

McGahan, Peter. *Crime and Policing in Maritime Canada: Chapters from the Urban Records*. Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions Ltd., 1988. Pp. 246. Illustrations. \$14.95, (paper)

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conservative relief programs in the country. Mayor Jackson and his cronies demanded that work programs be geared only to projects that they deemed necessary while more innovative programs like the WPA theatre and arts projects received little attention.

Baltimore's stingy approach to aiding its needy led to increased activity on the part of the jobless and hungry. Responding to federal relief initiatives, grassroots organizations emerged to claim decent treatment from city officials. Foremost among these groups was the Peoples' Unemployment League, formed in 1933 by the local Socialist Party to lobby and bargain for the unemployed. Through public demonstrations and personal visits to key New Dealers, PUL succeeded in winning some improvements in relief administration, stopping a number of evictions, publicizing racism and sexism in relief agencies, and often providing food and shelter for those it sought to represent. Perhaps most importantly, PEAL changed some of the ways in which federal administrators viewed the unemployed, and it taught the jobless themselves the virtues of both organization and interracial cooperation. Yet, federal officials never conceded the right of the unemployed to participate in policy formation.

The 1930s in Baltimore also witnessed increased union activity among the city's working people. Spurred by the emergence of the CIO on a national level and by the creation of the National Labour Relations Board, Baltimore unions grew during the depression. Argersinger describes well the conflicts between the local chapters of the CIO and the more conservative AFL, as well

as the cooperation between the CIO and other groups such as the PEAL.

Argersinger concludes that the New Deal could have worked harder to influence city officials. Instead, state and local officials retained their power and were able to limit the extent of reform. Baltimore thus stood out as one of the most conservative cities in the country - certainly it could not register the successes of Frank Murphy of Detroit or Fiorello La Guardia in New York. Argersinger argues, however, that the New Deal did some significant changes by widening the gap between private and public agencies and politicizing change numbers of professional social workers. Further, Baltimore did get new streets, schools, a welfare and recreation department, and other public services. Finally, New Deal measures unleashed citizens' groups and strengthened the more liberal wing of organized labour.

Argersinger's study adds to a growing body of literature that focuses on the New Deal's impact on the local level. A number of recent studies, for example, have described how southern plantation owners and businessmen influenced and controlled federal programs in their region. Baltimore offers an interesting comparison as an urban centre that suffered similar limitations. Argersinger also shows us the contradictory consequences of New Deal measures. While much of the federal legislation in the 1930s was shaped and controlled by local elites, other measures, perhaps unintentionally, empowered portions of the dispossessed.

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McGahan, Peter., *Crime and Policing in Maritime Canada: Chapters from the Urban Records*. Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions Ltd., 1988. Pp. 246. Illustrations. \$14.95, (paper).

Urban history is too often about 'things': housing, architecture, infrastructure, economic activity, urban systems, and so on. Peter McGahan's *Crime and Policing in Maritime Canada* is a book about people, the residents of five 19th and 20th century towns and cities as viewed through police records and the local press. This material was collected with the support of the Solicitor General of Canada and the Atlantic Institute of Criminology. Urban and social historians in Canada have been slow to recognize the value of criminal justice records as urban indicators. Although policing in Canada has been largely an urban phenomenon, municipal police remain almost invisible in historiography because of the exaggerated importance of the North West Mounted/Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Maritime communities were among the first centres in British North America to organize permanent police forces, and by the late 1800s most small towns had their own small town cops. The work of Eric Monkkonen in the United States suggests that the police were the most important urban bureaucracy in the 19th century, and that a good part of their work was of a service nature. Other interpretations, focusing on the founding decades of urban police departments, stress the police role in maintaining class relations. McGahan has produced neither a monograph nor an anthology, but a series of snapshots that reveal the complexity of the police role in Maritime communities. Most of the excerpts deal with Moncton, New Brunswick, and

Halifax, Nova Scotia, but there are also chapters on 20th century Saint John and late 19th century Charlottetown. The connections between the chapters are loose and the author provides no interpretive framework, other than an observation that urban law enforcement has been characterized by "drama, humour and ambiguity."

Among the themes covered are temperance and prohibition, public drunkenness (which until recently decriminalized was a major concern of police according to arrest records), disorderly conduct, young offenders, female criminality and victimization, complaints against the police, and the routine of patrol and detective work. A number of the chapters touch upon the police as a profession or an organization. The sources presented suggest that law enforcement in Maritime towns was not an exciting occupation, but consisted of dreary routine for patrolmen and seemingly trivial queries for detectives. A main concern of men on the beat was checking the doors of business premises at night. In some towns the beats were timed so that supervisors and citizens knew the whereabouts of the patrolmen. In terms of criminal activity, burglary and theft appear to have been the major concerns of the political masters of the police. The beat, from the point of view of the guardians, was an effective way of eliciting information from the population. Excerpts from a Charlottetown Police Minute (Occurrence) Book for 1916-17 and a Halifax Night Detectives Report Book for 1942-43 reveal that citizen complaints were the prime motivating factor in detective work. Gossip and hearsay formed the main source of 'evidence' for solving crimes and retrieving stolen property. There are hints

that police departments exercised considerable discretion, particularly on questions relating to the sale of liquor, both legal and illegal. For example, the police usually knew the identity and location of the local bootleggers. Some of the selections stress the internal tensions and disciplinary problems of police organizations and give the police a human face. Drinking, both on and off duty, was a major disciplinary problem.

Chapter XVI, a reprinted log book of a 1960s Saint John policewoman, is particularly interesting, and reveals a lot about police-community relations. Policewomen, first introduced prior to World War I in a number of Canadian cities, served as morality and welfare workers. In the Maritimes they were rare until quite recently. This selection challenges the romanticized view of working class life and displays the range of social questions with which police departments dealt on a daily basis. These included "drug use, wife abuse, neglect of children, poverty, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, shoplifting (and) marital discord." The author notes that "the level of destitution among some families at this late date is shocking." An important point is how often the working class approached the police for assistance; if the police were simply an agency of social control, there were many willing victims. McGahan's sources note the role of police intervention in domestic disputes and the practice of sheltering transients in station houses.

The police were very much a neighbourhood institution and the retired Saint John policemen interviewed for chapter XVIII knew their neighbourhoods well. The mental mapping of their police beats, before and after urban renewal, is

a useful source for socio-economic characteristics. The men interviewed remembered the various beats in terms of the problems associated with them. The least popular beats were those with the fewest buildings, which allowed patrolmen to shelter from the elements. Their oral histories also discuss the impact of technology - radios and patrol cars - and the decline of the foot patrol. Before World War II in larger centres, patrolmen kept in touch with headquarters through electric call boxes; these gradually were displaced by motorized transport, which gave the police increased mobility and enhanced response time, but made them more distant and impersonal. This in turn created difficulties in dealing with young offenders.

There are a few criticisms. The sources deserve some discussion; one gets the feeling that police records reflect not so much crime or suspicious activity but the desire of employees to justify their hours on the job. Although the work appears geared toward the popular market, an overview of relevant secondary literature would have been useful. Historians in particular will want more context, such as why and how the various police departments were organized. Some of the selections are inconclusive or of questionable value; in a couple of cases, newspaper accounts of crimes seem strung together, scissors and paste style. There is some interesting material on the Halifax police and the unemployed in the 1930s, but, surprisingly, nothing on the police and organized labour. Overall, the volume is a welcome addition to the sparse historical literature on urban policing in Canada.

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**Russo, David J., *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historians Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988. Pp. xiv, 281. Index.**

Standard texts on historiography and primers on historical method and writing usually ignore antiquarianism, local history and genealogy. David Russo believes that an unwarranted snobbery in the academic historical profession is responsible for these omissions. At the same time, most college and university calendars in the United States and Canada list at least one course on local history. Many boast of public history programmes, which on close examination turn out to be academic training for careers in small museums, heritage foundations, and genealogical institutes. Some 13,000 such agencies existed in the United States and Canada in 1986 and Dale Steiner's handbook on historical periodicals shows ninety-five titles under the state, provincial, and regional category. In short, academic historians seem no longer to disdain local history practitioners.

Russo's complaint about academic snobbery may have less substance than he believes. Has academy history fixed on concepts, models and patterns and removed the average people from America's past? Russo is certainly right to insist that from the colonial period to the 1930s most historical study in America was local, "nearby history," to borrow an apt and charming phrase. We

owe these largely unknown amateur antiquarians and genealogists much, he argues, and he makes a personal partial repayment in this largely descriptive discussion of a variety of these writers and their works. Russo believes that American life remained largely decentralized until the Great Depression and that is why he closes with the 1930s.

Local histories through this century were community, town and city oriented, so Russo's discussions will interest urban historians. New England's puritan sense of mission, town settlement pattern and concentrated populations led Yankee antiquarians to rummage in their backyards for a usable past. Men (rarely women) in other states copied New England's example. As America urbanized, authors exalted founders and descendants, and to some extent celebrated urban growth as progress. These city histories provide a window on the attitudes of their time, as well as more concrete material for modern urban historians. John F. Watson's work on Philadelphia recaptured the range of the city's life in great detail. Many in the northeast, notably in New York, followed his example. Beyond that, the people Russo describes were indefatigable collectors of local lore, documents and materials. They founded what have become indispensable depositories for academic scholars.

Rooted in spontaneous localism, these people reflected community self-consciousness but did not generate an historiographical trend. Lone authors laboured to recapture, but not explain, their community's past. The works detailed material culture and personalities, and occasionally described social life, economics, or living

patterns. Increasing detail and complexity notwithstanding, it is difficult to see how a local history of the 1830s differed much from one published nearly a century later. Authors almost never conveyed a sense of change over time, accepted the prevailing elites' social and intellectual values, and stereotyped non-Anglo Saxon peoples. They would not, therefore, qualify as historians in any contemporary sense.

The authors did respect accuracy and truth, however subjectively defined. Some, however, unabashedly sought heroics, and few were critical of their locale's past. They relied on the same techniques throughout. Boosterism, pride in forbears, or an impulse to record for posterity provided the motivation for this wide variety of compilations, annals, narratives, and edited collections.

At times these authors and their works seem displaced from their world. The Civil War and the American centennial intensified interest in local history and informed changes in American education from 1890 to the First World War. But did progressivism or America's intellectual ambivalence about Europe after 1919 affect local historians? What about the Great Depression itself, that wounding of the American Dream? What about shifting literary trends? At times the distinctions Russo makes among antiquarianism, local history and genealogy become fuzzy. Finally, he does not deal effectively with the rise of antiquarianism as a profession.

Given changes in the study of local history since 1940, Russo might have brought his subject up to date rather than stopping in the 1930s when he saw academic and local history beginning to