

Gaffield, Chad. *Language, Schooling and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987. Pp. xviii, 249. \$32.50 (cloth)*

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eventually abandoned the bank its fate was sealed. It is an interpretation which may be a prisoner of the documentation.

Because creditors destroyed the records of the bank, the bulk of extant documentation comes from various government sources. It should not surprise us that the documentary record tells us a great deal about the problems associated with the government, the Grand Trunk, and the Glyn accounts. We know much less about other aspects of the bank's business. This documentary reality makes weighing the relative importance of the government account as compared to general liquidity and note circulation problems extraordinarily difficult. Suffice it to say Baskerville's interpretation sees the problems associated with the government account in its various manifestations as the primary source of weakness for the bank.

The Bank of Upper Canada is, then, a major contribution to scholarship both as a collection of documents related to a key economic institution and as an interpretive essay on the banking and financial practices of the pre-Confederation era. Its vision is grand, its interpretation provocative, its research sound. It is also a highly enjoyable read on a topic usually noted for its dryness.

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Gaffield, Chad. *Language, Schooling and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987. Pp. xviii, 249. \$32.50 (cloth).

Gaffield's book is an attempt to provide local background to Ontario's language-of-instruction controversy, which reached its peak in 1912. It is basically a social history of Prescott county from about 1840 until the beginning of the twentieth century. The

analysis is divided over seven chapters, which lead us through different aspects of Prescott's history, in the context of Ontario's educational system of the nineteenth century

The first chapter gives an overview of Ontario's school system, from the period of Egerton Ryerson (1841-1896). The most important aspect of Ontario's educational policy during that period was "voluntary assimilation": Ontario Francophones were expected to assimilate to English, by exposure to English teachers, English institutions and an English-speaking majority population. Coercive measures regarding the language of instruction were felt to be unnecessary and probably dysfunctional. Beginning around 1883, provincial politicians began to see this linguistic tolerance as a major factor contributing to the stability of French in Ontario. By means of regulations, commissions, and policies, the *English* curriculum in the French-language schools was gradually strengthened. The trend culminated in the controversy of 1912.

Chapter 2 is a demographic history of the county, based on the published censuses for 1851-1881. The latter data are used for detailed comparisons between Alfred township (settled predominantly by Francophones) and Caledonia (with a majority of Anglophones). During the period 1840-1870, population growth was due primarily to immigration. Beginning in the early 1880s, the Francophone group increased mostly through natural increase, while the population of British ethnic origin began to decline. The chapter points to early, strong and persistent segregation between the two language communities. Altogether, this analysis is a nice mixture of methods, dealing with aggregate patterns as well as with diachronic data on families.

The next chapter discusses the county's economic development, from the growth of the forestry industry in 1840-1870 (the "système agro-forestier") to its decline in the 1870s. The analysis demonstrates the links

between economic conditions (indicated by data on occupation, farm ownership, and productivity) and micro-demographic strategies of marriage and fertility, despite some very tenuous (and occasionally incorrect) arguments. The economic bust of the 1870s led to a changing linguistic mix (continued immigration of Quebec Francophones, out-migration of Anglophones), and to the establishment of a sizeable Francophone "proletariat."

Chapter 4 focuses on the history of schooling in the county. The provision of education in French was a function of several factors: demand (school attendance was correlated with the socio-economic status of the family; Francophones were over-represented among labourers), location of schoolhouses (generally situated in Anglophone regions), and priorities set by trustees (predominantly English-speaking). The connections between socio-economic characteristics, language, and access to education are well established in this chapter.

In chapter 5, we deal with the local political situation. The changing linguistic composition of the population led to the rise of Francophones in the political establishment, especially in the Liberal party. The early 1880s were obviously a watershed: Francophone Liberals replaced Anglophone Conservatives, beginning in 1882 federally and in 1886 provincially.

Events in the rest of Canada - such as the hanging of Louis Riel - led to the development of a distinct Franco-Ontarian identity; they also led to the alienation of the Franco-Ontarians from the political processes of the day. The Francophone-elected representatives were backbenchers who were rarely heard; the leadership of the main parties showed little or no understanding of Franco-Ontarian problems. As a consequence, the Catholic church assumed a leading position in matters related to language and education. A major consequence to this development was the

expansion of the separate school system. This growth was not always supported unambiguously by the parishioners. Gaffield's discussion shows that several parishes had no great urge to set up separate, French language schools, despite the proclamations from the Archbishop. Often, the parish priest was caught up in the middle of such conflicts.

The establishment of the separate schools did not solve all educational problems. Such issues as overcrowding, lack of instructional equipment, the poor quality of the teachers, and - in particular - of the English taught in these schools were common to many separate schools in the county. These conditions made it difficult, if not impossible, for Francophone children to continue their schooling past the primary level. Thus, the price for the safeguarding of French-language education may have been the blocking of further educational (and, eventually, occupational) opportunities.

The final chapter gives a summing up of the conditions in Prescott county at the beginning of the twentieth century. The demography, ecology, social structures and institutions of the county point to "cultural fission" - the "two solitudes" in the microcosm of a peripheral county.

Overall, this book fills an important lacuna in our understanding of the development of the relations between Canada's two charter groups. Its strength, in presenting an integrated history of Prescott county, is also its weakness: while the author hints at developments in the second half of the twentieth century, the connections to these developments and their analysis are made only sporadically. Nevertheless, this is a very readable and informative work.

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Voisey, Paul. *Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988. Pp. x, 341. Illustrations.

The character of frontier society in North America has long generated intense scholarly debate. Historians have proposed various models to explain the evolution of society in newly settled regions. Paul Voisey's study of early 20th-century Vulcan, located in south-central Alberta, challenges these long held notions.

Indeed, Voisey's quite convincingly asserts that none of the current models adequately explain the nature of frontier society. He successfully argues that the interaction of tradition, environment, metropolis (any outside influence directed at the local community), and frontier (the process of building communities where none existed) moulded society in newly settled regions. Voisey also questions long cherished notions about frontier development, particularly those related to motivation for settlement. Voisey's meticulous and careful examination of settlement, agriculture, and social life underscores the interplay of these phenomena in transforming the prairie around Vulcan into a prosperous wheat producing region.

The pioneers who settled Vulcan were primarily young men from the American midwest and eastern Canada drawn by the free, government-sponsored homesteads, the promise of quick returns from wheat-hungry, metropolitan markets, and rising land values. Of middling backgrounds, these men arrived with sufficient capital to exploit the cheap and seemingly inexhaustible land.

A speculative boom accompanied Vulcan's opening in 1904 and small-scale speculators were major participants in this boom. Many were in non-farm occupations and their sole intent was to capitalize on rising land values which accompanied the prosperity of wheat. Often speculators completed houses, barns,

and other necessary improvements to entice those who were interested in farming. Rising land values could tempt virtually any farmer to sell for profit and, having garnered the quick return, move on to new opportunities elsewhere. As Voisey points out, the breaking of millions of acres of new land in the plains states, such as the Dakotas after 1900, frequently lured profit-oriented settlers away from Vulcan. As a result, a succession of owners often developed farms as land changed hands again and again. For many, Vulcan was just one stop on a long journey.

During its early boom years geographic mobility was extremely high in the Vulcan area. Few settlers stayed more than five years and by 1938, just 15% of the original pioneers who arrived in 1904 remained in Vulcan. Not until the collapse of the wheat market in the post-1920 years, would this mobility subside. Voisey concludes that Vulcan was hardly "the sleepy, stable place" so often called to mind by the frontier.

Voisey centres his analysis of crop selection on the choice settlers faced between mixed farming and intensive specialization in wheat. Advocates of diverse crops comprised metropolitan-based agencies such as the Dominion Department of Agriculture. These supporters stressed the long-term benefits of mixed farming, especially soil conservation and protection against crop failures. Yet, the environment was ideally suited for wheat production. The flat, treeless plains invited "extensive use of machinery" which greatly increased productivity. Wheat's deep roots enabled it to overcome the aridity of the Alberta plains by collecting water from every possible source. Given its quick and inexpensive start-up costs, wheat also accommodated the speculative tendencies in the settlers and their geographic mobility.

Interested more in quick profit than long term benefit, Vulcan's settlers rationally chose wheat over mixed farming. Yet, many pioneers still maintained small farmyards that enabled them to cultivate diverse crops.