

Stamp's principal reliance on James Edgar's daily letters to his wife Matilda, generously quoted along with some of hers to other family members, very effectively creates an intimate family ambience. So do the many photographs, albeit the end result favours his voice over hers. Whiteley is even more concerned to let her subject speak. She introduces each section of Annie Tuttle's memoir, which is then reproduced and supplemented with some two dozen extant letters.

The three books raise interesting general questions. In what should be required reading for anyone attempting a female biography (*Writing a Woman's Life* 1988), Carol Heilbrun shows how diverse women have used writing to acquire a kind of control over their lives not otherwise permitted them. Sarah Crease, Matilda Edgar, and Annie Tuttle all wrote, in part certainly to please others but also, perhaps, "to create a space" (113) for themselves, a respite from the lives in which they found themselves. In other words, the very existence of an abundance of primary material creates its own dilemmas, as does its paucity, which is so often the case for women. Not only that, Heilbrun puts considerable responsibility on biographers, perhaps too much, to move beyond the specifics into interpretation of silences across the life cycle. In *The Challenge of Feminist Biography* (Sara Alpern, ed. 1992), ten women reflect on their own experiences and in every case link their choices for inclusion, and thereby exclusion, to their own lives. The authors of these three books do the same, at least to some extent, in their introductions.

None of the three books - *Henry and Self*, *My Dearest Wife*, *Life and Letters* - is pretentious. Rather than close off discussions, they open them up. Bridge is able to give only a taste of the very extensive Crease family correspondence, in BC Archives, extending across gender and generations. Scholars can draw on the Edgar Family Papers in the Archives of Ontario to interpret Matilda Edgar's perspective on her husband's letters. Annie Tuttle's memoir more tantalizes than explains the role revealed in a ream of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Anglican church publications of the late nineteenth century on evangelical religiosity in single women's lives. We have work to do.

Jean Barman
University of British Columbia

She Answered Every Call: The Life of Public Health Nurse, Mona Gordon Wilson (1894-1981). Douglas O. Baldwin. Charlottetown, PEI: Indigo Press, 1997; illustrations, bibliography; xx + 318 pages, ISBN 0-9680354-4-2.

Douglas Baldwin has produced a richly descriptive narrative which tells the life story of a little known Prince Edward Island public health nurse/administrator, Mona Gordon Wilson. Although Baldwin's style and the limitations of his sources leave the reader to read between the lines in relation to the larger context of Wilson's work, this biography still adds to a fascinating new literature on the role of public health nursing in the development of the social welfare state. Wilson's long career actually parallels the transformation of the Red Cross from a humanitarian aid organization to a major player in the public health field. Wilson began her career in the post-First World War period by joining the American Red Cross. With her Johns Hopkins nursing friends, Wilson nursed in Russia and the Balkans, demonstrating that it was not only men who enlisted to experience travel, companionship and adventure. Returning to Canada in 1923, Wilson took the new University of Toronto public health nursing course and was then hired by the Red Cross to head Prince Edward Island's new public health program. In the interwar years, the Red Cross was pouring its postwar surplus resources into establishing a network of outpost hospital and nursing stations across Canada, funding university public health nursing programs, teaching home nursing courses and launching the Junior Red Cross. Mirroring Canadian Red Cross policy, Mona Wilson oversaw the transformation of the Red Cross public health program to a permanent program in the provincial government's newly created Department of Health a decade later. While the male-dominated and state-supported Red Cross helped facilitate the process, along with provincial governments, of turning public health services into the emerging social welfare state, the organization's prominent role masks the considerable contribution already made by early women's organizations that utilized the professional support of public health nurses.

Typical of public health nursing leaders, Wilson was born into an upper middle class family

and educated at Havergal Ladies' College in Toronto, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing in Baltimore and the University of Toronto. There, role models such as Mary Ellen Knox and Kathleen Russell fostered the administrative talent she would need. When Wilson arrived in PEI, it was one of the poorest and most isolated of Canadian provinces, with neither a Department of Health, nor even a local branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses. While Baldwin's description of Wilson's day-to-day work certainly outlines the valuable services which public health nurses often provided, his analysis of the implications of public health work as social regulation is anecdotal at best, alluding occasionally to the insensitivities of health educators to the realities of rural poverty.

Baldwin made extensive use of the available diaries and letters and tapped the memories of many friends, colleagues and family members. Unfortunately, they reveal little of Wilson's inner thoughts and feelings. Her diaries, and hence the biography, provide copious, and at times, repetitive details on her travels, yet, for example, give us little insight into the complex network of women friends we know she developed. Wilson, who Baldwin describes as a "doer, not a thinker" (274), a sporty outdoorswoman who was equally comfortable with men as with women, perhaps needed stern qualities in order to survive the early public health bureaucracy. Although Wilson failed to link her struggles to secure adequate salaries and benefits for her and her nurses to the gendered nature of women's work as nurses, she certainly encountered obstacles. For example, Wilson was forced to accept cheaper open-topped Ford roadsters instead of closed coupés for the use of travelling public health nurses, despite the obvious inconvenience this entailed during inclement weather. Neither would the Prince Edward Island government recognize Wilson's Red Cross years in calculating pension benefits.

Yet Wilson's accomplishments were considerable. She built public health programs, which in PEI, as elsewhere in Canada, laid the foundation for state-supported health care and oversaw these programs from the 1920s to the 1960s. She was also a dedicated reformer who waged her own campaigns to improve the health and well-being of her adopted Islanders, particularly crippled children. As well, she took a leave of

absence during the Second World War to serve as the Canadian Red Cross's Assistant Commissioner for Newfoundland. There, Wilson administered to the needs of shipwrecked soldiers and sailors in the North Atlantic, showing the same personal courage which had earlier won her a decoration from the Italian Red Cross.

Dianne Dodd
Parks Canada

Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950. Constance Backhouse. Toronto: The Osgoode Society of Canadian Legal History by the University of Toronto Press, 1999. xiii + 281; ISBN: 0-8020-8286-6; \$27.50.

In this book, Backhouse challenges the lingering legitimacy of the powerful story of Canada as the "north star of freedom" - a country racially blind. The historical record, she argues, provides quite a different story, a story of racially based exclusion and discrimination. And more disturbingly, the record prevents the claim that this discrimination was the unfortunate result of bad behaviour by specific unenlightened individuals. Rather, Backhouse powerfully documents the ways in which the legal system itself has been profoundly implicated in the creation and maintenance of white supremacy in Canada.

From the thousands of cases Backhouse reviewed in her research (and notes on these are available on the web - www.utpress.utoronto.ca/publishing/index.html/backhouse), she selects six. The six stories are drawn from around the country, from across racialized groups, and engage different dimensions of the legal system. We hear the story of legal wrangling over the racial status of the Inuit in Northern Quebec in 1939. We see a Dakota elder sent to jail for having participated in a Grass Dance at an annual fair in 1903. We learn about the unsuccessful legal efforts of a 52-year old Mohawk widow to assert sovereignty claims in order to secure the return of her handwoven seine fishing net in 1921. We see the Regina Chinese-Canadian community unsuccessfully oppose a law prohibiting them from hiring any white woman in 1924. In