

## *Escape From Van Diemen's Land: The James Gammell Chronicles* by Elizabeth Gammell Hedquist

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that the assembly was in no mood to accept a Church of England university after Strachan had twice publicly accused the Methodists, the largest religious sect in Upper Canada, of being disloyal because of their American roots, and had incorrectly claimed that most people in Upper Canada belonged to the Church of England. Di Mascio is mistaken, however, in claiming that all the professors would have had to be members of the Church of England, and that the Church would have total control of teaching (106). This was a very liberal charter for its day, rejected because of the animosity generated by Strachan's utterances. Except for the seven members of the college council, and presumably professors in the divinity school, should one exist,

there was no religious requirement of the faculty. It is strange that the author would make such a fundamental error, given that the charter is readily available online, and is discussed in detail in that old but still excellent history of Upper Canada, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841*, by Gerald M. Craig.

Used with its limitations in mind, this work adds a useful dimension to the history of education in Ontario. Used, however, by someone who does not know these limitations, the book is likely to create a somewhat distorted picture of discussions of education in Upper Canada.

**Ronald Stagg**  
Ryerson University

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## *Escape From Van Diemen's Land*

### The James Gammell Chronicles

By Elizabeth Gammell Hedquist

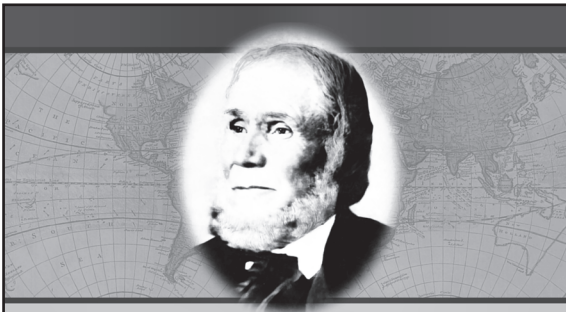
Provo, Utah: Y Mountain Press, 2013. 335 pages.  
\$US 19.95 paperback. ISBN 978-1-611660-32-6. ([www.byubookstore.com](http://www.byubookstore.com))

**T**wo Thousand and Thirteen marks the 175th anniversary of the 1838 Upper Canadian Rebellion/Patriot War. The publication of Michigan-based author Elizabeth Gammell Hedquist's book is therefore most timely. Hedquist who is James Gemmell's (now spelled Gammell) great, great granddaughter, builds upon her father's research from the 1950s to tell the fascinating story of her Patriot relative. She presents her research in a chronological order, reflecting upon James Gammell's life experiences from birth to death.

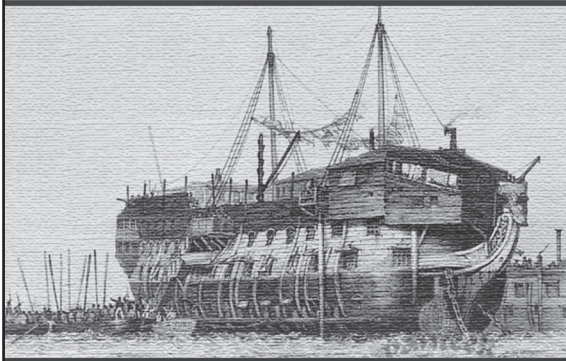
The book is divided into two distinct sections. Chapters one to twenty-three deal with Gemmell's life from his birth on

26 October 1814 in Kilmarnock, Scotland, through to his return to the United States after his escape from incarceration as a political prisoner in Van Diemen's Land (now the Australian state of Tasmania). The second half of the book investigates Gemmell's association with the Mormon Church and his involvement in the opening up of the western American frontier states of Texas, Utah and Montana.

The first chapter deals with the history and genealogy of the Gemmell/Gammell family in Scotland. Chapter two details the departure from Scotland, life in New York City and James' departure to live with his uncle at the Gore of Toronto (now Bramp-



ESCAPE FROM VAN DIEMEN'S LAND  
The James Gammell Chronicles



Elizabeth Gammell Hedquist

ton, Ontario). By 1837, young Gammell had become politically active against Sir Francis Bond Head and the ruling Family Compact in Upper Canada. He eagerly joined fellow Scot William Lyon Mackenzie and was involved in the battle at Montgomery's Tavern on 7 December 1837. After the defeat of the rebel forces, Gammell fled to Navy Island and eventually participated in the ill-fated Short Hills raid. There he was captured, tried for treason under the Lawless Aggression Act and sentenced to be executed. Lieutenant Governor Sir George Arthur commuted his death sentence to transportation, and Gammell was sent to the penal colony of Van Diemen's Land.

Subsequent chapters chronicle Gammell's incarceration at Fort Henry in Kingston, his journey to Quebec, the voyage aboard the *Captain Ross* to England, the time spent in jail at Liverpool and Portsmouth and aboard the hulk *York*, and his trial and conviction in London. Chapter thirteen details his voyage to Van Diemen's Land aboard the *Canton*, and chapters fourteen to twenty-one describe Gammell's time spent in the Van Diemen's Land prison system up to his ultimate escape (one of only a few to do so) in April of 1842. Once back in United States, James Gammell made his way to New York City before relocating to Jackson, Michigan.

Chapter twenty-five begins the second half of James Gammell's interesting life. Chapter twenty-six speaks of his life in Michigan and his two marriages before his departure for the American west. Chapter twenty-seven deals with brother William Gammell's life in Texas and his involvement in the Battle of San Jacinto, the Texas Revolution, and annexation of this territory into the United States. There is a certain irony in these details when the success of the Texas campaign for freedom is compared to the failure of the Patriots to overthrow British rule in Upper Canada!

Subsequent chapters tell of James Gammell's affiliation with the great American frontiersman Jim Bridger, conflict with the British over the Oregon boundary, Brigham Young and the Mormon pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley, the Montana gold rush, Feramorz Little and the early development of Utah, the Utah War, the Mountain Meadow Massacre, and Gammell's excommunication from the Mormon Church. Final chapters record Gammell's settling in Sheridan, Montana and his death there in April of 1881.

There are some shortcomings in this self-published work. There is no real conclusion offered to tie the complex life of James Gammell together in a succinct manner. The lack of an index makes an otherwise well written text difficult to connect and to cross-reference. There are no chapter numbers associated with page numbers on the contents page. The author relies heavily on the original narrative of Gammell's fellow Patriot Linus Miller, and on several period newspaper articles. She should have also considered use of first-hand accounts written by Benjamin Wait, Daniel Heustis, Robert Marsh, William Gates, Stephen Wright and Elijah Woodman. Another overlooked original source consists of period newspapers from Canada, the United States, and Australia, many of which are conveniently available on-line. Similarly, Hedquist often quotes from Pybus and Maxwell-Stewart's *American Citizens, British Slaves* (2002). Other secondary material such as Colin Duqemin's *Niagara Rebels* (2001) [for the Short Hills raid], Stuart Scott's book and articles [for Gammell], and publications by Tom Dunning, John Thompson and John Carter [for the Van Diemen's Land penal system and transportation], should have been consulted and

referenced more frequently. There are also several minor historical inaccuracies to be found in the text.

Why is *Escape From Van Diemen's Land* an important work? To my knowledge this is the first full-length account of a Patriot captured in the 1838 Upper Canadian rebellion to be written by a direct relative. As noted at the outset of this review, the timing of the release of this volume is significant, coinciding with the 175th anniversary of the 1838 Rebellion/Patriot War. Hedquist is also the first author to detail the complete and complex life of a Patriot exile after returning to the United States. No other period narrative, or any current secondary resource, has managed this accomplishment. Solid research, a wealth of graphics, seven useful appendices, and a very reasonable price, all contribute to make this book one you should acquire. It is a welcome addition to the research dedicated to the 1838 Upper Canadian rebellion/Patriot War and to connections to Canadian, American and Australian history of the period.

**John C. Carter**

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## *Rugged Game*

### Community, Culture and Wrestling at the Lakehead to 1933

By C. Nathan Hatton

Thunder Bay: Lakehead University Centre for Northern Studies, Northern and Regional Studies Series #20, 2012. \$24.95 paperback. ISBN 978-1-895939-34-7. ([www.cns.lakeheadu.ca](http://www.cns.lakeheadu.ca))

Those interested in the history of martial arts will be familiar with C. Nathan Hatton's work. He has published on a variety of subject matters

ranging from wrestling's role in military training to the generally unknown boxing career of film star Victor McLaglen. *Rugged Game* however, is not simply a history