



**Magistrates, Police, and People: Everyday
Criminal Justice in Quebec and Lower Canada,
1764-1837 (Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal
History)**

Donald Fyson

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The role and function of criminal justice in a conquered colony is always problematic, and the case of Quebec is no exception. Many historians have suggested that, between the Conquest and the Rebellions (1760s-1830s), Quebec's 'Canadien' inhabitants both boycotted and were excluded from the British criminal justice system. *Magistrates, Police, and People* challenges this simplistic view of the relationship between criminal law and Quebec society, offering instead a fresh view of a complex accord.

Based on extensive research in judicial and official sources, Donald Fyson offers the first comprehensive study of the everyday workings of criminal justice in Quebec and Lower Canada. Focussing on the justices of the peace and their police, Fyson examines both the criminal justice system itself, and the system in operation as experienced by those who participated in it. Fyson contends that, although the system was fundamentally biased, its flexibility provided a source of power for ordinary citizens. At the same time, everyday criminal justice offered the colonial state and colonial elites a powerful, though often faulty, means of imposing their will on Quebec society. This fascinating and controversial study will challenge many received historical interpretations, providing new insight into the criminal justice system of early Quebec.

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