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In Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario by Samuel J. Steiner

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about student health led to the creation of new sites through which administrators could exert their moral vision of the university and shape the student body" (9). In doing so, Gidney expands the understanding of the historical relationships between youth's health, citizenship, and morality. Her history of how university administrators tended the student body in the past also sheds light onto the ways universities are tending the student body today. She exposes the current conceptualization of universities as moral communities where students are seen as "immature youth, to be guided to full adulthood" (190) and the university as their moral and intellectual guide.

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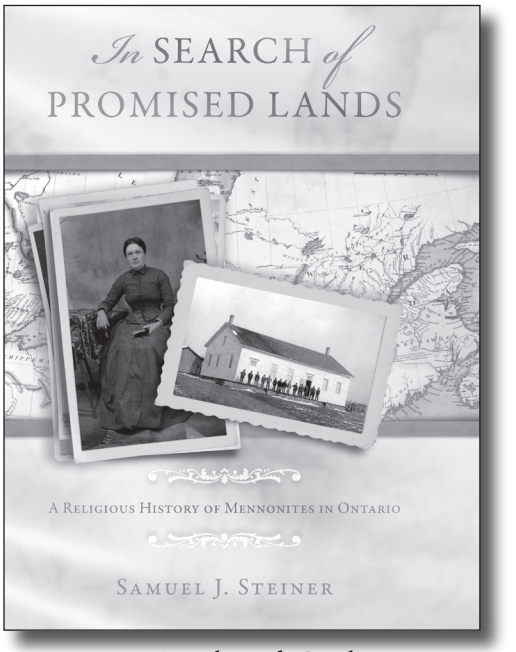
In Search of Promised Lands

A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario

by Samuel J. Steiner

Kitchener, Ontario: MennoMedia, 2015. 880 pages. $69.95 Hardback ISBN: 9780836199086. $39.95 E-Pub. (www.mennomedia.org)



Samuel J. Steiner's *The Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario* is a comprehensive account of the rich past of one of the province's early settler groups. Steiner's archival record is voluminous, yet he weaves the evidence together into a rich, cogent, and accessible history of the Mennonites in Ontario. Drawing upon personal narratives, municipal records, the census, newspapers, and denominational records (to name a few), Steiner's book explores the nuances of Mennonite origins in Upper Canada and follows those threads through to the near present. Steiner incorporates the themes of religiousity, assimilation, conflict, and identity politics throughout his book to trace the fragmentation and realignment that constantly occurred within the denomination in order to sketch the spectrum of Mennonite faith and practice in Ontario.

The Promised Lands of the title provide a rich metaphor for the way early Mennonite, Amish and Quaker communities sought a new life in North America upon which to build their faith. This promise continued to animate settlement and emigration patterns as Mennonites from Pennsylvania traveled north to the Niagara region, the Grand River valley, and the Huron Shores of present-day Ontario, or when other Mennonite communities immigrated to Canada in the twentieth century from places like the USSR, Germany, Asia, or South America. Although not dissimilar from other immigration sto-

ries, Steiner's history of the Mennonites ably captures the way religion fundamentally and prominently directed the actions and reactions of this particular immigrant group to their new home.

Over the span of two centuries on this new frontier, Mennonites adjusted and readjusted what constituted their "promised lands." While people claimed allegiance to their Mennonite identification, that identification underwent internal change and was comprised of many variations. Congregations aligned and realigned their faith and faith practices in relation to conflicts, shifting religious trends, generational changes, and social changes. Some groups held firm to conservative and fundamentalist practices, while others became much more liberal.

Steiner's work pays great attention to the broader economic, political, and religious climates. For example, in the early chapters on settlement in the Thirteen Colonies, Steiner observes how the story of the Mennonites, Amish, and Quakers was not atypical of the time. Like the Puritans or members of the Church of England who settled in New England or Virginia, respectively, the pacifist groups existed within this same immigration narrative. They all sought out a new opportunity in a new world where religion could factor prominently into daily life. Examples from the twentieth century illuminate the way Mennonite self-identification was a category in a constant state of flux. The Great War bred greater acceptance of fundamentalist theology and cooperation as Mennonites stood united in their pacifist stance to the war. After 1918, the influx of Mennonite settlers from the Soviet Union again reshaped broader patterns of belief and culture as new ideas emigrated with the new groups. The post-Second World War moment and the evangelical zeal of the 1950s and '60s reshaped Mennonite groups on the basis of practice, theology, and missionary work as they attempted to "bring the church up to date" in the new world order. Finally, later-twentieth century immigration of Lowland German Mennonites as well as groups from other parts of the world such as Asia and South America forced the established Mennonite churches in Ontario to re-evaluate their core values as new international ideas influenced traditions.

Why did some Mennonites shift away from Old Order practices and others did not? This central question helps Steiner to maintain cohesion in his encyclopaedic volume. He points to the effects of emigration, of change over time, of the broader forces of secularization and modernization in society as just a few of the key reasons that division took place amongst the Mennonites. In one of the most interesting discussions of the book, Steiner explores the challenges of divorce and remarriage to the various orders. Divorce posed a significant issue to involvement in the Mennonite church; divorced individuals were denied membership. Against the backdrop of the 1960s and the rapid social change that occurred, this issue exemplified the way some orders like the Mennonite Brethren re-examined their positions in order to reflect broader society and their choice to assimilate more than their companion orders.

Steiner is meticulous in paying heed to the vast array of complicated themes and ideas that accompany the history of a denominational group over such a long period of time. Debates such as the effect of secularization upon the religious community or the place of ecumenism certainly receive attention in the book; however, teasing out the implications of these weighty historical issues are sometimes of secondary concern. In a history as comprehensive as Steiner's this is not so much a criticism but a desire for a continued discussion.

Steiner's book would be of interest to

armchair historian and academic alike. His writing is accessible and his history sharp. His briskly-paced book would be of particular use to students of Ontario, religion, and the church. For teachers, *In Search of Promised Lands* is an excellent example of archival history done well. It would help to augment discussions on the place of conflict in society, immigration in Ontario, and how modernizing or changing society profoundly impacted religious and cultural groups. Most importantly, Steiner's concluding discussion about the broad spectrum of Mennonite practices raises important questions about how secularization affected specific religious groups—an area of inquiry not yet fully enough explored in the historical record. For the Mennonites, it has meant a history of debating the preservation of shared values, faith, and rituals and the merits of assimilation into broader society.

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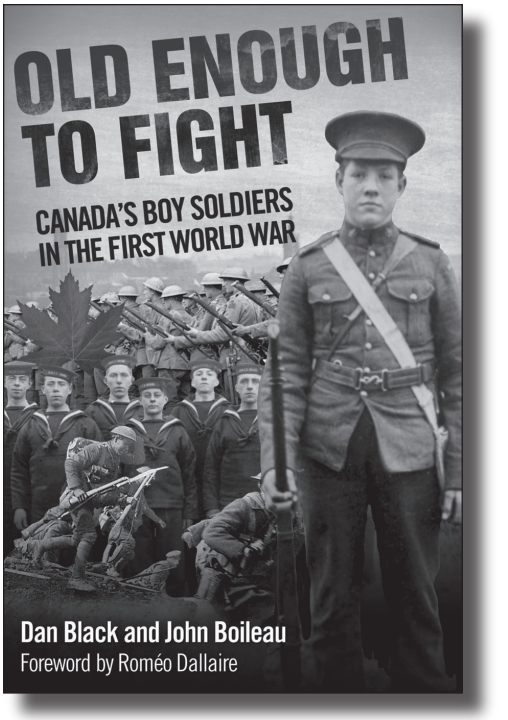
Old Enough to Fight

Canada's Boy Soldiers in the First World War

By Dan Black and John Boileau

Toronto: James Lorimer, 2013. 448 pages. $24.95 softcover. ISBN 978-1-4594-0955-2. $34.95 Hardback 9781459405417. $16.95 Ebook 9781459405424. (www.lorimer.ca)



With the centennial of the First World War upon us, a large number of books have been published recently about Canadian participation in that conflict. Some cover old ground with fresh insight, while others venture into areas not previously looked at in any detail. *Old Enough to Fight: Canada's Boy Soldiers in the First World War* by Dan Black and John Boileau attempts the latter. Of the roughly 620,000 men and women Canada put into uniform, an estimated 15-20,000 soldiers (or just over 3%) were boys younger than military regulations allowed. The authors note there is a literature on the history of boy soldiers in the Commonwealth, but no detailed examination of the phenomena in Canada. Historians like Desmond Morton in *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (1989) and Tim Cook in *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916* (2007) have noted the existence of recruits younger than 18 years of age, but this new book is the first detailed treatment of the topic.

The question of how the Canadian Expeditionary Force came to have underage soldiers is answered in the introduction and first chapter. The British and Canadi-