

Notes and Comments

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NATIONAL MAP COLLECTION PUBLICATIONS: A RESPONSE

Ed. Note - In the last issue of the U.H.R., Professor John Taylor reviewed two books recently published by the Public Archives of Canada. They were: T.L. Nagy, Ottawa In Maps (Ottawa, 1974); and A.F.J. Artibise and E.H. Dahl, Winnipeg In Maps (Ottawa, 1975). The following letter was received in response and is reprinted here in its entirety.

A book review often includes criticism unpalatable to an author or publisher but the reviewer's right to openly express his opinions should not be challenged. In this letter, therefore, I would like only to clarify several points raised by John Taylor in his review of Ottawa in Maps and Winnipeg in Maps.

The two books reviewed were prepared as part of the Public Archives' diffusion programme. This programme is in response to the declared policy of the Secretary of State to disseminate, where possible, the cultural resources of the nation and is designed to heighten the department's visibility.

The technical and design problems of the publications are easily recognizable and indeed caused no one more distress than the authors and the staff of the National Map Collection. To us, maps are far more than "a minor national treasure" and poor reproduction and bad publicity damage our overall purpose, which is to collect, preserve and provide service to the cartographical heritage of Canada.

The type of publication -- glossy, easily readable text, selection of maps to portray a story -- indicates that the main audience was not intended to be the cartographical historian. Both books were prepared primarily for the members of the general public and in particular for those residents (present and past) of Ottawa and Winnipeg. In general the books have been well received, both by the general public and by researchers, including many in the teaching profession.

These publications may be considered the first prepared primarily for a general audience, but Mr. Taylor may not have been aware that the division has published seven other catalogues since 1970. These include Telecommunications: the Canadian experience: an annotated list of maps (1974), County atlases of Canada: a descriptive catalogue (1970), and Index to township plans of the Canadian West (1974). Two other such catalogues are currently being prepared, and within several months, our main entry card catalogue will be available in printed volumes from G.K. Hall & Co. In addition, Sixteenth century maps relating to Canada: a checklist and bibliography was published in 1956 and remains a classic scholarly work. The National Map Collection, as part of the Public Archives of Canada, serves a wide audience and is aware that no publication can satisfy the demands of all components of that audience.

Mr. Taylor's comment that "the map division has picked up too much of the spirit of Expo and Infocan and not enough of the tradition of the institution of which it is a part" is unfair and I feel, based on misunderstanding and lack of knowledge of the division's accomplishments, plans, and purposes. Cartographical materials have been collected by the Public Archives since the department was created in 1872, and the importance of these materials was recognized by the creation of a map division in 1908. This division has contributed to the proud tradition of the Public Archives. However, archival institutions should not be static; the Public Archives of 1976 is not the archives of 1908 nor 1935.

All publications of the federal government must adhere to established bilingualism guidelines. Thus, Mr. Taylor's criticism of the "bilingualism ad absurdum" which he feels is a drawback of the publications should be directed elsewhere.

In conclusion, the two books are part of the P.A.C. publication programme directed towards the general public. They should not, therefore, be considered "a quick flash".

Betty Kidd
Chief, National Map Collection
Public Archives of Canada

VISIBLE LANDSCAPES OF THE PAST

A special session on "Visible Landscapes of the Past" is projected for the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Geographers at Laval University, May 23-27, 1976.

Contributions with respect to heritage, diffusion, folk-cultural, developmental or image-based perspectives will be welcomed. In general, the session will attempt to bring together several themes of inquiry that share a concern with the built environment of the past.

Contributions should place an emphasis on the extent to which systematic study of such a concern can enhance the understanding of Canada's past geographies, contribute to an analysis or appreciation of the contemporary landscape, or provide a basis for long-range planning of the visible environment.

Those interested in presenting a paper (of 15 to 30 minutes duration), circulating an abstract (one to three pages), or acting as a panel discussant should write Darrell A. Norris or Victor Konrad, Department of Geography, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4L9.

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ATLANTIC CANADA STUDIES CONFERENCE

Two urban history papers will be presented at the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference to be held on the University of New Brunswick campus in Fredericton on April 8 to 10, 1976. They are:

David Sutherland, Dalhousie University, "Colony to Colony:
Nineteenth-Century Halifax".

Carl Wallace, Laurentia University: "Boosting St. John, 1840-1870".