

Calton Point or Catton Point? A Misprinted Toponym on the Yukon Coast

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ABSTRACT. Capt. John Franklin's account of his journey along the western Arctic coast of North America presents two spellings of the toponym he gave to the point at the eastern end of Workboat Passage, the strait between Herschel Island and the mainland. "Pt. Catton" is printed in the text, and "Pt. Calton" on the accompanying map compiled by Lt. E.N. Kendall. One of these must be a misprint. Catton Point and Calton Point have been used by the National Topographic System and on Canadian hydrographic charts. Calton Point was adopted by the Government of Canada for use in November 1962. However, Catton Point is almost certainly the intended toponym after the Rev. Thomas Catton, FRS (c. 1758–1838), President of St. John's College, Cambridge (1819–22), and tutor when John F.W. Herschel arrived at the college in 1809. Catton was one of 13 fellows of the Royal Society honoured by Franklin in northern Yukon. No Calton has ever been elected to the Royal Society or included in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Key words: Calton Point, Catton Point, John Franklin, Arctic toponymy, Herschel Island

RÉSUMÉ. Dans le récit de son expédition tout au long de la côte ouest de l'Arctique de l'Amérique du Nord, le capitaine John Franklin a écrit de deux manières différentes le toponyme qu'il a donné à la pointe est du passage Workboat, soit le détroit entre l'île Herschel et la terre ferme. La graphie « Pt. Catton » est employée dans le texte, tandis que la graphie « Pt. Calton » est utilisée sur la carte d'accompagnement compilée par le lieutenant E.N. Kendall. L'une des deux graphies doit être une erreur. Au fil des ans, Catton Point et Calton Point ont été utilisés par le Système national de référence cartographique ainsi que sur des cartes hydrographiques du Canada. Le nom de Calton Point a été officiellement adopté par le gouvernement du Canada en novembre 1962. Cependant, il est presque certain que Catton Point était le toponyme désiré, d'après le nom du révérend Thomas Catton, MSR (v. 1758-1838), président du collège St. John's à Cambridge (1819-1822) et tuteur lorsque John F.W. Herschel est arrivé au collège en 1809. Thomas Catton était l'un des 13 membres de la Société royale à avoir été honorés par Franklin dans le nord du Yukon. Aucune personne du nom de Calton n'a été élue à la Société royale ou n'a vu son nom publié dans le *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Mots clés : Calton Point, Catton Point, John Franklin, toponymie de l'Arctique, île Herschel

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INTRODUCTION

In July 1826, Capt. John Franklin RN, FRS (1786–1847) led a party in two boats, HMS *Lion* and HMS *Reliance*, along the northwestern coast of North America (Franklin, 1828). The purpose of the expedition was to explore the coast and fend off Russian claims in the region (Lambert, 2009:36). This was the first journey by a European along the Arctic coast west of the Mackenzie Delta, although by then Asian goods had reached the area through the intercontinental fur trade (Bockstoce, 2009).

Franklin named 21 physical features in what is now Yukon (Fig. 1). Eight were inland mountains (Mounts Davies Gilbert, Fitton, Sedgwick, and Conybeare; Barn Mountain and Cupola Mountain; the Buckland Mountains and the British Mountains), and the remainder were at the coast (Points Sabine, King, Kay, Stokes, Catton, and

Demarcation; Phillips Bay; Herschel Island; and the Bab-bage, Mountain Indian, Malcolm, Backhouse, and Clarence Rivers). All of the features were marked on a map compiled by Lt. E.N. Kendall, surveyor to the expedition. The map accompanied Franklin's published account of the expedition, *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827* (Franklin, 1828). Some of the names have been modified (e.g., Buckland Hills has replaced Buckland Mountains), but all except Cupola Mountain and Mountain Indian River (now Firth River) appear on National Topographic System sheets 117 A, 117 C, or 117 D, at scale 1:250 000.

Twelve of the 21 toponyms Franklin assigned in the Yukon, a remarkable proportion, were chosen to honour natural philosophers or savants, people we would today call scientists (Table 1). All of these men were fellows of the Royal Society. The purpose of this paper is to correct a

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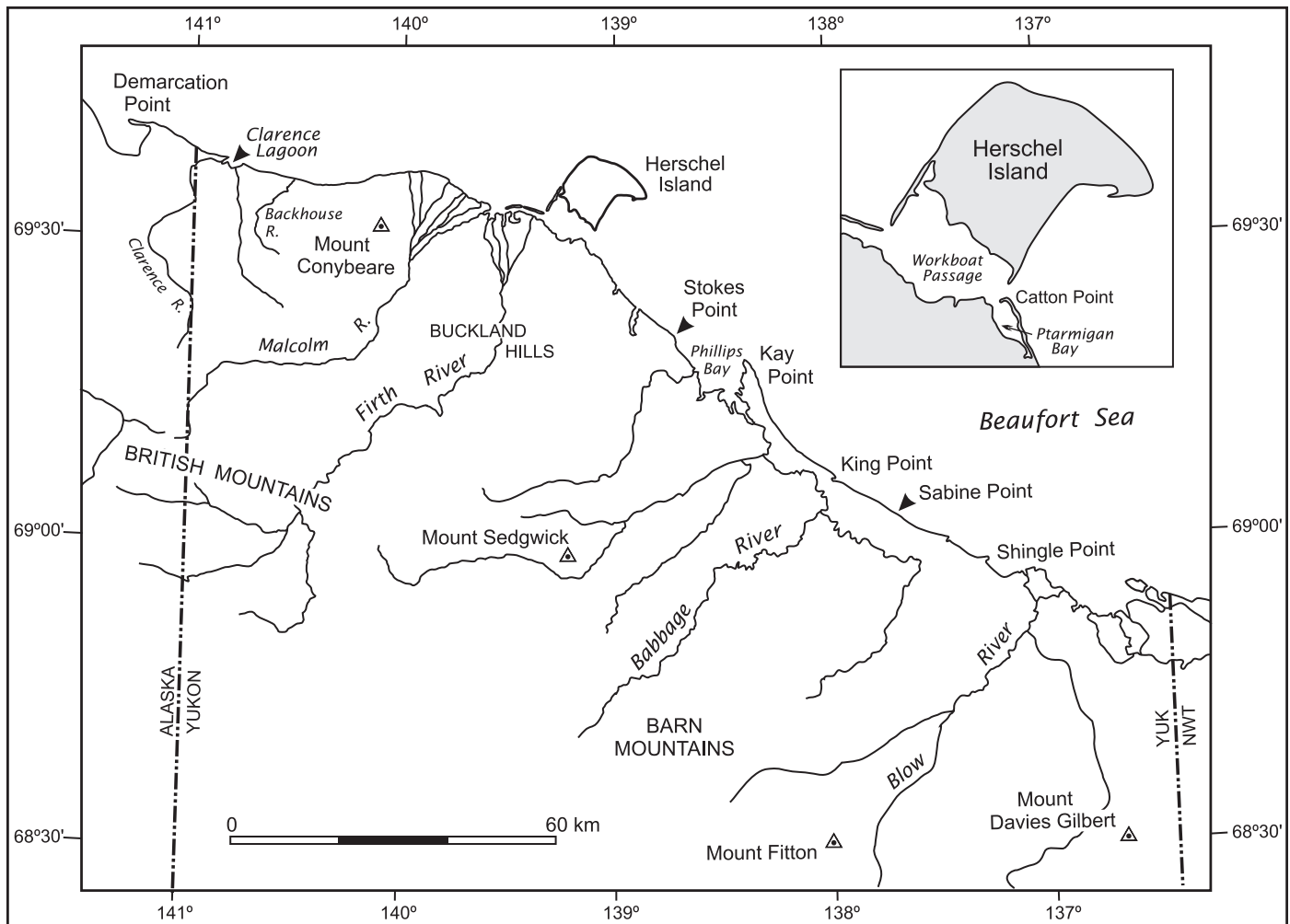


FIG. 1. The Arctic coast of Yukon, with current names corresponding to toponyms assigned by Captain John Franklin and names of other features mentioned in the text. Cartography by Christine Earl.

toponym currently in use that likely stems from a misprint on Kendall's map.

JOHN FRANKLIN, FRS

John Franklin was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) on 20 February 1823, having been nominated by Charles Babbage (1791–1871), Edward Sabine (1788–1883), Francis Beaufort (1774–1857), and 18 others (Royal Society EC/1822/25, royalsociety.org/library/collections/).

The scientific community that Franklin joined was dominated by astronomers and geologists. Fundamental progress in astronomy had been made in 1780–1820 by William Herschel. His son John, hitherto known chiefly for his mathematical ability, was the rising star of scientific London. John Herschel and Charles Babbage were founders of the Astronomical Society of London in March 1820, which emulated the Geological Society that had been organized in 1807. John Herschel (1831:287) pointed out that, in the 1810s and 1820s, astronomy and geology were the premier scientific disciplines, astronomy expanding the limits of space

and geology the limits of time (Rudwick, 2005, 2008). Most of the savants Franklin honoured in northern Yukon were drawn from these disciplines, and several individuals were members of both societies (Table 1). John Herschel was even on the council of the Geological Society in 1827–29.

Franklin honoured 14 savants in the Yukon part of his *Narrative* (Table 1). However, fewer (Dr. William Henry Fitton, Revs. William Buckland and William Daniel Conybeare, Messrs. Charles Stokes, Charles Babbage, and the Herschels) were mentioned in his journal (Davis, 1998). The rest appear only in the *Narrative*, which introduced the region to his readers in familiar terms, thereby establishing it as a comfortably British space (Carter, 1989).

CATTON POINT – CALTON POINT

On 17 July 1826, Franklin passed the point of the mainland that extends towards the southeastern corner of Herschel Island (69°30'14" N, 139°6'37" W). The point is at the end of the spit that shelters Ptarmigan Bay from the Beaufort Sea (Fig. 1). In his *Narrative*, Franklin referred

TABLE 1. Years of election to learned societies for persons honoured with toponyms assigned by Capt. John Franklin (1786–1847) in July 1826. Personal titles as of 1825 are given. John Franklin was elected FRS in 1823, FGS in 1829, and FLS in 1836.

	Discipline	Royal	Geological	Linnean	Astronomical
Charles Babbage (1791–1871)	Mathematics	1816	–	–	1820
Capt. Francis Beaufort, RN (1774–1857) ¹	Hydrography	1814	1808	–	1820
Rev. William Buckland (1784–1856)	Geology	1818	1813	1821	–
Rev. Thomas Catton (c. 1758–1838)	Astronomy	1821	–	–	1820
Rev. William Daniel Conybeare (1787–1857)	Geology	1819	1811	–	–
Dr. William Henry Fitton (1780–1861)	Geology	1815	1816	1827	1825
Davies Gilbert (1767–1839)	Engineering	1791	1808	1817	1820
George Bellas Greenough (1778–1855) ²	Geology	1807	1807	1811	–
Caroline Lucretia Herschel (1750–1848) ^{3,4}	Astronomy	–	–	–	1835(H)
John Frederick William Herschel (1792–1871) ³	Mathematics ⁵	1813	1826	–	1820
Frederick William Herschel (1732–1822) ^{3,6}	Astronomy	1781	–	–	1820
Capt. Phillip Parker King, RN (1793–1856)	Hydrography	1824	–	1824	–
Thomas Phillips (1770–1845)	Painting	1819	–	–	–
Capt. Edward Sabine, RA (1788–1883)	Geophysics	1818	1844	1817	1839
Rev. Adam Sedgwick (1785–1873)	Geology	1821	1818	–	1830
Charles Stokes (1784–1853)	Geology	1821	1811	1808	–

¹ Franklin named Beaufort Bay (now Lagoon; 69°48' N, 142°00' W), west of Demarcation Point; the name was later assigned to the Sea.

² Mount Greenough is in Alaska, just west of the border (69°10' N, 141°40' W).

³ I have argued that Herschel Island was named in honour of the three distinguished astronomers in the family (Burn, 2009).

⁴ Caroline Herschel was barred from election to any of these societies because she was a woman. Nevertheless, the Astronomical Society conferred its Gold Medal on her in 1828 and elected her an Honorary Fellow in 1835.

⁵ John Herschel was a remarkable polymath. He was best known in astronomy, but he also made substantial contributions to physics and chemistry. His election to the Royal Society in 1813, the year he graduated as BA, was for mathematics.

⁶ William Herschel's knighthood was a Hanoverian honour, and as a naturalized Briton, he was not entitled to the style "Sir" (Hanham and Hoskin, 2013).

to the promontory as "Pt. Catton," although he did not mention it in his journal (Franklin, 1828:28; Davis, 1998). He provided no details in the *Narrative* as to who Catton was. Unfortunately, the feature was labeled "Pt. Calton" on E.N. Kendall's map that accompanied the *Narrative*. Clearly one of the spellings is in error. In 1849, Lts. W.J.S. Pullen and W.H. Hooper camped to the east of the point on their journey from Alaska in search of the lost ships HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*. Pullen called the point "Catton" in his diary (Pullen, 1979:62), but Hooper wrote "Calton" (Hooper, 1853:262)! Probably because of the spelling on Kendall's map, British Admiralty chart 2435, dated 1881, labeled the feature "Calton," and maps of Canada (1898), Explorations in Northern Canada (1904), and the Yukon and Mackenzie Region (1911) followed suit. In contrast, Canadian nautical charts 7080, 7601, and 7623 (all dated 1960) labeled the feature "Catton" (Fraser, 1962). The point was named "Catton" on edition 1 of National Topographic System map 117 D, published in 1962. In November 1962, "Calton" was adopted as the official name by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, on the basis of Hooper's text, chart 2435, and the maps mentioned above (Fraser, 1962). As a result, Calton Point is marked on nautical chart 7661 (1986) and edition 2 of 117 D (1989).

REV. THOMAS CATTON, FRS (C. 1758–1838)

Rev. Thomas Catton, BD (c. 1758–1838) was elected FRS on 31 May 1821 (Royal Society EC/1821/21). One of the first members of the Astronomical Society, he was elected on 9 June 1820 with Capt. Francis Beaufort, three months after the Society was founded (www.ras.org.uk/library/obituaries/1288-ras-obituaries-12). Catton, who had attended school in Norfolk with Horatio Nelson, was a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, and President of the College in 1819–22 (Sussex, 1838; Venn, 1940:540). John Herschel had studied at St John's (1809–12) and was elected a Fellow of the college in 1813. Catton maintained the only astronomical observatory then at Cambridge University in one of the college's interior towers, making observations there from 1791 to 1832 (Council, 1838:110; Sussex, 1838:95). His nomination to the Royal Society was signed by 10 fellows, including William and John Herschel. Catton does not seem to have published any scientific result during his lifetime, but in 1853, after his death, the Astronomer Royal, Sir George Airy, published 10 volumes of his observations (Venn, 1940). Catton was known as a scrupulous and skilful observer, with an accurate knowledge of the theory and use of astronomical instruments (Sussex, 1838:95). Catton may have taught John Herschel because he was a tutor when Herschel entered their college. Several letters between Catton and John Herschel have been catalogued (Crowe, 1998), in which, among other matters, Catton asks

Herschel if he will be a candidate for three separate professorships at Cambridge University: the Woodwardian (Geology, 1818), Lucasian (Mathematics, 1821), and Plumian (Astronomy, 1827) chairs.

The case for *Catton*, not *Calton* Point, is (1) that Rev. Thomas Catton was a fellow of the Royal Society like the other savants honoured in northern Yukon; (2) that he was well known to John Herschel, and Franklin placed the toponyms for Catton Point and Herschel Island in proximity; (3) that his name is spelt correctly in Franklin's text, which would have been easy to correct, while Kendall's map would have been costly to adjust once engraved. Most (7/8) of the toponyms Franklin assigned between Sabine Point and Herschel Island honoured fellows of the Royal Society. These gentlemen were Edward Sabine, Phillip Parker King, Charles Babbage, Thomas Phillips, Charles Stokes, Rev. Thomas Catton, Rev. William Buckland, William Herschel, and John Herschel. The only exception was Kay Point, named for relatives (Franklin, 1828:125), one of whom, his nephew Joseph Henry Kay, was later elected FRS (in 1846 with John Herschel, Edward Sabine, and Francis Beaufort among the nominators; Royal Society EC/1846/12). Caroline Herschel was then ineligible for election to the Royal Society on account of her sex. No person surnamed Calton has ever been elected FRS or appeared in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

CONCLUSION

Of 21 toponyms Franklin assigned near the Yukon coast, 12 were for fellows of the Royal Society (Table 1). One of these was Point Catton, for the Rev. Thomas Catton FRS, astronomer, academic, and friend of John Herschel. The misprint of Catton's name on the map that accompanied Franklin's *Narrative* has been propagated into current toponymy and should be corrected in the national records.

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