



INQUIRING MINDS

*Crevasses, Illecillewaet Glacier
1905, Vaux family fonds (V653/
PS-94), Whyte Museum of the
Canadian Rockies*

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Canadian Pacific Railway pushed through the Canadian Rockies and began to promote tourism in the “Canadian Alps.” Some tourists who rode the rails had scientific interests and set out to explore the botany, geology, glaciology and palaeontology of this recently accessible and scientifically intriguing area.

One such family of amateur scientists, George Vaux VIII, Sr. and his three children, Mary Vaux, William Vaux IX, Jr. and George Vaux IX, Jr., travelled here from Philadelphia. Together this Quaker family explored and documented the great glaciers of the Rocky Mountain and Selkirk ranges, confirming through their photographs and studies the realization that great glaciers were, in fact, receding.

During their travels, they encountered others with scientific interests such as Dr. Charles and Mary T. S. Schäffer, fellow Quakers interested in alpine botany, and Dr. Charles D. Walcott, an eminent palaeontologist and secretary of the Smithsonian Institution who discovered the Burgess Shale. Each of these inquiring minds left records of their work in paintings, hand-coloured photographs or scientific reports that speak to their discoveries in these mountains.



Mary Vaux Walcott, *Canada Buffaloberry, (Lepargyrea canadensis)* from *North American Wild Flowers*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1925 Smithsonian Institution Archives



Burgess Shale fossil, Canadian Pacific Railway photograph, Mary Schäffer fonds (V527/PS1-1138), Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies