

Ottawa has obtained from a grandson of Askin a great mass of family papers, pertaining largely to Charles Askin's career and activities. Included in it, however, is a considerable quantity of papers relating to John Askin and to certain of his contemporaries, and as many of these as seemed pertinent to our present editorial task have been copied for reproduction. It is possible, of course, that other of John Askin's papers are still preserved and will ultimately come into public knowledge and possession; if such be the case their historical exploitation must be the task of some future editor, since our various endeavors to resurrect such papers have produced only negative results.

The volume now printed comprises selections from the John Askin Papers covering the period from 1747 to 1795 inclusive. Prior to the year 1778, however, it includes but a few scattering documents. It is the present expectation that a second volume, containing selections of the more important papers pertaining to the period 1796-1815, will be published in the near future, and the present Introduction is designed to serve for both volumes, which will comprise a single group of source material illustrating the early history of the Northwest and Detroit.

To some extent every piece of historical editing presents problems peculiar to itself, to whose solution the editor devotes whatever measure of scholarly skill and judgment he may command. A statement of certain problems encountered in the editing of the Askin Papers, together with the solution hit upon, may prove advantageous to the reader who shall have occasion to consult the volumes. In general the printed document aims to present a scrupulously accurate copy of the original manuscript. But since it is impossible to represent in print numerous idiosyncracies of longhand manuscripts, the Editor has steadily endeavored to reproduce the evident intent of the writer, but to escape a slavish adherence to mere pedanticism. In the matter of punctuation, for example, it becomes frequently a matter for editorial interpretation whether a given mark of the penman shall be printed as a comma or as a period. Such interpretation we have not hesitated to supply. Of similar