The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815.
J.M. BUMSTED. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Winnipeg: University of

Most histories of British and Irish emigration to Canada have begun at the port of
departure in the United Kingdom; little attention has been paid to the society which
produced the emigrants. As a result the deep cultural and historical differences
which characterize the various districts of Scotland, England, and Ireland have
generally been ignored and their relevance to emigration and to settlement in
Canada have been neglected. National surveys of emigration over long periods do
not reveal the varied backgrounds and changing experiences of successive waves of
emigrants.

In The People's Clearance, J.M. Bumsted set out to correct this deficiency by
examining emigration from the Scottish Highlands to British North America
between 1770 and 1815. Bumsted has gone back beyond Greenock and other ports
of embarkation to explore the society which produced the emigrants as well as the
nature and circumstances of their departure. His study begins with a brief review of
the modernization of the Highland economy in the late eighteenth century; he argues
that the Highlanders refused both to adapt to improved agriculture and to accept
employment instead as labourers. Against the wishes of the landlords, the clansmen
chose to emigrate in order to preserve traditional life in a new setting. While
Bumsted's attention to specifically Highland emigration over a limited period
provides a valuable insight into the movement, he offers no detailed exploration of
the Scottish townships which experienced heavy emigration.

Bumsted's investigation of a regional group over a limited time reveals a major
distinction between early emigration and the exodus of the nineteenth century. He
makes use of Scottish estate papers, religious archives, and government records to
document how landlords feared and opposed emigration. The People's Clearance
proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the clansmen voluntarily emigrated between
1770 and 1815 and completely demolishes the popular myth of forced emigrations.
The author is careful to point out that his conclusions apply only to the years before
1815; after that time a complete about-face in landlord attitudes towards emigration
changed the character of the departures. This interpretation of the circumstances of
early Highland emigration reveals the importance of understanding the European
context of emigration and gives an indication of the wealth of material of Canadian
interest available in European archives.

Unfortunately Bumsted does not use this rich resource to best advantage. Scottish
estate papers offer the historian the possibility of analysing social and economic
change at the local level: rent rolls, agricultural surveys, and correspondence provide
excellent descriptions of individual Scottish communities. Bumsted might have used
the estate records of Clanranald and MacLeod of Dunvegan to survey the course of
economic and social development in Arasaig and in Skye before and during the
emigration years. Instead, he has only used these collections for brief reviews of
events leading up to the emigrations. Lacking a close analysis of selected
communities, The People's Clearance relies on general surveys of the Highland
economy and on the observations of contemporary observers to explain the causes
of emigration from the Highlands. The result is a misreading of the economic factor
behind the departures and a muddy presentation of the cultural motives for the
movement.
Bumsted denies that the eviction of tenants in order to establish sheep farms contributed to Highland emigration before 1810 (p. 29), and he gives little attention to the economic pressures which threatened the tenants' position throughout his forty-year period. By contrast, this reviewer's work on Highland emigration to Glengarry County, Upper Canada, from 1770 to 1815, points to a definite relationship between sheep farming and emigration. The first clearances to make way for sheep farms occurred in Glengarry and Knoydart, Inverness-shire in the early 1780s; major emigrations followed over the next three decades. Large-scale sheep farming threatened the clansmen's prosperity in several ways. Southern graziers could offer double or quadruple rents — amounts which traditional tenant farmers found difficult to match. Sheep farms left the former tenants with less land to work and caused greater competition for the remaining mixed farms and lower profits for traditional agriculture. The future clearly threatened to bring more sheep farms, more evictions, and a diminishing share of the economic pie for the tenant farmer. The growing financial pressure on the clansmen, particularly from the spread of sheep farming across the Highlands, was one of the two major causes of emigration from Glengarry and Knoydart before 1815 and, I suspect, from other Highland districts as well. Bumsted's failure to emphasize this pressure and his denial of a causal relationship between sheep farming and emigration stems from his neglect of local case studies.

Similarly, detailed local studies would have provided a more convincing exposition of the cultural motives for Highland emigration. The book's treatment of emigration as an attempt to preserve a traditional way of life lacks definition. Bumsted's survey deals rather superficially with the emigrants themselves and focuses instead on landlords, social commentators, and organizers of the departures. A closer investigation of the emigrant communities would have revealed the tenants' fervent belief in their right to clan lands and their desire to live with Gaelic-speaking kin. These essential values of traditional life were threatened by the economic changes of the late nineteenth-century, and hence provided the other major motive for the clansmen's emigration.

While *The People's Clearance* suffers from the general nature of the author's inquiry, it also falls below scholarly expectations in several specific instances. Reference is made to a scandal in which Father Alexander Macdonell, later Bishop of Kingston, was involved in 1802-3; one account of the affair is quoted uncritically. Since Bumsted provides no analysis of the reputed scandal or its consequences, its inclusion seems intended to titillate rather than to inform. Secondly, the nineteen passenger lists which make up some 20 per cent of the book are imperfectly transcribed. For example Bumsted's list VII, naming emigrants on the *British Queen* in 1790, deviates in six cases from the original list at the Public Archives of Canada (RG4, Records of the Civil and Provincial Secretary, A1, vol. 48, pp. 15874-75). Archivists should therefore caution genealogists about these lists when recommending the volume.

*The People's Clearance* deserves to be read for its many perceptive observations on emigration from the Scottish Highlands. The book represents an early step in the reexamination of Highland emigration which is valuable more for its treatment of landlords and organizers than for its account of the emigrants. Bumsted took on a
broad subject into which little previous research had been done and, in spite of
certain gaps, produced an excellent overview of early Highland emigration to British
North America.

Marianne McLean
Manuscript Division
Public Archives of Canada

The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874-1924. DAVID H.
$28.95.

This book makes an important contribution to historical analysis of Western
development and Canadian resource use as a whole. David Breen deals initially with
the era of the open range (1874-1896), moves on into the period of mass immigration
and western settlement (1896-1911), and ends with a discussion of pressure politics
by cattlemen's groups in the period of drought up to the early 1920s when farmers
began to abandon the semi-arid southwestern lands. Within this context, he weaves
the story of the economic, social, and political development of prairie ranching
around the frontier community's ability to influence federal policies over grazing
resources which could affect the ranchers' ability to reach international markets.

Breen contends that the pioneers of Western Canadian ranching after 1874 were
British and Eastern Canadian men, many with considerable capital, who formed a
unique and somewhat elitist group which was hostile both to the American concept
of the "open range" and to incursions by farmers into their domain. The group used
its connections with John A. Macdonald's Tories to lobby successfully for a system
of grazing leases and for control over water rights in the semi-arid areas of southern
Alberta and southwest Saskatchewan, which effectively shut out farm interests from
large tracts of land. The cattlemen were supported by federal officials like William
Pearce who believed that the semi-arid lands were unsuitable for other agricultural
purposes. They attempted to make a permanent base for the ranching industry
through regulations based on more rational planning of land classification and
utilization.

The close relationship between ranchers and government officials came under
increasing attack during the late 1890s. Large-scale migration into the West brought
pressure to open up the grazing leases, especially as dry land farming techniques
developed. Farm interests, supported by Frank Oliver, Liberal M.P. for Alberta,
branded the old system monopolistic and designed to serve a single interest. The
policy ideal became promotion of the "diversified farm"; scientific arguments about
the unsuitability of the southwest for farming were ignored. The Laurier Government
slowly retreated from the older policy of closed leases and, after Oliver became
Minister of the Interior in 1905, implemented a wholesale alienation of the water
reservations. Breen sees this period as the high tide of settlement incursions into the
ranching domain and the catalyst for speeding up the shift to smaller, more
economically feasible units. Oliver's policies at Interior severely disrupted the
Western cattle industry and made clear to the ranchers that they had to come to
terms with larger regional political interests. They attempted to do so through their
producer organizations and, particularly in Alberta, through participation in the