

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

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[See table of contents](#)

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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

Cincinnati, are deliberately excluded, contributes in a small way to the study of immigrant labour history from a Marxist perspective. Of the twenty-four selections in "Suggestions for Further Reading," two are by Jentz and five by Keil. *German Workers*, published by a prestigious scholarly press, serves as still another example of committed radical history with a political point of view moving into the mainstream of American historiography.

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Bottles, Scott. *Los Angeles and the Automobile. The Making of the Modern City*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987. Pp. xii, 302. Illustrations, tables, maps, index.

North Americans have a love-hate relationship with the automobile. Planners hate it. Almost everyone else loves it; at least they buy and use cars whenever they can. Scott Bottles, a historian now working in the real estate division of Wells Fargo Bank, challenges a variety of automobile critics by documenting the popularity of the automobile from at least the time of the Model T.

Appropriately enough he focuses upon Los Angeles, tracing the pattern of use (and local politics) of transportation from the turn of the century through to World War II. He examines successive debates over the regulation of the local streetcar companies, traffic and parking in the downtown area, and transportation planning. Throwing in evidence pertaining to automobile use and the results of local referenda on transportation issues, he builds a convincing case that Angelenos consciously opted for the automobile en masse in the 1920s, when per capita ridership on the Los Angeles [street] Railway Company dropped precipitously while per capita automobile ownership increased almost threefold. He argues that this shift

was not encouraged by municipal government or planners. Rather, "the individual citizen began using his car because the reform movement could not assert its control over the traction companies." The companies would not - indeed Bottles suggests that their finances often would not allow them to - improve their service. No powerful popular movement attempted to ensure that good mass transit would be provided, if necessary through public ownership. Downtown business interests wanted better transit, but the car appealed to a broader geographical constituency. Most people chose cars because they offered greater freedom and ease of movement, even in the early 1920s when the streets could not accommodate them. Subsequently, the municipal government improved streets and eventually built freeways. In so doing, Bottles argues, it followed rather than led public opinion.

The challenge of this argument is twofold. First, it is a direct rebuttal of the widespread "conspiracy theory" that the automobile manufacturers bought up transit companies in the 1940s with the intention of closing them down to create greater demand for their product. By the 1940s, Bottles argues, the battle was over. Especially in Los Angeles, but in American cities as a whole, the transit companies were on their last legs and the city was already being remade around the car. The people had voted with their pocketbooks. Secondly, and more important, Bottles challenges the whole notion - eloquently expressed by Lewis Mumford and repeated many times since - that in so doing the people were being shortsighted. He points out that in building better roads Los Angeles has compounded rather than solved the problem of congestion - a favourite argument of the proponents of public transit. But, on balance, he reckons that the automobile has been better than the alternatives, allowing greater freedom of movement while providing lower residential densities and a higher quality of life. The people, he implies, are not fools.

The argument is, up to a point, persuasive. Certainly, his challenge to the conspiracy theory carries weight. Moreover, his praise for the automobile is a useful corrective to recent criticisms. In taking the automobile for granted, we should not forget that it has been, and to some extent still is, a liberating machine. But liberating only for those who own one. Modern suburban environments, of which Los Angeles is an exemplar, have been built around the car. On foot or by transit they can be very difficult and unfriendly places to negotiate. People who cannot afford a car and those who are unable to drive - including many disabled or elderly people, as well as most persons on low incomes - are left on the hard shoulder. Bottles tells us very little about the experience, views, and politics of these people, leaving nagging doubts that the majority has gained at the expense of a (perhaps sizeable) minority. To the extent that such doubts are well founded, Bottles's claim that the automobile is "democratic" rings hollow.

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Lai, David Chuenyan. *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. Pp. xvi, 382. 41 tables, 55 figures, and 40 black and white photographs. \$29.95 (cloth).

David Lai's book on Canadian Chinatowns describes their physical and cultural landscape from 1858 to 1988. The book also deals with Chinese immigration to, and migration within, Canada and gives some examples of Chinese experience of racial discrimination. *Chinatowns* is an urban ecology study of meticulous detail, supplemented by tables, excellent maps, and photographs. Even though Lai's clear style makes it easy reading, the detailed discussion of various Chinatowns may be overwhelming to some readers. However,