

A review for the Nova Scotia Historical Society by Jeff Turner.

The majority of writers of history have a point to prove or a thesis to put forward with their narratives. Although these works can provide the reader with new and interesting insights into the past they often presuppose a firm grasp of both local landscape and historical context. For those with a keen interest in history this does not necessarily present a problem, as one is either already familiar with the material or will endeavour to acquire a deeper understanding of the subject at hand by reading additional texts to fill any information gaps. For the more casual reader of history, however, many written works are cast aside as they appear too daunting to consume and comprehend.

Nova Scotia's history is fascinating to say the least and thus it is a shame that so many great historical works go unread by a wider audience.

Peter Landry in his book *The Lion & The Lily* bridges the gap between academic writing and popular narrative. He has, simply put, developed a straight forward, entertaining, yet detailed historical account of the first 160 years (1600-1760) of the French and English struggle to control Acadia/Nova Scotia. Despite his obvious Acadian ancestry, the author has created a balanced and detailed telling of the story.

Potential readers may be initially taken aback by the book's 1008 pages. By any standard, a book of this length, or perhaps we should call it a tome, might appear intimidating. Yet on closer inspection, the layout of the book makes it very approachable. Written as a series of 78 historical essays, contained in 7 parts, the short length of each allows the reader to ease into the story and then get carried along until, in the words of the author, turn "metamorphic like" into a history.

For those who seek a comprehensive story, the text works masterfully, laying before the reader an exciting tale full of new beginnings, war, intrigue, murder, adventure and conquest. The story opens with the early investigation of the Nova Scotia coast by European fisherman and explorers and progresses through the establishment of the first French colony and the genesis of the Acadian people. It then delves into the development of the region as a contested borderland between two great empires and explores the establishment of the fortified marches anchored by French Louisbourg on one side and English Halifax on the other. Landry concludes with the regions involvement in the Seven Years War through the telling of the tragedy of the Grand Derangement and the second siege of Louisbourg. The layout is clear and logical, guiding the reader through the great flow of people and events in the old Acadian period. In the end, the reader is left with a sound understanding of the progress of our early history.

For those who are familiar with the early history of Nova Scotia, the true value of *The Lion & The Lily* may rest in its use as a reference guide. We all need to refresh our memory of particular historic episodes and individuals from time to time. The detailed Table of Contents combined with the essay chapter structure enables the reader to quickly locate information while providing a comprehensive narrative of events and people. You may be tempted to read ahead but this is an impulse generated by the author's easy writing style, not a lack of detail, and the need to find additional information on the topic you were originally seeking a refresh on. Furthermore, every chapter is thoroughly annotated, with the endnotes comprising nearly one third of the text. The reference sources contain just about every readily available primary source document and most of the major books and papers published over the past century and beyond. The four indexes (General, People, Places and Vessels) augment the value as a reference guide.

The Lion & The Lily is a well organized and documented history of Nova Scotia that both academics and casual readers will find informative and entertaining.