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Numéro 1-75, june 1975

The Canadian City in the 19th Century

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1020582ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1020582ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Spencer, S. (1975). The Good Queen of Hogs: Toronto, 1850-1914. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, (1-75), 38–42.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1020582ar>

THE GOOD QUEEN OF HOGS: TORONTO, 1850-1914

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English Canada's most populous city has been known variously as Hog Town, the Queen City and Toronto the Good. Each of these names reflects on the character of the place. Toronto was and is a commercial and industrial hub, the provincial (and sometimes national) focus for haut culture and modernity, and the self-proclaimed centre of goodness and righteousness.

To say that Toronto's development was favoured by geography is little less than a truism. Facing one of the best harbours on Lake Ontario, a modicum of prosperity was assured in the early nineteenth century. In conjunction with the port was a swath of fertile land extending north to Lake Simcoe. From the 1820's, farmers came down Yonge Street to secure credit, buy provisions and market their produce with the merchants of Toronto (York through 1833).

As the seat of government for Upper Canada and later Ontario, the city derived the benefits from the provincial payroll and the construction concomitant with being the capital. Additionally, communications were more readily developed between Toronto and outlying areas. However, by the 1840's, the city's commercial functions were sufficiently developed that removal of the seat of government was not the cause of great consternation (as was the case in Kingston).

Primary commercial functions were the wholesaling and retailing of imported manufactures and the export of such staples as wheat and lumber. By 1850, and the repeal of the British Corn Laws, Toronto boasted a considerable brewing and distilling industry. Boot, shoe and clothing production were also well established. Men of wealth, such as the distillers William Gooderham and John G. Worts amassed fortunes large enough to allow them leadership in the formation of the Bank of Toronto, established in 1855.

The most significant development of the 1850's was the railway boom. The Grand Trunk from Montreal reached Toronto in 1856; the Great Western, from Sarnia, London and Hamilton was extended to Toronto in 1855; the Northern, tapping the city's traditional hinterland, was

completed to Collingwood at the beginning of 1855. These three lines gave rapid and direct communication with the most populous and developed parts of the United Province. When combined with lake shipping facilities (enlargement of the St. Lawrence canals had been completed in 1848), Toronto's transportation profile was second only to that of Montreal in British North America.

The railways did not lead to dramatic industrialization in Canada as they had in Britain and the United States. More directly, they strengthened the positions of centres such as Toronto and Montreal. While many Lake Ontario ports could, and did, serve as exportation points, Toronto's central place functions of importing and distribution were further enhanced by its development as a railway centre.

By the early 1870's, banking activities also focussed on the city. Although the old, oligarchic Bank of Upper Canada went down in 1866, it was more than adequately replaced by the Bank of Toronto, the Ontario Bank (1859), the Canadian Bank of Commerce (1867), the Dominion Bank (1871) and the Standard Bank of Canada (1873). Throughout the nineteenth century the main business of these institutions was the financing of crops and the timber industry.

The increasing importance of manufacturing was most particularly felt after 1880. Partial credit might go to the protective tariffs of 1879, but industrialization was rapid in many western countries in the late nineteenth century. Although census figures are not completely reliable, they show very large increments in values of goods produced and the number of men employed between 1880 and 1910. The scale of production increased so dramatically that establishments employing fewer than five persons were eliminated from the returns in 1900.

Toronto's city fathers were boomers for industry. Tax exemptions and free land greeted the manufacturers who located there. Archtypical of the large employers was the Massey Manufacturing Company which came down from Newcastle in 1879. A factory was built convenient to both rail and lake shipping. In short order, Massey absorbed such going concerns as the Toronto Mower and Reaper and the Anselm B. Harris companies. Massey competed on the world market, selling in Australia, South America and Europe as well as North America.

While the railway yards and the port attracted industries to the lakefront, suburbs along the railway lines showed phenomenal growth. West Toronto Junction went from hamlet to industrial centre in less than a decade. There, local inducements and railheads played a duet which Toronto's piano producers found irresistible. Single industry towns such as Swansea and Don Mills flourished briefly on the city's periphery until the completion of the local transportation network did its work of homogenization.

Before the First World War the most important component of home to work transportation was the street railway. Toronto's system began in 1861, with service extending up Yonge St. to the Yorkville town hall. From its inception, the street railway determined the city's commuting patterns. Residential suburbs developed where access to the city was easy, and failed to develop where it was difficult. By 1891, when the city's population stood at 170,000, fifty to sixty thousand people rode the cars each working day. In the following year electrification of the lines began. The last horse drawn cars were taken out of service in 1894. By 1914, with Toronto's population approaching 500,000, the Toronto Railway Company maintained almost one hundred and thirty five miles of track and carried over 150,000,000 passengers annually.

Access to the city and the need for services such as water, fire and police protection and well paved streets led to a series of annexations to Toronto. The first wave of additions began with Yorkville in 1883. By 1891 the corporations' area had doubled as Brockton, Riverdale, Rosedale, the Annex, Seaton Village, Sunnyside and Parkdale opted for union. The decade prior to 1914 saw further large scale amalgamations which brought the city limits to their present approximate dimensions. The most important areas taken in this second offensive were North Rosedale, Deer Park, East Toronto, Bracondale, West Toronto, Midway, Dovercourt and North Toronto. Some of these had first developed as residential suburbs (e.g. Yorkville) while others (e.g. East Toronto) were initially self-contained, then fell to the forces of conurbation.

Civic services, the factor which led to most of the annexations, was the major ingredient in local politics. Aldermen were expected to insure that streets were opened and paved, that fire and police protection were maintained and that taxes stayed low. The local arena

attracted middle class individuals who sat contentedly on the City Council year after year and upwardly mobile lawyers who wished to use their exposure as an avenue to more exalted office or a lucrative practice. Special interests also participated; wholesalers often represented downtown wards while contractors and developers were elected in the burgeoning suburbs.

W.H. Howland's reform campaign of the mid 1880's (when Toronto's moral ascendancy was proclaimed) was a notable exception to the general exclusion of party politics from municipal elections. Reelection of mayors and aldermen was traditional, provided that they had performed adequately in the previous year. Property qualifications for both electors and candidates preserved local politics from contamination by the working classes. The achievement of civic office was usually quiet, clubby and polite.

One of the major reasons for this quiescence was Toronto's ethnic homogeneity. Overwhelmingly British in origin, Toronto had no need for the politician as middleman between alien minority and established culture as existed in many American cities. The city's Roman Catholic adherents were primarily of Irish descent. Members of that faith could become aldermen easily enough, but the sentiments which made the Orange Order a powerful force kept Catholics from the mayor's chair.

Religion and wealth were the major social delineators in Toronto. Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Catholics sought to outstrip each other in the magnificence of their church buildings. Competition also raged between the choirs of the larger churches. Forays into other cities to entice able and experienced choirmasters and organists to the holy places of Toronto were common. Church services and choir practices consumed much of the leisure of poor souls denied the comforts of radio and television.

With the introduction of electric lighting and public libraries in the 1880's, reading became more accessible as an evening entertainment. Before the First World War, however, the new technology had a much greater impact on work than on leisure. Electrified street cars carried workers to large factories where men and machines toiled at the processes of mass production. Office

buildings were encouraged to great heights by structural steel and elevators. The pace of work inside was accelerated by the presence of telephones, telegraph and typewriters.

Technological advance both aided and impeded city planning. Parkdale, conceived as a purely residential suburb, was unable to resist the encroachment of industry along the rail lines. Conversely, good public transport rapidly eliminated the old, functionally mixed areas. A few lakefront mansions survived to the end of the nineteenth century, but these were relics. The wealthy now had entire neighbourhoods in Rosedale and the Queen's Park district. As large estates downtown were converted to commercial use, the Denison lands north of Dundas Street were subdivided and overlaid with middle class housing. Such land use specialization proceeded very rapidly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The mercantile Toronto of 1850 consolidated its position as the railroads made it an even more efficient distributing centre. When large scale manufacturing became common after the American Civil War, Toronto was a natural location. The eminence of wholesalers -- the city's merchant princes -- was eclipsed by that of the 'captains of industry' by the end of the century. As the nations of Europe prepared for war in 1914, the Massey-Harris Corporation was more representative of Toronto than any wholesale house or ornate cathedral. A first rate, second rank city had emerged; centre of commerce, industry, finance, education and political life for the province of Ontario, Toronto had its boosters and detractors but it was undoubtedly the central place in Canada's central province.