

**Wilson, Bruce G. *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton: A Study of Wealth and Influence in Early Upper Canada, 1776-1812.* Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983. Pp. iv, 248. Maps, Tables. \$9.95**

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and so remains two-dimensional. His land purchases and political involvement to 'protect the character' of the Victoria suburb of Oak Bay could be clarified by reference to the broader issue of professionals in protective urban 'reform,' and the significance of his corporate contracts and speculative investments could be underlined by reference to the business history of the period. Working without the private letters employed by Barrett and Liscombe, Terry Reksten made these social worlds figure more prominently in his popularly-oriented *Rattenbury* (1978). Barrett and Liscombe's *Rattenbury* is a more thoroughly documented subject, but without the broader context necessary in a professional biography, analysis succumbs to narration and the promise of a treatment of "Architecture and Challenge in the Imperial Age" remains unfulfilled.

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Wilson, Bruce G. *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton: A Study of Wealth and Influence in Early Upper Canada, 1776 — 1812*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983. Pp. iv, 248. Maps, Tables. \$9.95.

When Robert Saunders wrote his valuable 1957 *Ontario History* article that still stands as the basic survey of the Family Compact of Upper Canada, his opinion, based on then current research, was that it was not in essence a business-related oligarchy. Increasing interest in business history during the last few years has considerably changed this interpretation. Some business aspects of the Compact, particularly such fields as land acquisition and speculation, have been extensively reexamined. Far more studies of the careers of the merchants are now available through the two relevant volumes of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, and in more extensive articles such as Edith Firth's Alexander Wood, Max Magill's William Allan, Syd Wise's John Macaulay, and my own examination of George Jervis Goodhue and James Dougall.

Modern monographic treatments are rarer. Douglas McCalla's Isaac Buchanan presents a most interesting case of an Upper Canadian merchant whose career came at the very end of the Family Compact era, just as Hamilton's activities came at the very beginning. These biographies presented the authors with unusual difficulties because the absence of personal papers meant that the subject's life could not be rounded out beyond their business careers. Possibly, the unavoidable gap is not too serious; one rather wonders if their personal lives were not completely subordinated to business activities and love of political power. The latter, of course, was useful for business purposes as well as desirable in itself. Such dignities as the designation "the Honourable,"

obtained on becoming a member of the Legislative Council, enhanced one's social status *vis-a-vis* the "socially superior," yet frequently impecunious provincial officialdom.

Wilson's study of Hamilton's enterprises, which began as his doctoral thesis, is an interesting and detailed account of the commercial development of the Niagara Frontier from the earliest settlements to its role in the relatively well-established province at the beginning of the War of 1812. It is particularly valuable for the way in which it traces the development of business activity from the military supply-fur trade economy to the merchant activity of a settled agricultural region. The trade along the economic axis that grew up from Detroit to London, England, via Niagara, Kingston and Montreal is well described, and the battles for monopoly, land and office carefully analyzed. Rather surprisingly, in view of its importance by the early years of the nineteenth century, no analysis is made of the trade with Britain via the alternative upstate New York routes to New York city. Although Hamilton may not have used this method of shipment, its existence played a role in peninsular trade and the success of some of his later rivals. Naturally, in Wilson's story the trade and development of Niagara is strongly emphasized; at times it seems that the importance of Hamilton and his region are rather overemphasized considering Upper Canada's development.

Wilson's discussion of the relationship between Hamilton and the newly-established central government of Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe and his successors after 1791 provides another major theme of the work. Merchants like Hamilton, who had operated virtually free from any control, strongly resisted the centralizing policies of Simcoe; equally Scottish merchants, again like Hamilton, had little sympathy with Anglo-Irish President Peter Russell and his York coterie after Simcoe departed. They would, however, form a natural alliance with Peter Hunter, when the Scottish second governor arrived. The struggles were activated by both the dislike of central control and economic expediency. Wilson's discussion raises many important questions, not the least of which is in how far the case study of Hamilton can be applied in other areas.

The problem of local government, and the formation of a local oligarchy for the Niagara peninsula, is also examined in some detail. Wilson demonstrates how the initial loyalist establishment was supplanted by the merchants, whom he feels formed the local elite in contrast to office holding compacts of other districts. An analysis is made of local elections and appointments to the magistracy; but an examination of the extent of the provincial officials dominance of local office before the Niagara area became a separate administrative district in 1800 might shed further light on the suggested late development of an oligarchy at Niagara.

Another important theme is the examination of the Scottish system of kinship interlinkage, which was so important

in Upper Canada, and its effect on Hamilton's operations. His policy of bringing out cousins, training them and setting them up in business, in the end meant that he had himself created several of his leading rivals. The careers of Hamilton's sons is also discussed, their trials and tribulations clearly demonstrate the problems faced by a second generation in trying to equal the career of the founder. As Wilson notes, the lack of success of the sons in commerce, and their turning to office holding, established a precedent followed by many other Upper Canadian mercantile and official families. The changing character and economy of early nineteenth century Upper Canada seems to have been inimical to the founding of important dynasties. In Hamilton's case, as Wilson also points out, the father's training his cousins but spoiling his sons may have had a great deal to do with the long-term dynastic failure. Although the book includes tables of commercial statistics and maps showing Hamilton's land speculations, there are no genealogical tables showing the Scottish kinship relations, marriage contacts and Hamilton's sons and their offices, which would be of great assistance as references.

For the urban historian the study has a great deal of interest, as it deals with some of the first urban nuclei of the colony, and shows how the metropolis of Montreal, or possibly London operating through Montreal, dominated the western hinterlands. It also shows something of the very beginnings of the rise of Toronto from the point of view of the hinterland magnates. More broadly, what we have in Wilson's Hamilton is a study of the Upper Canadian merchant at the opposite end of Upper Canadian history from McCalla's Buchanan; at a period of rapid transition when the first primitive settlements of the colony were developing into a united province. Hamilton, as Wilson states, represented an era; his biography provides a good picture of the pioneer merchant in the continental Mid-West in the era of transition from wilderness to settled colony.

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Wall, Geoffrey, and John S. Marsh, eds. *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on its Evolution in Canada*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982. Pp. 436. Illustrations. \$14.95.

The term "recreational land" includes those areas, including parks, that are used for recreational purposes. Though pedantic, it is useful for allowing the inclusion of multi-purpose land in a discussion of outdoor recreation along with more formally defined parks. The essays included in this selection discuss a variety of aspects of outdoor recreation, largely from the perspective of the historical geographer.

Generally comprised of case studies, they explore the reasons for the development of recreational land and the conflicting pressures these bring to the planning process. Topics range from the development of national, provincial and municipal parks to the growth of commercial tourist areas. The essays also examine activities as diverse as pioneer recreation, canoeing and snowmobiling.

Many of the articles were originally published in the 1970s and include pioneering studies by J.G. Nelson, R.I. Wolfe and G. Killan. The editors have also added new works in an effort to better represent the themes and regions of recreational land development in Canada. The articles are grouped into several sections covering themes of rural and urban development and outdoor leisure activities. The whole is introduced by an overview written by the editors—"Themes in the Investigation of the Evolution of Outdoor Recreation"—and by a lead article written by Geoffrey Wall entitled "Recreation Resource Evaluation, Changing Views."

Books of this type that rely on available articles to examine a comprehensive theme are inevitably limited by the chance nature of the selection. In this case the choice is complicated by the multi-disciplinary nature of the field. Most of these articles were originally penned for a variety of reasons for a number of special audiences. The resulting collection is therefore uneven and there are a number of holes in the coverage. The articles, written by planners, geographers and historians, sometimes present conflicting ideas. Some are laden with jargon and esoteric references while others are excessively bland. The article by Battin and Nelson, for example, "Recreation and Conservation: The Struggle for Balance in Point Pelee National Park, 1918-1978," while interesting from a planning perspective, is very simplistic in its historical analysis.

The difficulties of satisfactorily treating a subject by using randomly written articles are readily apparent in the section on urban recreation. Two useful articles by E. McFarland, "The Beginnings of Municipal Parks Systems" and "The Development of Supervised Playgrounds," document the emergence of the parks idea in Canadian cities. Although weak on context and analysis, they point to the contradictory philosophies that promoted parks both as physical recreation areas and as gardens. W.C. McKee's article on the Vancouver parks system looks at the motivation behind the establishment of parks in that city. It too is weak on analysis, however, and the central argument that businessmen promoted parks for their own economic ends is not convincing. Having introduced the notion of recreational land in order to broaden the discussion beyond parks, it is unfortunate that the section on urban recreational land is confined to this traditional form. There is no discussion of broader planning concerns. Heritage preservation, for example, would have been an apt topic. Yet this aspect of recreational land use is poorly served by V.A. Konrad's highly esoteric "Historical Artifacts as Recreational Resources."