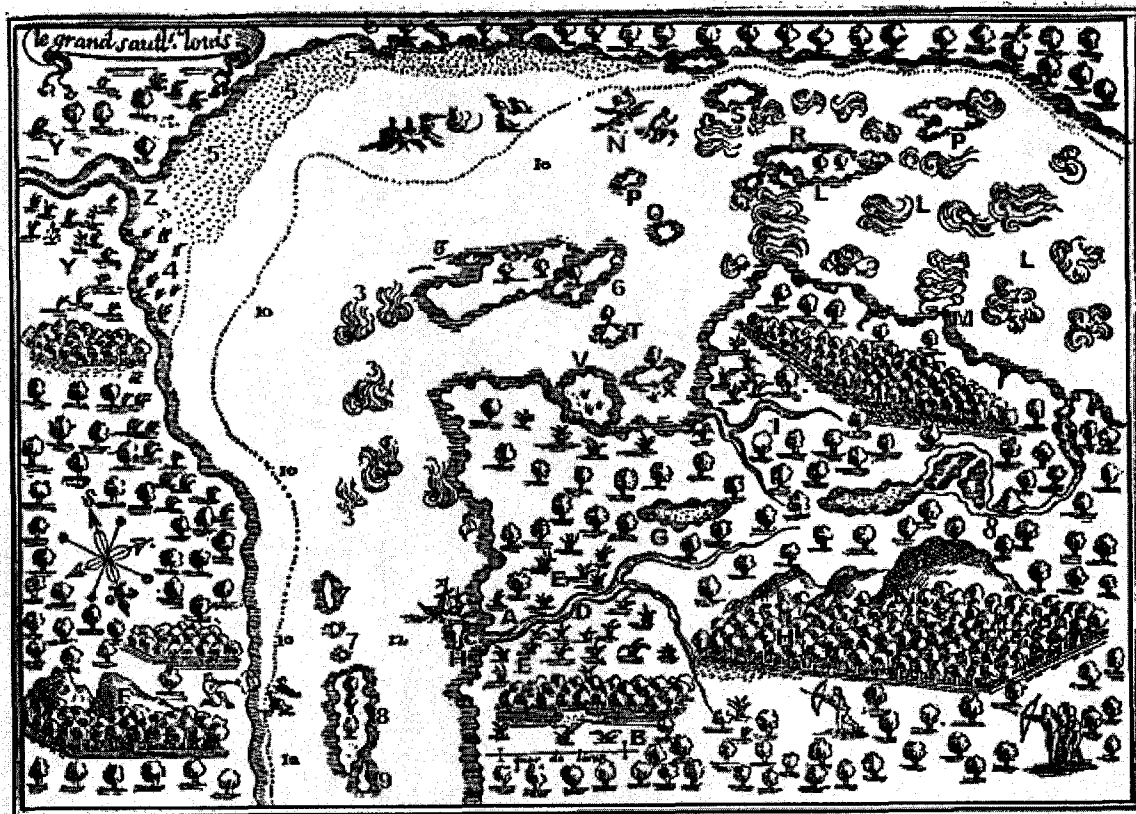


Figure 1

"Les Grand Sault Saint Louis." Map.

Samuel de Champlain

C.H. Laverdière. Les Oeuvres de Champlain. (Montreal: Laval University, 1870) 396a.

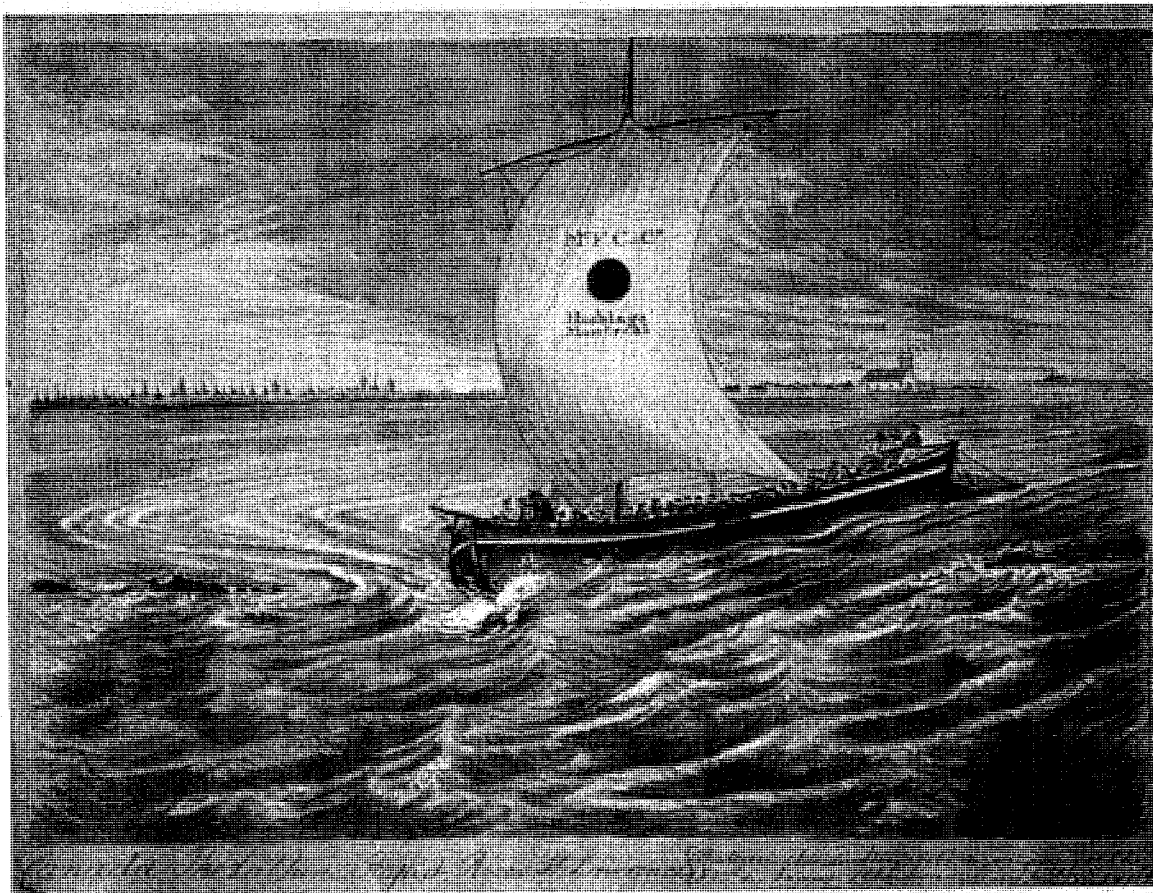


Figure 2
"Boats Descending the Lachine Rapids, May 24, 1843." watercolour
Henry Francis Ainslie
Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1955-129-6



Figure 3

“Shooting the Rapids.” Oil on canvas

Frances Anne Hopkins, c. 1879

National Archives of Canada (1989-401-2X; C-2774)



Figure 4
“Lachine Rapids, Indian Pilot Baptiste.” Print, based on drawing
published in *New Views of Canada*, 1884
Massicote collection, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec



Figure 5
“Lachine Rapids, Indian Pilot Baptiste.” Print, based on drawing
published in *New Views of Canada*, 1890
Massicote collection, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

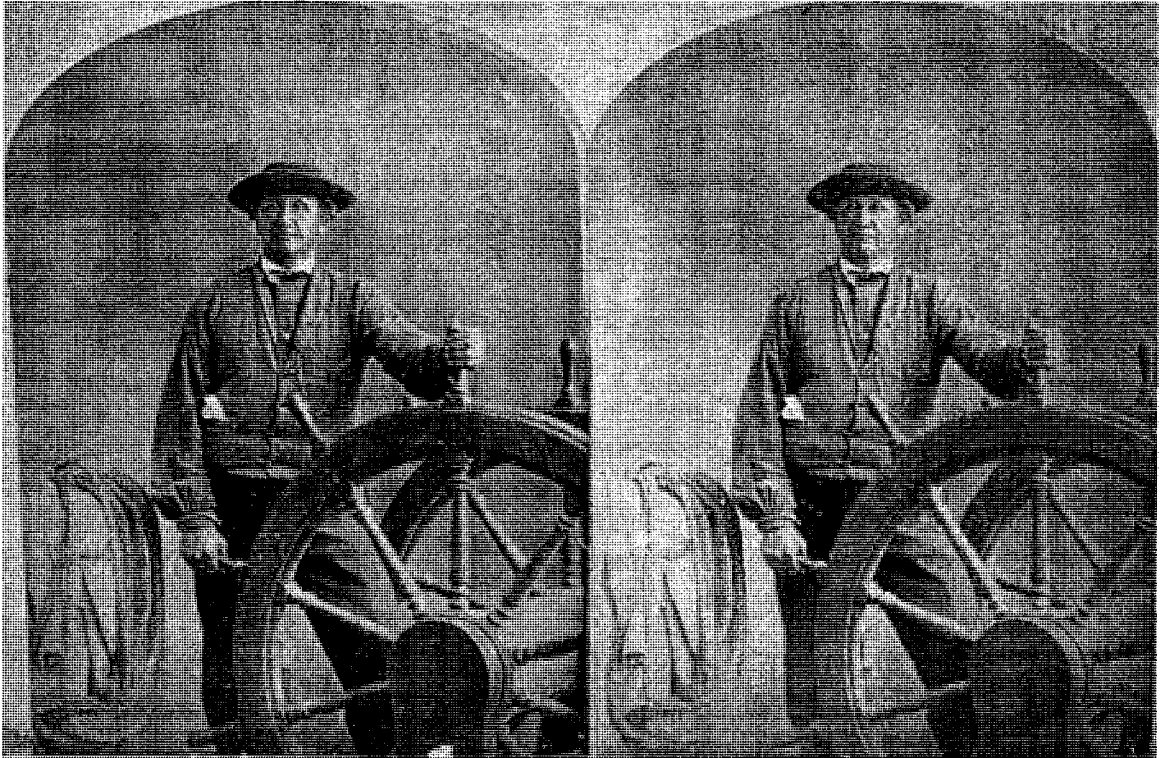


Figure 6

“Baptiste Taiaiake, the Native who piloted a Richelieu steamer down the Lachine Rapids.” Photograph

William Notman, 1868

Library and Archives Canada PA-195139



Figure 7
"Jean Baptiste Rice, river pilot, Montreal vicinity, QC, about 1890" Photograph.
Anonymous
About 1890, 19th century
McCord Museum MP-0000.933.5



Figure 8
“Big John and party shooting Lachine Rapids, near Montreal, QC.” composite
photograph
Notman & Sandham, 1878
McCord Museum II-50718.5

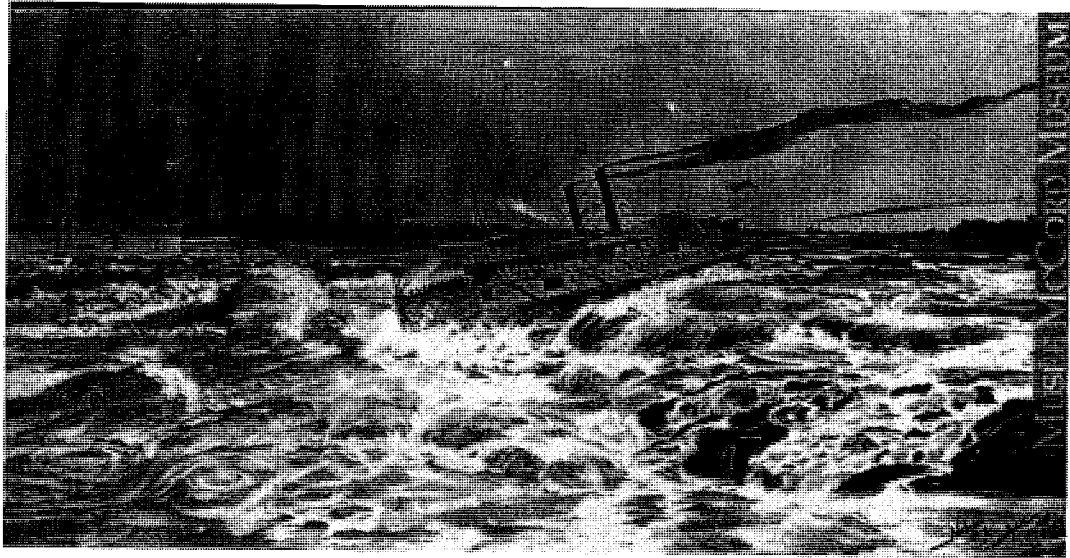


Figure 9
"S.S. "Corsican" in Lachine Rapids, QC." composite photograph
Notman & Sandham, 1878, copied in 1902
McCord Museum N-0000.25.1084

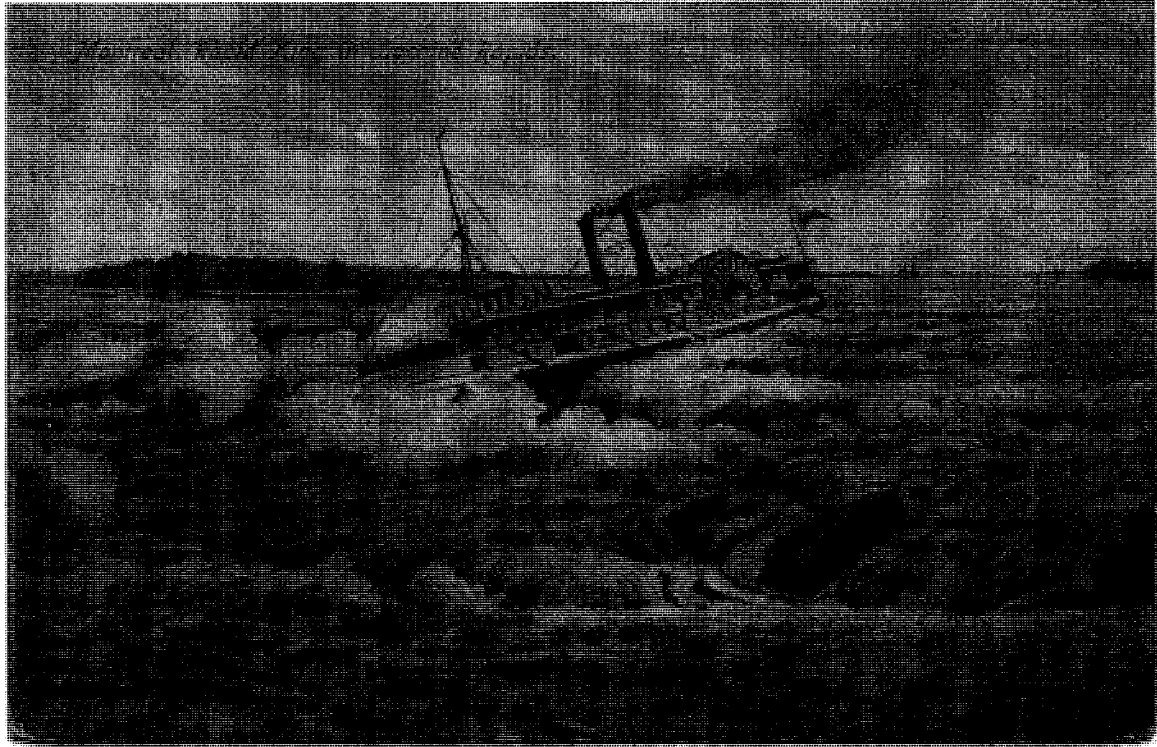


Figure 10
"Montreal. RAPIDS KING in Lachine Rapids." Postcard.
William Notman, published by Novelty Mfg. & Art Printing Co. 1911
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

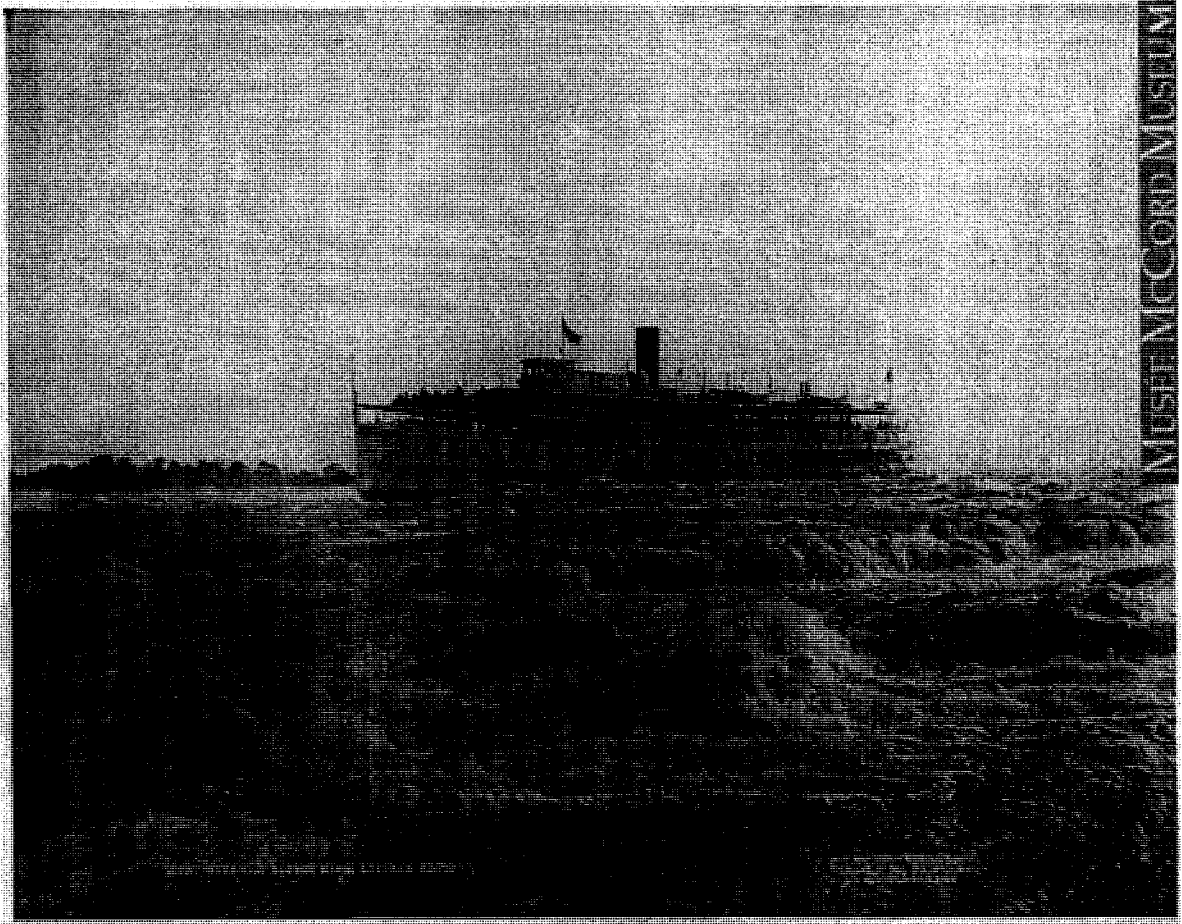


Figure 11
“S.S. "Rapids King" running Lachine Rapids, QC, 1901.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1901
McCord Museum VIEW-4270

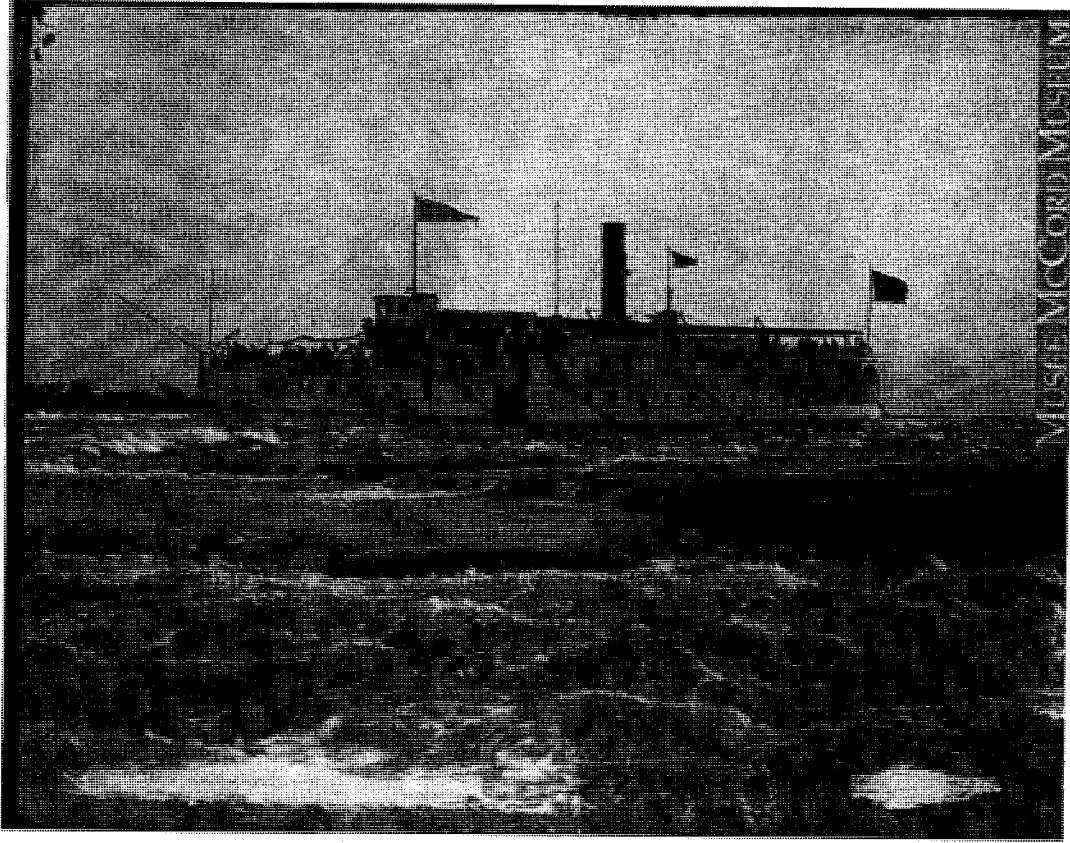


Figure 12
"S.S. "Brockville" running Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4207

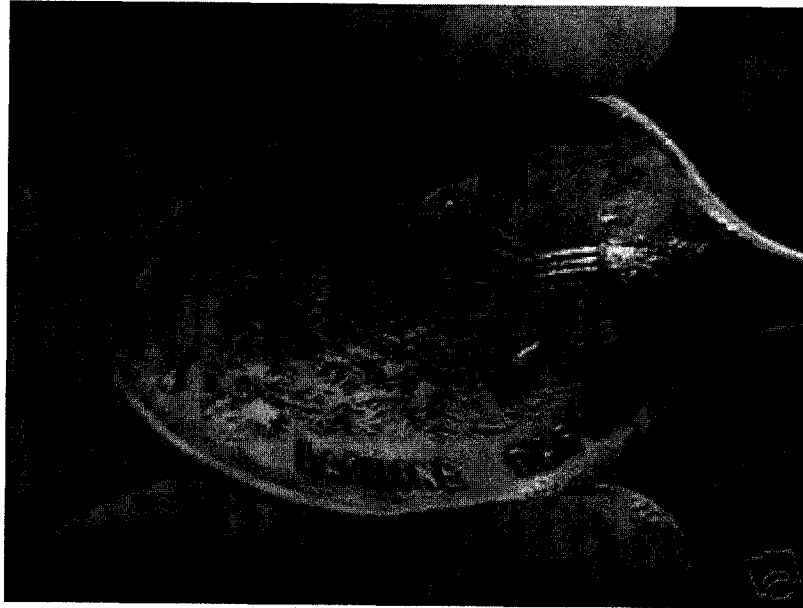


Figure 13a

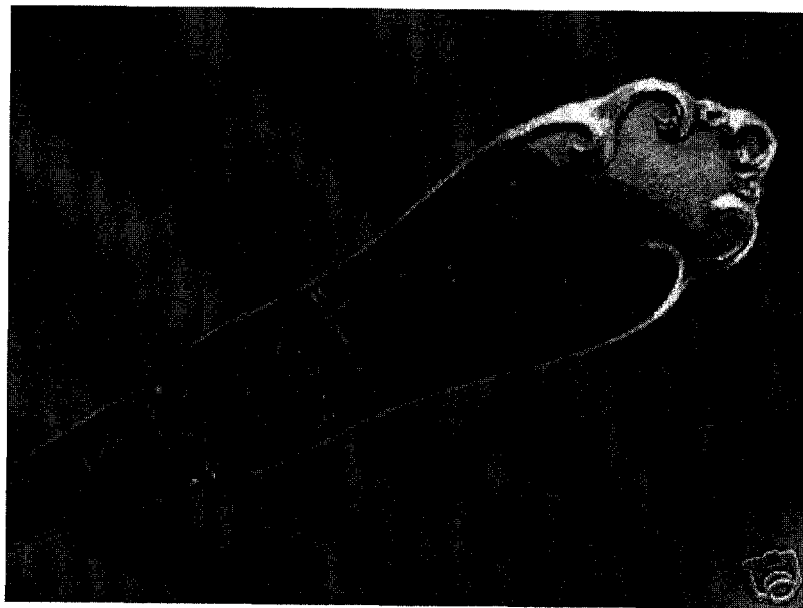


Figure 13b

Figures 13a, 13b
Untitled. Silver souvenir Spoon.
Date unknown. Manufacturer unknown.
Ebay

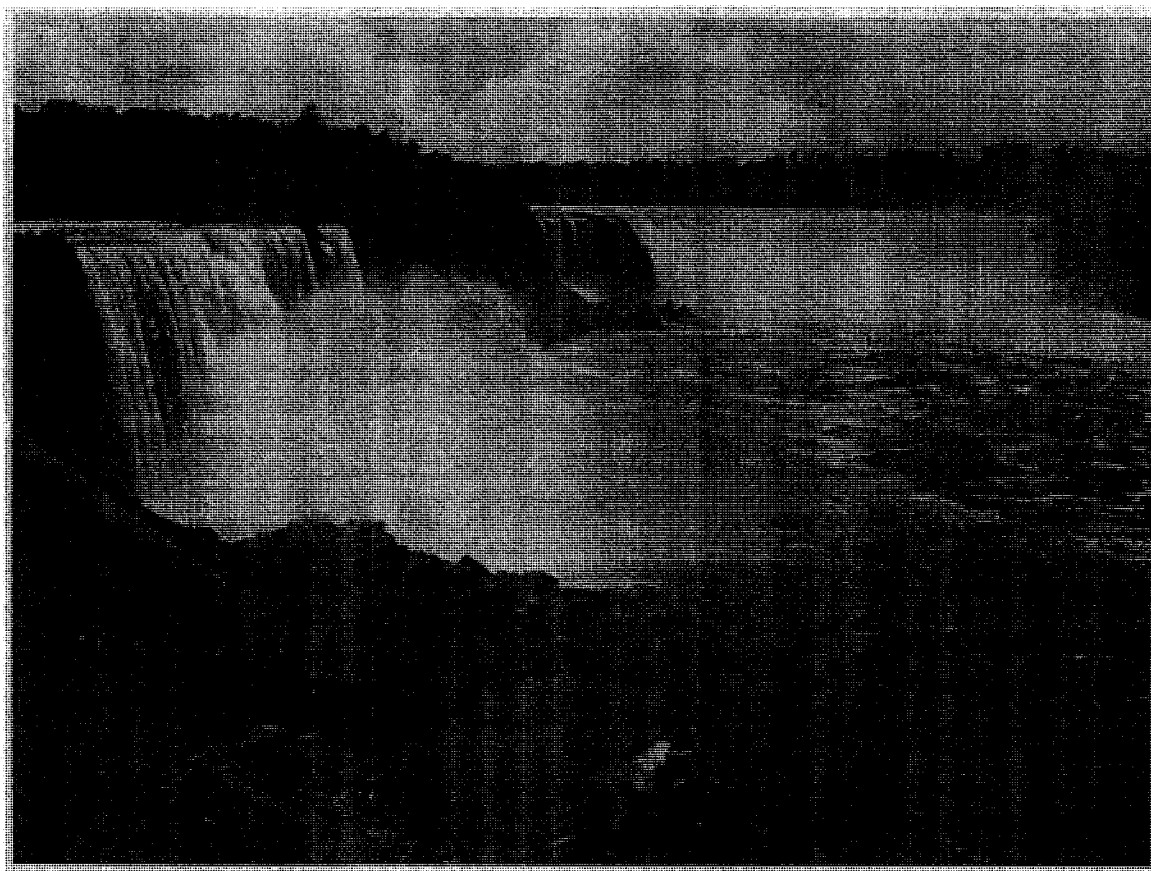


Figure 14

“Maid of the Mist and Niagara Falls.” Photograph

Illustration from J. B. Mansfield (ed.), History of the Great Lakes (vol I),
Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1899

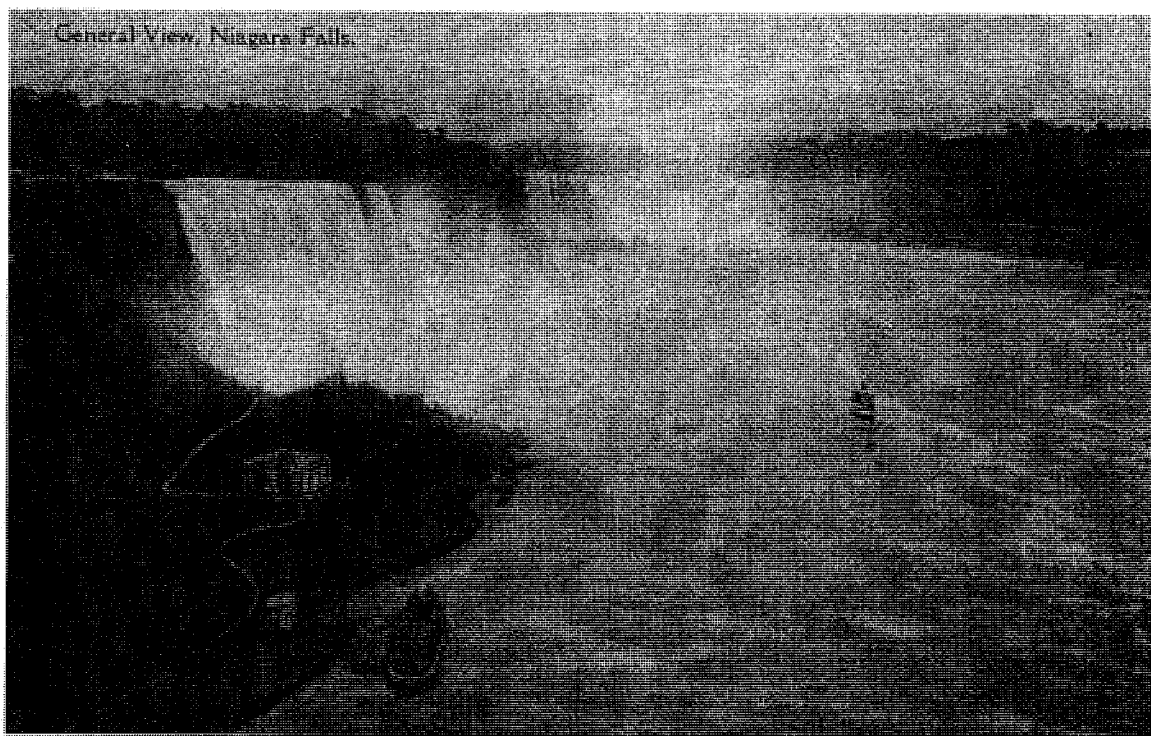


Figure 15
"General View, Niagara Falls." Postcard
Harris Litho. Co. Limited, Toronto, c1906
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive



Figure 16
"Niagara Falls, ON, about 1860." Photograph
William Notman, 1863
McCord Museum, I-6692.0

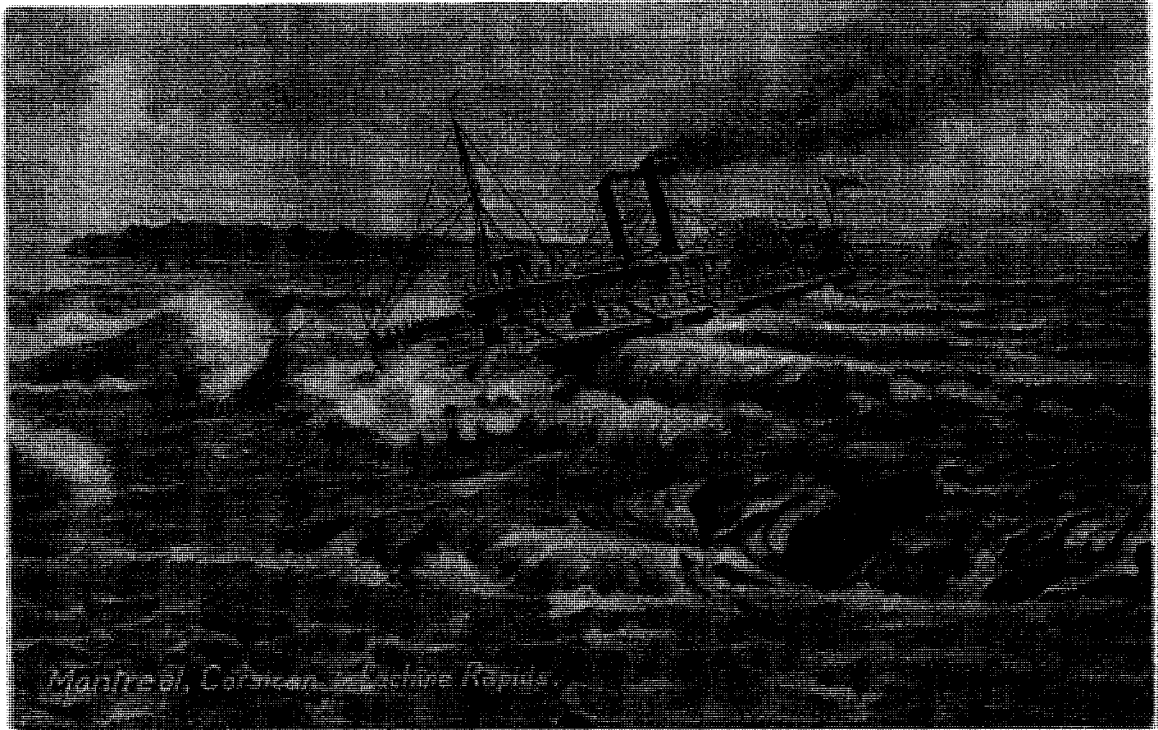


Figure 17

“Montreal, Corsican Lachine Rapids.” Composite image, postcard.

Image by Notman, distributed by Illustrated Postcard Co., Montreal, c.1904

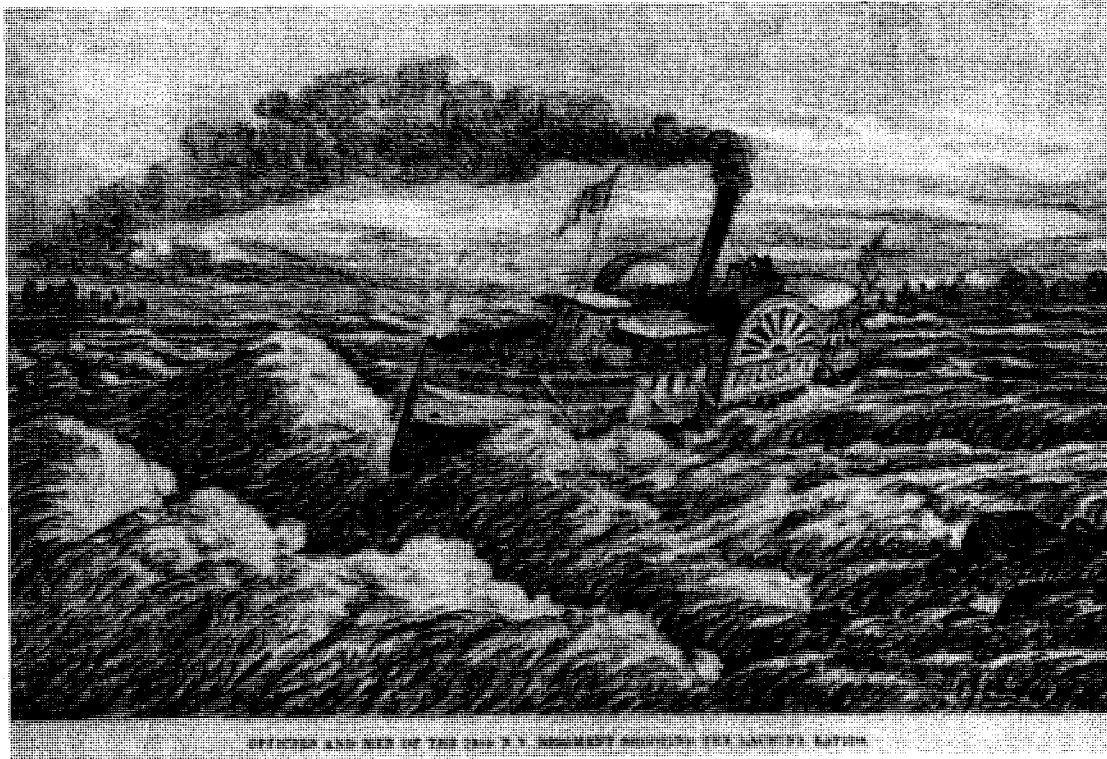


Figure 18

“Officers and Men of the 13th N.Y. Regiment Shooting the Lachine Rapids [Celebration of the Queen's Birthday at Montreal].” Print.

Canadian Illustrated News. vol.XIX, no. 22, 341. 31 May 1879

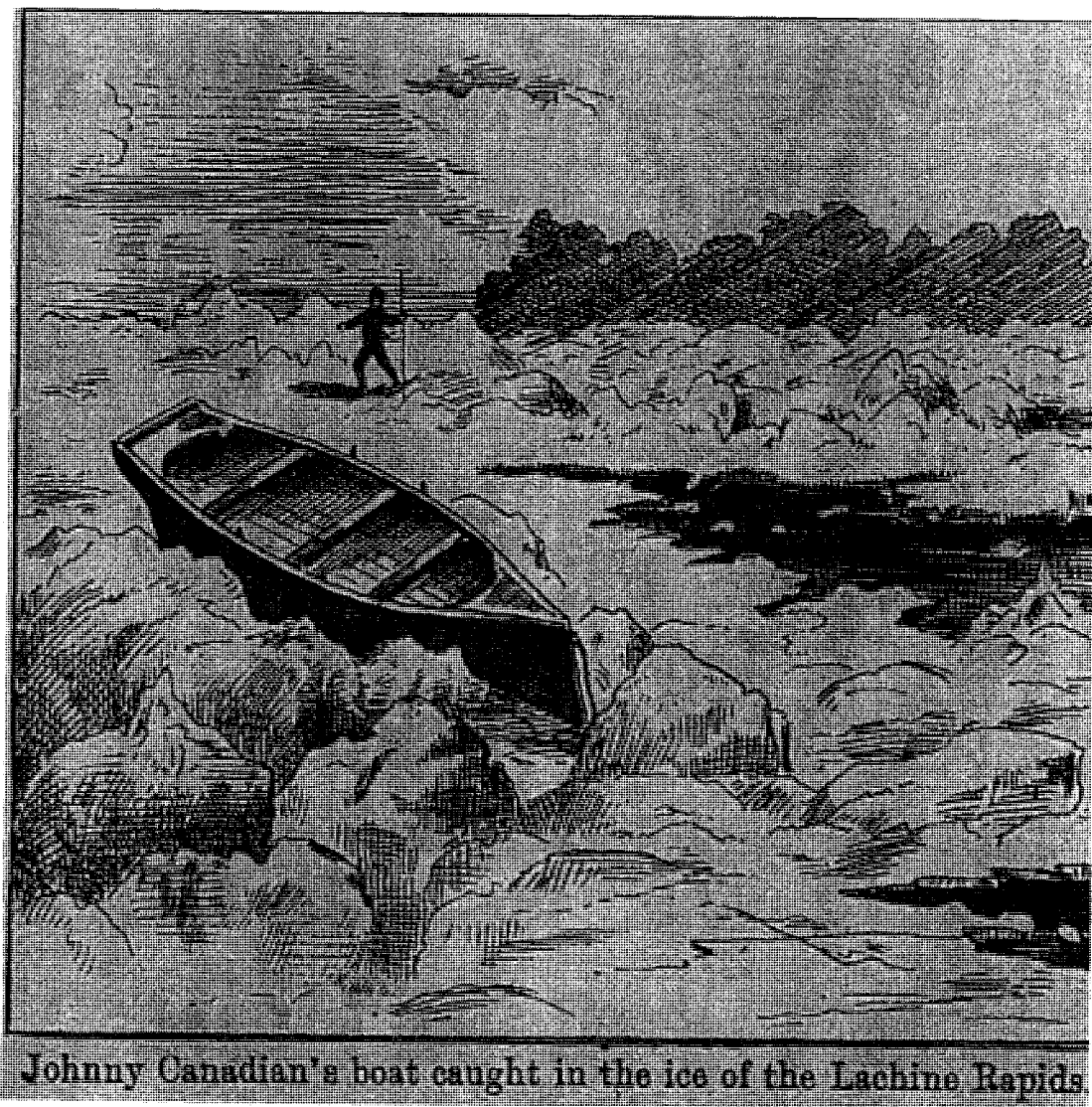


Figure 19
"Johnny Canadian's Boat Caught in the ice of the Lachine Rapids [Incidents of the Week]." Print.
Canadian Illustrated News. vol.XIX, no. 14, 212. 05 April 1879

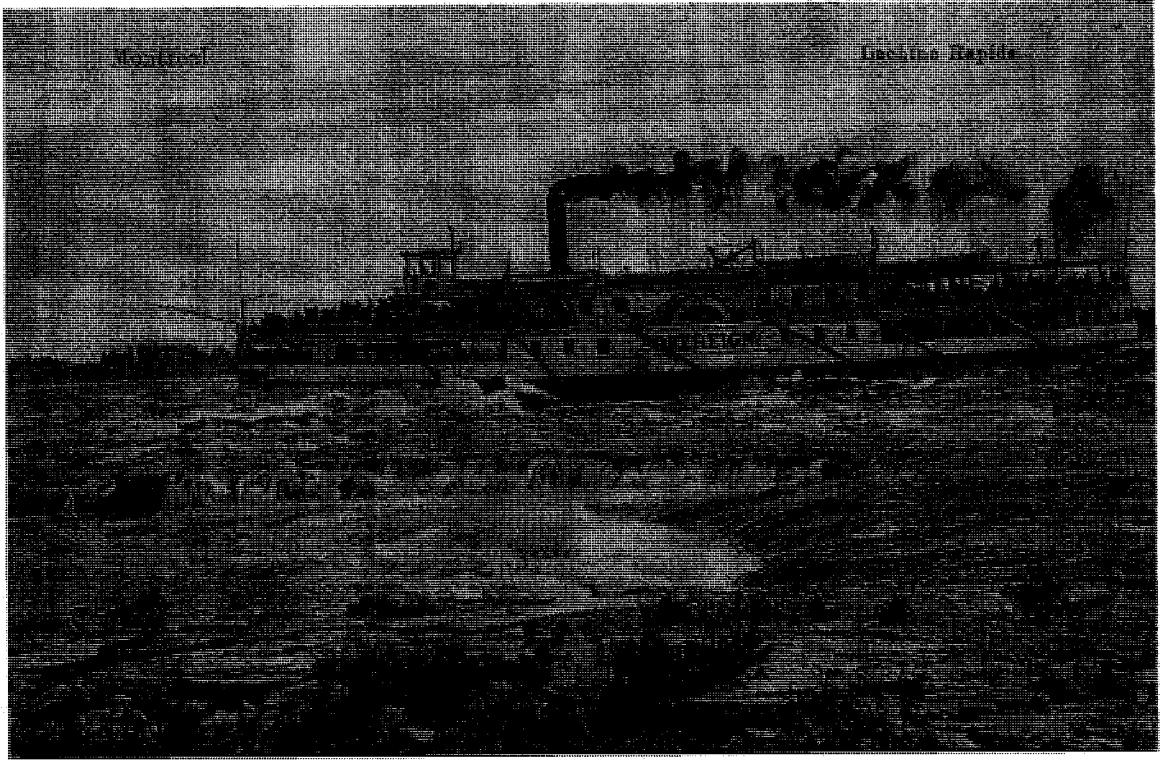


Figure 20
"Montreal Lachine Rapids." Postcard.
Montreal Import Co., Montreal, c. 1907
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

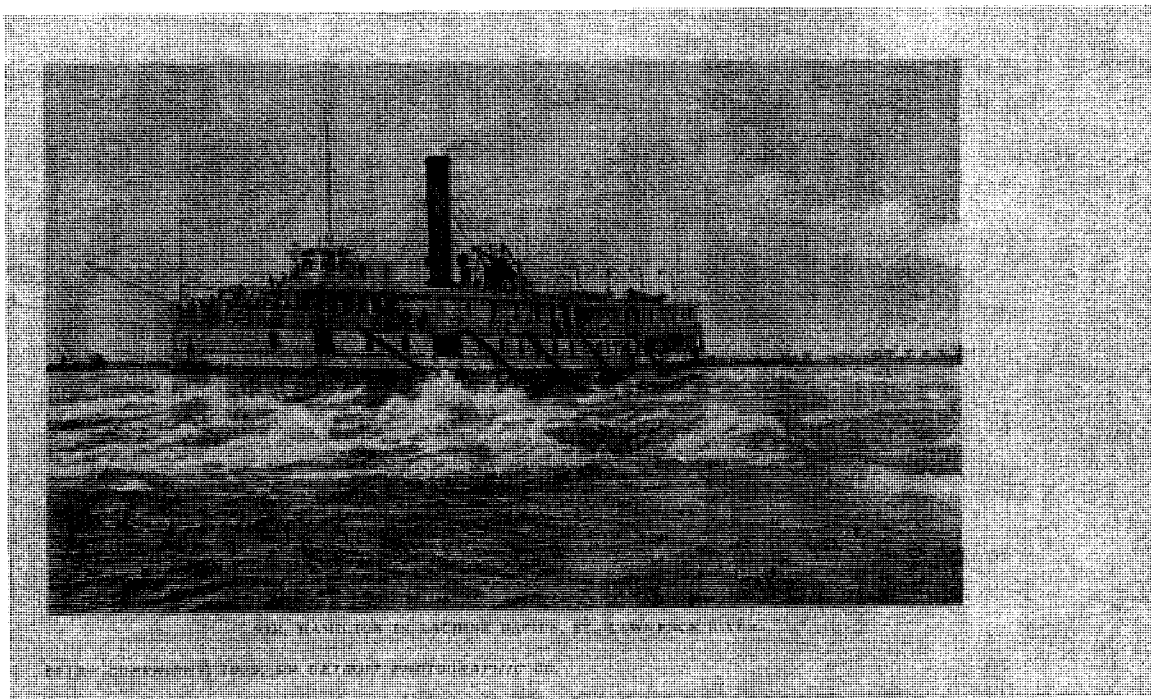


Figure 21

“Str. Hamilton in Lachine Rapids, St. Lawrence River.” Postcard.

Detroit Photographic Co., 1902

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

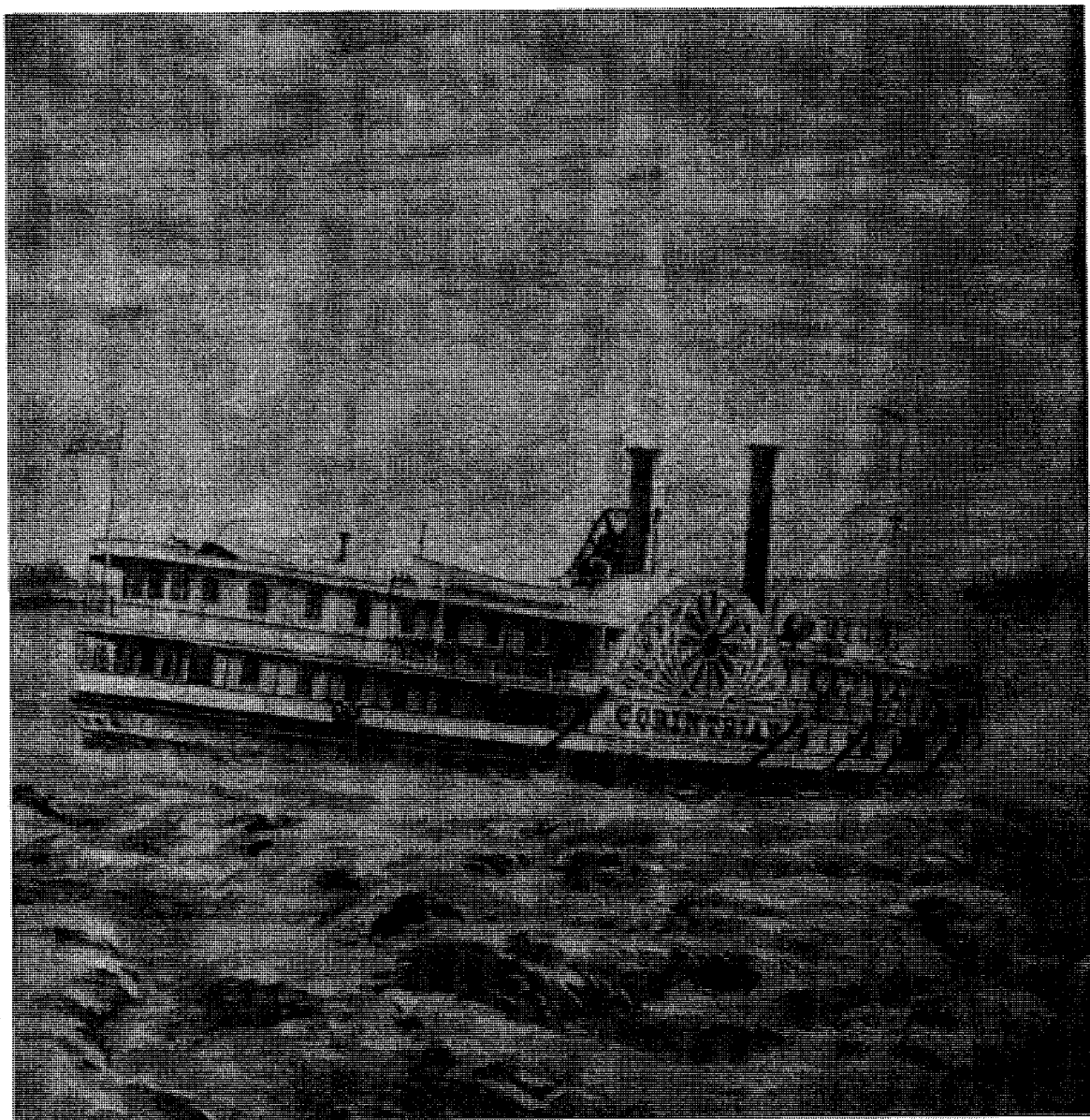


Figure 22
"Steamboat Corinthian." Stereoview.
J. G. Parks, Montreal. ca 1875-1882
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

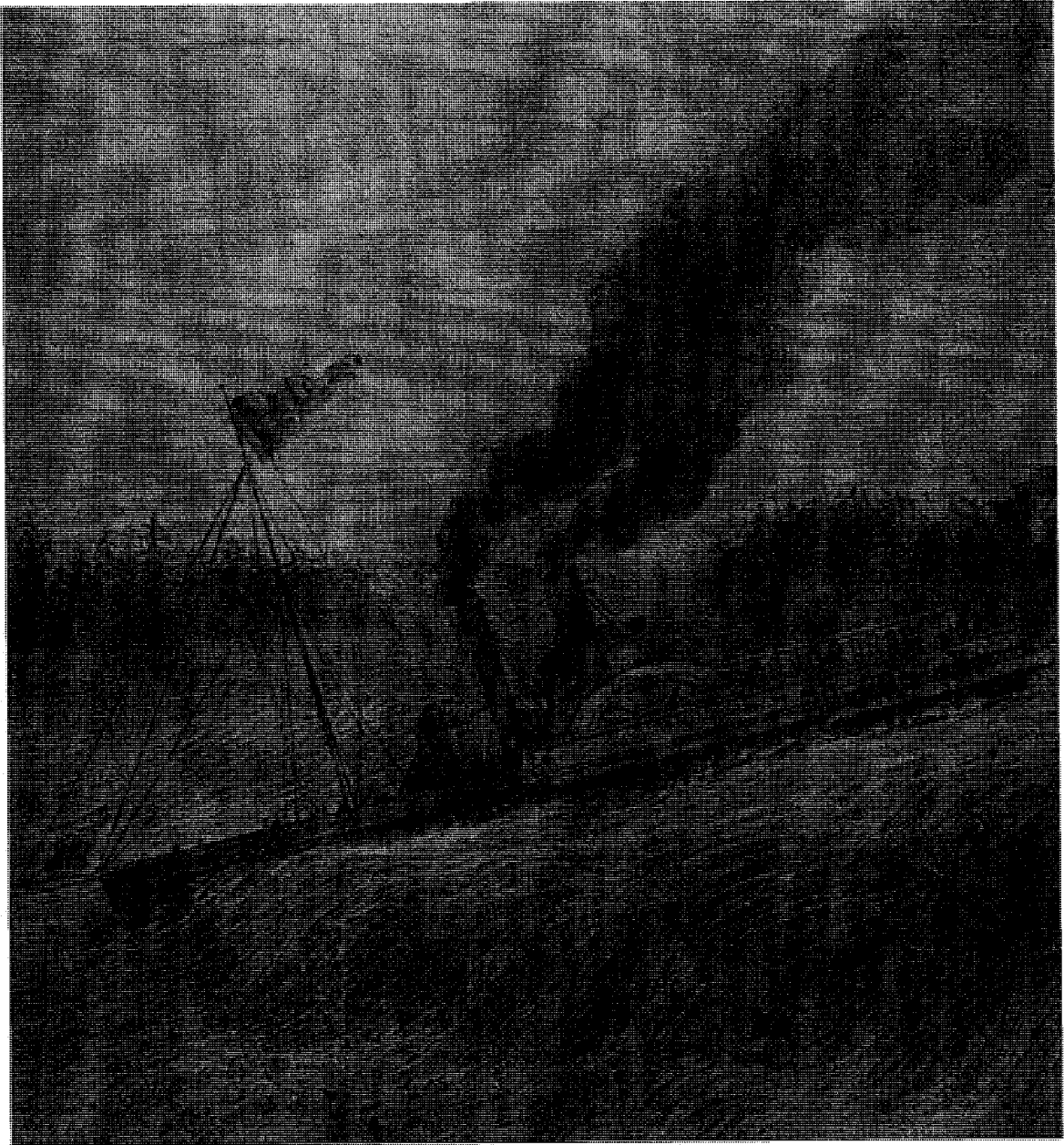


Figure 23

“Steamboat running the Lachine Rapids above Montreal.” Stereoview.

C. R. Chisholm & Bros. Montreal. c 1870

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive



Figure 24

“Running the Lachine Rapids on the St. Lawrence River.” Postcard.

American News Company, New York, c 1900

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

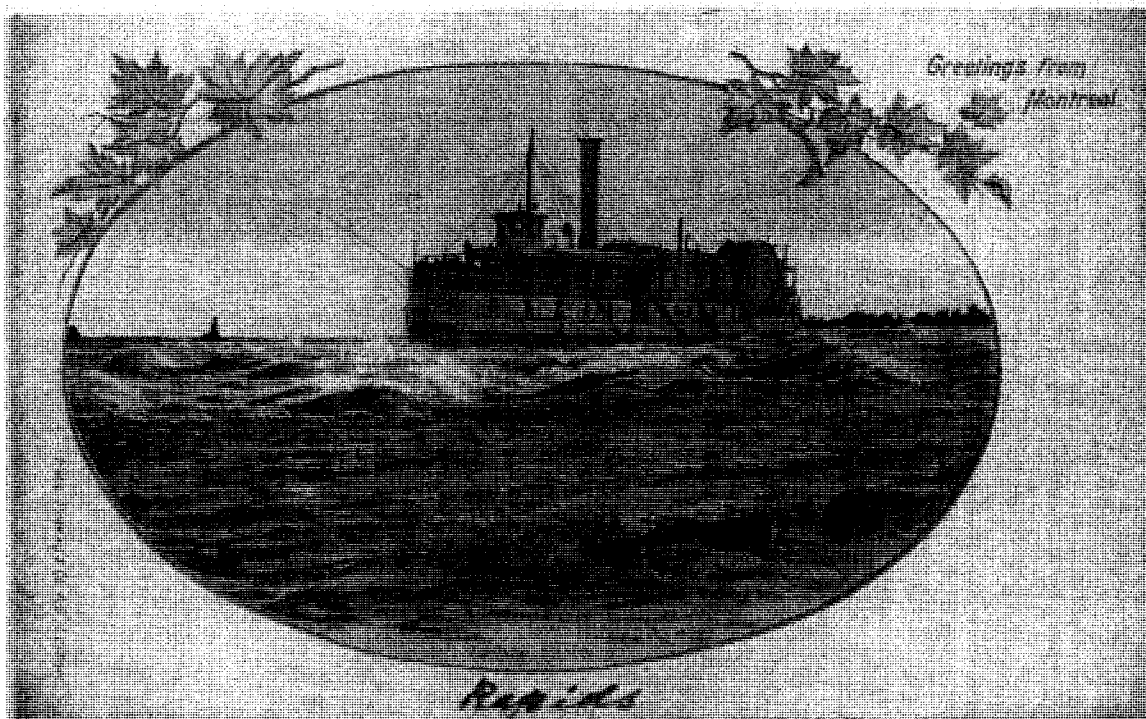


Figure 25
"Greeting from Montreal." Postcard.
Emil Pinkau & Co. A-G, Leipsic, c. 1900
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

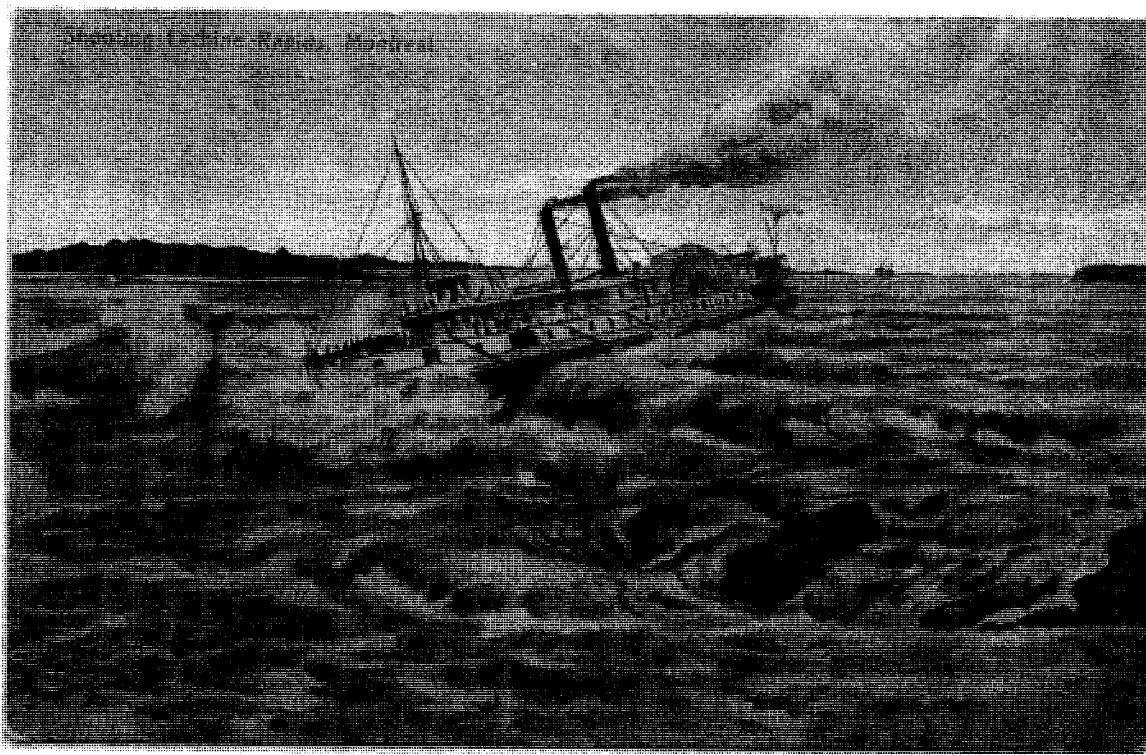


Figure 26
"Shooting Lachine Rapids, Montreal." Postcard.
William Notman, c 1904
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

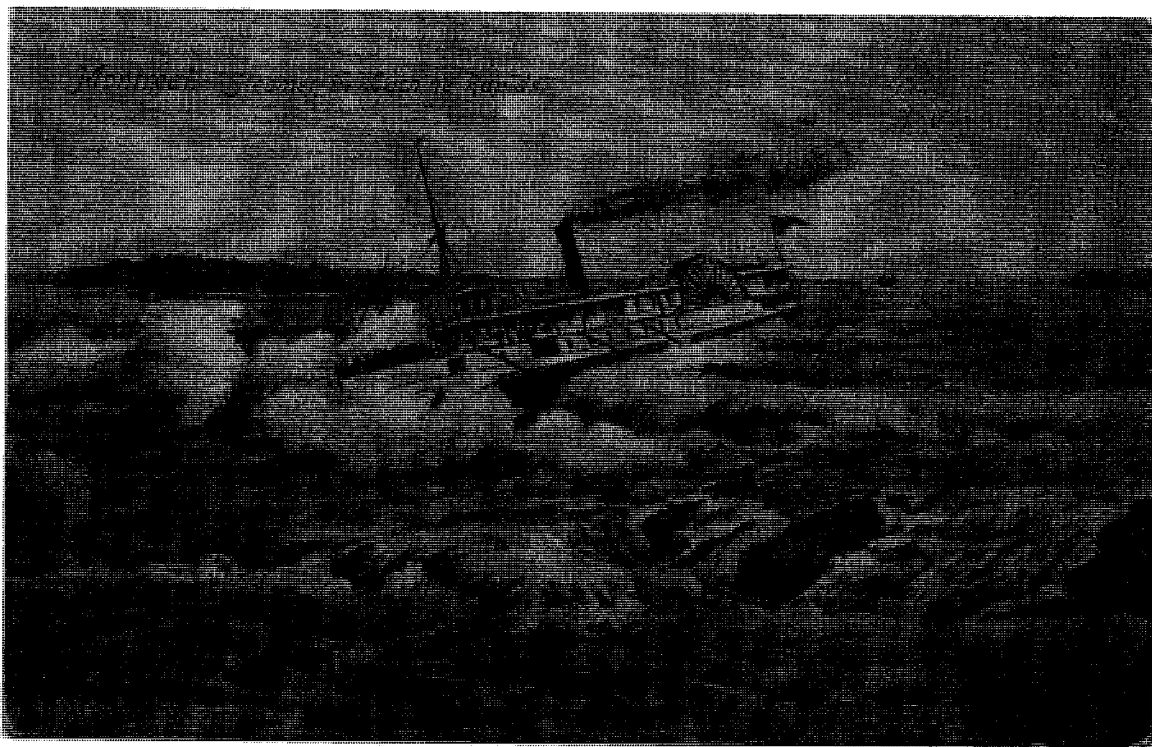


Figure 27

“Montreal. Steamer in Lachine Rapids.” Postcard.

William Notman (distributed by Novelty Manufacturing and Art Printing Co.), c. 1910
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

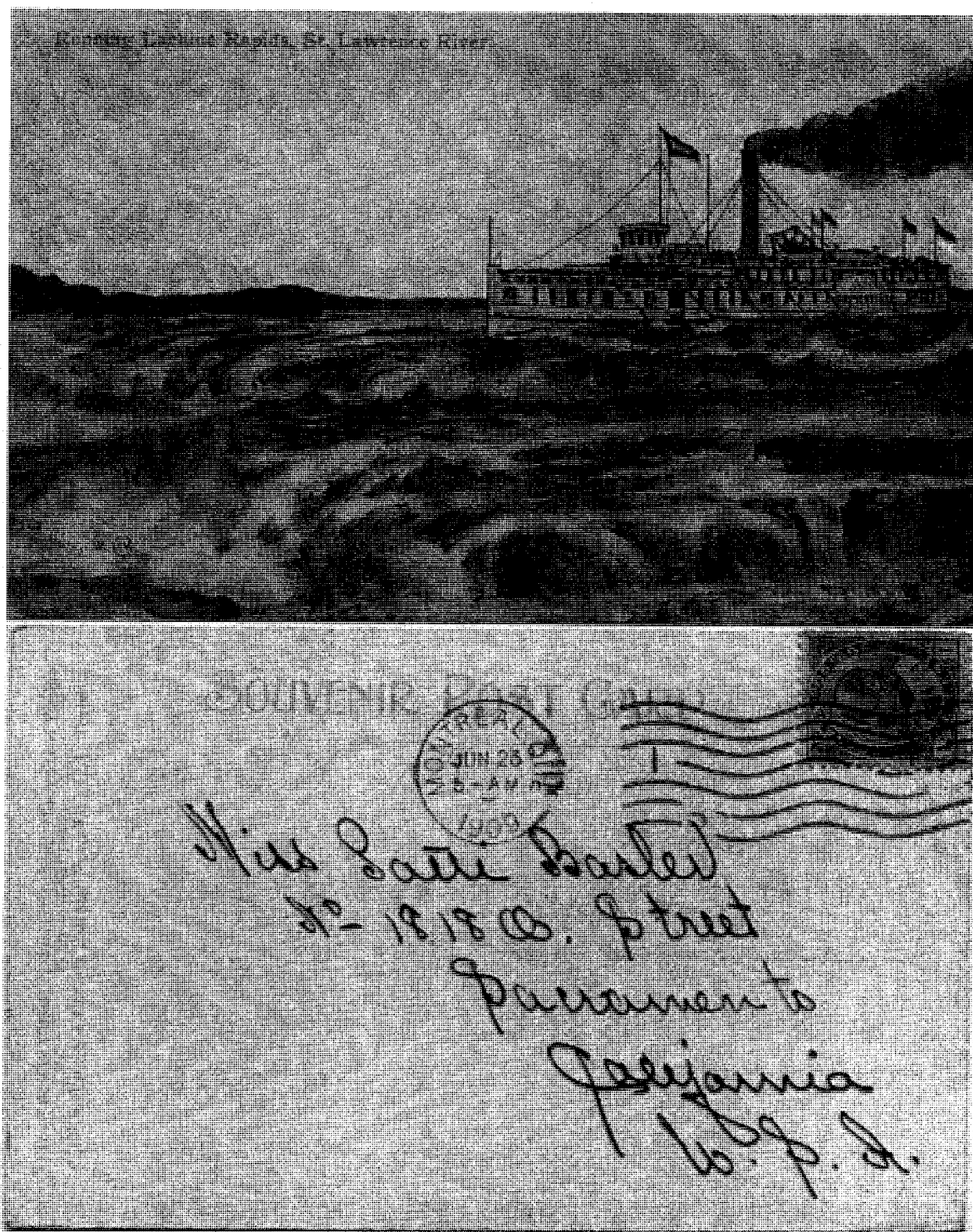


Figure 28 (and reverse)

"Running Lachine Rapids, St. Lawrence River." Postcard.

Valentine & Sons' Publishing Co., Ltd. Montreal and Toronto, c 1905

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

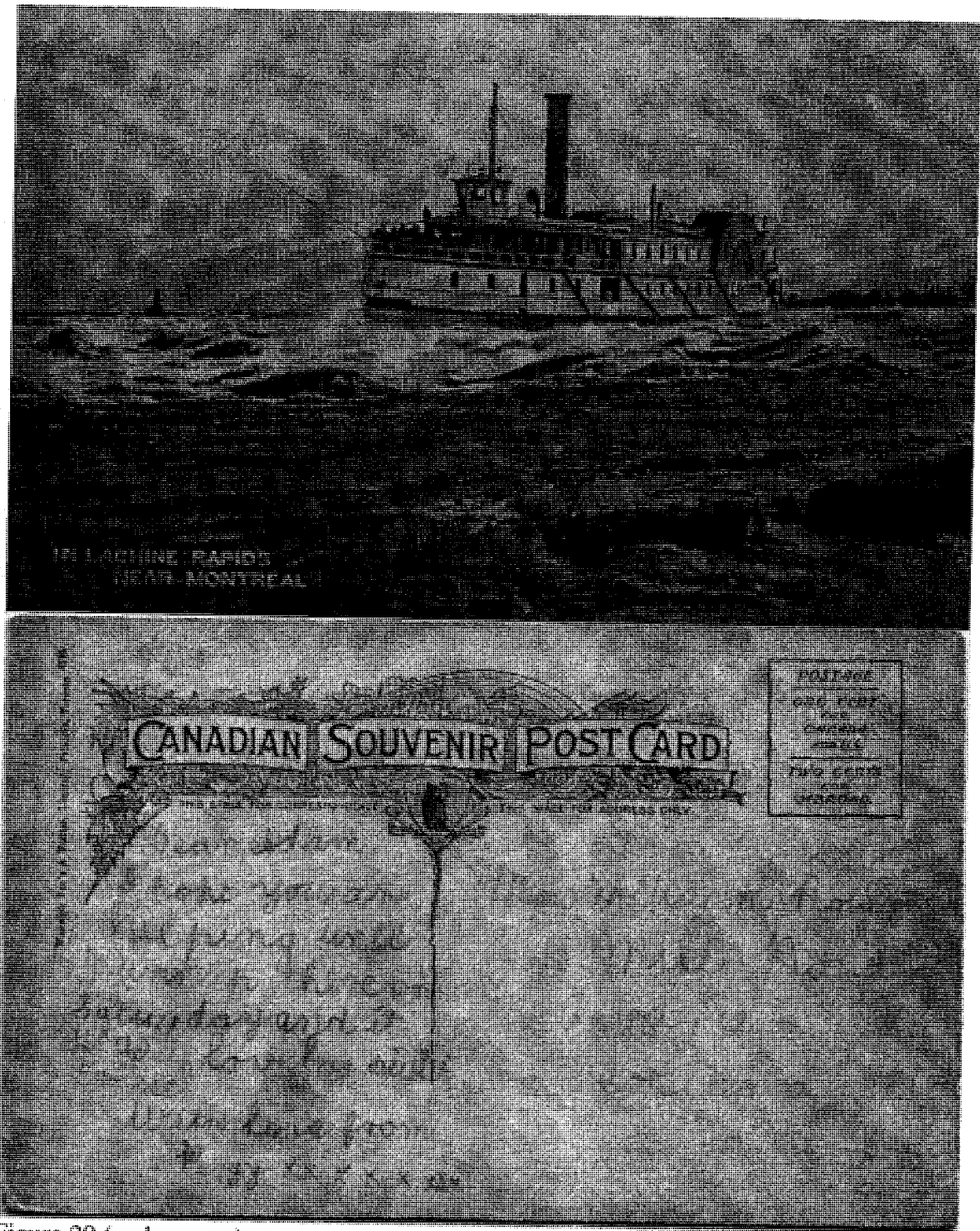


Figure 29 (and reverse)

"In Lachine Rapids near Montreal." Postcard.
 Warwick Bro's & Rutter, Limited. Toronto. no date provided.
 Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

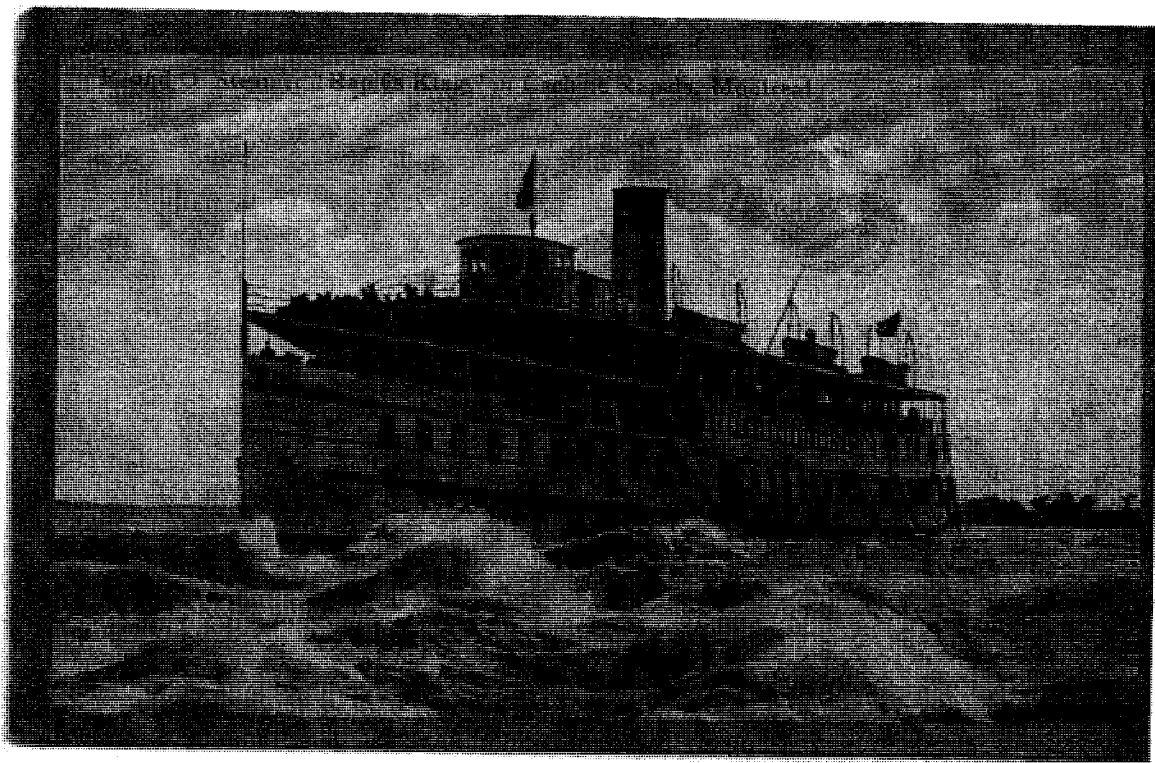


Figure 30
"R. and O. Steamer 'Rapids King' in Lachine Rapids, Montreal." Postcard.
Valentine & Sons Publishing Co., Ltd. c 1913
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

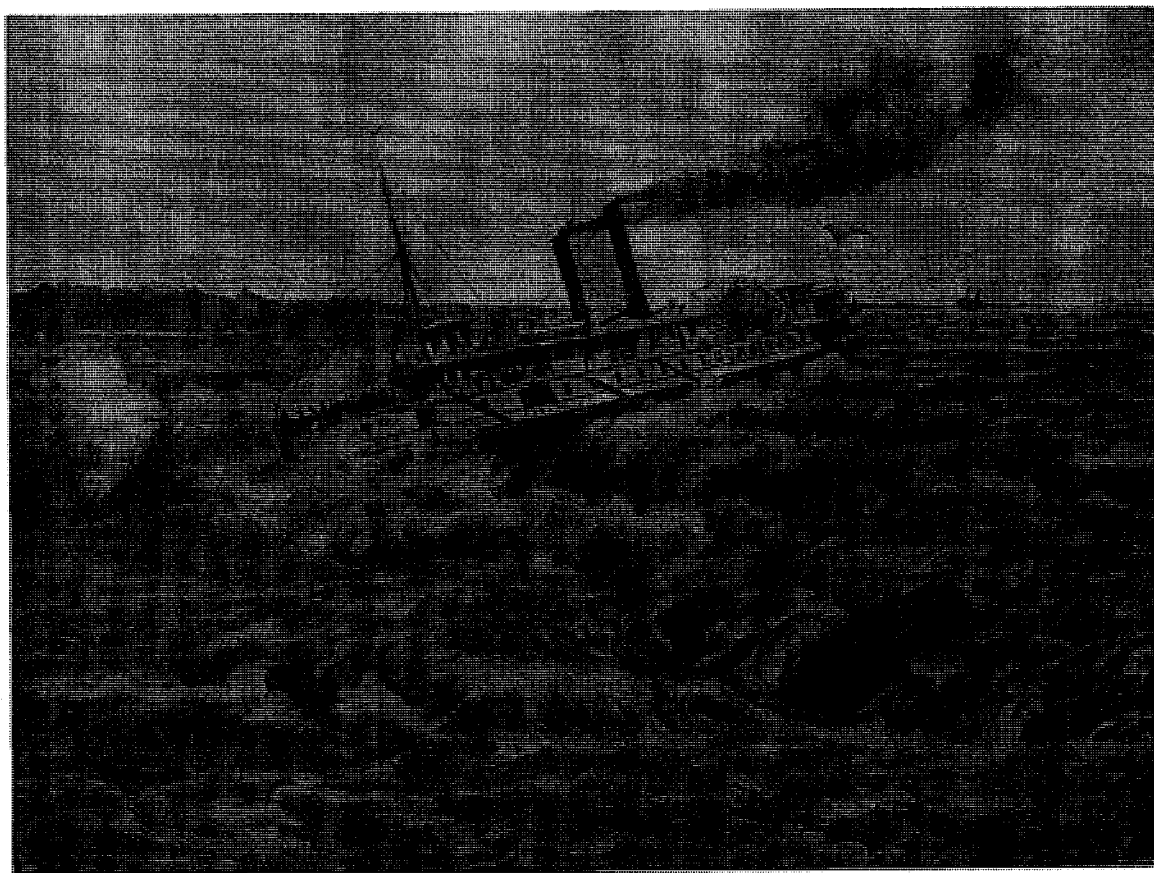


Figure 31

“Shooting the Lachine Rapids, St. Lawrence River.” Photogravure

The Werner Co., 1892 (accompanied publication)

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

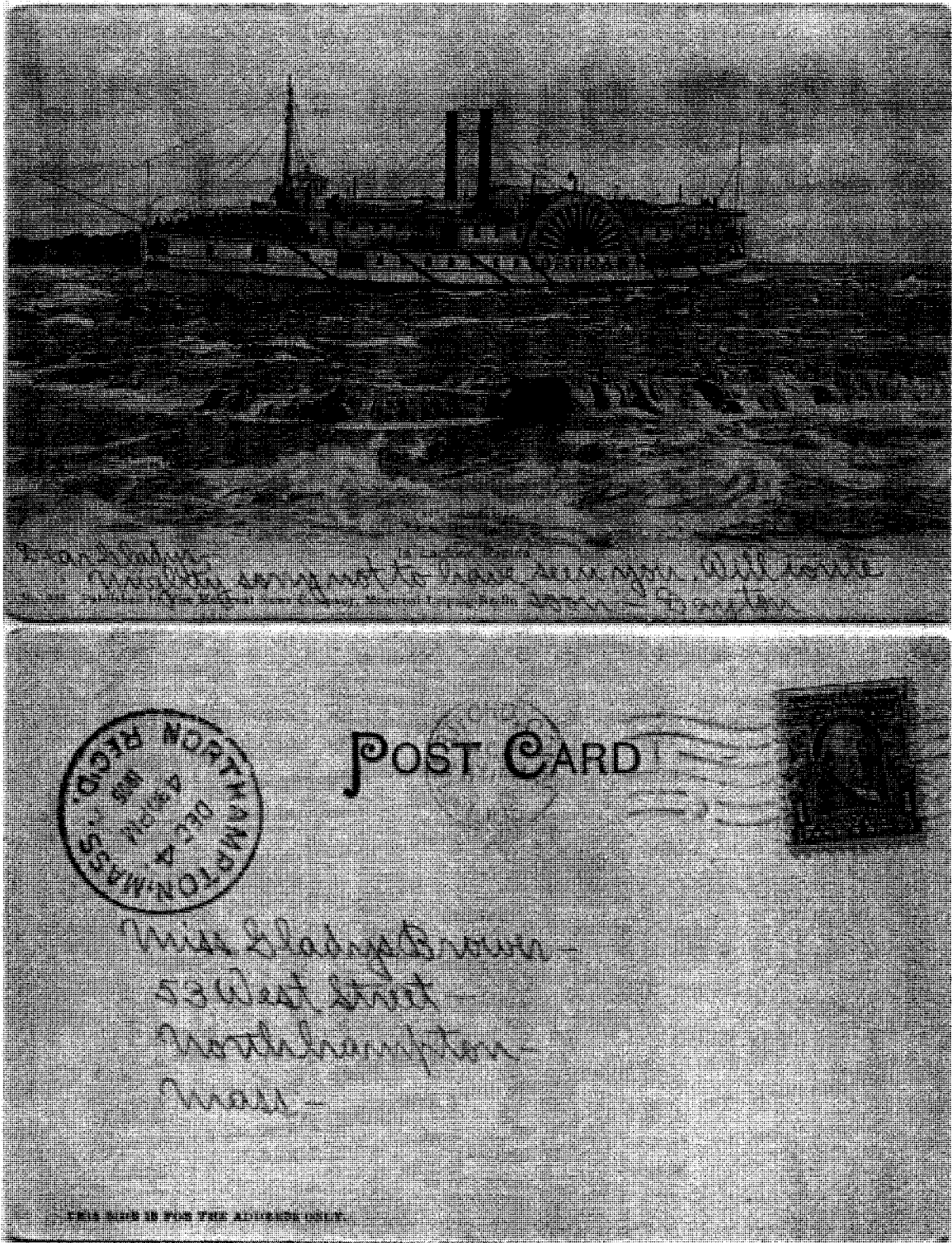


Figure 32 (and reverse)
 "In Lachine Rapids." Postcard.
 Montreal News Company, c1904
 Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

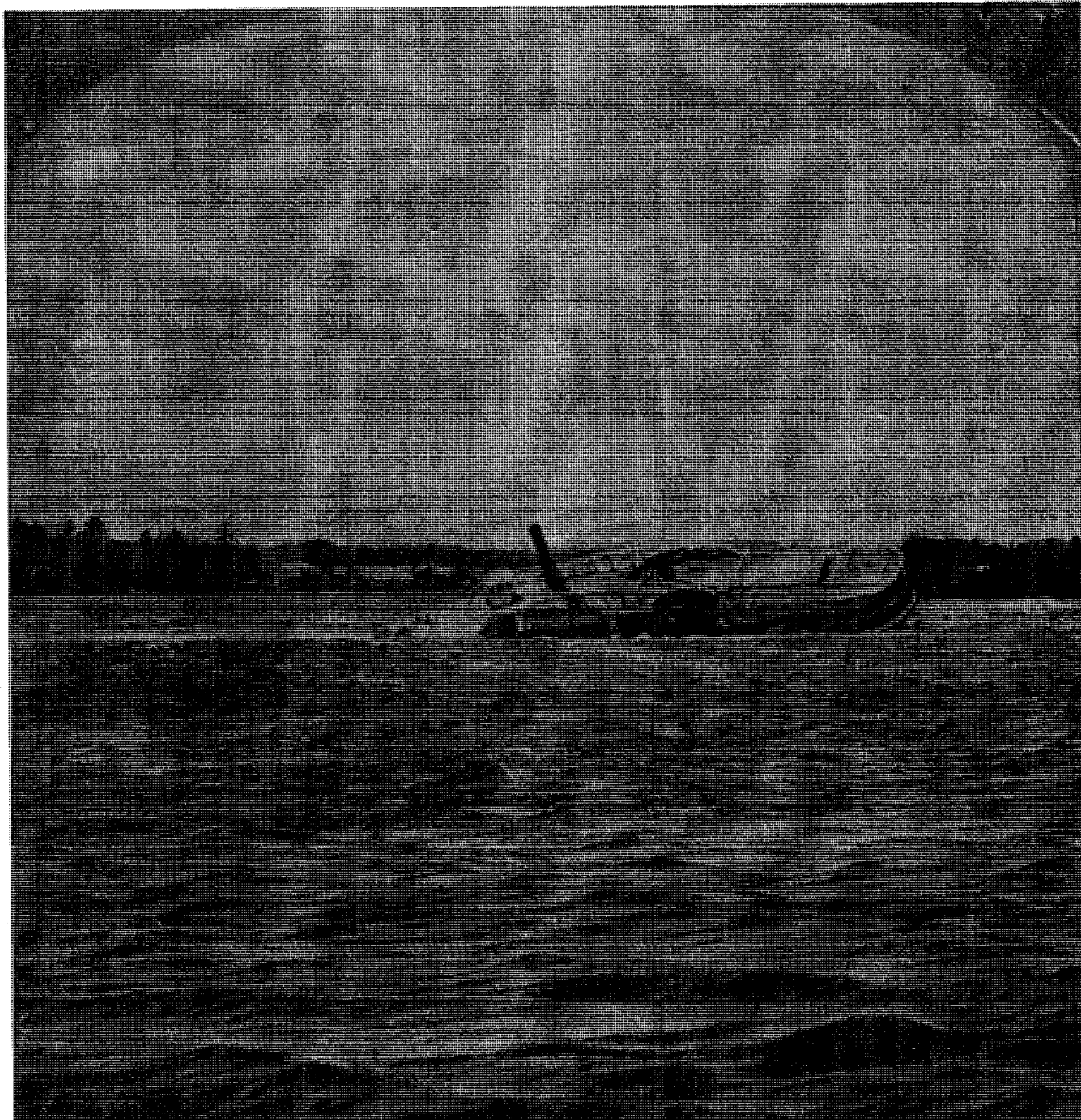


Figure 33
"No 84858 Wreck of the Steamer L. Renaud in the Lachine
Rapids, near Montreal, May 12, 1873"
W. Notman, 1873
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

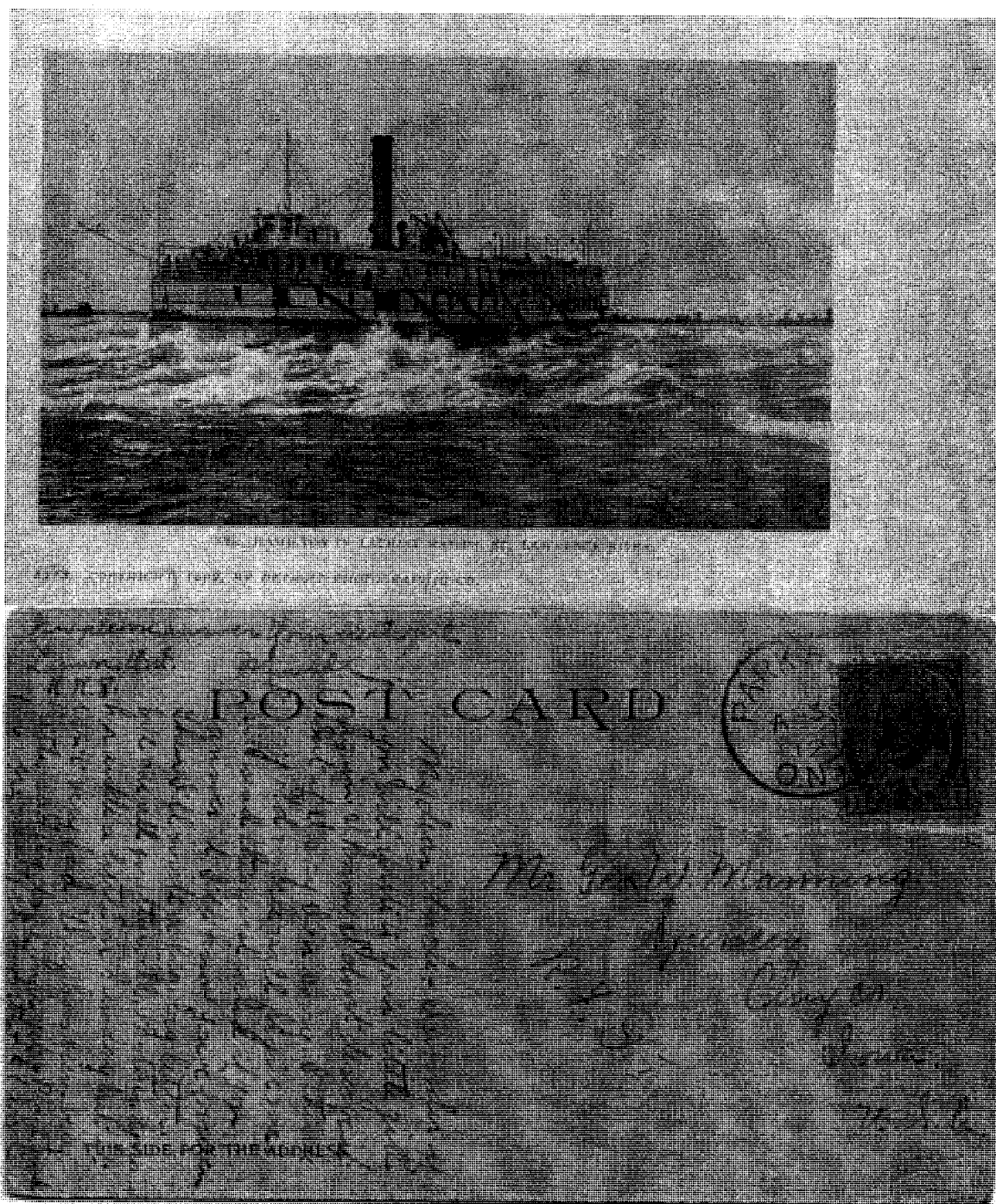


Figure 34 (and reverse)
 "Str. Hamilton in Lachine Rapids, St. Lawrence River." Postcard.
 William Henry Jackson
 published by Detroit Photographic Company, 1902
 Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive



Figure 35
"Racing Down the Rapids by Frank W. Lawrence." Engraving.
Lawrence Brothers, East Orange, New Jersey, 1888
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive



Figure 36
"Steamer Bohemian shooting Lachine Rapids." Magic lantern slide
Willilam H. Rau, c1885
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archives

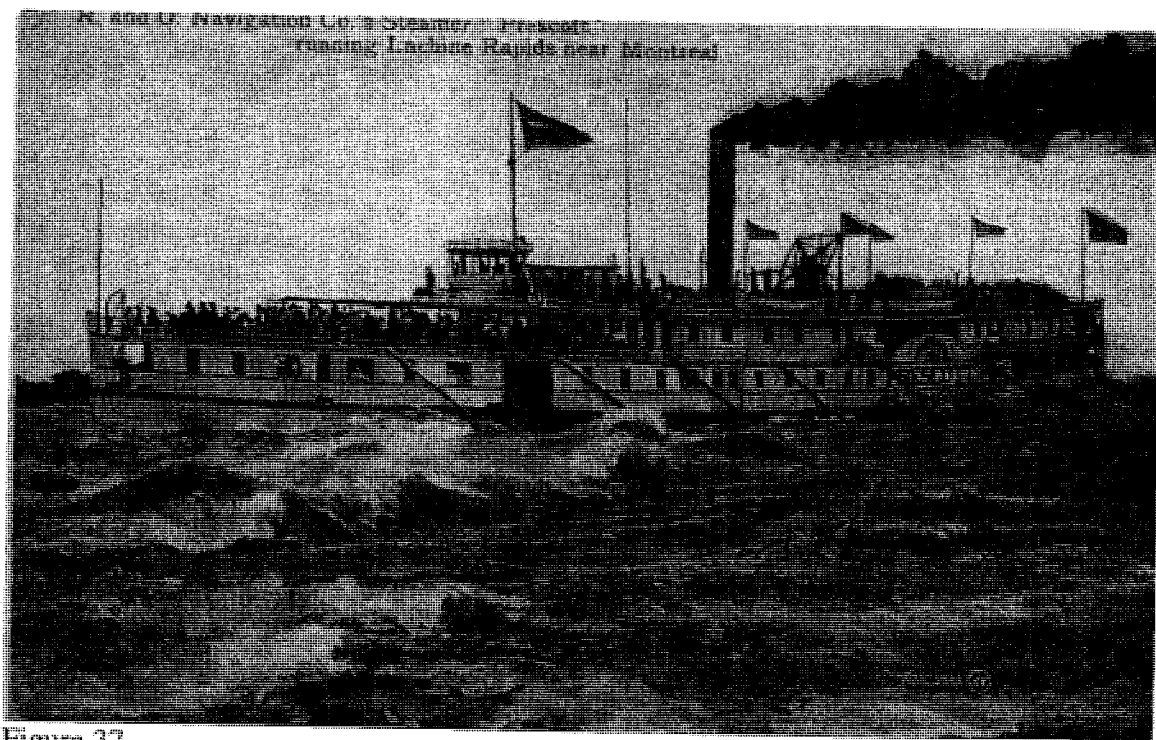


Figure 37

"R. and O. Navigation Co.'s Steamer 'Prescott' running Lachine Rapids near Montreal."

Postcard

The Valentine & Sons' Publishing Co., Ltd., Montreal and Toronto

no date given

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

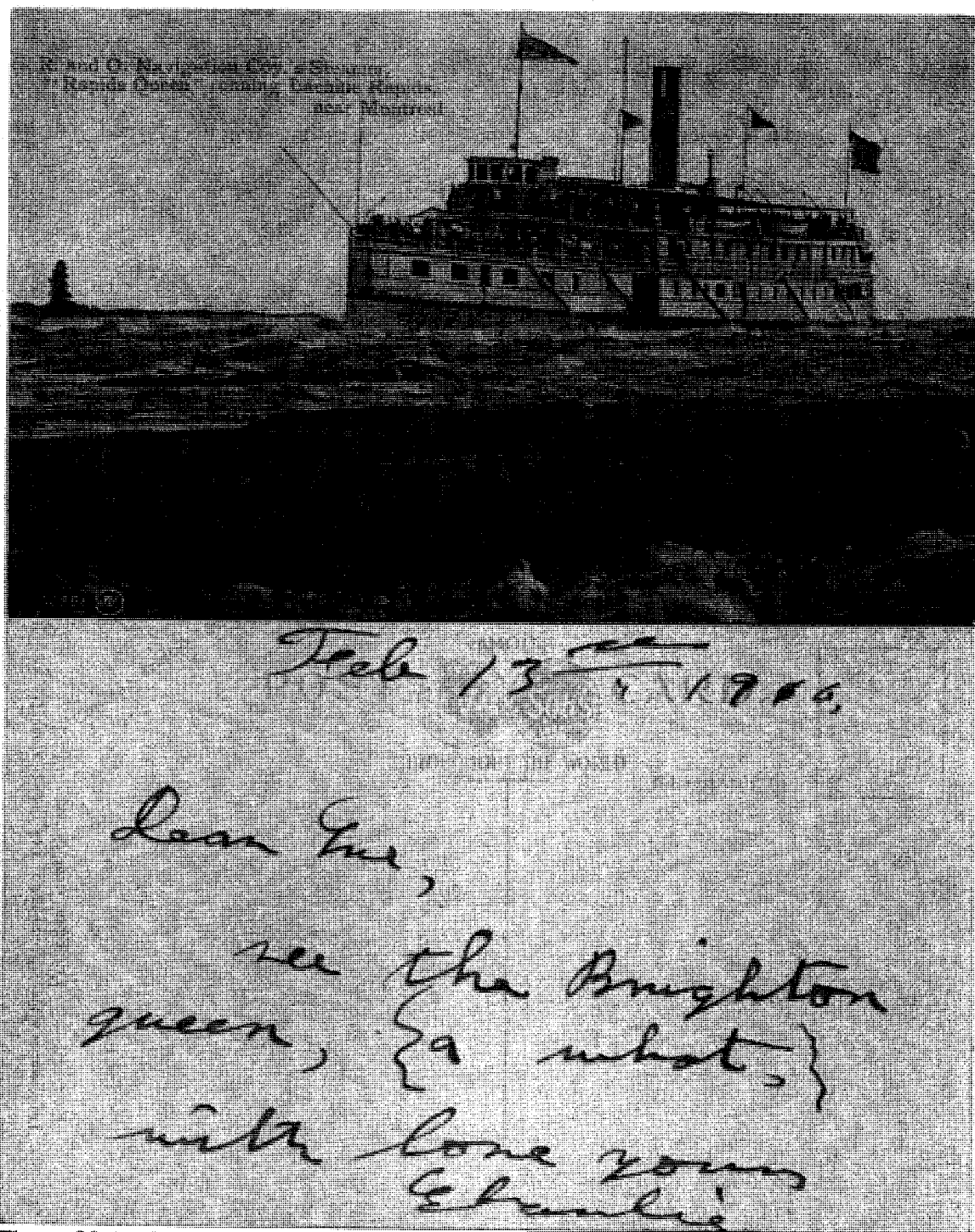


Figure 38 (and reverse)

"R. and O. Navigation Coy.'s Steamer, 'Rapids Queen' running Lachine Rapids, near Montreal." Postcard

The Valentine & Sons' Publishing Co., Ltd. Montreal and Toronto c.1916

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive



Figure 39
“Entering the Rapids.” Stereoview.
Published by J. G. Parks, c 1890
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

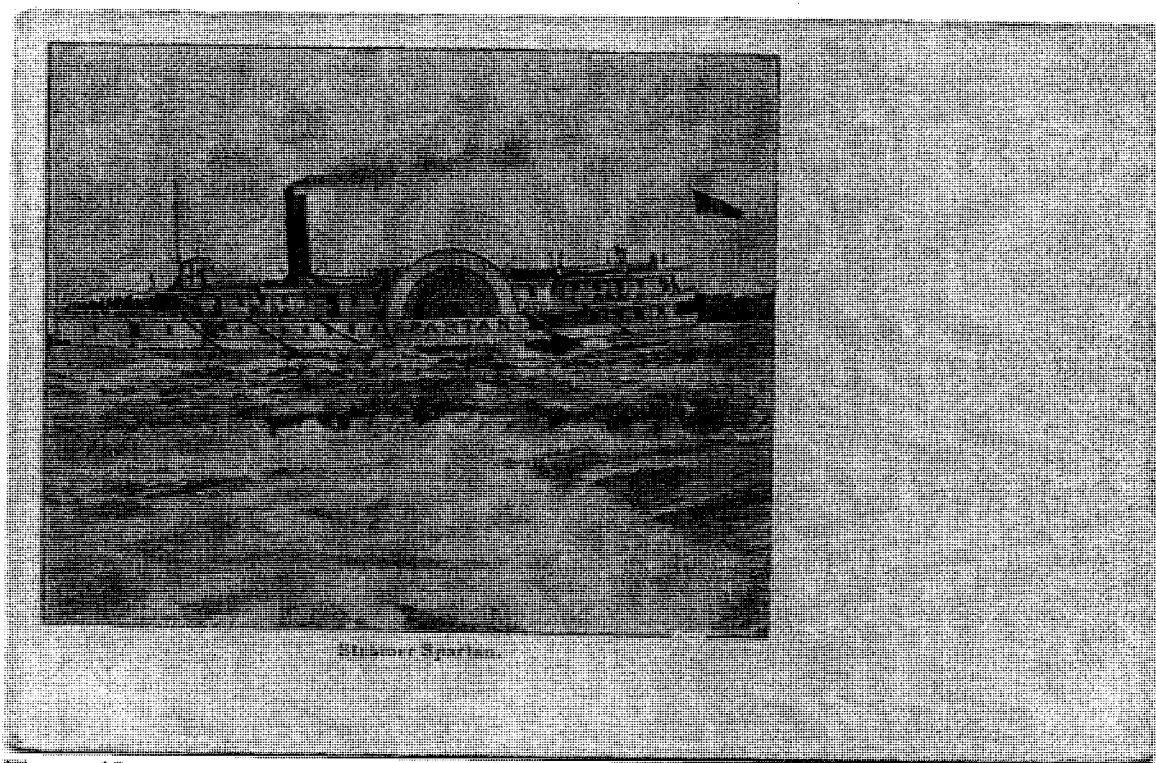


Figure 40
"Steamer Spartan." Postcard.
No author given, c1903
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

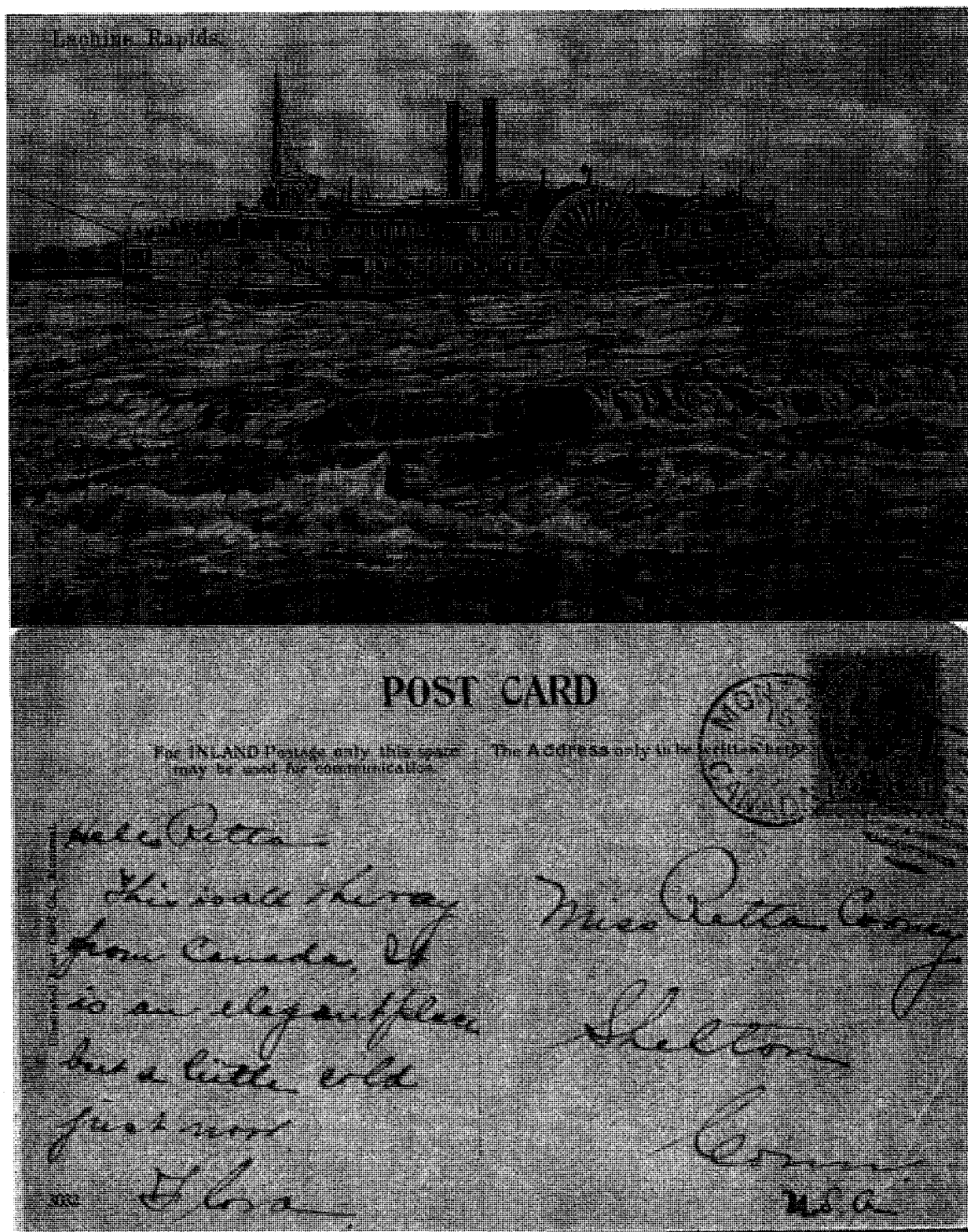


Figure 41 (and reverse)

"Lachine Rapids." Postcard.

Published by Illustrated Postcard Co., Montreal, c1907

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

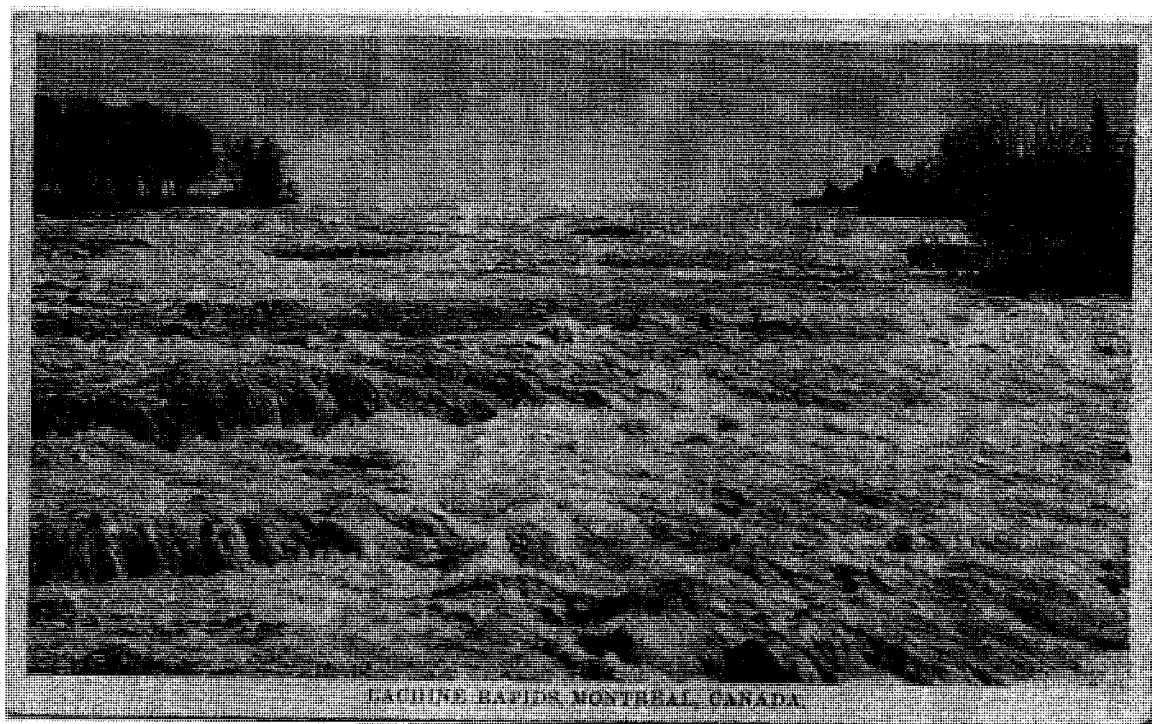


Figure 42
"Lachine Rapids, Montreal, Canada." Postcard
International Fine Art Co., Montreal, c 1925
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

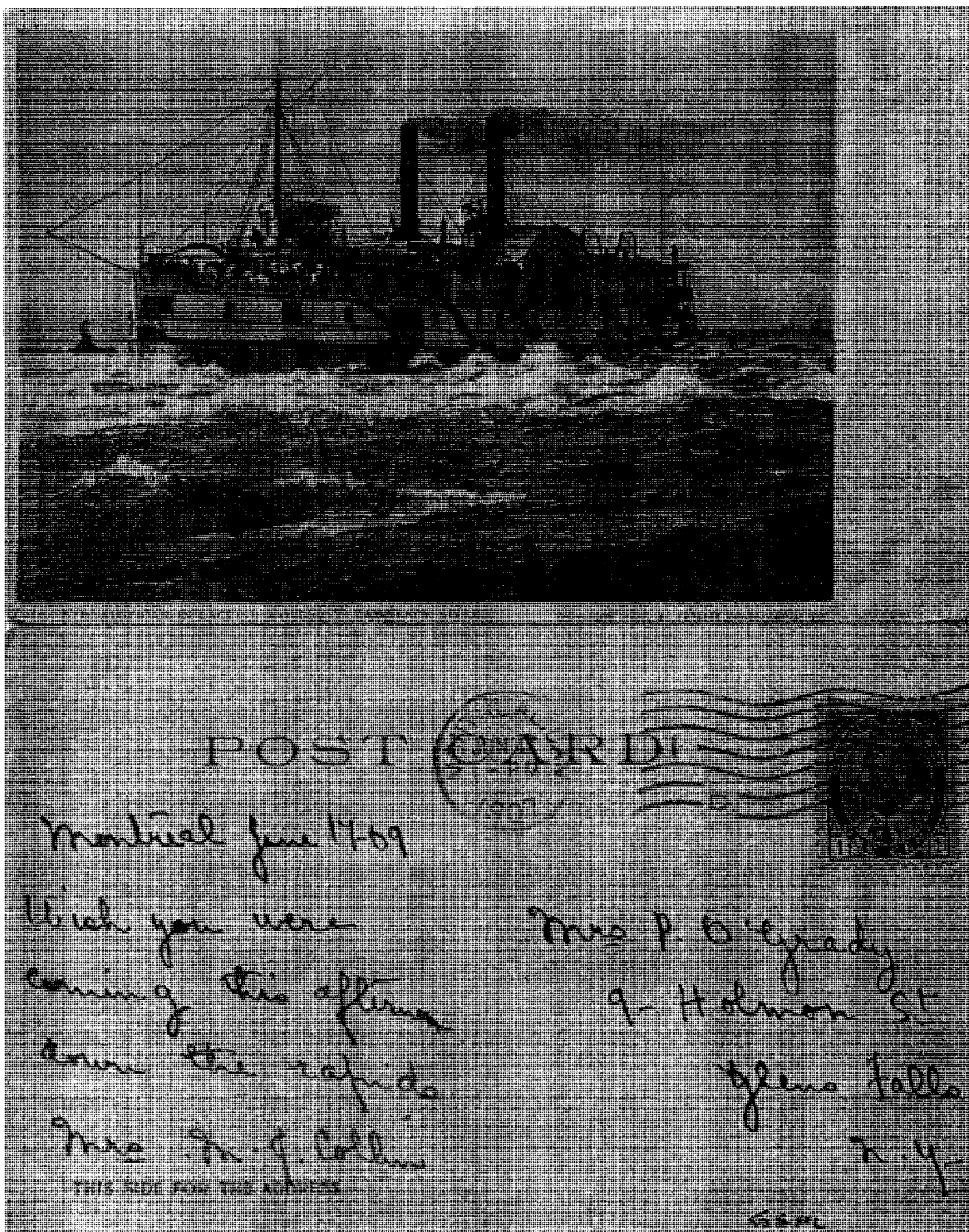


Figure 43 (and reverse)

"Str. ALGERIAN in Lachine Rapids, St. Lawrence River." Postcard.

Published by Detroit Photographic Co., c 1903

Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

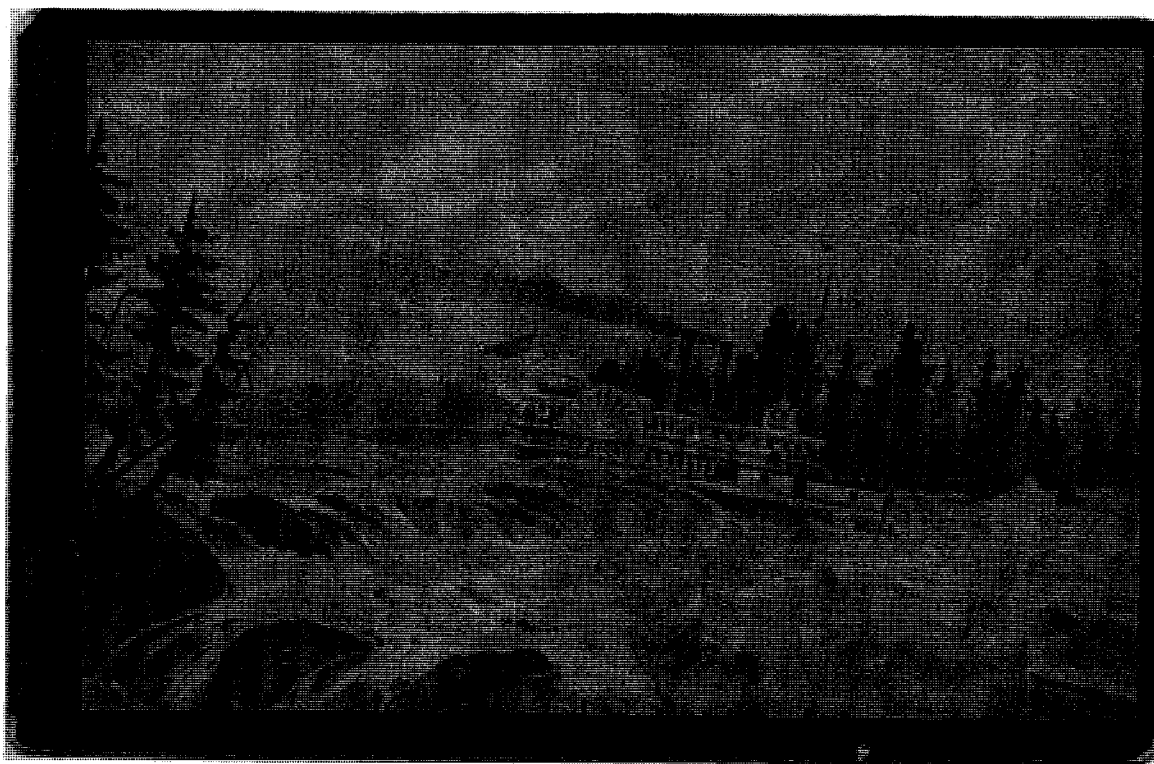


Figure 44
"CORSICAN in Rapids." Carte de visite.
McFarlin & Speck, Moravia, N. Y., c 1877
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

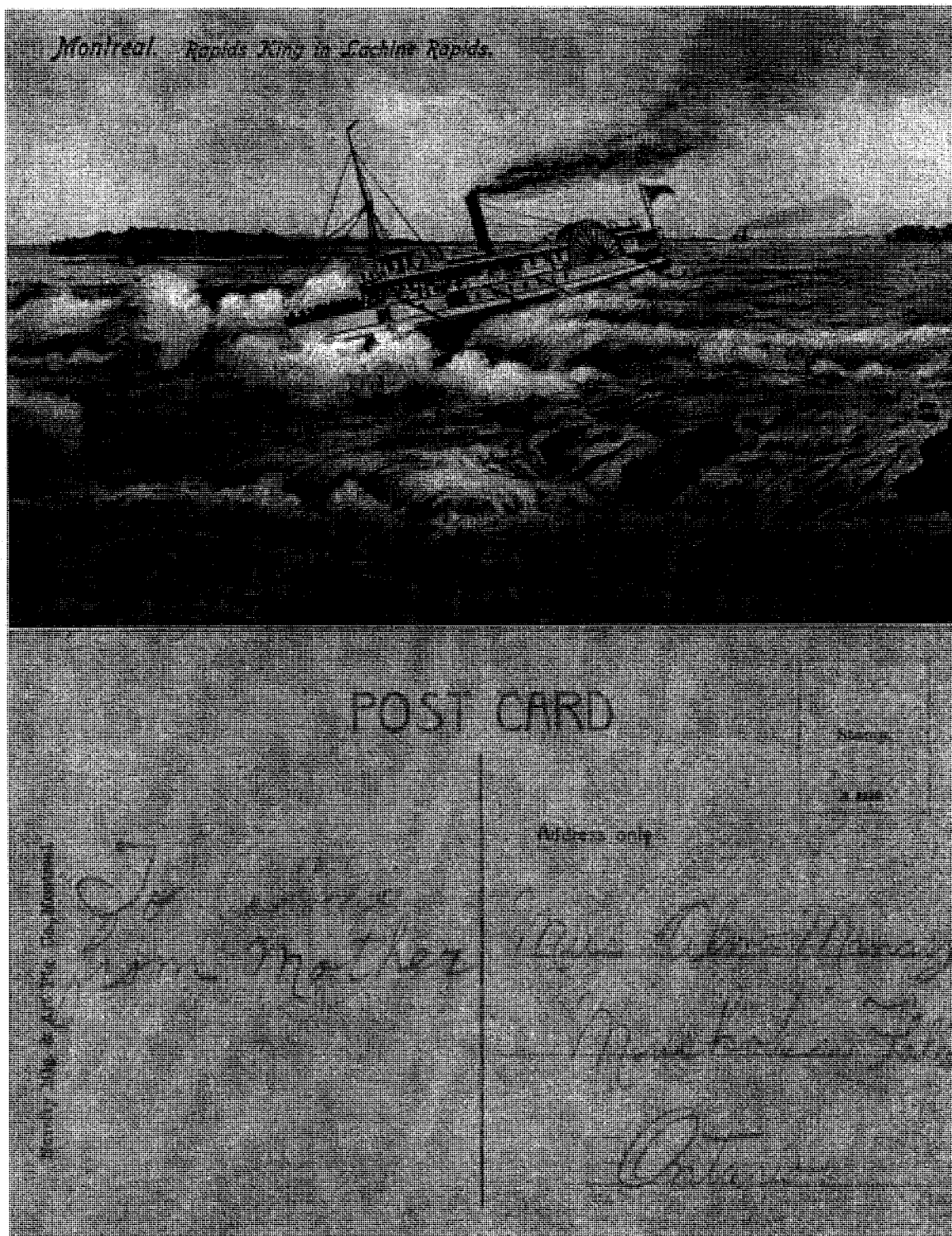


Figure 45 (and reverse)

“Montreal. RAPIDS KING in Lachine Rapids.”

Photographed by Notman, Published by Novelty Mfg. & Art Ptg Co., Montreal, c 1911
 Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

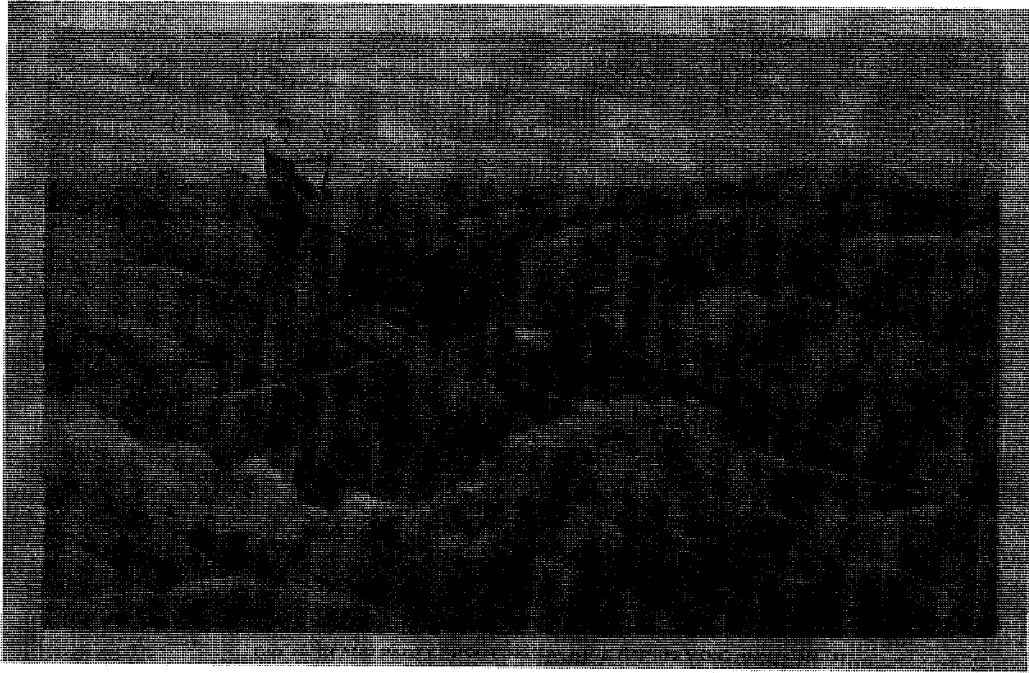


Figure 46
"Big John and Shooting Party Lachine Rapids Montreal, Can." Postcard.
James Weston, published by Photogelatine Engraving Co. Ltd. (PECO)
Ottawa, ON, c 1907
Maritime History of the Great Lakes Archive

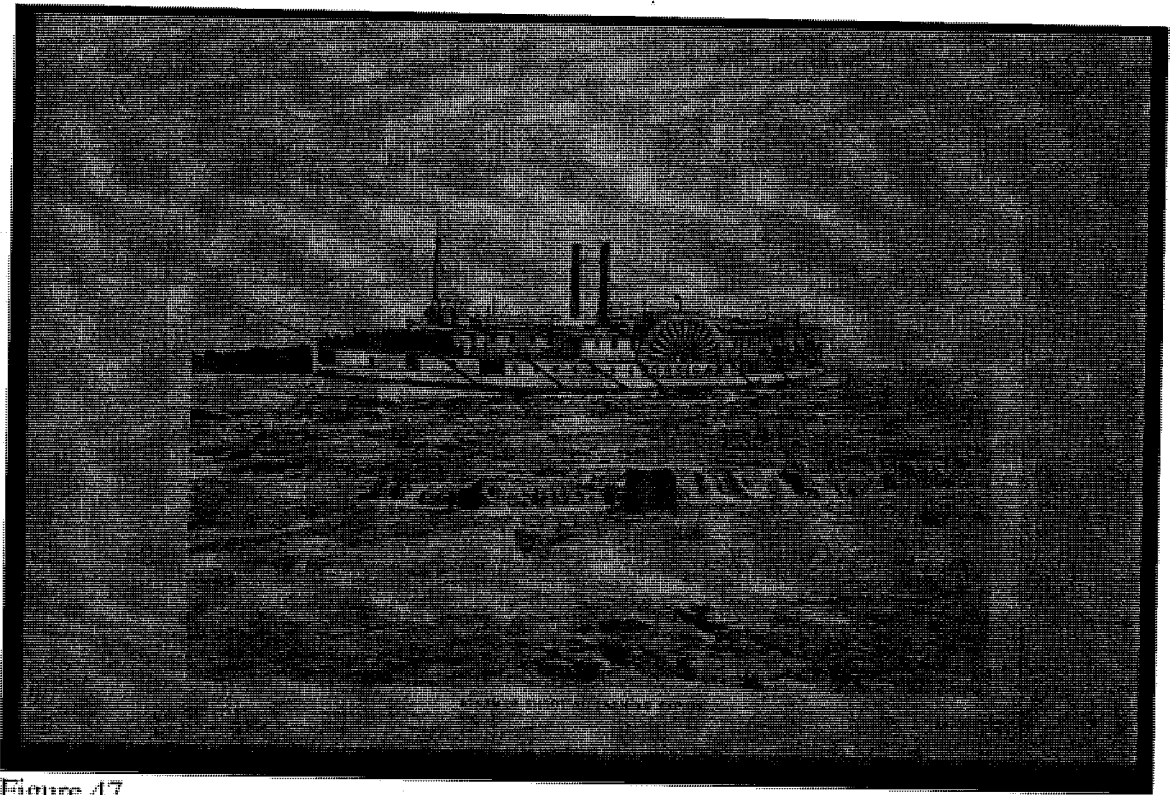


Figure 47

“Steamer Shooting Lachine Rapids.” Photograph.

Creator unknown. Publisher unknown. Date unknown.

Massicotte Collection, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

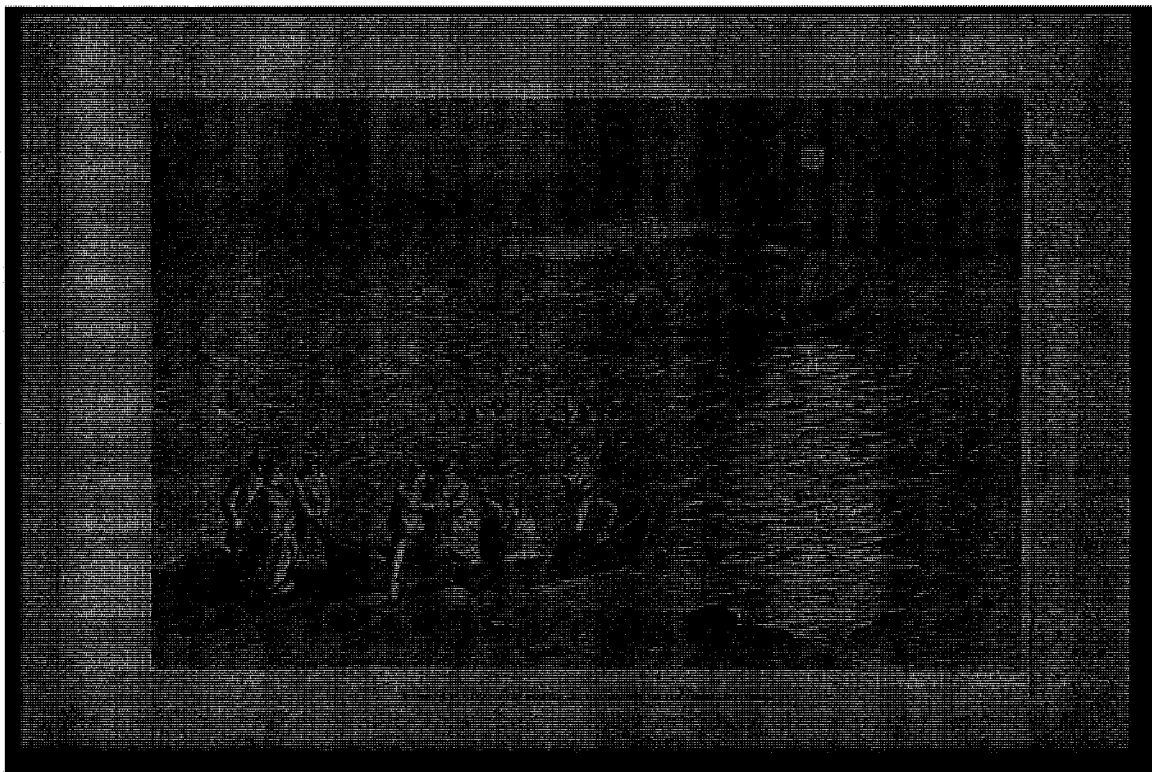


Figure 48

“The Wreck of the Steamer Louis Renaud.” Print.

C. Kendrick

Published in Canadian Illustrated News., May 24, 1873. pg. 328

Massicotte Collection, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec



Figure 49

“La Chine Rapids.” Drawing.

No date provided. No author provided.

Massicotte Collection, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

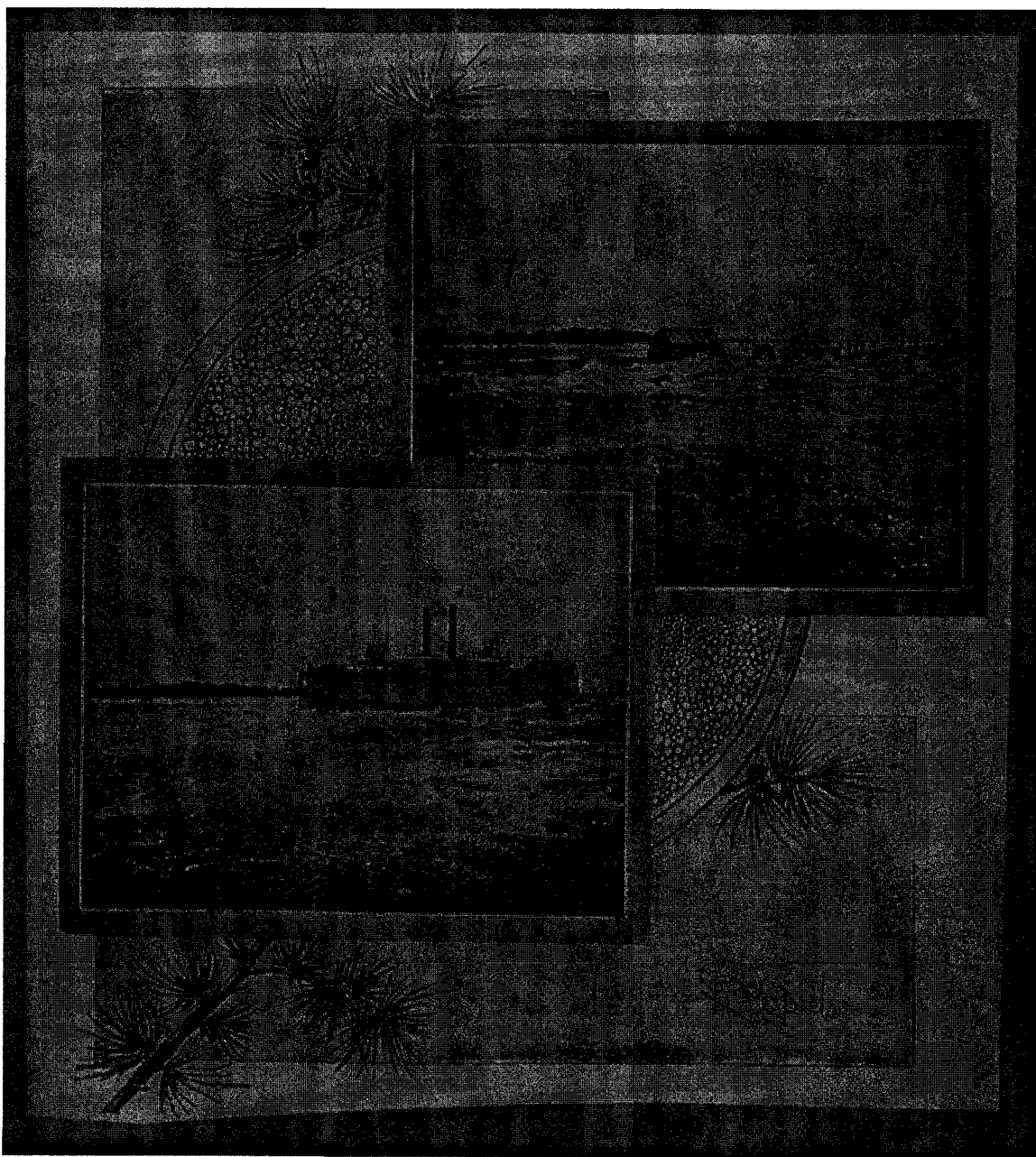


Figure 50

“Lachine Rapids.” printed photographs.

No author provided, 1892

Massicotte Collection, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

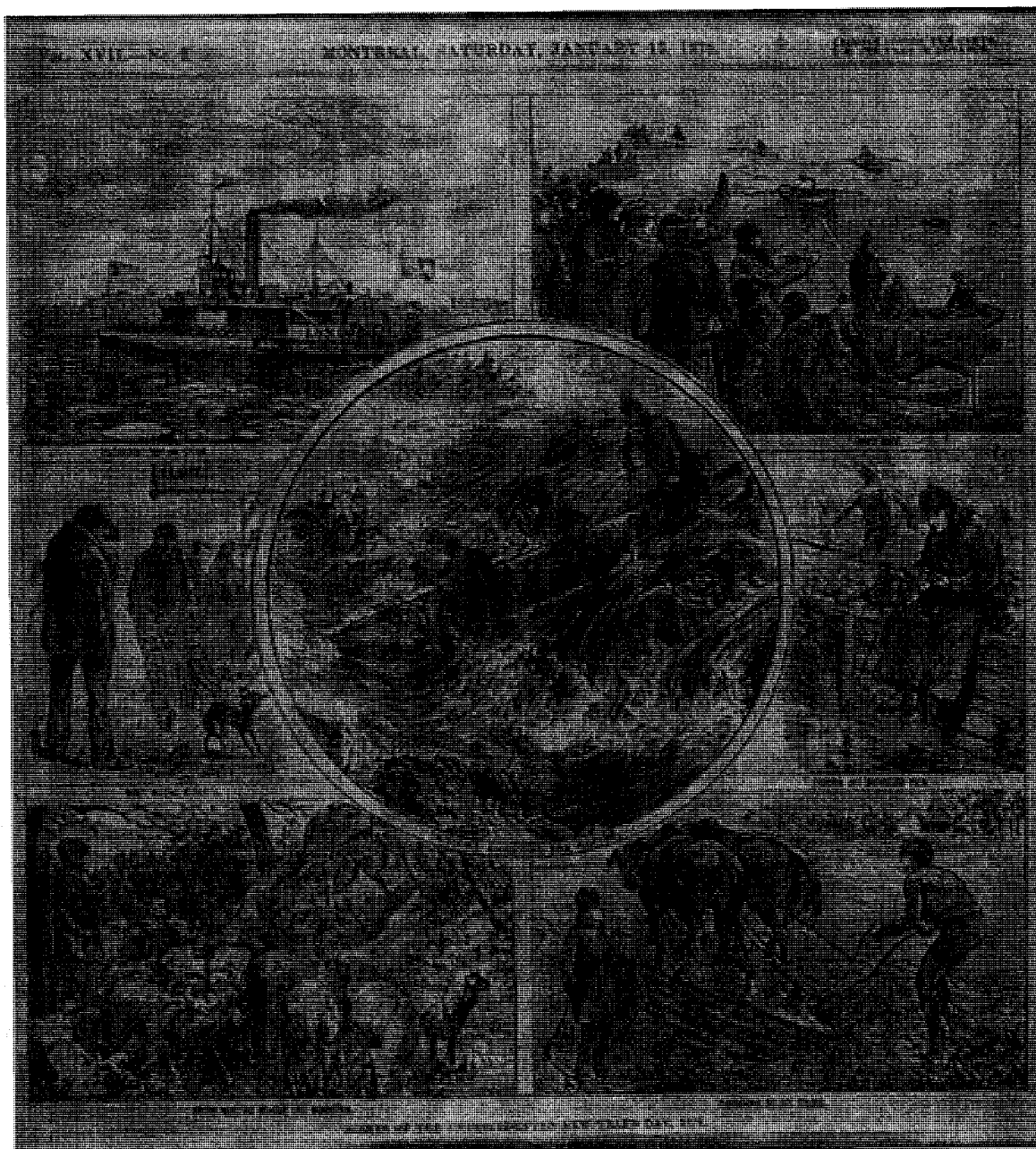


Figure 51

"Indians Shooting the Rapids." Print, based on drawing.

No author provided.

Published in Canadian Illustrated News. XVII, no 2. January 12, 1878.

Massicotte Collection, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

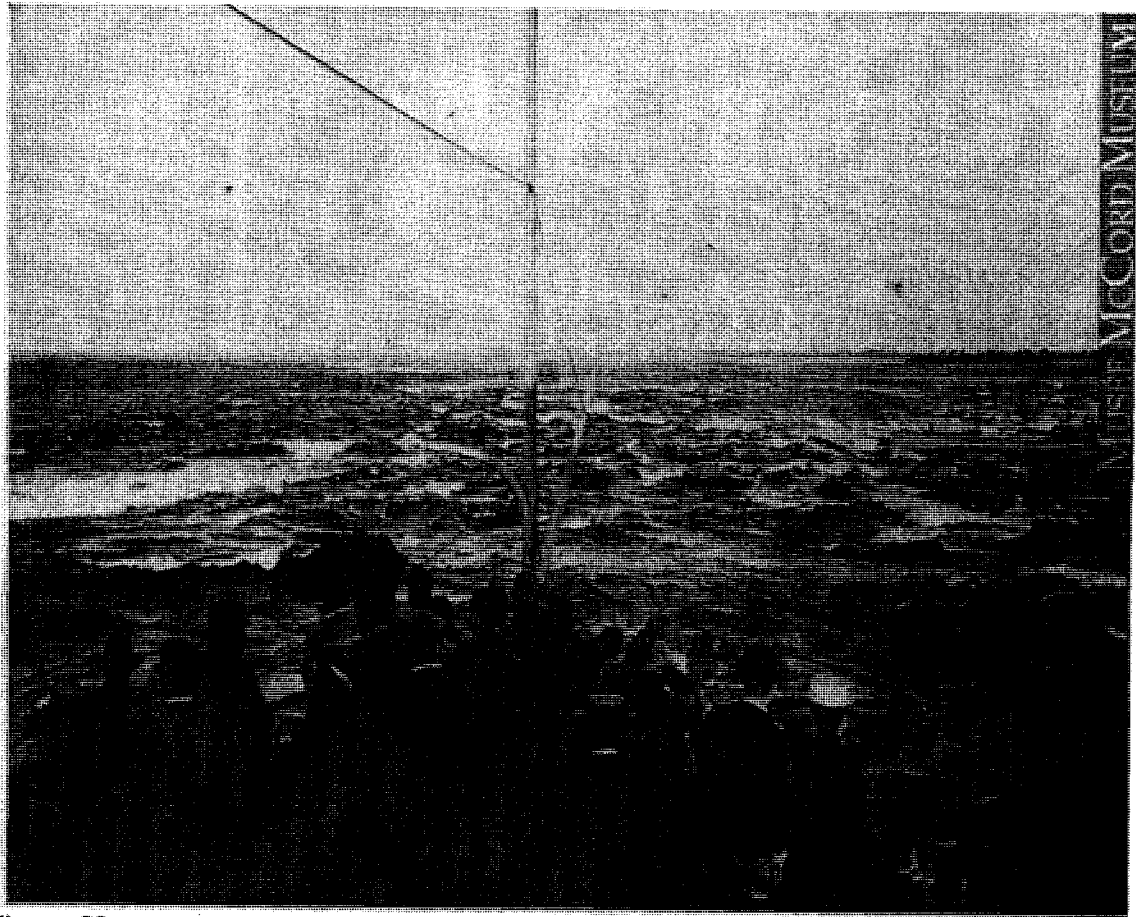


Figure 52

"Lachine Rapids from steamer, near Montreal, QC." Photograph.

Alexander Henderson, c. 1870

McCord Museum, MP-0000.1828.9

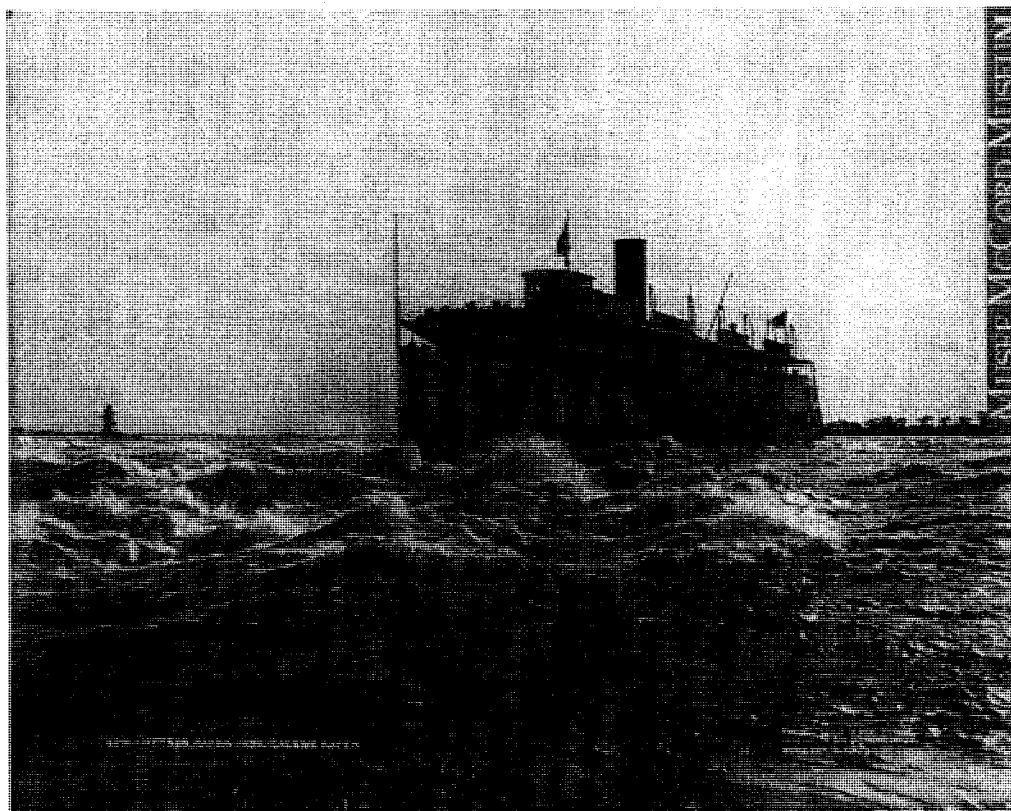


Figure 53
"S.S. 'Rapids King' running Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1901
McCord Museum VIEW-4271

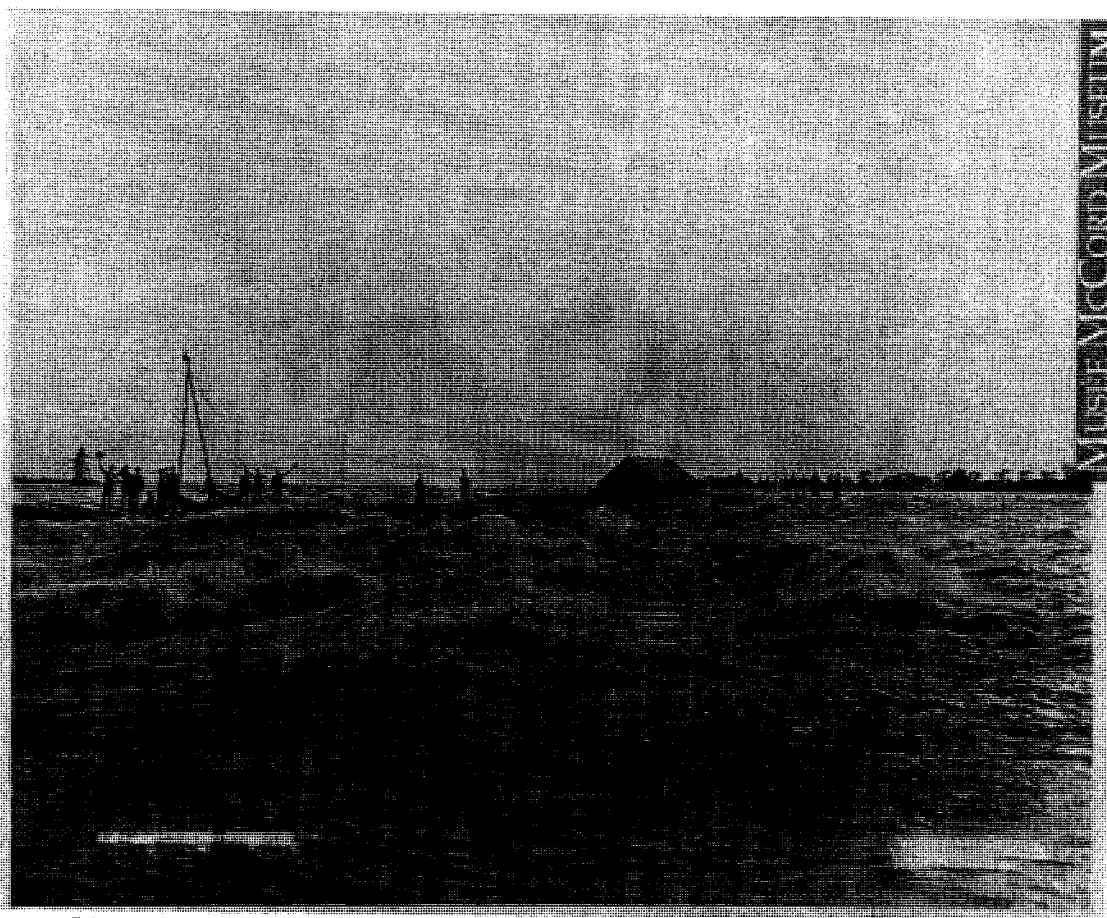


Figure 54
"Raft in Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1901
McCord Museum, VIEW-4274

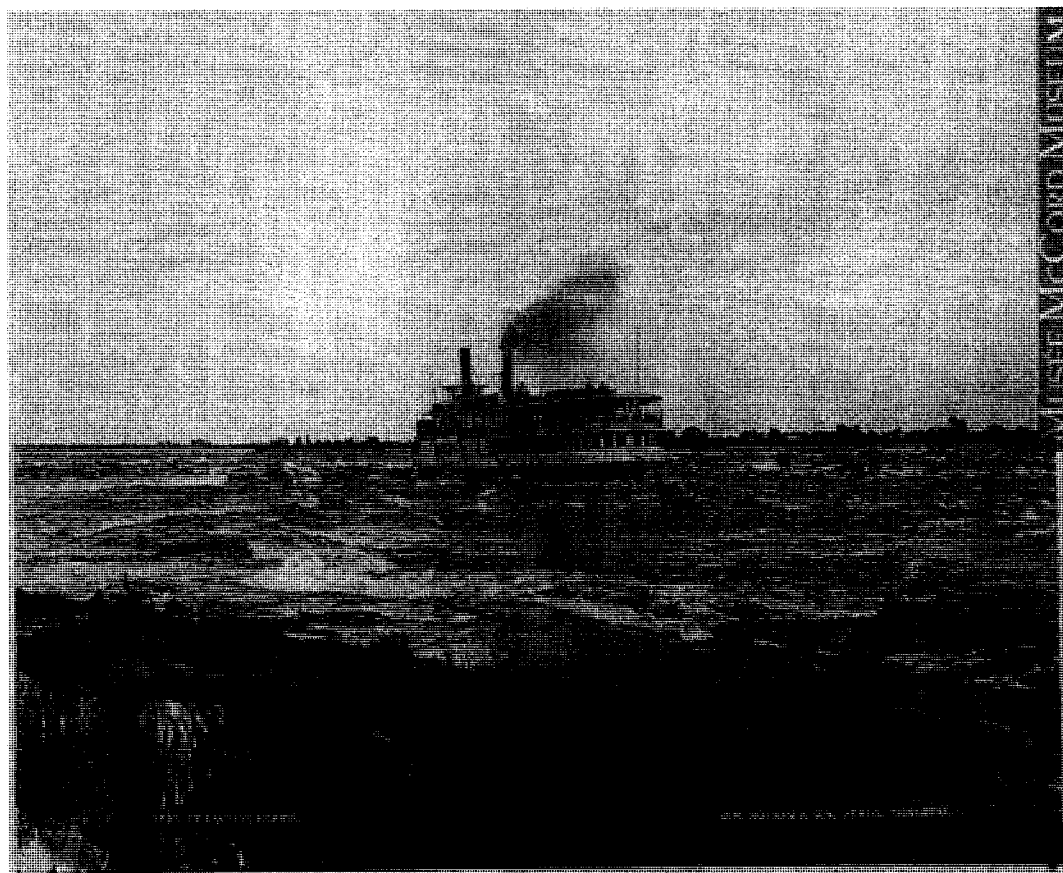


Figure 55
“S.S. ‘Sovereign,’ Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph.
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1890
McCord Museum VIEW-2476

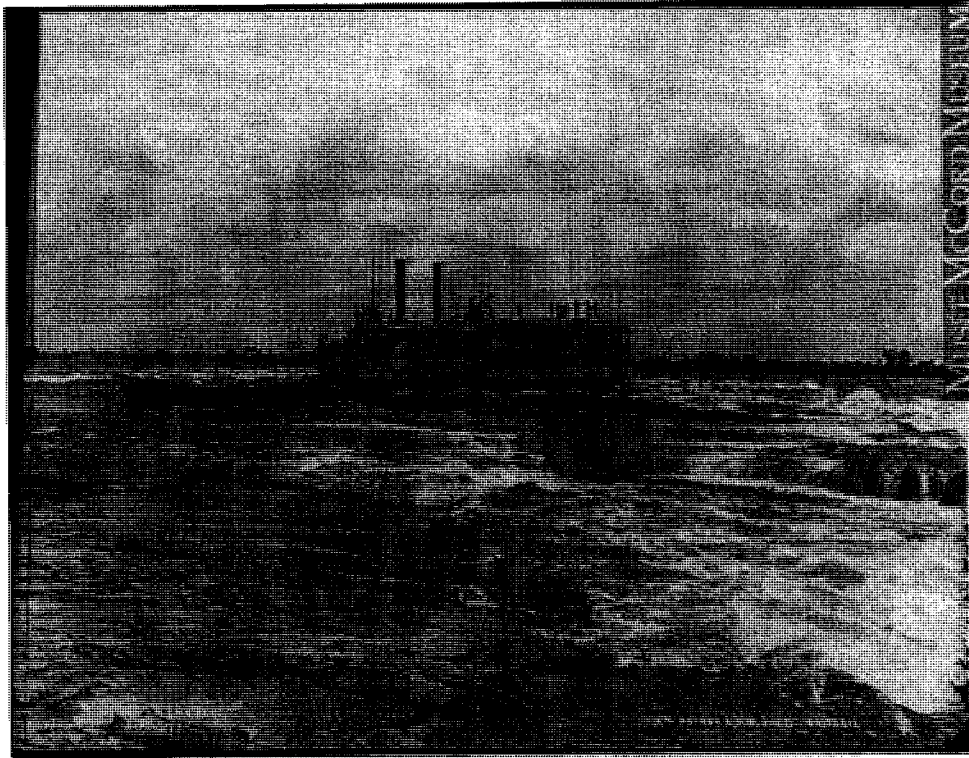


Figure 56
"S.S. 'Bohemian,' Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1885
McCord Museum VIEW-2474



Figure 57
“S.S. ‘Sovereign’ in Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph.
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1895
McCord Museum VIEW-3368



Figure 58
"Fishing in Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1901
McCord Museum VIEW-4275

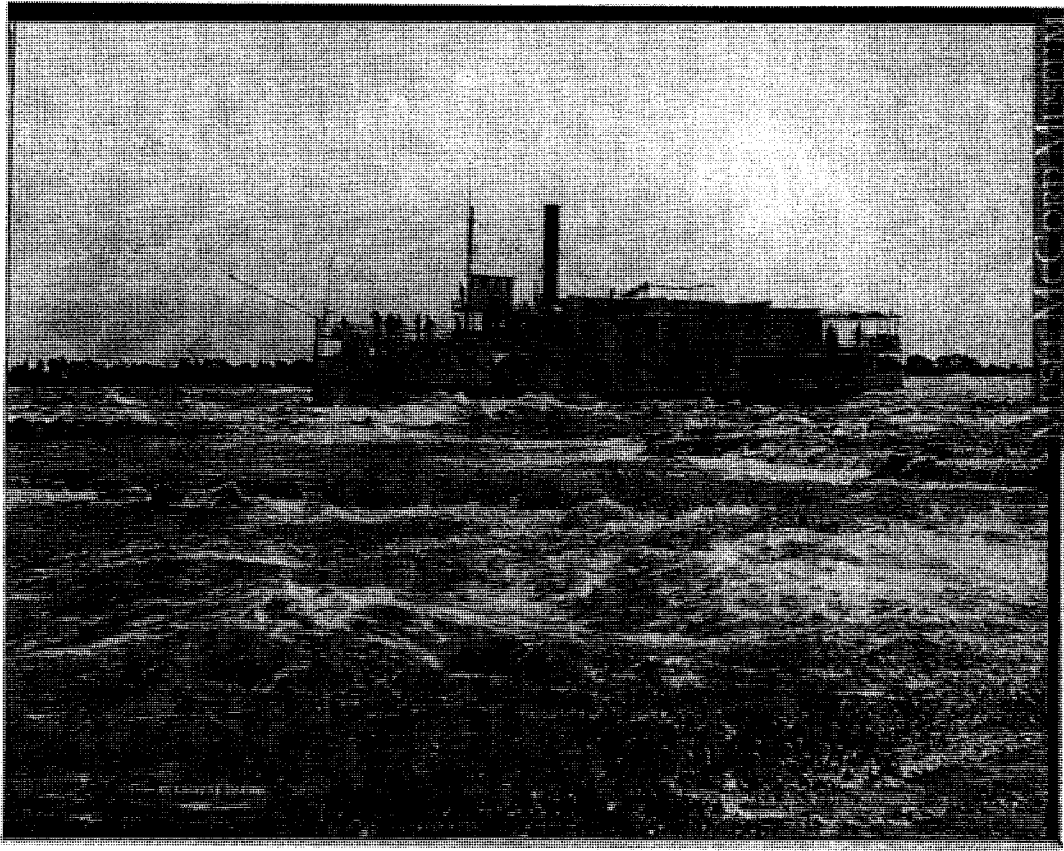


Figure 59
"S.S. 'Gatineau,' Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1890
McCord Museum VIEW-2475

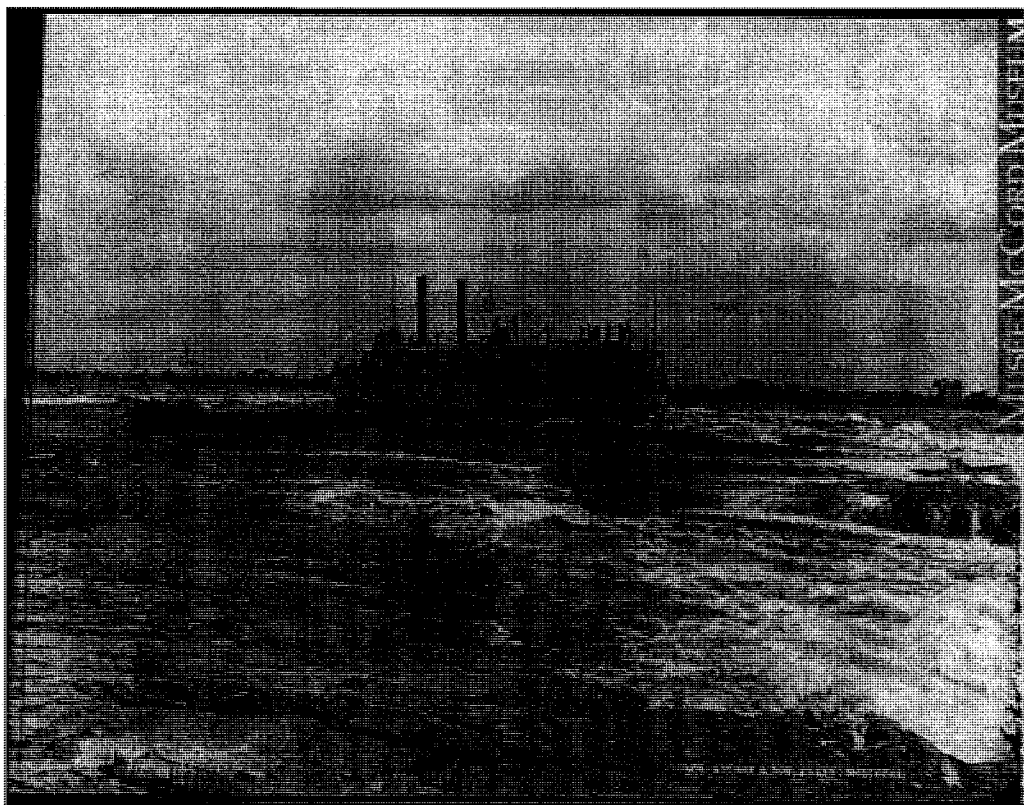


Figure 60
"S.S. 'Bohemian,' Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1885
McCord Museum VIEW-2474.1



Figure 61
“S.S. ‘Sovereign’ in Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1895
McCord Museum VIEW-3368.1



Figure 62
“S.S. ‘Prescott,’ Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1890
McCord Museum VIEW-2472.A.0

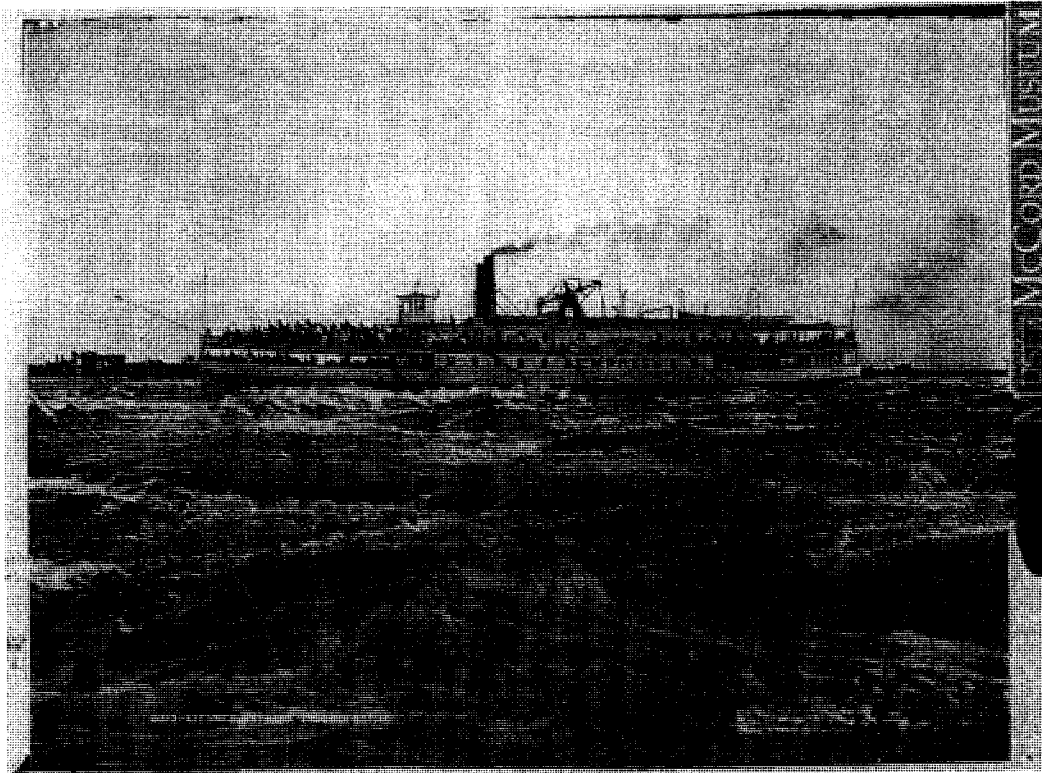


Figure 63
“S.S. ‘Empress’ running Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1901
McCord Museum VIEW-4272

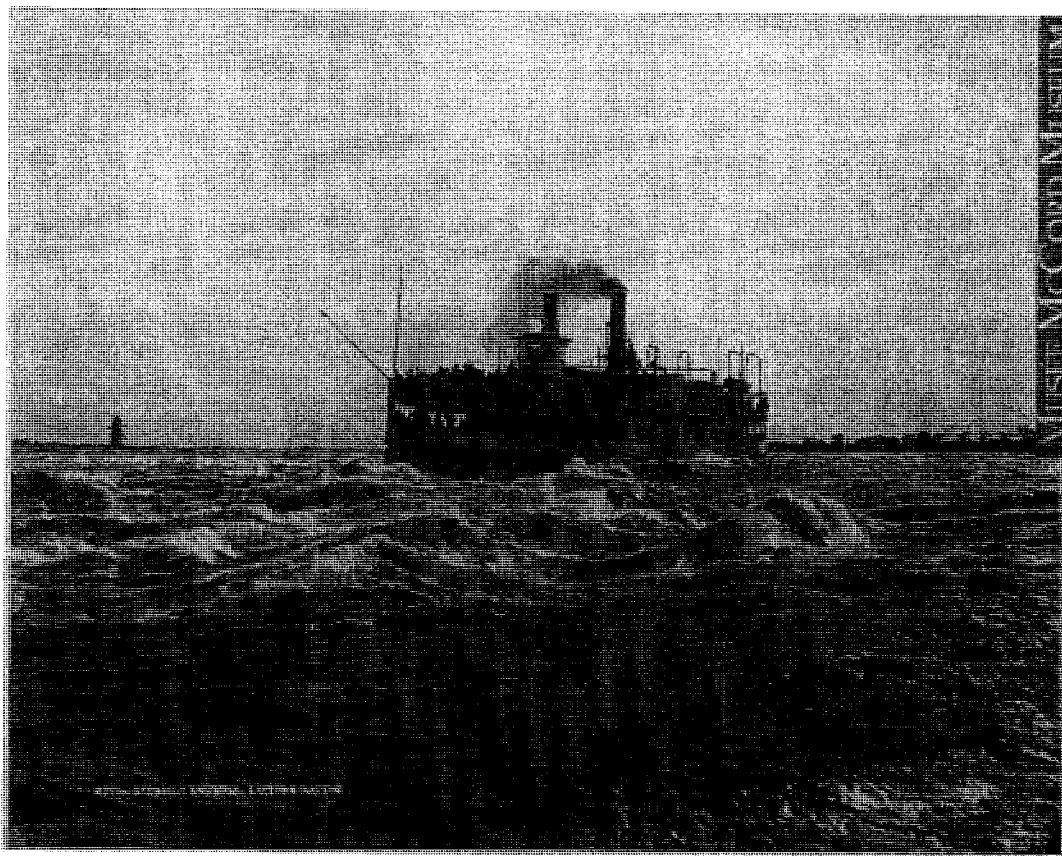


Figure 64
“S.S. ‘Empress’ running Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph.
Wm. Notman & Son, 1901
McCord Museum VIEW-4273

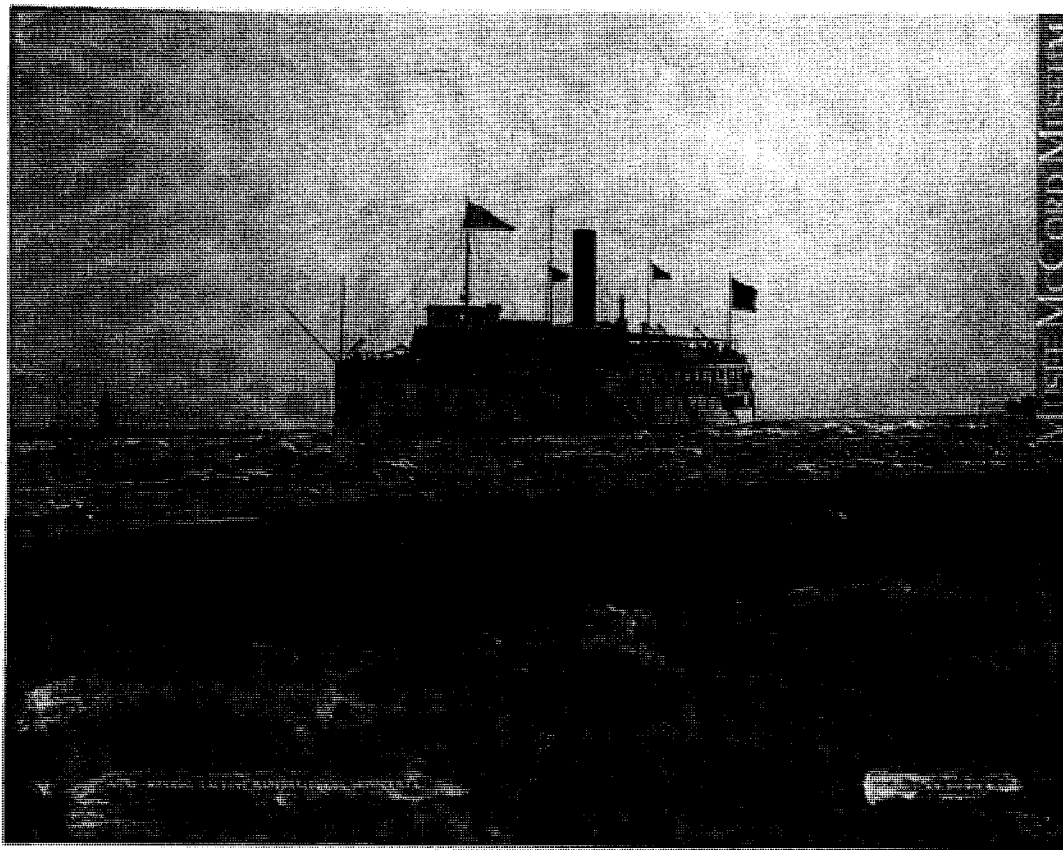


Figure 65
"S.S. 'Brockville' running Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4208



Figure 66
“S.S. ‘Brockville’ running Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4209

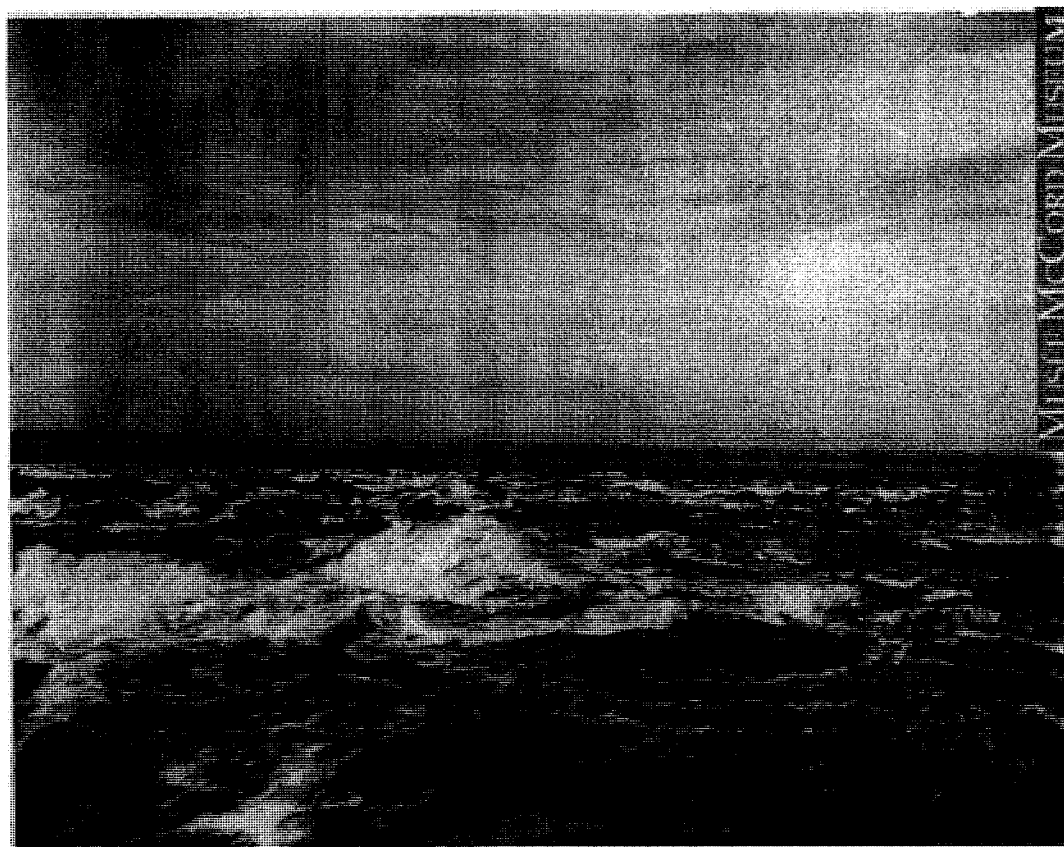


Figure 67
"Lachine Rapids from lower deck of Steamer 'Sovereign,' QC." Photograph
Alfred Walter Roper, c 1897
McCord Museum MP-1977.76.44

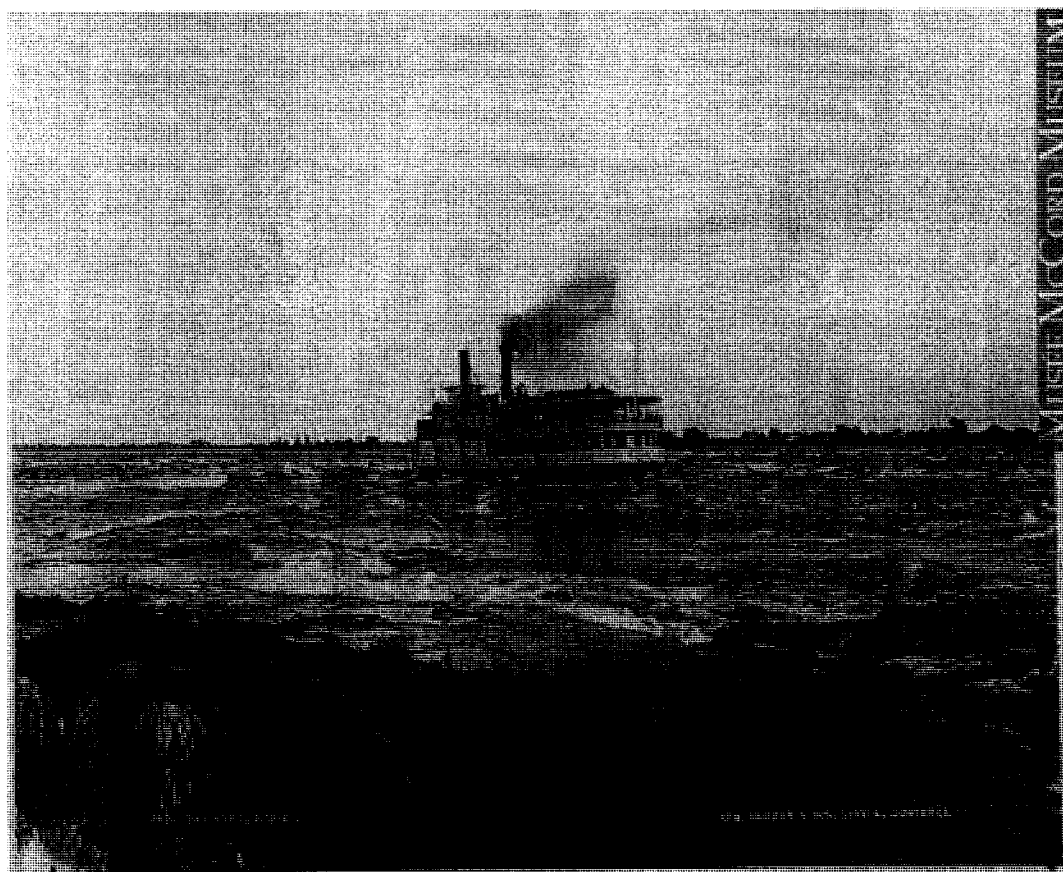


Figure 68
“S.S. ‘Sovereign,’ Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1890
McCord Museum VIEW-2476.0



Figure 69
"S.S. 'Sovereign,' Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1890
McCord Museum VIEW-2476.0



Figure 70
"S.S. 'Prescott,' Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1890
McCord Museum VIEW-2472.A.0.3

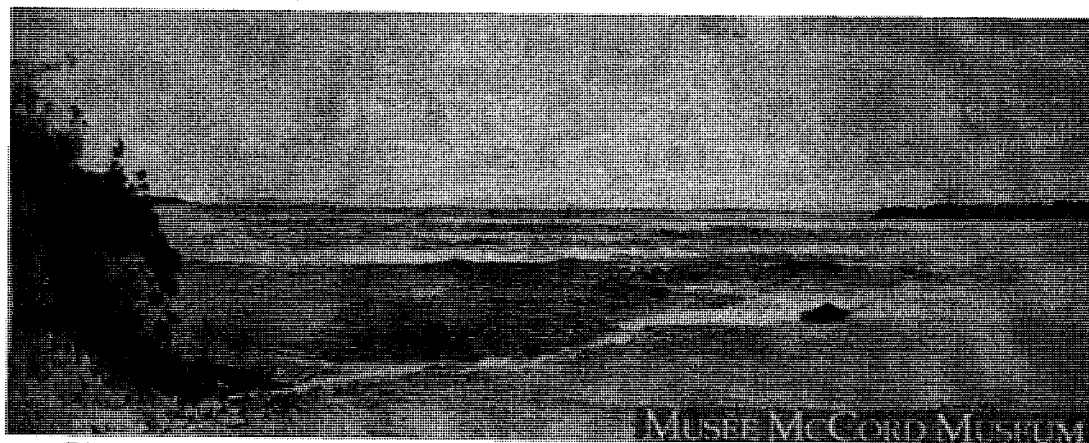


Figure 71
"Lachine Rapids, 1862." Photograph of watercolour by Otto R. Jacobi
William Notman, c 1863
McCord Museum I-6644.1

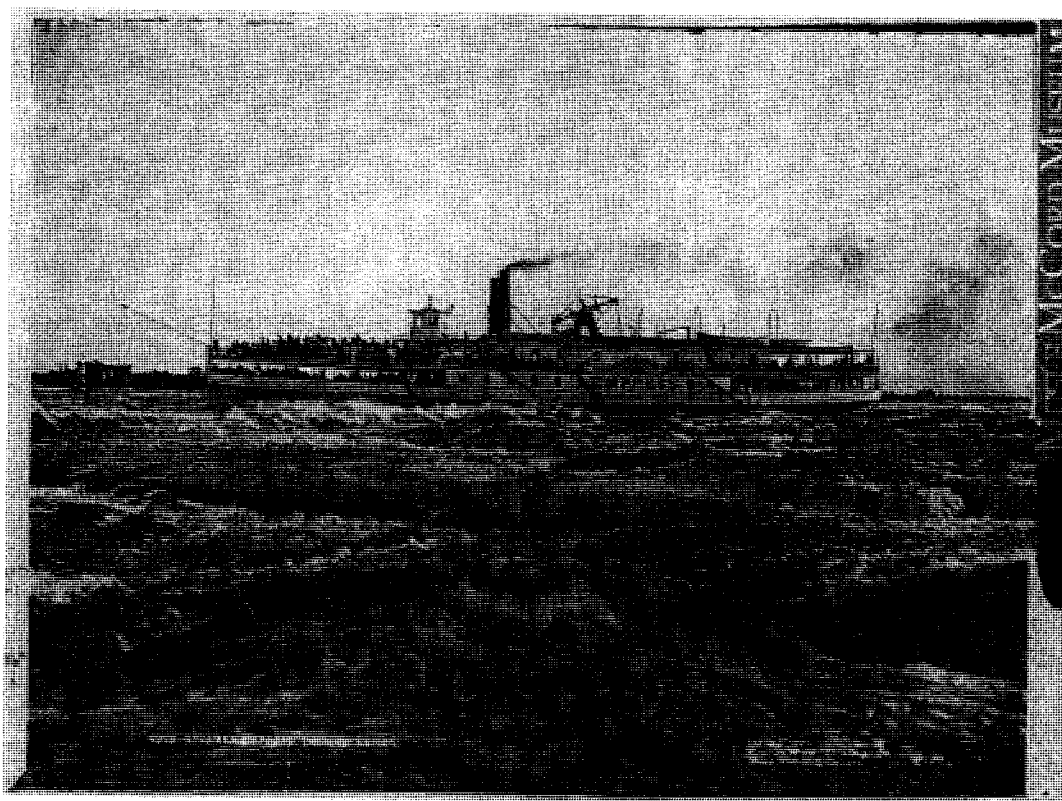


Figure 72
“S.S. ‘Empress’ running Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1901
McCord Museum VIEW-4272.1



Figure 73
“S.S. ‘Gatineau,’ Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1890
McCord Museum VIEW-2475.0

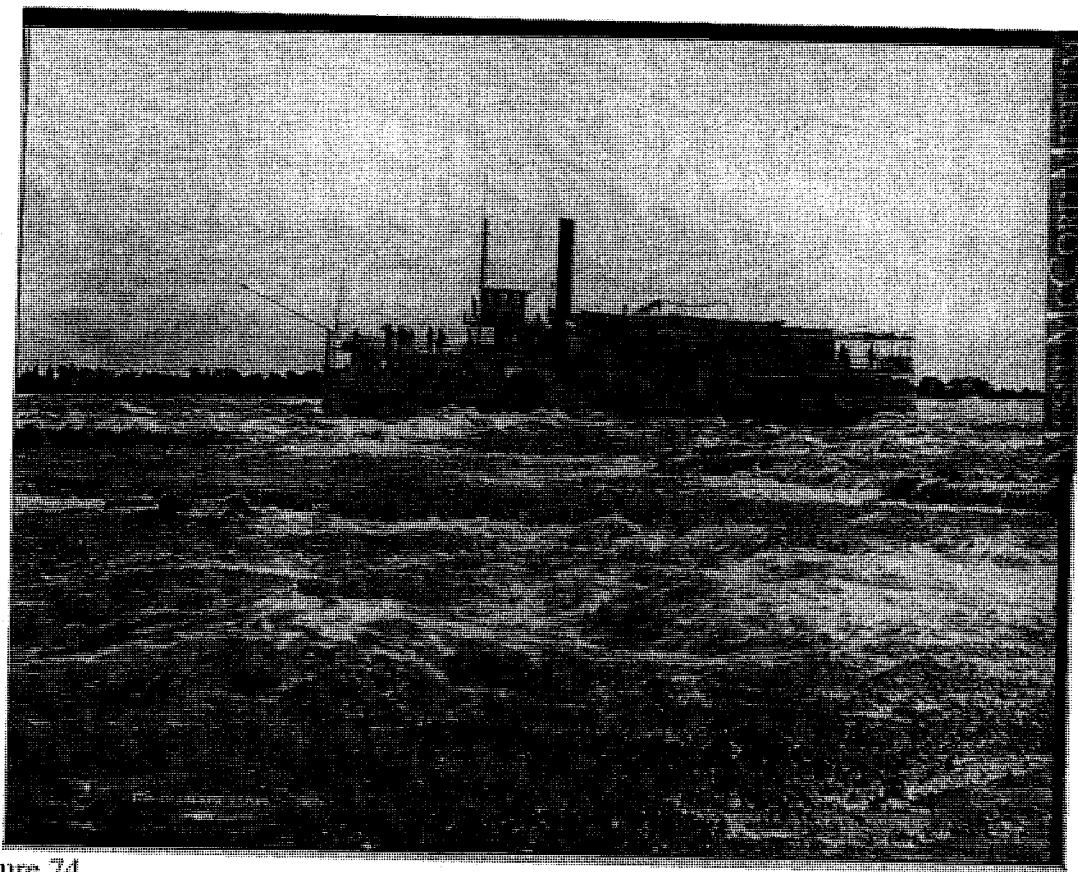


Figure 74
"S.S. 'Gatineau,' Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1890
McCord Museum VIEW-2475.01

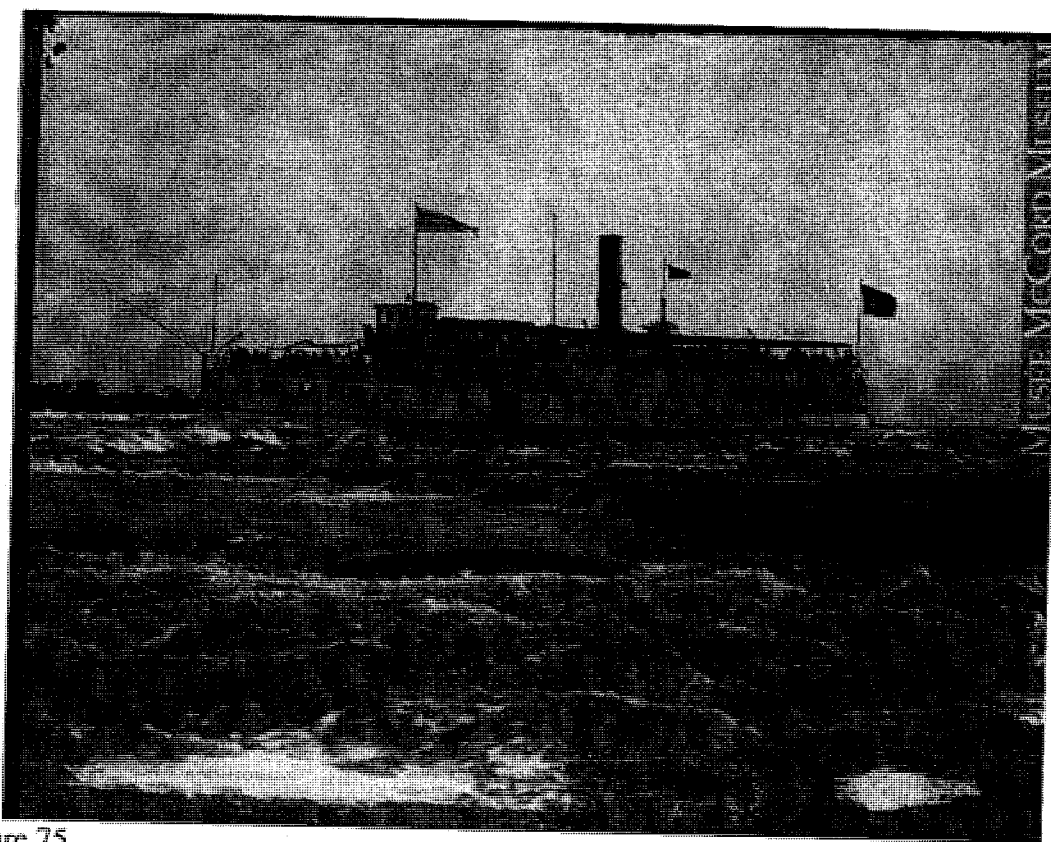


Figure 75
"S.S. 'Brockville' running Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4207.1

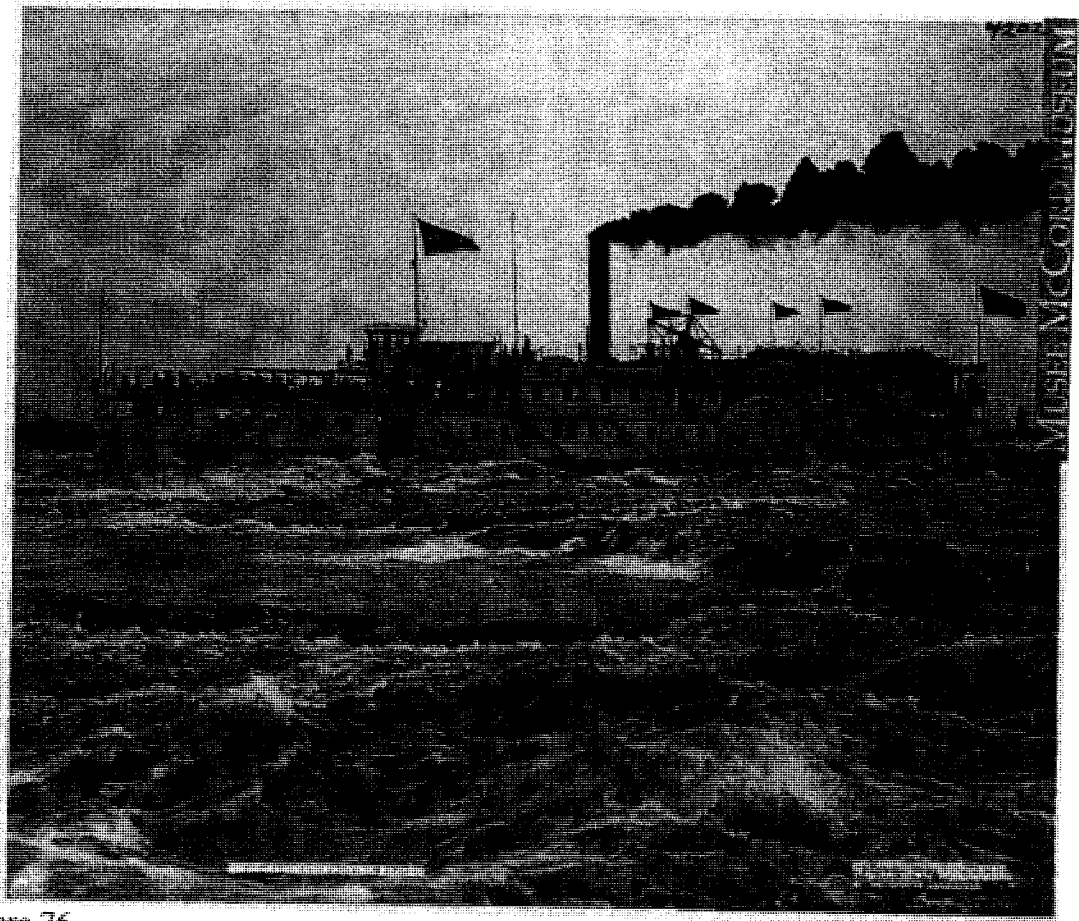


Figure 76
"S.S. 'Prescott' running Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4202.02

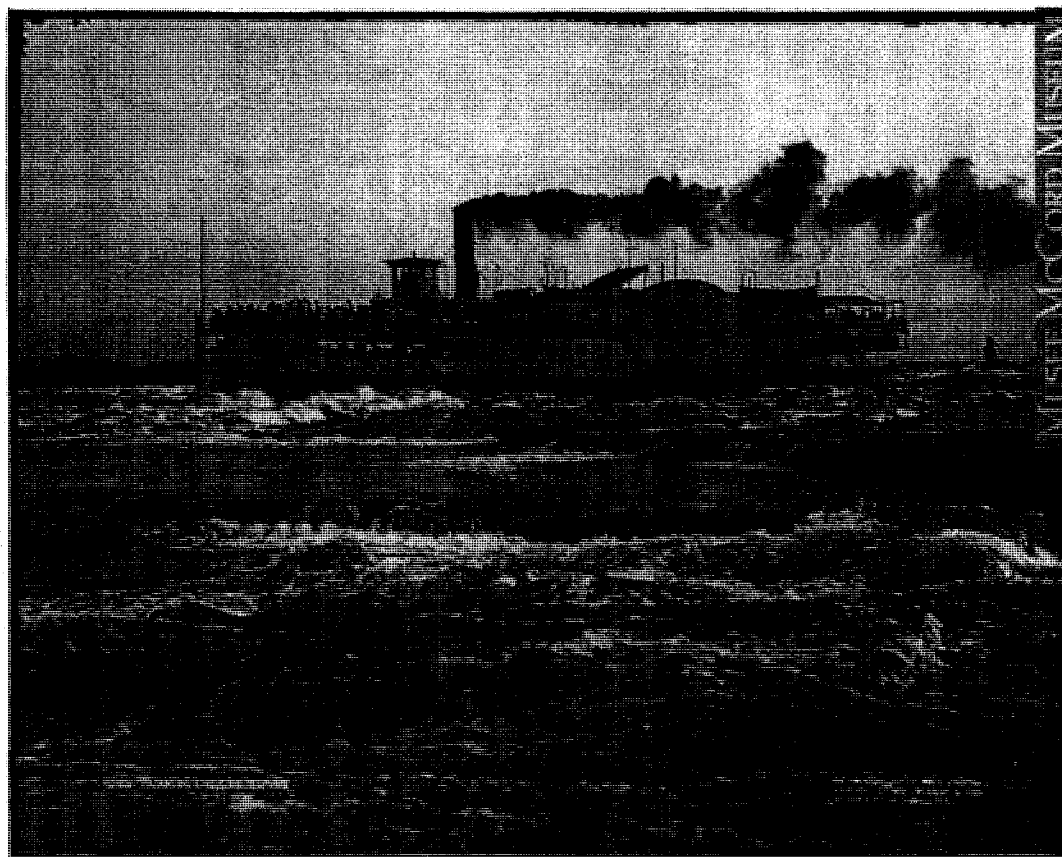


Figure 77
“S.S. ‘Duchess of York’ running Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4205



Figure 78
“S.S. ‘Duchess of York’ running Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4205.A



Figure 79
“S.S. ‘Prescott’ running Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph.
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4202.0

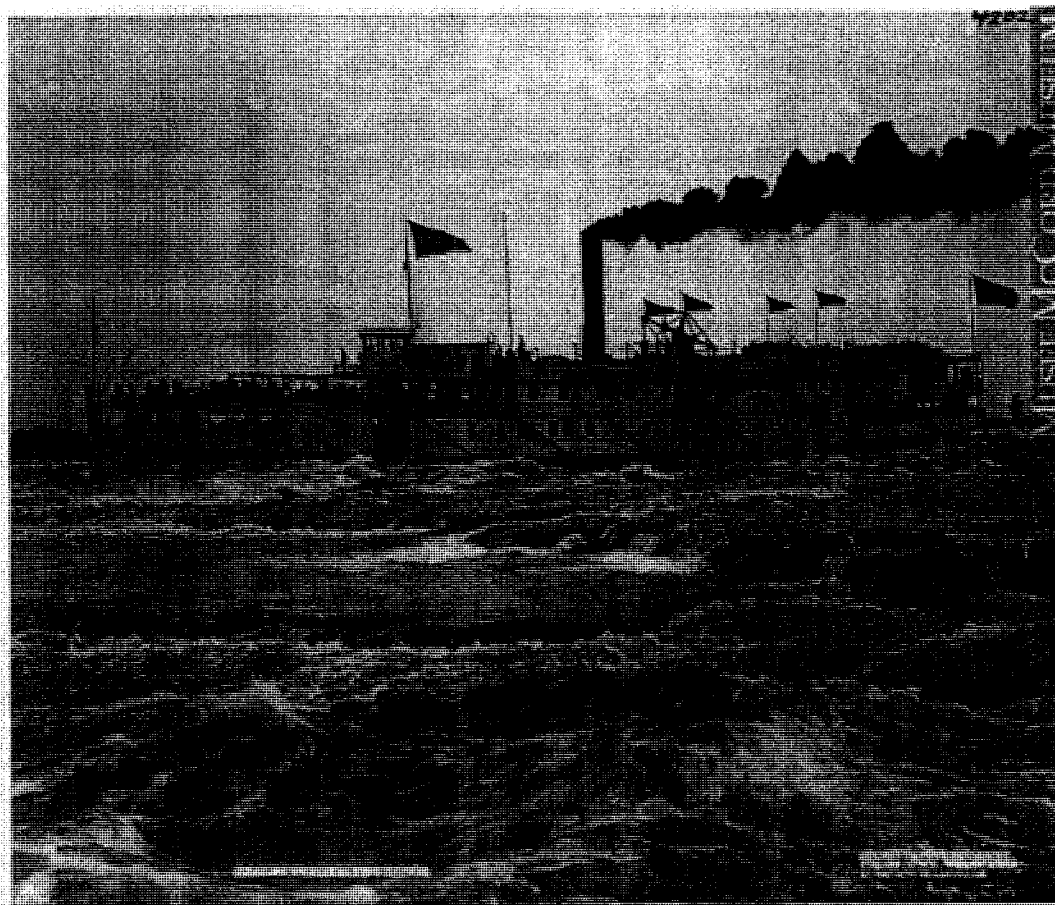


Figure 80
“S.S. ‘Prescott’ running Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph.
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1906
McCord Museum VIEW-4202.0

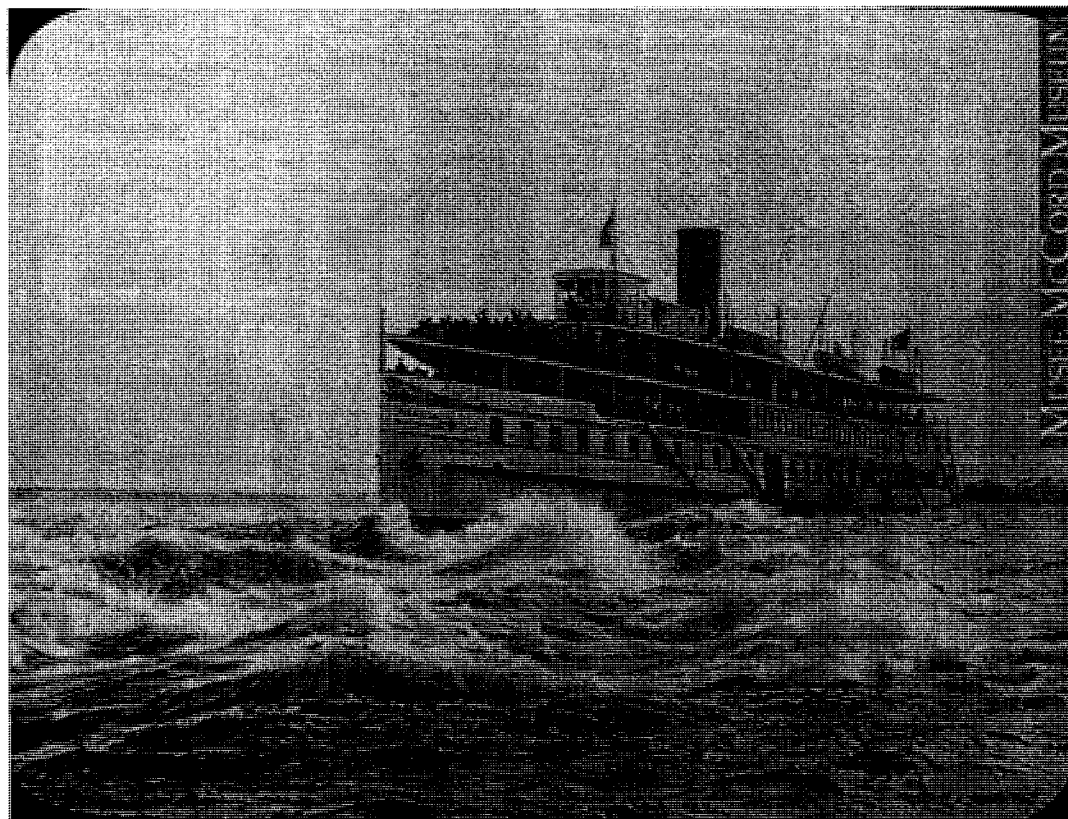


Figure 81
“S.S. ‘Rapids King’ running Lachine Rapids, QC, 1901.” Photograph, glass lantern slide
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1920
McCord Museum N-0000.25.1083



Figure 82
“S.S. ‘Prescott’ running Lachine Rapids, QC, 1906.” Photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, 1908
McCord Museum VIEW-4204.0

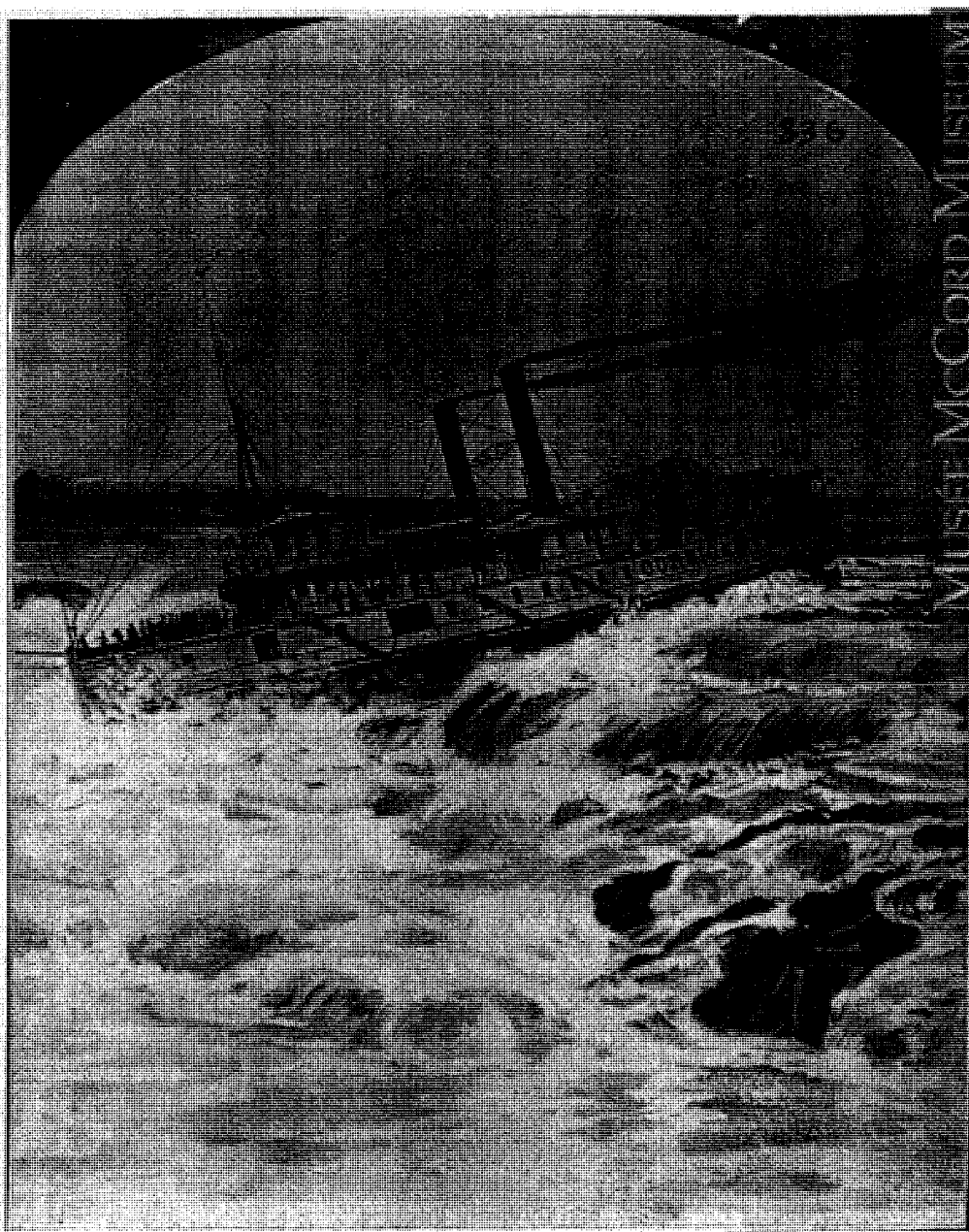


Figure 83
"S.S. 'Corsican' in Lachine Rapids, QC." Photograph.
Notman & Sandham, 1878
McCord Museum VIEW-836.1

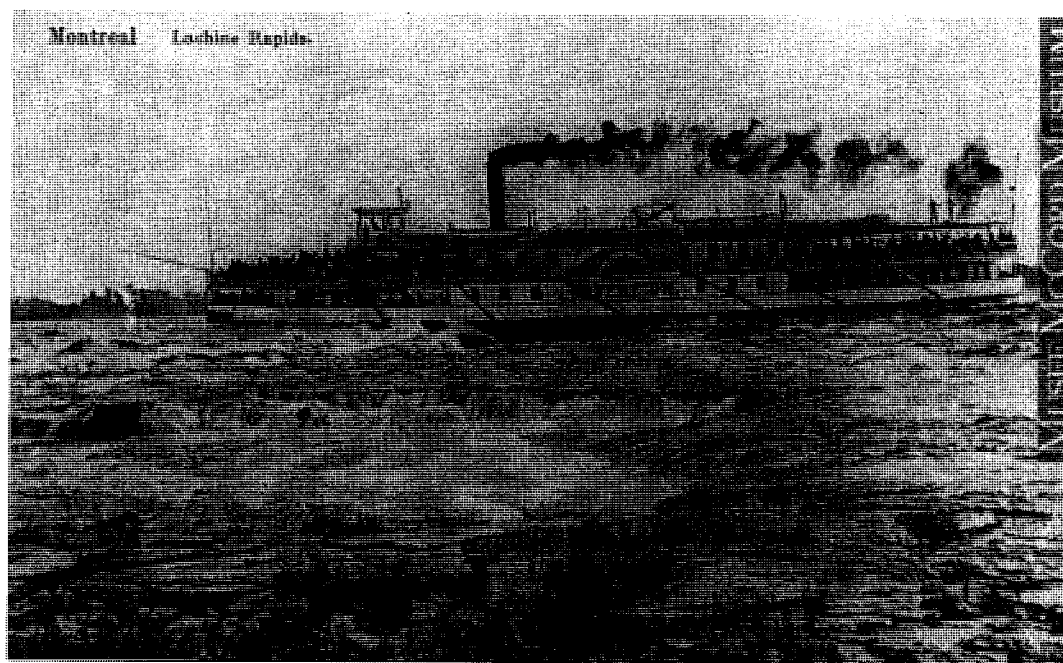


Figure 84
“Lachine Rapids, Montreal vicinity, QC.” Collotype
Anonymous, c 1910
McCord Museum MP-0000.899.9

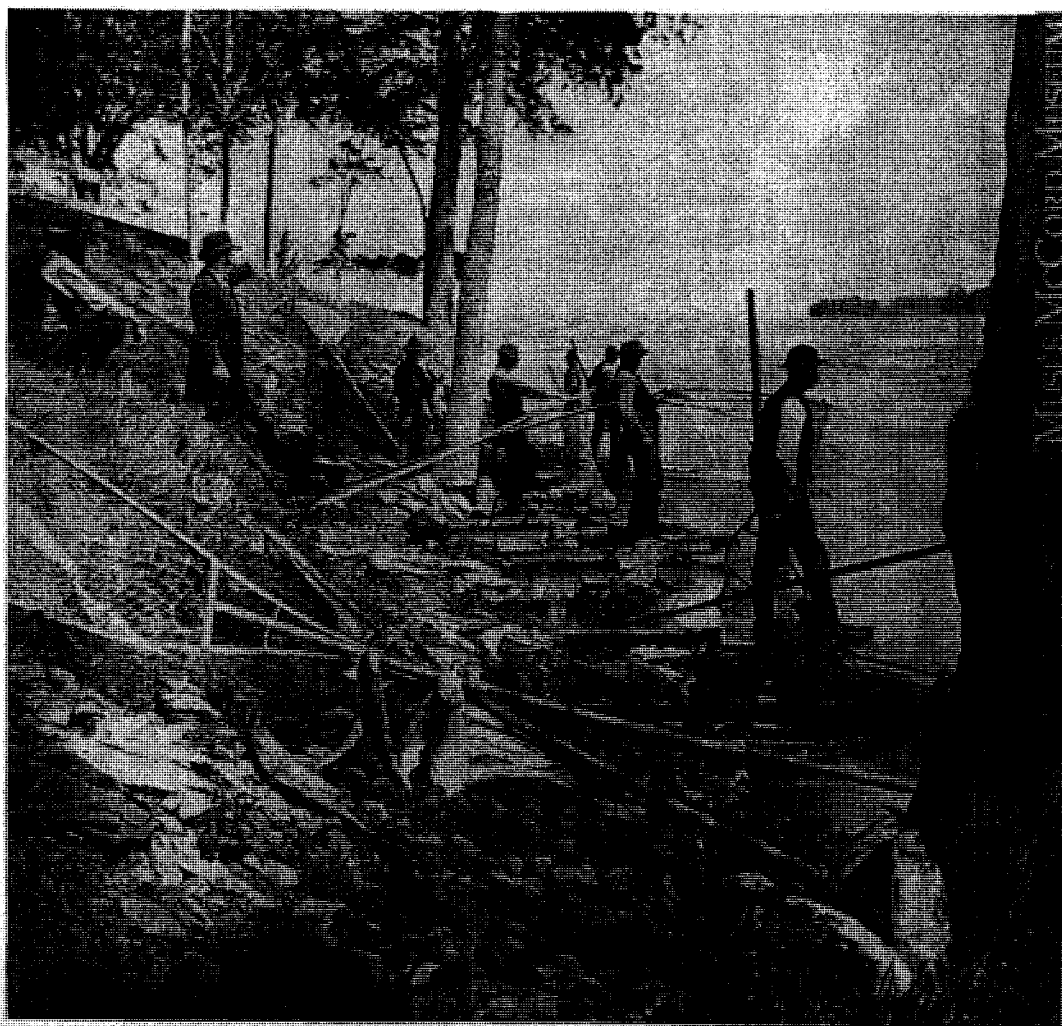


Figure 85
"Shad Fishing, Lachine Rapids, near Montreal, QC." Photograph
W. A. Cummings, c 1875
McCord Museum MP-0000.1750.25

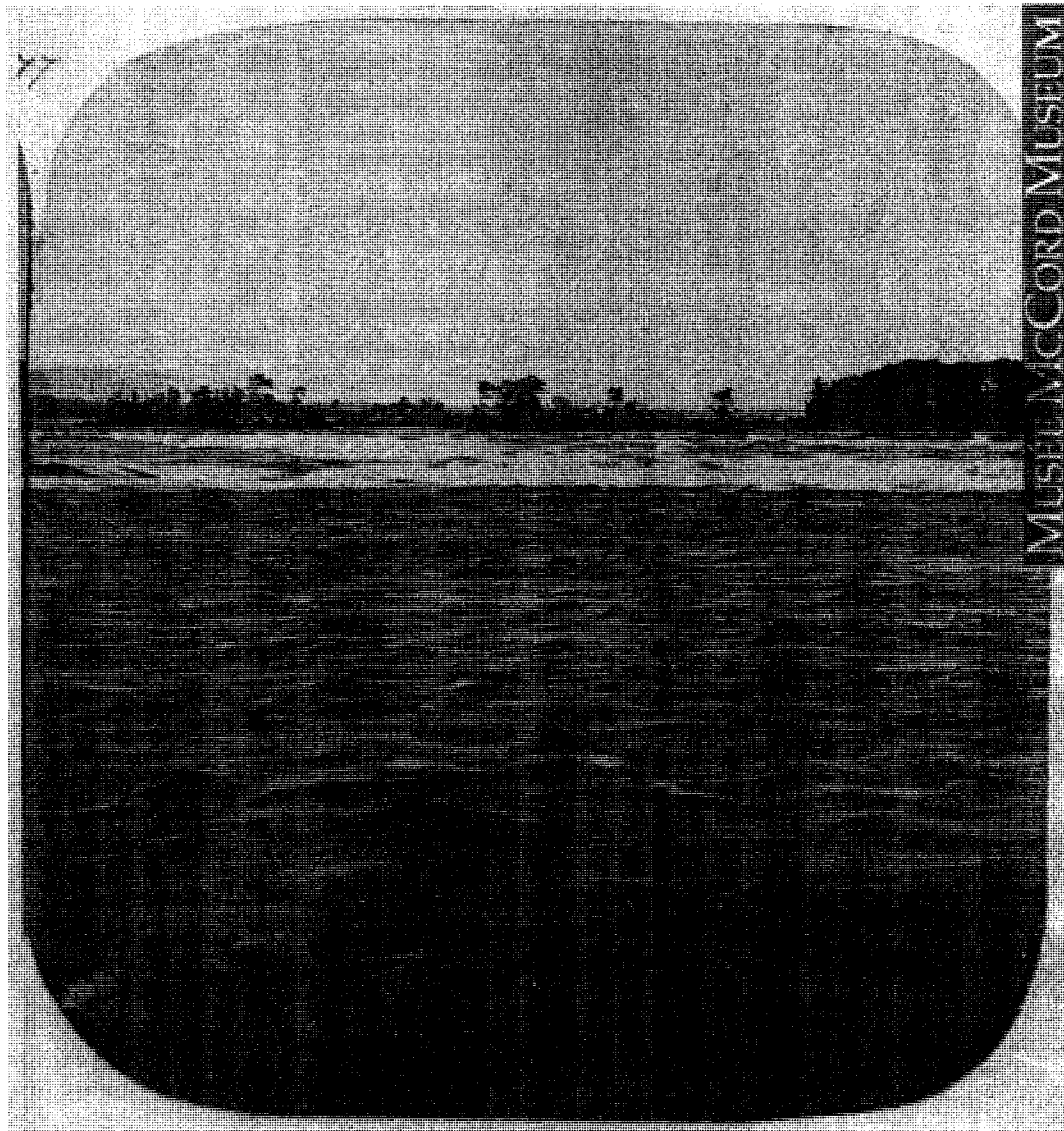


Figure 86
"Lachine Rapids near Montreal, QC." Photograph
William Notman, c 1860
McCord Museum N-0000.193.315.2



Figure 87
Photograph
“S.S. ‘Corsican’ in Lachine Rapids, QC.” composite photograph
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1891
McCord Museum VIEW-838

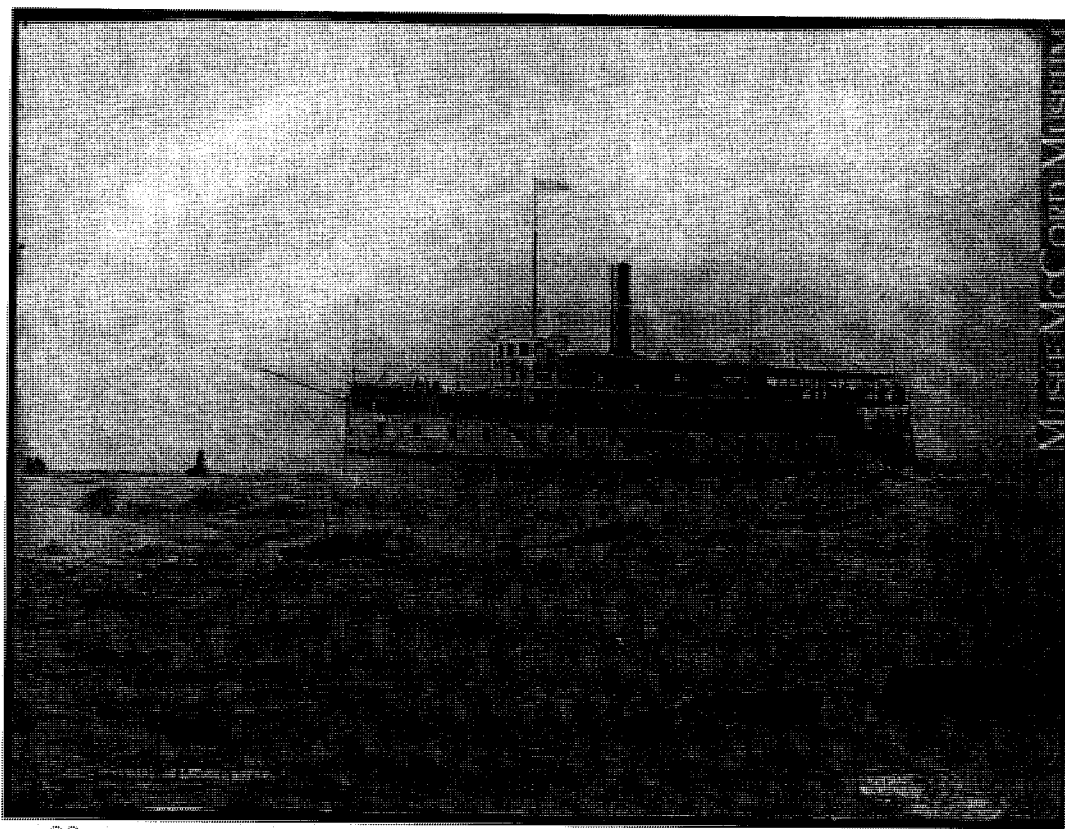


Figure 88
“S.S. ‘Columbian’ in Lachine Rapids, QC.” Photograph.
Wm. Notman & Son, c 1898
McCord Museum VIEW-3161

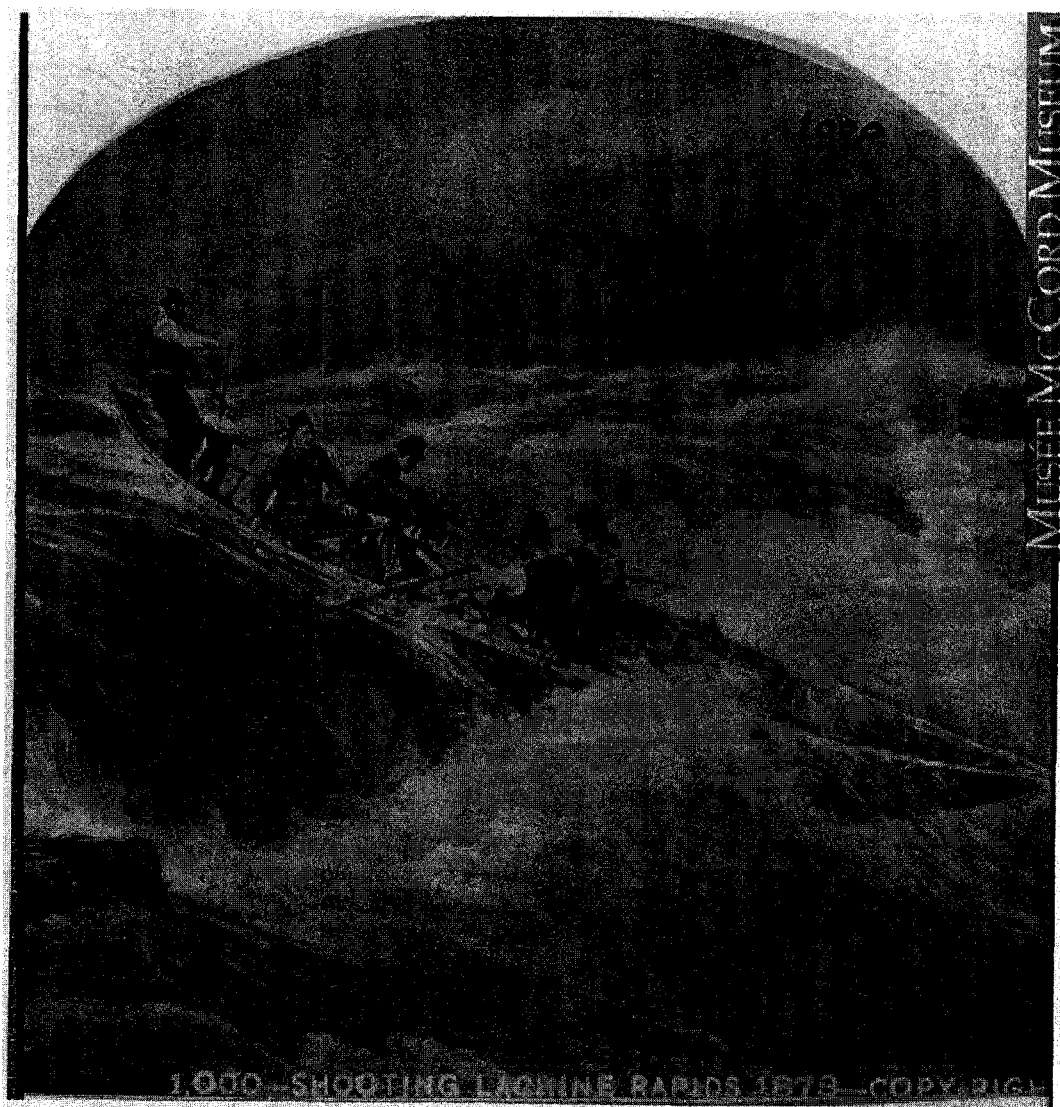


Figure 89
"Shooting Lachine Rapids." Photograph.
Notman & Sandham, c 1878
McCord Museum VIEW-1000.1



Figure 90
“S.S. Corinthian in Lachine Rapids, Montreal, QC.” Photograph.
James George Parks, c 1870
McCord Museum MP-0000.2199

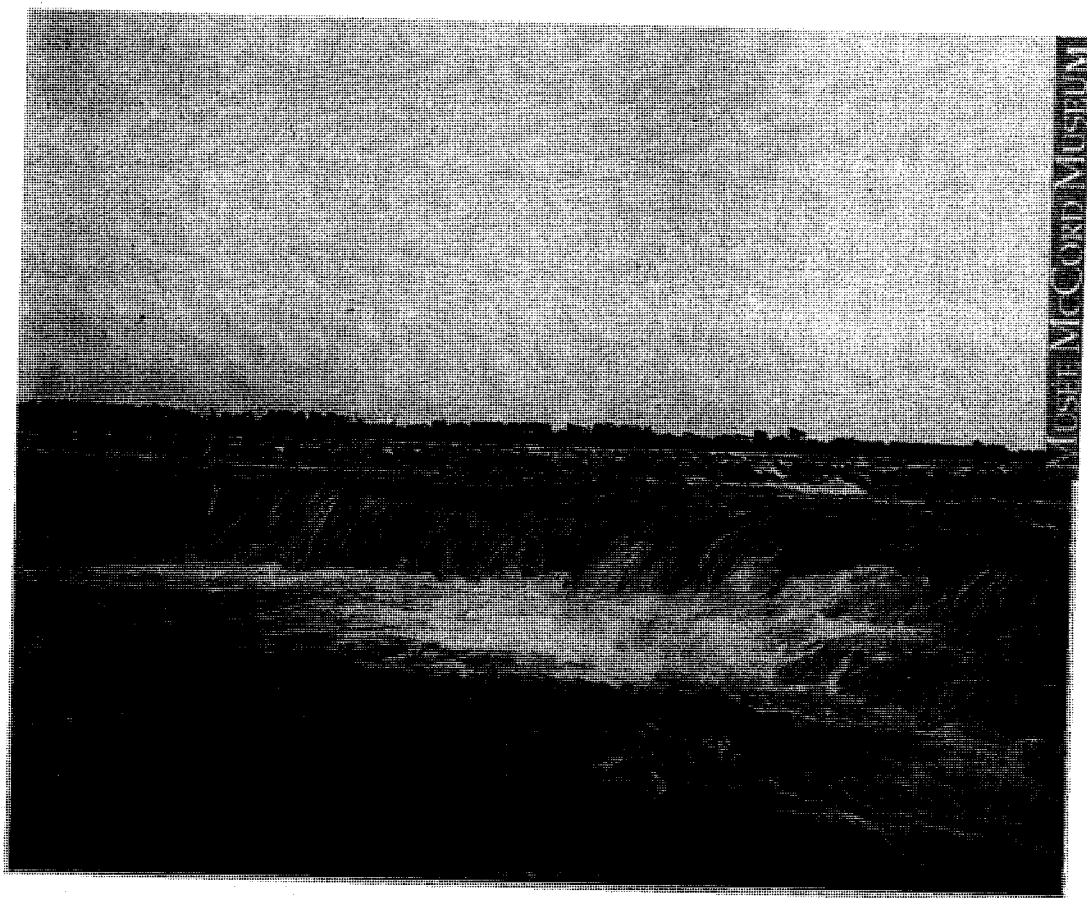


Figure 91
"Cascade Rapids from Horseshoe Island." Photograph
Alfred Walter Roper, 1899
McCord Museum MP-1977.76.98