

When the Personal is Historical

WHETHER CORRESPONDENCE, LIFE WRITINGS, or other personal records, first-person sources have long been a staple for scholars from biographers to historians of cultural production and social practices in particular places. The two books reviewed here – Ruth Compton Brouwer’s *All Things in Common: A Canadian Family and Its Island Utopia* and Michael Boudreau and Bonnie Huskins’s *Just the Usual Work: The Social Worlds of Ida Martin, Working-Class Diarist*¹ – share a number of common themes with key works in Atlantic Canadian history that primarily use private records. But these two books are distinctive in that they focus on a family during more than one generation and, in Brouwer’s case, during more than one century.²

Many studies based on correspondence and life writings have focused on individuals, key moments, or particular themes. In Atlantic Canada, seafarers and their families³ along with those engaged in other specialized occupations such as medicine⁴ created life writings shaped by particular kinds of work. Loyalist⁵ and European settlers wrote about migration experiences shaped

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- 1 Ruth Compton Brouwer, *All Things in Common: A Canadian Family and Its Island Utopia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021); Michael Boudreau and Bonnie Huskins, *Just the Usual Work: The Social Worlds of Ida Martin, Working-Class Diarist* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021).
 - 2 The only academic counterpart for this region is Robert M. Mennel’s *Testimonies and Secrets: The Story of a Nova Scotia Family, 1844-1977* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).
 - 3 Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914* (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 4-6; Joanne Ritchie, “Amelia Holder,” in *The Small Details of a Life Twenty Diaries by Women in Canada, 1830-1996*, ed. Kathryn Carter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 95-100.
 - 4 J.T.H. Connor, “Putting the ‘Grenfell Effect’ in Its Place: Medical Tales and Autobiographical Narratives in Twentieth-Century Newfoundland and Labrador,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 77-118.
 - 5 Gwendolyn Davies, “The Diary of Sarah Frost, 1783: The Sounds and Silences of a Woman’s Exile,” *Papers of The Bibliographical Society of Canada* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 57-69; Hector Maclean, John G. Reid, Jo Currie, and Keith Mercer, *Hector Maclean: The Writings of a Loyalist-Era Military Settler in Nova Scotia* (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2015); Bonnie Huskins, “‘New Hope’ in Shelburne: Loyalist Dreams in the Journal of British Engineer William Booth, 1780s-90s,” in *The Consequences of Loyalism: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Calhoun*, ed. Rebecca Brannon and Joseph S. Moore (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2019); G. Patrick O’Brien, “‘Gilded Misery’: The Robie Women in Loyalist Exile and Repatriation, 1775-1790,” *Acadiensis* 49, no. 1 (Spring/printemps 2020): 39-68.

Lane, “When the Personal is Historical,” *Acadiensis* 52, no. 1 (Spring/printemps 2023): 147-157.

by contemporary forces and events.⁶ The centenary of the First World War has drawn greater attention to first-person sources from soldiers, military nurses, and families on the home front, inspiring new studies as well as contextualized editions of war diaries such as those published by Island Studies Press or in the New Brunswick Military Heritage Series.⁷ Studies of outmigration from the region, a subtheme for some family members in *All Things in Common*, also rely on first-person sources, whether family correspondence or personal recollections.⁸ In many life writings from Atlantic Canada, work, family, and local community⁹ combine with broader themes from the history of childhood and the life course¹⁰ or even

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- 6 Dirk Hoerder, "Immigrants in a Settled Society: The Maritimes," in *Creating Societies: Immigrant Lives in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), Chap. 4; Max Vanger and Robert H. Babcock, "A Jewish Immigrant in the Maritimes: The Memoirs of Max Vanger," *Acadiensis* 16, no. 1 (Autumn/automne 1986): 136-48; Sam Migliore and A. Evo Dipierro, *Italian Lives, Cape Breton Memories: Revised Edition* (Sydney, NS: Cape Breton University Press, 2017).
- 7 Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw, eds., *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012); Brian D. Tennyson, *Nova Scotia at War* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2017); Katherine Dewar, *Those Splendid Girls: The Heroic Service of Prince Edward Island Nurses in the Great War* (Charlottetown: University of Prince Edward Island Studies Press, 2014); Bill Parenteau and Stephen Dutcher, eds., *War on the Home Front: The Farm Diaries of Daniel MacMillan, 1914-1927* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2006).
- 8 Gary Burrill, *Away Maritimers in Massachusetts, Ontario, and Alberta: An Oral History of Leaving Home* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Betsy Beattie, *Obligation and Opportunity: Single Maritime Women in Boston, 1870-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).
- 9 Gail Campbell, "Using Diaries to Explore the Shared Worlds of Family and Community in Nineteenth-Century New Brunswick," in *Feminist History in Canada: New Essays on Women, Gender, Work, and Nation*, ed. Catherine Carstairs and Nancy Janovicek (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 41-57.
- 10 Margaret Conrad, "'But Such Is Life': Growing Up in Nova Scotia in the Interwar Years," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 2 (1999): 1-26; Deborah Stiles, "The Gender and Class Dimensions of a Rural Childhood: Martin Butler in New Brunswick, 1857-1871," *Acadiensis* 33, no. 1 (Autumn/automne 2003): 73-86; Gwendolyn Davies, "'Old Maidism Itself': Spinsterhood in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Literary and Life-Writing Texts from Maritime Canada," in *Mapping the Margins: The Family and Social Discipline in Canada, 1700-1975*, ed. Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 235-46; Heidi MacDonald, "Singleness and Choice: The Impact of Age, Time, and Class on Three Female Youth Diarists in 1930s Canada," in Carstairs and Janovicek, *Feminist History in Canada*, 118-34; Heidi MacDonald, "'Being in your Twenties in the 1930s': Masculinity and Liminality during the Great Depression," in *Bringing Children and Youth into Canadian History: The Difference Kids Make*, ed. Mona Gleason and Tamara Myers (Don Mills, ON: Oxford, 2017), 156-69.

environmental history.¹¹ And some life writings fuse work and introspection, such as diaries kept by clergy.¹²

Scholars have often found the cultural practices of writing and preserving diaries in individuals influenced by those strands of Anglo-American Protestantism that emphasized the importance of literacy, self-reflection, and the keeping of spiritual histories.¹³ As Presbyterians or Baptists, the subjects of the two books reviewed here also fit partly within this tradition. Another significant subcategory within the genre of religious life writings are the earliest published life writings of Black people.¹⁴ Yet Indigenous peoples, Acadians, and Black people are underrepresented in life writings from earlier centuries.¹⁵ Manuscript recollections, published memoirs, and gathered oral

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- 11 Liza Piper, "Backward Seasons and Remarkable Cold: The Weather over Long Reach, New Brunswick, 1812-1821," *Acadiensis* 34, no. 1 (Autumn/automne 2004): 31-55.
 - 12 Edward MacDonald, "The Working Life of an Island Priest: The Diary of Father Angus McDonald, Diocese of Charlottetown, 1879-1883," *Historical Studies* 80 (2014): 9-27; Julian Gwyn, "The Kings County World of the Reverend Edward Manning to 1846," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 16 (2013): 1-18; Keith S. Grant, *Enthusiasms and Loyalties: The Public History of Private Feelings in the Enlightenment Atlantic* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).
 - 13 Laura Sangha, "Personal Documents," in *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources*, ed. Sangha and Jonathan P. Willis (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 110; Christa Häammerle, "Diaries," in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*, ed. Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 143; Margaret Conrad, "Mary Bradley's Reminiscences: A Domestic Life in Colonial New Brunswick," *Atlantis* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1981): 92-101; J.I. Little, "Death in the Lower St. John River Valley: The Diary of Alexander Machum, Jr., 1845-1849," *Acadiensis* 22, no. 1 (Autumn/automne 1992): 122-33; Marguerite Van Die, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Belief and Female Spirituality in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada," in *Canadian Women: A Reader*, ed. Wendy Mitchinson et al. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996), 49-68; Annie Leake Tuttle and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, *The Life and Letters of Annie Leake Tuttle* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999).
 - 14 See George Elliott Clarke, *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
 - 15 Kathryn Carter, "Introduction," in *The Small Details of a Life Twenty Diaries by Women in Canada, 1830-1996*, ed. Kathryn Carter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 17; Gail G. Campbell, "I Wish to Keep a Record": *Nineteenth-Century New Brunswick Women Diarists and Their World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 4; Robin McGrath, "Circumventing the Taboos: Inuit Women's Biographies," in *Undisciplined Women: Tradition and Culture in Canada*, ed. Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 223-33.

histories are more available from a broader range of social groups for 20th century biographies¹⁶ and other studies.¹⁷

In earlier centuries, most of these kinds of life writings were produced by men, and men's diaries combining intellectually or religiously informed reflection with records of economic activities have generated important studies for 18th and 19th century Nova Scotia.¹⁸ By the 19th century, "the golden age of the-then largely secular-private diary," rural women and middle-class urban women writers were more prominent among the producers of first-person sources,¹⁹ as these women were more likely to have literacy, more flexibility in their work, and, for many, also more leisure. This is evident in studies of women's first-person sources in Atlantic Canada from the early influential work of Margaret Conrad²⁰ to the more recent work of Gail Campbell.²¹ Both have shown, as do Boudreau and Huskins, how even the busiest women with the "usual work" might respond to a cultural expectation of writing and

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- 16 Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *Tracking Doctor Lonecloud: Showman to Legend Keeper* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2002); Sam McKegney, "'I was at War – But It Was a Gentle War': The Power of the Positive in Rita Joe's Autobiography," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 30, no. 1 (2006): 33-52; Chris Benjamin, *Indian School Road: Legacies of the Shubenacadie Residential School* (Halifax: Nimbus, 2014); Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia*. 2nd ed. (Lockeport, NS: Roseway, 1992).
- 17 Jacinthe Laforest and Georges Arsenault, *Acadian Women of Prince Edward Island: Three Centuries of Action* (Charlottetown: Acorn Press, 2016); Georges Arsenault, "'All had a Pretty Good Night': A Teenager's Diary in 1933/'Tout le monde a passé une belle soirée' : Journal d'une adolescente en 1933," *Island Magazine* 81 (Spring/Summer 2017): 13-21; Linda Kealey, "Outport 'Girls in Service': Newfoundland in the 1920s and 1930s," *Acadiensis* 43, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2014): 79-98; Marilyn Porter and Linda Cullum, eds., *Creating This Place: Women, Family, and Class in St. John's, 1900-1950* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).
- 18 See Julian Gwyn, "The Parrsboro Shore? West Indies Trade in the 1820s: The Early Career and the Diary of Joseph Norman Bond Kerr," *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 13, no. 1 (June 1993): 1-42; B. Anne Wood, *Evangelical Balance Sheet: Character, Family, and Business in Mid-Victorian Nova Scotia* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006); Daniel Samson, "'Damn TORYISM Say I': Dissent, Print Culture, and Anti-Confederation Thought in James Barry's Diary," *Acadiensis* 46, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2017): 177-90; Elizabeth Mancke and Colin Grittner, "From Communal to Independent Manhood in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, ca. 1760-1820," *Histoire sociale* 52, no. 106 (Novembre/November 2019): 257-80.
- 19 Häammerle, "Diaries," 144.
- 20 Margaret Conrad, *Recording Angels: The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950* (Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1982); Margaret Conrad, Donna E. Smyth, and Toni Laidlaw, *No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771-1938* (Halifax: Formac, 1988). Other studies of Nova Scotian diarists include Jennifer James, "Ada Powers' Diaries: Politics, Sisterhood and the WCTU," *Atlantis* 20, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 1995): 63-76 and Julian Gwyn, "The Private Life of Jessie MacCallum, Diarist of Windsor & St. George, 1901-1910," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 20 (2017): 51-65.
- 21 Campbell, "I Wish to Keep a Record."

keeping correspondence or diaries over time, and how they might find some solace in this.

Mary McDonald-Rissanen's study of Prince Edward Island women's life writing includes the author's grandmother,²² and, like the two books reviewed here, are examples of a newer type of historical writing: academic monographs built from their authors' own families, personal papers, and oral histories. Working within language and literature departments, authors such as Helen Buss or Joanne Findon²³ have, not surprisingly, taken more narrative, literary approaches that focus on individuals from their family histories and a few key themes. Allan Bogue, an economic historian specializing in rural history and the history of the American Midwest, used his recollections and family history as a base from which to evoke and analyze the agricultural history of southwestern Ontario in the interwar decades.²⁴ Ruth Compton Brouwer's *All Things in Common: A Canadian Family and Its Island Utopia* and Michael Boudreau and Bonnie Huskins's *Just the Usual Work: The Social Worlds of Ida Martin, Working-Class Diarist* also take a place-based approach, with multiple themes, especially gender and family history, situated within town, city, countryside, or region.

All Things in Common is a multi-generational story that begins with the arrival of the Loyalists, extends to the formation of a communal network of kin and economic operations in early 20th-century Prince Edward Island, and concludes with reminiscences of the author's childhood. This broad timeframe enables intersections with several themes in the socio-economic and religious history of this region. Brouwer thoroughly, thoughtfully, and cautiously contextualizes these themes while noting recurring threads and possible influences and effects of individual and family experiences from early years in New Brunswick and Cape Breton to subsequent years in Prince Edward Island (the primary focus of the study). Outmigration as well as return migration and persisting family connections through correspondence or travel

22 Mary McDonald-Rissanen, *In the Interval of the Wave: Prince Edward Island Women's Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Life Writing* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

23 Helen M. Buss, *Memoirs from Away: A New Found Land Girlhood* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999); Joanne Findon, *Seeking Our Eden: The Dreams and Migrations of Sarah Jameson Craig* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

24 Allan Bogue, *The Farm on the North Talbot Road* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

also expand the geographic scope at times to include New England and the Prairie Provinces.

At various points in time, key members of this family were among those Presbyterians known by the late 19th century as McDonaldites – or those sharing or inheriting aspects of the cultural style and theological ideas of the Rev. Donald McDonald. Resident initially and briefly in Cape Breton and then on Prince Edward Island until his death in 1867, McDonald was a passionate Calvinist revivalist who preached in both Gaelic and English.²⁵ McDonald's preaching and writings were also preoccupied with some of the themes of 19th century Anglo-American millenarianism, which also persisted in the interests of one of the Compton family's key leaders in the early-to-mid-20th century. After McDonald's death, the already internally diverse movement divided over many of the key points of debate in late-19th-century evangelicalism, with some forming de facto separate churches with different forms of religious organization and practices compared with those of mainstream Presbyterians at this time.

Brouwer argues that both the family's experience of economic hardship in the past and the socio-economic context of late-19th-century Prince Edward Island influenced the founders of the community in 1909, which though initially informal was later incorporated. One founder even explicitly acknowledged the influence of Edward Bellamy's utopian novel *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*.²⁶ At first glance to modern readers, the community also seems to fit within the region's credit and cooperative movements,²⁷ but, as Brouwer notes, the Catholic nature of much of the movement in the Maritimes in a time of "two solitudes" (74) meant an absence of any intersections in at least the historical record. Brouwer notes the scholarly debate over to what "utopia" or "utopian" should refer, and acknowledges some of the ambiguities in using these words to describe the community – words that the community's founders did not use in the surviving record but that were sometimes used by contemporary observers. In Belle River and Bangor, Prince Edward Island, individuals received wages for hours or salaries for positions within various economic ventures into farming, fishing, lumbering, wood products, and

25 David Weale, "McDONALD, DONALD (1783-1867)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald_donald_1783_1867_9E.html.

26 Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Company, 1888).

27 Ian MacPherson, *Each for All: A History of the Co-Operative Movement in English Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979).

local commerce. But in sharing property and savings, a common fund of basic supplies from harvests and a community store, and mutual aid in adversity, members and later the incorporated company were clearly also operating communally.

Yet, as Brouwer acknowledges, at other times the company was more like a paternalistic small business with a patriarchal leader who had a particular religious and economic vision. Although the encouragement of endogamy fit the pattern of more sectarian communities, the employment of outsiders did not; but it did parallel the way some earlier utopian communities in North America had integrated with local economies. Internal tensions from personalities, a mixture of secularization, and the attraction of religious groups newer to Prince Edward Island as well as local disasters and socio-economic changes during and after the Second World War led to the community's formal dissolution by 1947.

Although Brouwer was able to draw on a number of secondary sources on 19th-and-early 20th-century Prince Edward Island to contextualize her material, Boudreau and Huskins faced the challenge of a less-well-researched time period for their study set in post-1945 Saint John. Instead, their work will become one of the sources others can use when turning to topics on mid-20th-century urban New Brunswick. Like Brouwer, Boudreau and Huskins use oral history and recollections, conversations with living family members, newspapers, the census, and other demographic records. Brouwer's key manuscript sources are church records and extant correspondence and other personal or business records, rather than life writings themselves, though some of her sources were recollections. *Just the Usual Work*, in contrast, is built from an extended and fascinating series of five-year diaries, where each dated page has five sections. Huskins's maternal grandmother, Ida Martin, kept these diaries from 1945 to 1992.

As the authors show, these kinds of writings – in many ways a counterpart to the older traditions of the “account book, the daybook, the almanac, and the commercial diary”²⁸ – can be seen as the fruit of time snatched from the assembly line, the kitchen, the factory floor, or childcare.²⁹ These five-year

28 Bonnie Huskins and Michael Boudreau, “‘Daily Allowances’: Literary Conventions and Daily Life in the Diaries of Ida Louise Martin (nee Friars), Saint John, New Brunswick, 1945–1992,” *Acadiensis* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 89.

29 Kathryn Carter, “An Economy of Words: Emma Chadwick Stretch’s Account Book Diary, 1859–1860,” *Acadiensis* 29, no. 1 (Autumn/automne 1999): 43–56; William De Genaro and Nick Hubble, “Working-Class Writings,” in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical*

diaries also fulfilled, however tersely, the traditional cathartic and occasionally introspective role of life writings as “a safety valve, enabling the writer to objectify uncomfortable feelings.”³⁰ The considerable timeframe of the diaries also makes them also function partly as a memoir, with the opportunity for Ida Martin to comment on or revise previous entries and eventually collaborate with her daughter Barbara Martin Huskins in maintaining this record. Reading this is even more poignant in light of Barbara Huskins’s death not long after the book’s publication.³¹

Organized as a “series of critical essays” (126), the book’s themes alternate between gender/family and the socio-economic history of post-1945 Canada. Particularly welcome and useful are themes related to life course history, especially the history of widowhood, of old age, and of intergenerational relations. In the fields of gender and family history, the nature of surviving sources and student/general reader interest has tended to generate more scholarship on the history of childhood, youth, and early adulthood. The authors also show how the diaries reveal the rise of the welfare state, along with the persistence of older mutual benefit or kinship-based sources of support in times of adversity. The unpaid and paid work of Ida Martin was shaped by post-war changes in consumer goods, not all of which were as instantly useful or relevant to the household economy as advertisements suggested. The book also provides a biographical complement to other work on post-war urban development and housing in Canada.

Combined with local sources, *Just the Usual Work* also provides an in-depth view of the labour history and social worlds of Saint John longshoremen in the post-war decades, albeit from a perspective critical of some aspects of urban working class masculinity during this period. The analysis of images versus the lived experience of the male body is particularly powerful in light of Ida Martin’s husband’s history of repeated workplace injury and resulting health issues. One could speculate that the excessive alcohol consumption among those engaged in physically arduous and injury-prone occupations, whether 19th-century lumbermen or 20th-century longshoremen, may have

and *Biographical Forms*, ed. Margaretta Jolly (London: Fitzroy Dearborn/Routledge, 2001), 961.

30 Celia Hunt, “Recovery, Healing, and Life Writing,” in Jolly, *Encyclopedia of Life Writing*, 737. For a more extreme example of the confidential role of life writing, see Lorna Hutchinson, “God Help Me for No One Else Can’: The Diary of Annie Waltham, 1869-1881,” *Acadiensis* 21, no. 2 (Spring/printemps 1992): 72-89.

31 <https://obituaries.tj.news/obituary/barbara-huskins-1084044646>.

been a response both to managing chronic pain and traditions of masculine sociability.

Huskins and Boudreau also include other topics, such as the history of leisure and communications, with brief dips into television, sport, and music history. Some readers may wish to hear more about how moments in the diary might intersect with the themes in recent works on Don Messer and post-war Canadian television.³² The discussion of how Ida Martin's diaries, including her musings on radio and television, reveal her interest in and tracking of current events or issues, especially in both federal and provincial politics, is particularly original. Here I wished the authors had engaged more with the scholarship on the "Robichaud era" for readers less familiar with this decade in New Brunswick history.

Boudreau and Huskins, like Brouwer, also engage the debate on secularization in post-1945 Canada and elsewhere as well as the growth of newer evangelical denominations, which overlapped with older traditions. In common with many families, Ida Martin worshipped at her Baptist church without her husband early in her married life in part because evangelical identities were at odds with masculine drinking cultures. Later in his life, he occasionally attended and eventually joined a newer Pentecostal congregation; as Boudreau and Huskins note, this was another example of the couple's paradoxically parallel and separate social worlds. One could speculate whether this might also have related to changes in Pentecostalism in Canada (and elsewhere), as it became more gendered and conventionally patriarchal over the course of the century than it had been in its founding years.³³ Yet at the same time it retained the noise – the physicality and emotional display – of its older cultural style, characteristics that had already become problematic for some middle-class male evangelicals by the end of the previous century.

Despite the different timeframes, scopes, and genres of primary sources used, the two books share common themes such as family coping strategies in times of economic adversity and occupational pluralism. Both books are

32 Johanne Devlin Trew, "Conflicting Visions: Don Messer, Liberal Nationalism and the Canadian Unity Debate," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 26 (2002): 41-57; Greg Marquis, "The Folk Music of Anglophone New Brunswick: Old-Time and Country Music in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick* 3 (2012), <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JNBS/article/view/20084>; Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

33 Michael Wilkinson and Linda McGuire Ambrose, *After the Revival: Pentecostalism and the Making of a Canadian Church* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

well written and accessible to undergraduate students and the general public; interested readers might also enjoy the articles that began these projects³⁴ and the authors' blog posts.³⁵ *All Things in Common* might be more suited to an upper-level course because some of the intellectual and religious history references are more specialized and subtle. Used in conjunction with Gail Campbell's monograph "*I Wish to Keep a Record*": *Nineteenth-Century New Brunswick Women Diarists and Their World*,³⁶ *Just the Usual Work* was a very effective textbook in a recent Atlantic Canada seminar at Mount Allison University. The book's introduction to the use of life writings is also a great stand-alone reading on historical methods. The discussion of how scholars investigate and handle the psychological power of topics closest to home and the coded language in family sources concerning frustration, disappointment, or outright conflict with other family members or neighbours is thoughtful and sensitively handled, without loss of intellectual rigour. As the authors hope, these studies should inspire others to pursue similar kinds of questions and to look for other personal or family sources that might work as ably as foundations of important monographs in both the history of the Atlantic region and the wider fields of gender, family, rural, and urban histories.

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34 Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Prince Edward Island's Unique "Brotherly Love" Community": Faith and Family, Communalism and Commerce in B. Compton Limited, 1909-1947," *Acadiensis* 45, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2016): 3-23; Bonnie Huskins and Michael Boudreau, "Irresponsibility, Obligation, and the Manly Modern: Tensions in Working-Class Masculinities in Postwar Saint John, New Brunswick," *Labour/Le Travail* 78 (Fall/Automne 2016): 165-96; Bonnie Huskins and Michael Boudreau, "Daily Allowances': Literary Conventions and Daily Life in the Diaries of Ida Louise Martin (nee Friars), Saint John, New Brunswick, 1945-1992," *Acadiensis* 34, no. 2 (Spring/printemps 2005): 88-108.

35 <https://canadianutopiasproject.ca/settlements/compton-community-of-belle-river-and-bangor-pei/>; <https://activehistory.ca/2019/09/negotiating-the-personal-working-with-the-diaries-of-ida-martin/>.

36 Campbell, "*I Wish to Keep a Record*."

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