

## *Negotiating a River: Canada, the US, and the Creation of the St. Lawrence Seaway* by Daniel Macfarlane

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less than satisfying. Macdonald evidently feigned an interest in retiring to all who could bear him do it, but in reality showed very little confidence that anyone could serve the party or the government as well as he could. He died in office only weeks after defending his government in a general election, leaving a party confused and aimless, bedeviled by untimely illnesses, deaths, and incompetence.

A useful chronology completes the picture, and Canada's most influential and complex nineteenth-century figure is fully presented in less than 200 pages, but the book remains oddly unfinished. Martin's haste out the door leaves the reader wishing for a meatier interpretation of Macdonald's

significance, of what made him so special. Martin the biographer prefers to point out particular personal traits, such as Macdonald's sense of humour, his humaneness, his ability to read his interlocutors. One would have hoped to read more about Macdonald's political abilities and his evolving philosophy of power and government.

Ged Martin reveals himself in this short biography as Macdonald's most subtle interpreter, and as a critical, yet fully sympathetic biographer. His study commends itself both to the learned and the merely curious.

Patrice Dutil  
Ryerson University

## *Negotiating a River: Canada, the US, and the Creation of the St. Lawrence Seaway*

by Daniel Macfarlane

Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2014. \$95.00 hardcover. ISBN 978-0-77482-643-3.  
\$34.95 paperback. ISBN 978-0-77482-644-0 ([www.ubcpress.ca](http://www.ubcpress.ca))

The fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 2009 resulted in a spate of books on the subject. *Negotiating a River* is the most recent. Each of the works on the Seaway has emphasized different aspects of the building of the massive creation. Clare Puccia Parham, for instance, concentrated on the experiences of those who worked on the project in her *The St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project: An Oral History of the Greatest Construction Show on Earth*. Jeff Alexander, on the other hand, looked at environmental damage associated with the Seaway in his *Pandora's Locks: The Opening of the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence Seaway*. Daniel Macfarlane has chosen to highlight the final negotiations between Canada and the United States, following the Second

World War, and ecological and social issues associated with the building of the seaway, and to put the whole project in a theoretical framework. This is not to say that the author confines himself to these topics, far from it, but he does stress that these topics are crucial to understanding the creation of the seaway.

In fact, his first chapter deals with the thirty years of negotiations and offers between the two countries that preceded the final push to close a deal. These negotiations were extremely complex, involving not only the two national governments, but also provincial and state governments and numerous lobby groups. Macfarlane has done an excellent job of providing an overview, without getting into the smaller details. Of course, in covering so much

ground in a relatively short account, choices had to be made. For instance, the Chicago Diversion is mentioned in a couple of places, but if the reader wishes to know what it is, it is necessary to consult the endnotes (245, note 50 and 246, note 58) to get an explanation of the Diversion and of why it caused so much controversy. Given the continuing environmental controversy over the Diversion, some explanation in the main text might have been useful.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal mainly with the post-1945 negotiations. Over the years, there has been some debate among historians about the degree of support in the Canadian cabinet for an all-Canadian seaway. When The American Congress continually held up approval of joint participation, and President Truman seemed unwilling or unable to speed up regulatory approval of the State of New York as the American body charged with working with Ontario to develop power generation, in conjunction with the seaway project, the cabinet debated going it alone. Macfarlane makes a persuasive case that a clear decision was reached to build an all-Canadian waterway. The government then carried out a public relations campaign to prepare the people of Canada for a Canadian system. This is an important contribution to the history of the seaway.

What he is not as clear on is why the Canadian government waited almost two years before acting, giving the Americans enough time to change their opinion about joint action. In his introduction, he blames this generally on stalling techniques by the Americans. He does acknowledge that it would have been difficult to build the



seaway through the International Section, between Ontario and New York, without incorporating the delayed power project. He also discusses the reluctance of some members of cabinet, as the Americans seemed to be moving closer to a decision, to endanger the close relations with the United States developed during the war years. One wonders though, if there really was a determination to

go it alone, and cabinet had prepared the Canadian people for just that, why there was such a long hesitation. In fact, when the American Congress approved an all-American seaway, the best that Canada could do was to get tacit approval from Washington for one lock on the Canadian side, and channel dredging for a possible parallel channel through Canadian waters, hardly a Canadian waterway. Macfarlane even acknowledges that there was considerable disappointment in Canada, because of the previous commitment to a Canadian seaway. Possibly this hesitation on the part of government was the result, from the beginning, of a conflict between the Canadian nationalist ideal and the reality of binational relations with a powerful friend.

The remaining three chapters deal with the construction and early operations of the seaway, concentrating on the International Section. This will be of particular interest to residents of Ontario. Every work that has dealt with the construction phase has covered much of the same ground, from Carleton Mabey's first-hand account of 1961 onward, but each has emphasized different aspects. Macfarlane covers the main aspects well, including the difficult negotiations between the two countries

over different aspects of the project, the acquisition of land by the hydro authorities in each country, the difficulties of construction, the setting of locking fees, a concession to the United States, the opening ceremonies, the economic effects on the area around the construction, and the limited success of the seaway over the following years.

He reserves considerable space for a discussion of the displacement of people and of the environmental damage done by the seaway and dam construction. It is quite apparent that the author feels that the loss of so much land (original plans called for dikes to protect a goodly portion of the flooded land in Ontario) in the interest of 'progress' was a negative result of the joint power/navigation construction. His discussion of environmental damage, including erosion, loss of fish and bird habitat, serious damage to the American eel population, changes in the shoreline and the currents, arrival of invasive species, and pollution from decaying vegetation and man-made materials left underwater, ultimately does not seem as serious as he claims it was. Perhaps the most damaging, the arrival of invasive species, he explains, could have been stopped if the two governments had taken action earlier in the life of the seaway to force ships to empty their bilge water before entering the St. Lawrence. Fish and birds have adjusted to the loss of their habitat by finding new ones. Damage to the eel population has been somewhat mitigated through the installation of eel ladders in the Moses-Saunders power dam.

Macfarlane's point, however, one he develops throughout the book, is that technology and government priorities trumped any local interests and environmental concerns. Coming off the management of large-scale endeavours in the Second

World War, with the economy booming and a new-found national confidence, the federal government engaged in a number of mega-projects, such as the Trans-Canada Pipeline, and the Trans-Canada Highway. Increasingly, government managed natural resources in order to build up the country, confident that science and technology could achieve any goal. Government could manage and structure society and the environment. This concept, which the author terms 'high modernism', encompasses using science, technology and social planning for nation building, social reconstruction, the creation of a bulwark against domination by the United States and defense in the Cold War against Communism. As he puts it in discussing the destruction of the 'Lost Villages' along the St. Lawrence and the consolidation of the people into modern towns, using the latest urban planning techniques: "Such plans imposed state-defined political, economic and social values, and enabled the Canadian state to control how these communities fit into the emerging postwar social order, so that they could be more fully integrated into the dominant political and industrial capitalist structures."

Macfarlane thus sees the destruction of a way of life as a failure of 'high modernism', as was the environmental damage. Even the difficulties experienced by engineers in holding the water level steady in the seaway after their models made them believe it would be easy, he says, shows the failure of the blind belief in science to reorder the world into a better place. Since the seaway and the power project have not lived up to claims and desires of their creators, while they were an impressive engineering achievement, "and there were certainly economic benefits, in hindsight the project should be considered a mistake" (207).

Whether or not one buys into the au-

thor's theory and his conclusion, this is a book that makes one think about what exactly the dual seaway/power project represents. Was it simply a grand scheme to improve the economy and boost national pride, or was it part of a broader scheme to create a new social and economic order in Canada? Certainly this book is aimed at an academic audience, with its extensive

discussion of theories of national development, but the casual reader should not be put off by this. The story of the seaway and power project is an intriguing one, and Daniel Macfarlane tells it well.

Ronald Stagg

Author, *The Golden Dream: A History of the St. Lawrence Seaway*

## *The 104th (New Brunswick) Regiment of Foot in the War of 1812*

By John R. Grodzinski

Fredericton, New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions & New Brunswick Military Heritage Project, 2014. 220 pages. \$18.95 paperback. ISBN 978-0-86492-447-6

In his new work John Grodzinski tackles the incredibly rich story of the New Brunswick Fencible Infantry, the singular regular regiment recruited from within British North America. The regiment was ultimately established and served as the 104th Regiment of Foot. In the 145 pages of text (plus appendices and endnotes) he distills the essence of the unit's organization, campaigns, exploits, and accomplishments, and introduces the reader to many colorful and significant individuals who helped shape what I would term a Canadian story.

The train of facts, figures, places, and persons appearing within such a short work are perhaps Mr. Grodzinski's significant contribution; the well-detailed endnotes and bibliography attest to the depth of his research and point the reader to the greater understanding of this premier unit.

In the book's Foreword, Donald E. Graves, speaking of the author, states: "He admirably dissects the complexities of the British Army's arcane system of organization, recruiting, and promotion." One can see this in Dr. Grodzinski's examples from

deep within the British Army's regulations, orders, and instructions, covering recruitment, enlistments, and transfers; the inclusion of foreigners and foreign deserters, convicts, and prisoners of war in the regimental structure; and the citing of physical characteristics to be possessed by a regimental soldier. He introduces the reader to the rations, provisions, baggage, boys, fifers, buglers, drummers, musicians, bands, and the wives and children who would accompany the regiment.

The book's initial chapter presents the atmosphere and times in which the unit was 'born' and discusses its fateful fifty-day mid-winter march from Fredericton, New Brunswick to Kingston. The February 1813 march, often termed "A March Upon Snow-shoes," to assist British forces fighting the Americans, found the regiment covering a distance of 1,100 kilometers (500 miles) in the harshest of winter conditions, trudging through the snow with the aid of common snow-shoes, dragging their supplies, weapons, and rations behind them on toboggan. Here the author introduces the reader to Lt. John LeCouteur, through