

Book Reviews

Inheritance. Ontario's Century Farms Past and Present. JOHN and MONICA LADELL Toronto: Macmillan, 1979. xx, 274 p. ISBN 0 7705 1792 7 \$16.95.

Surrounded by expensive and powerful agricultural machinery the modern farmer stops work for a moment, takes a deep breath and allows the freshly tilled soil to trickle through his fingers. This action symbolizes an ageless bond existing between man and the land. What is the significance of this relationship and how is it perceived by the residents of Ontario's large towns and cities? Ontario's historical time frame is short, the land vast, and life in the countryside seems distant and irrelevant. Subjected to media images of cozy farm life the urbanite absorbs a meaning, sentimental and packaged, of the Canadian farm which is totally at odds with the reality of our rural heritage. In *Inheritance* John and Monica Ladell have escaped the trap of nostalgic reflection and have attempted to paint a realistic picture of Ontario's century farms (those farms which can boast continuous ownership by one family for one hundred years or more.)

Based on interviews with the present inhabitants of a number of century farms the book consists of family profiles which, for each chapter, follow an introductory essay outlining the settlement history of a particular area or of a particular class of immigrants. Apart from the occasional absence of proper source citations and perhaps a tendency to oversimplify these essays are solid, tightly written, and lively. For the reader unfamiliar with the wide and diverse range of early settlement patterns in Ontario the chapter introductions offer succinct and well balanced descriptions of the province's genesis. The authors examine the settlement activities of the Loyalists, the Irish, the Highland Scots and the Mennonites as well as specific settlement experiments such as the Colonization Road programme. No new ground is covered but the early settlers' intensity of purpose has been imaginatively captured.

The farm or family profiles do not mesh well however with the introductory essays and represent a collapse of stylistic precision. Too often the profiles become anecdotal in which disconnected details are churned out respecting the construction of farm buildings, the crops sown, the cattle raised or the intricacies of family relationships. These seemingly unorganized recollections are often punctuated by short, disturbing tangents. Although one is left with an appreciation of the diversity of farming enterprise and the unending hardness of farm life the profiles do not stand up well on their own. Rarely do the authors examine in any detail the important components of the farmers' social existence; his church, community, or local school connections.

Discrepancies in quality between the essays and the profiles appear to be the result of the methods employed to extract information from sources. The essays are good examples of finely tuned abstract narratives gleaned from a wide variety of secondary sources. The profiles on the other hand are largely based on a primary source: the authors' own taped interviews. One can conjecture that the rambling nature of the pro-

files probably parallels similar rambling taped interviews. If in fact the interviews were systematically structured the authors simply did not sift and weigh the evidence sufficiently to produce a smooth synthesis.

In spite of the authors' acknowledged dismissal of scientific methodology an evaluation of the taped interviews would have been beneficial. A bibliographic paragraph or two could have included a description of the questioning strategy employed plus an analysis of the manner in which the transcriptions were sorted and appraised (assuming transcriptions were produced). Probably many readers would also appreciate an indication of the present location of the tapes.

The flaw inherent in the profiles section is most unfortunate since the fresh approach adopted held such promise. The book will stand however as a much needed account of Ontario farm life which, although romantic at times, does not degenerate into sentimentality. The repercussions of encroaching suburban neighbourhoods and the inordinate capital outlay required by farmers today just to survive are clearly exposed. The identification of the countryside with bacon and beer commercials is also rendered an unwritten but unmistakable blast.

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Geneviève Guimont Bastien, Line Chabot et Doris Drolet Dubé. Ottawa: Direction des Lieux et des parcs historiques nationaux, Parcs Canada, 1980. 392 p. ISBN 0-660-90397-0. Prix Canada \$20.00, Prix autres pays \$24.00.

One of the most frustrating impediments to research in architectural history is the lack of information about sources. To date, no "union list" of Canadian architectural collections has been compiled to alleviate this difficulty. Archives and other repositories wrestle to balance on the one hand, restraints on budgets and personnel and on the other, increasing acquisitions and researcher demands for their archival holdings. In the course of conducting historical research, scholars often encounter archival collections which are unorganized and for which no descriptions exist. Researchers may chafe at finding resource materials virtually inaccessible or they may approach the problem in a manner mutually beneficial to themselves and the custodians of those materials.

In choosing the latter option, Parks Canada has made available at a modest price an inventory of the architectural drawings from the Archives de l'université Laval. It has also exploited fully the resources it has invested in architectural research. The philosophy behind this unpretentious publication seems to be that to inform the researching public of resources available to them is as valuable a service as to publish the results of research in those documents. Christina Cameron, Head of Architectural Analysis at the Canadian Inventory of Historic Building, Parks Canada, further emphasizes this attitude in a preface punctuated by a sensitive statement about the importance of preserving architectural records.

This is a large volume, unadorned by architectural plan or drawing, and containing 353 pages of listings. The first part consists of 224 pages of itemized projects which make up the *fonds* Chênevert, followed by a very workable alphabetical index of proper names, of clients, buildings and other architects. A second alphabetical index makes access to the inventory description possible by geographic location. The second part, or-