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Rasporich, A. W., ed. *The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1984. Pp. iv, 231. Maps, illustrations. \$12.95

J. William Brennan

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Rasporich, A. W., ed. *The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1984. Pp. iv, 231. Maps, illustrations. \$12.95.

Urban scholars will find a good deal that is of interest in this collection of papers originally presented at the Western Canadian Studies Conference sponsored by the University of Calgary in 1983. The purpose of this conference was to explore the economic, political, social and demographic changes which have followed in the wake of the region's post-World War II resource boom. Happily some of the best of the seventeen essays in *The Making of the Modern West* address urban themes.

In his overview of prairie history since 1945 which serves as an introduction to the volume, Gerald Friesen points to urban growth as one of the most striking developments of the period. Two other contributors, Peter J. Smith and Max Foran, offer more detailed appraisals of the impact of the resource boom on prairie urban development, and their essays deserve to be discussed at some length.

Smith provides a broad survey of the pattern and pace of urban growth on the prairies, and especially Alberta. In absolute terms it has been the region's five largest cities which have experienced the most dramatic growth — accounting for three-quarters of the total for the three prairie provinces — but smaller urban places have also become more populous, and more numerous. In other words, the prairie urban system itself has become more complex. This Smith attributes largely to the post-Leduc resource boom. Where once agriculture was the mainstay of the prairie economy, and urban centres existed primarily to provide services for farmers and their families, oil, natural gas and mineral development have extended the range of functions performed by many of the region's cities. Single enterprise resource towns (hitherto almost unknown on the prairies) also began to appear in greater numbers, a sign that urban development there has begun to more closely approximate the experience of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. Smith also briefly discusses two other trends which invite similar comparisons: the trend to suburban and satellite town development, particularly in the Edmonton area, and the growing concentration of population in Alberta's two largest metropolitan centres and the highway corridor between them.

Max Foran's essay is much more narrowly focused, but no less valuable. He examines the leading role played by a small group of independent Calgary oil men, geologists and entrepreneurs in the search for oil and natural gas in the North. Dr. John Campbell Sproule, a Calgary geologist, laid the basis for Arctic exploration with a series of extensive and accurate geological surveys during the 1950s and 1960s. Calgary-based independent oil companies were the first to begin an active drilling program in the Arctic Islands, in 1961, and it was they who organized the much larger con-

sortium (Panarctic Oils) which carried the work forward after 1968.

Oil and gas exploration in the North was also facilitated by major innovations in overland transport and in portable camp facilities. Here too Calgarians played a major role. In the 1950s Bruce Nodwell began manufacturing tracked vehicles that could traverse the hitherto impassable muskeg. Canadian Foremost's all-terrain vehicles have since acquired an international reputation. Don Southern and his son Ron became no less successful; by 1959 their firm, ATCO Limited, was producing 2,000 portable dwelling units annually.

The effect of all of this, Foran concludes, has been to change Calgary's role in the oil industry. Since the first brief oil boom at nearby Turner Valley in 1914, Calgary functioned mainly as an operational base for companies searching for oil in Alberta. In the 1960s, however, "the city became the focus for new directions in exploration and technology, and as a consequence assumed a more viable position in the forefront of Canada's national oil and natural gas industry" (p. 128).

There are several other essays which analyze the region's economic transformation in a more general way. Most are brief, impressionistic pieces which will not likely have much long-term impact. The exception is Kenneth Norrie's provocative essay, in which he argues that the basic structure of the prairie economy has been a product of geography, history and market forces. Federal economic policies (with the possible exception of the Crow rate) have not discriminated against the region in the sense of making it less industrialized or diversified than it might otherwise have been. Recent "province-building" strategies he judges have had no greater impact in broadening the region's economic base or fostering industrial growth. As Norrie puts it, "the West was born a small, resource-rich economy, and it has remained so through to the present" (p. 75).

Two other essays also deal with themes related to urban development. Diane Bessai traces the growth of professional theatre in the major prairie cities, and Christopher Varley offers a similar survey of the accomplishments of Vancouver, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton artists.

*The Making of the Modern West* also addresses other subjects. The roots and manifestations of "western alienation" are explored in some detail, for example, though much of the discussion seems dated now that Brian Mulroney's landslide victory has given the region its strongest representation in the federal cabinet in more than two decades. Nevertheless there is much in this book of enduring value, and anyone who wishes to understand the sweeping changes

which have occurred on the prairies since 1945 ought to peruse it.

J. William Brennan  
Department of History  
University of Regina

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Ramirez, Bruno. *Les premiers Italiens de Montréal: L'origine de la Petite Italie du Québec*. Montréal: Boréal Express, 1984. Pp. 136. Photographs. \$9.95.

From 1861, the year of Italy's unification, until the outbreak of World War I more than 14 million Italians left their towns and villages to seek better living conditions elsewhere, mainly in Latin and North America. A considerable number of these emigrants passed through Montreal, because of its geographical position, one of the main gathering centres of immigration into North America. Some of these immigrants decided to remain in Montreal, thus creating the first Italian "colony" in Canada. Professor Ramirez's book chronicles, in great detail, the history of this settlement, and explores the historical process in the course of which the "colony" acquired its own territory and its permanent identity, becoming in the years just preceding the war a "community" consisting of more than 4,000 persons.

The study is divided into two main sections: an historical part, in which the author follows the development and the vicissitudes of the "colony" and a part that reproduces a series of eight interviews with Italo-Canadians who lived through some of this historical process.

The first chapter, "Les précurseurs," traces the socio-economic history of the first Italians who settled in Montreal around 1860. The first records — in the nominal manuscript census of 1871 — show 55 people born in Italy, and living mostly on the east side of the city. The author establishes the fact that most of these early immigrants were single men, who could more easily become part of the Canadian labour force. A first and most important part of the process of blending into the local society was the establishment of a family, and therefore the choosing of a wife, and in the majority of cases a French Canadian one. The census shows that of the 55 Italians residing in Montreal, only six were labourers; the rest did some kind of independent work, mainly in marble working and trade.

The census of 1881 lists 131 Italians living in Montreal; of these, only 14 were also in the 1871 census. The majority of these immigrants lived in three eastern quarters of the city — but mostly in the French ones — and in a family. Only one third of the men were married to Italian women: the majority had French Canadian wives, a choice obviously dictated by linguistic, cultural and religious affinities. The census clearly shows the high mobility of the immigrants,

and the author tries to follow their movements through a few among them, especially the marble workers, who were in great demand in the developing urban centres, and the tradesmen, who had to adapt themselves to the needs of the market place. The available evidence also points to a marked increase of seasonal labourers, some commuting from Italy and many residing permanently in Montreal.

The second chapter, "Le période de transition," covers the years when, because of the building of the railway network and the development of the mining industry, Canada saw a large increase in the influx of immigrants. From 1880 to 1898 the average number of yearly immigrants from Italy was 361. In 1899 and 1900 the number exceeded 1,000, and it reached 3,497 in 1901 and 5,930 in 1905. The records indicate that in this period immigration from Italy was mainly seasonal. Focusing on the immigration from the southern Italian province of Molise, Professor Ramirez examines in depth the economic conditions that compelled so many *molisani*, most of them peasants, to leave their land to come to Montreal, and the role played by agents working for large companies — the Canadian Pacific Railway, shipping companies, etc. — in bringing over cheap labour. The author deals at length with the practice of the "agents" — usually prominent members of the colony as well as with the role played by the Italian authorities and with the Royal Commission appointed by the Federal Government to study this "scandalous" problem.

The available data shows that the Italian "colony" resided in a very narrow portion of the city: 80 per cent was concentrated within 14 streets; and 123 families of the 235 listed in a census conducted in 1905 by the priest of the parish of Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel lived virtually adjacent to each other. The data, the author remarks, ". . . permettent du moins de conclure que cet important noyan de familles immigrantes italiennes réside au coeur du tissu urbain montréalais, partageant avec le prolétariat urbain de la ville des conditions similaires de logement et d'hygiène" (p. 38).

Quite different were the living conditions of the seasonal workers, who were brought into Canada by the thousands when the need required cheap labour. Professor Ramirez identifies many of the unscrupulous agents who oversaw this trade, and follows the capillary network in which they operated, and which extended from rail, mine and shipping companies all the way to the smallest southern Italian villages where the labourers were recruited. The periodic influx of a large number of men created many practical and social problems. Those workers, who, at the end of the season, decided not to return to Italy, had to be housed. The logical choice was the centre of the town: an area showing all the signs of urban deterioration, and therefore easily transformed into vast and cheap dormitories by the agents, who could thus have complete control over this itinerant population. The living conditions of these quarters reflected the true condition of the migrant workers: overcrowded, and