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BOOK REVIEWS

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Stelter, Gilbert A., and Artibise, Alan F. J., editors. "Canadian Resource Towns," Plan Canada, Vol. 18, No. 1 (March 1978). Pp. 71.

The March 1978 issue of Plan Canada offers a series of articles on a particularly characteristic, but often neglected, feature of Canadian history - resource towns. The issue, edited by Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F. J. Artibise, contains a variety of material which is interesting, if not always satisfying. Included are four articles: an introduction to the history of resource towns by Stelter and Artibise; a depiction of the early development of Cobalt, by Douglas Baldwin; an overview of the history of planning and development in Whitehorse by Paul M. Koroscil; and a discussion, by L. D. McCann, of how resource towns have changed in this century.

Much of the material presented in these four articles can be subsumed under three categories: 1) discussions of planning principles and their applications in particular instances; 2) discussions of social, political and economic problems of resource towns; and 3) depictions of the details of historical development in resource towns. A brief discussion of some of the more interesting material in each category follows.

Planning principles and applications. The straightforward and informative introductory article by Stelter and Artibise is a good historical overview of how the ideas of successive generations of professional planners influenced the development of resource towns. The article describes how the laissez-faire planning -- or non-planning -- of the pre-1920 period was succeeded in the interwar years by ideas derived from the "City Beautiful" and "Garden City" movements and how those ideas, in turn, were superceded by yet another set of concepts, involving land use segregation, separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic and the "neighborhood unit." McCann, using essentially the same breakdown of historical periods as that put forward by Stelter and Artibise, offers a more detailed -- and very informative -- discussion of the changing physical layout of resource towns. He emphasizes the fact that the development of resource towns, throughout their history, has responded, not to local perceptions of what was needed, but to the theories of planners in distant urban centres. In the end, however, he seems to suggest that that is a state of affairs which cannot be changed.

The Koroscil article, like those of Stelter, Artibise and McCann, attempts an analysis of how planning principles have changed over the years -- in this case, focusing on the town of Whitehorse. But Koroscil's analysis lacks clarity and consistency, with the result that the reader acquires a good deal of factual information -- including unfortunately, lengthy verbal descriptions of street plans -- but is not given much help in deciding what the significance of that information is. Still, much of the information is interesting in itself.

Social, political and economic problems. The most ambitious socio-economic analysis is offered in the McCann article, which makes use of demographic data from the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to develop a description of changing social patterns in resource towns. The analysis yields two facts which constitute a very interesting commentary, not only on social change in resource towns, but also on the planning profession and on our society as a whole. The facts, based on a comparison of the relatively new town of Kitimat with older resource centres, are as follows: 1) Modern planning principles -- despite the rhetoric of social concern which accompanies them -- have served only to reaffirm the sharp residential segregation by class which existed in the notorious "company towns" of the past. At the same time, 2) residential segregation along ethnic lines appears to have disappeared, or at least to have been very much ameliorated. Unfortunately, having stated those facts, McCann leaves the reader dangling. He offers no discussion of their significance and reproduces them inaccurately in his concluding remarks.

Details of historical development. The most successful article -- both generally and as a social and political commentary -- is one which does not put forward an elaborate "analysis." "The Development of an Unplanned Community: Cobalt, 1903-1914," by Douglas Baldwin, offers a vivid description of how the hardships of life in early Cobalt were forged out of the citizen's helplessness in the face of development pressures from transportation and mining companies. Baldwin's success is a product of the historian's most tested tools: strong research -- leading to a rich accumulation of telling detail -- and clear writing.

In short, the March issue of Plan Canada is recommended reading for anyone interested in the development of Canada's remote communities. Despite a number of shortcomings, it offers an interesting glimpse of an area in which there is much room for further scholarly work.

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Tulchinsky, Gerald, editor. To Preserve and Defend: Essays on Kingston in the Nineteenth Century. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976. Pp. xiv, 402. Illustrations. \$18.00.

Visitors to Kingston, Ontario may react to this eastern Ontario city in various ways. Some would find its essence in the forbidding gloom cast by its many penal institutions and wonder about the cumulative effect on the community of succeeding generations of such a custodial function. Others might respond to the substantial achievements of Queen's University,