

Notes and Inquiries

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NOTES AND INQUIRIES

The Historical Methods Newsletter began publication in 1967 in response to the need for communication among scholars interested in the social sciences, especially quantitative historical analysis. Published quarterly by the Department of History at the University of Pittsburgh, the HMN now reaches approximately 2,300 scholars in the United States and 35 foreign countries. While a majority of the readers are historians, over 30 percent are scholars in other areas of the social and behavioral sciences.

The Newsletter publishes short articles, research notes, review essays and announcements. Each issue also features reports of research in progress contributed by HMN readers. The editorial office maintains an active file of these research reports and can respond to queries for information about particular techniques or data by referring the inquirer to individuals who are using the methods in question.

Recent issues have included articles on applications of content analysis to historical research, the study of literacy, concepts of violence in historical and social analysis, applications of the computer to historical bibliography, and the teaching of statistics to historians. Future numbers will feature essays on quantitative analysis in Latin American history, medieval peasant demography, nominal record linkage, and quantitative history in Japan.

One year subscriptions to the Newsletter are \$3.50 for students, \$5.00 for other individuals, and \$9.00 for institutions. To enter a subscription, or obtain further information on the Newsletter, please contact the Historical Methods Newsletter, Department of History, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260.

SESSIONS AT CHA MEETINGS, JUNE 1973, SPONSORED BY
THE CANADIAN URBAN HISTORY COMMITTEE

1. Community Development on the Canadian Frontier

Chairman-commentator: Rex Lucas, Sociology, University of Toronto

God's Chosen People: The Origins of Toronto Society, 1793-1818
Robert Burns, University of Western Ontario

Urban Calgary, 1884-1895
Max Foran, University of Calgary

(A parish near Chicoutimi - definite title to follow)
Normand Seguin, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

2. Approaches to the Study of the Urban Past: A Panel Discussion

Chairman-commentator: Reuban Bellan, St. John's College, University
of Manitoba

Sociology: Gerald Fortin, Université du Québec à Montréal

Geography: James Lemon, University of Toronto

Urban and Regional Planning: Norman Pressman, University of
Waterloo

History: Gilbert Stelter, Laurentian University

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WESTERN STUDIES CONFERENCE

A session of the Western Studies Conference, held in Calgary on March 2 and 3, was given over to an historical look at some aspects of the Canadian urban west.

Three papers were given in the session:

Alan Artibise (Cariboo College), "Winnipeg and the
City Planning Movement 1910-14".

Tom Weir (Manitoba), "Winnipeg, a City in the Making".

John Taylor (Carleton), "Urban Social Organization and
Urban Discontent: the 1930's".

In addition, Ed Rea (Manitoba) commented on the burgeoning interest in western urban development in a conference-opening paper entitled "Western Historiography: Old and New".

Professor Artibise's paper detailed the genesis of the planning movement in Winnipeg, the importance of the derivative and indigenous

sources of the movement, the nature of the participation in the movement and an evaluation of its success.

Professor Weir, a geographer, using maps on slides, outlined the areal growth and changing political configuration of Winnipeg and environs from the pioneering period to the contemporary Uni-city.

Professor Taylor discussed the social morphology and political geography of Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver and their relationship to the successes and failures of radical political movements in the three cities.

A decision respecting publication of the conference papers is expected shortly.

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THE CITY IN HISTORY: IDEA AND REALITY

The University of Michigan's Center for Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies recently held an interdisciplinary conference entitled "The City in History: Idea and Reality". It took place in Ann Arbor March 14-17, 1973 under a joint grant from the Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The conference organizer, Professor John W. Eadie expects that a published volume will emerge, including both the prepared papers and the discussion, much of which was in closed session.

The participants and their papers are as follows:

(a) Origins of Cities

1. Mason Hammond, Classics and Ancient History, Harvard University, "The Emergence of Medieval Towns: Independence or Continuity?"
2. James Mellaart, Western Asia Archeology, University of London, "The Origins and Development of Cities in the Near East, Up To the Early Bronze Age"
3. Louis L. Orlin, Near Eastern History and Literature, University of Michigan, "Ancient Near Eastern Cities: Form, Function and Idea"

(b) Form of Cities

1. Charles A. Blessing, Director of City Planning Commission, Detroit, "City Form in History: The Past As Bridged to the Future"
2. Hans Blumenfeld, City Planning, University of Toronto, "Continuity and Change in Urban Form"

3. Paul Wheatley, Geography, University of Chicago, "The Places Where Men Pray Together: Paratactic Reflections on the Quality of Life in the Cities of the Traditional Islamic World"

(c) Idea of the City

1. Glanville Downy, History, Indiana University, "Aristotle on the Greek Polis: A Method of the Study of the Idea and the Reality"
2. Norton E. Long, Community and Metropolitan Studies, University of Missouri, "History and the Contemporary City"
3. Richard M. Morse, History, Yale University, "The City-as-Object in Argentine Literature: A Study in Evanescence"
4. John W. Reps, Urban Planning and Development, Cornell, "Thomas Jefferson: Town Planning"

(d) Quality of Life in Cities

1. Herbert J. Gans, Sociology, Columbia University, "Some Conceptual, Methodological and Value Problems in the Historical Comparison of Cities"
2. Richard L. Meier, Environmental Design, University of California, Berkley, "The Design of Resource-Conserving Cities: Redefining Urban Eco-systems"
3. William Michelson, Sociology and Urban Studies, University of Toronto, "The Advent of Multi-dimensionality in Conceptions of the Quality of Urban Life"
4. John P. Robinson, Survey Research Centre and Journalism, University of Michigan, "Measures of the Quality of Urban Life"

All the papers were distributed and presumably read in advance. Hence authors neither presented nor summarized their papers. Rather the sessions were given over to lengthy critiques by prominent scholars, followed by rebuttals and a general free-for-all. The preceding sessions had the following critics:

- (a) John Pfeiffer, Anthropologist and Science Writer, Rutgers University
- (b) Janet Abu-Lughod, Sociology, Northwestern University
- (c) Edmond N. Bacon, Urban Planner, Philadelphia
- (d) Jacquelin Robertson, Planning Commissioner, New York City

My impression is that this method of organizing a conference largely rests on the quality of the critics. It rests also on the extent that participants read the papers, which should never be assumed. It

provided in any case for some ferocious discussion at best, although this was not always based on what people actually wrote in their papers.

A miscellanea of some of the major questions raised includes the following: 1. To what extent has urban life always consisted of a trade-off of costs and benefits vis à vis non-urban life? 2. Under what circumstances were existing social and technological inventions actually utilized for new forms of settlement? 3. To what extent should those concerned with practical amelioration of today's cities expect any answers whatever from persons concerned with the past? 4. To what extent is the classical city an improper model for the city of Western civilization? Abu-Lughod, for example, suggests that the Islamic city is a much better model. 5. Of what importance is "Beaux arts" architecture as some symbolic contribution in itself to a city and the life in it? 6. Can the scientific process add appreciably to contemporary efforts to "save" cities? 7. Which is "even less reliable", textual or archeological evidence? 8. How does one add historical or scientific knowledge to assist the incremental growth of contemporary cities? 9. Has our standard of judging cities changed in nature as well as amount?

Speaking personally, I think that the participants in the conference gained considerably from the cross-fertilization of ideas. I am not sure at all how much coordination was made between ancient and modern studies themselves, as the analogies made and lessons purportedly learned were frequently either pained or hopelessly general. Nonetheless, a conference such as this certainly adds to the consciousness of the participants, who may well carry additional perspectives away from a conference table. It will be interesting to see what, if anything, we do differently in the future.

William Michelson