

## Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW  
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Evenden, Leonard J., ed. *'The Suburb of Happy Homes: Burnaby Centennial Themes*. Burnaby, British Columbia: Community and Economic Development Centre and Centre for Canadian Studies, Simon Fraser University, 1995. Pp. xviii, 192. Illustrations. Maps. \$?? paper

Paul Voisey

Volume 25, Number 2, March 1997

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016074ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016074ar>

[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

Voisey, P. (1997). Review of [Evenden, Leonard J., ed. *'The Suburb of Happy Homes: Burnaby Centennial Themes*. Burnaby, British Columbia: Community and Economic Development Centre and Centre for Canadian Studies, Simon Fraser University, 1995. Pp. xviii, 192. Illustrations. Maps. \$?? paper]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 25(2), 65-66.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1016074ar>

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 1997

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/>

which gender, class and race intersect and translate themselves in space.

Dubinsky's central theme is neither work nor leisure, it is sexual violence. *Improper Advances* studies the 400 stories of Ontario women who brought complaints of physically-coerced sex to the police, between the years 1880 and 1929. It is, as with the two other books, about the social construction of gender. Her concern is in fact more with rural Ontario than with cities ) but Dubinsky is interested in both the social and spatial settings for sexual violence. And, despite the cultural stereotypes about the "stranger" and the danger of sexual assault, the reality, not surprisingly, is completely different. The number of cases of sexual violence is highest for household members (66), followed by strangers (51), neighbours (46), dates (40), against children (39), gangs (30), and friend of family (23). In broader categories, women were assaulted, in 175 cases, by people they knew as compared to 95 cases where they did not know their aggressor. In other words, the "private" world is more dangerous than the "public". It is the confining of women to the private sector that increases the danger in their lives. This reality underlines the fact that sexual violence is about power and unequal power relations.

Dubinsky goes on to explore the impact of these constructed gender relations on the construction of space, more particularly, on the development of Northern and rural Ontario. She makes an intriguing argument about moral boosterism, about the "convergence of discourses — of national economic and social development, gender relations, sexual morality, and crime. ... The perceived need for economic growth and the desire to cleanse one's community of vice thus arose from the same impulse and often from the same people (p. 161).

What comes across most strikingly from these books is the difficulty women have had, in a variety of different spaces and times, to affirm their autonomy and, conversely, the difficulty society has had in dealing with women's autonomy. In fact, as the books indicate in wonderful detail, society has "dealt" with women's autonomy by medicalizing it, criminalizing it, channeling it into healthful recreation, marginalizing it and by creating a variety of discourses that legitimated lower wages, insecure employment, sexual violence, sexual stereotyping, etc, etc, etc. Sexual autonomy is perhaps the form of autonomy that most frightened society for both Strange and Dubinsky, but economic autonomy is also important in Strange and central in Sangster. The city was often the focus for these struggles around autonomy, both because the material conditions underpinning autonomy (particularly women's paid employment) were established first in the city, but also because the social actors "articulating" the discourses were often urban.

The books all attempt to deal with women as both actors and acted upon, as creating their own lives and having their lives fashioned, constrained and constructed by forces beyond their control. The authors all deal with race, class and gender and also, and perhaps more directly in these studies, with family

and employment status. The struggle for autonomy is not a struggle for isolation, since women's autonomy is also embedded in community, family and work. But what these studies make clear is that the question of women's autonomy raised, and continues to raise, fears, resistance, justifications and a whole variety of terrains of struggle. The telling of these stories, as Strange, Sangster and Dubinsky have demonstrated, is both wonderful and depressing.

Caroline Andrew  
Political Science  
University of Ottawa

---

Evenden, Leonard J., ed. *'The Suburb of Happy Homes: Burnaby Centennial Themes*. Burnaby, British Columbia: Community and Economic Development Centre and Centre for Canadian Studies, Simon Fraser University, 1995. Pp. xviii, 192. Illustrations. Maps. \$?? paper.

Readers might welcome the appearance of this book since the study of suburbs has been a relatively neglected aspect of the Canadian city, especially those, like Burnaby, that began as working class suburbs. They will be disappointed however, if they think the title reflects the contents. There is little sense of Burnaby as a suburb since none of the articles study the relationship between the municipality and other parts of the greater Vancouver area. The word suburb also implies commuting, but virtually no attention is paid to this theme even though several articles include material on the electric railway system and one focuses entirely on a major roadway. Several articles offer fleeting references to automobiles, but none study them explicitly. And belying the title entirely, the collection contains not a single article on housing. The title, we soon learn, has nothing to do with this collection of articles, but was resurrected from a 1942 publication.

If the book does not treat the sort of themes one might expect from a study of a suburb, then what does it provide? Published to commemorate Burnaby's one-hundred-year existence as an incorporated municipality, it offers a wildly eclectic mixture that includes articles on the introduction of computer mapping in the municipality, the relationship between street widening and land values, the building of a town centre in the 1980s, how contemporary retired men spend their time, the natural environment of the mountain that houses Simon Fraser University, and five articles relating to particular aspects of the history of civic politics and government. This mix reflects a variety of disciplines and contributions from the university, civil service, and private business. Most of the articles are unimaginative, many are unanalytical, and some are oblivious to the important literature on their topics. Many employ an administrative and technical approach that ignores broader economic and social forces. Some are so incredibly short that they can barely introduce their topics, much less explore them. One is so uncritical of its subject that it

resembles a booster tract. Perhaps the best article is Bettina Bradbury's study of the municipal relief crisis during the Great Depression, and it supplements our general understanding of this topic rather than supplanting or broadening it.

If you need to learn something specific about Burnaby itself, you might find it in this collection. It has particularly maps on various themes, although the photographs are sparse and poor. Otherwise reading it will not expand your understanding of cities in general or suburbs in particular.

Paul Voisey  
Department of History  
University of Alberta

---

Noel, Jan. *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. Pp. vii, 310. Illustrations. Price? paper.

One of the many pleasures gained from reading Jan Noel's prize-winning history of the temperance movement in pre-Confederation British North America is coming to know some of the prominent temperance pioneers who directed and shaped the movement in various parts of the colonies. One such captivating portrait is drawn of the Reverend Joseph Stibbs Christmas, pastor of Montreal's American Presbyterian Church and founder, in 1828, of Montreal's first (interdenominational) temperance society. Noel's description of Christmas — a learned man with a sensitive, poetic temperament, a firebrand who "stirred up a furious press controversy with intemperate criticism of long dead popes" and a gifted orator, causing his congregation to swell to three hundred from thirty during his four-year ministry — allows the late twentieth-century observer to appreciate the scale of temperance enthusiasm generated through the influence of single individuals, the movement's intimate association with evangelical principle and expression, and the broad network of temperance advocacy. The Rev. Christmas fired his born-again troops from an urban stage, but Noel shows that this was by no means only an urban or even town phenomenon. In fact, she provides persuasive evidence that the most dramatic reduction in imbibing occurred in farming communities, particularly during the 1840s. Further, her examination of temperance leadership at all levels of the movement demonstrates that the learned Rev. Christmas was the exception rather than the rule amongst the movement's pacesetters: temperance societies tended to be led by people like Jesse Ketchum of Toronto or Jeffrey Hale of Quebec, wealthy but lacking in formal education or elite culture and thus considered not to be 'persons of the first rank.'

Noel's impressive analysis of the personalities and issues associated with this first wave of temperance is further strengthened by the clarity of her expression. Her graceful prose carries the reader over a period of about fifty years during which the temperance movement rose in the Maritimes as a powerful force

associated with temperance lodges, crested in Upper Canada and then coasted west to Red River and British Columbia. Noel's book is a model of intelligent and broad research, while her energetic prose makes this research accessible to a wide audience.

Noel's thesis is that the successful temperance campaigns of the 1840s, during which it is estimated that between one-quarter and one-third of the Upper Canadian population accepted the teetotal pledge, with something close to that in the Maritimes, were fueled by the simultaneous growth of evangelicalism and the formation of a new middle class. Between 1820 and 1867, she finds two distinct stages: an early phase, culminating around 1850, during which temperance was promoted and sustained by religious revivalism, and a second, more secular phase, in which temperance was championed by Victorian improvers of various stripes as a means of developing a stable workforce to support their middle-class aspirations. Where the movement's first stage was led by utopian revivalists, the second saw the accession of "gentlemen" prohibitionists who drank moderately, and whose main complaint about alcohol was its corrosive effect on the work ethic. In sum, she argues, "temperance followed a pattern common to many movements: it started out small, pure and fiery, and became less so!" (p. 12)

In spite of the undeniably great value of this book, there are several troubling features of Noel's analysis. The study rightly ascribes fundamental significance to the evangelical ethic as a defining condition for the ready acceptance of temperance before 1850. As the movement progressed, however, Noel finds that evangelicalism waned as a motivating force, eclipsed by a variety of factors more closely related to class formation than to spiritual demands. Yet, it seems clear from recent work on evangelicalism, a good deal of which Noel references, that it did not fade as a central feature of Maritime and central Canadian life until near the end of the nineteenth century. During this much longer period, in fact, right until 1914, evangelicalism remained a powerful force. This was particularly true for female temperance advocates associated with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, such as Letitia Youmans. Interestingly, women play almost no role in shaping temperance to their own ends in the fascinating story told by Noel. It seems possible that the underestimation of evangelicalism's on-going societal influence results at least in part from the absence of women reformers from the record she presents. This is not to say, however, that Noel ignores the impact of temperance on women's societal position in this fine book. She provides a particularly insightful argument for the role of temperance literature as one of the prime vehicles for carrying the gospel of domesticity to the middle classes, and in constraining women within this new role description. Nevertheless, in this analysis, strongly reminiscent of Barbara Welter's writings, women are acted upon, not actors.

Secondly, Noel assumes that a largely secularized middle class had developed by mid century. Most studies of this period, including Jane Errington's new work, argue that the process of middle class formation did not occur in Ontario, and by infer-