

A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women. Edited by LINDA RASMUSSEN, LORNA RASMUSSEN, CANDACE SAVAGE, and ANNE WHEELER. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1976. 240 p. 100 photos. ISBN 0 88961 030 4 bd. \$20.00; ISBN 0 88961 029 1 pa. \$8.95.

The history of prairie women is there for us to reap. Perhaps this book will make it a little easier. . . . (p. 9)

Indeed, this book does make it a little easier to reap the history of prairie women, but it could have done so much more. Anyone who has attempted to study the experience of Canadian women is aware of the frustrations in finding sources. In general, only the literate elite had the time and inclination to record their experiences, and as this book amply demonstrates, the women coming to the prairies were so preoccupied with survival that it is surprising they had time to record anything. Only as prairie life became more sophisticated did the record become fuller, yet it is by no means complete—we cannot know how much material has been lost or destroyed by those unaware of its value. As a result, finding evidence of the experience of prairie women beyond the big names—Murphy, McClung, Parlyby *et al.*—requires a lot of digging.

The authors of *A Harvest Yet to Reap* have diligently searched in archives and libraries from Victoria to Ottawa for evidence of the experiences of prairie women from (roughly) 1885 to 1925. With the assistance of the librarians (*sic*) at the Public Archives of Canada and archives of the prairie provinces, they have unearthed much information. The information is arranged chronologically, and the book is divided into sections reflecting stages in the development of the prairie woman's experience from her arrival in the West to the winning of the right to vote. Each section begins with an introductory essay, but the real story is told in the words and pictures of the women themselves using excerpts from newspapers, pamphlets, autobiographies, unpublished reminiscences, letters, and interviews, as well as numerous photographs. The format balances each page of text opposite a large photograph. Clearly, much time and thought went into the arrangement of this potpourri of information. The photographs are arranged so that each one illustrates the facing text(s), in either a general or specific way. The sepia tones of both photographs and text give a soft and attractive effect. A quick reading leaves a good impression.

Nevertheless, for anyone interested in more than a scrapbook about prairie women, this volume is disappointing. The principal weakness lies in the lack of identification of sources. In most cases, anyone wishing to consult the original of a particular item or additional material from a particular source would find it extremely difficult to know where to go. Although excerpts from published material are generally well-documented, some newspaper items are cited without dates, and the location of some Canadian Pacific Railway immigration pamphlets which probably are not available in all libraries is not given.

The documentation of published sources is even less satisfactory. The brief bibliography ('A Note on Archive Collections') contains limited information. The majority of excerpts in the main part of the book are attributed in some fashion to the author or source but these citations are inconsistent and incomplete. Some acknowledgments succeed only in being puzzling. An example is a text acknowledged 'Mrs. Addams Circa 1914-1916' (p. 116). Is this from the Addams Papers, reminiscences by Mrs. Addams, an interview with her, or a book by her? The authors do not tell us. Other citations are simply misleading. For example, with one exception there is no distinction between the interviews conducted by the authors themselves and those conducted by others and available in archives. The interviews with Akitt, Collicut, Reeves, and Wilson were conducted by the staff of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, where they are available. Some dozen items are not acknowledged at all. For example, the letter on page 102 is from the Martha Morgan Papers at the PAC, and is one of

nine letters to Morgan from Martha Pritchard describing her life as a domestic at Cannington Manor, in what was then the Northwest Territories. Surely it would be useful for anyone interested in the topic to know where the letter can be found and that more material is available.

This is not to suggest that each excerpt be cited in full scholarly fashion in the body of the book. This would tend to clutter the text and possibly distract some readers. But there is no reason why such information could not be placed at the end of the book (or each section) for the benefit of those interested in pursuing further research. For the most part, the photograph credits are much better, with less than a dozen photographs unacknowledged. Many of these pictures likely are in private hands, and the authors should have said so.

It is unfortunate that the experiences of native and non-English-speaking women were not included, and the authors are aware of this gap. This omission may in part derive from "deficiencies of archives collections" (p. 9), because until recently little effort was being made to collect ethnic archives. However, it can also be attributed to a lack of material to be collected. Documenting the experiences of ethnic and native women is possible if the researcher is prepared to go beyond the traditional sources, an undertaking requiring more time and money than the authors had at their disposal.

It is not clear whether sloppy proofreading or sloppy research is to blame for the large number of errors, particularly in the spelling of names. For example, Louisa Jane McDougall appears as Louisa (p. 48), and Louisa Jame (p. 236). Henrietta (Muir) Edwards becomes Henrietta (Edwards) Muir (p. 222), and it was Carol Bacchi-Ferraro not Perraro (p. 232) who wrote her thesis on Canadian suffragists. Such errors further weaken the value of the book as a reference tool.

The authors have added brief biographies of important prairie women and a time line, as well as an index. There is no apparent logic about who merits a biography. Certainly the mysterious Mrs. Addams should have been included. The time line goes beyond a simple outline of events and includes irrelevancies and editorial comment. The index is peculiar, containing references to abstract concepts such as "Role, Women's" and "Distribution of the sexes," cross-references which lead to further cross-references, and entries such as "Labour, paid, women's, man's protest against." A more useful index could have been provided by revision and expansion to include references to the photographs, not just the textual excerpts.

Perhaps the problem is that the authors were doing research, not for a book, but for a film which did not require precise references to sources. Once the film was made, the authors found that only a small fraction of the material collected was actually used. They were correct in feeling that the material was too valuable not to be shared; however, they could have shared it much more meaningfully. There is enough to be done in the field of women's history without having to go over the same ground. Little enough has been written that each new book becomes of necessity a reference work. *A Harvest Yet to Reap* could have been a landmark in clearly identifying and disseminating sources for the further study of the history of prairie women, but it has accomplished only half the task. The harvest is still to be reaped.

Jean E. Dryden
Provincial Archives of Alberta

Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930. ROBERT F. HARNEY and HAROLD TROPER. Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, ©1975. x, 212 p. illus. ISBN 0 442 29948 6 \$14.95.

Immigrants is an attractive book which manages to make "Toronto the Good" look better than ever. With the interest stimulated by the release of a Federal Government green paper on immigration, and of feature films such as *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, *Hester*