

Letter from Mabel B. McCurdy to Alexander Graham Bell, April 28, 1910

Beinn Bhreagh, Aviation History of Canada. Near Baddeck, Nova Scotia. April 28, 1910.
Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, 1331 Conn. Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. Dear Mr. Bell:

Your note of April 22 received yesterday and I have been gathering the material and do hope that I have everything. I have not been able to find the letter of Militia Council to Baldwin and McCurdy written on June 3 as it is not in the Letter files; if I should find it later I will send it on to you.

Have not looked over this collection for mistakes as I haven't time before the mail so please excuse any mistakes.

Noticed by last night's papers that Ottawa Parliament is not expected to be prorogued until May 11. Hope that won't delay matters with the C.A.C.

Yours sincerely, Mabel B. McCurdy

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AVIATION NEWS Letter, Militia Council to Bell Ottawa, 7th May, 1909 Sir,

On the occasion of your addressing the Canadian Club of Ottawa on the subject of Aerial Navigation you were good enough to draw the attention of the Canadian Government to the work of Messrs. Douglas McCurdy and F. W. Baldwin in that line and to suggest that something should be done to secure their services for Canada and to assist them, if possible, in the pursuit of their studies of the art.

I am now directed by the Minister in Militia Council to say that the achievements of these gentlemen have engaged the attention of the Militia Department for some time past and

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that it has been the desire to assist them in any way possible, but that unfortunately no funds for airship investigation or construction have been provided by Parliament for the present year, and therefore it is regretted that the Department is not in a position to put forward any proposals involving expense at the present time.

I am, however, to inform you that the Department would be glad to place at the disposal of Messrs. McCurdy and Baldwin the use of the military grounds at Petawawa, as well as such men and equipment available, as might be of assistance to them, should they feel disposed to carry out trials there.

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I am further to add that the Minister in Militia Council would be very pleased indeed, looking to the future, to hear from Messrs. McCurdy and Baldwin as to whether they would be disposed to give their services to the Department as specialists, and if so on what terms and conditions, and also their views as to what funds they consider should be provided, say next year, for the pursuit of aerial investigation, construction and navigation on the Government's behalf.

(Signed) —Fiset (?) Colonel, Deputy Minister of Militia & Defence. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, Baddeck, N.S.

Baldwin and McCury to Militia Council Baddeck, N.S., May 14, 1909 Secretary Militia Council, Ottawa, Canada. Dear Sir:

Your letter No. H.Q. 6978.4 addressed to Dr. Bell has been referred to us by his Secretary. Dr. Bell is in Washington and sails for Europe on Saturday, May 15, where he will remain for a period of perhaps three weeks.

We appreciate the offer of the Minister in Militia Council in permitting us to make trials of our aerodromes at the Military grounds at Petawawa and will be glad to avail ourselves of the opportunity.

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If it would, therefore, be convenient we will ship the Silver-Dart within a week, direct to Petawawa where we will ourselves arrive early in June to conduct the trials.

With regard to the future our own plans are too vague to make any definite proposal but we would be glad to be of service to the Department in any way we can, and any information we may have is at the disposal of the Government.

(Signed) Baldwin & McCurdy. (The Militia Council have evidently written Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy again on June 3 but I can find no trace of the letter)

Baldwin & McCurdy to Militia Council Baddeck, N.S., June 8, 1909 The Secretary, Militia Council, Headquarters, Ottawa, Canada. Dear Sir:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of June s, No. H.Q. 6978.4.

Acting on the suggestion of our letter to you of May 14 we have shipped the Silver-Dart by freight to Petawawa and part of her will arrive there about the 12th of June. The remaining parts as soon as we can possibly get them ready.

Mr. Baldwin is, at present, in Toronto and he plans to be at Petawawa in time to receive the Silver-Dart crates. I will join him there in about two weeks time and would be very glad indeed to stop over in Ottawa and call upon the 4 Engineering branch of the Department.

I thank you very much for your courtesy in advising us as to the conditions of living at Petawawa. It would be our choice to live under canvass so, as you suggest, to be near the scene of operations.

I will ask Mr. Baldwin at your suggestion to notify the Camp Engineer as to the time of his arrival at Petawawa.

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I am, Sir,

Very truly yours, (Signed) J.A.D. McCurdy.

Dr. Bell to Militia Council Baddeck, N.S., July 7, 1909. Secretary Militia Council, Headquarters Ottawa, Canada. H.Q. 6978 Dear Sir:

I have just returned from Europe and have consulted with Mr. J.A. Douglas McCurdy and Mr. F. W. Baldwin concerning the letter of the Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence addressed to me, dated May 7, 1909.

I find that Messrs. McCurdy and Baldwin would be very much pleased if some arrangement could be made whereby they should give their services to the Department of Militia and Defence as Specialists in Aviation as suggested, and they would be glad to receive from the Department some proposition as to terms and conditions.

They expect to visit Ottawa very soon and hope to confer personally with the Minister of Militia or his representative and give their views as to what funds they consider should be provided next year for the pursuit of Aerial Investigation, Construction and Navigation on the Government's behalf.

I am, Sir,

Yours respectfully, (Signed) Alexander Graham Bell)

Militia Council to Dr. Bell Ottawa, July 14, 1909. Dear Sir,—

In reply to your letter of the 7th instant, intimating that Messrs. McCurdy and Baldwin would be very pleased if some arrangement could be made whereby they should give their services to the Department of Militia & Defence as Specialists in Aviation, I beg to say that

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I shall be very glad indeed to meet these gentlemen at any time and discuss with them the whole question.

I may add, however, that, at the present moment, little can be arranged definitely, owing to the absence in England of Sir Frederick Borden, whose return is expected about the middle of October, next.

Yours very truly, (Signed) —Fiset (?) D.M. Dr. A. Graham Bell, Beinn Bhreagh, near Baddeck, Nova Scotia.

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Letter, Earl Grey to Dr. Bell Government House, Ottawa, 13th December, 1909. Dear Dr. Bell:

I have just returned to Canada and my first letter must be one of thanks to you for the pleasure I derived from my visit to your beautiful home on Little Bras d'Or. It was a great surprise to me to find a green instead of a white world. Baddeck has evidently a great advantage over Ottawa during the early part of winter. The views from your house are beautiful, and I thoroughly enjoyed my two days there.

I shall be obliged if you will tell Mrs. Bell how greatly I appreciated the privilege of occupying her bedroom.

I was much attracted by the two young aviators, and the pretty wife. They made my stay most pleasant and interesting. The weather was wet and conditions adverse to the realization of McCurdy's ambition to beat the world's record. The more cautious Baldwin never committed himself to the expression of any such hope.

Although the weather conditions made it impossible for Baddeck No. 2 to show what she could do, she gave us a sufficient exhibition of her powers to enable me to realize more vividly than I have ever done before, what a big part the flying machine is likely to take in

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the life of the future. The anticipation that the flying machine will make ' Dreadnoughts' as obsolete as bows and arrows, and will also abolish Custom Houses, thus bringing about the Parliament of Man and the Federation of the World, in accordance with Tennyson's prophecy, does not seem quite so extravagant as I have had formerly supposed.

I must congratulate you if you will allow me, on having secured for yourself that beautiful promontory. It is an ideal position. What pleases me, perhaps more than anything else in your kingdom, was the houseboat in a little bay of its own, only approachable by an Indian trail, through a natural forest. I heard with envy and admiration of your habit of retreating there, every Saturday, winter and summer and of the absolute Sunday's rest you there enjoy in uninterrupted seclusion. I have never seen anywhere else, any arrangement which appeared to me to be a shot so near the centre of the bullseye.

I much regretted losing the pleasure of meeting you in your own house, and with my kind regards to Mrs. Bell, and with renewed thanks for all the hospitality of her house and room,

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely, (Signed) Grey.

Letter, Dr. Bell to Earl Grey Washington, D.C., December 17, 1909(. His Excellency, Earl Grey, Governor General of Canada. My dear Earl Grey:—

Allow me to thank you for your kind telegram of the 9th inst., and for your note of the 13th just received.

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I was at first much disappointed that I could not remain at Beinn Bhreagh to give you a personal welcome. Upon second thoughts, however, I came to the conclusion that it was perhaps a fortunate circumstance for "my boys" that they should have the opportunity of meeting you by themselves without any person to come between. You would of course

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take their measure at a glance; and I felt it might be “the chance of their lives” to form the acquaintance of the Governor General of Canada in this quiet way, and that it might mean everything to them in their future careers. Having met Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy you will understand I am sure how it is that, having no sons of my own blood, I feel a great affection for these fine young men and wish to help them to the utmost of my ability.

I am encouraging them to work together, fo each supplements the deficiencies of the other. McCurdy is the progressive element in the combination, and Baldwin the conservative. Baldwin is par excellence the thinker, and McCurdy the doer. McCurdy, high-spirited and ambitious, requires constantly to be restrained; while Baldwin, though quite a genius in his way, is of so retiring and modest a disposition that he requires to be pushed to show what there is in him. Both boys are of the best blood of Canada, well educated, and of high personal worth and character; and they will, undoubtedly, make their mark in the world.

What to do to advance their interests I do not know; but, noticing your great kindness to them, and your apparent interest in their work, I feel emboldened to approach you somewhat confidentially to ask your advice upon the subject.

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I have advanced them sufficient money to enable them to cuild their first two aerodromes, “Baddeck No. L”, and “Baddeck No. 2”. They are now at the end of their resources; but I have told them that I will see them through to the end of March, 1910, after which they must stand upon their own feet and look out for themselves.

Baldwin has some means of his own, not much; and McCurdy has none. By the end of March they must find a purchaser for one of their machines or give up their aerodrome factory; for I cannot, of course, continue indefinitely to support their work, although I am ready to stand behind them to the best of my ability to give them a fair start. I propose to

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leave America, however, about the end of March, for a trip around the world, so that it will be impossible for me to do much for them after March, 1910.

I do not think there are any better flying-machines in existence than those they now have; and all they need is practical experience in the control of the machines in the air. I have recommended them to avoid publicity as much as possible until they have accomplished privately all that others have succeeded in doing in public; so that when they do appear, they may take, at once, their proper place in the van of progress.

They have so far been greatly handicapped by the lack of a suitable testing-ground; but, as soon as the ice forms on the Little Bras d'Or Lake, they will have an ideal surface for aviation experiments. I have no doubt that they will soon be able to demonstrate, beyond cavil, that they really have a practical aerodrome that would prove of use to some Government. Then will be the time when they may hopefully seek for a purchaser.

I happen to know that the War Department of the United States has an unexpended balance of an appropriation for the purchase of heavier-than-air machines, through the failure of Herring to materialize and make good his contract with the Government. I believe that a little exertion upon my part here, on behalf of Baldwin and McCurdy, might lead to the purchase of one of their machines by the United States Government; and perhaps to their employment as experts in connection with the Aeronautical Department of our Army.

As an American, by adoption, I would of course be glad to have the United States obtain their services; but my interest in the boys themselves leads me to doubt whether it would be to their best interests to come here, or look to the United States as a market for their machines. They are British subjects, and intensely patriotic. I not only respect this feeling, but believe that the British Empire affords the best field for their exertions.

Where are the British subjects who are prominent in the work of aviation? I know of none, with the exception of Baldwin and McCurdy, who are not of foreign blood. Even Maxim is an American by birth. So is Cody; and Farman is half French. Of Brabazon-Moore I know

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nothing excepting the name, and it certainly has a foreign sound about it, suggestive of alien blood. Who else is there in the British field? No one I can think of at the present time. 11 When aerodromes are used in war Great Britain will certainly have to depend upon her own subjects for the supply of machines; Here then, it seems to me, is the opportunity for Baldwin and McCurdy.

By establishing in Canada a manufactory for aerodromes, they are benefiting their own country by the introduction of a new industry; and I have advised them to look to Great Britain for their market, believing that this would be of benefit to the British Government and to themselves. They have adopted this plan as their policy; and naturally look to me for advice and guidance, but I must confess that I do not know what to recommend as the next step to be pursued.

I have influence in America, but not in Great Britain. I could undoubtedly help them here, but they are unwilling to enter the United States if they can find a field of usefulness in their own country or in Great Britain; and I think they are right.

I do not know what to do to enable them to enter the British field, and I should be very glad of a word of suggestion from you as to the proper plan of procedure for them to adopt.

Yours sincerely, (Signed) Alexander Graham Bell

Letter, Dr. Bell to Earl Grey Washington, D. C.,? December 27, 1909. His Excellency, Earl Grey, Governor-General of Dominion of Canada, Ottawa, Canada. 12 PERSONAL Dear Earl Grey:

In reply to your note of the 20th inst., I may say that it will give me pleasure to give Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy the free use of my Laboratory buildings, tools, and machinery, for one year, if they can manage to continue their aviation work at Baddeck. I cannot promise them any further financial aid, as I have already contributed a larger sum than I can well afford. Their machines, however, will be their own, for I shall not seek a return. Upon the

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possibility of their finding purchasers for these machines will depend the continuation of their work.

If the Canadian Government should decide to foster the Art of Aviation in Canada as an adjunct to military defense, an appropriation of twenty-five thousand dollars, would in my opinion be sufficient to start a Department of Aviation in connection with your militia system. The appropriation could be used in the purchase of Canadian-built aerodromes; and in the instruction of a selected body of militiamen in the use of the machines. This would enable Canada, at some future time, to contribute to the Imperial Defense a supply of aerodromes and skilled aviators from the Canadian Militia.

The appropriation would be sufficient to enable the Aviation Department to purchase the two aerodromes "Baddeck No. I, and Baddeck No. II", and to start Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy on the construction of a third. It would also permit of their employment as experts to give instruction in the use of the machines. Such a plan would probably result in the permanent establishment of the Aerodrome Industry within the Dominion.

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If the Canadian Government is not prepared to organize a Department of Aviation in connection with the militia system, it might perhaps be willing to give some aid to the establishment of a new Canadian Industry, by granting a small appropriation, say of ten thousand dollars, directly to Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy, as a recognition of the importance of their work, and to assist them in prosecuting their researched in Aviation. Such an appropriation of course would not go far towards establishing their industry in Canada; but it would, at all events tide them over a critical period in their career, and enable them to keep their factory going while they are looking round for purchasers of their machines.

The prestige attached to a recognition of this kind by the Canadian Government, would mean very much more to Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy than the mere money value of

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the appropriation. It would probably enable them to dispose of their machines abroad; and might lead to their securing the necessary capital to establish their business upon an enduring foundation in Canada.

Yours sincerely, (Signed) Alexander Graham Bell

Telegram, Baldwin and McCurdy to Militia Council

Baddeck, N.S., Mar. 3, 1910: — Flights are now being made over the ice here. If you should care to look into the matter would be very glad to receive and entertain your representative.

(Signed) Baldwin and McCurdy

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Telegram, Baldwin & McCurdy to Major Maunsell

Baddeck, N.S., Mar. 3, 1910: — Have wired Militia Council officially concerning flights which we are now making here over the ice. Would be glad if you could see your way clear to spend a week or so with us at Baddeck to see what is being done. The weather is uncertain and we should like to take advantage of the ice while we have it.

(Signed) Baldwin and McCurdy

Telegram, Baldwin to Earl Grey

Baddeck, N.S., Mar. 3, 1910: — Recent flights over the ice here very successful. Wish you could have seen them.

(Signed) F. W. Baldwin.

Telegram, Earl Grey to Baldwin

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Ottawa, Mar. 4, 1910: — The Governor General desires me to thank you for your telegram and congratulate you on successful flights. Lord Grey hopes you will forward full report from time to time.

(Signed) Arthur F. Sladen

Telegram, Maunsell to McCurdy and Baldwin

Ottawa, Mar. 4, 1910: — I shall leave Montreal on Maritime Express Sunday noon. Please have everything in readiness for flight early next week.

(Signed) Major Maunsell

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Letter, Baldwin & McCurdy to Militia Council Baddeck, N.S., March 10, 1910. The Secretary, Militia Council, Headquarters Ottawa, Canada. Dear Sir:

Referring to the letter of the Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence addressed to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell May 7, 1909 (H.Q. 6978.4), which was replied to by us on May 14, 1909, and by Dr. Bell on July 7, 1909, we feel that we are now in a position to make a definite proposal and respectfully submit that the Canadian Government purchase our two aerodromes, Baddeck No. 1 and Baddeck No. 2, for the sum of \$10,000 delivered at our factory here.

After the delivery of the machines we shall be glad, without further expense to the Government, to give such instruction to one or two officers as will enable them to use the machines provided that such instruction is given here where we have every facility for the work.

The receipt of \$10,000 will enable us to continue our aerial investigations here and develop improvements in our machines.

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Yours respectfully, (Signed) Baldwin & McCurdy

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Letter, Dr. Bell to Earl Grey Baddeck, N.S., March 10, 1910. His Excellency Earl Grey, Governor-General of Canada, Ottawa, Canada. Dear Earl Grey:

I enclose for your information a copy of a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Militia Council by Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy (March 10, 1910), containing a proposal to sell their two aerodromes, Baddeck No. 1 I and Baddeck No. 2, to the Canadian Government for the sum of \$10,000.

I am glad to learn from Major Maunsell, who is here, that you received my letter of Dec. 27, 1909 from Washington, D.C., so that you know my views upon this subject.

Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy had intended to have made a somewhat similar offer last year in the event of their making successful flights at Petawawa. On account, however, of the mishap to their drome at Petawawa, they felt it inadvisable to approach the Canadian Government upon the subject until they had successfully demonstrated the capabilities of their dromes to fly.

This they have now done; and I beg to enclose photographs of a fine flight made by Mr. Douglas McCurdy in the drome Baddeck No. 2 on March 3.

On this occasion he was alone; but he has also demonstrated the capability of the machine to carry two persons. On several occasions he has carried Mr. F. W. Baldwin as a passenger. Yesterday he carried Mr. Baldwin in one flight, Mr. William McDonald in another, and then 17 took Major Maunsell for a drome over the ice on Baddeck Bay.

It may seem strange that Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy should ask the Government to purchase two dromes instead of one but the reasons will be obvious to you.

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They estimate that they will be unable to carry on their factory here without a capital of at least \$10,000; and they prefer to raise this amount by the sale of their two machines.

They realize that it might be considered an imposition upon the Government to ask \$10,000 for one machine; and therefore offer two, as, in their opinion, a fair equivalent for the money, as a charge of \$5000 per machine will yield them only a reasonable profit upon the cost of construction.

\$5000 would not suffice to support their factory but \$10,000 would probably be sufficient to enable it at least to exist; because they are saved the expense of acquiring buildings and workshops of their own for one year, as I have placed the facilities of my Laboratory at their disposal for that period of time without charge.

They are much elated over the fact that they have already received their first order for an aerodrome. This is a monoplane for Mr. Gardiner G. Hubbard of Boston, Mass. It is now practically completed, and they hope to try it out here in a few days if the ice holds out.

They are encouraged to believe that during the course of their next year they may receive other orders for aerodromes from private individuals and from foreign Governments, and that the profits from the sale of these machines may enable them to acquire buildings and machinery of their own, and place the new Canadian industry upon a self-supporting basis.

I think it is in every way desirable that the Canadian Government should acquire two aerodromes rather than one; because accidents of various kinds are always liable to occur with the best machines in the hands of inexperienced aviators. With two dromes, an accident to one will not interfere with continuous practice work. One machine will always be available while the other is being repaired.

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While this seems to be a plausible argument why the Canadian Government should purchase two machines rather than one the real, and most important reason is that the sum of \$10,000 is necessary to aid a new industry to establish itself upon Canadian soil.

Of course if the Canadian Government decides to accept the proposition a larger appropriation than \$10,000 will be required; for the Government will have to erect buildings in which to house the aerodromes, do some grading at Petawawa or whatever place may be selected as an aerodrome Park for practice work, and meet the expenses of a staff of experts to be trained as aviators for the Canadian Militia.

I do not know what the total expense of a department of aviation will amount to, but I have given you my ideas upon this subject in my letter of December 27, 1909.

So far as Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy are concerned, all that they want is the sum of \$10,000 to support their industry during another year.

Yours sincerely, (Signed) Alexander Graham Bell 19 PS: — I would emphasize the fact that in purchasing these aerodromes the Government will receive much more than the mere money value of the machine — it will secure the establishment of an aerodrome industry within the Dominion of Canada. This will be of as much advantage to the Canadian Government, as to Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy. A.G.B.

Letter, Major Maunsell to Baldwin & McCurdy Ottawa, April 6, 1910. My dear Baldwin & McCurdy,

I was delighted to get your telegram of the 5th inst., reporting nine successful flights of the "Mike Monoplane".

This was very good news, and I must congratulate Mr. Hubbard and yourselves on the satisfactory construction and design of your first monoplane, and I hope Mr. Hubbard will have the best of luck with it.

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I have been waiting patiently for the Militia Council to take up your question generally, which they did yesterday (Of course the reports were prepared long ago, but the question had to await its turn on the agenda of Militia Council papers).

The decision, I am told privately, was that Privy Council was to be asked to concur in the recommendation of the Militia Council, that a grant be given to you upon certain conditions, which are to be subsequently drawn up. I hope this will be an annual grant.

This, I am sure, will be satisfactory to you, but you must be patient for a week or so yet, as no definite 20 decision can be given you until Privy Council deals with it, and they of course have the right to refuse it.

I shall let you know when anything more definite is decided.

With kind regards to Dr. and Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Baldwin,

Believe me,

Very sincerely yours, (Signed) G.G. Maunsell Messrs. Baldwin & McCurdy, Baddeck, Nova Scotia.