

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Notes and Comments

Report on "The Nineteenth Century Canadian City: Internal Change and External Links," Edinburgh, 4-7 May, 1989

Notes et commentaires

John Weaver and John Taylor

Volume 18, Number 2, October 1989

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017756ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017756ar>

[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 document

Weaver, J. & Taylor, J. (1989). Notes and Comments: Report on "The Nineteenth Century Canadian City: Internal Change and External Links," Edinburgh, 4-7 May, 1989. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 18(2), 177-178. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017756ar>

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 1989

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

**Report on "The Nineteenth Century
Canadian City:
Internal Change and External Links,"
Edinburgh, 4-7 May, 1989.**

The conference, organized by Judith Wiesinger and Ged Martin of the Centre of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh, was a well-attended meeting that brought together researchers from both sides of the Atlantic. The academic sessions were augmented by an optional field trip through the eastern Lowlands to New Harmony, including a drive past the new town of Cumbernauld and the industrial complex at Falkirk and a stop at the Firth of Forth bridges, as well as several memorable receptions in the magnificent halls of the Old College. A week of sunshine displayed Edinburgh at its finest. Given the number of the presentations (there were approximately 40 papers given), a complete account of all sessions will not be attempted here, but some of the conference highlights can be recounted - several papers will be published in future issues of the *Urban History Review*.

Gilbert Stelter (Guelph) opened the conference with an address that traced some of the European planning and architectural influences on Canadian towns and cities. During one of the two concurrent sessions the following morning, there were three papers concerning historical demography. Frank Innes (Windsor) and Kenneth Pryke (Windsor) surveyed Canadian town and country mortality rates using the 1871 census. The data used by Patricia Thornton (Concordia) for a study of mortality and fertility in mid-19th-century Montreal were collected from a variety of sources, as Professor Thornton has been attempting to explain the variations in infant mortality that appeared among the city's ethnic groups. Sharon Cook (Ottawa) gave an account of the composition of Ottawa's first Protestant old-age home. An excellent constructive commentary by Michael Anderson (Edinburgh) raised a number of

issues about the data and about such specifics as diet within the families.

The papers in a session on "Scottish Settlement in Canada" appeared divergent at first glance, but each linked genealogy to wider theoretical notions. The result was a well-integrated session of three papers each of which underlined the importance of ethnic networks in survival strategies: William Ramp (Trent), "'Our People in These Parts': Tracing Scottish Networks in Nineteenth Century Hamilton"; Gilbert Stelter, "The Scottish Brotherhood: Town and Country Planning in the Upper Grand Region of Upper Canada"; and John Taylor (Carleton), "'Fair Promises and Disappointments Without Number': William Stewart, A Bytown Merchant on the Lumber frontier, 1827-1845." In a session on urban social issues, Susan Houston (York) gave the audience a look at her new research on juvenile delinquency in turn-of-the-century Toronto. There was particular interest in whether systematic biases and gender patterns appeared in the records. Charlene Porsild (Ottawa), in considering the Protestant-Catholic conflict in child welfare in Ottawa from 1945 to 1975, focused on the delivery mechanism rather than the objects of the social services.

Urban social order was the organizing theme for another session of especially well-delivered papers. Michael J. Webster (Western) considered the students' Hallowe'en as a confirmation of late Victorian social order, challenging a previous study by Keith Waldon. Peter Goheen (Queen's) pointed out that streets were the most symbolically meaningful areas within the Victorian Canadian city in his exploration of parades, which introduced the geographer's perspective to the parades of the bourgeoisie and organized labour. Employing the cultural lag approach of Eric Hobsbaum, Goheen proposed that the established patterns of elite parades were used to help shape those of the emerging labour movement. His analysis went further

in dealing with the frequency of parades, their auspices, and their timing. In this same fine session, Carman Miller (McGill) presented a pioneering work on the social and recreational functions of the militia and the armories of Montreal. The militia units, overwhelmingly comprised of men born outside the city, contained many students and clerks. An expression of the voluntarism of the era, the militia organized a number of activities while the armories housed an assortment of sporting equipment. In a sprightly discussion, Michael McCulloch (Laval) outlined how the 1840 charter for Quebec City attempted to Anglicize local government by gerrymander and by a separation of policing from local government. Soon the English-speaking mercantile elite withdrew from local politics, devoting more time to their newly established private corporations. Local government returned to the control of *les Canadiens*. In the end, the complexity of the society defeated so-called reform. Many of the remarks of the commentator, Robert Morris (Edinburgh), dealt with the paper on parades. He felt that Goheen's characterization represented the parades as too orderly, but he proposed that the orderliness of the labourers may have served to express their counter-authority.

Not all sessions provided a neat package. A paper given by Colin Howell (St. Mary's), "Baseball, Class and Community in the Urban Maritimes, 1870-1910," was presented with one on the German-Canadian identity of Berlin, Ontario, and another that attempted to reconstruct the Montreal Jewish business community. "'Said to be a Very Honest Jew'," by Gerald Tulchinsky (Queen's), employed the R.G.Dun credit reports and other materials to assess how Jewish merchants and tradesmen fit into the city's network of business relations. Montreal's Jewish merchants were concentrated in tobacco, fancy goods, and jewellery; capital and credit often came from outside the city, but this separation from the other communities in Montreal was not

exclusively a matter of discrimination. In another session, Rae Fleming provided a highly imaginative approach to the introduction of the trolley in Toronto. His was a McLuhanesque study which used newspapers, literature, and art to trace the public's reaction through three phases: resistance, anxiety, and indifference. Michael Doucet (Ryerson), John Weaver (McMaster), Marc Choko (Montreal), Richard Harris (McMaster), and Richard Dennis (London) presented papers on the business of shelter provision.

The speakers in a session on the early growth of urban centres stressed again the role of the elites. Phyllis LeBlanc (Winnipeg) considered how the elites of Moncton worked to obtain a railway in a period of decline. William Brennan (Regina) charted how Regina struggled to find an economic niche in the metropolitan shadow of Winnipeg. In an important theoretical departure, Peter Smith (Alberta) used the mercantile model of James Vance to help explain the dominance of Edmonton in northern Alberta. He argued that the key was the experience in long-distance wholesaling gained during the fur trade, which proved valuable in the transition to the wheat staple.

Art in the city and the city in art were dealt with in several papers. Angela Davis (Manitoba) traced the career of the Brigden family in "The Art-Workmen: Business and Engraving in Toronto, 1870-1971." Brian Osborne (Queen's) interpreted the work of prominent historical artist C.W. Jefferys. John Jezierski (Saginaw Valley State University) considered the differing approaches of the two prominent photographers, one American and the other Canadian, in "Notman and Jackson: The Image of the Canadian City in Nineteenth Century Photography." On the Monday following the conference, there was a colloquium that brought together British researchers who work on the city of Hamilton, Ontario. Several reported on their projects: David Ingram (University of

Birmingham, England) on the changing structure of the region's population; Victoria Evans (University of Edinburgh, Scotland) on the changes to the city's core area of distinguished Victorian homes; John Benson (Wolverhampton Polytechnic, England) on retailing from 1891 to 1941; Stephanie Blackden (Curator, Kellie Castle, Fife, Scotland) on public health developments in the late 19th century; and James Sturgis (Birkbeck College, London, England) on "problem drinkers" and urban society from 1870 to 1914.

The centre will be holding "Limitless Identities: Is There a Canadian History?" during 4-5 May 1990. Suggestions and offers of papers should be sent to:

Ged Martin,
Centre of Canadian Studies,
21 George Square,
Edinburgh, Scotland,
EH8 9LD.

John Weaver and John Taylor