

Clearly this is a book which can be expected to generate considerable controversy. It does provide a rich picture of the world surrounding these boys although it may not be as discerning about how they saw that world. And it does raise important new questions which should serve to further the perception that military and social history have much to gain by joining forces.

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JUDITH FINGARD — *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. Pp. 292.

For those still enamoured with the mythology of iron men and wooden ships associated with sailing in the nineteenth century, Judith Fingard's study of merchant sailors in Halifax, St. John and Quebec City will provide a much-needed cure. While presenting some background on the early and late years of the nineteenth century, Fingard's study concentrates mainly on the golden age of sail from the 1850s to the early 1870s, when sailing ships carried the bulk of transatlantic cargo, and details the rough, violent, dangerous lot of seamen and their thriving sailortowns in these three Canadian ports. The book covers the sailor labour market in general, the conditions of life at sea and in port, and sailors' attempts to defend their rights, both by legal and illegal means. It discusses the role of boarding house keepers, crimps and social reformers in shaping Jack's fortunes.

The strength of the work is clearly in its detailed portrait of the sailor's lot, much of this culled from the local press in Halifax, St. John and Quebec City and supplemented by government reports and archives, private business records and some personal papers. Fingard distinguishes between the few career sailors, of respectable behaviour and usually with family connections to shipowners, who could hope to proceed beyond the station of sailor, and the young, somewhat wild men who made up the bulk of the labour force and who rarely stayed in the life beyond thirty years of age. As she details the uncomfortable, difficult and dangerous working conditions that sailors encountered in port, and the leaky vessels and tyrannical captains they endured at sea, it is easy to understand why. The rough nature of sailortowns' night life only balanced the equally rough working day.

The most interesting part of the study examines the sailors' attempts to receive adequate payment for their labour. Given the chronic shortage of labour in North American ports, British and European sailors found it advantageous to look for work here, even though this meant deserting ship in Canada rather than returning to Europe as originally contracted. Court action by captains to force return of crew members, and charges by sailors to force payment of wages or lawful discharge, were common. By examining these litigations in some detail, Fingard is able to illustrate the limits of power which the legal system allowed to both sellers and buyers of labour and to provide an interesting study of this specialized labour market.

The role of boarding house owners and crimps as labour agents between ship owners and sailors and as providers of entertainment and accommodation to sailors in port is also explored. Quebec City crimps were noted for their eagerness to recruit deserters and for considerable violence in accomplishing their ends, while St. John crimps (while equally successful) opted to form a Boarding House Keepers Association which allowed them to effectively control the local labour market without resorting to the strong-arm tactics of their Quebec counterparts. While reformers and government officials branded crimps and boarding house keepers as exploiters of sailors, Fingard clearly draws the common class ties between these residents of sailortown and the sailors who kept sailors' wages high and often acted as guides to foreign sailors through the legal and police system in port. Government attempts to regulate or suppress crimping clearly failed, and ships' captains recognized the advantages of the illegal system in providing men.

The main limitation of the work is its rigid adherence to its introductory stand to be “descriptive in nature”. The wealth of information contained in the study could be greatly enhanced by some analytical work. For instance, the role of provincial, federal and imperial governments is constantly mentioned throughout the study and a four-page appendix lists the titles of forty-nine major pieces of legislation affecting sailors. Yet there is no general discussion of the prevailing ideas on the value of sailors’ labour in society and what these legislative changes meant for the sailor, captain and shipping company.

Similarly, the contrasts between Quebec City, St. John and Halifax are often noted, but no concluding synthesis is present which might raise some larger questions and theories about urban development and sailortowns, or about the economic life of the three cities and its response to the labour supply problem. Given Fingard’s previous studies of those at the margin of urban society, one would have hoped for some more attention to these larger questions.

Jack in Port, as Fingard notes in her concluding bibliographical essay, is a pioneering work. It is also a book that will encourage further study of this worthwhile area.

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GREGORY S. KEALEY and BRYAN D. PALMER — *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Pp. xiv, 487.

This study is a spirited and persuasive reinterpretation of the significance of the Knights of Labor in the history of Ontario’s working men and women. Rooted in a thorough examination of the available archival sources and reflecting upon much of the recent labour history in North America and abroad, *Dreaming of What Might Be* argues that the Knights of Labor, for the first time, forged a “movement culture of alternative, opposition and potential” (p. 17) among its members where common class interests overcame, at least briefly, conflicts of religion, sex and ethnicity. In addition to this qualitative difference, Kealey and Palmer also argue that the Knights’ strength during the 1880s resulted in a higher percentage of organized workers in Ontario than at any time until the CIO years in the late 1930s. For the authors, the great upheaval of the 1880s should rank with the labour confrontations of 1919, the late 1930s and the years between 1943 and 1946. While overall a work of strength, the book is marred by some minor organizational problems and a weakness for pushing a solid argument just a bit too far.

Rejecting much of the previous work on the Knights of Labor, which portrayed the Holy and Noble Order as an anachronistic, fuzzy-minded, ill-led organization responsible for its own collapse, the authors demonstrate that at the height of its power in Ontario, the Knights encompassed a wide range of skilled and unskilled workers, in the major cities and several small towns across the province, in manufacturing, commercial and transportation sectors, among women, the Irish, Franco-Ontarians, Roman Catholics and Protestants. In doing so, the Knights were the only organization which attempted to organize from the entire working class. Building on the varied history of strikes, collective action and resistance by Ontario workers before the 1880s, the Knights were able to forge these diverse and often conflicting traditions of opposition into a “culture of solidarity and resistance” (p. 278). Adopting Lawrence Goodwyn’s concept of a “movement culture” presented in his *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (New York, 1976) to describe this phenomenon, Kealey and Palmer argue that with the intellectual leadership of the labour press, and men like Phillips Thompson, and through their secret ritual and various social activities, the Knights of Labor were able to form an alternative to the dominant nineteenth-century ideals of competition and materialism.