

Despite this one complaint, which merely illustrates the reviewer's bias, the volume is a valuable addition to the library of prairie literature. Edwards writes with originality, wit, and style. Though the corpus of his work, (he would enjoy that idea), is too small and fragmented to place him on the level of Haliburton or Leacock, his humour and satire deserve to be discussed in that context.

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RICHARD ARTHUR PRESTON, ed. — *For Friends at Home. A Scottish Emigrant's Letters from Canada, California and the Cariboo, 1844-1864.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974.

For Friends at Home is a highly valuable collection of letters. Its value stems mainly from the personal characteristics of the principal author of the letters, James Thomson. Thomson, a young Scottish baker who emigrated to Canada in 1844, was both sensible and curious. He also had a passion for factual information and a talent for conveying it correctly to others. As a result his letters are a social historian's (and in places even a quantitative historian's) delight. Unlike most letter writers who take the ordinary details of life for granted, Thomson gives us the facts. One of his first letters analyses the occupational composition of his fellow passengers bound for Quebec. In addition to the majority who were farmers and farm labourers there were "four of five blacksmiths, three bakers, half a dozen wrights and joiners and a tailor... We also had two fiddlers and a poet". He recorded, always in exact terms, his wages, the cost of his board and his laundry bill, and the amount he could save in the circumstances. He told friends at home the various steam boat fares between Quebec and Hamilton, the price of flour, the number of square yards of rock and clay to be taken out of a section of the St. Laurence canal, the height and number of poles per mile on the new Montreal-Toronto telegraph, the precise size of the newly subdivided building lots in embryo Cardinal, Ontario. He explained at length the passenger regulations on an immigrant ship in the year 1853. There is much, much more not only about life in Upper Canada but also about Chicago and the California and Cariboo gold fields, where Thomson also worked for varying periods of time.

And he noticed things. In Montreal in 1844 he was struck by "the want of tall chimneys there being no factories here. Instead of manufacturers we have importers." He noted too a lack of distinction in dress among the urban "classes" of Montreal though he found the country people easily identifiable by their "uniform" homemade clothes. In 1846 he told his Scottish relatives of an outbreak in Upper Canada of the Irish potato blight and that many of the Irish labourers employed on the canals spoke no English at all. This list of insightful observations also could be extended a long way.

The volume has been capably edited by Professor Preston. His introduction is helpful, filling in most of the background and family gaps that the letters themselves do not. There are almost enough footnotes. There is however, one central interpretative section of his introduction with which it is difficult to agree. He sees Thomson's letters as a rare example of the writings of a "literate" member of "the lower order" and sees Thomson's life as "the making of a typical Canadian." But Thomson began not as a labourer from the "lower order" but as a skilled tradesman, who had some means when he arrived. Did a typical Canadian go off to the California gold rush and amass enough wealth to take a holiday in

Scotland, return as a cabin passenger and put down £500 on a farm on the front? Did a typical Canadian join the *Cariboo* gold rush (at age 40) leaving wife and children to cope as best they could? Did a typical Canadian become a town councillor and reeve? Did other members of "the lower order" subscribe to "The Montreal *Transcript*, the Toronto *Globe* and the New York *Tribune* and some smaller papers"? Thomson's life was at once too adventurous, too genteel and too comfortable to be "typical", at least of the numerical majority of immigrants. If Professor Preston is still interested in typical representative of "the lower order" in nineteenth century Canada he might begin by searching for some records of that swarm of Irish canallers for whom a young and relatively affluent James Thomson baked bread in 1845.

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MICHAEL B. KATZ. — *The People of Hamilton, Canada West, 'Family and Class in A Mid-Nineteenth Century City'*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1975.

This volume, one of the Harvard Studies in Urban History, is a welcome addition to a relatively scant literature on the nineteenth century city. Because of the immensity of the task of commenting upon the social, economic and demographic processes operating in such cities, Katz has selected a single Canadian city as his laboratory. In doing so he has, of course, recognized the dual problem of dealing with a single case study and establishing its representativeness in the national system of which it forms a part or indeed in the context of nineteenth century cities as a whole. Inevitably, because of the paucity of Canadian studies, comparison is made with the British and American experience.

The dual concern is understandable and springs from a concern with normative rather than ideographic studies, with a quest for meaningful generalisation. Repeated throughout the text however, it receives a greater emphasis than is needed. Perhaps this reflects the uncertainties that an outsider such as the present reviewer detects in the discipline of history, an uneasiness with changing paradigms, a need to reconcile the general with the unique. For other social scientists this debate is over and it is time for work. Katz accomplishes this elsewhere in the text. It is demonstrated in the basic premise that the shattering of illusions about past society can best be accomplished by the use of hard data about the lives of everyday people and by statements in the aggregate. It is seen in the delightful way with which he illustrates his statements about the group by using particular individuals such as William Benson whose life is used to demonstrate the author's notions of occupational change and transiency. Here both aggregated statements, about the general and individual, about particular and unique individuals, are used with telling effect.

Katz aims both at establishing and describing precisely the basic social and family patterns for Hamilton in the period 1851 to 1861 and in a broader manner at demonstrating how these reflected the pattern of modernisation from a more traditional to an industrial society. With this second objective the focus is not upon changing technology or economic organization but rather how institutional structures and the attitudes and behaviour of "the man in the street" changed in fundamental ways. Using large quantities of data derived from a variety of sources such as the census, the assessment rolls and marriage registers and by machine