Profile

Henry Montgomery, PhD (1849-1919): Professor of Archaeologic Geology

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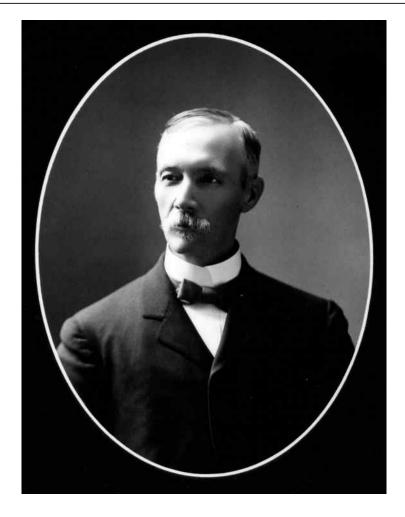
On 24 February 1919, every Toronto newspaper, the *Toronto Globe*, the *Mail* and the *Star*, carried the obituary of Professor Henry Montgomery. He had just died, at age 71, on the twenty-first of February, in Painesville, Ohio, where he had been living with his only son Clarence. His wife predeceased him and, in a sad twist of fate, his son died on the twenty-sixth of February, a mere two days after his father's funeral.¹

Obituaries are lifeless chronicles, a listing of achievements in a formulaic manner. Where born, where educated and worked, married or not, offspring if any, and how and where died. Montgomery's were no exception to this rule. He was born in Durham County, Ontario, in 1849; he was educated at the University of Toronto, receiving his Ph.D. from Illinoisan Wesleyan University in 1903; and from 1883 to 1894 worked as a professor of geology, palaeontology and archaeology, and museum curator in North Dakota and Utah. He was a professor at Trinity and then at the University of Toronto from 1894 to 1903, when he was appointed Curator of the University of Toronto's scientific collections. At this time, the Globe noted: "he helped plan and design the Museum building in [sic] Bloor Street West." He was superannuated (retired) from the University of Toronto in 1912. His wife, Isabelle, had predeceased him by several years. For three years before his death he had lived with his son in Painesville where his health, which had never been "robust," led to him succumbing to a bout of pneumonia and flu.

Readers of *Ontario Archaeology* are familiar with the history of archaeology as a discipline in Ontario (Killan 1980). According to Killan (1983), the first professional archaeologist in Ontario was David Boyle. In 1884 Boyle donated his collection of artifacts to the Canadian

Institute, where he became associated with the prehistorian and University of Toronto Professor, Sir Daniel Wilson (Trigger 1966). In fact Henry Montgomery was a student of Wilson who predates Boyle in Ontario archaeology. Charles A. Hirschfelder is another student of Wilson predating Boyle. Montgomery does not rate even one reference in Killan's book. He is mentioned in Noble's survey article on the history of archaeology in Canada (1972:40) as a professor of geology at Trinity College who excavated mounds in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In one article on early antiquarians in Ontario (Kapches 1994), I discuss Montgomery and Charles A. Hirschfelder. Both of these men would have interacted with David Boyle but they took different career paths, ones that took them out of Ontario at a time when David Boyle was gaining in authority and responsibility with the Canadian Institute. Hirschfelder's story will not be told here; suffice it to say that even though there was a ten-year age difference (Montgomery over Hirschfelder), they were students who worked on digs together. When, in 1883, Montgomery left Toronto for a position in the United States, he gave his archaeological collection to Hirschfelder. Around the same time, Hirschfelder had a falling out with the scholars of the Canadian Institute and also with Boyle, the newly appointed Curator of the Canadian Institute's collection (Kapches 1983, 1994).

Although Hirschfelder is interesting in his own right, he can't be considered a professional archaeologist, only an antiquarian in the Victorian sense of the term. It's the life and times of Henry Montgomery that will be the focus here. I think he rightly deserves the title of Ontario's first professional archaeologist. He's little known in Ontario today because the greatest part of his



career was spent out of the country and province.² He's also little known at the universities where he worked in the United States because he moved around a lot during his career. Sadly, he is not remembered anywhere for his archaeological work, which was quite substantial, and indeed one of my colleagues refers to him as a "pot-hunter." The epithet is unfair. Like many of his era, he followed the academic mores of the day, which are not equivalent to the scientific standards of today, and never will be. I will outline Montgomery's career to rectify that lack of knowledge and restore him to his rightful position as a respected Ontario archaeologist, in fact the first professional archaeologist in the province.

Finding His Way: The Early Ontario Years

Little is known about Montgomery's early years. He was born in 1849 on his family farm near Burton, Ontario, south of Lake Scugog. He was educated locally and sent to Upper Canada College (UCC) in Toronto for one year (1867-1868). He had an older sister, Sarah, who was denied an education while her brother was given one, a circumstance that caused her great unhappiness. "His education was wasted because he died in the 1918 flu epidemic." The family also knew, however, that he had been a professor at the University of Toronto. Obviously Sarah's feeling about her brother and her lack of opportunity coloured her family's history of her brother's life.

After UCC, he attended the University of Toronto. Although he had scholarships in Natural Sciences, he also had to work to earn money to attend university, so that it was some eight years later that he graduated with a B.A. in 1876.4 He achieved an M.A. in 1877 and a B.Sc. from Victoria University, Toronto, in 1880. At university, he took courses in mathematics, mineralogy and geology, zoology and palaeontology. His professors were the "who's who" of the University of Toronto's academia. He conducted field work in geology and palaeontology with George Jennings Hinde over a period of four years. He took natural history and botany with R. Ramsay Wright. He also studied mineralogy and geology with E.J. Chapman the first professor and Chair of the Geology and Mineralogy department at the university.

His first publication was a letter to the editor of the Globe titled "Indian Remains in Simcoe and Muskoka" (3 August 1878, p.2). In this letter he describes his two years of research on Huron ossuaries in Simcoe County, involving excavations, and offers some observations on the size of the pits and the types of crania discovered. In his correspondence with A.F. Hunter, he mentions that he was digging ossuaries in Simcoe County as early as 1870.5 His first scholarly article was on salamanders, "Some Observations on the Menobrachus Maculatus" (1879). Both of them were written while Montgomery was a teacher at the Collegiate Institute (now Jarvis Collegiate Institute) and a lecturer on botany and zoology at the Toronto School of Medicine.

During this period, he was also involved with the Toronto Entomological Society and on March 2, 1877, he was elected corresponding secretary.⁶ Over the years he held various positions in this organization, including president (1881), and he also lectured on subjects such as "Comparative Anatomy and Physiology as Applicable to Insects" (13 February, 1878). Eventually this society became the Natural History Society of Toronto, the Toronto Naturalists Club and, on December 4, 1923, the Brodie Club⁷ (Herzberg 1996). He continued to publish with a second scholarly article, "A Blastoid found in the Devonian Rocks of

Ontario" (Montgomery 1881). During this period he also seems to have attended the Johns Hopkins Laboratory in Baltimore, Maryland (dates unknown), and then lectured on biology and physiology at the University of Toronto School of Medicine.

This early period of his career seems to be unfocused. He studied several disciplines and taught many subjects. Ultimately, he was looking for an academic position and wisely made himself as diversified as possible in the academic community. He continued to teach in an academic environment and also published in scholarly journals. Herzberg (1996:102) observed that Montgomery was the most educated member of the Toronto Natural History Society and she wondered how the course of natural history in Toronto would have fared had he stayed in the city. However, as was noted in one of his obituaries: "In the eighties there were not many scholastic openings for Canadians in their own country, the almost invariable practise of Toronto... being to import men from the British Isles...."8 With an excellent collection of letters of reference and published articles to his credit, Montgomery was successful in obtaining an academic position in 1883 at the newly formed University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. Thus began the first phase of his career as a respected university professor.

Finding his Stride: 1883-1889, the Dakota Years

Montgomery was hired as professor of natural science and vice-president of the University of North Dakota (UND), at a salary of \$2000 per annum, in July 1883. He was the first employee of the university, which was in the process of being built. Although it is his archaeological career that is of interest here, it was his administrative career that is recognized and revered at UND today.

Along with Professor Webster Merrifield, Montgomery designed the curriculum, which included a preparatory programme, a normal school course and a Bachelor of Arts and Science programme. Due to internal conflicts, the president of the university was fired and Montgomery was appointed acting president from 1885 to 1887. Over this period Montgomery dealt with the administrative issues of the university, including the rebuilding of the university's main building, called Old Main, after a severe windstorm on the sixteenth of June, 1887. As well, he lectured on medical subjects and, while he was acting president, UND established a Faculty of Medicine. However, as much as Montgomery wanted to be president of the university, according to Geiger (1958:60-61) he was not very popular and was overlooked when the appointment was made.

While in the Dakotas, he conducted a prodigious amount of archaeological and geological field work. Before he was officially hired, on the tenth of July, 1883, he was already opening burial mounds in Walsh County (Montgomery 1889). In total, he excavated 39 mounds, examined the exterior of another 49 mounds, and worked in several counties including Walsh, Ramsey, Benson and Grand Forks. He gave numerous lectures to the public and university community on his field work in and around Devils Lake and other locales and the local press carried many articles describing his fieldwork and talks. Montgomery used the press to his advantage.

When he began his archaeological work in the Dakotas, he hypothesized that the mounds he was excavating were the remains of cities with immense populations, similar to the largest mound in North America in East St Louis (Cahokia). "I delight to look at and to think of the pretty scenes around Fort Totten and would give a great deal to know the name of the great city which flourished in that vicinity many centuries ago."9 By the time he published on these excavations, after numerous years of additional research, he concluded that there were artifact similarities with the mound builders of the Mississippi valley, but that the peoples of the Dakotas differed substantially from the mound builders of that and surrounding areas (1906a:651). Syms (1979) has published on the Lake-Sourisford burial complex. Montgomery's work on mounds in Manitoba and Saskatchewan of the northern Plains was a continuation of work on this complex.

Today, Montgomery is remembered at the University of North Dakota in many ways: his name is engraved on a bronze plaque at the location of "Old Main," which was demolished in the 1960s; a building is named after him; and various histories discuss his administrative contribution to the fledgling university. Professors in the archaeology department have studied his work, including Gordon Hewes¹⁰ and Fred Schneider.¹¹

Montgomery left Grand Forks in 1889 for a teaching position at the Normal School in Cortland, New York. He told A.F. Hunter in a letter dated 30 September, 1889, that since he had last seen him in Toronto he had decided to leave Grand Forks because his family did not like the harsh winters. His own poor health was also a factor. By July of 1890 he had accepted a position at Deseret University in Utah and began the second phase of his archaeological and geological studies.

Go West Again: 1890-1894, the Utah Years

Montgomery was appointed Chair of Mineralogy, Geology and Natural History, and Curator of the Museum of Deseret University, Salt Lake City. The University of Deseret became the University of Utah in 1892. Once again Montgomery threw himself into field work, teaching and amassing collections for the university museum. Being in a mining department and in a state whose economy was hugely dependent on mining, it is not a surprise that much of Montgomery's field work and collecting activities were focused on mines. He continued to publish scholarly articles on various subjects, such as teaching science in public schools (1892), the sand of Great Salt Lake (1893a) and mineral wax (1893b).

During his time in Utah he conducted archaeological work at the village site of Paragonah and the mounds of Nephi (Mason City) south of Salt Lake City (Montgomery 1894b), caves in southeastern Utah (Montgomery 1894a) and in Nine Mile canyon (Montgomery 1894c). These three articles appeared in Warren K. Moorehead's *The Archaeologist* and are the first to have been published on the archaeology of Utah. Montgomery

was the first to hypothesize that the peoples who made the rock art in Nine Mile canyon were the same people who lived in the communities in the valleys. Today these peoples are called Freemont and date to ca. A.D. 400-1300. In 1894 the University of Utah was experiencing financial difficulties. Through an endowment from the Church of Latter Day Saints, which included the founding of the Deseret Professorship of Geology, economic ruin was averted. This professorship was given to a high ranked Mormon, James E. Talmage and Montgomery was let go (Chamberlain 1960:202-203). To be fair, it must be averred that Montgomery was applying for positions back east while he was employed in Utah. 14

How is Montgomery remembered in Utah today? He is mentioned in the history of the University (Chamberlain 1960). The current Curator of the Anthropology Collections at the University Museum, Dr. Duncan Metcalfe, knew of him but did not know what happened to him (conversation in Salt Lake City, 2 June, 2003). Janetski (1997) compares Montgomery's work favourably to that of others working in Utah archaeology at the time.

So once again, by changing academic positions, Montgomery left behind a research record that entered Utah's scholastic oblivion. Upon leaving Utah he was fortunate to be hired at Trinity College, Toronto in September 1894 as a Fellow in Natural Sciences. ¹⁵ Apparently the College had overcome its aversion to hiring Canadians. Thus began the last and in many ways the most productive phase of his academic career. He began to call himself a professor of archaeologic geology, reflecting his expertise in both disciplines.

Disappointments and Successes: 1894-1912, the Toronto Years

Montgomery did not go into the archaeological field again until some 13 years later, 1907. In the meantime he continued his academic pursuits, publishing articles in *Science* on volcanic dust (1895), eminent men of science (1900a), and a crystal of spodumene (1900b). He was not content, however, to remain at Trinity and was searching in the United States for another appointment

by 1901. ¹⁶ The main reason seems to be economic. His poor salary was acknowledged from the moment of his hire when the Corporation of Trinity College Minute Book states that "it was possible that a sufficient sum would be guaranteed to him from private subscription to enable him to accept the post." In 1903 he was making \$1200, much reduced from his earlier salary in North Dakota, for example.

Although he always maintained a productive publication record, he was finally able, in 1903, to complete and successfully defend his Ph.D. thesis titled "Prehistoric Man in the United States and Canada" at Illinoisan Wesleyan University. In 1906 he published his work from the Dakotas. In 1910 he contributed several photographs and a large chapter in Warren K. Moorehead's massive two-volume reference book *The Stone Age in America* (Montgomery 1910c).

In 1903 he was appointed the curator of the new museum in the University of Toronto when Trinity amalgamated with the University. Thus began an important and frustrating time in his career. One of his steps was to catalogue the palaeontological collections at the university (Montgomery 1905). Certainly the major initiative at the University of Toronto at the time was the pressing need for a single museum building. This building project was spearheaded by President Loudon and by the next president, Sir Edmund Walker. In a letter to Loudon, ¹⁸ Montgomery bemoans the fact that the government architect is not consulting the president or the curator of the museum concerning the plans for the building. In March of 1906, Montgomery visited eight museums and art galleries in the northeastern United States, reviewing the construction techniques, architectural layout, construction and maintenance costs, heating, lighting, and storage of collections, location of offices and laboratories, and exhibition spaces. His recommendations were presented to President Loudon in May of that same year (Montgomery 1906b). He emphasized that the museum should do research and educate the public. He concluded:

A very useful building for a beginning could be had by the erection of one about 180 feet in length and 65 feet in width...,

and having three stories and a basement.... a building should serve the purposes of the University and public reasonably well for several years until proper additions could be made [Montgomery 1906b:40].

He had sent this "little pamphlet of interest" to Sir Edmund Walker¹⁹ but, disappointingly, Montgomery was ignored by Walker and the other members of the university's museum committee while Charles Trick Currelly, the flamboyant and charismatic collector from Toronto, was hugely popular (Dickson 1986). Unlike Montgomery, Currelly had the ear and also access to the pocketbooks of the wealthy benefactors of Toronto. In 1911 Currelly wrote an article in the University of Toronto Monthly titled "New Museum" (Vol. II, March, 159-169). When this became known, Walker "had to act as a patient and methodical mediator between the professors who had been thinking of the museum as theirs, and Currelly who had been thinking of the museum as his" (Dickson 1986:34). Indeed Montgomery is not mentioned once in Dickson's book on the founding of the Royal Ontario Museum.

By 1907, with the development and building of the museum out of his control, it was apparent that Montgomery was Curator of the University of Toronto Museum in name only. At that time he seems to have re-directed his considerable energies towards archaeological fieldwork. In 1907 he returned to the work of excavating mounds (Montgomery 1908). In 1908 and 1909 he worked in Manitoba (Montgomery 1910b) and in 1909 he excavated the Otonabee Mounds in Ontario (Montgomery 1910a). He pointedly did not call these Serpent Mounds because he did not feel they were built as effigy structures, in contrast to the Ohio mounds (1910a:2).

By 1910 the world seemed to close in around Montgomery. Hunter wanted Montgomery to visit sites in Simcoe County but poor health, both Montgomery's and his wife Isabelle's prevented this from happening.²⁰ On July 29, 1910 the *Globe* announced that the funeral of Mrs. Montgomery had taken place the day before.

Montgomery and his son never recovered from her death.²¹ There is no indication that he did any more fieldwork. He retired from the University of Toronto in 1912.

The Final Years: 1912-1919

After his wife's death, neither Montgomery nor his son Clarence enjoyed good health. Montgomery did not publish again but he did review his collection and sent some objects to the Royal Ontario Museum in 1916.²² In particular, he sent objects that had been collected while he was employed at the university.

After his death and the death of his son, his estate sold his collection to the ROM for \$25 in December 1919.23 About 50 cases of artifacts, notes and books were examined by the curators at the ROM and the collections were divided according to each curator's speciality.24 Today his archaeological collections are in the New World Archaeology section of the Department of World Cultures and the mineralogy collections are in the Mineralogy section of the Department of Natural History. His textbooks are scattered throughout the building, often having ended up as curiosities in curators' libraries. For example the Manual of Paleontology, Vol.1, by Henry Alleyne Nicholson and Richard Lydekker (1889), which was owned by Montgomery and contains the handwritten notation "Henry Montgomery, a student of Professor Nicholson in the University of Toronto, Toronto," passed into Madeline Fritz's library, then to Peter von Bitter's, as one curator to another has passed down his book.

Coda

In this short albeit detailed profile of Henry Montgomery much has been left out. It includes, for example, his discussions concerning the politics of the British and American Associations for the Advancement of Science, which was a heated topic of discussion at the time; the impact of his membership in the Natural History Society of Toronto; his interaction with David Boyle, the Canadian Institute and the Ontario Provincial Museum; his

involvement with the Smithsonian Institution and Otis T. Mason, and with the U.S. Geological Survey's work on Lake Agassiz by Warren Upham.

Montgomery was a respected scholar of his time and his influence was widely felt. There are blanks in our knowledge of his career: his archives, although detailed in some respects, are lacking in others. There are no archaeological field notes so detailed comments on his fieldwork will not be possible. There is, nevertheless, much more to be said about his career and a more detailed presentation is planned for the future.

Henry Montgomery deserves to be remembered by modern day archaeologists, geologists and museologists. He had a remarkably productive career at a time when universities, academia, scientific societies, and museums were at an early stage of development. When he had unfettered opportunity, as he did during his time in the western states, Montgomery achieved a lot. In Toronto, within the mire of university and provincial politics, he was less successful. I can only wonder, as Louise Herzberg did (1996:102), what the nature of museums and archaeology in Ontario would have been had Montgomery not left for North Dakota in 1883.

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Notes

¹Toronto Globe, 1 March 1919.

²Jean-Luc Pilon of the Canadian Museum of Civilization argued for Henri Ami as the first international archaeologist in Canada. However, Ami (one of George Dawson's students at the Geological Survey of Canada) was born ten years after Montgomery.

³This is a comment made by Sam Campbell, Sarah's grandson, in a personal communication to Mima Kapches, by email, from Janet Elliot McKenzie, 21 April 2002. Janet McKenzie is Montgomery's second great grandniece.

⁴Montgomery obituary, *Trinity University Review*, Vol. 31, No.6, March 1919, 142.

⁵Letter to A.F. Hunter from Montgomery dated 7 February 1889, Simcoe County Archives, Minesing, Ontario.

⁶The Toronto Entomological Association Minute Book, plus loose sheets, 26 February 1877 to 17 December 1883, Royal Ontario Museum Library Archives.

⁷The Natural History Society of Toronto Minute Book, Royal Ontario Museum Archives; Brodie Club Minute Book, Royal Ontario Museum Archives.

⁸Montgomery Obituary, *Trinity University Review*, Vol. 31, No.6, March 1919, p. 142.

9University of North Dadota, The Student, 1889:9.

¹⁰Letter from Kenneth Kidd to Hewes, 18 January 1949.

¹¹Letter to Kapches, 29 May 1990.

¹²A.F. Hunter Papers, Simcoe County Archives, Minesing, Ontario.

¹³UND, The Student, April 1881, p.13.

¹⁴19 June 1891, letter to Montgomery from E. Haanel, Syracuse University, Montgomery Archives, ROM Library.

¹⁵Corporation Minute Book, Trinity College, 986-0001/14, 10 October 1894.

¹⁶Rev. T.C.S. Macklem, Trinity Provost, letter to Montgomery, 10 September 1901, ROM Library, Montgomery Archives.

¹⁷Trinity College Archives, 986-0001/014, 18 October 1894, p.387.

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