

this position were diminishing. Many of the latter were Irish and in many respects their circumstances were not all that different from those of their relatives who had migrated to the industrial towns of England.

Social historians may wish for greater detail on day-to-day life in the rapidly changing society of the timber province than is provided here. However, the author is a historical geographer and his central purpose is the elucidation of the relationship between people and place. The fact that he occasionally strays outside the province for the social material that he does include, probably also indicates a shortage of material from which to work. This is not surprising in a province which, until recently, left so many of its documents from the past strewn about — like so much slash in a cut-over area — exposed to the ravages of decay, fire and flood. Since the opening of the provincial archives in 1967, the situation has improved greatly. Still, Professor Wynn is to be congratulated for producing his fine study under somewhat trying circumstances and in spite of the dictum of one of New Brunswick's greatest scholars, W. F. Ganong, whom Wynn quotes in his preface as having concluded that his province's past offered "no hold for an attempt ... to make New Brunswick history of interest beyond its own borders".

By placing New Brunswick in the wider perspective of the early expansion overseas of industrial Britain, Wynn has succeeded in producing a book of considerable interest to those outside the boundaries of the province. His work is well-illustrated with many excellent maps, diagrams, figures and carefully chosen pictures. A glossary of familiar terms used in the lumber industry would have been helpful.

Eric Ross,
Mount Allison University.

* * *

DONALD H. AKENSON, ed. — *Canadian Papers in Rural History*. Gananoque, Ont.: Langdale Press, 1982. Pp. 256.

This volume contains nine articles, all supposedly devoted to "rural" history. That by John Mannion, "The Waterford Merchants and the Irish-Newfoundland Provisions Trade, 1770-1820", however, belongs where it began, in a book of essays on commerce and industry. And, title notwithstanding, it says relatively little about the Newfoundland trade.

The other articles are more clearly rural. Alan Skeoch details the developments in ploughs used in Canada in the nineteenth century, demonstrating that ploughs tended to improve, thanks mostly to American invention. Bruce Batchelor provides an examination of the Saskatchewan Land and Homestead Company, hinting at large themes, though his article is too short to develop them. Darrell Norris and Victor Konrad survey farmhouses in Ontario's Euphrasia Township and propose a useful typology of them. The authors have traced the ownership of those houses back through time, discovering that "the brick-built central gable house was definitely an earmark of above average prosperity" (p. 75), while the opposite was true of single-storey houses. Their high-powered methodology and dense prose often mask the obvious.

Two authors deal with individuals. Gerald Bloch explores Robert Gourlay's schemes for reshaping the society and economy of England by distributing land to the rural poor. Gourlay intended the government to preside over this redistribution; yet he felt that government to be corrupt and uncaring. Where, Bloch asks, was the consistency in this? John Clarke details the land John Askin acquired in Ontario's Essex County, 1796-1820, and explains that position, family and friends helped him in his acquisitions. This is not surprising, Clarke suggests. What is surprising, however, is his conclusion that Askin's "vision and accomplishment" were "truly remarkable" (p. 106). Nothing in the text suggests as much, as Clarke seems to recognize.

Peter Russell examines farm size and rates of clearing in fifteen Ontario townships, 1812 to 1842. The townships chosen were all well-settled by 1836 and their assessment records are extant. Russell argues, though he does not prove, that it was quite possible for a hard-working immigrant to save enough from his wages to purchase land. Toiling on his own, however, he could not clear a substantial farm quickly. The average acreage cleared annually on a farm across the fifteen townships never exceeded 1.55. Still, most immigrant farmers could realistically expect to clear good-sized farms over their lifetimes, especially the twenty-five percent and more who had family members, servants, or money enough to ensure that they did not labour alone. For them, and even for the less favoured, Upper Canada was a land of opportunity.

Russell's work stands scrutiny, though his suggestion that, because non-resident land speculators held relatively little land in his fifteen townships, one may doubt Lillian Gates' assertion that a "lavish land granting policy ... had established speculator control over the most fertile parts of Upper Canada" (p. 140), is open to question. Well settled townships might not have had large blocks of land transferred to non-residents; thinly settled ones might have. Upper Canada certainly had poorly settled, fertile townships.

Editor Donald Akenson's article on the Irish adds further Ontario content to the volume. Using recent demographic work on Ireland, immigration statistics and Ontario census data, Akenson reaches a number of startling conclusions. Before 1842 approximately two-thirds of Ontario's Irish immigrants were Protestant and one-third Catholic. The same was true in 1871. Thus neither the pre- nor the post-famine Irish were predominantly Catholic. Nor were they pauperized. Nor did the post-famine migrants flock to the cities, as Kenneth Duncan, "without a shred of demographic evidence" (p. 223), maintains. In fact, virtually everything "we think we know" about the Ontario Irish "is wrong" (p. 222), for such authors as Duncan, H. C. Pentland and Michael Cross persist in projecting "the atypical (but dramatic, readable and politically agreeable) as the general" (p. 225). Sloppy thinking and a damnable "racism that, although doubtlessly unconscious and unintentional, is incompatible with responsible scholarship" (p. 224), condition their work. Obviously, Akenson cannot generate light without heat. This is unfortunate because his findings are significant and should not be obscured by his censoriousness and because his own logic is not entirely consistent. If Michael Cross can be censured for "an unremitting desire to explain (at least in part) the behaviour of various Irishmen in Upper Canada in terms of their background in Ireland" (p. 225), the same should hold for an author who attributes (at least in part) the land hunger and political and commercial assertiveness of the Irish Protestants in the New World to their experience in the Old.

Finally, R. M. McInnis doubts that an "agricultural crisis" existed in pre-Rebellion Lower Canada. He notes that some soil scientists now question whether soil can become exhausted in quite the way historians have assumed

that of Lower Canada did, and argues that French Canadian farmers were not backward, producing crop yields largely consistent with those secured elsewhere. He finds little reliable evidence of rural over-population. Birth rates were not astronomically high, farms excessively subdivided, or arable land all cropped. Certainly, the natural disasters of the 1830s produced dislocations, probably severe ones, but such disasters were not symptomatic of an ongoing crisis. McInnis does not deny that Lower Canada's economy faced certain intractable problems. Natural increase was sufficiently high to "strain ... the economy's ability to grow through capital accumulation just at that time when much of the rest of North America was initiating the process of Modern Economic Growth" (p. 33), while the lack of internal and external markets for agricultural produce boded ill.

McInnis' work is of considerable import. If he is right, then many others, most notably Fernand Ouellet, are wrong. Though many of his conclusions are tentative and need further exploration, as McInnis fully recognizes, good reasons exist for taking them seriously, grounded as most are on a considerable body of hard data drawn from Lower Canada's first detailed agricultural census, that of 1851-52. This article is, incidentally, worth reading for its historiographical content alone. McInnis' article and several of the others, notably Akenson's and Russell's, amply justify acquiring this volume.

Colin READ,
Huron College, University of Western Ontario.

* * *

DAVID GAGAN. — *Hopeful Travellers. Families, Land, and Social Change in MidVictorian Peel County, Canada West*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981. Pp. xxi, 197.

The Hopeful (or perhaps better the *Hopeless*) *Travellers* were some 13,000 households enumerated in the three census returns of 1852, 1861 and 1871. This analysis of a county's social structure, which has been made possible through the use of the computer, is the most ambitious yet to be published by a Canadian historian.

Peel County is strategically situated between the urban centres of Toronto and Hamilton. Access to trade at first lay through Port Credit, whose trade volume was exceeded in Canada West in 1851 only by Toronto, Kingston and Whitby (pp. 15-16). Then, in the 1850s, that route was supplanted by the railway, which made Brampton an important regional centre of 2,000 souls. Developed late owing to the reluctance until 1819 of the Mississaugas to sell their birthright and to the dislocations of the 1812-14 war, Peel received heavy immigration only in the 1820s, when the county was administered from Toronto. The system of land granting, which so favoured Loyalist descendants, the military and surveyors meant that thirty percent of the best land was held by absentees, thus preventing Peel and many other parts of Ontario from developing as rapidly as a more democratic system would have permitted. Speculators (absentee owners of more than 500 acres) formed but three percent of proprietors and held only ten percent of the land between 1820 and 1840. Such a small concentration of land holding compared to contemporary England, Scotland and Ireland, emphasises more the weakness than