

Book Review / Recension d'ouvrage

A Canadian Girl in South Africa: A Teacher's Experiences in the South African War, 1899–1902

by E. Maud Graham

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A Canadian Girl in South Africa: A Teacher's Experiences in the South African War, 1899–1902 is a primary source book regarding everyday life in South Africa during and after the Boer War. It is written from the perspective of a female Canadian teacher, E. Maud Graham, and describes in some detail her travels to Africa, teaching and interacting with the students living in concentration camps, and her analysis of some key issues she observed. The book has been broken down into 15 chapters. The first nine chapters are dedicated to her travels and teaching and the remainder of the book examines significant aspects of Boer, African, and British relations. There is an introduction of considerable length in which the editors, Dawson, Gidney, and Klausen, provide the reader with an overview of the Boer War and a detailed biography of Graham's life.

With the information regarding Graham that the editors provide, the reader is able to understand the context in which she and her colleagues travelled to South Africa and the duties and goals required of them by the "Motherland." The biography outlines Graham's family life, education, accomplishments, and community involvement that help shape who she was as a white, middle-class individual and educator. It is with this knowledge that the reader can understand her analysis of cultural differences, race relations,

labour, education, and economics. Her notes and writings attempt to be neutral but her personal beliefs can be found within most chapters. Photographs from personal albums are placed throughout the book to highlight daily life in South Africa and are also used to validate her observations. The photos are an interesting addition to her written words, and present a view of South Africa and Graham's world of 1899. Not all photographs from the original works are included in this book due to poor quality, reproduction issues, or unavailability. The introduction includes maps and photos that were not included in the original and are from a variety of sources.

E. Maud Graham's first-hand account sheds new light on the subject of the Boer War and, in particular, the role that Canadian women played in helping to rebuild the South African education system. Although the book does not offer specific details about the curriculum taught, it offers an overview of subjects covered in the classroom. The age and division of students is also briefly mentioned along with some expectations within school (daily hygiene checks and soup lunches). School administration is also covered throughout the chapters in a critical review of the system within which she taught. The book provides interesting accounts of social history from 1899 to 1902 and the interactions among Boers, British, Africans, and Canadians. While some of her statements and views are traditional and conservative, Graham is a modern woman with a mind of her own who ventures out of her comfort zone to enjoy her time in South Africa. This can be seen in her love of sports, her zeal in running her own household, her travels across the country by cattle-drawn carts, and her eagerness to explore the beauty of South Africa.

Extensive footnotes, endnotes, and annotations are presented throughout the book, both in the introduction and main body. They offer additional information pertaining to the Boer War, historical references, explanations, and sources for more in-depth information on imperialism, race and class relations, and other significant topics. The book includes a subject index that assists readers in finding specific aspects of Graham's first-hand account. Both the detailed notes and the user-friendly index will be appreciated by historians interested in an a priori account of Canadian imperial educational history in South Africa in the early twentieth century.