



Historian Jeffrey McNairn Honoured with Provincial Award for Scholarly Article

OHS Riddell Award presented June 10, 2017
York University Senate Chambers, Toronto, Ontario

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In 1967, The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) established an awards program to recognize individuals, organizations, corporations, and authors who have contributed significantly to the preservation and promotion of Ontario's heritage.

The Riddell Award recognizes the best article in Ontario history published during the Award year. The OHS is pleased to present the 2016 Riddell Award to Jeffrey L. McNairn for his article, "'The common sympathies of our nature': Moral Sentiments, Emotional Economies, and Imprisonment for Debt in Upper Canada," which appeared in the journal *Histoire sociale/Social History*.



Jeffrey McNairn (left) accepts the 2016 OHS Riddell Award from Chair of the OHS Honours and Awards Committee Ian Radforth.

In this innovative and brilliant article, McNairn examines the campaign to end imprisonment for debt, Upper Canada's most prominent humanitarian cause of the 1820s and 1830s. Contributing to the new "history of sensibility," the article shows how legal reformers and friends of debtors appealed not just to reason but also to the emotions, using moral arguments and performing dramatically – often shedding public tears – in ways intended to overcome Upper Canadians' indifference to the fate of imprisoned debtors. Moreover, because the legal reformers used emotions so effectively, their opponents were driven to adopting their own emotional appeals even as they publicly worried that displays of emotion might be used to defend the unworthy. The article is based on a deep reading of Upper-Canadian newspapers and displays a sure grasp of a wide range of relevant historiographies. It sheds new light on the fashioning of political and social relations in the province's public sphere.

The Honours and Awards Committee congratulates Jeffrey McNairn. The award was presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Historical Society at the York University Senate Chambers in Toronto, Ontario.

Founded in 1888, the Ontario Historical Society is a non-profit corporation and registered charity dedicated to the preservation and celebration of Ontario's history for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

To learn more about the OHS's Honours and Awards Program, or to submit a nomination, please visit <https://www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca/index.php/categories> or contact the Society's offices by telephone or e-mail.

-The Ontario Historical Society-

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