

*In Duty Bound: Men, Women, and the State in Upper Canada  
1793-1841* by J.K. Johnson

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he was in fact de Gaulle's representative whose mission was to fuse together myriad groups. Courteaux appears to have missed the extensive use Marc Ferro makes of Dupuy's papers in his biography of Pétain, and Ferro's observation that wartime Québec resembled Vichy without the Germans. On page 75, Courteaux notes that in 1941 "Darlan was ready to negotiate with the enemy" -- when Germany had ceased being "the enemy" since the armistice of June 1940. The work of Christine Levisse-Touzé and Jacques Cantier might have altered Courteaux' view of General Maxime Weygand and the situation in North Africa. Lastly, Courteaux did not consult William Christian's *Divided Island*, which would have provided insight for his section on Saint-Pierre and Miquelon.

There is scant discussion of Québec and Canada as societies. Jeffrey Keshen's splendid *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers* is not cited. In fact, the bibliography contains many glaring holes. Whether or not one agrees with her methodology and conclusions, Esther Delisle's research has left a

mark and should be discussed. Most strikingly, given that Robert Rumilly's name does appear in the bibliography, his role in championing a notorious Vichy criminal after the war should have come up.

When the home front in Canada is discussed, as a non-expert I find myself unconvinced. Courteaux suggests that the crisis in France "became an excellent excuse for anti-war and anti-British sentiments" in Québec. This is a bit of a chicken or egg question, but did the anti-war sentiment not trump the question of France? Courteaux takes the *Globe and Mail* to task for calling Vichy fascist and for supporting General Charles de Gaulle. Were such opinions "virulently simplistic arguments" as Courteaux contends (88), or were they more or less prescient? Finally, Quebecers who volunteered to fight for Canada in France are largely absent here; the work of Yves Tremblay might have helped on this score.

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## *In Duty Bound*

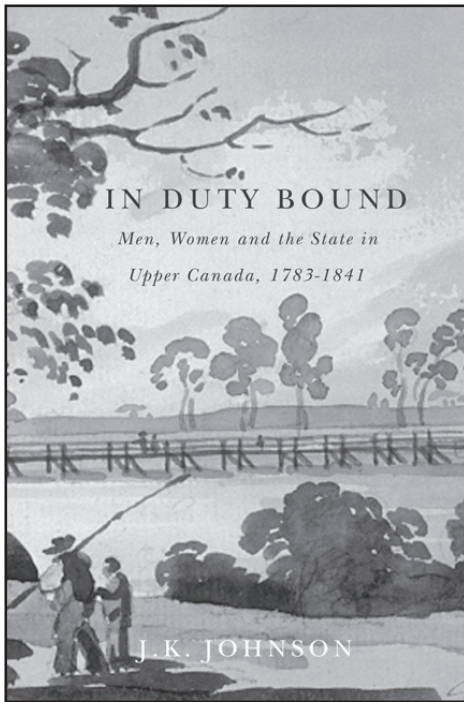
*Men, Women, and the State in  
Upper Canada 1793-1841*

By J.K. Johnson

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. 320 pages. \$100.00 hardcover.  
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ISBN 978-0-77354-278-5. ([www.mqup.ca](http://www.mqup.ca))

It is tempting to see Keith Johnson's *In Duty Bound Men, Women, and the State in Upper Canada 1783-1841* as the culmination of a life's work on Upper Canada, so broad is it in its scope, but to do so would

suggest his other work on the colony was only a prelude to this work, an assessment which would not give adequate credit to his earlier publications. Nevertheless, this is a book that, no doubt, draws on material that Johnson has collected over the years, as well as many documents and publications amassed specifically for this study. As the author explains in his introduction, he is trying to "expand even further the boundaries of what can be known about the lives and experiences of the Upper Canadian population", "by exploring the relationship between the people of Upper Canada and the Upper Canadian state..." (p. 4), building on past studies of portions of the population and on studies of limited aspects of



the subject.

Johnson draws on a vast knowledge of existing literature on the interaction of government with the people in Upper Canada, to which he adds new information drawn from petitions sent to different branches of the administration by ordinary citizens. The work is divided into six chapters corresponding to different interactions between the people and government, which was represented by the lieutenant governor, the executive council, the legislative council, and the assembly, plus their subsidiaries, local government (the magistrates and a few locally appointed/elected minor officials), and the courts. In order, the chapters deal with acquiring land, the most important activity involving government for the majority in Upper Canada, working in and for the government, being paid for government authorized work, acquiring government pensions, teaching and supervising

teachers, going to court, and seeking help when in economic distress.

Anyone familiar with the history of Upper Canada has a sense that government was disorganized and complex, despite having relatively few officials and employees. Johnson not only illustrates and explains the complexity, but shows consequences from this situation. The failure of many citizens to take the last step to get legal title to their land and the long term legal problems this created for their heirs and for the government, he illustrates, was a consequence of a complex and expensive process involving multiple officials and considerable time.

In other chapters, he provides additional revelations about the interaction of the provincial administration and its people. Given records often were not kept, as required, or have disappeared over time, or could not be located, evidence is often fragmentary, but is suggestive of certain conclusions. For instance, looking at the small percentage of surviving records of local common schooling, the author finds information that contradicts what is often thought about the subject. The anti-American Family Compact, who dominated the appointed positions in government, complained that the schools in Upper Canada were in imminent danger of being taken over by American teachers, who would teach the principles of American democracy and undermine British values. Historians have tended not to question whether there were American teachers in the system. In the limited area where records exist, the author found almost no Americans teaching in the common schools. He could not, of course, deal whether there were Americans teaching in the many unofficial schools, set up by parents who did not have access to government ones, but the available evidence suggests that, at least in

the government schools, about which the Family Compact were concerned, American teachers were not a threat.

What is an even greater revelation is the fact that, at least in the limited area for which information is available, there was a significant proportion of female students, and female teachers. The assumption of many who have written about Upper Canada is that education, even of a primary nature, as offered in common schools, was largely pursued by boys, and equally, that teaching in government schools was mainly a male occupation until a later period. While Johnson does not claim that his limited sample is indicative of the situation in the whole of the colony, his evidence does suggest that there may be another dimension to public education in Upper Canada.

In areas where his information contradicts or qualifies previous studies, the author points out the different conclusions and why he feels his evidence is stronger (see for example pp. 192-195). When there is not enough information to create a clear picture of how government and people interacted on a particular subject, he provides numerous examples of individuals who petitioned the government about the matter, sometimes drawing conclusions from the material and, at others, leaving it up to the reader to draw conclusions. In these instances it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the episodic evidence. This technique is what makes this publication more suitable for historians and serious students of Upper Canadian history than for the general reader with an interest in the colony. The extensive case studies and numerous statistical charts offer valuable insight but do not make for an easy read. The casual reader may find it easier to dip into the more approachable sections, such as that explaining the humourously complex nature of government organization, or

the difficulty which the poor and distressed had in getting assistance from government.

What Johnson has done is to provide some new insights into the lives of average Upper Canadians and, where other information may exist, to create a firm foundation for future studies. It is unfortunate, for instance, that Johnson did not have access to the recently published study of the lives of workers on the Rideau Canal by Robert Passfield, *Military Paternalism, Labour and the Rideau Canal Project*, which offers an alternative view of how workers were treated, to that which Johnson describes on the basis of William N.T. Wylie's work (pp. 87-88). By the same token, when discussing early court cases, and how they involved much more in the way of violent crime than in later years, Johnson might have made use of Passfield's earlier work on the building of the Rideau, *Building the Rideau Canal: a Pictorial History*, and both an earlier work covering the building of the first Welland Canal, *The Great Swivel Link: Canada's Welland Canal* and the more recent *The Great National Object Building the Nineteenth-Century Welland Canals*, both works by Roberta M. Styran and Robert R. Taylor. These publications provide more information on violent crime and its causes, specifically related to work on the canals.

There comments should not be seen as significant criticism of what is a major accomplishment and a valuable addition to the literature on the history of Upper Canada. If there is anything lacking, it is the historical records that would have allowed the author to flesh out the image of how the people of Upper Canada interacted with their government in a number of aspects of their lives. With this book, we know a good deal more on the subject than we did before.

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