

Stave, Bruce M. *The Making of Urban History: Historiography Through Oral History*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977. Pp. 336. \$6.95 paperback

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Number 2-78, October 1978

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019429ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019429ar>

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Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Brookes, A. A. (1978). Review of [Stave, Bruce M. *The Making of Urban History: Historiography Through Oral History*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977. Pp. 336. \$6.95 paperback]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, (2-78), 110–112. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019429ar>

offer inspiration to a broader perspective. To give a most relevant contemporary example: the mercantile theory of city support and its pattern through the ages set Artibise's recent studies of Winnipeg in a new and vital comparative context.

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Stave, Bruce M. The Making of Urban History: Historiography Through Oral History. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977. Pp. 336. \$6.95 paperback.

The Making of Urban History consists of interviews with nine prominent American urban historians conducted by Bruce Stave for the Journal of Urban History between the spring of 1974 and the summer of 1976. In a good historiographical introduction, Stave states that the book combines urban and oral history, "two of the fastest growing and most significant developments in historical study to emerge since World War II" (p. 13). Many of the comments of Blake McKelvey, Bayrd Still, Constance McLaughlin Green, Oscar Handlin, Richard Wade, Sam Warner, Stephan Thernstrom, Eric Lampard, and Samuel Hays on the former topic are informative, provocative, and stimulating. Unfortunately, mediocre editing occasionally tarnishes the effectiveness of the latter genre.

Although the discussions are open-ended, and no uniform questionnaire is employed, several themes reoccur. The three senior practitioners (McKelvey, Still, and Green) all seem to agree that the lengthy, narrative urban biography, the approach they established in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, is now "dead, old history" (Green, p. 128). Through such pointed questions as, "is local history urban history with the brains left out?" (p. 81) a distinction is made between old "city" and new "urban" history. In Bayrd Still's career "the general reader and local citizen as well as scholar" (p. 78) were important; and Blake McKelvey, long-time city historian of Rochester, recalls with considerable pride the plumber who came to mend a faucet one day and mentioned he had been reading McKelvey's works on the city for fifteen years (p. 58). A more dispassionate Constance Green remembers, however, the total rejection of her book on Holyoke by its citizens--largely because it was accurate (p. 119). While Eric Lampard emphasizes the importance of reaching a general readership, it is apparent that the increasing sophistication of new, "urban" history has made the field more purely academic.

History from the bottom up or "the faucet down" (p. 59), especially that of the quantitative historians, also receives considerable attention in the various interviews. The depersonalization and the lack of "colour" of "barefoot empiricism" are bemoaned by the more traditional historians, though Lampard, Thernstrom, Warner, and Hays predictably offer qualified support. Nevertheless, the use of statistical methods in certain

situations is generally accepted by all interviewees. Rather than being a deliberate plot to replace historical letters with social science numbers, Thernstrom explains the undesigned nature of his own "conversion." After receiving a C- as a senior in a freshman algebra course, he abandoned the idea of advancing in economics; but when beginning the Newburyport study for his graduate dissertation in history, the quantitative approach was "really forced on me by the nature of the evidence" (p. 225). Hopefully, Lampard's call for "an end to quantificating" or "huffing and puffing about quantification" (p. 264) should suggest an end to this foolish issue.

The more recent leaders in the field, however, all clearly exhibit a saturation with the many quantitative social mobility studies which have appeared in increasing abundance during the past several years. Instead, they point to a need to go further into the analysis of social structures, social change, and "the interaction of human relationships" (Hays, p. 309). Repeatedly, they encourage the growth of more systematic and comparative history, with emphasis on the study of the urban process: not on the study of things which happened in cities, but on "how something [the city] . . . came to be" (Warner, p. 196). Most stimulating is Sam Hays' suggestion that a scale or continuum be established for urban places, differentiating by "types of industry, . . . population mix, . . . ethnic background, . . . age of city, . . . rates of growth" (p. 316). With such a national or international scale, specific cities could be selected for intensive study in a systematic and comparative way.

A final, recurring theme concerns the existence of urban history as a separate sub-speciality within the broader discipline of history. There appears, among the Americans at least, an almost unanimous feeling that it will and should not survive independently. Lampard began in "rural" history, considers himself an economic or demographic historian, and feels the rural/urban dichotomy is artificial (pp. 258, 269). Thernstrom has retreated from being a "new urban" to a "social" historian (p. 230). Hays started his career as a "conservation historian" and is presently interested in the "social-political matrix" (p. 298). Thoughtfully aroused, the reader may conjecture as to which way the different leaders will take the field.

The only aspect of The Making of Urban History to be regretted is that Stave did not spend greater time and care on editing. Several typographical errors and the placing of Lampard's "Select Bibliography" between footnotes fifteen and sixteen (p. 285) are minor indications of this shortcoming. To establish historiographical chronology, the interviews have been placed in order of seniority rather than the order in which they appeared in JUH. Thus, Stave refers to comments by Thernstrom (Chapter 7), Warner (Chapter 6), and Hays (Chapter 9) in his talk with Handlin (Chapter 4). Much of the discussions on contemporary issues like the energy crisis or Blake McKelvey's feelings that President Ford is (was) trying to return the U.S. to the condition in which it existed "before the Great Flood" could have been omitted. Similarly, while the autobiographical reflections at the beginning of each interview

unquestionably develop character and create a relaxing atmosphere, it is debatable whether readers need to know that Blake McKelvey was a newsboy, an errand boy for a fish market, a taxidermist's assistant, a book salesman, and a machine tender before turning to history (p. 34); or that Dick Wade's dad, formerly a country lawyer, moved to Chicago and became president of the Eskimo Pie Company--"one of [Stave's] favorites" (p. 159).

Despite these quibbles, the aim of the book is to "search for the meaning of the making of urban history" (p. 25) and in this it is largely successful. The comments on influential books, the footnotes and bibliographies, the descriptions of research sources and techniques, and the cornucopia of ideas for future projects, now all collected in one volume, make the book invaluable as a basic jumping-off point for any graduate seminar in urban history.

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Armstrong, Christopher and Nelles, H. V. The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company: Sunday Streetcars and Municipal Reform in Toronto, 1888-1897. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1977. Pp. ix, 214. Illustrations. \$12.95.

Professors Armstrong and Nelles first outlined the Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company to the Canadian Historical Association meeting in 1973. Delivering it in their inimitable vaudevillian style, Armstrong and Nelles succeeded in entertaining an audience and in overcoming the tedium so often inherent in the study of the relationship between municipal politicians and public utility companies or in an examination of the sabbatarian movement. In this greatly expanded version, Armstrong and Nelles have again sought to entertain "by telling a story about certain intrinsically amusing events" (p. vii) but they have not fulfilled their earlier promise. They have used a generous number of Bengough cartoons and doggerel verse from Grip and other Toronto papers to advantage but much of their humour depends on the assumption that "the Saints," who favoured blue laws, were silly rather than sincere. Thus, their humour is often strained. The best example of this is the basic premise of their title. The "revenge" of the Methodist bicycle company (C.C.M.) was brief, as the authors admit. The bicycle craze which cut into street railway earnings was short-lived and C.C.M. was soon in serious financial difficulties while the Toronto Railway Company went on to prosper (pp. 171-2).

The volume begins with a vivid word picture of Toronto in the late 1880s and 1890s describing the city's physical setting, its chief characters and its moral righteousness. A good selection of photographs supplements it and, despite the absence of a map, the authors do whet the reader's appetite. Alas, the reader soon encounters indigestible courses.