In conclusion, three defects, small and large, mar this otherwise admirable book. Although the narrative is footnoted to the teeth, Tippett provides no bibliography. The French Académie to which Canadian artists of the time flocked was not the "Julien," a mistake often encountered, but the Julian, founded by Rodolphe Julian (1839-1907). The fifty-one black-and-white plates of indifferent quality provided by the University of Toronto Press are not likely to inspire widespread interest in these neglected works of art.

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Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs: The Illustrated Story of Country Fairs in the Prairie West. DAVID C. JONES. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983. 157 p. ISBN 0-88833-099-5 $16.95.

It's no secret that there are marked cultural differences between urban centres and rural communities in Canada. These differences come vividly to mind when one compares David Jones's recent book on country fairs in the prairie West with David Breen and Kenneth Coates's book on the Pacific National Exhibition [PNE] in Vancouver [reviewed in *Archivaria* 18]. *Vancouver's Fair* (1983) examined the ways by which real estate developers and civic boosters transformed a regional agricultural fair into a glittery international exposition, complete with musical revues, freak shows, fortunetellers, and carnival rides. Occasionally the PNE promoters battled with city councillors and citizens' groups over matters of finance and neighbourhood development. But rarely were the promoters embroiled in moral issues; rarely were they criticized for the side shows, the scantily clad dancing girls, and other entertainments which were offered annually to city folk at the PNE. Such was not the case for the promoters who feature in Jones's book. Organizers of rural fairs were constantly under attack from local newspaper editors, clergymen, and other social reformers who looked upon frivolous games and titillating shows as a threat to the very foundations of rural society. Maybe these moral crusaders had good cause for concern; most likely, they were being prudish and parochial. Whatever the case, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs* provides some interesting insights into the *mentalité* of western Canada.

Although the morals and mores of the prairie West lie at the heart of this book, it is essentially a history of rural fairs from the 1800s to the 1930s. Jones has selected over seventy photographs to illustrate the tale and, with few exceptions, the pictures are well chosen. The pictures (most of which are drawn from the Glenbow-Alberta Institute collections) emphasize the edifying aspects of the fairs: stalls laden with sheaves of golden grain at Qu'Appelle, parades of champion horses at North Battleford, enticing displays of preserved foods at Millarville. The bizarre face of the fair is here, too: the "Human Bullet" about to be launched in Edmonton, an aerial equestrian plummeting into a pool of water in Lethbridge, and Serpentina ("half woman, half snake!") reclining seductively somewhere west of Winnipeg.

Linking the four sections of photographs, Jones's text is tightly written, lively, and informative. Notes to the text are testimony to the author's command of contemporary farm journals and the major prairie newspapers. He has successfully mined the published reports of the provincial Departments of Agriculture in Alberta and Saskatchewan and

has made good use of several local histories. He has even drawn upon interviews conducted with "old-timers." Primary documentary sources, on the other hand, are more limited, for much of the book is based on two collections: the records of the Agricultural Societies of Alberta (in the Glenbow) and the Saskatchewan Agricultural Societies records (housed at the Saskatchewan Archives Board in Regina). Relatively few references are made to government documents in the SAB's Saskatoon repository, while virtually no mention is made of primary sources in the provincial archives of Alberta and Manitoba. Perhaps those archives had little to offer, or perhaps the author was not as assiduous as he might have been in ferreting out material in Winnipeg and Edmonton. Similarly, the author might have dug deeper in Record Group 17, Records of Agriculture Canada at the Public Archives of Canada, a record group which contains a number of files pertinent to this study.

The format and appearance of the notes and citations in the book could also be better. Many of the numerals which indicate the notes to the text are so small and are printed so faintly that they are almost indecipherable. With regard to the notes themselves, those which refer to primary archival sources are somewhat inconsistent and confusing. It is not always clear what collections are being cited or where these collections are located. But these are minor flaws in what is otherwise an attractive and well-produced book. Moreover, while a few sources may have been overlooked during the course of the author's research, the documentation which Professor Jones has provided is more than adequate to support his thesis.

According to the author, country fairs in the West were intended primarily as educational forums. Through exhibits, information booths, and practical demonstrations, farmers and their families were to learn the best ways of improving their herds, their crops, and their household efficiency. Country fairs — which were regulated by provincial agencies — were also used as a means of assimilating new immigrants, of introducing European homesteaders to local methods of irrigation, ploughing, stock raising, and so forth. Above all, the fairs were intended to celebrate the virtues of agrarian life.

Most rural reformers believed that the best way of promoting the edifying qualities of a fair was through prize competitions and exhibitions of farm produce: "Through competition in exhibits the winners, by form of example, would teach the losers ... the meaning of excellence in farm practice." (p. 3) Enthusiasts even claimed that the "mere selection and fitting of exhibits at home on the farm [would] stimulate thought of a high order, by promoting comparison, judgement and constructive imagination." (p. 19) At least that was the idea. In practice, these events often seemed to provoke carping criticism, jealousy, and petulance in competitors. Typical was the woman in Ranfurly, Alberta who complained shrilly to government organizers when her baked goods failed to win first prize at a local fair. Claiming that her work was "dainty," "crisp," and "fluffy as a dream," she slammed her opponents' offerings as being "heavy," "clumsy," and "shapeless." (p. 101) Then there were those who cheated by re-icing and re-exhibiting the same cake, or who laced their jars of preserves with artificial colouring. Shame! And the menfolk were no better, what with gluing false manes to their Clydesdales and all. (p. 25)

Were the rural competitors really so artful, so petty? Did the tawdry blue ribbons and fleeting praise of the judges mean so much to them? Yes. Given the drudgery of farm life, and a lack of variety in their own daily lives, many farmers and their wives inflated these

competitions and exhibitions out of all proportion. That they did so is rather sad and pathetic and may say a lot about rural sensibilities during the period. Of course, some diversions were available at the country fairs, especially for males. But as Professor Jones points out, local policemen, school board officials, and provincial agents went to great lengths to sanitize and censor anything which seemed to be frivolous or titillating. The "hootchi-cootchi girls," for example, were routinely denounced as being lewd and lascivious. They look harmless enough in the photographs. Surely these transient performers did not constitute a serious threat to the moral well-being of the prairie West. And what real harm was there in dancing cheek to cheek or riding the Big Dipper with the girl from the next township?

Here is the crux of the matter. One gets the impression from reading this book that the rural reformers, who played so large a part in regulating country fairs, were overly defensive and unduly censorious. They saw — or thought they saw — attacks upon the fabric of rural life at every turn, from every quarter. Had they tried to strike a proper balance between informative demonstrations and amusing displays, rural life — as represented at the annual county fairs of western Canada — would have been much richer and more satisfying. The "entertainers" and the "instructors," however, were always at odds; the latter were usually the victors. The result was a circuit of uninspired, somewhat insipid events which inevitably had less appeal for an increasingly sophisticated rural population. No wonder, then, that the circuits all but disappeared in the 1930s. No wonder the boys left the farms and headed for big cities such as Vancouver. There they could take in shows such as the PNE. There they could ride the Big Dipper and ogle the "hootchi-cootchi girls" without feeling too guilty.

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Eldorado: Canada's National Uranium Company. ROBERT BOTHWELL. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984. xiii, 470 p. ISBN 0-8020-3414-4.

Eldorado — City of Gold — was originally the objective of Spanish explorers in the New World. Eldorado, the corporation, sought its fortune in Canada's northern frontier. While the anticipated gold mine never materialized, in its place a mineral even more valuable than gold brought Eldorado Gold Mines Limited to worldwide prominence. Radium, a metallic chemical element used in luminous materials and in the treatment of cancer, reached prices exceeding seventy thousand dollars per gram in the 1930s. Charlie and Gilbert LaBine, the enterprising brothers who founded the company in 1926, seemed destined to amass huge fortunes. They did achieve a degree of wealth from the sale of radium but ironically this did not reach either personal or public expectations. Another irony of Eldorado's history stems from the fact that radium was eventually supplanted as the main source of income for the company by an element originally deemed a useless by-product of the radium refining process. With the onslaught of the atomic age, uranium became the primary concern of Eldorado.

Robert Bothwell has written an authorized history of the early years (1926-1960) of this speculative gold mining company turned crown-owned uranium corporation. Beyond chronicling internal developments, Bothwell attempts to place Eldorado within a national and international context. He strives to examine the political, economic, and, to