

advisor to the manager of a large farm at Arusha in Tanzania.

The mandate of the Life Writing Series is to publish memoirs of people for whom “philosophical purposes are central to their lives.” Wilfrid Laurier University Press and Patricia Koretchuk have combined successfully to show how David Caldwell’s hard work, blunt honesty, and ironic sense of humour served him well through all the twists and turns of his life.

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Kathleen H. Brown. *Schooling in the Clearings: Stanstead 1800-1850*. Stanstead Historical Society, 2001. Pp. xi, 291.

At the turn of the eighteenth century large numbers of New England families, attracted by the offer of cheap land, moved north to establish farms in the forests of southern Quebec in what would become the English Townships. Located to the southeast of Montreal, Stanstead began as one of the early townships, and in 1829 along with five other townships became the electoral district of Stanstead County, whose seat was the village of Stanstead Plain on the Vermont border. Thanks to earlier research, most notably by Jack Little, Jean-Pierre Kesteman, and Françoise Noël, the area’s social, political, and economic history has been well mapped. Brown’s detailed study of its elementary and secondary schooling, spanning the transition from private to common schools, and including the establishment of academies or “superior schools,” is an important contribution to this growing body of Eastern Townships scholarship.

As a popular history intended for “general readers interested in pioneer times in the Eastern Townships,” the book originated in Brown’s personal interest in a cache of four generations of family papers containing school correspondence, account books, minutes, and journals. Supplemented with her meticulous research in public archives, which resulted in appendices containing the names of around 10,000 pupils and many school sponsors, trustees, and teachers (primarily for the late 1820s and early ’30s), this initial foray into family history turned into a study of far more than local interest. Its focus is broad, encompassing such varied influences as the Sunday School movement and clerical supervision, the impact of a halting and

uneven state formation, the ongoing fragility of both private and public financial support, and the challenges raised by inexperienced teachers, few texts, and unlit school rooms. Brown, a retired academic, writes elegantly and accessibly, with a keen eye for local differences, and a witty awareness of the daunting challenges young scholars faced in the dull, moralistic English readers of the early period, and the later (somewhat more pedagogically informed) American texts. She has, moreover, generously illustrated her research with maps, graphs, drawings, documents, personal profiles, and helpful and informative sidebars. While one might wish for greater engagement with the historiography of nineteenth-century education, and fewer verbatim accounts from newspapers and documents, Brown's succinct summaries of such developments as the monitorial schools, the Sunday School movement, Quebec's Royal Institution and Assembly schools, and the United Province's Common and Model schools, make this a helpful introduction to educational history generally, while offering valuable insight into a neglected chapter of anglophone educational history in Lower Canada.

The province took its first step towards a public system of education in 1801 when the Assembly passed An Act for the Establishment of Learning in the Province, setting up a short-lived system of government or free schools (free only to the poorest children), which became known as Royal Institution schools. Dominated by the Anglican Church and highly unpopular, these schools were replaced in 1829 by locally managed secular schools, called trustees or assembly schools, which rapidly increased in numbers, and soon drew in most private and Royal Institution schools. Independently minded, anxious to provide at least a basic education for their children, and convinced that education and religion should be separate, the American immigrants frequently found themselves at odds with the values and customs of colonial administrators and Anglican Church clergy, and on occasion disagreements resulted in temporary school closings. With the union of the Canadas in 1840, a centralized system of common schools was finally put in place under the superintendency in Lower Canada of Jean-Baptiste Meilleur, an administrator to whom Brown accords a high grade. While the new arrangement did promise to establish elementary schooling on a stable financial basis, the common schools created their own difficulties among a population averse to giving up local control, and unaccustomed

to the notion of taxation to support schools. Devoting rich detail to each attempt by trial and error to establish a satisfactory school system for Stanstead's youth, Brown perceptively points out that, as is usually the case, more attention was devoted to how the schools would be administered than to what would happen in them. Nevertheless, by carefully combing newspaper advertisements, accounts of public examinations, and the contents of textbooks, curricula, and school regulations, she is able to offer fascinating insight into an educational process heavily reliant for success on the tenacity and idealism of parents, teachers, and students. A final chapter explores the efforts by leading citizens in a small number of centres to open academies (based on the New England model) to train elementary teachers, prepare other students for American colleges, and, in some cases, also include an elementary school. By 1850 a public elementary school system was in place, as McGill Normal School began to train male teachers, the first school inspectors visited schools, and regional examining boards checked teacher qualifications; nevertheless, progress in establishing a totally public system of higher education was much slower and remained hampered by a shortage of funding.

Money problems, the determination (if not stubbornness) of township settlers to provide an educational system in keeping with their own values, and government initiatives to establish a rational system of public education form constant themes throughout this study of schooling in the Stanstead area. Though much has changed, as Brown's in-depth examination of the educational culture of the early nineteenth century makes abundantly clear, these problems remain central in today's educational turmoil. Historians of education, as well as anyone interested in seeing current controversies in historical perspective, will find this a most instructive and illuminating study.

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