

***Bones: The Life and Adventures of Doctor Archibald Menzies.* Graeme Menzies 2024. Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath, Scotland. 142 pp. ISBN 978-184995-591-1.**

Quite a few books deal with famous naturalists or scientist but few provide details about what life was like in Nova Scotia in the 1790s. This book is about Archibald Menzies who was born in Scotland, son of a gardener, whose talents were recognised early by the chief of the Menzies Clan who sponsored him to study botany and medicine at Edinburgh University. Archibald became a surgeon in the Royal Navy, surviving battles and missions that included two global voyages over a period of 20 years. The book not only describes his travels and his botanical achievements but also provides a commentary about the conditions and politics that he experienced. Eventually, he returned permanently to London, married and became a highly respected doctor a further 20 years. After this he retired, surviving until the age of 88, a remarkably long life for someone who had travelled twice to Western North America on sailing ships, the first of which was on a commercial mission that traded animal skins for metal tools and objects such as beads; the second was on a circumnavigation, which took almost five years, included a survey of the western coast of North America, with Captain George Vancouver after whom the island was named. Earlier in his naval career, Archibald sailed to Nova Scotia from the Caribbean, arriving in September, 1792. Here he spent three years as a naval surgeon in Halifax. He soon went on excursions and in letters home expressed his pleasure at seeing familiar plants as well as those new to him, including a vast number of cryptogamic plants. During his time here, he sent seeds and plant specimens back to his botany professor in Edinburgh and others, including the leading botanist, Joseph Banks. He explored areas around Halifax, western Nova Scotia and PEI, before returning to Britain. Although his visit to Nova Scotia was brief, reading about it in the chapter entitled 'Blood and Botany' is enthralling. Members of the NSIS should purchase this book and follow the rest of his career and fascinating life. The book includes 12 pages of colour plates and is filled with fascinating details of the life and times of Archibald Menzies.

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