

The question remains whether Bliss' book can be considered popular biography or, indeed, whether good entrepreneurial history can be written as popular biography. Bliss, in the tradition of Creighton, Lower and W.L. Morton, writes for an educated rather than a mass audience. Still, whatever the complexities of his subject matter, he eschews jargon and sociological models which would make his book less appealing to a general audience. With a central figure who dominates his account, Bliss can maintain human interest without sacrificing discussion of weighty issues and broad trends. It may not be possible to marry completely popular and academic history, but Bliss comes as close as it is likely to be possible.

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Lost Toronto. WILLIAM DENDY. Toronto, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978. xv, 206 p. ill. map. ISBN 0 19 540294 4 bd. \$19.50.

Regina Before Yesterday. Edited and introduced by J. WILLIAM BRENNAN. Regina: City of Regina, ©1978. 228 p. ill. (Regina's 75th Anniversary Management Board's Historical Committee) \$15.00 pa.

Historic photographs provide a dramatic and instant indication of the differences between our contemporary world and the world we have lost. Viewed in isolation, they tend to conjure a world that was warmer, nicer, more human: most of us have an easily triggered nostalgia. In books that are heavily visual therefore, the accompanying text is critically important if we are to gain a balanced view of that past world, particularly for volumes on visual urban history at a time when contemporary urban society is often regarded as less than ideal.

Two recent books on Canadian cities show the strengths and weaknesses of an emphasis on visual evidence. William Dendy's marvellous compilation of archival photographs that purport to show *Lost Toronto* implicitly looks back longingly on an earlier and richer landscape, while *Regina before Yesterday*, tends to look back as a measure of how far the community had come since the pioneer days. On casual inspection, both volumes trigger the appropriate emotions of regret and celebration and there are some excellent images that make both attractive additions to most libraries. The written texts, however, are unbalanced.

Dendy's *Lost Toronto* concentrates on almost one hundred buildings that occupied a small area of central Toronto and are organized in a sequence in which one might come across them while out walking. For each lost building, there is a matching descriptive compilation of who owned, built, and designed the structure; information concerning important events in Toronto or Ontario history connected with the site or building; an architectural historical analysis of style; and a concluding comment on when the building was lost and for what reason.

Many of these impressive early buildings were lost by fire or commercial redevelopment at the turn of the century; another set have disappeared in the last two decades, and to these, Dendy chooses to comment on the aesthetic quality of the replacement use through a small contemporary photograph. Many of these replacements are parking lots, or comparatively sterile high rise structures. As a plea for conservation of the city's past, such poignant visual contrasts could be very effective propaganda. Yet Dendy's 'propaganda' can only be effective if a reader is concerned with the meaning of these structures as aesthetic rather than functional units. Dendy does not seem to connect the parking lots with the bank towers that surround them, bank towers that are the late twentieth century

successors to the many banks and office buildings that are celebrated in his book. Can one endorse the scale and decoration of these early commercial structures in isolation from their place within the social and economic gradients of earlier Toronto? Our late twentieth century eyes can value their style and appearance for their potential contribution to our contemporary needs for texture in the downtown environment, but can we ascribe such public motives to earlier private, profit-making monuments. Not all the structures recorded are the palaces of commerce, to be sure, but there is a heavy emphasis on a private and wealthy world, and this gives an unreasonable sense of old Toronto.

Future archivists might well value this book not just for the wealth of detailed visual and written information that it contains, but also as a subtle indicator of why, in the 1970's, old buildings still are being torn down, and why we indeed have a lost Toronto! Why have architectural historians failed to create a broad public support for conservation? Is it that the forces of change are so overwhelming, or is it partly because the profession's *raison d'être* for labelling some building as important is cast in very specific architectural and aesthetic vocabularies that few lay people can embrace? Such a question develops from a reading of accumulated, detailed style analyses.

For the informed student of architectural history, there are many fertile areas developed in this volume. The plans for the grandiose Federal Avenue in 1911 and 1929 are revealing of the city's attempt to symbolize its own importance. Another unfulfilled design, the 1928 plan for a 670 foot skyscraper for Eaton's College Street headquarters, is interesting when seen in the context of their monumental corporate symbolism recently added to Yonge Street (a streetscape of relatively anonymous buildings that are constantly being eroded by redevelopment. Dendy's good discussion of what King Street used to look like seems to be a sad omen for Yonge Street). The controversies over whether American, British or Canadian architects should get the nod from Toronto clients for many buildings also provide interesting historic data for students of Canadian cultural nationalism. Many of these buildings and photographs were used by Eric Arthur for his classic *No Mean City*; Dendy adds considerable detail to Arthur's broad canvas, though Arthur still contains a more representative cross-section of lost Toronto buildings.

Some of Dendy's scholarship might have been usefully added to the volume on Regina, except that many of the structures would not be amenable to the style-and-architect labelling favoured by architectural historians. Marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of Regina's incorporation as a city in 1903, this committee-organized volume sadly underuses the power of photos that record the struggle to transform a flat prairie boom town into a 'pleasant city on a boundless plain'. From a CPR construction site at Pile O'Bones to the treed and laked surrounds of the Provincial Legislature after World War II, the temporal sequence of some two hundred and twenty pictures of places, events and people are nicely presented in a format (on yellowed paper) that suggests a collective civic photo-album. For the Regina resident, one of the family as it were, such an album doesn't need many captions and there will be knowing smiles of the changes that occurred over the years on the site of today's dominant landmarks. Yet, for anyone outside the city, the need for orientation and explanation are frustratingly ill-served by short captions under each photo. The large amounts of empty page space, an effective design device in some ways, might have been put to better use for an explanatory text. The photos are contextually identified by quotes from newspapers, boosterish speeches, and diaries of the day, and they complement the tone of a "scrapbook" assemblage. But how typical were these quotes, how fair were the comments of travelling Englishmen, and can we rely on such snippets for the social history of Regina? One doubts this at times: for example, a panoramic view of South Railway Street, Stanley Park and the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) station appear on page 174 with a 1920 caption, while the right side of the same photo, the freight yards behind the station, is used on p. 196 with a 1928 storyline.

More important, is there again an over-emphasis on the record of the wealthy and

commercial, in a city that had a survey of poor housing conditions done by J.S. Woodsworth in 1913 and in a city that was the site of that famous CCF manifesto? In many respects, such editorialising is presented to the contemporary compiler at the outset, given the social selectivity of early photographers. That noted, there is a good attempt at a cross-sectional view. But, if photos are to be used to illuminate more than just fashion, an 1886 group photo of men in front of a railway engine needs to tell us more than the fact that they were associated with the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway and Steamboat Company. Were they local businessmen, or Eastern Canadian or American entrepreneurs? Similarly, how strong was the CPR's control over the town? The only map in the volume is a blurry 1883 CPR townsite plan, with the railway right-of-way slashing diagonally across the grid. Many subsequent photos show the ongoing landscape effects of this central landuse. More research on the town's municipal relations with the CPR, from the comparative perspective of 1978, could have helped underline these photos. Several panoramas are used from different time periods: fold outs might have helped preserve the intent and the impact of such vistas, for they show the transformation from false-front wooden stores and shacks to a provincial capital in which public works, borne out of Depression needs, contribute the pleasant dimensions that the CPR and others needn't or wouldn't contribute earlier. The CPR, the Royal North West Mounted Police and the CCF all have connections with Regina; one goes elsewhere to find detailed scholarship on such central elements of Canadian society. Though the visuals are often striking, the text does not use them to full potential in highlighting these significant Regina-based developments.

Regina before Yesterday is a parochial celebration, and the positive qualities of that adjective reveals something of Dr. Brennan and his committee's priorities in trying to capture a community's evolution in this family album manner. *Lost Toronto* is equally parochial, more negatively in that it appeals to a narrow audience, but equally it reveals as much about the priorities of its author's professional background as it does the subject matter.

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Steam into Wilderness. Ontario Northland Railway, 1902-1962. ALBERT TUCKER. Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1978. viii, 214 p., ill. maps. ISBN 0 88902 444 8 bd. \$19.95 0 88902 558 4 pa. \$9.95.

A steam locomotive forges ahead through clouds of vapour, smoke and snow across the cover of Albert Tucker's history of the Ontario Northland Railway. It draws behind it the typical ingredients of rail romanticism — idealised beginnings, heroic engineering feats, political interference and life-line service to isolated communities.

Northern Ontario in the early twentieth century was seen as an exciting new frontier ripe for the exploitation of timber and mineral resources and new agricultural opportunities in the great clay belt north of Lake Timiskaming. In a unique break with the Canadian tradition of an east-west axis, the Ontario Government struck north with its railway, under the direction of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway Commission — known after 1946 as the Ontario Northern Transportation Commission. The aim of Premier Ross' administration was to stem some of the Canadian Pacific assisted immigrant movement to the western prairies and re-direct it to the clay belt. A railway would encourage both the settlement of North-eastern Ontario and, significantly, create a bulwark against French Canadian encroachment.