

of excellent quality and more than adequate. The over two hundred photos are well chosen, but additional research or consultation would have resulted in captions that were more accurate and complete. To call the layout of the photo pages uninspired is grossly flattering. It opts for neither esthetic impact nor maximum utilization of space, but cleverly combines the worst of both.

All criticism of this book fades into insignificance when compared to its overall excellence. It has at last given us an adequately researched and competently written coverage of a largely neglected aspect of Canadian history. Its faults can largely be laid to the constraints of available space, and Dr. Douglas and his colleagues have carried out their mandate with both effectiveness and style.

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Strangers from a Secret Land. PETER THOMAS. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. xiii, 319 p. ISBN 0-8020-5694-6 cl. 0-8020-6620-8 pa. \$32.50 cl. \$14.95 pa.

Strangers from a Secret Land is one of the more intriguing books to appear recently on pre-Confederation Canada. Emigration from Wales to Atlantic Canada is the subject of Thomas' work, and the emigrants themselves are the focus of the volume. In 1818 and 1819, the ships *Fanny* and *Albion* carried some one hundred and three hundred Welsh emigrants to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick respectively. The emigrants came from Carmarthen and Cardiganshire in west Wales; most were farmers and skilled craftsmen facing economic distress, and political and religious turmoil in their homeland. Many of the first group of emigrants obtained land near Shelburne, N.S., while the second group settled near Fredericton. Both parties lost some of their members to other destinations and neither was able to attract substantial reinforcements from Wales in later years.

For too long, the early peopling of Canada was explained through useful but narrow studies of emigration, settlement policy, and elite groups. Recent work on emigration, however, has analyzed the emigrants' own experiences; these publications have been the product of both academic and amateur historians. Peter Thomas, who is a professor of literature and not a trained historian, falls somewhere between these two groups. *Strangers* tells the story of this Welsh emigration in a powerful narrative that links past and present, and offers a compelling interpretation of the history of one Canadian immigrant group.

Strangers is not written in the analytical style now favoured by many historians but is presented as a dramatic narrative. Thomas chose first to describe his research in the style of a detective investigation and then to present his findings as a series of overlapping tales. The first chapter presents the mystery of a Welsh cemetery near Fredericton and follows the author in his frustrating, but ultimately successful search to identify who these Welsh people were. Then the tales begin: a chapter sets the scene in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Wales; others follow the careers of the ship-owners who organized the migrations and the actual voyages to America. The tale of an emigrant from the same parish who returned to Wales is presented in another chapter, while the story of the Welsh settlements in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is briefly recounted. The final tale

is found in the conclusion, which describes the community today and the meaning of its people's story.

Of particular interest both to archivists and to local historians is Thomas' account of how he located documents and what they told him. The search began in a graveyard, but Thomas used archives and libraries, contacted churches surviving from the period, advertised in newspapers, and followed word of mouth recommendations from one informant to another. Such wide-ranging activity is essential to document the lives of ordinary people. Scattered throughout the story of his research, Thomas also makes the documents speak to us, both directly in quotation and by means of a critical reading. The very process of writing history is made explicit as Thomas presents first the facts of his story as he uncovers it; second, the inferences that can be drawn from these facts; third, the meaning of the facts discovered; and fourth, what this history says to modern Canadians. *Strangers* provides a marvellous example of the variety of documents needed to reconstruct even a part of the lives of non-elite groups, the relationship between documents, and the complex process that is the writing of the story of the past.

Thomas' choice of a literary model for his work is not entirely successful. His central story of Welsh emigration and settlement in the Maritimes is sometimes lost in this discursive presentation of events. Historical research always turns up fascinating material on subjects which are useful but peripheral to the problem being investigated. Thomas' text could have been reduced by one-quarter with the elimination of sections concerning Welsh ship-owners and the career of naval officer Anthony Lockwood, and with a briefer description of the voyage to the United States. The chapter on the social and economic situation in late eighteenth century Wales might have been balanced by a more detailed account of Welsh settlers in nineteenth century New Brunswick. The focus in *Strangers from a Secret Land* too often strays from the emigrants and their experience to the story of all those who were in any way connected with the emigration.

Thomas' great success in this book is to rescue the story of these nearly forgotten emigrants from historical oblivion and thereby at least partially fill holes left by academic historians. It is no easy task to know and understand the history of peasant or other unpowerful peoples such as the Welsh. Such histories were long considered unimportant because of the distance of such people from the centres of power or because of the seemingly unlettered or backward state of their cultures. Even the raw materials of history sometimes seem lacking since such people are often missing from conventional historical sources. *Strangers* clearly illustrates that these people not only created but also preserved records of their experience. Indeed that preservation has often been the work of individuals, not professionals, who maintained records of their families and communities. Peter Thomas' work shows that to write the history of groups such as the Welsh emigrants, the author must know the people who will lead him to the records.

Strangers from a Secret Land demonstrates the importance of the scattered records that remain for non-élite groups such as the Welsh emigrants and brings to light an important pre-Confederation document. The notebook of Evan Evans, with a poem among the farm accounts, the typescript copy of the ballad "**Cân Sef Hanes y Brig Albion**," or the photocopy of a published diary and correspondence do not at first glance appear to be significant historical records. But unprepossessing documents such as these preserve information about the emigrants' experience. In particular, the ballad "**Cân Sef**" deserves a wider audience since it documents a specific experience whose general contours would be familiar to all emigrant Canadians. In seventy-two stanzas, the ballad presents a

narrative of the emigration from Wales to New Brunswick, describing in detail both the voyage and the emigrants. Documents such as “*Cân Sef*” which describe events from the people’s point of view are both rare and important. Despite their humble appearance, they deserve to be collected by the principal archives of all countries shaped by migration in recent centuries.

Strangers from a Secret Land powerfully emphasizes the importance of history, and of the memories and documents which enable us to know the past. Thomas encountered reluctance among a few members of the Welsh community to share their knowledge with him; knowledge of the past is not easily obtained nor is it simply a piece of paper to be pinned on the wall. Historians have no monopoly on their subject so it is appropriate that a professor of literature, himself an emigrant, should in this book so effectively illustrate that history is our “inner territory, the soul of the tribe.”

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Cape Breton At 200: Historical Essays in Honour of the Island’s Bicentennial.
KENNETH DONOVAN, ed. Sydney, Nova Scotia: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1985. 261 p. ISBN 0-920336-34-5

This collection of ten essays on various aspects of Cape Breton’s social and economic development commemorates the bicentennial of the creation of Cape Breton as a separate crown colony in 1785. The fourth collection of historical essays on Cape Breton to appear in the last two decades, this is by far the most ambitious. Unlike earlier collections, none of the essays have been published previously and only a few of the contributors have written elsewhere on similar topics. Furthermore, the extensive use of contemporary photographs, maps, plans, and sketches, including several by well known historical illustrator Lewis Parker, is a notable improvement over previous collections.

Editor Ken Donovan opens the collection with his article “Tattered Clothes and Powdered Wigs: Case Studies of the Poor and Well-to-Do in Eighteenth Century Louisbourg.” Using principally probate and court records Donovan, a historian at Louisbourg, documents the disparities in wealth and social status in this garrison town which were “the norm not the exception.” This is followed by an essay by Terry MacLean, a former member of the research team at Louisbourg, presently on faculty at the University College of Cape Breton, explaining the research and development process which led to the construction and interpretation of “the nation’s most ambitious outdoor museum and historic site.” “Historical Research at Louisbourg: A Case Study in Museum Research and Development” provides details about the research questions posed by historians and others working on the Louisbourg project, the procedures adopted for reporting on research, and the extensive primary and secondary sources amassed. MacLean provides a list of the most significant material collected and indicates how this has refined our understanding of eighteenth century Louisbourg.

Two essays focus exclusively on the nineteenth century. Robert Morgan, Director of the Beaton Institute at the University College of Cape Breton, outlines the efforts of Sydney’s élite to mount a separatist movement following Cape Breton’s annexation to