

## Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW  
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Léonard, Jean-François and Jacques Léveillé. *Montreal after Drapeau*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986. Pp. 134. Illustrations. \$29.95 cloth; \$14.95 paper

Caroline Andrew

Volume 16, Number 3, February 1988

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017743ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017743ar>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

### ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this review

Andrew, C. (1988). Review of [Léonard, Jean-François and Jacques Léveillé. *Montreal after Drapeau*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986. Pp. 134. Illustrations. \$29.95 cloth; \$14.95 paper]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 16(3), 295–295. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017743ar>

treau, the result, initially, of foreclosing on its mortgage with the Cornwall Electric Street Railway. This 1899 acquisition led by 1905 to amalgamation with Stormont Light and Power and the creation of Cornwall Electric. An unprofitable gas company was also purchased in the process to get rid of a rival.

The story of how Sun Life got into the utilities business is testimony both to the enthusiasm for electricity at the turn of the century and to its pitfalls. The electrical utility alone proved profitable and the company for many years was forced to subsidize a transit service that could neither be abandoned because it constituted a public service, nor be made profitable in part because Cornwall was not big enough to support it. Even as late as 1947 the fare remained at 5 cents because the company feared that people would walk rather than pay more.

Sun Life's dilemma shows the extent to which people had become dependent upon electricity and tended to see it as a public service. It also suggests that the issue of public vs. private ownership was not as important to the city as local control. Despite many efforts by Sun Life to unload the company, either on the city or private interests, it was not until a Kingston-based company made a serious offer to purchase that the city in 1972 finally took over the transit and electrical services.

Like most business histories, this book pays little attention to the domestic applications of electricity. No explanation is given as to why Cornwall Electric dropped out of the domestic appliance sales business as soon as stores began carrying these lines. This was clearly not the case with the Hydro towns, where Hydro Shops raised resentment among private dealers with their aggressive promotion of appliance sales. We are told that Cornwall Electric promoted electric ranges as early as 1919 (presumably so that it could get out of an unprofitable gas business) and that the number of electric ranges in Cornwall jumped from 4 in 1920 to 800 in 1930. Surely this was due to some vigorous promotion, aside from the "perception that electricity would soon replace gas for cooking." The author tells us no more. If women were involved in the promotion of domestic electrical applications in Cornwall, as elsewhere, the author likewise gives us no insight into it.

Dianne Dodd  
Department of History  
Carleton University

---

Léonard, Jean-François and Jacques Léveillé. *Montreal after Drapeau*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986. Pp. 134. Illustrations. \$29.95 cloth; \$14.95 paper.

This is an useful addition to the existing Canadian urban politics literature in English. The book is basically the translation of a series of articles written by Jean-François Léonard and Jacques Léveillé for *Le Devoir* during the last Montreal municipal election campaign. Given the general significance of the election — the end of the Jean Drapeau era — it is interesting to see the authors' analysis of the Montreal political climate. Léonard and Léveillé are very measured — they are realistic about the limited likelihood of Jean Doré bringing in substantial reforms, yet it is not a personalized denunciation of Doré as having sold out the earlier, more radical, promise of the Montreal Citizens' Movement. Rather, they feel that politics in Montreal is now dominated by a new middle class primarily concerned with its own interests and that this political alliance will fundamentally determine the political direction of the city. This does not preclude the possibility of actions favourable to the less advantaged but it sets limits on these actions. Certainly judging Doré's performance so far, the analysis seems well-founded.

The book is welcome in that it makes available in English the work of Léonard and Léveillé — two of the most important urban scholars in Québec — whose work is not sufficiently known in English-speaking Canada. This book helps to change this and for this reason alone, I hope it makes its way into university classrooms. The translation, done by Dimitri Roussopoulos, who also wrote a lengthy "Introduction," is very readable — it is clearly an advantage to have a translator who is a specialist in the area. While not a complete analysis of the political situation of Montreal, this is journalism of the highest order — thoughtful, well-presented and readable.

Caroline Andrew  
Vice-Dean, Social Sciences  
University of Ottawa

---

Mormino, Gary Ross. *Immigrants on the Hill: Italian-Americans in St. Louis, 1882-1982*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986. Pp. xi, 289. Illustrations, tables, bibliography, index.

*Immigrants on the Hill* is an intensive examination of emigration and ethnicity at the local level, more specifically of Italians from Cuggiono in northern Italy to "the Hill" in St. Louis, Missouri from 1882 to the present. The book traces the emergence of a unique Italian neighbourhood, with "the Hill" taking a commanding place as one of the most stable, immobile and cohesive ethnic colonies in the United States. The author's intent is to transcend raw statistics and portray emigrants not as victims of a tragedy, but rather as agents of change and architects of their own destiny. To a considerable degree, this attempt is successful. Placing his study