



The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada (The Social History of Canada, No 49)

Allan Greer

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The Lower Canadian Rebellion of 1837 has been called the most important event in pre-Confederation history. Previously, it has been explained as a response to economic distress or as the result of manipulation by middle-class politicians. Lord Durham believed it was an expression of racial conflict.

The Patriots and the People is a fundamental reinterpretation of the Rebellion. Allan Greer argues that far from being passive victims of events, the habitants were actively responding to democratic appeals because the language of popular sovereignty was in harmony with their experience and outlook. He finds that a certain form of popular republicanism, with roots deep in the French-Canadian past, drove the anti-government campaign. Institutions such as the militia and the parish played an important part in giving shape to the movement, and the customs of the maypole and charivari provided models for the collective actions against local representatives of the colonial regime.

In looking closely into the actions, motives, and mentality of the rural plebeians who formed a majority of those involved in the insurrection, Allan Greer brings to light new causes for the revolutionary role of the normally peaceful French-Canadian peasant. By doing so he provides a social history with new dimensions.

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