

Morrison, Daniel., *"Trading Peasants" and Urbanization in Eighteenth-Century Russia: The Central Industrial Region.* Garland Series of Outstanding Dissertations, William H. McNeill, Gen. Ed., New York and London: Garland, 1987. Pp. 415

Daniel Stone

Volume 18, Number 3, February 1990

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017727ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017727ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Stone, D. (1990). Review of [Morrison, Daniel., *"Trading Peasants" and Urbanization in Eighteenth-Century Russia: The Central Industrial Region.* Garland Series of Outstanding Dissertations, William H. McNeill, Gen. Ed., New York and London: Garland, 1987. Pp. 415]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 18(3), 262–262. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017727ar>

merge in such men as Justin Winsor and Albert Bushnell Hart. The American Association for State and Local History deserves more time than Russo grants here. And working in Canada, he might have ventured some cross-border comparisons. Did monarchist loyalism generate a different approach to local history or genealogy than republican Puritanism?

That said, one must not upbraid authors for the books they did not write. Russo makes an important point. Those who recapture the past are partners with those who seek meaning and significance in history. Local history has been, and remains, appropriate to American (and Canadian) society, as travel beyond our cities and suburbs should remind us. The astonishing devotion and enterprise Russo captures in this monograph, has indeed helped to keep the past for citizens and academics alike.

Reginald C. Stuart
Dean of Humanities and Sciences
Mount Saint Vincent University

Morrison, Daniel., *"Trading Peasants" and Urbanization in Eighteenth-Century Russia: The Central Industrial Region.* Garland Series of Outstanding Dissertations, William H. McNeill, Gen. Ed., New York and London: Garland, 1987. Pp. 415.

At first glance, Russia's impressive achievements under Peter the Great and Catherine the Great barely mask the miseries caused by a rigid feudal society (a "service" society in the terminology of Russian historians) in which peasants could not leave the land or own it, and

city-dwellers paid high taxes for the bare privilege of escaping agricultural serfdom. Static Russian cities lacked the self-governing rights of Western and Central European cities, and the Russian burghers lacked the initiative and self-confidence of Western burghers.

This impressive Ph.D. dissertation from Columbia University shows convincingly that this picture needs some modification. The author, Daniel Morrison, studied Russian archival and published sources on immigration to Central Russian cities in the 18th century. He concentrates on Moscow, which enjoyed by far the quickest growth, without neglecting provincial centres.

The principal periods of urbanization occurred at the beginning of the century under Peter I and at the end of the century under Catherine II. The obstacles put up by the city governments to receiving commercial competitors were generally overcome through the expansion of previous commercial links between country and urban businessmen and, eventually, through intermarriage. At the end of the 18th century, merchants and artisans of peasant origin comprised over 30% of Moscow's 175,000 inhabitants (another 30% consisted of house serfs of local nobles). In addition, numerous peasants came to Moscow each winter to trade, manufacture or supply unskilled labour before returning to their villages in the spring. Going beyond Morrison, one might compare the economic role of the Russian peasants to the role of the Jews of central European regions evading restrictive legal structures in order to take advantage of commercial possibilities; the Russian Empire barred its few Jews from living in Central Russia.

Expanding on earlier research, Morrison shows that peasants from Central Russia devoted much of their time to commercial and artisanal activity with the approval of their noble landlords. Many of these "trading peasants" were "house serfs" whose domestic services were not needed while others were agriculturalists who gained permission to supplement their farm activities with commerce in order to satisfy their serf obligations with monetary payments. Such serfs easily gained noble consent (generally in exchange for a lump sum payment) to move to a city permanently, particularly in the late 18th century when new laws made voluntary manumission easier.

Morrison's brief conclusions show an understanding that his research implies a much higher degree of social mobility than is generally accepted at present, but unfortunately the dissertation format prevented him from expanding much on them. One hopes that he will do so soon.

Daniel Stone
Department of History
University of Winnipeg

Galishoff, Stuart., *Newark: The Nation's Unhealthiest City, 1832-1895.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988, Pp. xii, 260. Tables, maps, index. \$38.00 (U.S.).

The United States Census of 1890 designated Newark as the unhealthiest city in America. It had the highest death rate for cities with over one thousand in population and led the country in the rate of infant mortality and deaths from scarlet fever. Newark also stood among the top ten for communicable diseases such as malaria, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and