

the great Midland Revolt of 1607, rioters converged on one village from outlying villages. This map is a clear representation of how a riot was organized and it makes an interpretative statement about both the local orientation and the deliberative nature of enclosure protest in the early seventeenth century. Most of the essays are very good also, especially Charlesworth's own resolution of the Tawney-Kerridge debate over agrarian capitalism in the sixteenth century and John W. Leopold's essay on the 1724 Leveller's Revolt in Galloway, Scotland. As a collection of short concise treatment of the history of rural protest, this book is a useful introduction to the subject. As an atlas of the rural protest, however, it falls short of what it might have been.

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EMILIA CHICOINE, C.N.D. — *La métairie de Marguerite Bourgeoys à la Pointe-Saint-Charles*. Montréal : Fides, 1986. Pp. 359.

In days gone by, when nuns were still enveloped from head to toe in the mystery of their religious dress, smaller students were sometimes plagued by serious doubts as to whether they really had legs and feet at all. The same doubt seems to have afflicted most historians of religious orders, or so their work suggests. So absorbed have they been with the spirituality of their subjects that they have left no room for the mundane business of living, the serious preoccupations involved in keeping food on the table, clean linen in the cupboard, and the creditors at bay.

It is refreshing, therefore, to be allowed access to the everyday operations of a religious community of the past. The study in question is of a farm belonging to the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame, a foot of the congregation, so to speak, planted sturdily in the soil of the island of Montreal. The farm grew out of a concession originally made to Marguerite Bourgeoys in 1662, of 30 arpents of uncleared land. She and her successors managed it and added to it until by 1781 it covered, according to a formal report, "212 arpents en superficie, le tout en désert, avec maison, grange et étable en pierre" (p. 99). Through two centuries it weathered the comings and goings of Indians friendly and unfriendly, of French and British battalions, of an American invasion force, only to fall prey in the end to a more formidable force: the irresistible expansion of the city of Montreal. Today only the farmhouse remains, a fine example of early Quebec architecture, restored to serve as a witness to the Congregation's past.

The author, Sister Emilia Chicoine, has reconstructed that past, or at least, the small part of it relating to the farm at Pointe-Saint-Charles. Unfortunately, the Congregation's archives have suffered in a series of disastrous fires. Therefore for the early years she has at her disposal — in addition to the building itself — only a limited documentation: census figures, notarial records, account books dealing directly with the farm and the *engagés* who worked it, and the occasional references found in other records. She has contrived to fill the gaps, however, by drawing from other sources of information on Montreal under the French regime. The result is an informed speculation on how the community lived: baking, sewing, doing the laundry, herding the cattle, bringing in the crops, celebrating the holidays of the year. Her method makes sense, since the life of the early congregation was enmeshed in the life of Montreal.

Readers will be especially interested in Sister Chicoine's chapter on the *filles du roi*. She maintains that many of these young women started their life in Canada at Pointe-Saint-Charles. As she herself admits (p. 51), there is no conclusive evidence to prove this; only a reasonable assumption, based on Marguerite Bourgeoys' well-recorded activity on their behalf, a sensible hypothesis that in a frontier town of small, cramped houses, the space available at the farm would not be allowed to go to waste, and, finally, the authority of a long-standing tradition within the Congregation. This

raises an interesting point about Sister Chicoine's methodology. Over and beyond written documentation, she is ready to appeal to the witness of "constant oral tradition". The community holds its own history, and the reader should pause to consider how imposing oral tradition can be in a structure as permanent and solid as this. Sister Chicoine herself can remember most of the years of this century; she is able to refer back to Sister Sainte-Henriette, whose history of the Congregation, which appeared in 1910, contained information gathered from "contemporaries of contemporaries" (p. 231) — a collective memory, then, which reaches back into the eighteenth century.

After the heroic beginnings, the most interesting part of the book comes at the end. Imperceptibly, oral tradition merges into living memory, and the feeling and flavour remains of a way of community life which is now passing into history. The visits from the Mother House of nuns and students, the joys and pleasures of a day in what was still the country, the excitement of the first automobile ride, and of the first electric light — whether the recollection is her own, or that of her community, it comes across full of life and atmosphere. Sister Chicoine should be commended, not only for her painstaking research into the documents, but for her own testimony. The museum at Pointe-Saint-Charles is well worth a visit, if not in person, then at least through her book.

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PETER CLARK, ed. — *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600-1800*. London: Hutchinson, 1984. Pp. 359.

JAN DE VRIES — *European Urbanization 1500-1800*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984. Pp. xvii, 398.

Both books under review treat chronologically similar periods, and present overlapping findings on the history of urbanization in early-modern Europe. Both, for example, show that central and western Europe — and England in particular — were much more urbanized before 1800 than was previously believed. Both agree that immigration from the countryside rather than natural increase, was the engine of urban population growth until well into the nineteenth century. Both emphasize a major reason why towns failed to reproduce themselves: the pronounced imbalance between male and female numbers. The surplus of females resulted in a high degree of celibacy, which contributed to negative fertility. Finally, both books paint a picture of relative social stability accompanying dynamic growth throughout most of the period.

So much for the similarities: in almost every other respect these books are sharply different. De Vries' is a work of macro-social history, which advances the study of cities to a higher conceptual level. Heavily statistical, it is none the less accessible to the non-numerate reader, because the conclusions are arrived at in a clear and well-organized fashion. De Vries' argument that cities can be better understood if studied as networks or systems rather than in isolation from one another, is entirely convincing, based as it is on a scrutiny of the structure and demographic experience of the 379 cities known to have reached a population of 10,000 or more between 1500 and 1800. The picture that emerges is one of continuity and stability, extending even into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The great era of city building in the high Middle Ages endowed Europe with 3,000 or 4,000 towns. After that time there was very little town creation until the late eighteenth century, and even then the new towns numbered only a few hundred. Over the long term there have been few changes in the urban hierarchy. Cities that were large in 1500 remained large in 1800 and later. Very few small cities have succeeded in overtaking their larger neighbours.

Of course the tale is not exclusively one of continuity, but most of the discontinuity that does take place occurs between 1600 and 1650. In this half-century Europe's centre of gravity shifted