

inequalities and oppression of any kind largely go missing here. Neil Sutherland reminded us years ago that survivors of painful childhoods often disappear from view. That is certainly true here. The brutalization of girls and boys by their own families and by their employers that commonly overwhelmed early child welfare efforts on the prairies as elsewhere is nowhere to be found. Ultimately, its reliance on a limited body of sources and inattention to differences of power and experience leaves *Heavy Burdens* vulnerable to romanticizing the past, even as it recovers details that may well inspire more critical investigations.

Veronica Strong-Boag
University of British Columbia

Rusty Bittermann and Margaret McCallum, *Lady Landlords of Prince Edward Island: Imperial Dreams and the Defence of Property* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).

In *Lady Landlords of Prince Edward Island*, Rusty Bittermann and Margaret McCallum show not only female landlords' presence but also their centrality to nineteenth-century Island developments. They argue that women's "attempts to ensure that Island law and policy supported their interests as landlords" made them "significant players" in the project of empire (148). A refreshing approach to Anglo-Canadian imperial history, the study speaks to any scholar interested in gender, Canadian legal and political history, British social history, and experiences of empire and colonialism, broadly speaking.

Lady Landlords aligns with recent trends in British economic history, namely the reconfiguration of traditional economic narratives through a gendered lens. Bittermann and McCallum join a growing contingent of scholars showing that the very nature of economic and legal discourses often obscured female participation. Careful research of provincial documents (detailed in a helpful Appendix) show the extent to which British women featured in Island landholding; women, excluding those sharing property with husbands or family, owned over one quarter of the land held by absentee owners in the 1870s and 1880s.

Bittermann and McCallum organize their work into biographic studies of four such landowners: Anne Saunders, her sister Jane Saunders, Jane's daughter Georgiana Fane, and acquaintance Charlotte Sullivan. Beginning with the Saunders' land inheritance in 1785, the authors plot a rough chronology through the women's lives, which aligned with "most of the history of British imperial involvement with landlordism on Prince Edward Island" (8). This included local anti-landlord resistance of the 1830s, legislative imperatives of the 1850s, and the acquisition of absentee landowners' property by the provincial government in the 1860s and 1870s. The women's lives were so entwined with the Island's political developments, argue the authors, that the 1875 Supreme Court decision striking

down large-scale landownership also "... marked the closure of... opportunities for women to exercise political and economic power" (15).

Bittermann and McCallum highlight common elements among the four women, which made possible their substantial imperial landholdings. Foremost was the women's class status. Make no mistake; Bittermann and McCallum's subjects are decidedly *Ladies* of the gentry classes, representing British social elites (one must turn to Bittermann and McCallum's other work on Island property politics for alternate class experiences). As the authors show, their subjects' social ranking afforded them economic possibilities unavailable to their middling female counterparts. Typically inheriting their land from fathers and husbands, an established system of lineage and circumstance placed the women in the unique position of land ownership.

While the women inherited Island property through traditional systems, they did not feel bound by traditional gender roles. Bittermann and McCallum argue that their subjects challenged historic (and historiographic) representations of nineteenth-century femininity through energetic engagement in their landlord duties. This included ventures to their Island properties for three of the women, with Jane Saunders residing in Charlottetown for almost a full year in 1839-1840. Here, Bittermann and McCallum underscore the significance of increased mobility in the Atlantic world over the course of century. While understated, their discussion of female travelers speaks to the centrality of technological developments to women's participation in the colonial economy.

Further emphasizing the landladies' divergence from traditional gender mores was their relationship with Island tenants. Through skilful analysis, Bittermann and McCallum pre-empt any romanticization of landlady-tenant relations. They show that their subjects did not necessarily adopt "feminine philanthropic roles," which did not always align with economic interests. While Georgiana Fane courted Island tenants' admiration, Charlotte Sullivan actively resisted gendered expectations of benevolence, assuming an approach "grounded...in strategic land purchases and effective property management" (124).

For all of their shared qualities, there were important differences between the protagonists; the four women represented an assortment of marital statuses, including legally separated, widowed, and never-married. Bittermann and McCallum allude to heightened disdain for "spinsters," arguing that the Colonial Office failed to take seriously unmarried landowners "who were excluded from assuming the public roles at home that might have provided some justification for their existence" (143). Considering recent interest in the historical conditions of single life, it would have been fascinating to hear more of the social context governing never-married landladies' economic autonomy. That said, the uniqueness of Bittermann and McCallum's gendered approach negates such minor critiques. *Lady Landlords* is an important contribution to the scholarship in its gendered reconsidera-

tion of the legalities and economy of empire.

Jessica P. Clark
The Johns Hopkins University

Daniel Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1862* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2008).

In this excellent work, Daniel Samson explores the conflicted emergence of liberal modernism in nineteenth century Nova Scotia. The book is a fascinating exercise in political economy, combining a firm understanding of economic activity with the evolution of policy, institutions and attitudes towards economic change. A sub-theme of the book is the tendency of the poor to treat resources as common property and the conflicts that emerged as wealthier parties claimed the resources as their own private property.

Samson's focus is rural. He supports earlier arguments that Nova Scotian rural society was economically diverse. Some prospered, some fared poorly, occasionally very poorly indeed. The failure of the potato crop in the 1840s resulted in intense hardship among the poor, particularly in Cape Breton. More generally, the limited quantity of good quality land and its uneven allocation among settlers played a large role in creating the hierarchy of the countryside. The passage of time failed to diminish the inequalities apparent at the early days of settlement.

Merchants were an essential part of the rural economy, purchasing agricultural goods and timber from farmers while selling them imported goods. The merchants possessed economic power; they could choose to carry families through hard times or to sue in court for unpaid debts. Suits allowed some to acquire large quantities of farm land.. Merchants also possessed political power, less by securing office than by their influence on office holders. They were not reluctant to branch out from trade into mining, shipbuilding and the promotion of manufacturing as opportunities appeared.

Mining was another rural activity that Samson examines. In early years, grindstones were an important export. At first, poor settlers treated the quarries as common property, but cooperated to manage access. Samson traces the process that led to the 'enclosure' of these resources by the more well-to-do. Mineral rights in coal had been claimed by the Crown, and the state exerted more control of these resources than of grindstones. Initially, a few simple mines were established that produced sufficient coal to supply the garrisons in Halifax and Newfoundland, although in defiance of government regulations, settlers often dug coal from coastal outcrops or from seams on their own land.

Coal was 'enclosed' when the General Mining Association established well