

The aspirations and disappointments of Charles Fothergill in Upper Canada, Ontario's pioneer ornithologist/naturalist, from 1817 to 1840

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Introduction

Charles Fothergill (1782-1840, Figure 1) was the first naturalist actively engaged in ornithological studies in southern Ontario, but due to a combination of misfortune and mismanagement, his efforts did not lead immediately to an advancement in natural history. It was not until a hundred years after his death that his extraordinary achievements came to light. Recently, I wrote a series of articles for the newsletter of the Pickering Township Historical Society about Charles Fothergill's years in Pickering Township where he lived from 1831 to 1837. I then followed those up with another article on the "Nature Notes of Charles Fothergill between 1831 and 1837", specifically those notes that pertain to Pickering Township. Subsequently, I published all of the articles in a special edition of the newsletter (Sabean 2015). The sightings that Fothergill recorded for Pickering—27 bird species, 7 mammals, and one reptile—constitute the first historical "list" of natural history for the city (then township).

For the general background of those articles, as everyone must now do, I relied heavily on James L. Baillie, Jr.'s article, "Charles Fothergill, 1782-1840", published in an issue of the *Canadian Historical Review* (Baillie 1944). Baillie wrote nearly three quarters of a century ago. What prompted his effort was the "discovery" (in several descendants' homes) of 16 manuscripts between 1931 and 1944. More than 40 years later Paul Romney made Fothergill the subject of his doctoral dissertation, a distillation of which was published in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Romney 1988). Even that is more than a quarter century ago. While I was particularly interested in Fothergill's contributions to the history of Pickering Township, I was also interested to see if Baillie's and Romney's assessments of Fothergill might change with new information or a different approach.

Writing in a more popular article in the same year as Romney, Elaine Theberge noted that Fothergill's status as

Fothergill's descriptions of the birds, mammals, fishes, reptiles and amphibians were meticulous and included a number of species he was the first to describe.

Figure 1. Charles Fothergill (1834) by Grove Sheldon Gilbert. *With permission of the Royal Ontario Museum. © ROM*



Canada's pioneer naturalist was beginning to have its due (Theberge 1988). While Romney's interests were chiefly political, Theberge was more concerned with arguing that the reappearance of the Fothergill manuscripts proved him to be primarily a naturalist: "Although prominent as a legislator, newspaper publisher and artist, it is in the field of natural history that Charles Fothergill deserves to be best remembered." Another more recent, but brief, account of Fothergill's contribution to Ontario ornithology may be found in D.F. Brunton's article in *Ornithology in Ontario*: "The early years of ornithology in Ontario: southern Ontario from Champlain to McIlwraith 1600 to 1886" (Brunton 1994). Brunton suggested that "Fothergill's tragic life in Canada underlines the limited support that existed in the early nineteenth century for intellectual pursuits... His time was one of political unrest and rebellion, as well as difficult economic conditions for most citizens... and the community of the day was simply not prepared to listen." While

what follows is not a detailed biography of Fothergill, it does cover the main factors of his life in an attempt to understand what went wrong to nearly assign him to oblivion rather than to celebrate his great accomplishments.

England

Charles Fothergill was born in York, England, on 23 May 1782. His father, John Fothergill, was a maker of brushes and combs. Charles was trained in his father's trade, but did not choose to follow a commercial avocation; rather he opted to find his niche in scientific and artistic pursuits. In 1811, Fothergill married Charlotte Nevins, the daughter of a Quaker woollen manufacturer. Two sons, Charles and George, were born to them before they immigrated to Upper Canada.

If one's pedigree counts for anything, Fothergill was well situated. He came from a well-known Yorkshire family noted for their interests in ornithology, science and art. His uncle, James Forbes, F.R.S., for example, was an artist who

*He came to Canada with one plan in mind—
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of the British Empire.*

travelled to Asia, Africa, America and Europe depicting the people and places he encountered, including the natural history. Fothergill assisted in the preparation of his *Oriental Memoirs* (Forbes 1813) and acknowledged his debt to his uncle in art and natural history in dedicating to him a book he himself published in 1813 under the title *Essay on the Philosophy, Study, and Use of Natural History* (Fothergill 1813).

A great uncle, Dr. John Fothergill, a naturalist and philanthropist, had assisted George Edwards with the publication in England of his works on birds including many new world species being illustrated for the first time, and also sponsored William Bartram in his botanical investigations in the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida between 1773 and 1778. Another uncle, William Fothergill, recounted to Charles the birdlife of the ancestral home of the family in Yorkshire, while a first cousin, Alexander Fothergill, drew from life nearly all the birds and other wildlife of the same area. Alexander's brother, another Dr. John Fothergill, was an artist and compiled a list of birds in *The History of Richmondsire* (Whitaker 1823). Charles's brother, Dr. Samuel Fothergill, was a physician, and his sister Eliza Fothergill was a talented portrait and landscape artist.

British Research

Given these stimuli, it was not surprising to find Fothergill wandering about the British Isles in pursuit of its natural history. He spent a year in Wales, another in Ireland, and still another in the Shetlands and Orkneys, two years in Scotland and two years on the Isle of Man. As early as age 13, he had begun an intensive study of Yorkshire birds, and at 17 (1799) he had published *Ornithologia Britannica*, a folio of eleven pages, listing 301 species of British birds (Fothergill 1799). Four years later, he published a two-volume work at London entitled *The Wanderer: or a Collection of Original Tales and Essays Founded upon Facts* (Fothergill 1803). Before leaving for the New World, he also published in 1813 an *Essay on the Philosophy, Study and Use of Natural History* (Fothergill 1813). Seeking a greater challenge, he conceived the idea of compiling a comprehensive natural history of the British Empire, and for that he had to travel to the New World.

Aspirations

On 6 March 1817, 200 years ago, Charles Fothergill arrived in York, Upper Canada, having emigrated from Yorkshire, England to Montreal the previous year. He came to Canada with one plan in mind—to research, compile and illustrate the natural history of the British Empire. The project carried the tentative title *Memoirs and Illustrations of the Natural History of the British Empire*. It was to run

to several volumes and include his own illustrations. This might appear to have been a daunting task, but if anyone was prepared to attain this end, it was he.

After visiting York, Upper Canada, Fothergill eventually settled his family at Smith's Creek (later Port Hope) in the spring of 1817, where he opened a general store and became the settlement's first postmaster. Meanwhile, he applied to Lieutenant-Governor Sir Francis Gore for 1200 acres of land on the south shore of Rice Lake. In this vicinity, he proposed to create a colony of gentlemen.

In 1818, Fothergill was appointed a Magistrate in the Court of Requests, and the next year became a member of the district land board. By 1821, he was also operating a brewery and distillery in Port Hope and a sawmill in South Monaghan. Later he would become one of the principal founders of the Port Hope Harbour and Wharf Company, founded in March 1829.

In 1821, Fothergill was appointed King's Printer, necessitating a move to York where he took up his duties as of 1 January 1822. In this capacity, he published the official *Upper Canada Gazette*, but he also availed himself of the opportunity to find other outlets for his energy. He published a newsletter, the *Weekly Register*, which would include the first nature column to appear in a Canadian newspaper.

From 1825 to 1830, Fothergill represented Durham County in the Legislative Assembly where he played an active role. Among the bills he initiated in the House, were an Act to establish agricultural societies in the province, an Act for the preservation of salmon within Upper

Canada and a proposal to create a federal government for all the British provinces in North America. According to Paul Romney's assessment: "Fothergill's importance in the years 1824-30 was considerable. He was the foremost exponent of 'conservative reform' views in the province, and his image of gentility and respectability was useful to the emergent reform movement at a time when many people still equated 'party' activity with disloyalty" (Romney 1988).

The Pickering Years

Charles Fothergill's wife, Charlotte Nevins, died in 1822. Shortly after her death, he wrote pensively to his sister Elizabeth in England expressing a desire to reunite with the Quaker heritage of his family. Though his family had been Quakers (Friends) for many years, Charles had been banished in England from the society for his interest in breeding race horses. It may be that his wish to reconnect with the Friends' Society was what led him to the Richardson family of Pickering Township, a Quaker family that had emigrated from Ireland about 1820. At some time, he met Eliza Richardson, eldest daughter of Joshua and Catherine Richardson and on 20 March 1825, they were married in Port Hope. For the next six years, the family made their home in Port Hope.

Late in the year 1830, Fothergill purchased for £1200, a 50-acre lot in Pickering Township (Lot 14, Concession 1) from York businessman Alexander Wood and sometime in the following year he moved his family to this land. The land was described as having a gristmill and sawmill and with a blacksmith shop on

its border. Even before the sale was registered in the Land Registry Office, Fothergill was already petitioning Peter Robinson, Commissioner of Crown Lands, for permission to obtain the adjoining Lot 15, a Clergy Reserve. In order for Fothergill to repair the mills and get them up and running again, he needed to dam up the creek that ran through the property and supplied the motive power for the mills. The dam, however, would have backed up the creek onto Lot 15. Before he invested in re-establishing the mills, he needed to gain control of the land he would be flooding.

Fothergill had in mind more than the working of the mills on his newly acquired property. Once he secured Lot 15, comprising 187 acres, he proceeded to purchase the 200 acres of Lot 16 as well, and these 387 acres would form “the principal part of the Town plot of Monadelphia”. Monadelphia was the name he gave to a proposed town he planned to create. First he restored the mills, then he built a distillery and barns. Further plans included dwelling houses, a tavern, churches and a printing office and probably much more. From the time Fothergill first arrived in Upper Canada, he had been interested in assisting British immigrants. When his “colony of gentlemen” did not materialize in South Monaghan, perhaps Monadelphia, on a grander scale, was meant to accomplish the same ends.

Intellectual Pursuits

Fothergill had high intellectual ideals and pursued many of them during his years in Upper Canada. As an artist, he entered some of his paintings into a public exhibition. Along with Paul Kane and

Richard Bonnycastle, he was one of the exhibitors in the first exhibition of art in what is now Ontario, which took place in July 1834 at the Legislative Building on Front Street West in York. It was sponsored by the Society of Artists and Amateurs. For the show, he pulled out some of his older watercolours that he had painted in Yorkshire and Scotland. None of his Rice Lake or Port Hope paintings were entered in this exhibition, not even his very first effort in the New World—a watercolour painting of a Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) (Figure 2) completed while he was still aboard ship in the St. Lawrence River.

As a public-spirited citizen, Fothergill proposed both a literary society and a museum for the Town of York. In 1831, with the aid of Dr. William Rees, a surgeon and meteorologist from York, and William (Tiger) Dunlop, army officer, surgeon and official with the Canada Company, Fothergill proposed to establish the Literary and Philosophical Society of Upper Canada, which, among other things, would promote the study of natural history. They applied to Chief Justice John Beverley Robinson and Archdeacon John Strachan to assume the leadership.

In 1836, Fothergill, again with associates Rees and Dunlop, proposed the establishment of a Lyceum of Natural History and the Fine Arts. For this they received the patronage of Sir John Colborne. Sir Francis Bond Head promised “a piece of ground on the Military Reserve behind the Garrison, and near Farr’s Brewery, containing a little more than two acres” (Fothergill undated. TFRBL MS. Coll 140:24). Plans for the Lyceum were ambitious. It was to comprise a museum



Figure 2. Fothergill's first effort in the New World—a watercolour of a Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) completed while aboard ship in the St. Lawrence River. Fothergill (undated) T FRBL MS Coll 140:20, folio 247.

of natural and civil history, an art gallery, a botanical garden and a zoological garden. Henry Scadding cited a prospectus that described a picture gallery “for subjects connected with Science and Portraits of individuals” and did not omit “Indian antiquities, arms, dresses, utensils and whatever might illustrate and make permanent all that we can know of the Aborigines of this great Continent, a people who are rapidly passing away and becoming as though they had never been.” (Scadding 1966). The building that would house the museum and art gallery was to be patterned after the Parthenon of Athens.

Fothergill's last venture was the establishment of a printing office in which he published the newspapers the *Palladium of British America*, and *Upper Canada Mercantile Advertiser*, with his eldest son, Charles, as co-proprietor. He also issued a *Toronto Almanac* and the *Royal Calendar of Upper Canada* for 1839. Despite all this other activity, Fothergill did not forget what he had come to Upper Canada to achieve, and in 1833, Fothergill wrote a letter to British bookseller, John Murray, seeking a publisher for his intended opus: *Memoirs and Illustrations of the Natural History of the British Empire*.

A Naturalist Above All

No matter what else occupied him during the 24 years he lived in Upper Canada, he remained, above all, a naturalist. He prepared “An Essay Descriptive of the Quadrupeds of British North America”, in which he described 117 mammals (Fothergill, undated). He was one of the first to document the depletion of salmon in the rivers and streams of Upper Canada and in 1835 he had a paper he prepared on the migration of salmon read at the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec (Fothergill 1835). In that paper, he noted the diminishing of salmon due to the building of dams, the increase of human population, and illegal fishing.

He wrote that Magistrates “who have attempted to enforce the protection... have generally suffered some way... in their persons or property. The writer of this essay had a very valuable mill burnt down in the night, [and] other mischief done for sending a notorious salmon poacher to gaol for killing salmon contrary to Law” (as quoted in Anonymous 1855).

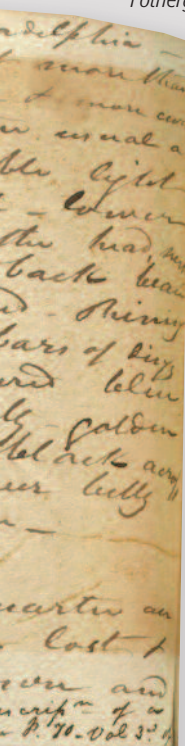
In order to record, study and illustrate the fauna of North America, Fothergill collected and had stuffed, specimens of as many species as he could find. In his journals, he often spoke of shooting birds and mammals for the purpose of identification. These he would have preserved and added to a growing collection. Beyond that, he would purchase stuffed specimens from

Figure 3. A handwritten account by Charles Fothergill on the Golden backed or Little Pivoine [Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*] Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library MS 140:25.

295
 Golden backed } Shot May 4. 1838 at Ottawa
 or Little Pivoine } Length apparently more
 with darker - like smaller
 and sharp pointed than
 amongst the Woodpeckers - upper mandible
 brown, lower yellow - irides hazel
 eyelids white - upper plumage on
 rump &c - lead coloured blue - the
 throat marked with a gold colour
 olive - on the wing two short
 white - smaller coverts lead colour
 chin, throat, neck, breast and belly
 yellow - with a broken bar of
 the breast - about the vent slaty
 white - legs & feet light brown
 The above written about a specimen
 shown after the specimen was
 just as I was going to sit down
 describe it accurately - } have a further description
 I believe & above was a female } perfect male

Charles Fothergill: Description of Northern Parula, Female and Male

The account below is an example of a species description that I (JWS) transcribed from a handwritten account (Figure 3) by Charles Fothergill. The first line in the account (below) is the name he gave to the species he was describing. Then, in square brackets, is the present nomenclature—the English and the Latin genus and species names. The third line provides the source from which the account has been taken. The number 25 refers to Volume 25 of the Charles Fothergill papers in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library (TFRBL) entitled “Memoirs and illustrations of natural history in various parts of the British Empire” (Fothergill, undated, TFRBL MS 140:25). The number 20 signifies Volume 20 in the same collection: “Canadian researches chiefly in natural history” (Fothergill, undated, TFRBL MS 140:20). I have also noted R.D. Black’s references by page and number from his 1934 article (Black 1934). Note that words and phrases contained between asterisks (*) are interlinear additions or corrections made by Fothergill in the manuscript, usually indicated there by a caret (^)



Golden backed or Little Pivoine / Golden, or Bronzed Backed, or Least Pivoine [Northern Parula.

Setophaga americana] 25: 295; 20: 70 (Black 154:86)

[25: 295] “Shot May 4, 1833 at Monadelphia. Length apparently not more than 4 1/2 Inches. Bill small & more curved and sharp pointed than usual among the Warblers – Upper mandible light brown, lower yellow – Irides hazel – Lower eyelid white – Upper plumage on the head, neck, rump &c, lead coloured blue – The back beautifully marked with a gold coloured shining olive – On the wing two short bars of dingy white, smaller coverts

lead coloured blue – Chin, throat, neck, breast and belly golden yellow – with a broken bar of black across the breast about the vent & lower belly white – Legs & feet light brown.

The above written about a quarter an hour after the specimen was lost & just as I was going to sit down and describe it accurately. I believe the above was a female. For a further descrip[tio]n of a perfect male see p. 70, Vol. 3rd of Cana[dia]n Researches.”

[20: 70] “The following is a description of a perfect male killed at Monadelphia May 12, 1837 ...

Length 4 1/4 [-] 4 1/2 In. Breadth 6 1/2 [-] 6 3/4 inches. Bill to corners rather more than 3/8ths, very sharp pointed, somewhat curved and beset at base with very fine horn like bristles. Upper mandible dark blue, *nearly black*, lower orange yellow. Irides hazel. Eyelids white. From the bill to the eye black. Head, cheeks, sides & back of the neck, scapulars, less[er] wing coverts, lower back, rump and upper tail coverts a fine and glossy blue or very blue lead colour much more inclining to a perfect blue than the most cerulean lead colour. Center of the back behind the shoulders tapering to a point on the lower back a bright and shining golden *olivaceous* bronze colour – not easily described or imitated. Quills black finely margined on their outer edge with blue and on the inner with white. Their coverts the same tipped with white. The first row of the second coverts are also white which together form two short bars of white across the extended wing. Chin and throat virgin golden yellow – below this across the front of (th)e neck a narrow bar of black *or dusky spots* edged with gold. Upper breast gold or yellow with a few large spots of bright ferruginous. Lower breast, belly, vent & under tail coverts white. Sides lead colour. Tail a little forked, bluish black finely edged on their outer margins with blue. Two outer feathers marked with a large spot of pure white near the end of inner web. Legs & feet *light* reddish brown. Soles yellow.”

a number of different sources. The collection was housed at first at his home in Pickering Township. In his *Statistical Account of Upper Canada*, Thomas Rolph (1836) recorded a visit he made to Fothergill in Pickering.

The Township of Pickering, he said, is well settled & contains some fine land and well watered. Mr Fothergill has an extensive & most valuable museum of natural curiosities, at his residence in the township, which he has collected with great industry & the most refined taste. He is a person of superior acquirements & ardently devoted to the pursuit of natural philosophy (Scadding 1966).

Fothergill's Museum

When Fothergill began to urge the creation of a provincial natural history museum at Toronto, he moved his collection into the city. According to James L. Baillie, Jr., the first home was in Chewett's building at the southwest corner of King and York Streets, then it was moved to the Market Square building (St. Lawrence Hall) and finally it was housed in a building at the corner of York and Boulton Streets. Fothergill also kept detailed records of his wildlife encounters, filling several ledger-size volumes with descriptions of birds, mammals and other wildlife that he either shot or observed. Baillie, the first to write comprehensively about Fothergill in relation to his natural history pursuits, concluded:

The present writer has made no attempt to ascertain the number of British animals discussed in the Fothergill records, but his Canadian descriptions and notes

concern approximately 186 birds, 105 mammals (not including domestic ones), 27 fishes, 15 reptiles, and 2 amphibians. The descriptions were, in nearly all cases, given in great detail, and were prepared with such care that one experiences little difficulty in identifying the animals concerned. There is no question that Fothergill was the pioneer naturalist of southern Ontario and the care with which he made his notes stamps him as one of the most important of the early naturalists of Canada (Baillie 1944).

Fothergill died in Toronto on 22 May 1840. He was buried in the burying ground of the Cathedral Church of St. James. During his years in Upper Canada, he was at one time or another, among others, a storeowner, a postmaster, a mill owner, a brewer, King's printer, a newspaper publisher, a legislator, a magistrate, a member of the land board, as well as a naturalist and an artist.

So why is Charles Fothergill not better known for his role in the affairs of Upper Canada? And why has he not been generally recognized as the Audubon of Canada, or at least, as Baillie put it: "one of the most important of the early naturalists of Canada" (Baillie 1944)?

Disappointments

It must be said that in many ways Fothergill was a man ahead of his times, a visionary, a deep thinker. But that, among other things, was also his undoing. Paul Romney, in his article for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, refers to "unbroken sequences of failures that were largely of his own making." "His

self-destructive risk-taking is probably traceable to an obsessional neurosis akin to that of a compulsive gambler” (Romney 1988).

Even before he came to Canada, Fothergill had already gained a reputation as a poor money manager. He appeared to be constantly in debt. That trend continued in the New World. His store in Port Hope failed and the property was seized for debt. Later, he was dismissed from the post office for his criticism of the post-office administration.

Fothergill was strongly opinionated and that often brought him into a clash with the ruling authorities. Thus, for example, he was removed as King’s Printer on January 1826 after voting against the administration and incurring the wrath of the Family Compact. While the decision was political, he had not endeared himself to the administration by constantly asking for cash advances and not using the money wisely.

As a legislator, he was not always able to convince his fellow members of the benefits of his proposals. So while he had an act for the preservation of salmon passed in the House, it was vetoed by the Executive. His proposal to create a federal government was rejected by the majority of the House as “visionary”. Had he succeeded at the time, we would this year be celebrating nearly 190 years of a united Canada instead of 150 years. But his proposal to create agricultural societies not only passed in the House, it had some success subsequently.

Of his scheme to create a model community in Pickering, whether Fothergill was ill prepared to complete his project, or whether events conspired against him,

he was unable to see his vision established despite a great outlay of money. He lacked the good will of his neighbours, including some of the earliest settlers in Pickering Township, who might have assisted him in achieving his goal if he had not quarrelled with them. In 1834, one of his mills burned down, the responsibility for which he blamed an alleged salmon poacher, John Sparks, whom he had previously prosecuted. In the same year, both his milldams were carried away by floods—for which he blamed his sons for neglecting their responsibilities. In any case, he could not enlarge his mill complex because the land he had purchased was not sufficient for the operation—for which he blamed the seller of the property for misrepresenting what was intended in the sale.

When, in 1831, Fothergill requested Robinson and Strachan take up the leadership of his proposed Literary and Philosophical Society of Upper Canada, they turned him down only to accept a few months later a similar proposal from James Cull, newly arrived in Upper Canada and virtually unknown. On Friday, 5 September 1832, Strachan gave the inaugural lecture to the society. The society, however, failed to attract a large following and soon disbanded.

Lyceum of Natural History

As for the plans for the creation of a Lyceum of Natural History and the Fine Arts in the mid-1830s, although Fothergill did secure the support of Sir John Colborne and Sir Francis Bond Head, the project eventually had to be abandoned. There was an effort to raise money by subscription, but it fell short of the goal.

Henry Scadding was probably right when he said in 1873 that the project “was probably too bold in its conception and too advanced to be justly appreciated and earnestly taken up by a sufficient number of the contemporary public forty years ago” (Scadding 1966). At the time Fothergill’s efforts were most needed, he was lying desperately ill at home for seven months, so ill that doctors despaired of his life. No doubt his health had been undermined by the troubles he faced in Pickering and by his inability to find remunerative work.

This was not the first time sickness plagued Fothergill. In 1822, the year he began his term as King’s Printer, a time that should have been one of the happiest of his life, he suffered a prolonged illness. At the same time an infant son (his and Charlotte’s third son) died from meningitis, and Charlotte, herself, succumbed after a long bout with tuberculosis.

The failure of the Lyceum was especially cruel for Fothergill as he was desperate to find employment and had written a letter to Sir Francis Bond Head in 1836 pleading to be appointed to one of several offices then vacant: Commissioner of Crown Lands, Surveyor General, or Inspector General, or failing those appointments to be put in charge of the Lyceum (his preferred position).

The Final Challenge

By the time Fothergill took on his final challenge, the publication of the *Palladium of British America*, he was probably too worn out by illness, constant poverty, and failure to secure a remunerative position. Samuel Thompson, who in 1838

managed Fothergill’s newspaper, summed up the dilemma perfectly:

Mr Fothergill was a man of talent, a scholar and a gentleman, but so entirely given up to the study of natural history and the practice of taxidermy that his newspaper received but scant attention... His family sometimes suffered from the want of common necessities, while the money which should have fed them went to pay for some rare bird or strange fish (Thompson 1969).

When he died in 1840, his debts, his land claims and his failures all had to be sorted out by his widow and children. So destitute was Fothergill’s widow that a Quaker neighbour wrote a letter to Fothergill’s sister in England to make her aware of Eliza’s predicament and suggest she desperately needed financial help.

Assessment

There can be no doubt that, as Baillie stated, “As a naturalist and an illustrator of animals, he ranked with the best of his period.” At the same time, again as asserted by Baillie, “Fothergill exerted no great influence on the development of natural history studies in Ontario” (Baillie 1944). Although he accumulated much data for his proposed *Memoirs and Illustrations of the Natural History of the British Empire*, all of his notes and illustrations remained in manuscript form not to be discovered until the 1930s. Added to that, shortly after he died in 1840, the building that housed his museum burned down and his collection was totally destroyed by the fire. All of Fothergill’s stubbornly accumulated artefacts, and all of his notes

...what remains of his achievement stands as a remarkable record of the wildlife of southern Ontario in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

and written records were lost, some permanently, some for nearly 100 years. His descriptions of the birds, mammals, fishes, reptiles and amphibians of Upper Canada were meticulous and included a number of species he was the first to describe. Had his work been available to subsequent scholars and scientists over the next century, the development of ornithology and other scientific disciplines would have been greatly advanced. As it is, however, what remains of his achievement stands as a remarkable record of the wildlife of southern Ontario in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Faunal Descriptions

Ten years before Baillie published his seminal article on Charles Fothergill, Delamere Black did an analysis (not without error) of one of Fothergill's manuscripts ("Canadian Researches Chiefly in Natural History" (Fothergill undated. TFRBL MS Coll. 140:20) in which he wished "to convey some idea of the quality and keenness of [Fothergill's] observations" (Black 1934). Black recorded 117 birds, 23 mammals, 7 fish, 7 reptiles, 1 amphibian and 3 plants. My own researches were just as limiting as Black's, but in a different way. I had access to a second, and somewhat more extensive, manuscript containing Fothergill's faunal descriptions, viz., "Memoirs and illustrations of natural history in various

parts of the British Empire" (Fothergill undated. TFRBL MS Coll. 140:25). From these two manuscripts, I extracted only his faunal descriptions for Pickering Township. There, between 1831 and 1837, Fothergill observed, shot and stuffed as many of the specimens as he could—often with the help of his son George, who appears to have been handy with a gun. The preserved specimens were added to his growing museum. While I asked Ross James, Barry Kent MacKay and Glenn Coady for help in determining the bird species described, for the most part I was able, without question, to make my own determination. I have to conclude with Black that of Fothergill's wildlife records: "The minuteness and accuracy of Fothergill's descriptions are amazing and such that there could be no doubt as to the identity of the species in the great majority of cases" (Black 1934).

Acknowledgements

Glenn Coady provided encouragement for my researches into the Pickering years of Charles Fothergill from the very beginning in 2009.

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