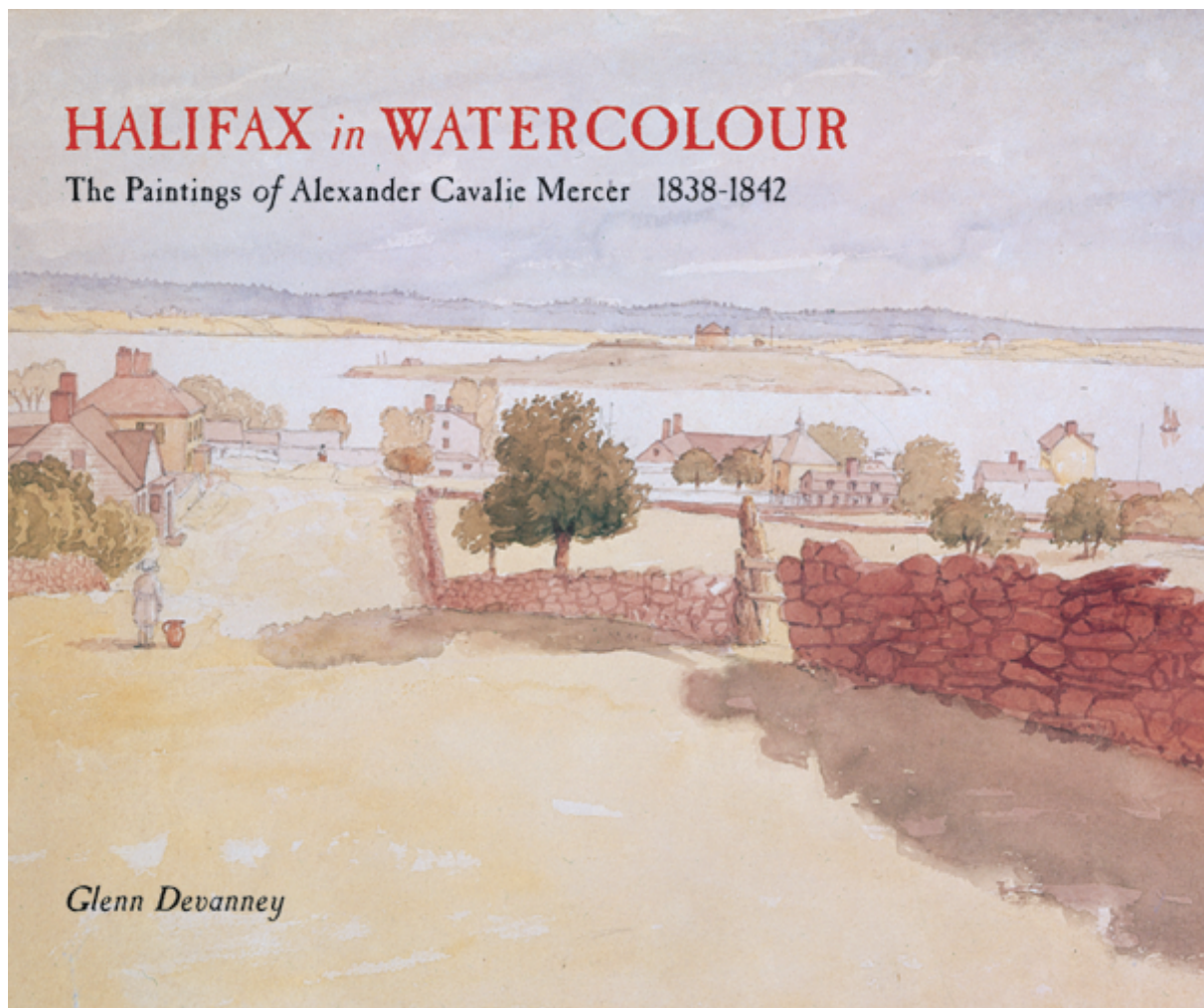




Halifax in Watercolour

The Paintings of Alexander Cavalie Mercer 1838-1842

For the first time, a book of Cavalie Mercer's paintings is available in the UK exclusively through this site, sold in aid of the Mercer Grave Restoration project.



British Artillery officer Alexander Cavalie Mercer is most famous for his detailed account of his experiences leading up to and including the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, most of which was published in his 'Journal of the Waterloo Campaign'.

Far fewer know of him as an amateur artist, but Mercer often composed what he called "souvenirs", paintings and sketches of his postings in Europe and North

America, and while posted in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Mercer painted nearly 80 watercolours of the area between 1838 and 1842, now treasured by the Canadian nation. Imagine how delighted I was to reach out to Glenn Devaney - who had come across some of my early material about finding Mercer's grave - to share more of his wonderful research with me.

Halifax in Watercolour showcases 50 of Mercer's best sketches, including paintings of the Citadel, the Commons, Artillery Park, Bedford Basin, Dartmouth, and the Northwest Arm. Drawing was a skill learned by artillery and engineering cadets at Woolwich, London, many of whom went on to display their talents. Additional photographs, maps, and historical context from author Glenn Devaney help the reader situate the site of the painting in the present-day. This is Halifax and history as it was before photographs, a visual treasure trove of the time.



Alexander Cavalié Mercer's Point Pleasant Battery, Halifax, Aug 6 1842

Glenn has also uncovered a full-length colour portrait of Mercer in the Canadian archives.



Library and Archives Canada/James Pattison Cockburn collection/c012624

For decades it was believed that a black and white head and shoulders portrait was the only image that existed of Mercer. Now here he is, painted by a fellow artillery officer in 1828. He looks quite the dandy! There is some discrepancy in his rank - at the time he was strictly a Major - but it seems most unlikely that it was any other.

Every Canadian who joins me on tour receives a copy of this book. I have plenty left, so if you would like to purchase one, the £20 proceeds (UK postage is free) go towards Mercer's ongoing grave cleaning, please do get in touch.

Reviews of the book include:

“There are only a handful of cities in Canada with a history as rich and deep as that of Halifax. As a key deepwater port for the British Empire, the city was at the heart of many major movements and conflicts.

In Halifax in Watercolour, Glenn Devanney takes readers on a visual journey back to early-to-mid-1800s Halifax as seen through the eyes — and the paintbrush — of watercolourist Alexander Cavalié Mercer. A British artillery officer who fought against Napoleon at Waterloo, Mercer visited Halifax for only a short time, but his output was extremely productive — more than eighty paintings of landscapes, street scenes, and coastal views.

I found this book a revelation. It depicts a historic Halifax that once was, and of which traces can still be seen today.”

— Mark Reid; *Canada’s HISTORY Magazine*



A few of the 100 copies waiting to find a good home