

the sources. The book's title reflects this necessary focus. Bruce Wilson has not set out to produce a biography of an individual, but has instead used Hamilton's career "as a focus for the study of certain broad aspects of social and economic development." Still, one wonders whether Hamilton's empire, with its interlocking family alliances, its melding of economic and administrative power, and its sheer size, was not the product of something more than a simple desire to make money or the perceived necessity of buttressing his fortunes against the uncertainties of the eighteenth-century economy.

The only other ground on which *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton* suffers is its isolation. Twenty years after the appearance of Gerald Craig's *Upper Canada: The Formative Years* published monographs examining particular aspects of the story which he surveyed so ably are still few and far between. As a recognizable field producing important scholarship, the study of Upper Canada may be said scarcely to exist, and studies such as this one must be read without the historiographical context which permits comparison, criticism, and synthesis. It is to be hoped that *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton* will serve to make other students of the province, both current and potential, more aware of the possibilities for innovative research and reinterpretation which its history offers. Those who follow will have a valuable model to consider and a high standard at which to aim.

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The Western District: Papers from the Western District Conference. KENNETH G. PRYKE and LARRY L. KULISEK, eds. Essex County Historical Society Occasional Paper No. 2. Windsor: Essex County Historical Society and Western District Council, 1983. xi, 195 p. ISBN 09691611-2-3.

It is always difficult to select a series of papers from a conference for publication, more so when eleven are chosen from many more read over two days. When the conference presents a multidisciplinary approach to a geographic area within a sixty-five-year timeframe, the difficulties multiply exponentially. *The Western District* covers the administrative unit of the same name from its origins in the District of Hesse in 1788 to the final evolution of Essex, Kent, and Lambton Counties in 1853. The conference was held at the University of Windsor in October 1979.

Professors Pryke and Kulisek are to be commended not only for the selection of eleven good papers, but also for the fact that their selection represents the state of research on the Western District. Heavily weighted towards native and military studies, the work also includes papers on land speculation, agricultural development, prominent individuals, and the eventual breakup of the district. Most of the major events and personalities from the period and region are at least touched upon. Research methodologies are as diverse as the disciplines of the contributors. Geographer John Clarke and historian Leo Johnson, for example, exploit quantitative data on land speculation and agricultural development respectively while historians Ron Hoskins and Dennis Carter-Edwards and anthropologist James Clifton employ qualitative and narrative methods. Dean Jacobs documents the decline in economic and social status of area natives through land surrenders. Most contributors get high marks for their use of archival and published primary sources.

In his address at the closing banquet S.F. Wise noted that the conference took a step forward not only in the study of the Western District, but also in the development of the study of local and regional history. *The Western District* is worth reading, not only for its value as a source on the district, but also as an example of a well-prepared volume of local history. It is to be hoped that conferences and publications such as these will stimulate public and academic awareness of the value of local archives. New archival endeavours at the local and regional levels depend very much on these demonstrations of the research potential of the documents in their areas.

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Francis Rattenbury and British Columbia: Architecture and Challenge in the Imperial Age. ANTHONY A. BARRETT and RHODRI WINDSOR LISCOMBE. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983. 391 p. illus. ISBN 0-7748-0178-6 \$29.95.

The Rattenbury saga is an intriguing one. For several years following the publication of his fascinating biography in 1979 we have waited for a study of the architecture of Francis Mawson Rattenbury. The authors of *Francis Rattenbury and British Columbia* state in their preface that they “decided to combine architecture and biography” rather than to treat Rattenbury’s architecture exclusively. Barrett and Liscombe’s approach to the man as well as his work was made possible through access to unpublished primary documents, principally family letters written by Rattenbury to his mother, Mary Ann (Mawson) Rattenbury, and to his sister, Kate Jones. The authors quote extensively from Rattenbury’s letters, providing a host of explicit and highly pertinent references to his professional career and his work. Even more fortunate for Barrett and Liscombe is the fact that they found in Rattenbury’s letters an astonishingly detailed chronicle of the architect’s practice. This is especially fortuitous as a disastrous fire in 1910 destroyed the offices of Rattenbury and those of a number of his colleagues in Victoria.

Francis Rattenbury was British Columbia’s premier architect virtually from the time of his arrival in Vancouver in 1892 until the early 1920s. The authors trace aspects of his family history, youth, and formative years in England, including early architectural work done while he was with his uncle’s firm of Mawson and Mawson (later Mawson and Hudson) between 1885 and 1892. Undoubtedly lured by imperial boosterism, the twenty-five-year-old Yorkshire-born architect immigrated to Canada and established his practice in Vancouver. Within months of his arrival, Rattenbury won the single most important institutional commission of his career, the British Columbia Parliament (Legislative) Buildings. Success infused the young architect with confidence, and he proceeded to supervise his prestigious project with skill and flair, if not bravado. As the Parliament Buildings were nearing completion, Rattenbury threw himself enthusiastically into a parallel career as a business investor, combining a sense of late Victorian imperialist confidence and a youthful nose for speculation. His first such adventure led him to start a steamship firm in the Yukon at the height of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898. The scheme quickly ended in failure, but Rattenbury was not dejected, merely tantalized by the hope that he would eventually have an entrepreneurial role in the settlement and building of the northern interior of British Columbia.