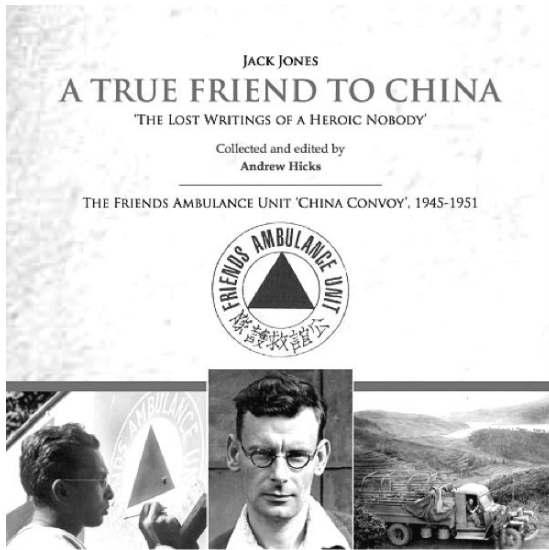


Book Reviews & Overviews



Jack Jones: A True Friend to China: The Lost Writings of a Heroic Nobody

Collected and edited by Andrew Hicks
(Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2015)

Reviewed by Susan Armstrong-Reid

According to Andrew Hicks, a lawyer by training and a writer by choice, he did not set out to write about Jack Jones (Reynolds) and his adventures with the China Convoy but rather “got sucked in almost reluctantly.” It began in 2004 when several book reviewers compared his bestselling novel, *My Thai Girl and I*, to that of Jack Reynolds’s *Woman of Bangkok*, published in 1956. He was intrigued to find why this gifted writer produced a bestselling novel and then disappeared from the literary scene. The *Bangkok Post* published his letter asking if anyone remembered Jack, and several of his friends contacted him. He discovered that Reynolds was actually a Briton named Jack Jones, who had worked in the Society of Friends’ Friends Ambulance Unit, commonly called the “China Convoy,” after the Second World

War. “The die was cast,” and Andrew Hicks “was hooked, each new discovery about Jack driving [him] on like a drug.” He spent the next decade uncovering tantalizing sources of previously unknown private papers and compiling a sweeping and riveting photo collection of daily life to tell the story of the China Convoy’s maverick transport director. *A True Friend to China* recovers Jack Jones’s writings at a pivotal moment in history – the years between the closing of the war and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China – “to constitute a vivid contemporary picture of [Convoy life] that a formal history can describe but cannot evoke.”

From 1941 to 1951, the Friends Ambulance Unit and its successor after 1947, the Friends Service Unit, worked throughout China, delivering medical supplies, providing emergency medical relief, and undertaking longer-term rehabilitation and development. To connect their widely dispersed staff, a weekly newsletter was mailed out, to which Jack Jones, often writing as Home Brew, was a regular contributor. Readers became very familiar with Home Brew’s often humorous, frequently ribald, but always opinionated accounts of the rigours of life on the road, running worn-out and overloaded trucks carrying medical supplies over impossible roads in all weathers and being attacked by bandits, knocked to the ground and beaten with the flat of a sword, and how he was constantly falling hopelessly in love with the Chinese women around him. Jones’s account concludes with his team’s life under the Communist regime and his escape down the Yangtze River to Hong Kong.

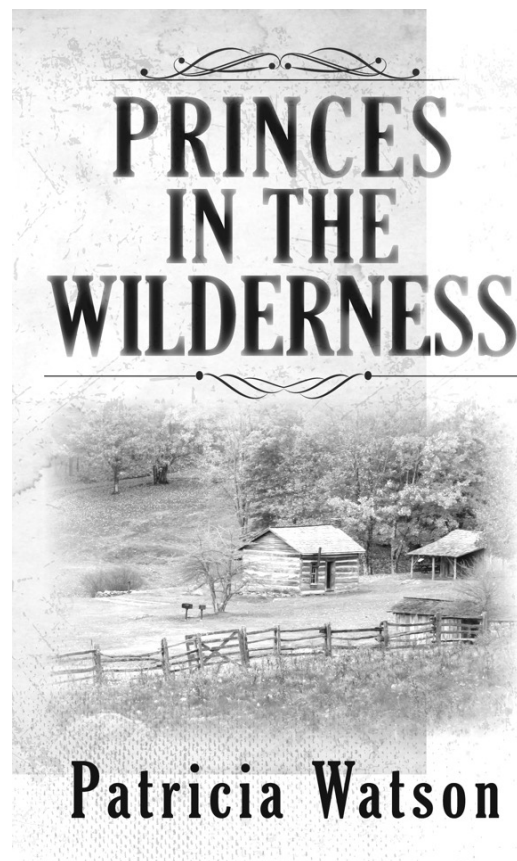
It would be easy to dismiss Jones as

merely a great storyteller regaling with yarns of the Convoy's heroic efforts, but not so. He made an impassioned plea for relief on behalf of famine victims in Hunan and to redress the issue of child labour in the Yunnan tin mines. His dogged efforts to establish and carry on a medical clinic at the Unit's main transport depot in Chungking just as the Communist entered the city reveals much about the man and his values. Jack's intensely compelling writing details his struggle to reconcile the difficult ethical compromises inherent in humanitarian work and the personal cost of daring to care so passionately about the welfare of the Chinese that it took Jones to the brink of suicide. Equally important, his writings capture heated debate within the rank and file surrounding the Convoy's concerns to deliver humanitarian relief in a Quakerly fashion that respected the Quaker attitudes towards peace, the importance of human relationships as foundational for global fraternity, and the need to speak out against social injustice.

Although Andrew Hicks forgoes the use of traditional academic footnoting, his grasp of the archival literature located in London and Philadelphia, and private papers allows him to deftly contextualize the individual actors' personalities and the tensions, clashes, and compromises that peppered their cross-cultural struggle to help alleviate human suffering. Included among these is the tragic tale of Canadian Robert Waldie's death. However, Hicks's discovery of photo collections and personal interviews provides an exciting opportunity to move beyond the written record. *A True Friend to China*, while providing a thoroughly enjoyable read for a general audience, commands a wider readership beyond those interested in the Peace Testimony and

Quakers' engagement in humanitarian work and social justice. At a time when the Humanitarian Summit 2016 is addressing the need to deliver humanitarian aid in a more culturally relevant and community-led process, while protecting the security and well-being of humanitarian actors, the voices of the China Convoy still resonate.

Dr. Susan Armstrong-Reid is Adjunct Professor, Department of History, University of Guelph.



Princes in the Wilderness by Patricia Watson (Indigo, 2015), overview by the author.

Televised news clips show the Prime Minister of Canada and the Queen's representative, the Governor General, at the airport welcoming refugees from

conflicts in Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey. Canada in its benevolence is offering a people, beleaguered and impoverished by war, the privilege to seek political peace and a brighter economic future. Immigration authorities have ensured that these people are screened to protect Canadian society and guarantee them tolerance to worship and create their own future.

Over two hundred years ago Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe offered the same welcome to immigrants as he had an ambitious plan to build a British colony in Upper Canada. Those who took up his offer similarly sought peace, tolerance to worship and work as they wished. As today, economic hardship drove them to leave their land of birth. Unlike the refugees of 2015 there were no airplanes, no government agency offering shelter, clothing or food. Some, however, were offered land grants. They came by foot, by canoe, over mountains, across raging rivers, some across oceans, many with their livestock and infants in arms to a wilderness. By the sweat of their brow they carved out homesteads and founded communities built around their own countrymen and kin. More than economic betterment brought them to Upper Canada. They had a vision larger than material gain. These early pioneers relied on God's provision, guidance and protection. They had faith guiding them as did the Old Testament patriarch called Abraham. That great hall of faith in Hebrews in the New Testament recounts his journey, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country—for he looked for a city whose founder and maker is God."

In the year 2019 my father's family, the

Dales, will have been in Ontario two hundred years. We were the primitive pioneers of South Simcoe County near the town of Schomberg. Because they arrived before the 1830s influx of settlers, theirs too was a journey of faith. I have put pen to paper and told their story in a book called *Princes in the Wilderness*.

I had no written journals to recount exact details because yeoman farmers were more than likely incapable of writing any. I wrote the book as a historical fictional novel rather than a genealogy. Genealogies are really only of interest to the particular family whose history is involved. I wanted to recount a broader social history. I wanted to capture the adventure of a seventeen year old man from Yorkshire England coming across an ocean and up the St. Lawrence rapids to a small military town called York, Upper Canada—coming to a country in its infancy. What did he see, what were his thoughts, who did he meet, what were his dreams? I had another reason for writing: My family settled forty seven miles north-west of Toronto near Lloydstown in what was called the Home District, one of the main hotbeds of the Rebellion of 1837. Coming from a farming background I wanted to tell the farmer's side of that rebellion. I wanted to correct the image I had been taught in school, of some rag tagged bunch of ill-clad, ignorant farmers marching on Toronto who in a half hour failed to accomplish any change in their governance. I was also careful not to take too much literary liberty and so misconstrue the truth, jeopardizing historical fact.

Members of the Society of Friends play a dominant role in my book for it was to the North Yonge Street group that my family came. It was they and the natives whom I believe helped my family. Quite frankly there was little else there. It was they

who played a major role in the Rebellion of 1837. It took seven years of research to make this book as accurate as I could in recounting those events. The degree of my family's involvement with the Society of Friends may be fictional, but the fact is not. We lived only one mile east on concession three from the Schomberg Society Meeting House at Dunkerron Ontario and just over a mile from Benjamin Hawkes's and his sons' farms. Mrs. Benjamin Hawkes was Samuel Lount's sister. Samuel, a Holland Landing blacksmith and member of The Children of Peace was hanged for treason for his leadership in the Rebellion. They had to have known each other. In the middle of a forest eighteen miles from the larger Newmarket community you would have had to rely on each other. You would have met at the local grist mill where you ground your wheat. Furthermore, even without today's social media, if there was a fight you would know about it and have an opinion regarding it. The following are just a few snippets or excerpts of my book *Princes in the Wilderness*.

The back cover gives the overview:

After defeating Napoleon in 1815, Britain's population exploded. The Industrial Revolution had mechanized industry and agriculture. In the small village of Settrington Yorkshire, Thomas Dale a young thirteen-year-old farmer, his brothers John and George, and their sister Hannah and her husband William Monkman saw little future in their homeland. In 1819 hoping to own their own land and freely follow their Methodist faith they left Britain, braved the Atlantic crossing, the St. Lawrence rapids and a treacherous storm on Lake Ontario to reach York, a military town of twelve hundred inhabitants. Here an Ojibwa introduced them to a Quaker farmer from Newmarket who took them by ox-cart up a barely passable trail called

Yonge Street. Staying a year with the Quakers, until the surveying was completed, they applied for land patents. Assisted by their Ojibwa friend, White Deer, the Quakers and a blacksmith from Holland landing named Samuel Lount, they began clearing the forest. It was not long before they had to choose between loyalty to Britain or to Samuel and their American born neighbours. On a cold day in early December 1837, Thomas barely escapes with his life trying to help Samuel.

We shall pick up the story at the storm on Lake Ontario:

The captain had steered the schooner out further from shore to take advantage of the wind and skirt some small islands. By nine o'clock the sky had clouded over, and the wind picked up. The waves were now two to three feet high and white capped. The captain trusted the pilot's judgement in not getting too close to the shore; shoals could not be seen for the surf. By ten, however he had no choice.

The schooner had been driven far too hard by the nor'easter and her sails were pulling her on a dangerous angle. It was too deep to drop anchor, and the captain could not drop sail and drift or she would turn broadside and capsize. All passengers were ordered to the hold as the crew tied down loose deck cargo. The pilot suggested making a run for the strip of water between Amherst Island, a mile ahead, and the mainland. On approaching the mile long island, they lowered the main sail to slow the ship. She ran past the shoreline at a heart-wrenching speed, listing dangerously to port. Near the tip of the island, the mainland broke the fury of the wind and drove them into a long inlet called Adolphus Reach. The foresail had been torn and was flapping wildly in the wind, but it had enough canvas to angle the Onondaga to a wharf. This was in front of

a two – storied building at the base of a two-hundred-foot cliff.

The captain kept the schooner to the leeside of the wharf and a ship's length from it. This was to prevent the ship from damaging the dock and the open-railed ferry tied to it. It was not long before two oilskin-clad figures emerged from the stone building and walked to the dock, waving them to come in. A dory was lowered to the water, and the captain and two crewmen rowed to shore.

A stocky bearded man, the owner of the mill and ferry, introduced himself as Cornelius VanAlstyne and his son Peter. "Hello!" he said "I see your foresail is badly torn. The lake can turn into a fearsome thing when it blows from the east. I don't have such a large sail to replace it, but I have friends a Bryce's Wharf that may have what you need. If not, we shall have to go to Kingston when the storm abates. The water is too rough to pull your ship any closer to my wharf."

"That is fine," replied the captain as he followed the man into the mill. On removing his outer wear, Mr. VanAlstyne's garments were revealed to be very plain. His deportment spoke of a very religious man. "I am a member of the Society of Friends, and we are always willing to help those in need. It will take at least a day to repair your sail. I am willing to take into my home anyone desperately needing shelter tonight, but don't have room for all your passengers. We have extra food for others if you need it."

"Thank you so much," replied the captain. "Perhaps you could take me to the place that might supply the sail I need."

Within the hour, the kindly mill owner had hitched his horse to a light cart and drove the captain up the steep height of land. He followed the trail east and then north, up the west shore of Adolphus

Reach. Luckily, they arrived just before the boat building shop closed. There was another stroke of fortune as well: a small schooner was in the process of construction for which the proprietor had the same size sail they needed. There was no deadline for finishing the schooner, so he was willing to reorder the sail. Just before supper, they arrived back at the mill. Most of the passengers had no need to inconvenience Mr. VanAlstyne; William and Hannah were the exceptions. Hannah had been feeling weak—[she found out she was pregnant before leaving Yorkshire and had a difficult time on the portages around the St. Lawrence rapids] —William thought it best to allow her to rest in better accommodations.

Lake of the Mountain was situated directly behind the mill, on the two-hundred-foot escarpment overlooking Lake Ontario. The lake, according to locals, was mysteriously without a bottom and, even more mysteriously, had no traceable source. Mr. VanAlstyne's father Peter who was of Dutch descent, had been a captain in the Royal Regiment in the state of New York. He had fought for King George against the colonies that rebelled against the mother country. After the war the family was no longer welcome in the newly independent country. They, along with other members of the Society of Friends, were forced to leave. They escaped north to British territory in Upper Canada. The Society of Friends were pacifists who refused to take up arms in any revolt against authority. Peter has risen to captain, running bateaux.

Upon their arrival the family first settled at Adolphustown across the Reach. Later they too were granted land by the crown near Picton. Peter ingeniously routed the two-hundred-foot waterfall from Lake on the Mountain into a wooden sluice, directing it onto an overshot water wheel to

run the mill at Glenora Ferry at the base of the mountain. He had bought stones from France that ground both regular and fine flour. For this commerce, it was necessary to ferry the grain across the Reach. A fellow Quaker and loyalist by the name of Dorland, who lived in Adolphustown, also ran a ferry from the opposite shore. It was not a money-making venture as everyone, regardless of time of day or numbers of farmers crossing, thought they should be accommodated. It was far too inconvenient to man it. Peter had passed away eight years ago, leaving the mill to his sons, his daughter and his son-in-law Mr. Meyers.

Prior to the evening meal Cornelius read from the scripture and offered a prayer for the food and the safe arrival of those aboard the Onendaga. William felt a kinship with these God fearing people. After dinner he talked about his conversion in the open air camp meeting back in Brompton and the Methodist prayer meeting held at his uncle Will's. Cornelius and William had one belief in common, it was that men needed to seek God's guidance. Cornelius called this the Inner Light. William told him of his desire to build a Methodist meeting house when he got settled.

"There is a Methodist church at Hay Bay just down the Reach. Or if you decide to worship with us, you would fit well into our society," declared Cornelius. "It's too bad you are going farther west to settle. There is still good land to be found here, but probably at a higher price than you would want to pay. Some are asking four pounds an acre. I know of some Friends who are farming north of York at a place called Newmarket. Tell them you met Cornelius VanAlstyne, Peter's son and you will be well received. Sometimes they come to visit us and speak at our quarterly meetings.

"Thank you so much," replied William "I shall do that." ...

As the story continues, we see that it was not too long before that came about, when the Dales docked at the foot of Frederick Street in York. We pick up the story as the Dales disembarked and saw some natives cooking salmon over a fire pit:

One very old native with feathers in his hair sat wrapped in a blue blanket on the weathered seat of a dried driftwood tree root. Beside the old man stood a young warrior in partial native garb. He too had feathers in his hair but wore it tied back in a queue. He had the high cheek bones of his Ojibwa ancestors but lighter skin and blue eyes. He wore a black headband adorned with a silver broach and a loose white linen shirt open at the neck with a silver medallion pendant. His trousers were tight-fitted scarlet-dyed deerskin tucked into calf-length deerskin moccasins. Thomas and his brothers were staring in awe of this spectacle when the young warrior beckoned to them. Much to their amazement, he spoke to them in perfect English.

"Good day!" he said "My name is Ettienne Benoit. I am an Ojibwa from Holland landing, but as you see from my name, my father is French. My Annishanabe name is Waawaashkeshi, White Deer. I come here every weekend to sell fish.

John replied, "Could you help us find a way to Newmarket in the Home District? We came to buy land for my brothers here and my brother-in-law, who is up there with my sister."

"Holland Landing is very close to Newmarket," said Ettienne. We have come to the market with a farmer called Brother Rogers from that area. He and his daughter Emily bring their produce thirty five miles down Yonge Street every weekend [to St. Lawrence Market] I could ask him if he would take you back with him tomorrow."

Eventually Brother Rogers and Emily appear over the lakeshore's fifteen foot

embankment.

“Good day, Ettienne!” I see thou hast company.”

“This is my friend Brother Rogers from Newmarket” said White Deer.

The old farmer was clad in butternut-dyed homespun [the colour identifying him as Quaker] and wore a wide brimmed hat. His long full beard was greying slightly, and his hair was shoulder length and very blond.

“They need a ride to Newmarket,” said White Deer. Do you think that when you take me back, they might accompany us?”

“I am sure we can make accommodation for these fine folks, but we may be detained until Monday. It looks like rain and I don’t want to soak myself on that muddy trail called Yonge Street on the Sabbath.”

Thomas spoke up, “We have come to take up land in the Home District.”

Brother Rogers shook his head and said, “I hope thou wilt not be disappointed, but the Lounts, who are to survey the new area to the west, won’t start until next spring. Thou won’t get a patent for thy land until at least next summer.”

The Dales had not anticipated this turn of events. They had been told in England that the land was ready for claiming.

William turned to Brother Rogers and asked “Do you think we may stay in Newmarket and work for our stay until we are able to get our own farms? I believe you may be a member of The Society of Friends.”

“I am indeed” replied Brother Rogers. I have fully cleared two-hundred acres on Yonge Street near the town of Newmarket. My wife and I and a few other brethren came from Pennsylvania twenty five years ago. The Lord hath blessed us indeed and we try to bless others”

“Do you know Cornelius VanAlstyne from Glenora Ferry?”

“Well, well. Just how do you know

Brother Cornelius?”

Amazed at God’s provision he explained the storm and then stated –“He told us to mention his name to his friends in Newmarket and here you are. We are Methodists from Yorkshire England and feel led by God to this new country. We have so much in common in our faith. We would be very blessed if you could help us find accommodation and work until we get our land.”

“Any friend of Cornelius’s is a friend of mine!” stated Brother Rogers. “We shall discuss this further when we get to town. Now thou must put thy trunks on my wagon.”

In *Princes in the Wilderness* I describe in detail their arduous trip up Yonge Street. Having sons himself to work his farm, Brother Rogers could not accommodate the whole Dale family. The Doans, from across Yonge Street, took in John and George, as their skill in wagon making was needed. Thomas, having worked in a blacksmith’s shop back in England found work at Samuel Lount’s shop in Holland Landing. They were not paid in cash but in accommodation for that year and finally by helping them build their cabins and getting their animals. The Dales learned the necessary pioneering skills from the Quakers, who had plenty of practice tackling wild and untamed land, both back in Pennsylvania and in Upper Canada. White Deer and his native friends, who lived in wigwams on the bank of the Holland River, helped them circumnavigate the huge swamp that separated Newmarket from their farms. Sister Rogers brought Hannah’s two babies into the world.

By the late 1820s anger over the unfairness of the ruling elite in Toronto was reaching a boiling point. Governor Simcoe had once seen the Quakers a hard working peaceful people. His successors in

the Family Compact were of a different mindset. Now they suspected them of being Yankee rabble rousers, dissemblers, unyielding to authority, even disloyal to the Crown. The gloved hand of welcome was deceptive. When it was expedient for political or their own personal gain –the gloves came off.

The foundational difference came down to the same reason that the Society of Friends and the Methodists became Dissenters in the churches back in England. They wanted change. Both believed in democratic, not authoritarian rule, either in commerce or matters of faith or state. In decision making that would influence the whole – the individual, whether man or woman, important or lowly as equals in the sight of God, who is no respecter of persons, had a right to voice opinion. Particularly among the Society of Friends, nothing was done without consensus. The farmers and their uprising in 1837 forced the change to responsible government.

For my family The Society of Friends were just that—friends who stuck by you when the going got rough. I take the liberty of reciprocating, by having my great –great grandfather help Samuel. By their deeds not their speech, the Friends fulfilled Jesus second commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”