

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

McCormack, A.R., and MacPherson, I., *Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference*. National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, History Division Paper No. 10. Ottawa 1975. 316 pp., maps.

Frederick H. Armstrong

Number 3-75, February 1976

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019656ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019656ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Armstrong, F. H. (1976). Review of [McCormack, A.R., and MacPherson, I., *Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference*. National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, History Division Paper No. 10. Ottawa 1975. 316 pp., maps.] *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, (3-75), 68–70. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019656ar>

time-honoured procedures with an internal logic of their own. In short, if repression worked, so did violence; the final outcome depended upon the broader political situation.

The Rebellious Century will interest social historians for many additional reasons: e.g. the way the authors' have collected and interpreted their data, the categories they use to classify collective violence, and so on. Let it be enough to say that the Tilly's have written an important, thoughtful book. They have done so in an engagingly offhand style that eschews jargon and academic fetishism. They have put forward their ideas with care and reserve; nevertheless, in the opinion of this reviewer it is not an exaggeration to report that their work has put the study of comparative social history on a new methodological and analytical foundation.

E.P. Fitzgerald
Department of History
Carleton University

* * *

McCormack, A.R., and MacPherson, I., Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference. National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, History Division Paper No. 10. Ottawa 1975.
316 pp., maps.

Urban history sessions have been a regular feature at the Canadian Historical Association meetings in recent years, however, the Western Canadian Urban History Conference at Winnipeg in 1974 broke new ground as the first purely urban history conference in Canada dealing entirely with Canadian topics. Held to celebrate the centenary of the incorporation of the city, and organized by the History Department of the University of Winnipeg, the choice of the western Canadian city as the theme was a natural one. It was also a very fortunate one, for the Canadian cities in the West have been rather neglected in the still underdeveloped field of Canadian urban studies.

The organizers of the conference showed great imagination in inviting representatives of a variety of related disciplines. Geography and cartography, planning and politics, were all explored; the participants varied from the research scholar to the consultant on urban problems. The appearance of the papers, under the auspices of the National Museum of Man, will thus be welcomed by students in many fields. Regrettably, some of the papers could not be included and it is unfortunate that the commentaries could not have been added, particularly as some of them -- that of Keith Ralston comes immediately to mind -- were of great interest. It is also regrettable that the Museum did not choose a somewhat less unwieldy format and a more substantial cover for such a large book.

The arrangement of the papers by topics has presented difficulties, because of their diversity, but the editors have arrived at a viable solution and have carefully provided both preambles to sections and a general introduction. Quite rightly, considering the locale of the conference, no less than six of the 13 papers deal with Winnipeg. Calgary, Edmonton and Moose Jaw are featured in three more and one deals with the two major cities of British Columbia. Finally, three studies provide some more general discussion.

The papers on Winnipeg provide a good variety of approaches to the overall evolution of the city. They naturally form the most cohesive unit. Alan Artibise provides an excellent survey of the rise of urbanization at the confluence of the Red and the Assiniboine up to 1875, Ed Rea examines the complexities of municipal ownership vs. corporate control for street railways and electric power and Paul Phillips and A.B. McKillop do a good job of discussing the contrasting careers of two leftist politicians of the 1920's and 1930's, Mayor S.J. Farmer and Jacob Penner. The article on Metropolitan Winnipeg by George Rich has the advantage of presenting the problems of constructing regional government by a participant. For once, this type of story is expressed clearly and takes into consideration the psychological as well as the structural factors. Finally, the urban backdrop is well filled in by Artibise and Ed Dahl by their series of clearly explained maps of the city. As the maps are variously oriented it is a pity that they

did not indicate north, for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the city.

Two articles on other centres are interesting for their attack on new aspects of urban problems. Pat Roy's examination of the relationship between racial prejudice and economic gain in Vancouver and Victoria is a fine sociological study and Carl Betke opens a virtually new field with his discussion of sports in Edmonton. Max Foran's article on early Calgary provides a good contrast to Artibise's Winnipeg, although he seems to overdraw the internal rivalries somewhat, and C.O. White's work on electrical utility ownership in Saskatchewan is somewhat complex to follow.

Of the general studies, John C. Weaver's excellent paper on Canadian civic reform from 1890 to 1920 is a fine contribution to a field which has been attracting increasing attention in recent years. His work provides an interesting contrast to Paul Rutherford's previous parallel study and Terry Copp's more specific book on Montreal. John Taylor looks at western cities in the Depression and postulates some interesting theories on the city and the frontier and the city as a frontier itself. Finally, Gil Stelter, moving beyond the west, provides a general overview of the role of the urban frontier in Canadian history which will provide good material for seminar discussion.

Altogether, the collection is a most valuable one and both the editors and the publisher are to be congratulated. Some of the new approaches to urban history may not be represented and the collection naturally suffers from a certain discontinuity which is inevitable in any such collection of papers. Nevertheless, the concentration on the West, with the variety of approaches and disciplines included, give use one of the most useful collections of material for urban studies available in Canada. It is to be hoped that other, similar, collections will appear in the future.

Frederick H. Armstrong
 Department of History
 University of Western Ontario

.