

Noon, Alan, *East of Adelaide: Photographs of Commercial, Industrial and Working-Class Urban Ontario 1905-1930*. London, Ontario: The London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1989. Pp. 179. Black-and-white photographs. \$29.95

Peter Robertson

Volume 19, numéro 3, february 1991

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017598ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017598ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Robertson, P. (1991). Compte rendu de [Noon, Alan, *East of Adelaide: Photographs of Commercial, Industrial and Working-Class Urban Ontario 1905-1930*. London, Ontario: The London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1989. Pp. 179. Black-and-white photographs. \$29.95]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 19(3), 234–235. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017598ar>

advised. It is not that the humanist calls for the overthrow of science, rather that more subjective modes of understanding and expression . . . should be given greater consideration." In this vein, he advances the lessons to be drawn from Lowry's near-schizophrenic blurring of self and lived-in environment. To be sure, Porteous recognizes that this might be dangerous for the individual, but he concurs with Heidegger's approach to "environmental humility," via a fusion of psychiatry, biography, ecology, and geography, that may serve modern Western society by breaking down our alienation from nature and ourselves.

Brian S. Osborne
Department of Geography
Queen's University

Noon, Alan, *East of Adelaide: Photographs of Commercial, Industrial and Working-Class Urban Ontario 1905-1930*. London, Ontario: The London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1989. Pp. 179. Black-and-white photographs. \$29.95.

East of Adelaide represents a labour of love: the retrieval from obscurity of 1200 surviving negatives produced by Henry Hines, a commercial photographer active in London, Ontario, between 1906 and 1929, and the subsequent restoration of approximately 400 of these negatives by Alan Noon of the University of Western Ontario. This process began in 1971 and culminated with an exhibition of Hines' work at the London Regional Art Gallery in 1987 and with the publication of this book two years later. Researchers who wish to examine the negatives may want to know that they are part of the Regional Collection at Western's D.B. Weldon Library, though, unfor-

tunately, the book assumes that its readers will know this essential information.

Librarian-archivist Edward Phelps of the University of Western Ontario has characterized the Hines collection as a " tantalizing peep-hole into the rich texture of the world we have lost . . . a challenge to the academic and social historian to take proper notice of the photograph as a document." Unlike many other collections of commercial photography, which consist largely of formal portraiture, the Hines negatives document a rich variety of non-portrait subjects: people at work, such as auctioneers, barbers, bartenders, blacksmiths, butchers, McCormick's chocolate makers, cobblers, deliverymen and their vehicles, firemen, and garage mechanics; working-class families and interior views of their homes; advertising displays in store windows and at London's annual Western Fair; the electrification of the city's factories, businesses and homes; and recreational activity at such places as Springbank Park and Port Stanley. Obviously, the passage of time has altered perceptions; during the 1920s, Hines himself probably regarded the photographs essentially as his means of making a living, but in the 1990s they have become potentially significant historical documents for researchers.

One of the strengths of *East of Adelaide* is the manner in which it overcomes the problem that the negatives, when recovered, lacked accompanying documentation. The book supplies a brief and informative biography of Hines, as well as a series of thematic notes about the photographs, and captions which, while avoiding the problem of over-elaborating what is already evident in each photograph, carefully read each

image for evidence which is then linked with information from other sources like newspapers and city directories. By drawing our attention to such details as the number of men wearing prostheses as the result of industrial accidents, the text emphasizes the power of photographs to document aspects of urban life that may not be readily evident in any other source.

Like many labours of love, however, *East of Adelaide* suffers from the fact that it assumes that Hines is significant merely because he has been rescued from obscurity, and fails to establish critical perspective on his work. For example, the book refers to "the uptown society photographers, whose ranks he [Hines] apparently never achieved." Just which of London's photographers are we talking about here: Frank Cooper, the Edy brothers, J. K. O'Connor, Westlake and Company, E. J. Sanders? And do sufficient quantities of their work still exist, both to justify the gratuitous label of "society photographers" and to allow meaningful comparisons to be made with Hines' work? Unless these questions can be answered, this phrase remains nothing but an unsupported generalization that fails to place Hines in context. Other sweeping statements, such as "[t]he history of Ontario and its urban centres is, for the most part, a record of the upper class and the wealthy," sacrifice accuracy as they strain to establish Hines, almost by default, as someone whose work was different and therefore important. Finally, the statement concerning the acquisition of "the entire collection" in 1978 should be clarified. The same donor, John K. Johanneson, in fact donated 168 negatives to the National Archives of Canada in 1971, seven years before donating the

remainder of the collection to the University of Western Ontario; the National Archives later enabled the university to complete its holdings by supplying a complete set of duplicate Hines negatives in 1981. Nowhere is this explained in the book.

East of Adelaide contains a bibliography which consists solely of a few secondary works on the city of London. Conspicuously absent from the bibliography is critic Alan Sekula's essay "Photography Between Labour and Capital," which is part of the book *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures 1948–1968: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton*, published in 1983. Sekula argues that photographic books and exhibitions "implicitly claim a share in both the authority and illusory neutrality of the archive," and that, since photographic archives "maintain a hidden connection between knowledge and power," any "discourse that appeals without skepticism to archival standards of truth might well be viewed with suspicion." He identifies photography as "a tool of industrial and bureaucratic power," and concludes that "the archive has to be read from below, from a position of solidarity with those displaced, deformed, silenced, or made invisible by the machineries of profit and progress." Had those responsible for East of Adelaide read Sekula's essay before putting pen to paper, the result might have been a less celebratory and more critical book, rather than a compendium of recycled civic boosterism.

Peter Robertson
National Archives of Canada

MacDougall, Heather. *Activists and Advocates: Toronto's Health Department, 1883–1983*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990. Pp. 334. Illustrations. \$29.95, (hard).

Activists and Advocates is a thematically organized history of the Toronto Health Department from its beginning in 1883 to 1982. The first three chapters are devoted to the departmental staff: a corps of inspectors and nurses, in daily contact with the public, and a succession of Medical Officers of Health, the policy-makers and chief administrators. Succeeding chapters examine various aspects of the department's general mission: to prevent disease and promote good health. There is, for example, a chapter on school health programs, one on smallpox and tuberculosis control, and one on sexually-transmitted diseases and family planning.

The health problems and demographic constituencies receiving particular attention from the department changed during the century under study. Combatting infectious disease through quarantine and operation of isolation hospitals was originally a major activity of the department, but as vaccines, drugs and diagnostic tests brought such diseases as smallpox, diphtheria and tuberculosis under control, attention shifted to chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and mental illness. Not prepared to be a major provider of care for sufferers of those illnesses, the department instead supported the work of other agencies by providing statistical data and publicizing information on prevention and control. Similarly, with generally increasing longevity, departmental attention shifted to some extent from infants and

children to the elderly. Establishing geriatric health centres entailed a significant expansion of department work in the 1960s as consolidation of well-baby services under the department had done in the 1910s. In the area of food and environmental inspection, such gains as sewage treatment, chlorination of the water supply and pasteurization of milk allowed concern to shift from the overflowing privies, polluted drinking water and adulterated food of the early years to environmental pollution by industrial wastes and smog. Control of those pollutants was for the most part effectively and legally beyond the department's scope (particularly after assignment of air pollution control to Metro Toronto in 1956), and the department necessarily confined its efforts mainly to monitoring and lobbying. By the 1980s the department was thus in several areas only one member of a cooperative health enterprise, rather than the leader and primary health authority it had been early in the century.

The chief strengths of *Activists and Advocates* are its subject matter and the wealth of data it provides. Few municipal departments of health in Canada have received scholarly study, and Toronto's is particularly worthy, both because of the city's importance and because programs of the department have often served as prototypes elsewhere on this continent. MacDougall has mined newspapers, medical journals and archives and has interviewed many people connected with the department. The numerous reproductions of photographs and placards bring to life the work of department doctors, nurses and technicians, and her bibliography includes a valuable selection of published work on public health in Canada, the United States and Great Britain.