

**Cashman, Tony. *Edmonton Exhibition: The First Hundred Years*. Edmonton: Edmonton Exhibition Association, 1979. Pp. 160. Illustrations. \$9.95**

**John Gilpin**

Volume 8, numéro 3, february 1980

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019369ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019369ar>

[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

Gilpin, J. (1980). Compte rendu de [Cashman, Tony. *Edmonton Exhibition: The First Hundred Years*. Edmonton: Edmonton Exhibition Association, 1979. Pp. 160. Illustrations. \$9.95]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 8(3), 165-166. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019369ar>

immortalize problem areas, the poor, minority groups, or any other aspects of the seamy side of life in early Regina. The three chapter or division titles reflect the same consensus view of the past: "Years of hope," "Canada's city of certainties," and "A pleasant city on a boundless plain." Only a few of the captions indicate that behind the "booster" facade lay serious health problems related to an inadequate water and sewage system; economic problems related to the boom or bust agricultural economy in the surrounding hinterland; and certain stresses in the social fabric of the city as new immigrant groups struggled for recognition and acceptance.

Books such as this have a value in that they encourage the discovery and preservation of photographic documentation of early urban history. Unfortunately, without supporting historical interpretation and statistical data the photographs alone provide little more than a nostalgic view of the past which may be pleasant for the casual reader but which will never increase to any extent the general understanding of the forces which led to the survival of the community. Urban history specialists will find little of interest in Regina Before Yesterday.

David R. Richeson  
History Division  
National Museum of Man

\* \* \*

Cashman, Tony. Edmonton Exhibition: The First Hundred Years. Edmonton: Edmonton Exhibition Association, 1979. Pp. 160. Illustrations. \$9.95.

Cashman's review of the first hundred years of the Edmonton Exhibition is concerned with the activities and physical growth of this event as well as with the people and organizations which were behind its development. These aspects of the fair are developed in chronological fashion using an extensive number of quotations from the Edmonton Bulletin, Edmonton Journal, minutes of the Association, and photographs from various sources such as the Byron-May and E. Brown collections.

From the point of view of an urban historian the value of this book lies in its discussion of the role of the various rural and urban interest groups which were involved in the development of the Exhibition and its role as a forum for boosterism. Between 1879 and 1895 the fair was organized by the Edmonton Agricultural Society which included among its membership residents of St. Albert and Fort Saskatchewan. The activities organized by the society consisted of displays of agricultural commodities which were judged and awarded prizes accordingly. The Society also prepared an exhibit of agricultural produce which was shipped to a fair in Ottawa in September of 1893. Such an exercise served to promote the agriculture resources of the region to eastern sceptics who were reported to have asked "if they were not grown on some experimental farm." The participation of a number of Edmontonians in the operation of this society is noted.

In 1895 a new era in the development of the fair was initiated when the Edmonton Board of Trade undertook to assist "the Agricultural Society in procuring grounds and erecting buildings with a view to establishing an agricultural exhibit for northern Alberta, instead of merely a local exhibit as at present." This initiative culminated in the acquisition of a portion of the Hudson's Bay Reserve on the Rosedale flats and the creation of the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association in 1899. The list of petitioners for the incorporation of this organization provided by Cashman included representatives from both the rural and urban areas of the Edmonton district. Cashman does not provide any analysis of the creation of this organization in terms of delineating the precise role played by the Board of Trade.

The interest shown by the Board of Trade in the creation of a suitable organization and procurement of a suitable site was equalled in 1905 by the City Council of Edmonton. In Cashman's view this interest derived from the fact that "the summer fair was so important to Edmonton's image it was not surprising that the council should get involved in that too." By 1909 a new site at the east end of the City had been purchased by the City of Edmonton and a new exhibition association had been incorporated. The Board of Directors for this new association consisted of forty percent City of Edmonton appointees, ten percent Board of Trade appointees and fifty percent association appointees. With the purchase of a new site, a design competition was held in order to find the plan "most suited to the grounds and to the present and future needs, on the exhibition lines of the growing City of Edmonton." The construction program which was undertaken included the erection of a manufacturers building made of wood and a livestock pavilion made of "solid brick." The latter was to be modeled after the pavilion at the Minnesota State Fair. The fair thus continued to keep faith with its origin as an agricultural exhibition despite the dominant role played by Edmonton in the administration of the affairs of the Association. In Cashman's view, the role of the fair as an institution in which town and country could meet continued to be characteristic of it until the early 1950s. From 1951 to 1956, however, Cashman notes that urban attitudes begin to dominate. The development of Klondike Days has been the result of this change.

This book provides a very useful overview of the development of the Edmonton Exhibition in which the author clearly demonstrates that it has been an integral part of the development of Edmonton. The author, despite the presentation of considerable detail concerning the activities that have surrounded this event, has presented two interesting ideas concerning its role as a forum for Edmonton boosters and as a meeting place which served to link the Edmonton business community with its agricultural hinterland. Both ideas, however, have not been sufficiently developed. Further research into and analysis of the role played by the Board of Trade and the interaction between the town and country interest groups with the Association is required.

John Gilpin  
Historic Sites Service  
Alberta Culture