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St. Catharines Historical Museum. *Glimpses Into Our Past, Volume 1, #1-50*. St. Catharines: *The Standard* and the St. Catharines Historical Museum, 1984. Pp. 52. Illustrations.

Ontario has been remarkable for the number and vitality of its non-metropolitan cities and towns. Twelve Ontario cities have consistently been in the middle rank during the twentieth century — with 10,000 population by World War I, and between 50,000 and 200,000 in 1981. Scholarly histories have been published for only two of these cities — Leo Johnson's *History of Guelph, 1827-1927* (1977) and John English and Kenneth McLaughlin's *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (1983), while the somewhat smaller city of Cornwall has been interpreted in Elinor Kyte Senior's *From Royal Township to Industrial City: Cornwall 1784-1984* (1983). Urban biographies of Kingston and Windsor are being prepared for publication in the *History of Canadian Cities* series. But St. Catharines, like Brantford, Niagara Falls, Oshawa, Peterborough, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay, still lacks a comprehensive history.

The two publications noted here are most worthwhile ventures in local history and will be useful in the larger enterprise of a full urban biography. *St. Catharines: The Contribution of the City* . . . was first presented as a paper to the Historical Society of St. Catharines by Dr. Jackson, Professor of Applied Geography at Brock University, who has already published books on the very early history of the city and on the Welland Canal. After a fascinating outline of the various emblems of civic pride, the paper sketches the main stages of St. Catharines' development in the past two hundred years. Until 1825, it grew slowly and organically as a milling and agricultural service centre; the framework of Indian trails and the parallelograms of the rural survey system created a more interesting and distinctive urban form than in most Ontario towns and cities. Between 1825 and 1855, St. Catharines was transformed by the Welland Canal into a significant industrial town, with flour and saw mills, shipbuilding, and foundries and factories making all kinds of implements and tools. The town expanded rapidly to rank seventh in population among Ontario urban centres from the 1840s to the 1870s, after which it was surpassed by towns such as Brantford, Guelph, Peterborough, St. Thomas, Stratford and Windsor. Dr. Jackson traces the various innovations in urban services in the later nineteenth century, which gave middle-sized cities the comfort and dignity to match their size. A high proportion of new industries in the past hundred years has been started by American enterprise, St. Catharines claiming the first branch plant in Canada in 1870. Dr. Jackson discusses the city's multicultural character by the mid-twentieth century as well as the impact of continued growth on the urban environment, and laments the loss of many distinctive nineteenth century landmarks. *St. Catharines* is well illustrated with a good selection of photographs and two plans; it is marred only by some typographical errors and the omission of the endnotes for references on page 21.

Glimpses Into Our Past comprises 50 short articles which were first published weekly in *The Standard* newspaper between October, 1981, and October, 1982. Each piece consists of a photograph (or lithograph or painting) with a brief text of about 250 words. There is a wide selection of subjects and topics, representing all facets of St. Catharines' development, especially its transportation and industry, but also military government, schools, churches and urban services. The photographs are well reproduced; most date from the period between 1890 and 1930, though there are six from as early as the 1860s. Some photographs were from *The Standard's* own collection, but quite a few were apparently contributed by St. Catharines residents and newspaper readers, whose interest was sparked by the series. The notes seem well-researched by at least sixteen individual contributors. There is a very good index compiled by Sheila Wilson, Special Collections Librarian at the Centennial Public Library, who, as President of the Historical Society, also was associated with the publication of Dr. Jackson's paper.

Both publications illustrate the crucial role of lively local history groups in sustaining a community's interest in its past. St. Catharines has had an historical society from as early as 1820; the present society dates from 1927, while the Historical Museum was established in 1967. These groups, with the St. Catharines Public Library and *The Standard*, have valuable resources for a comprehensive history of the city, including the results of a newspaper microfilming project in the early 1980s. Perhaps St. Catharines will have its full urban biography in time for the sesquicentennial celebration of its incorporation as a town, in 1995.

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At the broadest level, these two books can be seen as providing very different interpretations of the development of Ottawa and of the major social forces moulding the city. Sandra Gwyn's book is dominated by the Governors-General, their wives, and their entourages. This is the social group that has marked Ottawa. They dominated the social life but also, as Gwyn makes clear, had considerable economic power through the positions they controlled. For Courtney Bond it

is the businessmen that have developed Ottawa: they are the group whose presence runs throughout his book. This impression of the weight attached to the business community is reinforced by a long last chapter, "Partners in Progress," written by Robert U. Mahaffy, which details the history of Ottawa businesses whose support helped produce the book. But even before this last chapter, the importance of the business community runs throughout the book. The heroes are Booth, Ahearn and McKay rather than Dufferin, Minto and Lorne.

This comparison can be developed somewhat further. Sandra Gwyn centres on the federal government, on Ottawa as capital, on the public sector as dominant. Courtney Bond gives greater weight to the private sector, to Ottawa as a lumber town that becomes a capital but without entirely losing its previous local economic base and local structure.

At the same time, these two books share a certain number of characteristics. Both accord great weight to the actions of individuals and both give considerable attention to the detailing of relations between individuals, particularly family ties and friendships, that act as the base of the social groups that dominate the development of Ottawa.

But what do the books tell us about the development of Ottawa? This is perhaps an unfair basis for judging Sandra Gwyn's book as her intention is not to chronicle the development of the city but rather the social morays of the leading classes. Different sections of the books rely on different witnesses to the social scene in Ottawa. I enjoyed most of the first section, perhaps because it refers to a period more distant from our own and therefore more exotic but even more because the witness relied upon, Edmund Meredith, was a singularly perceptive observer of his time. He was a senior civil servant endowed with splendid curiosity about the world around him. His diaries provided Sandra Gwyn with wonderful source material for the period when the civil service first arrives in Ottawa. The book deals only briefly with the physical development of the city but does have some fascinating insights into the social life of the nineteenth century. Mixing of public and private dimensions of life went on considerably more than at present as is illustrated by the fact that the wives of ministers and senior civil servants came to the office for afternoon tea once a week. The work day was 9:30 to 4:00 with a two-hour lunch break. Nothing startlingly new but an interesting reminder of the enormous changes that have come about over the past century in the temporal and spatial organization of our public and private lives.

It is the Governors-General that mark the book, particularly Dufferin, but also Minto, Lady Aberdeen, and Lorne. For Sandra Gwyn, it was these British aristocrats who defined Ottawa society. Mere members of parliament and, even more so, Ottawa businessmen were generally considered crude, whereas good society was made up of the senior civil servants and the entourage of the Governor-General.

Sandra Gwyn also reminds us how much these British aristocrats loved the Canadian winter: an enormous number of festivities were organized around tobogganing, skiing and skating. The celebration of winter and of amateur theatricals marked the vice-regal society.

What *The Private Capital* does — and this brings us back as well to Courtney Bond's book — is to illustrate the gulf that existed between the social elite linked to the federal government and all other social groups. Those who lived off the capital despised the town when they arrived, Meredith described it as "rough, wild and unfinished" (p. 36), and to a large extent, this separation has remained. The social hierarchy of the federal government remains separate from that of the city.

Courtney Bond's book gives greater weight to the local Ottawa. This, in part, is inevitable given the fact that the book covers the full period of Ottawa's development from the earliest Indian settlements and therefore the lumber town period is dealt with in detail. But it is also the orientation of the book: the development of local services is an important element as is the Ottawa fire.

The book is broad in scope, going from the Royal visits to railway projects, and this is both its strength and weakness. It is a balanced view of Ottawa's development but so balanced as to sometimes give the impression of being more a catalogue of events rather than as an interpretation of them. The conclusion is that Ottawa has greatly developed and that the grace of life has improved (p. 134). This is a conclusion that is somewhat difficult to work with. What does it really mean?

However, it is not fair to judge the text without mentioning the illustrations. To a large extent, the text should be seen as accompanying the illustrations rather than standing on its own. The illustrations are handsome and a good description is given to each of them. This again links our two books, Sandra Gwyn's is also handsomely illustrated. More generally the style of each book reflects its central characters. Bond's is earnest, matter-of-fact and competent with the virtues accorded to the local business community, whereas Gwyn's is romantic, speculative and wide-ranging with virtues associated with the British aristocrats who were our Governors-General in the nineteenth century. *The Private Capital* is certainly a "good read" and while entertaining us, does convey a sense of the living and working conditions of the social elite. *Where Rivers Meet*, while considerably more prosaic, does contain considerable useful information on the development of Ottawa.

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