
In the latter half of the twentieth century as Canadians became more conscious of the diverse nature of their country, local history became an increasingly thriving activity. With thousands of genealogists tracing details of their family history, school children completing course projects on features of their communities, and professional historians exploring local themes, attention focussed on the array of villages, towns, counties, provinces, and regions that make up this country. Expanding interest in things local resulted in the publication of bibliographies and guides to match, which in turn fostered further research and publication, for example William Hamilton's *Local History in Atlantic Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974). Although bibliographies of counties appeared as early as 1938 (E.J. Williamson's *Bibliography of the History of Essex County [Ontario]*) , many more were published in the 1970s and 1980s following the surge of national pride in centennial year. For example, bibliographies of the Ontario counties of Bruce, Elgin, Essex, Guelph, Lambton, Oxford, Simcoe, and Wellington were published in this period. As the century ended, however, the number of new county bibliographies dropped.

While Ontario counties have been well-served by bibliographies, other provinces have not been as well documented (keeping in mind that some provinces never adopted county subdivisions). Nova Scotian counties, for example, have not received comparable attention, except for several recent county guides prepared, primarily for genealogists, by staff members at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Thus, W. James MacDonald's *Bibliography of Victoria County, Nova Scotia* stands out.

As the editor of *Patterson's History of Victoria County,* MacDonald has personal interests in the history and culture of the county in which he resides. But, should anyone else? What would draw readers to consult this modestly-priced bibliography about this mostly rural Cape Breton county? Several reasons can quickly be advanced. For one, the first flight of a manned aircraft in the British Commonwealth occurred above the frozen surface of the Bras d'Or Lakes near the village of Baddeck in February 1909. This flight was the brainchild of Alexander Graham Bell and his associates. Bell, like many others, fell in love with the beauty of the area and established his summer home at Beinn Bhreagh, near Baddeck. There his inventive mind
led to many experiments on a wide array of ideas from flying machines to hydrofoils. Today, the Bell Museum at Baddeck is a “must-visit.” Bell was not the only Scot to turn up in Victoria County, however. Throughout the nineteenth century Scottish immigrants by the thousands established the county as a preserve for Scottish culture and the Gaelic language. Canada’s only Gaelic College at St Ann’s currently fosters all things Celtic. Further, the world-famous Cabot Trail winds its way, in part, through the highlands and shores of Victoria County. So, there are numerous reasons why this county merits a bibliography.

MacDonald’s *Bibliography of Victoria County* seems to have been prepared directly from notes he accumulated over a period of time, and as a result entries reflect varying levels of detail and inconsistencies common in research notes. By covering all aspects of the county (“history, geology, natural history, fishery, religion, mining, etc.” [p. 7]), the volume fits well within the county bibliography genre. Although the preface states that the 291 records describe books and articles, MacDonald includes records for several manuscripts without explanation (e.g., #3, an anonymously handwritten account of a trip to Baddeck in 1877). Records give more or less complete bibliographic information, but a lack of bibliographic standards is obvious. MacDonald acknowledges that “some titles still require additional information (e.g., name of publisher, number of pages, date of publication, etc.)” (p. 7). Such information is now readily available from internet-accessible library catalogues, and could have been checked before finalising the bibliography. In fact, MacDonald includes a location for each of the items, a very helpful feature of the bibliography.

The bibliography is comprehensive, if not exhaustive. MacDonald includes items that deal exclusively with Victoria County as well as others that give partial or tangential treatment. Rusty Bitterman’s paper on Middle River in *Acadiensis* (1988), for example, focusses exclusively on a Victoria County community, whereas Gary Burrill’s *Away: Maritimers in Massachusetts, Ontario and Alberta* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992) concerns the three eastern provinces generally. Records in the bibliography describe substantial works (e.g., S.J. Hornsby’s *Nineteenth Century Cape Breton: A Historical Geography* [1992]) to shorter articles, manuscripts, and brochures. MacDonald’s attempt to be comprehensive points to the value of the bibliography. Many records are annotated with informative notes about the contents. In some instances, he excerpts
segments from the works themselves. While no explanation is given for why some records include quotations, the excerpts make for interesting reading, as in the case of the selection from Murdock Fraser’s “Diary of the Voyage of the Bredalbane, 24th Dec., 1857-24th Feb., 1858” (record #89).

The records are clearly laid out, but the lack of bibliographic standards detracts from the volume. Inconsistencies of style abound, some records are so incomplete as to be of little value (e.g., #62 Directories, #187 Maps, Plans, Charts, and #248 Sessional Papers [Federal Government Annual Reports]), and information about some publications is buried in notes thereby requiring a reader to read the whole volume (e.g., Bitterman’s second essay on Middle River is hidden in the note to the collection of essays edited by Kenneth Donovan). The subject index is another example of the non-standard approach adopted by MacDonald. Although the index is only two pages in length and can be scanned easily, he bizarrely sorts personal names by first name rather than surname. This odd arrangement leads to “Alexander Graham Bell” being placed in the “A” section and “Mabel Bell,” his wife, appearing with “M” terms. Further, a reader not aware that Mabel Bell was the wife of Alexander Graham Bell, would not make the connection to entry #15 where the author is listed as “Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell.”

MacDonald’s Bibliography documents much of literature on the county, and will be of considerable service to readers. The price is certainly reasonable. However, the bibliography should have received the critical eye of an editor and proof reader before being published. Its value would have been significantly enhanced if bibliographic standards had been followed and complete details provided for all records.

BERTRUM H. MACDONALD
Dalhousie University


There is an extensive, and ever expanding literature on the life and career of Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), the universally acknowledged