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BOOK REVIEWS

Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900-1930. Bruno Ramirez. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001. 272 pp. \$32.50 cloth.

The boundary of Canada and the United States is celebrated as the longest undefended border in the world. Despite its length and seeming prominence in North American history, only recently has the border received more than passing attention from historians and geographers. In his insightful and carefully documented book, Bruno Ramirez contends that this is partly because migrants from the United States to Canada, and from Canada to the United States passed through a porous border until the 1900s. With the exception of French Canadians migrating from Quebec to New England, Canadian immigrants did not create the kinds of ethnic institutions or residential clusters that historical geographers generally associate with immigrant settlement. Canadian settlers in the United States and their counterparts in Canada were the “invisible settlers” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Ramirez argues that Canadian migration to the United States had a distinctive geographical pattern and temporal pulse. Before the Canadian prairies were open to settlement, all three regions of British North America—Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes—contributed to migration to the United States. In Ontario and the Maritimes emigration was associated with a growing regional economy, but in Quebec it emerged as a symptom of a society in economic crisis.

Migration is intimately bound with perception and entrenched patterns of movement. Since industrial New England figured prominently on the mental map of migrants from the Maritimes, it became their preferred destination. They were always reluctant to occupy Canada’s empty prairie lands. Until the prairies became accessible, Ontario migrants sought land in the United States Midwest, notably Michigan. Canadians thus played an important role in the development of New England, the Midwest, and, later, the West Coast. Although Canadian politicians fretted constantly about the loss of population to the United States (the movement from Lower Canada to the United States being so great it was labeled a “training ground for American citizens”), cross-border migration was not always southwards. Migrants from the United States constituted the largest single ethnic group in the settlement of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Ramirez stresses the local nature of most cross-border migration but is careful to point out that despite apparent regional differences Canadian emigrants to the United States shared many common attributes, not the least of which was the fact that only the presence of a nearby legal boundary was what turned most of these mobile people into international migrants.

Crossing the 49th Parallel is an impressive book with much to offer anyone interested in Canadian or US history. Ramirez has deftly balanced the presentation of a broad picture of cross-border migration with the articulation of an argument often based on regional or local data. He avoids becoming bogged down in a mass of immigration statistics and never loses sight of the people of whom he writes. It is both a pleasure to read and an important contribution to the growing literature on migration within North America. **John C. Lehr**, *Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg*.