

Bush, Edward Forbes. *Engine Houses & Turntables on Canadian Railways 1850-1950*. Erin, Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1990. Pp. 160. Illustrations. \$35.00 (cloth)

Fritz Lehmann

Volume 20, numéro 2, octobre 1991

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019261ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019261ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Lehmann, F. (1991). Compte rendu de [Bush, Edward Forbes. *Engine Houses & Turntables on Canadian Railways 1850-1950*. Erin, Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1990. Pp. 160. Illustrations. \$35.00 (cloth)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 20(2), 89–90. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019261ar>

Russell, Hilary. *Double take: the story of the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres*. Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1989. Pp. 158. Illustrations and colour plates. \$59.95 (cloth); \$29.95 (paper).

In 1913 the Marcus Loew theatre circuit of New York City began construction of a theatre complex in Toronto. Designed by Thomas W. Lamb, it boasted two proscenium stage theatres under one roof and cost approximately \$500,000 to build. The Loews Yonge Street (capacity 2149) and Winter Garden (capacity 1410) theatres opened in 1913 and 1914 respectively. The theatres entertained patrons with the same program of vaudeville acts and short movies booked by the New York office of the Loew circuit. The Loews Yonge Street, the lower theatre, ran continuous performances during the afternoon and evening. Its patrons were entertained in surroundings that included red brocade, plaster painted to look like marble, and extensive use of gold draperies and elaborate gilded ornamental plasterwork. In the Winter Garden, only one evening show was performed daily. For a slightly higher admission fee, its patrons were treated to reserved seats amid surroundings meant to imitate the outdoors. Plaster painted to look like tree trunks, a profusion of floral murals, and real beech leaves interspersed with cotton flowers and hung from wire grids created a garden atmosphere.

In *Double Take: the Story of the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres*, author Hilary Russell describes the original Loews Yonge Street and Winter Garden theatres and their place in both theatre history and the empire of Marcus Loew. She concludes with their transformation into the Elgin and Winter Garden theatres of 1989.

The decline of vaudeville and the rising popularity of the sound film clearly influenced the history of these two theatres. The Winter Garden theatre closed and reopened periodically during the 1920s, and closed permanently on June 16, 1928. The Loews Yonge Street was wired for sound in April, 1929, and on October 3, 1930, it began to show films exclusively. From then on its fate was determined by the popularity of film. The advent of television and the concurrent movement toward smaller movie theatres thus meant hard times for this large capacity theatre that had prospered during the era of the movie palace.

The Loews Yonge Street was sold to 20th Century Theatres in August, 1969. It was renamed the Yonge in February, 1970, and the Elgin in March, 1978. Changes in ownership, name, and program direction failed to revive the faded theatre. It closed in November, 1981.

In December, 1981, the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications bought the Elgin and Winter Garden theatres and made plans to restore them. The government's aim was to add a mid-sized commercial theatre in Toronto. The federal government's designation of the complex as a National Historic Site confirmed the wisdom of the province's action.

At first glance, the quantity and quality of the illustrations lead the reader to think that this is a coffee-table book. However, a reading of the text alters that assessment. Nor is it a how-to guide to theatre restoration or a step-by-step description of the \$29,000,000 restoration. The few specific details of the restoration Russell includes and illustrates are, however, quite interesting. Rather, Russell thoroughly describes the original Loews Yonge Street and Winter Garden theatres and documents how developments in the entertainment industry affected them.

The book creates a desire for a personal tour of the restored Elgin and Winter Garden theatres.

Adrienne Johnson Goodwin
Ottawa, Ontario

Bush, Edward Forbes. *Engine Houses & Turntables on Canadian Railways 1850-1950*. Erin, Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1990. Pp. 160. Illustrations. \$35.00 (cloth).

This very attractive volume first reached the public in the limited role of a report for the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (Microfiche Report Series #209). In hardcover book form with lavish illustrations, black and white photographs, engineering and other drawings, it will appeal to all who cherish railway history, or the industrial archaeology of the age of steam power and iron. It is not an exhaustive account; for example, the Canadian Pacific Railway's Drake Street roundhouse, Vancouver, (which is preserved as an historical monument, with its turntable, both tidied up for Expo '86), is omitted because the author, in a limited time for research for the Parks Canada report, could not cover the whole country. But by and large he has succeeded in presenting a good historical account and a very representative survey of the types of locomotive "stables," from the smallest one-stall sheds with no facilities to the largest 57-stall roundhouse with machine and forge shops, wheel drops, and other facilities for locomotive maintenance and repair.

Mr. Bush has no information on his topic before the 1850s: perhaps some Maritime historian will tell us how the General Mining Association housed and cared for its 1830s locomotives. But beginning with the 1850s, he presents some most interesting

material. One big surprise: the purely functional roundhouse design which dominated the 20th century had not become the normal plan, and the early Grand Trunk Railway built a number of cruciform engine houses, two locomotive stalls in each arm. The nineteenth century was more lavish in decoration and architectural embellishment, while the twentieth century favored more stark, purely functional forms—but inside the roundhouse structures, it provided more ancillary facilities for servicing the larger and more complex locomotives of the final development of the steam locomotive. The author rightly discusses the evolution of the turntable, required by the technology of the steam locomotive and in turn making the “round” of the roundhouse a logical design.

Should we attempt to preserve one or more of these structures in commemoration of one aspect of the steam locomotive era that saw the railways emerge as the binding force of the Canadian nation? Without locomotives in its stalls, with no tracks leading somewhere from its turntable, I personally have rather negative views of the CPR’s Drake Street, Vancouver, roundhouse even though it is a survivor of the great fire and so doubly historic. Its function gone, it is just a peculiarly-shaped big old brick building; a specialized one, but having much in common with other industrial buildings of its era. Should we save it? If so, for what? Why not tear it down and build something for our present era on the site? This splendid book does not directly address this problem, but presents a good account of what a roundhouse was so we can consider whether we want to intervene and save one or more.

Fritz Lehmann
Department of History
University of British Columbia

Knight, David B. *Choosing Canada's Capital: Conflict Resolution in a Parliamentary System*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991. Pp. xix, 398. Maps. \$18.95 (paper).

The choice of a seat of government for the Union of the Canadas was perhaps the most vexatious and protracted question put before its newly-reformed parliament. As the *Montreal Pilot* noted, “objections would have been found to the Garden of Eden ... and we might have gone on fighting about localities until doomsday.” Except that Ottawa was fixed on. In narrative and documents, Knight leads the reader to this “last act” in a “concatenation of follies,” as the *Boston Daily Advertiser* put it.

This volume is a much altered, enlarged and improved edition of the original on the capital question, published in 1977 to good notices.

Improvements begin with a dressed-up cover, enlarged format and printing, and more substantial paper and binding. The length in words appears to be about double the original.

Substantive changes are of more import. A new sub-title replaces the 1977 version—“Jealousy and Friction in the 19th Century”—reflecting a shift in the interests of the author and the application of recent scholarship to the “seat-of-government” issue.

The notion of conflict resolution thus informs the extensive re-writing of the general introduction and the introductions to each chapter, as well as the selection of (the many more) documents in them.

In effect, the one volume now replaces two: the original *Choosing Canada's Capital*, consisting largely of documents, and a companion volume *A Capital for Canada*. The latter, also issued in 1977, was the author's doctoral dissertation, and

was a largely narrative account of the capital issue. Both books are out of print and, in effect, have become redundant with this new volume.

The new edition is basic reading for scholars of the city in Canada, whether geographers, as the author is, or from other disciplines. But, especially with the new material, Knight's book becomes a valuable entree into the politics and roots of political conflict in Victorian Canada. It also goes far in demonstrating how parliamentary systems in the nineteenth century dealt with tensions. There are insights here for contemporary Canada.

It is thus an important book for political historians and to those interested in constitutions and governmental systems.

Apart from its scholarship, the volume is accessible to students, and is in a format that can be adapted to classroom use, especially where a case study approach is used.

John H. Taylor
Department of History
Carleton University

Gross, Hans. *Rome in the Age of Enlightenment: The post-Tridentine syndrome and the ancien regime*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Pp. x, 409. Illustrations. \$54.50.

Heroic Tridentine Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a centre of religious and cultural dynamism whose activist zeal and artistic energies had significant effects in much of the world. Its story is well known to historians. In this welcome monograph, however, Hans Gross examines a city less familiar to English-speaking readers: eighteenth-century Rome, the city, as he puts it, of the “ancien regime.” In many respects this is an account of anticlimax, decline, and decay, which finds its own climax fittingly at the intrusion of a