

Nation Capital Commission/Region de la Capitale nationale.
History and Heritage Bibliography/Bibliographie de l'histoire et du patrimoine. Ottawa, 1976. Pp. xv, 310

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BOOK NOTES

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Nation Capital Commission/Région de la Capitale nationale. History and Heritage Bibliography/Bibliographie de l'histoire et du patrimoine. Ottawa, 1976. Pp. xv, 310.

Among the most avid and dedicated collectors and writers on local history in Canada have been the people of the Ottawa region. The tradition is not a recent one, but reaches well back into the nineteenth century. It has been a task not without difficulties.

The difficulties have rarely revolved around a shortage of materials, but rather around the difficulties of gathering it from widely fragmented repositories. This problem has probably been a more serious one for the Ottawa area than most other jurisdictions. The reasons for this situation are easily outlined. The region is divided by a provincial boundary that dictates a sort of archival dualism: the history of the region is that of two provinces. The history of the region is also part of the national heritage. Ottawa, as capital, implies national jurisdiction. And, of course, the city began with the Rideau Canal: under British jurisdiction. Economically, Ottawa has been a hinterland at various times and in various ways of London, Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, and even Boston. The records of the city's growth are often in the headquarters' cities. The intense and persisting localisms of the Ottawa area divide the region, and powerful religious and ethnic traditions often divide the localities. Ottawa, itself, is a city with two historical traditions.

No repository has even had the capacity, authority or possibly interest to draw together the documentary material on the city and the region. Each tends to collect what is of particular interest to it. And given the absence until recently of a city archives, the city of Ottawa, as a unit, has really been the archival priority of no one. The

Ottawa Public Library, the Public Archives of Canada, and the National Library, in particular, have done yeoman service for the city, but none of these really have either the jurisdiction or the mandate to be the integrating medium.

It is unlikely that the documentary diaspora of the last 150 years will be repaired, but the National Capital Commission has done the next best thing in its History and Heritage Bibliography of the National Capital Region. It has begun to tell us where the material might be found.

The 310 page bibliography make it a veritable War and Peace of urban bibliographies for Canada, both in scale and (with some reservations) quality. Some 64 archives, libraries, and other repositories were ransacked for material on the 63 municipalities of the National Capital Region. Manuscript collections, maps, newspapers, annual reports, government records, genealogies, serials, directories, almanacs, theses, dissertations and other sources have been canvassed and recorded. No other "urban" bibliography yet matches it, even though it is a first edition and admittedly incomplete. It could be made more manageable. The format is somewhat confusing. That may be a matter of technique; it might also stem from difficulties with the material.

At any rate, to the National Capital Commission, historians, librarians, and planners of the Ottawa region owe a debt. And to give credit where credit is due, the Senior Heritage Officer, who directed the enterprise, and his colleagues, who executed it, might attach their names to their work.

For further information, write The Senior Heritage Officer, National Capital Commission, Rideau Street, Ottawa. [John H. Taylor, Carleton University].

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