

McIntyre, W. John. *Aurora: A History in Pictures. Erin: The Boston Mills Press, 1988. Pp. 144. Black and white photos. \$14.95 (paper)*

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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the elites were thus more involved in provincial matters. In fact, until 1880, the provincial government could veto any city council decision. Unity was usually achieved, however, when public health matters were at stake, if only for reasons of self-interest. As Douglas Baldwin argues, "if public health legislation is defined as the attempt to control the physical environment to prevent diseases, then the 19th-century sanitary reformers were the first public health advocates in Charlottetown." Self-interest spilled further into the public realm when concern for regulating the market-place gained ascendancy. This argument is central to Boyde Beck's essay, which claims that the city's "market complex in the 1860s apparently catalyzed the process through which the traditional protective thrust of the laws became more selfish and mercenary."

The following chapter is a comprehensive examination of the police force from a social historical perspective by Greg Marquis. Given his work on Toronto and Saint John, Marquis has described a great deal about this institution in urban Canada. But like the other essays, an over-arching theme and the use of stronger theoretical principles would add power to this richly detailed account.

As it did in other Canadian cities, fire prompted the development of a public water supply. Although some argued for private ownership, the public viewpoint, based on security, necessity, and true economy, prevailed. Not unexpectedly, Charlottetown's sewerage system was a public matter, not one of great interest for the entrepreneurial sort. For lighting the streets of the provincial capital, as Harry Holman tells us, "public lighting remained private business." Control, in fact, was based externally, first in Montreal and later in Halifax. The volume closes with an account of Charlottetown life in 1914, posed as another set of imaginary letters. While we can indeed accept that the fictitious letters are based upon historical fact, and that the essay is charming, it is more difficult to accept the lack of a summary essay that

places Charlottetown in wider context, one that assesses the major themes of the volume. Still, we remain much in debt to Douglas Baldwin and Thomas Spira for exploring a neglected theme in Canadian urban history, for the book is generally well edited, an interesting read, and informative.

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The use of photographs has become increasingly prevalent in the treatment of the past, their ability to capture evocative images making them a valuable primary source. The camera, however, is not an impartial implement. Since both photographers and subjects can distort the past through the staging of pictures, caution must be exercised when interpreting this type of evidence.

In *Aurora: A History in Pictures* W. John McIntyre uses photographs to trace the evolution of this community on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of its incorporation. The book is organized into 13 thematic sections that cover various facets of town life. The photographs are generally ordered chronologically, but at times organization gives way to confusion as the photographs, particularly those on local government, appear to be randomly placed. A more fundamental problem is the conceptual framework of this study. The book suffers the fate of much local history in that Aurora is examined as an isolated entity, its growth not being placed within any broader context. This is especially unfortunate given the town's close proximity to Canada's largest metropolis. The study also lacks an interpretive framework, with each photograph being accompanied by only a brief

description. While some of these anecdotes, particularly on civic architecture, are informative, their value as evidence is diminished by the lack of any citations or references. Moreover, the continuity of the text is hampered because each photograph is treated as a separate entity and there is an absence of the progression and evolution of the town. The author makes few efforts to relate the photographs to Aurora's economic and social development, which is a problem given that industry played a key role in the town's early years. Numerous factories, of which the Fleury Plow Works was the largest, attracted many new settlers to the community. The inclusion of some maps outlining changing residential areas as well as the location of industry would have provided a valuable frame of reference as a gauge to growth.

The photographs, at times, lack proper balance. Images of worker cottages are noticeably absent among the pictures of stately homes. In all fairness, however, there are numerous excellent photographs that provide an interesting look at the history of Aurora. The home section depicts many fine examples of Georgian architecture that once graced the streets of this community. Pictures of the many business interiors impart light on the conditions of early 20th-century commerce. In addition, the book also contains a bibliography that reveals the available sources for further study.

Despite its many shortcomings, *Aurora: A History in Pictures* is useful in making available the pictorial heritage of this community. However, as with other primary documents, the time has come for photographs to receive critical treatment, and, in order for the value of pictures to be fully recognized, they must be placed into an interpretive framework.

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