

thorough index is very useful as well. The style of transcription is modern rather than literal; the sense of the documents, however, remains intact. Power's statement on the editing of Collins' reminiscences can be applied to the whole work. As he writes in the Introduction, "It may have lost some of its "bucolic" flavour..." but "no amount of rearranging could ever rob this memoir of its originality" or of "its unquestionable historical value."

If there is a problem with the work, it lies in the lack of explanation for the selection of documents. Publication can be seen as the highest form of appraisal, but the logic of the evidential or informational value of the record does not always speak to the reader. The selection of O'Connor's outward correspondence in and of itself does nothing to tell the reader that the man burned all of his incoming correspondence, a frequent practice of Basilians of the day. Some attention is given to the choice of an Assumption University Archives draft of Collins' reminiscences over another edition preserved at the University of St. Michael's College Archives in Toronto.

Having said that, there is an undeniable chronological and indeed logical flow to the book which reveals itself in the reading. It commences with O'Connor's early years, going to the late years of his presidency through the eyes of a student, considering the transition as witnessed by Mungovan, demonstrating the political and personal dimensions of religious life particularly through Ferguson's correspondence, pulling the entire chronology together through newspaper stories and in a brilliant but again unexplained selection, introducing the reader to the second and third presidents of the college in the appendix, thus foreshadowing future volumes.

This work represents Michael Power's first serious attempt at historical editing. Already known as an author of narrative works on institutions, individuals, and events in the history of Roman Catholic Ontario, the Assumption University Archivist has added another form of historical publication to his credit. The book is readable, informative, and, most importantly, succeeds in capturing the atmosphere of the period and place. *The O'Connor Years* is more than just a collection of documents on a religious theme. It very clearly demonstrates the value of the record in documenting the dynamic interplay of personalities and events at the local level, with the national, and even international levels. Dissemination of information contained in the records will advance knowledge of Assumption University and its archives.

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Federal Archives Division. General Inventory Series: Records of the Canadian Transport Commission (RG 46). CARL VINCENT. Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1984. xi, 30 p. ISBN 0-662-52772-0 free of charge.

Federal Archives Division. General Inventory Series: Records of the Department of Railways and Canals (RG 43). GLENN T. WRIGHT. Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1986. xiii, 51 p. ISBN 0-662-54263-0 free of charge.

Federal Archives Division. General Inventory Series: Records of Parks Canada (RG 84). GABRIELLE BLAIS. Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1985. ix, 44 p. ISBN 0-662-53834-X free of charge.

Federal Archives Division. General Inventory Series: Records of the Post Office Department (RG 3). THOMAS A. HILLMAN. Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1985. ix, 47 p. ISBN 0-662-53958-3 free of charge.

As the most recent products of the Federal Archives Division's (FED) ongoing inventory publication programme — a programme that began back in 1951 with the appearance of the inventory for RG 10, Indian Affairs — these four publications are, in one sense, inevitabilities. As a result, there is a tendency to turn one's review of the newest FED inventories into a kind of grand royal announcement, accompanied by the appropriate verbal fanfare and exhortations to carry on with the sacred task. To be sure, this is a valid enough exercise in that it contributes to the Public Archives' primary purpose in publishing their inventories — to make their records public — and this reviewer happily gives in to forces of inertia. However, it is hoped that in doing so, some new developments not only in the nature of the Federal Archives Division's holdings, but also in its methods and standards of archival description and referencing, may also be discussed.

Researchers will welcome the appearance of these four newly-published inventories for the existing and potential research value of the record groups they describe. Given the extremely important role of all forms of transportation in the economic, social, and political development of Canada, RG 46 (Canadian Transport Commission) and RG 43 (Department of Railways and Canals) are significant sources for Canadian history in general. Carl Vincent's claim that the records of RG 46 "constitute a valuable source of documentation on the evolution of government involvement in transportation, as well as the growth and development of the transport industry in Canada" holds true for RG 43 as well. Included within the Canadian Transport Commission and Railways and Canals record groups are those documents produced by government agencies that were primarily concerned with implementing a national transportation policy throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the various boards and committees covered by RG 46 acted as regulatory or quasi-judicial bodies monitoring the entire transportation industry in Canada; the two agencies which produced the records of RG 43, the Railway Branch and the Canal Branch, were engaged in the development, operation, and maintenance of government-owned, and some privately-owned, railways and canals.

Not surprisingly, the organization of the two "transportation" inventories reflects the idiosyncratic evolution and structure of the agencies with which they are concerned. RG 46 comprises records created by a number of independently-operating agencies that were either superseded or combined with others to form a new agency, but whose records remained relatively intact. The record group is in fact a conglomeration of a number of archival *fonds*, each with its own distinct provenance and administrative context. In order to incorporate this characteristic of the records in the inventory, Vincent has essentially chosen to write six administrative outlines corresponding to the six subgroups in the description of the records. The organization of the RG 43 inventory is a little more confusing since some of the subgroup headings indicate the administrative provenance of the records while others look more like records series. This is partly a result of the haphazard evolution of the records as products of a bewildering number of independent transportation business enterprises. The Canal Records subgroup, for instance, lists descriptions of records from six different canal operations throughout central Canada.

The appearance of the inventory of RG 84 (Parks Canada) is mainly the result of an acquisition agreement concluded in 1983 between the Public Archives and Parks Canada.

The inventory's author, Gabrielle Blais, explained the events leading up to the agreement in a recent *Archivaria* article.¹ In exchange for a commitment on the part of the Public Archives to, among other things, publish a complete inventory for RG 84 in time for the centenary of the national parks system in Canada, Parks Canada agreed to transfer over three hundred metres of its non-active records to the archives, thus increasing the volume of RG 84 fivefold. FED had become convinced that the already high research interest on the part of both administrators and outside researchers in records held by Parks Canada would surge during the centennial year and that proper archival care was necessary to ensure their preservation. Publication of an inventory for the record group, which documents the government's efforts in developing and maintaining national parks and historic sites for heritage purposes, should both accommodate and encourage such research interest. In spite of their shuffling through various departments, the agencies which have implemented the national parks programme since 1885 seem to have retained fairly complete and consistent registries, corresponding to the functions of the various branches and offices. As with many government departments, Parks Canada underwent a process of decentralization throughout the 1960s and 70s, and as a consequence many important policy and administrative records from the regional offices have been included in the inventory.

The research utility of an inventory for RG 3 (Post Office Department) hardly needs to be explained. As it consists of records produced by one of the earliest and most pervasive government institutions operating in Canadian society, it is extremely popular with genealogists and local historians — the two largest researcher groups at the Public Archives. Most of the enquiries into RG 3 records do not require a visit to Ottawa since the requests tend to be very specific about places or names, and generally require small amounts of information. Within such a research environment, it is invaluable both to the Public Archives and to researchers to have a proper inventory in the hands of the general public.

The 1960 preliminary inventory for RG 3, which this publication replaces, had the records arranged into eight "series," one of which was designated simply "Miscellaneous." Not only has author Tom Hillman found places for these miscellaneous files in the new inventory, he has also done an admirable job of rearranging the previous series under functional units which present much more clearly the administrative provenance of the records. The result is as close to definitive as a finding aid can be for this important record group.

It is in one sense absurd to give only one paragraph to a discussion of the administrative outlines contained in these inventories: in terms of physical proportions, they take up a third to a half of the entire number of pages. Even more important is the depth and scope of the scholarship that went into producing all of these administrative outlines, some of which represent the only existing organizational histories of the government institutions and programmes covered by the specific record group. The production of administrative outlines for FED inventories has indeed come a long way from the sparse listing of simple organizational changes and appointment of personnel presented in earlier publications. I am left, however, with some feelings of ambivalence as to the role and utility of such an extensive administrative history in what is essentially a research tool. Has the concern

1 Gabrielle Blais, "Preserving the Records of Parks Canada: A Centennial Celebration for 1985," *Archivaria* 20 (Summer 1985), pp. 238-41.

with providing a quick and easy reference linking the content of the records with their provenance been obscured in the process of producing scholarly works of history? I suppose the researchers themselves could give part of the answer, but the relationship between provenance and content is also a problem of archival theory that archivists themselves should address. I suggest that this question could perhaps fit into the general discussion on the part of Public Archives archivists concerning the "history of the record" and its implications for producing effective finding aids. In the meantime, it would seem that the size of the administrative outlines as presently constituted at least warrants more access points than that provided simply by dates.

A word about format is in order. It is, first of all, good to see that the 8" × 11" format adopted in the early 1980s for a new blue-covered series of inventories has been retained. The earlier, green-covered, pocket-sized format was simply too difficult to read and did not stand up well to the abuse given them by frantic researchers. Those nifty little windows inevitably served as starting-points for the total disintegration of the front covers. Secondly, it is also heartening to know that all of these inventories have been stored on the new FEDDOCS computer programme to allow for quick and easy updates. Hopefully, this will also result in published revisions appearing more frequently than in the past.

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Dictionary of Canadian Biography Volume VIII: 1851 to 1860. FRANCESSE G. HALPENNY and JEAN HAMELIN, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1985. 1129 p. ISBN 0-8020-3422-5 \$60.00.

The appearance of volume VIII of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* is, like that of previous volumes, a cause for excitement. This particular volume includes the biographies of 521 people who died during the decade 1851 to 1860. The book is the ninth volume to be released in the projected series of twelve. It is a tribute to the level of Canadian historical and bibliographical scholarship that this project, which has involved hundreds of people, has been able to maintain its consistency and quality for so long. In this volume, the biographies of Samuel Peters Jarvis and Sir James Kempt are among those particularly sensitive to their subject and society. Also, Sylvia Van Kirk's biography of Letitia Mactavish Hargrave uses quotes from her letters and is so finely crafted that one imagines oneself a close friend receiving letters from her. Few of the individuals were as important as Robert Baldwin, and his long biography is a wonderful and touching account of his personal struggles and public life. The writers had access to previously unused sources, and Baldwin's life lends itself to biography. On the other hand, Robert Sweeny, in his account of Peter Gill, notes that his subject's life reveals the limit of biography in providing historical understanding.

Sweeny's reservations have implications beyond his essay and they will strike a chord with many people. Many Canadians, and not just historians, must both delight in many of the individual biographies and wonder about the limits of thousands of such biographies in providing insights into our history. No one would ever define history as the story of 521 people who may not have had anything in common beyond death in the same decade; rather it is the pattern of change, or lack of change, of social structures or patterns of