



117c

117 Cornelius David Krieghoff

1815 – 1872

Set of 20 Hand-Painted Plates

hand-painted porcelain

a) Montmorency Falls; A Man in Foreground

9 ½ in / 24.1 cm diameter, 2 ¼ in / 5.7 cm high

b) Waterfalls, Ste. Ann or St. Ferréol

9 ½ in / 24.1 cm diameter, 4 ¾ in / 11.1 cm high

c) Quebec Seen from Point Lévis

11 ½ in / 29.2 cm diameter, 6 ¾ in / 17.1 cm high

d) Beauport Asylum (rotunda and trees)

9 ½ in / 24.1 cm diameter, 2 ¼ in / 5.7 cm high

e) Dr. Douglas's House

9 ½ in / 24.1 cm diameter, 2 ¼ in / 5.7 cm high

f) Canyon of Montmorency

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

g) Beauport Asylum

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

h) Lake (with canoe and scenery)

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

i) Grounds of Beauport Asylum (stream and field)

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

j) Wolfe Monument

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

k) Wolfe and Montcalm Monument

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

l) Natural Steps, Montmorency

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

m) Bridge on Grounds of Asylum

9 ½ in / 24.1 cm diameter, 2 ¼ in / 5.7 cm high

n) Quebec, Martello Tower

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

o) Wolfe and Montcalm Monument (Dufferin Terrace)

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

p) Citadel and Town of Quebec seen from Lévis' Wharf

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

q) Old Dufferin Terrace

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

r) Natural Steps, Montmorency

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

s) Montmorency Canyon (beaver in foreground)

9 ¼ in / 23.5 cm diameter

t) On Montmorency River (two ladies with crinolines)

9 ½ in / 24.1 cm diameter, 4 ¾ in / 11.1 cm high



117 a, b, c, g



PROVENANCE

Commissioned by Dr. James Douglas, founder of the Beauport Asylum
 Dr. Foote, Quebec
 Mr. Fitch
 Vesey Boswell, Esq., Quebec, circa 1903
 By descent to the present Private Collection, British Columbia

LITERATURE

Appraisal of the Contents of the Residence of Vesey Boswell,
 The Home & Club Department of The American Appraisal Company, February 10, 1914, listed, unpaginated
 Marius Barbeau, *Cornelius Krieghoff: Pioneer Painter of North America*, 1934, listed page 151
 J. Russell Harper, *Krieghoff*, 1979, page 144, porcelain plate titled as *Quebec from Lévis* reproduced page 141, figure 131, and the set of 20 listed page 197
 Janice Tyrwhitt, “The Enchanting World of Cornelius Krieghoff,” *Reader’s Digest*, date unknown, mentioned page 102

ALTHOUGH KRIEGHOFF IS known primarily for his paintings on canvas, this wonderful porcelain dessert set, comprising 7 tazzas and 13 plates, is a testament both to the artist’s extraordinary abilities and, incidentally, to his great entrepreneurial spirit. According to Russell Harper, the set was commissioned at “the whim of a Dr. Douglas in Quebec who wanted a dinner set decorated with local subjects,” and while porcelain was not Krieghoff’s preferred medium, he was open to trying something new, if

the terms were favourable. By accepting this unusual commission, he produced a truly lasting artistic record of an important period in Quebec’s history.

Born in Scotland and trained in Edinburgh, Dr. James Douglas came to Quebec City in 1826 (via the United States) and soon established himself as one of the most respected medical doctors and surgeons in the country. He reformed the Hôpital de la Marine and was one of the founders of the Asile de Beauport in 1845, a hospital that developed successful new approaches to mental illness, and which was the ancestor of the current Centre Hospitalier Robert-Giffard.

It is important to note, however, that Dr. Douglas was not just a wealthy doctor who bought nice things “on a whim,” and his connection with Cornelius Krieghoff would not have been happenstance. Dr. Douglas was a leader in the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec (where his bust can still be seen in the lecture room), and he built up a very important collection of fine art and artefacts. In 1847, he bought a domain in Beauport that he named Glenalla, a reference to his native Scotland. The villa, which was surrounded by magnificent gardens, had greenhouses for fruit and tropical flowers, as well as a large gallery in which he displayed his collection of paintings, sculptures and Egyptian artifacts, acquired during a trip to Egypt in 1860 to 1861. After the estate was sold in 1876 and the collection was dispersed, one of his mummies ended up in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The scenes depicted on the dessert service feature picturesque sites in the vicinity of Beauport, including Glenalla itself, as well

as views of Quebec City from the most appreciated viewpoints of the time, and monuments to James Wolfe and Louis-Joseph de Montcalm. Krieghoff’s natural talent and technical mastery of the medium are obvious to see. Porcelain painting was just starting to become fashionable in the 1860s, and Krieghoff, never one to miss an opportunity, may have been inspired by the luminous painted porcelains from his native Germany. Undecorated plain white glazed porcelain plates (known as blanks) were available from European porcelain factories, and these could be embellished by amateurs with simple floral designs, or skilfully painted by professionals with scenes to a client’s taste. Paints (known as colours) were specifically made for the purpose, sold in glass vials and in powdered form. The decoration was applied onto the first glaze, and when the artist had finished, the painted plates were sent off to be re-fired, a process that sealed the image under a second glaze. As the firing process was never entirely consistent, variations in the finished colour were common, noticeable in this set in the colours of the outer bands. The blanks that Krieghoff acquired were English, from the Royal Worcester factory, and the backstamps on the plates include the factory’s original 1862 circular stamp with a crown and the impressed Worcester Royal Porcelain Works stamp.

Dr. Douglas must have been delighted with the set. Whether he used it regularly as a dessert service is unknown, but the good condition in which it appears today makes it seem likely that it was a “cabinet set” for display rather than for daily use. One plate and one tazza have significant old repairs, but otherwise the set is in remarkably good condition.

The subsequent provenance of the set is recorded in Marius Barbeau’s book, so we know that it was acquired by a Dr. Foote, of Quebec, and then by a Mr. Fitch, before being bought by Vesey Boswell, the great-grandfather of the present owner. The Boswells of Quebec City (like the Molsons of Montreal) have been a household name in the city for over 170 years. Joseph Knight Boswell was born in Dublin in 1812. He spent a brief apprenticeship in Edinburgh, where he learned the craft of brewing, before arriving in Canada in the 1830s. He founded Boswell’s Brewery in Quebec City in 1844, and by the 1870s, Boswell’s had become Quebec’s largest brewery, exporting ales around the world. Joseph’s son Vesey Boswell became the sole owner of the company after the death of his elder brother in 1893. In 1904, the last time this fine dessert service was sold, it was bought piece by piece at auction by Vesey Boswell, and it has remained in the family’s collection until this day. It is extremely rare for a collection of this importance and rarity to appear on the market, and this is the first time it has been on public display since 1904—its whereabouts having been unknown for decades.

ESTIMATE: \$40,000 – 60,000