

*Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert
Craig Brown* Edited by David MacKenzie

Ronald G. Haycock

Volume 99, Number 1, Spring 2007

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1065808ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065808ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (print)

2371-4654 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Haycock, R. G. (2007). Review of [*Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown* Edited by David MacKenzie]. *Ontario History*, 99(1), 128–130. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065808ar>

tion in the 1980s, and the Toronto Power station remains abandoned and rusting by the rapids after more than three decades. It is not too much to ask that a book of this kind should do a bit more than celebrate the history of a company and its people; it should also make a strong case for the historic place itself.

In sum, *Niagara Power* is a worthy documentation of parts of the history of the Canadian Niagara Power Company by itself, but a less successful account of the origins and physical presence of its generating station at the lip of Niagara Falls. We can hope that the powerhouse will still be around for a second and augmented edition of the book when the time comes.

Mark Fram
University of Toronto

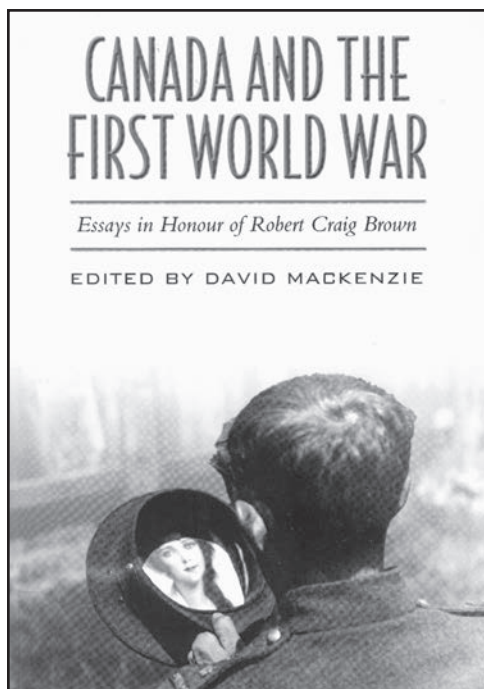
Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown

Edited by David MacKenzie. University of Toronto Press, 2005. xii + 452 pp. Illustrated. \$65.00 hardcover. ISBN 0-8020-3573-6. \$29.95 softcover. ISBN 0-8020-8445-1.

This collection of essays in honour of one of Canada's foremost historians, R. Craig Brown, indeed is a *festschrift*. But it is much more than that; it is also a volume that concentrates solely on the experience of Canada and Canadians in the Great War. As such it has far more utility and likely afterlife than the usual compendium of disparate papers. Furthermore, the basic theme of all fifteen contributions is to test the conventional wisdom that the Great War was the jolting catalyst for the transformation of Canada. This inspira-

Bibliography:

- Denison, Merrill. *The People's Power: The History of Ontario Hydro*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1960.
- Fram, Mark, "Niagara's Falls, Toronto's power: the value and conservation of a monumental hydro-electric generating station," in Fram, Mark, and John Weiler, eds. *Continuity with Change*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984, 257-321.
- Naylor, R. T. *The History of Canadian Business, 1867-1914*. Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006; originally published Toronto: Lorimer, 1975.
- Nelles, H.V. *The Politics of Development: Forests, Mines and Hydro-electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1974.



tion comes from Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook's book of thirty years ago, *Canada: a*

Nation Transformed.

Divided into four parts, the collection explores a variety of topics starting with David MacKenzie's fine introductory synthesis and Ramsay Cook's sensitive reminiscences about his close friend Brown and his work. The other three sections cover fighting the war, the home front, and war's aftermath. Military events, political leadership, French Canada's isolation and linguistic tension, ethnic and class relations, regional reactions, conscription, science and industry, support for soldiers' families, women and war, mass culture and nationalism, Canada and the Paris Peace talks, and war in memory are the study topics. Each scholar analyses the war experience in light of his or her own established expertise, asking how Canadians experienced that cataclysm and questioning the way it has been thought of and written about. As MacKenzie notes, these contributors – Terry Copp, John English, Margaret Macmillan, Jonathan Vance and Patrice Dutil, Desmond Morton, Douglas McCalla, Joan Sangster and J.L. Granatstein, Rod Millard, Paul Litt, Adam Crerar, Donald Avery, and David Mackenzie himself – collectively represent a cross-section of leading scholars studying Canada and the Great War. Readers of *Ontario History* will recognize that Ontario figures prominently in the lives and stories related by these scholars.

There is not the space in this slim review to detail each of these fifteen excellent articles. Just a few will have to suffice and the first and the last connect the findings of all. Terry Copp's survey of the Canadian military effort 1914-1918 sets the revisionist tone for the entire volume. He challenges the common interpretations that the conflict was an exercise in futility that victimized unknowing, and thereby misled, Canadians. As such wisdom goes, ordinary people quickly fell prey to the powerful and soulless forces of economics and technology. They

were then manipulated by governments and their impersonal bureaucracies. Finally, they were offered up to the military "donkeys" at the front. Ironically, coupled with this view is that in their sacrifice Canadians gave birth to a new nationalism through victory in great but bloody battles. Such interpretations, Copp points out, served to promote "literary, political and cultural agendas" (p. 35) of those far removed from the people who actually experienced the war. He then goes on to make it clear that if historians are to understand what happened and why, they must get down to what Martin Stephen describes as "the reality of the war and the society which produced it." After all, Copp notes that members of the generation that participated in the conflict "were not concerned with the views of later generations." (p. 35) He then sets out to look at the events of the military experience, and to introduce readers to the way a new generation of scholars has interpreted that reality. Even Sam Hughes, that historians' perennial "madman," has some redeeming features among his errors of judgment.

The intervening articles demonstrate clearly that the transformation of Canada was at best very uneven in spite of the fact that the war experience was perceived to be one of great upheaval. It certainly was one of monumental loss. They also point out that Canadian life did not change as much as the perception made it appear. In his "Remembering Armageddon," Jonathan Vance shows how Canadians grieved over a human loss on a scale that they had never experienced before. But he also finds that for most of them, their sorrow comes from nineteenth century traditions, values and sensibilities. This then suggests, as most of the papers do, that the war was positioned at the end of an age rather than being the beginning of one. Indeed, by 1914, most Canadians had no idea what they were getting into or the way

that it would turn out, but their society was already well into its transformation.

This is a very good book and it will live longer than most *festschriften*. It is a fitting tribute to R. Craig Brown.

Ronald G. Haycock
Royal Military College of Canada

Bibliography:

Brown, Robert Craig, and Ramsay Cook. *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*. Toronto; McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

Stephen, Martin. *The Price of Pity: Poetry, History and Myth in the Great War*. London: Leo Cooper, 1996. p. xv.

Rockefeller, Carnegie, & Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada

By Jeffrey D. Brison. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. xiv + 282 pp. \$75.00 hardcover. ISBN 0-7735-2868-7.

It would seem as though the historical examination of large-scale philanthropic giving is gaining momentum. Since 2005 alone there has been a spate of monographs published which deal with the influence of various Rockefeller philanthropic gifts in the first half of the twentieth century. I include in this list books by Birn and Lawrence, as well as my own. However, whereas these three concentrate on the impact of Rockefeller philanthropies on medical education and public health, Brison ambitiously chooses to examine the impact of both the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation on the arts and letters in Canada from 1927 to 1957, the era preceding establishment of the Canada Council.

The idea for this monograph originated with Brison's master's thesis in the History Department at Queen's University in which he compared the work-relief system of Canada's Department of National Defence with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the New Deal in the United States. Brison writes in his

Preface that he has always had "an unusual preoccupation with contrasting Canadian and American identities – mythologized, essentialized or otherwise "imagined." (p. vii) When he realized the American Carnegie Corporation had been supporting Canadian art and culture since the 1930s, he "knew what [his] next study was going to be about." (p. viii) This monograph is the result.

Brison divides *Rockefeller, Carnegie, & Canada* into three parts. The first sets the context of the relationship between Canadian culture and American wealth in the era before Ottawa took over support for the arts in Canada. It outlines how the Carnegie Corporation (1911) and the Rockefeller Foundation (1914) were established and discusses early philanthropic projects in Canada in the 1910s and 1920s. As Brison writes, "in this period of limited contact, American philanthropy played a small but significant part in a more general campaign to reform Canadian culture." (p. 45)

Through his Special Fund (later titled the British Dominions and Colonies Fund), Carnegie supported Canadians and Canadian projects with almost \$10 million between 1911 and 1935. One area touted was higher education, and institutions