

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Hamilton Between the Covers

J. C. Weaver

Volume 9, Number 3, February 1981

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019295ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019295ar>

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Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

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Cite this document

Weaver, J. C. (1981). Hamilton Between the Covers. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 9(3), 93–93. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019295ar>

BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTEs RENDUS

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HAMILTON BETWEEN THE COVERS

At the rate of research and writing currently underway in steeltown, it would not be surprising to find the above title gracing a study of fertility set in the ambitious city. In addition to the five titles reviewed below, there are at least four more volumes in process and what promises to be an excellent dissertation on labour from 1896 to 1930 by Craig Heron. The McMaster Labour Studies Institute is sponsoring the publication of a visual history of Hamilton labour, the Hamilton volume in the *History of Canadian Cities Series* is nearing completion, and Michael Katz soon goes to press with his second volume. Canadian historians should not forget that his social history project produced reports, articles, and dissertations that have added to our store of scholarship and scholars. A group of local historians with the involvement of university and *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* personnel resident in Hamilton have prepared a manuscript dictionary of Hamilton biography up to 1875. The Hamilton Historical Board manages three properties in the city, including Dundurn Castle, and has opened exhibitions on architectural history in all three. Heritage Hamilton, a private group which has financially assisted the restoration of several dwellings of architectural merit, is planning a walking-tour booklet. The long suffering Hamilton collection, a fine regional archive squeezed for years onto the balcony of a bank building leased by the Hamilton Public Library, now moves into the

handsome new library and civic market building.

J.C. Weaver
Department of History
McMaster University

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McCalla, Douglas. *The Upper Canada Trade, 1834-1872: A Study of the Buchanans' Business*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979. Pp. viii, 231. Tables. \$15.00.

Drawing heavily on the Buchanan Papers and other primary sources, Professor McCalla has painstakingly chronicled the growth and decline of the Buchanans' wholesale merchant business. Peter and Isaac Buchanan founded the business in Glasgow and Toronto in 1834, and expanded westwards into Hamilton in 1840, in part to prevent Montreal-based merchant houses from wresting the trade from their hands. Hamilton was soon to become the centre of their Canadian operations. By the mid-1840s, the business had expanded and diversified from its initial emphasis on dry goods to a larger, more complex, general wholesaling firm with hardware and grocery departments as well. Indeed, by the mid-1850s, the Buchanan firm was among the largest business in Canada, with an annual volume approaching \$2 million in 1856 (p. 1). Although the firm had suffered setbacks in earlier recessions, the financial crisis of 1857-58 began the firm on its downward slide. According to McCalla, the end of extensive growth in Ontario and failures in management - Peter Buchanan's death in 1860 was a serious blow - explain the firm's