

## Acadiensis II

P. A. Buckner

Volume 1, numéro 1, autumn 1971

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad1\\_1ed01](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad1_1ed01)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

### ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer ce document

Buckner, P. A. (1971). Acadiensis II. *Acadiensis*, 1(1), 3–9.

## Acadiensis II

Perhaps it is a sign of our basic insecurity and of our immaturity as a nation that our historians are still obsessed with the great "national" themes and that local history, despite a recognition of its importance,<sup>1</sup> is more talked about than written. This problem is compounded by the relative scarcity of journals specializing in local or regional studies in Canada. To make the inevitable comparison, it has been estimated that there are over five hundred periodicals in the United States devoted solely to American history.<sup>2</sup> Many of these are of extremely limited value to the professional historian, but while it is fashionable to decry the overproduction that results from such a plethora of historical publications, nonetheless it is the existence of many excellent journals, devoted to specialized topics, that has broadened the historian's understanding of the American past and led to an increasingly complex and sophisticated American historiography. It would be difficult to find one-tenth that many journals in Canada and few of these have made a significant contribution to the development of regional studies. *The Canadian Historical Review*, as one observer noted on its fiftieth anniversary, has done very little to encourage local and regional history in Canada,<sup>3</sup> and despite the best intentions of its present editors,<sup>4</sup> it is unlikely to do very much more in the future. The real problem, as one of its former editors admitted, is that "while I personally believe that local history must become *la nouvelle vague* in Canadian studies, I feel a self-imposed pressure to act against my conviction in the selection of material for

1 See J. M. S. Careless, "Limited Identities' in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, L (1969), pp. 1-10 and Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Historical Writing" in R. H. Hubbard, ed., *Scholarship in Canada 1967* (Toronto, 1968), p. 81.

2 Robin W. Winks, *The Historian as Detective* (New York, 1969), p. xix.

3 J. M. S. Careless, "The Review Reviewed or Fifty Years with the Beaver Patrol," *Canadian Historical Review*, L1 (1970), p. 67.

4 Craig Brown and Michael Cross, "At the Beginning of Year 51," *Canadian Historical Review*, L1 (1970), p. 2.

## 4 *Acadiensis*

publication: if a submission deals with a “national” question, it has an immediate advantage over a local or provincial subject.”<sup>5</sup>

Not all regions are equally badly served. Quebec, where the value of history as a weapon in the battle for cultural survival has long been recognized, has a number of well-established and valuable journals. Each of the Western Provinces, which led the revolt against economic and cultural domination from Central Canada, has one or more journals that deal with local history. Ontario historians have never had a problem, for research into an Ontario topic is considered of national importance while similar research into the peripheral areas of Confederation is not. Moreover, *Ontario History* has become a journal no Canadian historian can ignore. Only in the Atlantic Provinces is there clearly a void that needs to be filled. The Nova Scotia Historical Society does publish valuable papers in its *Collections* and the occasional article appears in the *Dalhousie Review*, but there is not a single professional journal in the Atlantic region devoted solely to the history and society of that region. Ironically the history of the oldest communities in Canada remain largely neglected.

The history of the Atlantic region has not always been ignored. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of considerable historical productivity. Nova Scotia led in this development, particularly after the founding of the Nova Scotia Historical Society in 1878, but New Brunswick did not lag far behind. Beginning in the 1880's, the latter province was the scene of intense intellectual ferment, some of the reasons for which were analyzed many years ago in a brilliant interpretative article by Alfred G. Bailey.<sup>6</sup> Fredericton produced a school of poets whose work achieved national acclaim, while Saint John was the center of a number of important scholarly societies. Undoubtedly the most important of these was the Natural History Society of New Brunswick. Founded in 1862, the Natural History Society had produced by the 1880's a number of able scientists with national and even international reputations. Loring W. Bailey, Professor of Chemistry and Natural Science at the University of New Brunswick, and George F. Matthew, a customs collector in Saint John, became internationally famous as geologists. Montague Chamberlain, author of the first catalogue of Canadian birds, went on to become Secretary of the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. George Upham Hay, author of numerous articles on the flora of New Brunswick, became President of the Botanical Club of Canada, and Dr. William Francis Ganong became Professor of Botany at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, President of the American Botanical Society in 1908, and the author of several widely used textbooks on botany.<sup>7</sup> Since this was an age which con-

5 Ramsay Cook, “Good-Bye to All That,” *Canadian Historical Review*, XLIX (1968), p. 276.

6 “Creative Moments in the Culture of the Maritime Provinces,” *Dalhousie Review*, XXXIX (1949), pp. 231-44. Reprinted in G. A. Rawlyk, ed., *Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 229-41.

7 W. Austin Squires, *The History and Development of the New Brunswick Museum* (Saint John, 1945), pp. 11-16.

sidered history a science, many of the members of the Natural History Society were also active members of the New Brunswick Historical Society.

Founded in 1874, the New Brunswick Historical Society grew very slowly in its early years. During the devastation caused by the great Saint John fire of 1877, its records were lost and its members scattered, and only the dedication of its president, Joseph Wilson Lawrence, kept the organization alive. Thereafter, as Saint John began to rebuild both materially and culturally, the Society was resuscitated. It organized the Saint John Centennial celebrations of 1883 and gained new strength with the revival of interest in the Loyalists in the 1880's.<sup>8</sup> Many members of the New Brunswick Historical Society were also members of the New Brunswick Loyalist Society, which was founded in 1883 and reorganized on a more effective basis in 1889.<sup>9</sup> Since the upholders of the Loyalist tradition naturally put considerable stress upon history, there was a revived interest in recovering and revealing the past of the Maritime Provinces. In 1894 the New Brunswick Historical Society began to publish papers in its *Collections* and in 1898 the *New Brunswick Magazine* was established with the support of the Society. The main contributors to the *New Brunswick Magazine* were James Hannay, W. F. Ganong, and W. O. Raymond, all with Loyalist ancestry and all prominent members of the New Brunswick Historical Society. Although the *New Brunswick Magazine* published many valuable articles, the editor, William Kilby Reynolds, a Saint John journalist and a member of the New Brunswick Historical Society, resigned in 1899 to seek greener pastures and a job with Intercolonial Railway in Moncton and the journal, never a financial success, disappeared later that same year.<sup>10</sup>

Several efforts were made to secure a successor to the *New Brunswick Magazine* and, after receiving guarantees of financial assistance from several members of the New Brunswick Historical Society, David Russell Jack agreed to publish a second journal. Agent for the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company and Vice-Consul for Spain, Jack was a prominent Saint John businessman. Active in civic affairs and an enthusiastic promoter of his city, Jack was chairman of the committee which brought electric street-lighting to Saint John. An amateur architect, he helped design one of the city's first concrete buildings and owned and operated one of the city's first motion picture theatres. An avid traveller, publishing travel articles in the *Montreal Star*, the *Brooklyn Eagle* and various Saint John papers, he was a member of the New Brunswick Tourist Board, and owned a number of tourist cottages at Duck Cove, just outside Saint John.<sup>11</sup>

8 *Loyalists' Centennial Souvenir* (Saint John, 1887), pp. 1-4. On Lawrence see the obituary in *Acadiensis*, I (1901), pp. 43-45.

9 *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 2nd Series, IV (1898), p. xxvii.

10 David Russell Jack, "Acadian Magazines," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 2nd Series, IX (1903), pp. 193-194.

11 Charles G. D. Roberts and Arthur L. Turnbull, *A Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, 1934), I, pp. 279-280; Obituary in *St. John Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1913.

## 6 *Acadiensis*

Jack's consuming interest was the history of the Maritimes. An insatiable collector of antiquities, he amassed a huge collection of Maritime book-plates and old silver, a large library and an immense scrap-book of newspaper clippings. He was always in the forefront of any campaign for the preservation of an historic site or the erection of a commemorative plaque. Even as a youth he wrote a *Centennial Prize Essay on the History of the City and County of Saint John*,<sup>12</sup> for which he was awarded a \$200 prize by the Mechanics' Institute of Saint John.<sup>13</sup> For several years Corresponding Secretary of the New Brunswick Historical Society, he delivered numerous papers before that body and acted as secretary of the elaborate Champlain Tercentenary Celebrations of 1904.<sup>14</sup> Of Scottish descent, he was active in the Saint Andrew's Society, assisting his cousin, Isaac Allen Jack, in writing a history of the Society, and in the congregation of Saint Andrew's Church, of which he completed the official history a few months before his death in 1913.<sup>15</sup> Historian of the Loyalist Society, he published several articles on Loyalist genealogies, and prepared a large tome on the Loyalists of New Brunswick.<sup>16</sup> He also collected the materials for a history of the press in the Maritime Provinces. It was probably this latter interest which led him to agree to bring out a magazine.

Jack chose the name *Acadiensis* for the new journal because "Acadia is a title now recognized by the scientific world as applying to the territory embraced within the area of the Maritime Provinces, including a small portion of the Province of Quebec and the State of Maine, immediately adjacent. This is precisely the ground we wish to cover."<sup>17</sup> Dismayed by the monumental disinterest shown by Central Canadians in Maritime history and by the inadequate recognition given to "Acadian" artists, musicians and writers, Jack declared that "local history and the writings of local men of letters are particularly what is sought after."<sup>18</sup> *Acadiensis* was also to deal with "Acadiana, Genealogy, Folklore, Book-plates, Biography, Heraldry, Antiques of various descriptions which

12 (Saint John, 1883).

13 The book did not meet with unanimous praise. In the copy of Jack's book in the New Brunswick Museum there is a letter from W. K. Reynolds to W. F. Ganong, 21 December 1898, advising Ganong not to cite Jack's "prize essay which he pretended he wrote. You are probably aware that the whole of it is a huge steal from other writers, and that pages upon pages are stolen bodily without a quotation mark." Reynolds described Jack as "an elaborate filcher" and his book as "a stupendous fraud", but W. O. Raymond was somewhat kinder years later, describing Jack's work as an "inadequate little book" and pointing out that it was written when Jack was "little more than a school boy." New Brunswick Historical Society *Collections* IV, No. 12 (1928), p. 287.

14 For a description of the event see W. F. Ganong, "A Visitor's Impressions of the Champlain Tercentenary," *Acadiensis*, V (1905), pp. 15-23.

15 I. Allen Jack, *History of the St. Andrew's Society of Saint John* (Saint John, 1903); David Russell Jack, *History of Saint Andrew's Church, Saint John, N. B.* (Saint John, 1913).

16 The manuscript is in the Saint John Public Library, which also has Jack's Scrapbooks.

17 *Acadiensis*, I (1901), pp. 4-5.

18 Jack, "Acadian Magazines," p. 200.

are of local connection, etc., etc.”<sup>19</sup> An ardent proponent of Maritime Union,<sup>20</sup> which he believed would enable the Maritimes “to hold an equal place with the larger provinces of Quebec and Ontario.”<sup>21</sup> Jack wished to see “a united Acadia, in which the descendant of the Acadian Frenchman, and of the United Empire Loyalist, might join hand in hand, in a political union.”<sup>22</sup> *Acadiensis* was to create the sense of regional awareness upon which this union would be built.

Although Jack’s main concern was to stimulate regional pride by promoting things “Acadian”, he was infected by the spread of Canadian nationalism as the country began to recover in the early twentieth century from the great depression of the earlier period and as Saint John adjusted to the Canadian commercial system.<sup>23</sup> Intensely conservative, like most descendants of Loyalists, Jack accepted the myth that the Loyalists had brought the “better classes” of American society to Canada and supported the idea of imperial federation.<sup>24</sup> But he believed it was time to stop importing “our Bishops, our college Professors, our Clergy, and our other men of letters from older communities,”<sup>25</sup> and that “Canada should have a purely Canadian literature for the promotion of Canadian interests and the dissemination of Canadian thought.”<sup>26</sup> He condemned Canadian publishers and the Canadian reading public for preferring the “work of alien authors [rather] than that of the men and women of their own land.”<sup>27</sup>

Jack was himself the main contributor to *Acadiensis*. In addition to editing the journal, he wrote notes on the activities of prominent Maritimers, reviewed books, contributed series on Maritime book-plates, on old silver and on Church epitaphs, and wrote articles on the Indians of New Brunswick, the history of local newspapers, the geography of the Maritimes, the genealogy of Loyalists and even two articles on Russia, which he visited in 1905.

Jack’s work showed great industry but little originality, but this cannot be said of Dr. W. F. Ganong’s contributions. A school-mate of Jack, Ganong had promised to write one article for each issue and very nearly did so.<sup>28</sup> His articles on the historical geography of New Brunswick still remain instructive and

19 *Acadiensis*, VI (1906), p. 162.

20 The only contributions published in *Acadiensis* which were avowedly political were two articles by R. V. Harris on Maritime Union. See “The Union of the Maritime Provinces,” *Acadiensis*, VI (1906), pp. 172-184 and “The Advantages of the Union of the Maritime Provinces,” *Acadiensis*, VIII (1908), pp. 238-249.

21 *Acadiensis*, I (1901), p. 6.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

23 J. M. S. Careless, “Aspects of Metropolitanism in Atlantic Canada” in Mason Wade, ed., *Regionalism in the Canadian Community, 1867-1967* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 119-124.

24 *Acadiensis*, III (1903), p. 150; V (1905), p. 265.

25 *Acadiensis*, II (1902), p. 5.

26 *Acadiensis*, VII (1907), p. 182.

27 *Acadiensis*, VIII (1908), p. 340.

28 *Acadiensis*, VIII (1908), pp. 236-237.

## 8 *Acadiensis*

valuable. All the major contributors were members of the New Brunswick Historical Society: Jonas Howe, Clarence Ward, the Reverend R. R. McLeod, Gilbert O. Bent, and, of course, the Reverend W. O. Raymond. It is easy to criticize these amateur historians for their limitations of scope and intention and for the ephemeral value of much of what they wrote. But, whatever their faults, their desire for absolute accuracy was commendable and they preserved for future historians material which might otherwise have been lost forever.

In spite of the dedicated labours of the New Brunswick Historical Society, *Acadiensis* was never a financial success. The public response in Saint John was disappointing and Frederictonians studiously ignored the magazine.<sup>29</sup> The journal lost several hundred dollars each year, which Jack made up out of his own pocket. Finally in 1908, after publishing at great cost the whole text of J. W. Lawrence's *The Judges of New Brunswick and their Times*, Jack felt he could no longer absorb the losses.<sup>30</sup> After eight years, *Acadiensis*, described at the time as having "no rival among similar periodicals in its scholarly articles, artistic appearance and profuse illustrations,"<sup>31</sup> came to an end. Jack himself died five years later and although W. F. Ganong and W. O. Raymond continued to produce many valuable historical works well into the post-war period, the New Brunswick Historical Society languished. The 1920's and 1930's, the "Golden Age of Maritime Historiography," saw numerous publications by a very able group of professional scholars,<sup>32</sup> but no attempt was made to re-establish a journal which would provide a focal point for the study of the history of the Atlantic region.

In a recent article in the *Queen's Quarterly* George Rawlyk pointed to the considerable research now in progress on the history of the Atlantic region and predicted a second "Golden Age" of Maritime studies.<sup>33</sup> It is to provide an outlet for this research and to recover the past of the Atlantic region that *Acadiensis* has been revived. Devoted to focusing regional awareness, the journal will concentrate upon Atlantic Canada, but will include within its geographic scope not only the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland but also Gaspésie and Maine with further extensions into Central Canada and Northern New England when these seem relevant. Regional in its approach, *Acadiensis* welcomes American studies that enrich our understanding of communities on both sides of the American-Canadian border. European studies that impinge

29 *Acadiensis*, II (1902), pp. 3-6. When the Fredericton scholarly community produced the *Kit Bag*, a short-lived poetry magazine, Jack wrote: "How can any good thing come out of Fredericton?" *Acadiensis*, III (1903), p. 70.

30 *Acadiensis*, II (1902), pp. 3-6; III (1903), p. 246; VII (1907), pp. 168-169; VIII (1908), pp. 235-237.

31 George M. Wrong and H. H. Langton, *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada*, XIII (1908), p. 53.

32 G. A. Rawlyk, ed., *Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces*, pp. 4-5.

33 G. A. Rawlyk, "A New Golden age of Maritime Historiography?", *Queen's Quarterly*, 76 (1969), pp. 55-65.

upon the development of the Atlantic region are within the scope of the journal. History will be defined in its broadest sense, and we look forward to contributions from anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists, or practitioners of any other discipline that will further our knowledge of the history of the Atlantic region. Since the purpose of founding a new journal is mainly to encourage scholarship in an area badly neglected by historians and only infrequently dealt with in established journals, *Acadiensis* will publish major articles reviewing the published material now available and reports on the resources to be found in the archives of the region. Documents of general interest will be printed. In future issues a review section will be included and news of interest to historians concerned within the region will be carried.

The success of this new venture depends upon your support. We welcome the submission of manuscripts, in either English or French, and we invite your subscriptions and your comments.

P. A. BUCKNER