

**Martin, Virgil. *Changing Landscapes of Southern Ontario*. Erin, Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1988. Pp. 240. Illustrations**

**John Clarke**

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## ***Book Reviews/Comptes rendus***

vaudeville houses to soon incorporate them into their bills, but by the 1920s vaudeville theatres were closing and converting to movie theatres. The vaudeville audience, like the performers they applauded, simply embraced the new technology. Sophie Tucker, Milton Berle, and George Burns and Gracie Allen all moved from vaudeville to movies and finally made the transition to television, a medium which seems to be the vaudeville of the post-war generation.

John C. Lehr  
Department of Geography  
University of Winnipeg

**Thompson, Dorothy J. *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. Pp. xiii, 342. 8 plates, 10 figures, 5 tables, index. \$37.50 (U.S.)**

The Greek papyri from Egypt provide an incomparable source of information about everyday life in the Greco-Roman period. Contracts, private letters and tax records can shed light on the past in a way that the work of the historical writers cannot. Regrettably few classical scholars have seen the rich possibilities of this kind of documentation as a window on the ancient world. Dorothy J. Thompson is one of a small number of ancient historians who has chosen Greco-Roman Egypt as an area of concentration, and her work stands as a model of the intelligent use of primary source material to construct historical analysis. Her first book, *Kerkeosiris: An Egyptian Village in the Ptolemaic Period* (Cambridge 1971), is unquestionably the best historical study of an Egyptian village that has been produced by a classical scholar. Her new book contains all of the virtues of the first, in terms of skilled interpretation of individual papyri and attention to minute points of detail, but moves beyond this sort of monographic approach to encompass a range of sources and methodologies which include archaeology, iconography, religion, epigraphy, literature,

anthropology and sociology. This book was deservedly the winner of the American Historical Association 1989 James H. Breasted Prize for the best book in English in any field of history prior to A.D. 1000.

Memphis proved to be a much more challenging site for study than Kerkeosiris. Although the latter was much smaller and less significant, several extant archives of papyri provided easily accessible raw material for historical inquiry. In the case of Memphis, on the other hand, the papyri are proportionately less numerous and more random; they therefore do not in themselves provide enough evidence to tell us all that we might want to know about Memphis in the Ptolemaic period. For this reason the author had to draw on a wide variety of sources for her study, and it is her dexterity in doing so that is one of the main strengths of this book.

Memphis, the modern site of Cairo, was after Alexandria the most important city in Ptolemaic Egypt. It is partially for this reason that relatively few papyri from the site are extant; it is one of the paradoxes of papyrology that the more successful a site was, the fewer of its documents have survived, since continuous habitation causes the destruction of the past whereas neglect and abandonment create ideal conditions for the preservation of papyri. The eight chapters of this book cover a number of topics in the social and economic history of Memphis. The importance of Memphis as a religious center of the country is the subject of a number of chapters (esp. 4: Ptolemies and Temples, 5: The Undertakers, 6: Apis and Other Cults, 7: Between Two Worlds: The Sarapieion). The role of Memphis in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds is the focus of the first (The Second City) and last (Roman Memphis: An Epilogue) chapters. The relationship between the indigenous inhabitants and the ruling minority, an inescapable issue in Egyptian history, is considered particularly in two chapters (3: Ethnic Minorities, 7: Between Two Worlds: The Sarapieion). Perhaps nowhere is the author's ingenuity at gleaning historical

information from assorted scraps of evidence more amply demonstrated than in the two chapters which deal with economic life; in the one (2: Economic Life in Memphis), documentation from the Pharaonic period to present-day Egypt is pulled together to assist in developing a picture of economic activity in the country during the Ptolemaic period. A more focused approach is taken in a chapter on an interesting archive of papyri belonging to a family of undertakers (Ch. 5: The Undertakers).

*Memphis Under the Ptolemies* is an outstanding example of classical scholarship at its best, distinguished by a synthesis of documentary expertise and historical imagination. Although it is written with full attention to papyrological detail so as to be indispensable to the specialist, it does not presuppose a knowledge of Greek, and thus would be equally informative to the nonspecialist.

Deborah Hobson  
Division of Humanities  
York University

**Martin, Virgil. *Changing Landscapes of Southern Ontario*. Erin, Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1988. Pp. 240. Illustrations.**

There is a tradition within Geography and its systematic branches, Cultural and Historical Geography, which treats its subject matter in terms of the "evolution of landscape" or "the changing landscape." The tradition is holistic, seeing landscape as the expression of Man's values, or "ways and works," to use the Philbrickian terminology. Most working in this genre present their insights in simple descriptive prose, in the literature of the area and period and in the cartographic and photographic heritage.

The photograph is rarely central, functioning often as a sort of theatrical back drop against which the action is played. That is what

makes this work, the author's second, different. The work is an exercise in rephotography, a process whereby a "scene" or "event" is reproduced at some subsequent time period.

In the pre-photographic period, the description of landscape had to rely on written accounts or painted pictures. Even when deliberately designed to assist scientific observation — and several generations of geographers, geologists and archaeologists were trained in "field-sketching" — much subjectivity remained. While the photographic record does not eliminate this subjectivity it does much to reduce it, leaving traces of silver to be organised by the viewer according to his or her experience, education and cultural predisposition. In this way one may more readily agree on what is "seen," although not necessarily on what it "means."

On this logic Martin searched the photographic record and captured a second image of the event or place in an effort to establish "change" by the juxtaposition of two or more images. In the initial search of hundreds and perhaps thousands of photographs, a heavy reliance was made upon the resources of the National Photographic Collection of the National Archives of Canada. Almost half of the published photographs are from this source; the rest are drawn from a variety of County museums, the National Air-Photo Library, and the Archives of Ontario-Hydro, to name but a few. The project was supported by the Explorations Programme of the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

Using clues internal to the original photograph, the exact location from which this was captured was determined. Then by matching the season, the time of day and the light conditions, a second photograph was taken (the method is explained in detail in a three-page appendix) and the changes of ten to 100 years are collapsed to the sharp contrasts of two frozen moments. The oldest

photo in the book dates from 1856; the shortest interval between any two images was thirteen months.

While, perhaps tongue in cheek, the author claims that rephotography falls within the warm embrace of Historical Geography, he rightly notes that it offers "pertinent information to a wide range of disciplines." The social and economic historian will find material to his liking here as will the geographer.

Visual inspection of the map locating the site of particular photographs suggests that South-western Ontario has perhaps received more of its due desserts. This may well be a fortunate "accident" for readers of the *Review* since it is here that most of the urban activity takes place. Indeed, half the book is devoted to the process of urbanisation. While the author recognises that the landscape exists as a continuum and that some photographs in one chapter could just as well be in another, he nonetheless chose to devote four chapters explicitly to things urban. These are entitled "Urban frontier," "Hamlets and Villages," "Towns" and "Cities." Two other chapters deal with the related themes of "Industry" and "Transportation." Given that in all there are ten chapters, the urban theme is well treated.

Each chapter includes a brief essay. These are succinctly and lucidly written. Martin exhibits considerable literary skill, utilising the power of suggestion to conjure up image and illusion to minimise text so that space can be given over to the photograph. The substantive material is organised and written in a dynamic way, geared to convey the changing impact of the phenomenon upon landscape rather than to simply describe it *per se*. For example, within the space of two pages on the broad theme of Agriculture, the author manages to discuss the varying impact of the Amerindian and pioneer European phase of occupancy upon the landscape, the effects of animal husbandry, the nature of the frontier, the advantageous and deleterious effects of

dependence upon wheat, the subsequent mixed farming economy and its effects on the nature of the farm family, and the impact of mechanisation.

The brevity of all this is disconcerting to those of us used to a basically textual presentation with supporting photographs. Given that this is a photographic essay with supporting text, this is a truly remarkable achievement. The text exudes the geographer's concern with *integration* and *interrelationship* and for its literary and professional skills is well received by this reviewer. Yet, it is almost too overpowering and all encompassing for the series of *static* photographs, which, one presumes, purport to be the landscape manifestations of the processes described.

Thirty-five photographs follow in this particular chapter, their impact varying for each individual reader but never for this reviewer equalling the sum of the parts. Like the points in some Pissarro painting they remain just that, points in a picture painted in words in the introductory pages. Could it be otherwise? Probably not, because of the author's devotion to the photographic image. Given this, the author perhaps wisely reports that: "The captions accompanying the photographs are intended to provide basic information as well as a few points of interest about the changes in each pair. Common sense and limited space, however, imposed constraints, and it is left to the reader to explore and interpret the bulk of the photographic evidence."

What does this volume have to say to readers of the *Urban History Review*? In Chapter 3, Martin describes the process by which rural farm land is converted into city-scape as urban expansion and concomitant land speculation drive farm values to a point where "optimum economic rent" necessitates the conversion of low return grain or pasture to subdivision or parking lot. Until the residential zone reaches a particular location, **the land is** part of a zone of "blight." It is perhaps because the author has lived through this

experience that the photographs in this section are so very apt. Paired photographs, taken only two years apart, show the remnants of trees pulled from superb farmland to be replaced by the non-descript architecture which passes for modernity and "progress." Another plate (#58) shows literally the signs of the city to come and then farm buildings being razed to add to the recently constructed shopping centre.

The most dramatic plate relates to a section of Etobicoke, which, in the space of 15 years, was utterly transformed with the building of Highway 401. But the plates on pages 68 and 69 are equally as meaningful. On the former, cows graze in front of a barn-yard, located three kilometres from Woodstock; in the background grain is stacked. In the subsequent shot of this same location 70 years later, the cows, grain and barn-yard are all gone; the landscape in an "eclipsed form" awaits the inevitable factories and housing. Page 69 shows an old rural road being remade as a city street, the street incorporating a plaque commemorating a world famous dairy cow and the farm whence it came!

In a chapter on hamlets and villages, Martin documents the steady decline in the villages and hamlets as changing spatial relationships and transportation affect their functions, but plate 88 serves to remind one that change can be revolutionary. This plate shows the village of Iroquois whose heart was destroyed to accommodate the St. Lawrence Seaway and its associated hydro-electric scheme.

The subsequent chapter distinguishes between village and town on the basis, of course, of function and size, but also on the "rule of thumb" that at the centre of a town, the "downtown", would have at least a block built up with three storey structures. The chapter reminds us of the ever present agent of fire as a force for change, that the roads of these towns were not asphalt and required boardwalks and that the past is manifest most

especially at second floor level since first floors have often been removed from the street because of the aesthetic offence they create.

In chapter 6, entitled "Cities," the stress is upon technology, which, Martin holds, set in motion the building of the city by improvements in transportation, and which provided the means of vertical expansion.

The chapter shows how much that was fine in our older cities has been drastically affected by the banking industry, by the city fathers and by those bent on "urban renewal." Much that was distinct and pleasing has been removed to be replaced by the bland. This is well illustrated by pages 124 and 125, which serve to illustrate not only the changes in transportation from trolley-car to omnibus to automobile, but the wanton destruction of much that was pleasing in St. George's Square, Guelph.

It is also exemplified on pages 140 and 141, in photographs of Toronto Street, in the city of that name. This, Martin notes, has been described "as the street which died"; a street from which "perhaps the finest grouping of nineteenth century commercial buildings on the continent" was removed to accommodate a parking garage and some office buildings, including an architectural monstrosity erected on behalf of Revenue Canada. Here, as elsewhere, Martin does not mince words, and since his values are mine I am sympathetic.

The chapter also contains useful photographs that illustrate the process by which streetscapes are changed as fire destroys, as streets are incorporated into the city replacing pine trees with telephone posts and concrete buildings. There is much to lament here, but there are also positive reminders. Our city streets have less mud and fewer "pot-holes" and the twentieth-century city is, at night, much better lit than its earlier counter-part, which in the absence of street-lighting was pitch black unless the moon shone.

Well enough! There are other chapters germane to those interested in things urban such as transportation and industry, chapters which can also stand in their own right, but these three serve to "savour the flavour."

This book will be of interest to urban and social historians, to landscape architects and to cultural and historical geographers. It presents some marked contrasts, even for those who might be expected to be so familiar with landscape to admit to surprise; one of the most telling demonstrations is that trees are now more abundant than at any time during the past century. The book can be used as illustrative material in teaching.

Who will buy it? I am not sure, but we will all be grateful that this innovative piece exists. I am sure the author hopes that his book will be a financial success. In a day and age in which government philosophy seems to be that success is to be measured in dollars, we may have to be grateful to the Ontario Heritage Foundation, the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and the Office of the Secretary of State for their insights: works such as this one may well remind us of the important function of such agencies. My personal thanks to Virgil Margin.

John Clarke  
Department of Geography  
Carleton University  
Ottawa

***"We Shall Be as a City Upon a Hill": John Winthrop's Vision and the Urban History of New England***

"We Shall Be as a City Upon a Hill," Governor John Winthrop exhorted his fellow emigrants on the flagship *Arabella* shortly before the great Puritan expedition of 1630 discharged its passengers on to the shores of Boston harbour. Winthrop's fleet of eleven ships was not the first to bring religious dissenters to the area: a small congregation of separatists form