

Terpstra, John. *Falling into Place*. Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2002. Pp. 318. Illustrations, maps. \$25.95 (paperback)

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the alterations of the landscape through time. Multiple maps are especially useful in understanding the mounds' orientations and relationship to each other. Additionally, by comparing the maps from chapter to chapter, and those placed side by side, it is easy to discern the changing landscape. The illustrations, particularly the pictures that show Cahokian life and architecture during the Mississippian phase, aid the reader in visualizing a complex civilization that existed in prehistoric America. Significantly, the author's insistence that Mississippian Cahokia, c.1000 to 1400 CE, was a city based on an urban development plan with monumental architecture elevates the achievements of the North American Stone Age to their rightful place alongside humanity's other great achievements. Finally, the more theoretical asides that would otherwise detract from the narrative are contained within helpful text-boxes.

Cahokia is a valuable study to introduce the history of the region and its multiple meanings for humanity.

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"This book is what happens when one person becomes completely enamored of the landscape, and a particular feature of the landscape, in the city where he lives."

So begins John Terpstra's fascinating, introspective, and illuminating travel through time and space. At one level, the subject matter of the book is the history of the Iroquois Bar, deposited by post-glacial Lake Iroquois at the City of Hamilton, Ontario. Beyond this, however, Terpstra's book explores the broader themes of landscape interpretation and sense of place through evocative and moving accounts of his personal experiences with this landscape.

The historical events and geographical processes described in this book, while specific to Hamilton, are familiar ones to readers of *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine (UHR/Rhu)*. There are city builders (Sir Allan MacNab and Thomas Baker McQuesten), planning decisions (the building of the Royal Botanical Gardens), transportation issues (the Desjardins Canal and the Chedoke Expressway), and so on, all of which directly affected the Iroquois sandbar in Hamilton.

What may be less familiar to *UHR/Rhu* readers is Terpstra's intensely personal and contemplative treatment of these people and processes. The book is, in short, geography and history as experienced and expressed in the words of the poet. (Terpstra has published six books of poetry.)

The press release accompanying the book notes that "Terpstra struggles to fathom just how much the physical and social geography of the area has changed since the sandbar was formed, and the meaning of modern society's constant and often ill-considered alteration of the landscape." The highly successful result of this "struggle" is a work that gives us cause to

re-examine familiar places and landscapes. The result for readers of this book will most certainly be new insights and a more profound understanding of places we thought we knew.

Terpstra's presentation of the historical and geographical facts is a lyrical tapestry in which the landscape and the author become one. Along the way, he eloquently expresses the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that comprise his personal experience of the Iroquois sandbar:

This was my personal landscape, for better or worse; and if I was to find a way into the physical and spiritual geography of my earthly dwelling place, the path would have to wend its way through the features of that inner landscape as well. (89–90)

For Terpstra, this personal landscape takes on a very human character:

Come, let us anthropomorphize the landscape . . . The living memory of how the place once was is given body, and that body is the earthly home of people for whom the very contours of the land evoke meaning. (26–27)

As he relates a wide range of personal experiences with the sandbar, Terpstra takes the reader on a 10,000-year odyssey, describing events and processes in refreshingly vivid and imaginative prose. For example, he describes the creation of the sandbar as follows:

Pushed and dragged all the way, the sand, gravel, pebble and cobble were deposited here by ice-age glaciers as unceremoniously as immigrant ships discharged their cargoes of humanity. As the ice began to retreat, a tongue of running water carried the stones the last little way to their new home. (16)

Throughout the book links are forged between the physical and cultural environments. In his description of James Durand's home, Bellevue, built on the sandbar in 1806, Terpstra writes,

He (Durand) chose the spot . . . because the road up the escarpment ran past it. In a time of few settlements, fewer roads and a lot of geography, that fact made life, and business, much easier. Geography rules.

Soon after, Durand's home on the sandbar played a significant role in the establishment of a settlement at the head of Lake Ontario:

The city of Hamilton was born on that front porch (of Bellvue) . . . The town was conceived on a piece of paper that lay on a desk inside a room within the house that James Durand built. (209)

Readers familiar with Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* among other historical and geographical treatments of landscape and sense of place will find Terpstra's book a thought-provoking and informative read. While some will want more history and others might crave more geography, those who seek a deeper understanding of the meaning of place (and why these meanings matter) will find this to be a very important book. Even those intimately familiar with Hamilton will encour-

ter a refreshingly different perspective on the city's history and geography.

There are, in my view, no serious flaws or shortcomings in this book. There were minor oversights, for example, the references to Alexander MacNab (it should be Allan MacNab), and I did find the chapter entitled "Oriah Mountain Dreamer" to be somewhat out of place, but experiences of the sort Terpstra is describing are, of course, personal and subjective. Overall, the book is a delight to read. The experience of the book itself is enhanced by four superb maps by Glenn Macdonald and eight exquisite sketches by Wesley Bates. *Falling into Place* should be read by all those interested in our experience of place. It is an eloquently written reminder that physical and cultural landscapes and the way we understand them are continuous works in progress.

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Mahoney, Timothy R. *Provincial Lives: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pp. x, 334. Illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. US\$54.95 (hardcover).

In the conclusion of his pathbreaking 1989 study of 19th-century urban American respectables, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*, Stuart Blumin pointed to an interesting irony. For all he had demonstrated about middle-class structures in urban America, his study focused on only a distinct minority—big-city dwellers—in an era when most of the people lived on farms and in small villages and towns. What, he asked, were the differences between urban and rural milieux when considering middle-class structure and identity? What, in other words, was the geography of middle-class formation in 19th-century America?

Ten years later, Timothy Mahoney has begun to answer that question, and rather ably. *Provincial Lives* examines the development of a middle-class consciousness within an urban system: the river towns in the upper Mississippi valley from the 1790s to the Civil War. This book dovetails nicely with Mahoney's previous work, *River Towns in the Great West* (1990), which traces the development of a regional urban system in small-town Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin in the middle decades of the 19th century. These books divide the labour of urban history clearly and well; *River Towns* describes the anatomy of the antebellum Midwestern urban system, *Provincial Lives* describes much of its physiology.

Mahoney's central argument is both plain and sophisticated: the Midwest was, in the early 19th century, a testing ground for middle-class values constructed in eastern cities and transported westward to growing towns and their hinterlands. Class identities here were not national or local in scope, but regional. "In the towns of the Great West the middle class transferred a cultural and social system which middle-class people had only just formulated in the older towns across New York and Ohio and tested its ability to shape social order in the West . . . and

the whole of the United States." (5) Three successive migrant groups played key roles in constructing and defining the regional middle class: early pioneers and transplanted gentry, whose ideals were paramount in local society, 1790s–1810s; young, male fortune-seekers, whose fraternal behaviour posed the threat of local social disorder in the 1820s and 1830s; and more respectable sorts—merchants and professionals—whose material display, mannered behaviour, moral admonition, and boosterism became the dominant means of expressing middle-class culture by the 1850s.

This regional middle-class consciousness was both powerful and fleeting. Regional elites held the economic and professional reins in local society; like those of southern planters, their ideals and values were hegemonic locally and overshadowed other subcultures. Economic and professional interests and common values married regional elites to one another. By the 1840s, a regional booster network was paralleled by a regional cultural network; river-town elites were bound by common interest, shared values, and mutual regard for cultivated behaviour.

This regional class culture eroded, however, as shared economic interest crumbled with the coming of the railroad in the 1850s. Initially, communities pooled talent and resources to draw railroads to their region, but ultimately the fruits of attracting railroads were not evenly distributed. Railroads could not, of course, run through every locality. Middle-class culture in the antebellum Midwest was predicated on regional commonweal; railroads divided community interest and ultimately conquered local middle-class culture in two ways. Where railroads connected small towns to big cities, local middle-class culture was swamped: middle-class culture generated in big city termini (of the sort that Blumin describes) prevailed; in those towns bypassed by the railroad, middle-class culture withered once a reason for regional consciousness was removed. In the upper Mississippi valley, the middle-class *moment* was bright but short-lived.

Mahoney's method in treating this subject is well balanced. Having painted the form of the regional urban structure, he seeks in this book to understand the social relationships that held it together. The author's archival research is impressive. He presents evidence from personal and family correspondence, diaries, and an interesting array of ephemera like social-event invitations and handbills. He uses family reconstitution (one of the most laborious methods that social historians employ) to explain the social networks that westward migration entailed and case studies to elucidate the professional culture of lawyers. Mahoney's book is, then, "structuralist," but not faceless. His portrait of regional society is rich, detailed, sophisticated, and above all, credible.

Some weaknesses remain, of course. The book is generally well written. Mahoney is at his best when telling stories about families, but this occasionally lapses in sections of dense, awkward prose (in the introduction and epilogue) that obfuscate the book's argument. Some usage inconsistencies mar the text (*Vanmeter* or *Van Meter*? *Saukenuk* or *Saukenauk*? *Kenney* or *Kinney Said*? *Hudson Bay Company*, *comradery*, and railroad