

As an overview of the state of oral history in Canada and Saskatchewan, however, the proceedings do succeed and are well worth the \$5 pricetag. The conference was obviously a success, the book is well presented and some of the papers are very good indeed. My main regrets are simply that the conference did not focus entirely on the history of Saskatchewan and that there was just not more emphasis on historical knowledge as being the paramount purpose of all the taping.

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Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land, and Social Change in Mid Victorian Peel County, Canada West. (Ontario historical studies series.) DAVID GAGAN. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981. xxi, 197, tables. ISBN 0-8020-2435-1. \$20.00 pa.

Historians, especially the North American variant of the breed, are fond of propounding new ways of looking at the past, of creating, rather paradoxically, "new" histories. The process has in fact reached that point of culmination at which we can ruminate over several generations of aging and even old "new" histories. Although it is easy to be cynical about the overuse of the phrase, it does behove archivists to prick up their ears when they hear of new histories. Those histories may well have implications for what we acquire and how we organize it.

In David Gagan's book, we have a very fine example of a "new" demographic history, which indeed is not very new, especially outside the sphere of Canadian scholarship. It is social history in the strictest definition of the word, dealing almost not at all with conventional political concerns. It is statistical and takes a quantitative approach to society. Like much of the social history and a great deal of the Canadian history being written at this time, it is regional, even local in its focus and limited in its time frame.

To the relief or disappointment of archivists, depending on their outlook, Gagan's work does not point the way to any new directions in acquisition. The sources he uses are familiar to any archivist who has ever dealt with a genealogist: manuscript census returns, abstracts of deeds, records of probate and surrogate courts, parish and other denominational records and occasionally, narrative accounts of travellers and residents. Where Gagan differs from a genealogist, of course, is in the computer-based methodology he uses to sort his data and the sophisticated questions he poses to it. The methodology and approach of an historian like Gagan may well affect how archivists describe what they collect.

Gagan sees Peel County in the period in which he is examining it, 1840 to 1870, as going through a sharp transition. By 1840, Peel had already passed from a "pioneer" to a "mature" society in terms of availability of land. Between 1820 and 1842, 95 per cent of its lands had passed into private hands. Increasingly in the 1840's, there was heavy pressure on land from incoming migrants. The appearance of an American market for Canadian agricultural produce promoted a system of extensive cropping of wheat. In the 1850's, the coming of the railways heightened the market orientation. The money made by farmers was used to buy even more land often to provide for the next generation. Land prices rose rapidly as outsiders were attracted. The 1860's, however, brought falling prices and declining exports. The soil was overcropped and yields fell. By the 1870's, an adjustment had been made with a new emphasis on mixed farming at the same time as traditional export markets were revitalized.

The increasing scarcity of land compounded by the depression of the 1860's posed major problems for the farming families of Peel as they attempted to maintain their standard of living and to pass it on to the rising generation. Gagan notes, for instance, that inheritance caused difficulties. Parents naturally desired to provide for all their offspring, but there was a limit to which family lands could be divided before they became uneconomical to farm. The contemporary solution was a form of partible/impartible inheritance whereby an eldest son would inherit all of his father's estate, but detailed and explicit clauses in the will would oblige him to provide for his widowed mother and his brothers and sisters, such obligations often totaling more than the value of the estate on paper. Through statistical studies, Gagan identifies a change over the period in household and family structure. Dependant children were staying at home longer while at the other end of the scale a larger proportion of aged relatives were joining the nuclear family. In hard times, such family-based social security was the only form available. Gagan speculates about the impact upon its various members of this extended dependence on the family. For the young, it meant a much longer period of dependence. Many were still at home when their parents reached old age. Married couples conversely had little privacy. Only for a short period at beginning of their marriage and perhaps for a few years at its end would they be alone in their home without children. Old-age and widowhood could be periods of quiet desperation with nothing more than basic necessities met and no independence. Childhood itself was a brief period with economic necessities generally dictating an early entry into the work-force. School attendance was not yet a common attribute of childhood in rural Peel, although larger families sent a greater proportion of their school-aged children to school than did small families, perhaps because parents with large families felt obliged to provide an education for those children who could not confidently expect to have their futures secured by their parents. Family size and fertility were also affected by changing economic circumstances. There was a sharp decline in the fertility of younger women in the 1850's, brought about by a later age of marriage and possibly by some rudimentary form of birth control.

Turning from the family to wider demographic and social concern, Gagan finds a high rate of physical mobility within Peel. Over the three censuses taken in the period he is studying, fewer than 10 per cent of the population were perennial residents. A full 70 per cent appear in only one return, 20 per cent in two. Rather ironically, however, Gagan believes it is those who stayed rather than those who responded to the siren song of opportunity, cheap land and the frontier who ultimately prospered. He finds society in Peel to be rather rigidly stratified. He defines four indicators of social status: property ownership, improved housing, household structure (large households being associated with improvement) and employment of domestic servants. Servants he finds to be the most crucial indicator of status. Those having servants were the most likely to have all other attributes. Still, Gagan finds that only 5 per cent of society had all these attributes, while a startling 25 per cent had none. Property, as well as social and political power, were concentrated in a very few hands.

In a shorter study near the end of the book, Gagan contrasts rural to urban demography in Peel by a study of its major centre in the period, Brampton. He finds significant differences: families were smaller in the urban area and rates of fertility lower for all age groups. People married later, but Gagan believes rudimentary birth control must have been more widely practiced in urban areas to account for the difference. The cycle of family life was different—the family was smaller and less extended. Children did not live at home as long. Substantially more attended school and for longer periods. Urban and rural life, then, by this period in Canada West's history were differing significantly. Both urban and rural society, however, experienced high levels of mobility.

What Gagan achieves in his study is quite important. For those of us raised on more conventional political and intellectual history, this may be hard to grasp at first. The concepts and techniques of scholars like Gagan who are as much social scientists as historians, require

some adjustment. The book has relatively few implications for political development and those it does have seem rather obvious—Canada West's desire to open the new west in Manitoba, for instance, because of the lack of room to expand within the colony itself. More fundamentally, however, Gagan is demonstrating the fascinating internal mechanics of the society by dispelling the popular myth that life in 19th century rural Canada was arcadian, simple, and static, without the tensions or concerns of urban society. Others should be able to build even more sophisticated concepts on the basic data he provides. For those of us who are archivists, Gagan's work, which is coherent and lucidly explained, can give an appreciation of the new uses to which familiar sources are being put and help us to better serve our clientele. It could well help us to better appreciate the use of quantitative and statistical sources, an appreciation many of us have been slow to develop. Careful reading of the book may well suggest a need to revise our methods of describing such material, providing more on the provenance (and hence possibly the accuracy) of such sources as the census, providing more detail on the continuities and gaps in such series of statistics and highlighting novel features—unique questions or divergent interpretations of questions—which may help guide historians to particularly useful sources. Finding aids which serve the needs of genealogists may not be of equal use to historical demographers.

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Essays in the History of Canadian Law. Edited by DAVID H. FLAHERTY. Toronto: University of Toronto Press for the Osgoode Society, 1981. Volume 1, xvi, 428 p. ISBN 0-8020-3382 bd. \$35.00.

Representing the first volume of a two volume series, this collection of essays can only augur well for the future of legal history in this country. As a pioneering effort in a new field of Canadian history, this volume suffers from very few of the flaws one might expect. With almost no exceptions, the essays in this volume achieve a high standard of scholarly excellence, which indicates not only the quality of the scholars contributing but also the presence of a skilled and intelligent editor.

For the archivist involved with legal records, this volume is both interesting and useful. For years legal and court records have been gathering dust inside and outside archival institutions; this volume is a witness to the change in this situation. It will be important for archives, especially provincial archives responsible for provincial court records, to be aware of the research possibilities of the records within their jurisdictions. This volume can act as the archivist's guide to those possibilities. On a practical level, for those interested, it supplies a useful guide to the secondary literature already available in the field.

David Flaherty's introductory article, "Writing Canadian Legal History: an Introduction" is intended as a blueprint for further work in Canadian legal history. Canadian legal history, he believes, can only become a viable field of study if it begins with a comprehensive approach. To be comprehensive, Canadian legal history must begin with a clear idea of the distinction between "external" and "internal" legal history. Conceding the necessity of "internal" studies into legal procedure, the legal profession, legal education, and law reform, Flaherty concludes that "the best research will necessarily deal with the external aspects of the interaction of law and society." In short, the legal system should be studied in its relationship to the historical development of a society.