

Canadian Churches, an Architectural History By Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, with photographs by John DeVisser

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ers in large enterprises. He realizes that in the 'second industrial revolution' in the not too distant future the 'logic of capitalism' would challenge these craftsmen's skills, independence and position in industry, and change their relations with their employers. We know from the work of Craig Heron and others that by the early twentieth century conflict between skilled workers and employers like Gurney was persistent, and that the employers had the upper hand even against what were by that time well organized craft unions of skilled workers. Thus Kristofferson's criticism of the earlier historians is essentially that they projected changes on the craftsmen in Hamilton too early, not that they were wrong about the effects of capitalist development in the long run, which he sees as occurring in the 1890s and at the turn of the century. It is interesting to gain a fresh perspective and new evidence about

the Hamilton craftsmen in the 1870s, but as Kristofferson suggests, new work on later periods would develop a better understanding of the influence of capitalism on Canadian workers. He hints for example that the craft unions and the Knights of Labor in the 1880s and 1890s might be reconsidered. No doubt another generation will work out an overall synthesis that will continue to enrich our working class history. Kristofferson has made a good start in a new, more optimistic direction that takes account of the less developed Canadian economy compared to Britain and the United States.

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Canadian Churches, an Architectural History

By Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, with photographs by John DeVisser. Richmond Hill: Firefly Books, 2007. 438 pages. \$85.00 hardcover. ISBN 1-55407-239-5 (www.fireflybooks.com)

Canadian Churches tells us about the rich architectural tapestry of high style and vernacular churches across Canada. Peter and Douglas Richardson, Emeritus Professors of the University of Toronto (Religion and Fine Arts, respectively), have successfully rendered the complex social and architectural aspects of Canadian churches into a highly readable, if heavy, tome. High quality colour photographs by John DeVisser and selected historical graphics and architectural drawings support the text and descriptive captions.

The introduction outlines the book's organization and intentions; it also includes a *précis* of architectural style and design features to look for in church architecture. More than four hundred pages follow, arranged into re-

gional chapters: Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, and West and North; a final chapter addresses changes. Approximately twenty-five per cent of the space is devoted to Ontario. Footnotes, sources, and a bibliography organized by subject and region round out the book, and for novices the authors have included a helpful glossary of architect terms. In addition to a general index there are three others—church name, location and denomination—and these are of considerable assistance in exploring such a lengthy book.

In addition to acknowledging a Christian audience, the authors state that this book is for "all who are interested in churches as buildings." (p. 26) Their stated intention is "to make the confusing variety of churches understandable to persons with little knowl-

edge of churches and theology.” (p. 26) The pedantic intent of this endeavour is welcome in what otherwise at first glance appears to be a ‘picture coffee table’ book.

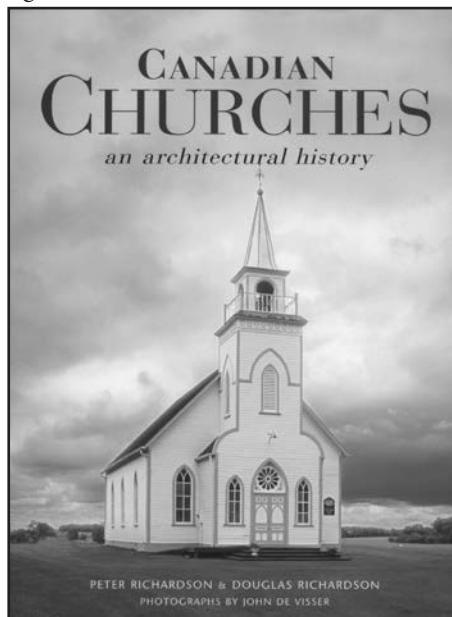
Each of the four regional chapters is introduced with a particularly useful historical background, offering a succinct summary of each region’s milestone events, peoples and buildings. Such an organization allows the reader to explore all Christian denominations in any one part of the country at one time. It is like a mini-book within a book. A minor quibble with this approach is that comparing a church in Ontario, say, with its counterpart in another region requires moving to and fro across 400 pages. I happen to be an admirer of the comparative method of teaching architecture, after Sir Banister Fletcher, and with time and patience one learns to navigate the pages. With esoteric epigraphs and citations from Voltaire (and not to mention its high price), I suspect *Canadian Churches* will not be a teaching manual as such, but will become a fine resource in an academic environment. To that end, yet one more version of the index, by name of architect, would have been useful.

The authors have made a careful selection of churches, reflecting the regions of Canada. Typical examples of plans and styles, as well as unique churches such as Ontario’s Sharon Temple, are included. Making suitable choices must have been indeed a time-consuming team effort, and the Richardsons admit that many worthy churches had to be excluded. A pan-Canadian book is always fraught with the central question of what to include, or

not to include. For example, I miss two great Toronto churches by architects Langley and Burke: Walmer Road Baptist and Trinity-St Paul’s United. Both are fine examples of the Romanesque Revival style, one in brick the other in the robust stonework reminiscent of the architect H.H. Richardson. Also, Joseph Connolly’s Toronto landmark in the Gothic Revival Style—St. Mary’s Roman

Catholic—is missing. Hamilton has an abundance of wonderful churches, yet the city is represented by just one (albeit excellent) choice, St Paul’s Presbyterian. One absence to which I would take exception is St. Thomas’s Aquinas Anglican, on Huron Street in Toronto, designed in 1892 by architect Eden Smith. Better known for his domestic buildings, Smith, according to his biographer Douglas Brown, is recognized as the founder of the Canadian Arts and Crafts Style. An

example of his ecclesiastical work, I believe, should have been included. The list could go on, but missing my personal picks, or anyone else’s, does not detract from the quality of the selection. And I was pleasantly surprised to see that the Richardsons included a number of modernist churches. There are many dating from the middle of the twentieth century or later—indeed two or three from the twenty-first century—that have heretofore not often been adequately noted for their innovative designs and success as places of worship. For example, there is the striking image of the Cathédrale St-Jean-Baptiste, built in 1961-62 in Nicolet, Quebec, and in Toronto there is the copper-clad St. Peters Estonian of 1954-55 on Mount Pleasant Road.



I wonder why the authors limited themselves to Christian churches. In the strict sense of the word a 'church' is a Christian place of worship, of course, but *Canadian Churches* neglects to reflect places of worship within the current Canadian context. Particularly for the benefit of those living in Ontario today, I believe such a book should have included synagogues, temples and mosques. The reader's appreciation of churches and other places of worship would benefit from a better understanding of how religious practice or liturgy affects the design of places of worship and what they may have in common with one another. Perhaps there are universal architectural characteristics that permit one religion easily adapting for its own needs the place of worship of another. The Richardsons offer one or two examples within a multicultural context, but they did not sufficiently explore how the changes would be managed. More floor plans and diagrams could perhaps have helped clarify the progression of physical changes.

"Changes" is a brief but mixed chapter that includes a history of church building from early Christian times to the Baroque period. At first I thought I was going to embark on an essay of how a church building may have been altered over time. Stewart Brand's classic *How Buildings Learn* is the subject I expected, but in this chapter the Richardsons focus principally on institutional changes in the context of the society of the times. The chapter concludes with introducing the auditorium plan typically associated today with suburban megachurches. The bulk of

this chapter could have been dealt with in the introduction. Christian revivalism and megachurches could have been introduced in relation to current threats to traditional or older churches with dwindling congregations. Adaptive re-use and development pressures in the urban context could have been addressed more coherently in one section, or perhaps as a postscript or afterword. I find that this chapter does not add clarity to the variety or understanding of churches seen on the Canadian landscape. Change is a worthwhile topic, but placing it at the end leaves me with the impression that this chapter is an afterthought.

Despite these concerns, *Canadian Churches* is an excellent sampler and introduction to Christian churches and theology during the last three centuries. It will leave the reader better informed about religious heritage in Ontario and beyond, and more appreciative of the efforts at preserving that national legacy. It will be a constant source book in my library and I recommend it for yours.

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New Canadian Library: The Ross-McClelland Years, 1952-1978

By Janet B. Friskney. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. xvii + 284 pp. \$45.00 hardcover. ISBN 0-8020-9746-0 (www.utppublishing.com)

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Toronto publisher McClelland and Stewart's 'New Canadian Library' series to the development and in-

stitutionalization of Canadian literature. Janet Friskney's *New Canadian Library: The Ross-McClelland Years, 1952-1978* appears fifty years after the first four books in the