

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Creighton, Philip. *A Sum of Yesterdays: Being a History of the First One Hundred Years of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario*. Toronto: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, 1984. Pp. 360. Illustrations

Duncan McDowall

Volume 18, Number 2, October 1989

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017757ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017757ar>

[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

McDowall, D. (1989). Review of [Creighton, Philip. *A Sum of Yesterdays: Being a History of the First One Hundred Years of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario*. Toronto: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, 1984. Pp. 360. Illustrations]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 18(2), 179–179. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017757ar>

Creighton, Philip. *A Sum of Yesterdays: Being a History of the First One Hundred Years of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario*. Toronto: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, 1984. Pp. 360. Illustrations.

Historians of the turn-of-the-century transformation of rural America into an urban, industrial, corporate world have made much of the front-line role of the professions in this remaking. Robert Wiebe and Alfred Chandler have, in particular, argued that the professionalization of medicine, engineering, and accountancy brought precision and uniformity to a society "in search of order."

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, founded in Toronto in 1879, provides persuasive evidence of Canadian business's craving for order. *A Sum of Yesterdays*, the Institute's commissioned history, aptly chronicles the profession's "sense of mission about the place of accountancy in the general structure of society." No narrow institutional history, it reveals the Institute's varied efforts to bring discipline and competence to its members' ranks, while at the same time responding to the broader desire for accurate and ethical reporting of financial performance in a society increasingly predicated on materialism.

The book is lavishly illustrated and it is the unbroken succession of clean-shaven, poker-faced Institute presidents that reminds us that this has been, until very recently, a profession dominated by Toronto WASP males. Like his father, Donald, before him, Philip Creighton has done a masterful and eloquent job of placing a prominent segment of the Canadian business community at the centre of our national development.

Duncan McDowall

Keil, Hartmut, and Jentz, John B., eds. *German Workers in Chicago: A Documentary History of Working-Class Culture from 1850 to World War I*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988. Pp. 425. Preface, illustrations, index.

German Workers in Chicago is a documentary study of working-class German workers. A volume in a series, "The Working Class in American History," it is also part of the "Chicago Project on the Social History of German workers in Chicago from 1850 to 1910." Most of the documents selected by editors Hartmut Keil and John B. Jentz, many of which appear in English for the first time, are from manuscript collections, literary offerings, public reports, and newspapers. Of particular interest are articles from the *Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung*, a socialist labour journal. The newspaper, predating turn of the century "muckraking," contended that Chicago was a capitalistic hell-on-earth, a conclusion that Keil and Jentz feel captures the essence of the German experience in "Gilded Age" Chicago.

Keil and Jentz depict German immigrant workers not as jolly burgers but as oppressed "wage slaves" who wanted a Marxist inspired class revolution. While German "artisans" could own their own business and remain in the working class, those who crossed the line into the middle class entered the ranks of the oppressors. For the revolutionary German workers, the events that sustained them were memories of the bloody 1871 Paris Commune and the Haymarket Riot of 1886. Conditions on the job were long, hard, and bad. In their infrequent hours of free time, workers found relief in drinking beer, attending the theatre, going to picnics, singing songs about labour solidarity, and joining fraternal societies. Organized religion was augmented by the German Turner movement, which promoted socialist values of free thought and physical training. Married women stayed in the home, which was what their socialist husbands wanted them to do. Class consciousness

was very real, transcending differences among people from various part of Germany. What many native Americans and members of other immigrant groups saw as German arrogance was unwarranted. Critics failed to realize that the goal of the German workers was to make the words in the Declaration of Independence and in the Preamble of the United States Constitution realities by creating a humane and orderly Marxist society that would emphasize socialist versions of democracy, republicanism, and political liberty. All of this makes for fascinating reading. Many of the selections evoke a call to revolution, sort of like a good old fashioned fire-and-brimstone sermon. Much of the book comes down to a rousing "Let's hear it for the workers" kind of history; a throw back to an earlier time, quaint rather than breaking new ground in writing about the radical immigrant labour experience.

This is not to say that *German Workers* is a poorly rendered work. Any student of the Gilded Age industrial experience, after clearly identifying the Marxist slant, will find it extremely valuable. The documents show that at least one German language newspaper, in this case in the Chicago area, illustrated oppressive conditions in the city's factories and housing. These areas of investigation have previously received attention, but seldom in the context of urban German workers. In another vein, Keil and Jentz demonstrate that many radical immigrant Germans, who moved into the bourgeoisie and above, maintained intellectual links to their German socialist past. No matter how wealthy they became, they continued to think of themselves as true socialists, assuming their economic advancement simply part of a stage in the revolutionary struggle. In a very real way, this conception, shared by other immigrant groups in the American experience, helped to shape present American values.

Keil's and Jentz's rather narrow documentary study, in which German workers in Canada, or for that matter, Milwaukee, St. Louis, and