

## Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW  
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Powell, J.M., editor. *Urban and Industrial Australia*.  
Melbourne: Sorrett Publishing, 1974. Pp. 252

Paul M. Koroscil

Number 1-78, June 1978

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019450ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019450ar>

[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

Koroscil, P. M. (1978). Review of [Powell, J.M., editor. *Urban and Industrial Australia*. Melbourne: Sorrett Publishing, 1974. Pp. 252]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, (1-78), 129–131. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019450ar>

and G.F.G. Stanley's The Birth of Western Canada.

The emphasis of this book is on the people who came to, and the events that took place within, Wetaskiwin and district. It does not, therefore, focus in a systematic fashion. A clear impression of the characteristics of Wetaskiwin as an urban centre and its role in the Wetaskiwin region does not emerge. This book fails to view Wetaskiwin as a social, political, spatial or economic unit which developed a particular relationship with a hinterland and other urban communities in Alberta. Because of this lack of focus on general themes much material irrelevant to the development of Wetaskiwin as an urban centre is introduced while key topics such as the role of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company in the development of the townsite are not given adequate emphasis.

This fact is demonstrated by the first three chapters which discuss the legend of Wetaskiwin, Indian Peace Treaties, Father Lacombe, the Reverend John McDougall, the Rundle Mission, the Hobbema Mission and the Alberta Field Force. Since these subjects are discussed without any references to how they relate to the growth of urban community at what became Siding 16, they serve as a weak introduction to the arrival of the railway in 1892. Chapter four, which notes the establishment of Siding 16, gives few details as to the geography of the townsite or the individuals and/or companies which took the initiative to create a townsite.

Despite the problems associated with the organization of this book it has merit as a source for someone prepared to undertake a more systematic study of Wetaskiwin. The text was written by one individual with the result that there is a readable presentation of the material. Important developments concerning its economic growth such as the construction of the Fairbairn Mill in 1899 are noted. The book also provides background information on various prominent citizens such as L.T. Miquelon who opened one of the first stores at the townsite. Its information value has been enhanced by a number of maps and photographs. An index as well as appendices listing among other things early settlers and M.L.A.'s are also provided.

John Gilpin  
Historic Sites Service  
Government of Alberta.

\* \* \*

Powell, J.M., editor. Urban and Industrial Australia. Melbourne: Sorrett Publishing, 1974. Pp. 252.

"Australian society in the twentieth century has become increasingly urbanized and more heavily dependent upon secondary industry; during the same period, but particularly in the past few years, Australians have also

become far less reluctant to acknowledge these primary characteristics as essential components in the regional personality of their national territory." This volume of essays is an attempt to explain the importance of these two major components. With the exception of one article, all of the essays have been previously published, primarily in geographical journals. In the introduction, J.M. Powell outlines the historical growth of Australia, the significance of the essays, and how they are integrated in the organization of the book, which is divided into seven sections. Section one deals with the creation of the Australian identity through the impact of the industrial component. This particular component is inextricably interwoven with the political development of the country. Three essays examine the influence of governmental decisions in the location of secondary industry, the development of the petrochemical and the mining and processing industries. All three essays depict the importance of this relationship in the industrial geography of Australia. The remaining sections in the volume examine urbanization. Despite the vast amount of open space in Australia, the country does have a strong urban personality. The two essays in the second section depict theory and application "to locate the Australian city in its broader spatial system." Both articles "match orthodox central place theory against the local situation."

The term "internal structure" refers to the location, arrangement, and interrelationships between the social and physical elements in the city. Section 3, 4, and 5 not only examine this aspect of the city but also the processes which have created this structure. The essays range from examining the historical importance of the locations and shifts of the boot and shoe industry in Melbourne, the impact of European immigration settlement patterns in Metropolitan Sydney to the application of a simulation game to explain shopping behaviour in the Australian city.

The urban centre cannot be divorced from its association to the external environment, that is, relationships with other cities in the urban system, nor from the national or regional urbanization processes of which the city historically is an integral part. In section 6, two research essays are presented which concentrate on urban activities which have an impact on a city's region. Since politicians and planners usually occupy the same work space in a building they often agree on solutions to solving the city's problems. One common solution that has always been advocated for Australian cities is decentralization. Section 7, which closes out the volume reviews the decentralization solution in South Australia.

After reviewing the anthology, the inevitable question arises as to the benefits of such a volume to the historical urbanist. The volume does provide the urban historian with basically a twentieth century background account of the growth, the problems, and some suggestive solutions to understanding the urbanization process in Australia. Secondly, for those urban historians who are interested in testing models which help to describe the basic distributions of urban land uses, the location of economic activities and population and

land use change, the volume provides examples of the classic empirical models which have been formulated to generalize these patterns. Thirdly, for those urban historians who are quantitatively inclined in their analysis, the majority of the authors employ mathematical techniques in their essays. Finally, for those urbanists who use a retrogressive historical approach in their research, this volume acts as an excellent data source for investigating the past Australian landscape. From another point of view, this volume does not cater to the interests of the traditional urban historian. P.J. Rimmer's essay, which uses "hard" historical data to explain the locational changes in the boot and shoe industry in Melbourne, represents one of the few articles in the volume that would interest the traditionalist.

J.M. Powell has done an excellent "sorting" job in putting together a worthwhile volume to explain the personality of Australia through the industrial and urbanization components. From a personal point of view, however, this reviewer would have been just as satisfied with the volume if the editor had devoted the entire book to the urban component concentrating on the "internal structure" of the Australian city rather than emphasizing the industrial geography of Australia.

Paul M. Koroscil  
Department of Geography  
Simon Fraser University.