

## *Tenants in Time: Family Strategies, Land, and Liberalism in Upper Canada, 1799-1871* By Catharine Anne Wilson

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London as young, unmarried women, and the development of their careers as writers. Peterman's text, accompanied by Ian Brewster's photographs of Bedford Square, where Susanna and Catharine often stayed with their cousin Rebecca Leverton, renders a fascinating snapshot of the interplay of family connections with the political and intellectual currents of literary London in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The courtship of Susanna and J.W.D. Moodie is engaging without being overly sentimental, and both here and in the description of Catharine's decision to marry Thomas Traill, the balance between romantic love and necessity, which so often affected marriage in this period, is sensitively addressed. The chapters that deal with "The Voyage Out" and the sisters' arrival in the Canadas are augmented with contemporary sketches and paintings that help to illustrate Catharine's delight and Susanna's dismay at the cities and settlements they encountered.

Sidebars in each chapter provide visual and verbal portraits of significant places and figures in their lives. Some are relatively well-known: the way-station for immigrants at Grosse Ile, for instance, or the Fox sisters, known as the "Rochester Rappers," whom the Moodies encountered in their flirtation with Spiritualism. Others are perhaps less familiar: Dr. John Hutchison, the blunt Scotsman who delivered a number of both sisters' children during their residence in the backwoods, or Traill's eccentric friend

the Rev. George W. Bridges, who built and later loaned the Traills the octagonal Wolf Tower, on the shores of Rice Lake. Most of the photograph and art credits are collated at the end of the volume, which will please readers who like a less cluttered text, but may frustrate others who would like the information closer to hand.

*Sisters in Two Worlds* provides an intriguing introduction to the life and works of Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie for those who are unfamiliar, and a good way to rethink and revisit for those to whom Moodie and Traill are familiar companions. In telling their stories through images and text, Peterman's volume gives a rich sense of Traill's and Moodie's two worlds in a way that will continue to captivate readers' interest.

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### *Tenants in Time: Family Strategies, Land, and Liberalism in Upper Canada, 1799-1871*

By Catharine Anne Wilson

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009. xviii + 375 pages. \$85.00 hardcover. ISBN 0-7735-3425-4 ([www.mqup.ca](http://www.mqup.ca))

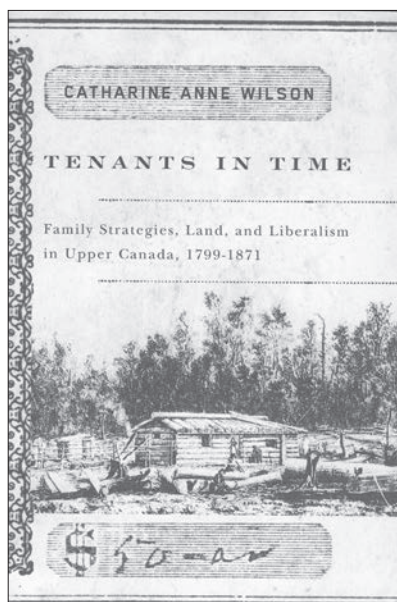
Those of us with an interest in Ontario, and more widely in North America, have reason to celebrate because of the publication of Catharine Wilson's latest book.

Tenancy, as the author correctly notes, is an important part of the settlement process, but one that has not attracted adequate attention even in the American literature which,

like the wider settlement literature, is so much more abundant than our own. Here few names appear, and after Widdis' seminal work on Elizabethtown Township in Leeds County (a graduate student thesis more than thirty years ago, and not easily accessible), Wilson's is the most significant book focused on rural tenancy.

To date such insights have been based upon a woefully small and spatially disparate sample of some five locations along the littoral of Lakes Erie and Ontario, excluding almost 95 per cent of southern Ontario. These include Gagan's work in Peel County, Marr's in York, Akenson's in Leeds, Wilson's on Amherst Island, and my own in Essex County. By incorporating material from her earlier book, *A New Lease on Life*, and by augmenting her qualitative insights with quantitative material drawn from the Township of Cramahe (Northumberland County), Wilson is able to develop a larger picture of tenancy in the province.

Wilson locates her work within the perspective of nineteenth-century liberalism, which sanctioned land acquisition as the root to independence and personal power. She pursues her objectives in a refreshingly interdisciplinary mode, recognizing the contribution of historical geographers, economists, political philosophers and legal historians. Methodologically, she engages at the micro-level—that of the individual—which enables her through detailed analysis to pursue things in a dynamic manner. This approach releases her work from the constraints of legal, institutional, economic and social frameworks within which so many people have operated, either from diminished vision or, more prob-



ably, paucity of data. She is able to portray tenancy not just as a step on the road to rapid ownership (in the Old World tenancy might bind a family for as many as nine generations), but as a mechanism that might be used at all stages of the life-cycle, both for rational and idiosyncratic purposes.

Among the many substantive issues tackled in *Tenants in Time* there are a number of themes not hitherto considered at length in the Upper

Canadian literature. Wilson considers, for example, differences between tenants and owners with respect to agricultural achievement and the ecological responsibility of tenants. She looks at differences in performance commensurate with the type of agreement, and she discusses the factors determining rents and tests of the adequacy of the formula used. These subjects appear in the more than fifty cross-tabulations which complement an essentially humanistic text emphasising the role of the actor in human affairs. These tables are generally of great value but, in some instances, the addition of standard deviations (if justified by the precision and number of the original data) would have permitted comparison with other areas. In other cases percentages are used, and the reader might wonder in a study of 97 tenants what the absolute numbers could be in the respective cells of a 56-cell cross-tabulated matrix of tenure types and labour and family characteristics (Table 3.8). This business of absolute number is important. For example, we learn on page 157 that leases sold for between 30 and 90 per cent of the assessed value. A range such as this might suggest that things were statistically 'astray,' and indeed on page 238, Wilson

records that the statement is based upon only three instances. I am sympathetic to this circumstance because frequently data are simply in short supply, and one has to be appreciative of any insight. But clearly there is still work to be done. That said, we have to be grateful for Wilson's endurance and achievement. We have much to celebrate in her work.

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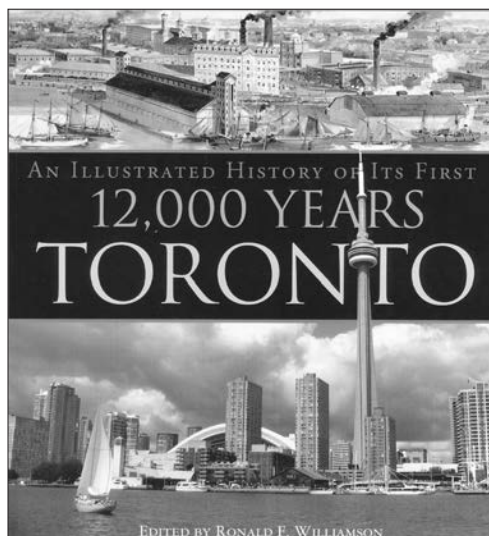
## *Toronto: An Illustrated History of its First 12,000 years*

Edited by Ronald F. Williamson

Toronto: James Lorimer and Company,  
2008. 128 pages. \$29.95 softcover. ISBN  
1-55277-007-9 ([www.formac.ca](http://www.formac.ca))

Ronald Williamson apparently had a clever idea. Wanting to find a wider audience for his studies of pre-European aboriginals in the Toronto region, he struck on the idea of recruiting other writers to discuss Toronto's past through various periods. Peter Carruthers frames the task in his preface. Robert MacDonald's chapter deals with the natural history, followed by Williamson's on about 10,000 years of native occupation. Carl Benn covers the period 1700 to 1850, Christopher Andrae roughly the subsequent century, and finally Roger Hall on the past half century or so. Note: not until half way through the book do we meet the founding of York.

Archeologist MacDonald reminds us of very ancient bedrock underlying the Toronto region and visible at the Don Valley brickyard, as are interglacial, glacial and post-glacial beds. By 12,000 before present (BP) the retreat or melting of the continental glacier



had concluded, though the lake level subsequently rose higher and then lower before coming up the current stage. By about 7,500 BP the modern forest as we know it had arrived, after the land had passed through the tundra and boreal stages.

In an oddly named chapter, "Before the Visitors," Williamson brings the aboriginals onto this scene about 11,000 BP, and then with deepening understanding describes their presence up to European contact and beyond. He lays out five periods of occupancy. Not