

Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach. BRUCE S. ELLIOTT. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988. xxviii, 372 p. ISBN 0-7735-0607-1 \$35.00 (cloth).

Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1815-1922. DONALD HARMAN AKENSON. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988. xiv, 237 p. ISBN 0-7735-0636-5 \$29.95 (cloth).

Archivists are only too aware of the tremendous growth of interest in genealogy and local history over the past two decades. Search rooms are filled with individuals tracing their ancestors. There is a high demand for basic statistical information such as that found in censuses and assessment rolls, and the volume of published genealogies and local histories expands almost geometrically. Among all these enthusiasts can be found a considerable number of scholarly researchers: demographers, historians, anthropologists, and others. One type of local and family history which has interested scholars is the immigration case study. Such studies are complex since all the work of a local study — identifying the players, and placing their contributions and significance in a broader context — must be done at least twice, for a locality in Canada and for one abroad. In spite of such difficulties, immigration studies are increasing in number in Canada, and Bruce Elliott's *Irish Migrants in the Canadas* is an excellent example of scholarly commitment to this field.

In *Irish Migrants*, Elliott has traced the emigration in the nineteenth century of a group of 775 families from Ireland to Upper Canada. This group originated in North Tipperary, in the geographic centre of what is now the republic of Ireland; the families were Protestant in religion and were recruited primarily from the descendants of English settlers in Ireland. Elliott's choice of the Protestant community of North Tipperary was based on practical considerations of the quality of the archival record and on the varied surnames used by Protestant families, but the group cannot be considered representative of the county from which it was drawn since the population of Tipperary was overwhelmingly Roman Catholic and native Irish by origin. After 1815, Protestant families in North Tipperary chose emigration to Canada because rapid population growth, minimal industrial development, and agricultural improvement offered little possibility of obtaining land for their families. The 775 families who came to Canada had very modest amounts of capital which could finance the acquisition of larger land holdings in the British colonies. The first successful emigration occurred in 1818 and resulted in the creation of two major North Tipperary colonies, in the area north of London, and in the Ottawa Valley. These settlements attracted a steady stream of arrivals as families used the information provided by their kin about opportunities in Canada to direct their migration there. Between 1820 and 1854 an average of ten North Tipperary families settled in Canada every year, with the exception of 1830-34 when over ninety families arrived in the colony.

Studies such as *Irish Migrants* have a great deal to offer the local historian and genealogist, as indicated by the high level of sales which the volume has already achieved. For some, Elliott's book will provide crucial bits of information about their ancestors, but for a far larger community, it will offer guidance as to what a local

history or a genealogy might contain, where in archives, libraries, and elsewhere information might be found, and how the work might be presented to the public. Elliott's work should also serve to raise the profile of the genealogist among historians in particular, since it is the detailed reconstruction of 775 family genealogies which forms the basis for his scholarly conclusions. Elliott's study of the North Tipperary Irish also documents one of the distinct regional British and Irish traditions which was transplanted to Canada. It is unfortunate, however, that *Irish Migrants* focuses so exclusively on economic and geographic aspects of Irish Protestant emigration from North Tipperary. Social relations with the rest of the community, whether in Ireland or in Canada, are discussed only at a general level, and the reader wonders, for instance, what sort of world view these emigrants held. Clearly the North Tipperary Protestants brought to Canada something more than a desire to better their children's economic prospects. How much of an impact did they have on shaping the conservative and Protestant traditions in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ontario?

Donald Akenson would perhaps answer that question with a suggestion that Irish Protestant and Catholic emigrants to Canada differed from each other less than we had assumed. In *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1815-1922*, Akenson presents a study of the two communities, analysing the demographic behaviour of Ireland's Catholic and Protestant population, both at home and abroad. Using published census data from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada — much of which is summarized in the extensive appendices to the book — Akenson demonstrates that Irish Protestants and Catholics have a similar demographic profile when variables such as social class or length of settlement in the new land are allowed for. He then argues that social practices such as the forbidding of inter-faith marriages and the development of the separate school system were designed to keep the Protestant and Catholic communities separate, in spite of their demographic similarity. Ironically both groups turned to religion, which emphasized their differences from each other, when faced with the radical transformation of Irish society and its economy in the nineteenth century.

Small Differences is a valuable study for its use of comparative statistical information to understand a widely scattered, bitterly divided and highly politicized community. What Akenson clearly demonstrates is how much silly, at times even racist, writing has been published on demographic differences between Irish Protestant and Catholic communities. Partisans of both sides have, for instance, argued that rates of premarital sex were significantly lower among their own adherents than among those of the other faith, while Akenson suggests that the rates were in fact quite similar. But if the two communities can be characterized by a single demographic profile, what remains to be examined is the mentalité and social processes which produced the fission which divides the two major religious communities in Ireland. Akenson's work will enrage many readers with its ironic tone and myth-destroying arguments, but it deserves to be read for the justifiable critique it offers of much of what has passed for scholarly work on Irish ethnicity.

Marianne McLean
National Archives of Canada