

in directions relevant to the modern role of his department. It is necessary, therefore, to define what these directions were and to describe what Camsell did see as appropriate roles for the organization. The author does not provide any detail about these questions. Perhaps it is impossible to document since the file disposal clerk has ravaged the Geological Survey files for these vital years. Yet, much more attention could have been paid to Camsell and his actions.

These criticisms aside however, Professor Zaslow has produced an important book, one which should serve as a model for other departmental histories. Of particular use to further research in this field of study is the exhaustive bibliographic essay at the end of the volume.

R.P. Gillis
Public Records Division
Public Archives of Canada

The Canadian Northern Railway: Pioneer Road of the Northern Prairies, 1895-1918. T.D. REGEHR. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, Maclean-Hunter Press, c1976. xv, 543 p. illus., plates, ports. ISBN 07705 1285 2 \$27.50.

This book, subtitled "Pioneer Road of the Northern Prairies, 1895-1918," is the first to chronicle, in more than a cursory manner, the history and accomplishments of this railway which was destined to become the largest single component of Canadian National Railways. It is also the first to thoroughly cover the Canadian railway activities of two of Canada's greatest railway entrepreneurs, Sir William Mackenzie and Sir Donald Mann. Both men and their railway have received scant space and less justice in most railway or transportation studies. Even if this book were less voluminous and the research less comprehensive, it would fill a major need. In short, Regehr's work is a landmark in the publication of Canadian transportation history.

The author sums up the popular current impression of the Canadian Northern as "the project of two rather unsavoury promoters. When they got into trouble the Canadian Government had to nationalize their railway. . . ." While he does not appear to set out deliberately to refute this theory, Regehr does so most effectively. Mackenzie and Mann are not whitewashed, but they emerge as hard-headed businessmen who so fervently believed in the future of the Canadian West, and particularly the northern prairies, that they created an enormous railway system to develop the area. Contrary to contemporary public opinion they invested their own resources in the construction of this system and its ancillary enterprises. They were also unique in their willingness to work with governments and to accept a measure of government control (for example, in the establishment of freight rates). The story of the expansion of this system from a single Manitoba line of 84 miles in 1896 to more than nine thousand miles in seven provinces by 1917, its financial, political and construction history, the decision to make the system transcontinental with its implications and implementation, and the final crisis when the First World War disrupted essential financing and development, are all recorded in meticulous detail.

In addition to its intrinsic historical merits, this book is of particular interest to archivists. Regehr was an archivist in the Public Archives of Canada from 1960 to 1968 and Head of the Public Records Section there from 1965 to 1968 before accepting a post as Associate Professor at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. He admits

that this first attempt at a major study of the Canadian Northern was made possible by the transfer of the greater part of the surviving Canadian Northern records to the Public Archives of Canada by Canadian National Railways pursuant to an agreement signed on 28 January 1963. It would be reasonable, therefore, to conclude that Regehr had succumbed to a temptation afflicting most archivists who consider themselves at least partly historians and who, having found in the course of their archival duties a particularly rich lode of source material, decide to mine it for their own benefit in their own time. Nevertheless, this conclusion would be most unjust in this case as the author has not only demonstrated a prior interest in the subject but also has indicated in the text and in the voluminous and well-structured bibliography that this is far from being a one-source work. The book is instructive to archivists as an example of the kind of use that can be made of the basic material in what is essentially a corporate archives. The bulk of the Canadian Northern records are, with the exception of the curtly written minutes of the company and its affiliates, largely financial in nature. The use of these records to recreate the labyrinthine corporate structure and its evolution illuminates anew the range of corporate records which can be deemed of historical value. In addition, the similarity between the task of the historian in recreating this structure through the use of these records and that of the archivist who must also recreate the structure in order to organize the records to facilitate their use by the historian illustrates, once again, the degree to which the two professions overlap.

The book is lucidly written and well put together. Regehr succeeds in maintaining a smooth narrative, which is no mean feat when the far-flung nature of the enterprise is considered. The development of the prairies, the railway's involvement with the political and financial worlds, building and acquiring rail lines and contemporary socio-economic conditions are all solidly interwoven. It is unfortunate that, of necessity, the recording of financial information must form such a large part of the text—it seems that few pages are without a dollar sign somewhere. It is unlikely the book will gain the popular success it deserves because it is a study of an extremely complicated subject that breaks largely new ground over most of its course. Even individuals who are reasonably well read on the general subject of early twentieth century railway development may need to read the book several times before the total picture becomes clear. The financing of the Canadian Northern makes the financial background of the first twenty years of the Canadian Pacific Railway seem simple by comparison. The fact that the principals of the Canadian Northern left few personal records is also unfortunate. The lack of direct testimony from Mackenzie and Mann increases the statistical nature of the book and forces a greater reliance for interesting quotes on the few associates who did commit their impressions to paper, particularly the eminently quotable D.B. Hanna. The price for a book with just eight pages of photographs and a monochrome cover seems unjustifiably high. The photographs, while interesting, appear to have been added as an afterthought and would have been more effective distributed through the book rather than printed as a single unit. The maps are inadequate both in number and quality. For a subject such as this where geography and construction progress are of major importance, the maps supplied are small, crude and give little chronological information.

Notwithstanding such essentially minor criticism, the book is a happy blend of meticulous research with good organization and writing. It stands as a model of intelligent and informed use of a wide range of archival and, to a lesser degree, secondary sources to create a major historical study of a hitherto largely untouched subject.

Carl Vincent
Trade and Communications Section
Public Archives of Canada