

The River & the Land: A History of Windsor to 1900 by Patrick Brode

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(1846) records the members of “The Cavan Blazers,” but does not say what they did to fulfill their purpose of “the young embarrassing the old.” Another entry (1885-1886) details the efforts of the “Anti-Sawdust Crusade,” to prevent lumber mill waste from clogging waterways. Most entries are more mundane—storms, trials, accidents, and assorted public gatherings. When news arrived of the Boer War victory at Mafeking (1900, May 18), we are told that “Bells rang, whistles blew, guns fired. Fire brigade turned out and tore things up. Cannon crackers made fearful din. The night was glorious one for noise...”

Interspersed with almost a thousand dated entries are dozens of archival images.

Genealogists and other serious researchers will rejoice to find the book fully indexed and its sources listed. An appendix logs, for the year 1913, Peterborough’s “Fraternal and Benefit Societies” and its “Sporting Organizations.” It also names all 23 mayors and the more than 800 town and city councillors who served from 1850-1913.

The closing entry (1913, December 17) announces the hydro-electric lighting of the city under municipal ownership. As this work amply and aptly testifies, it was an enlightened century. Dare we hope for a companion, twentieth-century volume?

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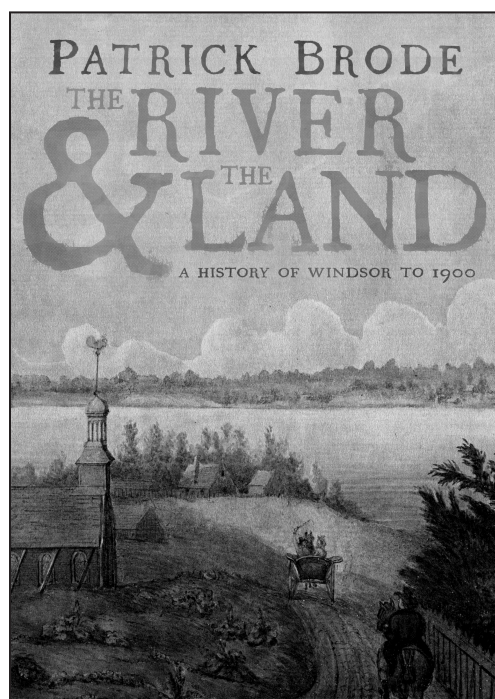
The River & the Land: A History of Windsor to 1900

by Patrick Brode

Windsor, Ontario: Biblioasis, 2014.
\$29.95 hardcover. 192 pages. ISBN 978-1-92742-889-4 (www.biblioasis.com)

The Straits,” “the Ferry,” and “South Detroit” (as the City of Windsor has been variously called), has had a long history of habitation and settlement. This is due in large part to its geographic position on the southern approaches to the Detroit River. From as early as 1701, European settlers took advantage of the opportunities that the location of the future Windsor afforded. Residents continue to benefit from Windsor’s location to this day.

With this wealth of history, I’ve always been amazed at the paucity of publications issued to tell this fascinating story. Titles by Neil Morrison (1954), Father Ernest



Lajeunesse (1960), and my late friend and colleague R. Alan Douglas (2001), remain as the few standard works available. It is therefore most timely that Patrick Brode’s

The River & the Land has recently been published.

Brode is a municipal lawyer and author of several previous and very readable books dealing with Canadian legal history. In his latest effort, Brode aims to show that while Windsor developed into a fairly typical Ontario Victorian town, it was also set apart by its location on the Canadian/U.S. border, and through its intimate role in events transpiring in Michigan and Detroit.

The author has not produced an encyclopedic nor a definitive history of Windsor. Rather, *The River & the Land* presents selected chapters/episodes in the evolution of Windsor up to 1900. This is volume 1 in what is proposed to be a three volume set. This first volume is a survey charting Windsor's history from 1679 to 1900. A succinct introduction is followed by eight chapters dealing with various stages in Windsor's evolution from an underdeveloped river crossing, to a booming twentieth-century city.

In the introduction, Brode presents an argument showing how the proximity of Detroit resulted in "an economic fusion in which business and workers crossed the international border almost as if it didn't exist." Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of early history from 1701-1836, culminating in the official naming of Windsor. During this period there was a mixing of French and Scottish influences. Land was power, and land speculation became the road to riches. One important aspect of the period that is dealt with is the impact of the War of 1812. By the mid-1830s, change began to occur in this "bucolic backwater," influenced by activities in Detroit.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the Battle of Windsor, with a focus on Colonel John Prince and his actions related to this armed incursion from United States. Following this last action in the Upper Canadian Re-

billion of 1838, Windsor remained as "a quiet hamlet, the tiny offshoot of Detroit" through the mid-1840s.

Chapter 3 spans the years 1845-58. It details the impact of railways on growth, their dramatic domination of the local economy, the remarkable increase in population, and the construction of many new public buildings. The 1850s was a decade of great technological advancement, which led to the development of new industries.

Chapter 4 provides some very informative material about the impact of the U.S. Civil War on Windsor. The presence of American "skedadlers" and rebel spies, the "Philo Parsons incident," and alleged collusion with the Confederates, all resulted in increased border tensions. The use of diaries written by then municipal clerk Alexander Bartlet, provides some first-hand information about these events, along with insight on the Fenian threat in the 1860s. The best chapter in this book!

Chapter 5 deals with the years 1870-79. The impact of disastrous fires resulted in the construction of a public waterworks and many new brick buildings. In the decade after the Civil War, growth was remarkable. It resulted in the expansion of town borders, private capital being used to improve infrastructure, and the advancement of public education, but also in the decline in the importance of the Great Western Railroad which linked Detroit with Buffalo through Ontario. The linkage with Detroit continued but in a negative way. As an appendage of Detroit's economy, Windsor faltered because of depression there in the late 1870s.

Chapter 6 tells the story of recovery during the years 1879-86. Depression would pass and the fortunes of Windsor would respond. The impact of the National Policy of tariff protection, of 1878, resulted in the establishment of U.S. branch

plants in Windsor. The improvement of municipal assets, public health, telephone service, electricity and streetcars, all led to the notion that Windsor was becoming a “distinct urban community.”

Chapter 7 looks at events during 1887-92. Hiram Walker’s investment in the building of the Lake Erie, Essex & Detroit River Railroad, provided an important link between Windsor and the surrounding countryside. The extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway established Windsor as part of a major North American rail system. By the late 1880s, Windsor had become a stronghold for residents wanting the annexation of Canada to the United States, because of perceived regressive tariffs. There was local support for reciprocity. The growth in population resulted in the expansion of town limits and Windsor was incorporated as a city on 24 May 1892.

The final chapter investigates the Victorian era from 1893-1900. In 1891, the rise of anti-Catholic feelings and racial discord is noted. The “Panic of 1893” triggered an economic downturn in Detroit. This had a negative effect on Windsor because of its

dependence on Detroit’s economy. But after 1900, Windsor would rebound to truly become an industrial dynamo.

The lack of any substantive conclusion is a major flaw in Brode’s work. What is a generally well written and informative chronological overview of the history of Windsor to 1900 falls flat at the end. With no summation or encapsulation of arguments made throughout the book, the reader may feel that something is missing. Certainly it is an abrupt end to Brode’s otherwise useful story! I would also question the utility of a selected bibliography, instead of listing all reference sources used. Finally some of the black and white images used to accompany the text are of poor quality. Apart from these shortcomings, I’d recommend *The River & the Land* as a publication to add to your library. It is a welcome addition to the literature about the history of Windsor. Stay tuned for volume 2 (1901-1945), and volume 3 (1946-2009).

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Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Sixteenth Century

by Charles Garrad, edited by Jean-Luc Pilon and William Fox

Gatineau, QC: Canadian Museum of History and University of Ottawa Press, 2014.
623 pages. \$89.95 paperback. ISBN 978-0-77662-144-9 (www.press.uottawa.ca).

The history of Iroquoian speaking peoples in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ontario is normally told by historians and ethno-historians. Archaeologists are viewed by most historians as second-class scholars of history—people who mend broken pots and stone tools of ancient times. Charles Garrad’s *Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Six-*

teenth Century is a clear demonstration that archaeologists can make unique contributions to history, by integrating historical (written and oral), archaeological, and anthropological evidence. This book represents the culmination of over fifty years of research and will become an essential encyclopedic reference for any archaeologist or historian who is interested in the early