

Title:	Letters by Duncan Campbell describing the rebellions in Canada, 1837-1839		
Creator:	Duncan Campbell		
Dates of Material:	1837-1839	Record Group Number:	RG 845
Summary of Contents:	<p>Seven letters written by Duncan Campbell providing an account of the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada in 1837-1838. Campbell was an ensign for the 83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment of Foot and fought in both the Upper and Lower Canada Rebellions. The letters are addressed to his family in Scotland. Transcriptions of the letters are included. Most of the letters are cross-written and are difficult to read.</p> <p>The first letter is dated at Montreal, 25 December 1837 and describes the Battle of Saint-Eustache and its aftermath. The letter is four pages. Campbell writes extensively about the battle noting that <i>“both regts. charged down the street as quickly as we could & took possession of the benches on both sides of the Church. The Rebels in those houses were all shot or made prisoners. They still however kept up a fire from the Church windows & showed the most determined courage you can imagine. At last the door was stormed by a party of Royals & almost immediately after it the church was set fire to. They now began to run in all directions & made no further resistance of any kind...our men shot about 7 of them & we brought 15 of them back prisoners. Two more hours were employed in scouting the woods & shooting any of the poor wretches who continued to resist, & making as many prisoners as we could...”</i>. He further describes the grisly scene of the burning church and bodies of the dead rebels, and the abandonment of the nearby villages. Campbell concludes that [Weeks] body had been found sunk in a river and that [Captain Henry] had turned quite deranged and is now in confinement.</p> <p>The next letter he wrote is dated at St. Thomas, Upper Canada, 4 February 1838. The letter is three pages and describes William Lyon Mackenzie’s occupation of Navy Island in the Niagara River with the Patriots. He writes that <i>“the Company that I am in got orders...to proceed to Toronto, the capital of the upper province as an escort to a large supply of arms & ammunition to arm the Militia in that quarter. For at the time the <u>Rebels</u> under McKenzie with a drove of Yankees were expected to make an irruption into the province from the Niagara frontier. They however did not try it, but took up their quarters in a small island 2 miles above the falls of Niagara where the Yankees supplied them with arms, ammunition, canon, etc. The island is so situated that any boats going to it from our side, runs considerable risk of being carried over the falls the stream runs so rapidly. We however set the Artillery to work at them as Navy Island is only a mile from the main land. They made such havoc amongst them that during a dark stormy night they (the Rebels) took their departure & dispersed themselves over the States, so Mackenzie’s Rebellion in Upper Canada may now be considered <u>over</u> as they have not been left a leg to stand upon & can never have the smallest chance</i></p>		

of succeeding.”

The remaining letters were written primarily while Campbell was stationed at Fort Henry. A letter dated at Kingston, July 13, 1838, is four pages and describes his journey to Kingston, which involved some time in Niagara Falls. Campbell writes that *“We have shifted our quarters about 600 miles to the eastward & the Regt has at last got all together again at Kingston... We had a very pleasant trip of it down here thro the big lakes & touched at several places on the lake Erie coast to get fuel for our Steamer... After getting to Chippawa (a small town at the east end of the Lake Erie within a mile of Navy Island, where Mackenzie took shelter during the winter) we left our Steamer & marched across to Lake Ontario, passing that nice little cascade that perhaps you may have hear of (viz the Falls of Niagara, which the road passes close by). Derinzey & I got leave to remain behind for a day & we saw as much as we could of that wonder of the World. It is quite needless for me to attempt to describe them. We were both smitten with amazement of no ordinary nature. One part of the performance that most of the visitors to the falls go thro is getting underneath the sheet of water, that is getting between it & the immense rock it tumbles over. I cannot say I relished that part of the fun, for the smallest stumble will pitch you into the chaldron wh. wd. be unpleasant to say the least of it. Ten miles below the Falls we got onto another steamer, wh. took us to Toronto, where we [kept] two days...”*

The next letter is dated at Kingston, Aug. 10, 1838, and is three pages. Campbell writes about the escape of 15 of the state prisoners from the fort there. They were assisted by one of the Engineer Department and the gaoler. Only two of the escaped prisoners have been found.

The next letter is dated at Kingston, 20 September 1838 and describes a hunting expedition he was part of, during which he caught several wild ducks and deer.

Another letter dated at Kingston, November 1838 describes another hunting expedition Campbell participated in. He also mentions unrest among the population, noting that *“I have just heard that those French Canadian villains have been again trying to stir up a rebellion down near Montreal & I believe have murdered a Captain of militia named Ross besides some English settlers at a place called Beauharnois & La Chino. One would suppose that they had enough of it last winter, but it seems not. Things are quite peaceful here at present. Whether they will remain so long or not, I can not say. But in case of accidents we have made every preparation to give the Yankees a warm reception if they come over as it is rumoured they intend to do...”*

The last letter is dated at Kingston, May 13, 1839 and is addressed to his mother. Campbell notes that things have been quiet, writing that *“I have not a word of news to give you Regimental or otherwise since I last wrote. Every thing goes on here in the old quiet & stupid way. We heard some talk of the Regt. Being moved up to Toronto this summer, but that has turned out to be*

	<p><i>untrue. So we may make our minds up to remain here for some time longer, wh. I am not sorry for, as this is in my opinion the best summer quarter in Upper Canada on account of the bathing, boating and shooting... ”</i></p>		
<p>Physical Description / Condition:</p>	<p>7 letters</p>		
<p>Administrative/ Biographical Sketch:</p>	<p>Duncan Campbell, 5th of South Hall (1813-1905), was an ensign in the 83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment of Foot. He fought in both the Upper and Lower Canada rebellions under Sir John Colborne.</p>		
<p>Location:</p>	<p>Brock University Archives</p>		
<p>Source Information:</p>	<p>Acquired in 2023.</p>		
<p>Described by:</p>	<p>Chantal Cameron</p>	<p>Date:</p>	<p>June 2023</p>