

respect to this and other themes, the Riel Papers, the papers of the Société historique Métisse, the Métis testimonies to abbé Cloutier, and other “untapped” sources should shed more light on the little known Métis perspective on the events on 1885.

In conclusion, one suspects there is definitely a case against the government in 1885 but the evidence presented by the author points to a much more complex account.

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**The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History.** DONALD HARMAN AKENSON. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984. xi, 404 p. illus., ISBN 0-7735-0430-3 cl.; 0-7735-0591-1 pa. \$15.95.

**Being Had: Historians, Evidence and the Irish in North America.** DONALD HARMAN AKENSON. Port Credit, Ontario: P.D. Meany, 1985. x, 243 p. ISBN 0-80835-014-7 \$45.00.

It is a not entirely facetious axiom of social history that the more common a phenomenon, the less fully it is documented or studied. So it has been with the role of the Irish in the history of Ontario. Those familiar only with the major political studies of the province before Confederation might well assume that it was largely populated by Scots and some English, with a few annoying Americans around the edges. A reading of Akenson should correct that perception.

If Ontario history, at least until the last decade, has largely been characterized by a study of its dominant political élites, it has also been marked by specialized studies, limited by period and region. It is a major accomplishment of Akenson that he offers a broad synthesis, tracing the Irish for almost a century in the province as a whole, but particularly through a microstudy of Leeds and Lansdowne townships. Because of his book's scope, Akenson's title can be misleading; his book has as much to say about the region it studies as about the Irish.

Akenson begins with a general survey of Irish immigration to Ontario based on British statistics and Canadian manuscript censuses. Given the difficulties and lacunae of his sources, Akenson is often forced to arrive at reasonable approximations between possible extremes. His conclusions are startling. It has been generally assumed that the Irish became a major element in Ontario's population only after the famine migration of the mid-1840s and that the majority coming to Ontario were Roman Catholics from southern Ireland. By Akenson's calculations, the Irish were a quarter of the population of Ontario both before and after the famine years, making them consistently the largest European element in the population. Moreover, the ratio of Protestant to Catholic immigrants was constant at 2:1 both before and after the famine migrations. Migration to Ontario originated in the same areas and the same economic strata after the famine as before. The poor could not afford to migrate; the well-to-do did not need to, leaving the middling classes. Most who came were managers of small farms from north-central Ireland. The Irish tended to settle in rural areas, not urban, with 75 per cent of them or more going to such areas until at least 1871.

In the central part of the book, a microstudy of Leeds and Lansdowne townships (midway between Kingston and Brockville on Lake Ontario), Akenson sees population growth and consequent changes in the scale and nature of society as the control motors of social change. Early society in Leeds and Lansdowne, the author argues, was individualistic and competitive, with social relations varying between opportunistic alliances and overt aggression. Cooperative ventures of any significant scale were an impossibility. Local government based on justices of the peace was well-adjusted to the local situation, representing the degree and style of governance the society was willing to accept. It was not, as often argued, an oligarchy foisted on an essentially democratic society. Akenson sees local militia service in the War of 1812 as in reality negligible, but the basis of a potent myth used as a self-serving justification by the social élite for its own social and political advancement.

The arrival of the Irish in increasing numbers after 1815 encouraged growth of new collective consciousnesses among both the Irish and the older "loyalist" society based on ethnic, religious, and business interests. Differences were fought out in the 1830s between the Protestant Irish led by Ogle Gowan and the local Tory notables. The Ulster Irish had a strong advantage in their own hyper-loyalism, their knowledge of electoral politics, and their crude and violent but very effective organization. Irish political power was solidified by the Rebellion of 1837 when militia service was again more rhetorical than real, but provided the Irish with legitimacy in the same way the War of 1812 had served earlier settlers.

Beyond 1840 and up to 1870, Akenson concentrates even more upon population growth to explain social change. As the population became more dense, a process Akenson terms "sub-ifeudation" or a filling-in of society occurred. Changes were pre-industrial and related to the quality of local life. Government, for instance, split into smaller units and became more effective and professionalized. Road and later rail networks expanded; postal service altered the scope of life. Likewise on a social level, there was an "infilling" of a network of clubs, lodges, churches, and temperance societies. As such institutions grew, society increasingly came under the control of a substantial middle class. The Irish were aided in the integration into this changing society by the Anglican Church, the Orange Order, and the provincial school system. The Anglican Church in Ontario, Akenson argues, was far more Irish in its origins than previously recognized, with a heavy representation of Irish clergy. The church helped the Irish to integrate into the new society, while maintaining the traditions and values of the old. In a similar manner, the Orange Order provided an agency of economic integration, acting as a source of jobs and business contacts. The Ontario school system was "simply the transatlantic branch of the Irish national system of education" (p. 269) with the same basic structure and even the same textbooks, thus giving the Irish a distinct advantage. In many ways, Akenson stresses, it is in fact the local society which is making adjustments to imported institutions.

The book concludes with an urban study of Gananoque, the major town in the region, to determine the success of the Irish in town life. Akenson finds the town in the period 1849 to 1871 to have been "proto-industrial," half-way along to a class-differentiated society. By the end of the period a conscious upper class of substantial factory owners had emerged. The middling and smaller merchants did not form a group, but were willing to be deferential to the local power élite, thus forming a potential class. There was no working class consciousness. The author argues that this proto-class structure was criss-crossed

by three important variables — religious affiliation, place of birth, and ethnicity. He finds that towards the lower end of the social spectrum there were groupings halfway between ethnic groups and a class — “ethclasses.” By comparing foreign-born and native-born in terms of occupational structure, he concludes that there was neither great advantage in being native-born nor disadvantage in being an immigrant. Irish-born Protestants were somewhat better off than Catholics in the town, although most Catholics were in skilled jobs.

The urban experience of Ontario’s Irish, however, is not Akenson’s major focus. He stresses that North American scholars and popular beliefs have been in concurrence that the Irish in the New World were urban dwellers. Indeed, so the conventional argument goes, the Irish experience in their homeland had rendered them incapable of succeeding at the frontier and in general the Catholics were much worse prepared to cope than the Ulster Protestants. On the contrary, Akenson argues that the Irish in Ontario were primarily rural and small town dwellers and he finds in his case study that both Protestants and Catholics made excellent farmers. Based on the 1842 census he concludes that, in the study area, Irish households had more acres cleared, held more land, and grew more of the main cash crop wheat than their non-Irish neighbours. For the 1861 census, his conclusions are even more startling. Within the Leeds community, immigrants were more successful at running fulltime farm enterprises than were the Canadian-born; among the immigrants, the Irish-born were more successful than the non-Irish; among the Irish immigrants, the Roman Catholics rated higher on all indices of success than did the Irish-born Protestants! Akenson hypothesizes that this may have happened because in farming the Irish immigrant had certain advantages. He arrived with a clean slate — without debts owing — and with sufficient capital to purchase land (acquired either by selling out in Ireland or working at various jobs in the New World), while the native-born farmer was lumbered by local inheritance traditions which obliged him to support his extended family after inheritance of the farm. The Irishman would have a greater portion of his income unencumbered and available for investment in his farm. The Irish were also more likely to succeed because, unlike the local who simply inherited a farm, the Irish had to pass an extraordinary number of “tests” — difficulties in migration, novel physical environment, actual location, and purchase of suitable land — which screened out all but the most able.

The genius of Akenson’s study lies in his grasp of the relevant historiography and in his ability to conceptualize and synthesize. He has absorbed the literature concerning early Ontario and combined it with a knowledge of the Irish which the writing of nine books on modern Irish history has given him. He evinces great skill in systematically approaching knotty historiographical questions. His analysis of the concept of the “family compact” should be pondered by every Upper Canadian historian (p. 101, n. 108). Like many contemporary historians, he relies heavily on use of census data, teasing out information censuses are not directly designed to produce. This should remind archivists of the need to describe such sources in detail in our inventories and guides. Likewise, Akenson uses the techniques and sources of historical geography, notably the *Abstract Index to Deeds*, a firm reminder of the significance of such sources beyond the genealogical uses to which they have often been put. Beyond these, however, Akenson’s primary sources are thin. From the footnotes, the major sets of papers used appear to be the Landon Papers (Queen’s), Stone and McDonald-Stone Papers (Queen’s, PAC, and TPL), Gowan Papers (AO and PAC), Johnstown District Quarter Sessions Minutes (AO), R.C. Dun and Company (Harvard University), several maps, and Brockville and

Kingston newspapers. It would be unfair to insist that a localized study be based on a tremendous diversity of sources, but those seeking to test Akenson's findings might do well to start with a close examination of primary sources. His assertions about the nature of pre-1812 society, for instance, are based largely upon the papers of Joel Stone. There may be no further sets of papers of members of the local élite for that specific time period and that specific region, but comparison to other prominent local figures across the province would be interesting. Likewise, generalizations on militia involvement in the War of 1812 are based mainly on the Stone and McDonald-Stone Papers. Although the McDonald-Stone Papers contain the Leeds militia records, one wonders whether the conclusions drawn would be reinforced or modified by use of the British Military Papers (RG 8 I C Series) and the correspondence of the Adjutant-General of Militia at the PAC.

While Akenson is most careful to make clear that his conclusions relate to a local study, that his chosen region is not necessarily "typical," and that his study neither gains nor loses in significance on the basis of typicality, some of his more enthusiastic readers are likely to lose sight of his cautions and generalize from this study to the province as a whole. Whatever caveats one has to offer, however, there is no gainsaying that this is a study of the first significance, a rare one in the study of Ontario, where even the individual footnotes should provide meat for further study.

The second book under review, Akenson's *Being Had: Historians, Evidence and the Irish in North America* is largely an adaptation of the arguments in *The Irish in Ontario* to place them within the context of American historiography and an expansion on some of the ideas there presented — the impact of the Irish National School System on Egerton Ryerson and the school system in Ontario, for instance. It will make interesting further reading for those intrigued by Akenson's arguments.

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**Harvest of Stones: The German Settlement in Renfrew County.** BRENDA LEE-WHITING. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985. xii, 323 p. ISBN 0-8020-2562-5 cl. 0-8020-6580-5 pa. \$24.95 cl. \$9.95 pa.

This book is the second recent study of the German settlement in the Upper Ottawa Valley; however, it covers far more thematic territory than Peter Hessel's *Destination: Ottawa Valley* which focused on the movement from Germany. Brenda Lee-Whiting moves beyond the facts of immigration to explore the material culture of the Renfrew County Germans — their buildings, tools, textiles, and especially their furniture — and various themes connected with their history in the new land. The author attempts to provide answers to most of the questions a historian might pose, and even provides some indication of the destinations of out-migrants by noting the residences of children which appeared in the obituaries of local residents. She delves far beyond the picture-book level in exploring material history and performs a valuable service in identifying the stylistic features of individual furniture-makers. Her biographical sketches of the latter make the point that even the skilled cabinetmakers among these people pursued the trade as a sideline to supplement agricultural income or to provide the initial stake with which to buy a farm. Though furniture factories had appeared in eastern Renfrew County by 1872