

[Atlas historique du Quebec: le pays Laurentian au XIXe siecle: les morphologies de base]  
Courville, Serge, Robert, Jean-Claude, Seguin, Normand, Hemmings, Mary (REVIEWER).  
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## **Abstract (Summary)**

The "staple" notion of economic worth propounded by historians such as D.G. Creighton and Fernand Ouellet viewed the St. Lawrence as a thoroughfare for European and North American growth with a Francophone population opting for a role as agrarian spectators. More recent Quebec historians, such as Jean - Pierre Wallot and Gilles Paquet, have de - emphasized the role of international commercial competition in deference to studying the internal dynamics of social history. More importantly, the works of Marvin R. McNinn and Douglas McCalla have emphasized the agricultural development in Ontario and provided a counterpoint to the traditional Eurocentric view of economic history. Poised between the polarities of economic and social historiography, the authors of this atlas present a historical interpretation of nineteenth century Quebec society that de - emphasizes British and European influences.

The Ontario agricultural success studied by McNinn and McCalla depended on trade routes and markets far more diversified and lucrative than those offered only by trade through the St. Lawrence seaway. In fact, Montreal gained its strength in the nineteenth century from its geographical position as an inland port servicing North American markets. Therefore, the McNinn and McCalla theses, if fully developed for a Quebec scenario, probably would have identified Quebec City, Trois Rivieres, and Tadoussac as suppliers of agricultural produce to the eastern seaboard or Europe. This perspective is not explored in the atlas.

## **Full Text**

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ATLAS HISTORIQUE DU QUEBEC: LE PAYS LAURENTIAN AU XIXe SIECLE: LES MORPHOLOGIES DE BASE / Serge Courville, Jean - Claude Robert, Normand Seguin. Sainte - Foy, PQ: Les Presses de l'Universite Laval, 1995. 171 pp., maps, tables and indices. ISBN 2 - 7637 - 7372 - 1

The historical role of the St. Lawrence River in the economic development of Quebec is the focus of this atlas. Each of its three authors has contributed personal expertise in order to fashion a revisionist theory of the nineteenth century socioeconomic history of Francophone Quebec.

Serge Courville provided an analysis of the traditional seigneurial land divisions as they related to the increasingly market - oriented city of Montreal; Jean - Claude Robert contributed material on the influence of Montreal on the economy of Quebec; and Normand Seguin focused on the agrarian development of the Mauricie region along the north shore of the St. Lawrence between Montreal and Quebec City.

Together, they provide a graphic representation of the transformation of population density, trade routes, and the agricultural activities of the region. At the outset, they establish the historical significance of this region as a conduit into continental North America. According to the authors, the socioeconomic dynamics that shaped the lives of its inhabitants are poorly understood.

The historiographical interpretations concerning this region are both numerous and contentious. As early as the Durham Report of 1837, investors and politicians alike were scrutinizing the economic significance of the St. Lawrence and the more populous regions of Lower Canada. What the Durham Report established, at least from a British perspective, was the value of this region to British interests as well as a recognition of the relative lack of enthusiasm for European - style market economy on the part of Francophones in Quebec. It was the role of the Francophone Canadian within the economic community that proved to be the subject of historical debate.

The "staple" notion of economic worth propounded by historians such as D.G. Creighton and Fernand Ouellet viewed the St. Lawrence as a thoroughfare for European and North American growth with a Francophone population opting for a role as agrarian spectators. More recent Quebec historians, such as Jean - Pierre Wallot and Gilles Paquet, have de - emphasized the role of international commercial competition in deference to studying the internal dynamics of social history. More importantly, the works of Marvin R. McNinn and Douglas McCalla have emphasized the agricultural development in Ontario and provided a counterpoint to the traditional Eurocentric view of economic history. Poised between the polarities of economic and social historiography, the authors of this atlas present a historical interpretation of nineteenth century Quebec society that de - emphasizes British and European influences.

However, the Ontario agricultural success studied by McNinn and McCalla depended on trade routes and markets far more diversified and lucrative than those offered only by trade through the St. Lawrence seaway. In fact, Montreal gained its strength in the nineteenth century from its geographical position as an inland port servicing North American markets. Therefore, the McNinn and McCalla theses, if fully developed for a Quebec scenario, probably would have identified Quebec City, Trois Rivieres, and Tadoussac as suppliers of agricultural produce to the eastern seaboard or Europe. This perspective is not explored in the atlas.

The authors have also failed to consider one aspect of Creighton's "westward" economic model: that Montreal as a major port on the St. Lawrence River had unwittingly become a trade centre for North American consumer goods. Was Francophone society in a position to capitalize on and exploit this shift in economic markets? Had the St. Lawrence Seaway become so much of a symbol of past lumber and fur - trade routes that economic, as well as cultural, development was blind - sided? These issues are not addressed.

The first section on population -- the most comprehensive of the three sections -- offers views of population density, movement, age, sex, matrimonial status, immigration, and non - Francophone populations. The second section has a more narrative form and analyzes commercial transportation such as shipping and rail, as well as the early structure of telegraph communication. The third section on agricultural activity is particularly detailed and benefits from the exceptional graphical representations that grace this book.

Without a doubt, this atlas offers much more than D.G.G. Kerr's Historical Atlas of Canada (Toronto: T. Nelson, 1961). The clear graphic representations of detailed agricultural, transportation, and especially population information are especially noteworthy for their consistency and sophistication. Elegantly articulating their theory of nineteenth - century social transformation in Quebec, the authors have delivered a compellingly attractive reference book.

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