

**Ranchers' Legacy: Alberta Essays** by Lewis G. Thomas. PATRICK A. DUNAE, ed. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986. 217 p. illus. ISSN 0820-9561-4. \$14.95 paper.

Professor Lewis G. Thomas' career, through both his own writing and that of his many students, has done much to shape Alberta's current understanding of itself and its past. This is particularly true of the pre-1914 ranching era. It was Professor Thomas who first pointed out in his Master's thesis that Alberta's ranching society had important Anglo-Canadian roots quite distinct from the American influence.

The social history of ranching and the relationship between ranching and local urban developments serve as the focal point of six of the ten collected essays in *Ranchers' Legacy*. The contribution that Thomas' history of the Alberta ranching industry makes to Canadian historiography in general is the strong point of the remaining essays. "The Umbrella and the Mosaic" and "Associations and Communications" are crucial historiographical essays. Had they derived from a source other than the Canadian West, they would be as carefully read by Canadian historians as is J.M.S. Careless' article "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History." Yet, because western Canadian history is still not considered a topic of national importance, this component of Thomas' work has remained relatively obscure, and Canadian scholarship has remained poorer because of it. The "Umbrella" that legal and historical protection afforded the French fact in Canada was extended to other minority ethnic groups by default because broadly applied restrictions against other ethnic blocs would have had a deleterious effect upon entrenched French rights and would have precipitated national conflict. In "Associations," he discusses the importance of communication within elite groups as a force uniting regional and national interests. These observations are critical to the understanding of Canadian regionalism and must not be ignored.

Thomas' work also reflects an abiding interest in social history — in home environments, architecture, material culture — and in local history as particular manifestations of both broader Canadian and regional western themes. In many of these concerns he was at least a generation ahead of his contemporaries. Only within the last ten years, and then most frequently through the work of our "public historians," as those historians who are in the service of the Crown are euphemistically called, have these topics begun to emerge in the historiography of Alberta.

The inspiration for Thomas' work on region and ranching was not derived from some rich, unmined body of documentation, accessioned by a diligent and far-sighted archivist. Rather it was inspired, as outstanding historical writing usually is, by personal experience, which in turn engendered a respect and an enthusiasm for local community traditions. In fact, from the 1920s to the 1960s, during Thomas' rise to influence, archival collection and preservation in Alberta was "fostered" only by a few interested individuals, who acted without any formal approach to collections policy.

Landmark collections of essays like *Ranchers' Legacy* should cause archivists to reflect upon the direction and purpose behind their work. My impression is that archives, if they assume any sense of direction at all, tend to follow the scholars in determining new collection areas that might have an impact on future historiography. *Ranchers' Legacy*, a milepost in the historical thinking of a generation of Alberta scholars, offers an interesting opportunity to determine the relationship between historical writing and archival policy in Alberta. It is likely that the Archives of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute's concentration

on Alberta's ranching frontier and small southern Alberta communities was in some way the result of the work of Thomas and his students. To extrapolate somewhat further, had Thomas had a similar impact on the broader provincial scale, one would expect to see collections at the Provincial Archives which concentrate on social and material history, with perhaps a particular effort to collect the records of our rural and urban elites. My recent work on prominent individuals in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Wetaskiwin, and Red Deer has often been frustrated by a lack of family papers which seem so abundant in comparable repositories in Manitoba and Ontario. To me, this is a sure indication that Thomas' writing and teaching probably had little influence on the local archival community.

Indeed it seems, and this is more an impression than the result of exhaustive analysis, that there has been a strong tendency to preserve only the records of provincial agencies, municipal governments, and province-wide associations instead of private manuscript collections. If archival collections determine historiographical direction, and to some degree they must, it is likely that the next generation of Alberta historians will tend to write history from the perspective of successive provincial governments and their agencies, and of the various provincial associations that dominate the collections, rather than that of the individual. This would be ironic in a province stamped for the past century as Canada's last bastion of individual initiative. In short, the inadvertent collecting tendencies of the archives will make it very difficult for many of Thomas' insightful suggestions, based as they often are on observations of individuals and their community collections, to be eagerly or effectively pursued.

**Frits Pannekoek**  
Alberta Historic Sites Services  
Edmonton

**Lost Initiatives: Canada's Forest Industries, Forest Policy and Forest Conservation.** R. PETER GILLIS and THOMAS R. ROACH. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986. xiii, 326 p. ISBN 0-313-25415-X \$35.95 (U.S.).

This book examines provincial and federal policies relating to forest management between 1880 and 1980 with emphasis on the period before 1940. It describes ideals of forest conservation which became popular before 1905 and subsequent attempts to implement them in forest policy. Ultimately, it is a story of failure; the authors conclude that "there has been little political leadership in this country which has endeavoured to create in an imaginative way a policy framework taking into account the needs of forest industries, but going beyond these to insuring regeneration of Canadian woodlands on a rational basis for future generations." The responsibility for this failure is placed at the feet of the Canadian public which, it is claimed, has remained blind to the fragile nature of the resource and insensitive to its wholesale destruction.

The historical account leading up to these conclusions presents a more complicated explanation for this failure. The first chapter provides an overview of the forest industry in eastern Canada to 1870. Chapters Two and Three describe the origins of the conservation movement and early federal initiatives in this area. Chapters Four through Seven chronicle attempts to carry out forestry programmes in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and British Columbia before 1940. The next two chapters summarize the history of