

# *Craft Capitalism: Craftworkers and Early Industrialization in Hamilton, Ontario 1840-1872* By Robert B. Kristofferson

Laurel Sefton MacDowell

Volume 100, Number 2, Fall 2008

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1065704ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065704ar>

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### Publisher(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

### ISSN

0030-2953 (print)

2371-4654 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this review

Sefton MacDowell, L. (2008). Review of [*Craft Capitalism: Craftworkers and Early Industrialization in Hamilton, Ontario 1840-1872* By Robert B. Kristofferson]. *Ontario History*, 100(2), 244–246.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1065704ar>

volume of data presented. Clarke appears to have included every bit of research he found, which makes for a considerably inflated text. His biographies of engineers, businessmen, politicians and others are certainly informative, and his account of Edmund Wragge, Chief Engineer for both railways, is of particular interest to me since information on nineteenth-century Canadian engineers is hard to find. But often these biographies are so long, and filled with so much extraneous matter, that I tended to lose the theme of the person's life. I suggest that any account of more than a short paragraph should have been placed in a biographical appendix. Similarly, Clarke's extensive quoting of primary material is mind numbing and thin on interpretation, and many of the quotations do not seem to be particularly relevant.

Secondly, weak editorial control disappoints me, creating a confusing text for the reader. Six chapters are, based on their titles, associated with organizing and funding the two companies; eight chapters are supposed to

cover various aspects of building the lines. But, for example, Chapter 14—"Organizing to build a new railway"—is partly biographical, partly about establishing the engineering staff and, above all, filled with verbatim quotations taking up more than half of the text. Fewer chapters, and offering more analysis, would have made the book much more readable.

Rod Clarke's *Narrow Gauge Through the Bush* contains new information about the TG&B and T&N railways and his drawings are tremendously valuable artefacts. In fact, it is Clarke's exquisite drawings that are the real strength of this book. .

Christopher Andreae  
Historica Research Limited

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### ***Craft Capitalism: Craftworkers and Early Industrialization in Hamilton, Ontario 1840-1872***

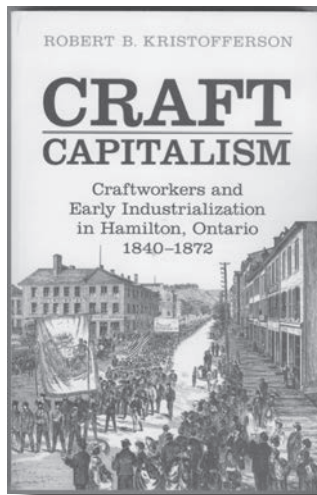
By Robert B. Kristofferson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. x + 326 pages. \$29.95 softcover. ISBN 0-8020-9408-7 ([www.utppublishing.com](http://www.utppublishing.com))

**T**his monograph is clearly written, with a core argument that is developed sequentially using considerable detail as evidence. Kristofferson takes an optimistic view of the craftsman's life, especially in the early 1870s, and presents an alternative to what he calls 'the dispossession model' that conveyed the proletarianization of craftworkers and heightened class conflict. His thesis is that many craftworkers in Hamilton in the period experienced considerable upward mobility in their craft, either as small or large proprietors or as supervisors and managers in the larger businesses. Thus they did well financially, had good relations

with employers, and gained a close-knit culture and a respectful status in the local society. Most Hamilton industrialists who led large companies started as craftsmen and understood their employees, respected their skills, had mutual interests with them, and often lived in the same residential areas. The reader learns a great deal about specific people in this early era, for the author vividly conveys the community in Hamilton in which the craftsmen lived and worked. He evokes the voices, activities and institutions of craftworkers, discussing the social groups they joined or directed, whether they were self-employed or employees, and the hours they worked.

Kristofferson presents a new view of craftsmen and the impact of the first stage of industrialization on Canadian workers. He differs from many labour historians of the previous generation who applied Marxist theory and wrote innovative histories that, in his view, ignored the complexities and nuances of early Canadian society. He debunks the pessimistic dispossession model in which the craftsmen's culture was transformed by "capitalist exploitation and industrial degradation of the large modern workplace." (p. 112) Kristofferson frequently notes the historiography on a point of argument, clearly explains how his study is different and lays out a new argument. Interestingly, just as the 'new labour history' was influenced by the social activism of the 1960s, it seems likely that Kristofferson's study was affected by the neo-conservatism of the 1980s, as he occasionally uses language such as 'value-added' goods that is not misplaced even today. Neither group focused on the craft union as a central aspect of the craftsman's life. This monograph is a study of craftsmen adjusting to the early stages of capitalism, with some of them emerging as proprietors of small businesses and budding capitalists.

After writing three chapters in which he argues that craft capitalism was the social context in which pre-existing practices of craft mobility were preserved and new ones emerged, Kristofferson spends three chapters examining the culture of the craftsmen, which he sees as a dynamic resolution of both old and new ideas. Building on the pre-existing crafts work culture, the close relationship between master and man (mutualism) made for workable social relations in the early industrial age. Craftsmen and proprietors celebrated the "unchanged masculine exclusivity of the shop floor" socially at picnics, on excursions, at testimonial dinners and



in parades. (p. 111) In order to achieve a strong sense of identity and to explain their mobility to themselves in this period of emerging industrial capitalism, craftworkers developed an ideology of the 'self-made man' which valued characteristics of individualism, independence, industriousness, honesty and sobriety but was also backed up by the all-male network in the craftsmen's world.

Kristofferson is especially interesting in his nuanced discussion of the concept of the self-made man, which he notes historians have applied most often to middle-class men in Britain, the United States and to a lesser extent in Canada. He applies the notion to his group of craftsmen and distinguishes between the middle-class notions of masculinity and the craftsman's ideas associated with this concept. He then discusses craftsmen's culture of self-improvement, which fuelled their participation in mechanics institutes, the YMCA and other organizations in Hamilton, and reflected their optimism about their individual and class prospects. Kristofferson also incorporates a new interpretation of the Nine Hours Movement, which he minimizes. He demonstrates that the hegemonic culture of mutualism more than an emerging class-consciousness pervaded it.

The chief weakness of the book's analysis is that it is applied to a short period. Kristofferson's research has provided much more detailed information about this group in the early 1870s and about the state of the Canadian economy at that time. Indeed he argues that many British craftsmen arrived in Hamilton because they were escaping capitalism's assault on their skills in the more developed British economy and found in Canada an opportunity to preserve their craftsmanship and either develop their own businesses or work congenially with craftsmen-employ-

ers in large enterprises. He realizes that in the 'second industrial revolution' in the not too distant future the 'logic of capitalism' would challenge these craftsmen's skills, independence and position in industry, and change their relations with their employers. We know from the work of Craig Heron and others that by the early twentieth century conflict between skilled workers and employers like Gurney was persistent, and that the employers had the upper hand even against what were by that time well organized craft unions of skilled workers. Thus Kristofferson's criticism of the earlier historians is essentially that they projected changes on the craftsmen in Hamilton too early, not that they were wrong about the effects of capitalist development in the long run, which he sees as occurring in the 1890s and at the turn of the century. It is interesting to gain a fresh perspective and new evidence about

the Hamilton craftsmen in the 1870s, but as Kristofferson suggests, new work on later periods would develop a better understanding of the influence of capitalism on Canadian workers. He hints for example that the craft unions and the Knights of Labor in the 1880s and 1890s might be reconsidered. No doubt another generation will work out an overall synthesis that will continue to enrich our working class history. Kristofferson has made a good start in a new, more optimistic direction that takes account of the less developed Canadian economy compared to Britain and the United States.

Laurel Sefton MacDowell  
University of Toronto at Mississauga

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### *Canadian Churches, an Architectural History*

By Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, with photographs by John DeVisser. Richmond Hill: Firefly Books, 2007. 438 pages. \$85.00 hardcover. ISBN 1-55407-239-5 ([www.fireflybooks.com](http://www.fireflybooks.com))

**C**anadian Churches tells us about the rich architectural tapestry of high style and vernacular churches across Canada. Peter and Douglas Richardson, Emeritus Professors of the University of Toronto (Religion and Fine Arts, respectively), have successfully rendered the complex social and architectural aspects of Canadian churches into a highly readable, if heavy, tome. High quality colour photographs by John DeVisser and selected historical graphics and architectural drawings support the text and descriptive captions.

The introduction outlines the book's organization and intentions; it also includes a *précis* of architectural style and design features to look for in church architecture. More than four hundred pages follow, arranged into re-

gional chapters: Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, and West and North; a final chapter addresses changes. Approximately twenty-five per cent of the space is devoted to Ontario. Footnotes, sources, and a bibliography organized by subject and region round out the book, and for novices the authors have included a helpful glossary of architect terms. In addition to a general index there are three others—church name, location and denomination—and these are of considerable assistance in exploring such a lengthy book.

In addition to acknowledging a Christian audience, the authors state that this book is for "all who are interested in churches as buildings." (p. 26) Their stated intention is "to make the confusing variety of churches understandable to persons with little knowl-