

From Rupert's Land to Canada. Edited by THEODORE BINNEMA, GERHARD J. ENS, and R.C. MACLEOD. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press 2001. Pp. 328, illus. \$34.95

This is a splendid collection of essays in honour of the late John Foster, professor of western Canadian history at the University of Alberta and a specialist on the Métis. The essays, written by colleagues and graduate students of John Foster, shed new light on Native, Métis, and western Canadian history. The book is divided into three sections: 'Native History and the Fur Trade in Western Canada'; 'Métis History'; and 'The Imagined West.' Each section is introduced by a historiographical essay, followed by three essays on a specialized subject related to the section topic.

Michael Payne reviews the trends in fur trade history. He notes how the early studies emphasized the economic and business aspects through a focus on the fur trade companies within the dynamics of imperial and colonial history. Then, beginning in the 1960s, the focus shifted to sociocultural studies that looked at the dynamics of trade through the perspective of the Natives and Métis; such studies assumed the existence of a monolithic 'fur trade society.' More recent studies challenge this assumption to argue that a multiplicity of societies and a variety of social ties and exchanges existed; they also question to what extent the fur trade was an integral part of Native life. Jan Grabowski and Nicole St-Onge examine the role of the Montreal Iroquois *engagés* in the western fur trade to show that their role was more integral and more long term than their French Canadian counterpart. Jennifer Brown examines in detail the two marriages of fur trader George Nelson to Ojibwa women, the first in 1803, and the second in 1808. She notes how Nelson's view of his marriages and the perspective of the community in which he lived changed over time because of changing sociocultural values. Heather Rollason Driscoll looks at the marriage pattern of Hudson's Bay Company employees from Native to mixed-blood to British-born women, and accounts for the change not in terms of racial attitudes, as earlier historians had done, but in terms of changing economic circumstances resulting from the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company with the North West Company in 1821.

In the section 'Métis Studies,' Frits Pannekoek chronicles the shift in Métis historiography from an obsession with the Red River colony to Métis ethnogenesis in other parts of North America, the Métis Diaspora of the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and a revival of Métis consciousness in the twentieth century as reflected in a revival of historical land claims. What unites these new studies is an interest in Métis identity

through the interplay of gender, race, and class. Heather Devine examines the family of Les Desjardins, a freeman who worked independently of the fur trade companies in the Lesser Slave Lake region of Athabaska between 1800 and 1830, and concludes that these freemen were the 'true' originators of the Plains Métis population with their fusion of Native and European values. Gerhard Ens studies the life of Johnny Grant, a Métis merchant trader, whose economic livelihood – and sense of identity – underwent dramatic change in the transition of western Canada from a pre-capitalistic to a developed capitalistic economy in the late nineteenth century. John Foster's last article on the subject of Métis origins is the fourth article in this section. He examines the relationship between the itinerant trader and the Indian hunters by looking at three critical relationships these traders formed: marriage to a prominent Indian woman; relations with the adult males of his wife's band; and association with fellow *engagés* (servants) as comrades and work mates. It is in these cultural dynamics, Foster argues, that Métis ethnogenesis is found.

In 'The Imagined West' section, Gerald Friesen notes the shift in western Canadian historiography from a British, then central Canadian, and, more recently, regional perspective, and from a political and economic to a social and finally cultural approach. The three essays that follow reflect the most recent trend. Theodore Binnema examines Blackfoot maps as 'texts' to be read for the Blackfoot cultural values they project. Ian MacLaren compares Paul Kane's field notes with his published account of his trip through the North-West in the 1840s, *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America*, to show the wide discrepancy between the two, and attributes the contrast to the need of the publisher to insure that the published version appealed to the stereotypes and racial views of Natives among the British public. Finally, Rod MacLeod and Heather Rollason Driscoll contrast the reporting of Native crimes in the early newspapers of four western Canadian towns – two in the north, Battleford and Edmonton, and two in the south, Calgary and Fort Macleod – to show the different perspective. In the northern towns, where economic change was slower, racist views were less pronounced, whereas in the southern town, especially with the advent of radical change on the heels of the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, racist views were stronger. All three of these studies bring into question the 'objective' nature of primary sources and alert historians to the need to be aware of the perspective and 'bias' from which the source is written.

The title of this book, *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, is a misnomer. Rather than showing the transition from Rupert's Land to western

Canada, from a fur trade to an agricultural economy, the collection of essays shows the deep gulf that lay between the two eras, and only reinforces the need to better understand the dramatic impact that the great transformation from Rupert's Land to Canada had on the region's environment, society, and culture. Certainly these articles point the way as to how such an understanding could be constructed.

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Mackenzie King and the Prairie West. ROBERT A. WARDHAUGH. Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2000. Pp. xiii, 328, illus. \$55.00

Canadian political historians never tire of examining the politics and policies of Mackenzie King, and with good reason. Not only did his administrations correspond with a period of extraordinary change in Canadian society but King and his colleagues left an enormous documentary record detailing the actions taken and the thinking behind them. The sheer volume of the archival collections on the Mackenzie King period has attracted many historians and, if the present study is any indication, will continue to lure many more. Astonishing as it may seem, Robert Wardhaugh's study of *Mackenzie King and the Prairie West* is the first to attempt to examine the multilayered nature of the relationship between Canada's longest-serving prime minister and the region with which he claimed to share a spiritual link. It is, therefore, a welcome addition to the literature.

Wardhaugh takes as his starting point the conventional wisdom that Diefenbaker's electoral victories of 1957 and 1958 effectively squashed the Liberals in the prairie west and that lack of interest on the part of subsequent Liberal prime ministers has meant that the party has never recovered from the Diefenbaker death-blow. This interpretation is too simple, argues Wardhaugh, and fails to recognize that the seeds of disintegration had been sown long before the 1950s in Mackenzie King's policies and strategies. Carefully cultivating political support in the region in order to win the leadership of the Liberal Party in 1919, King's early years as leader and then prime minister were characterized by efforts to woo the prairies back, or more firmly, into the Liberal fold. Almost two-thirds of Wardhaugh's analysis deals with this period before 1930. Once defeated by R.B. Bennett in 1930 and miraculously spared the impossible task of governing during the first half of the Depression, King began to shift his interests away from the prairies. When the prairies were no longer politically or economically powerful, Wardhaugh argues that King became increasingly attentive to the urban and industrial needs of central Canada after he returned to power in 1935. The

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