

**Johnson, J.K. *Becoming Prominent: Regional Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791-1841*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989. Pp. xi, 277. \$29.95**

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Volume 21, Number 2, March 1993

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016804ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016804ar>

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Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Lockwood, G. (1993). Review of [Johnson, J.K. *Becoming Prominent: Regional Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791-1841*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989. Pp. xi, 277. \$29.95]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 21(2), 126–127. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016804ar>

Athenian tribute lists, particularly that of 441, to estimate the size and resources of Aegean cities. Finally, Michael Jameson considers private space and the Greek city: going beyond his title, which implies a focus on private and public space, he also offers a sensitive treatment of the social functions of the private house.

The six chapters collected under the sub-title 'the institutions of the city' are varied in theme, approach and emphasis. Three are general studies. Pauline Schmitt-Pantel and Emily Kearns concentrate on theoretical issues of interpretation: the former uses the banquet to consider the relationship between 'collective activities and the political,' while the latter identifies common features in the varied figures who saved cities in myth and history. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood gives a detailed and subtle answer to the question: what is polis religion?, but the completely uninitiated reader will receive more enlightenment from the chapter 'The Country of the Gods' in R. Osborne's *Classical Landscape with Figure* (London, 1987), 165-192, which she seems nowhere to mention. The other three chapters concentrate on Athens, in two cases exclusively. David Lewis discusses public property in the city: although he casts his net as wide as possible, the relevant evidence is mainly from Athens—and suggests that the city may have owned more than one thousand public slaves in the fourth century. Robin Osborne recapitulates and refines the central thesis of his book *Demos: The Discovery of Classical Attica* (Cambridge, 1985) that participation in the communal activities of the local demes throughout Attica was as important for the functioning of Athenian democracy as involvement in the direct democratic government of the city. The argument here proceeds from the inscribed decisions of corporate bodies that survive at Rhamnusi

(in northeast Attica close to the crossing to Euboea): fifty-two are listed, two quoted and translated in full. Mogens Herman Hansen considers the political powers of the Athenian courts: the evidence is set out clearly, precise questions are asked, relevant modern analogies are adduced—and the stunning conclusion is drawn that 'the rate of political trials of generals in classical Athens seems to match the French revolution under Robespierre.'

Oswyn Murray contributes a somewhat disjointed introductory theoretical essay on 'Cities of Reason' that has already been published in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 28 (1987), 325-341. The original publication includes several pages of critical comments by Hansen (pp. 341-346): unfortunately, instead of reproducing these, Murray offers a perfunctory restatement of his belief that Athens was not 'an exceptional Greek city that should be analysed in terms different from those used for Sparta and other cities'—an issue that deserved full and explicit treatment as central to the subject of the volume. By contrast, the concluding essay by W.G. Runciman, which describes itself as 'an exercise in comparative sociology,' is an intellectually disciplined, clearly argued and thought-provoking interpretation of the Greek citizen-state as 'an evolutionary dead-end:' it argues that even Athens, Sparta and Corinth, which alone of Greek cities of the period had the potential to evolve into a more enduring form of polity than the citizen-state, were prevented by their very structure and organisation from breaking out of the constraints imposed by the legal and customary institutions characteristic of the *polis*.

The book by E.J. Owens offers a clear, competent, unpretentious and reliable account of Greek, Hellenistic, Etruscan and Roman town planning down to c. 200 A.D., illustrated by more than fifty

schematic plans closely keyed to the text. It is presumably the publisher who has given it a title which suggests that the author has written a general book on the ancient city comparable, for example, to Frank Kolb's excellent *Die Stadt im Altertum* (Munich, 1984). What Owens does, he does well: potential readers (and potential purchasers) who want an up-to-date and accurate survey of town planning in the Greek and Roman world should not be deterred by a title that seems to promise something else.

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**Johnson, J.K. *Becoming Prominent: Regional Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791-1841*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989. Pp. xi, 277. \$29.95.**

At a time when many excellent studies on Upper Canada are being published, Keith Johnson has produced an indispensable reference work with significant implications for the larger historiography of Ontario. *Becoming Prominent* is a collective biography or prosopography of the 283 members of the Upper Canadian House of Assembly. Johnson admits at the outset that these men were not ordinary, nor typical, nor representative Upper Canadians, nor is this book in any way concerned with what went on in the legislature. Rather, this study is about prominence at the provincial and local levels, and about the economic, social and political ingredients that went into the making of regionally prominent politicians. This study seeks to answer the basic question: how was prominence achieved? Johnson does not presume to offer definitive conclusions, based as this study is on sometimes fragmentary, sometimes dubious evidence, but instead he attempts "to identify some trends and collective characteristics that can be

applied to the careers of one set of prominent Upper Canadians during a period of about fifty years."

Although Johnson admits that the MHAs he is studying were but one set of prominent Upper Canadians, he contends that they are quite suitable representatives of prominence, with most of them bearing a triple stamp of approval, even if some were surrogates for greater prominence. Most of the members, before becoming provincial politicians, had achieved important local distinction in being appointed as magistrates and officers of the provincial militia. To be so appointed they needed the support of both the local "oligarchy" and the central elite. To this double official stamp of approval was added that of the property-owning portion of the population who were entitled to vote.

In studying 283 MHAs, Johnson assesses biographical information under five broad headings: occupational choice, wealth and land ownership, local office-holding, patronage and status, and the nature of parliamentary representation. In order to measure change over time, and to compensate for the obvious discrepancy in the size of the legislature from seventeen persons in 1792 to seventy in 1841, Johnson artificially creates two groups for the sake of comparison. Group A consists of members serving from 1792 to 1820, in contrast with Group B that consists of members sitting in the House from 1830 to 1841. Sixty-nine pages of this volume are devoted to brief biographies of the MHAs.

So, what do we learn about these regional leaders of Upper Canada? First, farming was the predominant occupation, followed by public service, merchandising, and more distantly by milling and the law. Although farming declined as an occupation as commerce and law became more favoured routes to obtain wealth, it remained the leading occupation. There are few concrete conclusions

that Johnson has deduced about wealth. Wealth was most likely to be associated with mercantile activity, it often was related to non-business activities such as public office, the Scottish were more likely to be wealthy than other national or ethnic groups, and it was best to arrive early and stay in one advantageous spot. The politically prominent sought prosperity through multiple occupations, but for most a political career was firmly grounded on the building blocks of becoming civil magistrates and holding commissions in the militia. These were appointed positions, with the central elite obviously favouring those with pro-administration leanings over Reformers; favouring Anglicans and Presbyterians over Methodists and other dissenters; favouring Scottish and English immigrants over Irish, American- and native-born; and favouring those who were regarded as being particularly loyal and respectable. To be at all perceived as somehow connected with the United States, American democracy and Ireland militated against being appointed to the magistrate and militia officer positions that were key to political success.

In showing that the Irish were virtually absent in civil and military appointments and severely under-represented as elected MHAs, Johnson argues that the bias of the provincial administration effectively worked against the Irish being elected as members. Johnson suggests that this modifies the buoyant conclusions of Donald Akenon about Irish immigrants becoming successful and prospering members of Upper Canadian society. Surely the significant point is how over-represented Scottish immigrants were in the legislature. Considering that most Irish immigrants arrived in Upper Canada during the last dozen of the fifty years under study, they were more likely to be concerned with establishing themselves on farms than with becoming politically prominent. If Ogle Gowan was a rare Irish immigrant member in the Upper

Canadian assembly, the number of Irish elected increased in the union period, only to decline in the decades following Confederation.

This volume is an indispensable reference work in that it offers a province-wide base of information that Johnson uses to appraise previous hypotheses and present general trends. In terms of urban representation, for example, he concludes that Reform candidates made almost no headway in the towns, and that urban property-owning voters identified strongly with the economic outlook of local Conservative candidates and that of the provincial elite. This book has significant implications for the larger historiography of Ontario by revealing the relative significance of ethnicity, nationality and religion in the formative years. It provides a stringent rebuttal to the reckless judgment of an Ontario historian some fifteen years ago that ethnicity had no significance for the immigrant groups scrambling for economic success in Upper Canada.

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Little, J.I. *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. (Studies on the History of Quebec/Études d'histoire du Québec, 2.) Pp. xxii, 368. Illustrations, maps, bibliography and index. \$44.95 cloth.

In *Crofters and Habitants* J.I. Little has produced an invaluable case study of a settler society in Winslow township, Quebec. He makes thorough use of the primary sources available using a variety of methodological techniques to extract information from the manuscript censuses, registry office title documents and parish records. The large number of