

Urban Biography: Print Books in the Digital Age

Deryck W. Holdsworth

Volume 40, numéro 2, fall 2011

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad40_2re02

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Holdsworth, D. W. (2011). Urban Biography:: Print Books in the Digital Age. *Acadiensis*, 40(2), 136–145.

Urban Biography: Print Books in the Digital Age

FOUR RECENT BOOKS, covering different aspects, locations, and periods of urban history in Atlantic Canada, provide examples of traditional illustrated histories as well as the potential of newer digital platforms for the dissemination of archival evidence and research findings: Peter E. Rider's *Charlottetown: A History* (Charlottetown, PE, and Ottawa, ON: Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation and Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, 2009); Steven High, ed., *Occupied St. John's: A Social History of a City at War, 1939-1945* (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); William D. Naftel's *Halifax at War: Searchlights, Squadrons and Submarines 1939-1946* (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing Co., 2008); and David Hood's *Down But Not Out: Community and the Upper Streets in Halifax, 1890-1914* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 2010). They also might be seen as examples of urban biography, which can focus on specific people as exemplars of wider social, economic, or political forces or, alternatively, bundle a wide array of evidence on the particularities and personality of urban place (the compendium of local detail being of prime importance).

One of the first efforts to identify the field of urban history in Canada was Gil Stelter and Alan Artibise's 1977 edited volume *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart), in which the authors sought to recognize what Canadian cities had in common as well as what made them distinct. Two sections dealt with urban growth and development and the other three the physical environment, urban society, and urban government and reform (vii). The chapters by T.W. Acheson and by Judith Fingard, reprints of earlier articles from *Acadiensis*, reflected the two predominant frames for considering urban space: places were seen as nodes in urban systems or as having their built environments and everyday life shaped by an array of social and economic forces. Acheson's work on industrialization in the Maritimes connected to a long-time Canadian interest in the economic links between the metropole and regional staples, now updated to consider manufacturing and capital flows. Fingard's work on poverty in Victorian Halifax reflected a concern with the lives of individuals within particular urban places, part of a shift to a focus on ordinary people that was emerging in social history and that would address issues of class, ethnicity and gender.

Alan Artibise, in conjunction with the former Museum of Man (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization), also spearheaded the development of a series of books – the History of Canadian Cities Series that began to appear in print in the mid-1980s – on the illustrated history of specific leading Canadian cities. In this series, published by James Lorimer, the salient feature of each volume was the 100 or so full-page, black-and-white glossy images of streetscapes of the city in question, a sequence across decades that signaled social and economic changes as initial settlement grew to more developed neighborhoods, business districts, and manufacturing areas. Modern maps showed key changes in built-up areas and transportation systems, and scholarly essays complemented the full-page images. The management of the History of Canadian Cities Series was in the hands of a newly arrived member of the History Division of the Museum of Civilization, Peter

Rider. However, redistribution of resources and personnel for the massive Canadian Museum of Civilization complex (announced in 1982 and opened in 1989), ended its commitment to the series. None of the six books intended for Atlantic Canada came to fruition, at least in that format. Rider, who had chosen to do the Charlottetown volume given his familiarity with the city from his time teaching at the University of Prince Edward Island, continued to accumulate research when not “ensnared” by the circumstances of the new museum project. He committed to maintain the series guidelines, which were intended to allow for comparative analysis across Canadian cities, and which allowed “a reader with specific interests to follow them from chapter to chapter without dealing with the balance of the text” (Preface). More than three decades after his research began in 1979, Rider’s volume initially intended for the series has come out as *Charlottetown: A History*. It is a weighty 474 pages, with 173 half- or third-page black-and-white photos set in a dense text, along with 27 colour images, many of them old postcard views.

Rider’s volume is divided into six periods: “Origins 1720-1854,” “Struggle 1855-1879,” “Expansion 1880-1920,” “Recession 1921-1945,” “Recovery 1946-1984,” and “Connected 1985-2005.” The chapter on origins is also subdivided into “The French Regime” and “British Settlement,” the latter with eight sub-headings. The four central chapters all have five thematic sub-headings: “Population Growth and Ethnic Relations,” “Political Life,” “Urban Landscape,” “Economic Growth and Metropolitan Development,” and “Social Life.” These divisions are also further compartmentalized. Within the heading “Urban Landscape,” for instance, there are sections headed “Public Buildings,” “Commercial Buildings,” “Residential Housing,” “Parks,” “Streets and Sidewalks,” “Harbour,” and “Utilities” (as well as, in one era, “Planning”). For the heading “Economic Growth and Metropolitan Development,” the sub-sections are entitled “Banking and Finance,” “Economic Promotion,” “Communication,” “Tourism,” “Administrative Functions,” “Commercial Activities,” and “Manufacturing.” And in the “Social Life” portion, there are essays organized under headings such as “Education,” “Public Health,” “Water and Sewerage,” “Public Morality and Social Welfare,” and “Entertainment” (and, in some, “Militia”). An enormous 39-cell matrix thus allows for numerous boxes in which facts can be placed and paragraphs composed in an effort to move the narrative along. The text is supported by 367 footnotes, far less than the 1800 that were initially accumulated as most were left out, according to the preface, “to accommodate the practicalities of publishing today.” But the mammoth accumulation of detail, whether footnoted or not, makes it almost impossible to sustain a compelling narrative.

Rider also offers a wide array of images. There are 22 oval pictures of mayors, with their chains of office, found within the sub-headings on “Politics” across the chapters. New fire hydrants are discussed in the paragraphs on “Water and Sewerage,” and so on. But to what end? Pictures are placed near to the text where they are discussed, so a small image captioned “Note the fire hydrant in this c.1885 photo of Apothecaries Hall, corner of Kent and Prince Street” (157) has nothing to say about the hall or the other commercial structures in the image. Rather, the photo helps to provide some visual relief to a section that noted progress on water mains: there were initially only 80 fire hydrants, but “by 1889 there were 1018 connections, of which 935 were dwellings, the rest were mainly commercial and manufacturing

establishments, public buildings, and stables. By 1894 this number had risen to 1,465" (157). Subsequent sentences list the size of the annual fee for water connections for houses depending on the number of rooms and occupants. But what might have a map of these hydrants shown, derived from the Goad's fire insurance atlases and indicating which areas were served and which were not? Over 50 pages later, a photo of houses in the Brighton neighborhood, c.1900, also had the caption "Note the fire hydrant" (213), but there is silence on residential architecture, landscaping, street conditions, and locale. Only a Google map query helped orient this reader to the location (and hundreds of other place references), likely second nature to local residents who, in this case, know of the prestige of the Brighton neighborhood north and west of Government House/Park and Victoria Park.

In the index, Toronto is found only once – a reference to the astute observation that "outside retailers were as likely to have their head office in Toronto as Charlottetown, by 1931, had fallen into the economic orbit of the Ontario metropolis" (216). One of those would be Eaton's – which opened a branch in 1928 and a spacious new store in 1955 – but there is no illustration of downtown Charlottetown with the juxtaposition of local and "outside" retailers. The city is the provincial capital, yet was still a small place that did not experience the transition to skyscrapers or modern department stores that some other Canadian city histories used to mark change (whether for good or bad, depending on one's perspective). Many facets of local urban growth and change that are presented seem unique to Charlottetown, all part of "the urban biography of the Birthplace of Confederation" (dust cover).

Instead of being driven by research questions, the volume is presented as an urban biography that, as the dust cover states, "attempts to see the community as a whole and places the major themes of its history within a larger context." Here that larger context is the Island – on the edge of an urban system centered in Montreal and Toronto and the resource-rich west, but where the capital is a small town of less than 9,000 (when PEI joined Confederation) (27). Even today it is small, having a population of only 32,000 in 2005 and less than 60,000 for the whole metropolitan area (396). Charlottetown's special place in Confederation gives it stature, but the array of images remains extremely local. They are, in many ways, like those of small-town places that are the subject of over 6,000 paperback titles in the *Images of America* series found in local bookstores across the United States. Produced by Arcadia Publishing, their model is to find a local historian who can write a one- or two-page introduction and then craft informative captions for the dozens of old postcards or archival images of historic stores and hotels, factories and parades (<http://www.arcadiapublishing.com/about.html>). These accessible "the way we were" compilations look backwards, fondly and rarely critically. They connect with nostalgia and memory and the images serve as triggers for those who are familiar with these places. A similar series in Britain published by Sutton, with more glossy photos but equally brief text, is also a way to tap local pride, using a common title: *A Century of (town name): events, people and places over the past 100 years*. Another comparison would be Nimbus Publishing's *Images of Our Past* series, including *Historic Glace Bay*, *Historic Amherst*, *Historic Annapolis Royal*, etc. Despite these similarities, Rider's massive tome seems a throwback – a Victorian history – but its modern audience is unclear. Undoubtedly fascinating for residents

of Charlottetown, and a one-stop compendium of the city's history, its wider appeal is limited, certainly beyond Atlantic Canada.

One immediate contrast between Rider's urban biography of Charlottetown and the second book under review here – Steven High's edited volume *Occupied St. John's: A Social History of a City at War, 1939-1945* – is the latter's dramatic large-format black-and-white photographs and the thick glossy paper used for the essays. The Johnson Family Foundation subsidy helped increase the number of photographs that characterize this quality product, perhaps aimed at veterans and the military history market, and the volume has a coffee-table feel. The seven essays contained therein, however, are much more than that as they draw on oral histories and diaries as well as archival photography, suggesting some of the exciting possibilities of the new digital humanities. High, a public historian and co-director of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia University, assembled an array of perspectives by historians and geographers, and it is clear they each read each other's drafts in order to help strengthen the cumulative impact of the chapters.

St. John's was an occupied city during the Second World War, suffering a "friendly invasion" by Canadian and American forces. Canada stationed an infantry battalion and built coastal batteries, a naval base, and airfields, all the while trying to respect the autonomy of Newfoundland. Canadian bases on Lester's Field and Calver's Field north of the city, for example, were camps only for the duration of the war "and six months after," and the structures were very basic. By contrast, the Americans, who arrived on a giant 1000-person troop ship (the *Edmund B. Alexander*), built a far more substantial base alongside Quid Vidi Lake, named Fort Pepperrell after the Massachusetts leader of the colonial forces that took Louisburg. They had gained the right to build bases on this and other parts of the British Empire as part of the lend-lease scheme that sent 50 First World War-era destroyers to Britain. Both Canadian and American military forces valued the opportunity to build up forces in the Western Atlantic, strategically important if Hitler invaded the British Isles. The Americans stayed longer, maintaining several sites in Newfoundland for strategic air force bases during the Cold War era.

The island, and St. John's, had war at its Atlantic front door, the ferry between Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, and North Sydney, Nova Scotia, being sunk on one occasion. U-boats operating from occupied French ports caused havoc to shipping just outside of the St. John's harbour, with ships bringing hundreds of rescued merchant mariners to be cared for in the city and its hospitals. Badly damaged ships shared harbour spaces with the merchant marine being assembled for outbound convoys, along with their corvette escorts, and many oral histories mention, in particular, one severely damaged ship with a gaping hole in its bow. A photograph of this unidentified ship, at anchor in the harbour with snow-covered rocks beyond, comes from a family photo album, and is included on page 139; it effectively brings to life the recollections mentioned in the text of people being rowed out to look at it.

This is a stunningly illustrated book, with 166 telling and carefully chosen images placed throughout the volume. Part 1, "North America's First Line of Defence," is comprised of two essays. In "Building a Wartime Landscape," geographers Chris Sharp and A.J. Shawyer set the scene nicely for the book by laying out the morphological jigsaw of where the Canadians and Americans added

to the St. John's landscape. The subsequent chapter by historian Paul Collins, "From Defended Harbour to Transatlantic Base," explains the development of HMCS Avalon and the convoy escort system based out of "Newfyjohn." He also describes how, as the Canadian presence increased, wives and families tried to join their spouses and sought housing in a city not easily able to absorb such an influx, as well as the pressure for social recreation space for off-duty military and merchant seamen. Collins closes his chapter with a city-wide photo, a mosaic of all the period aerial photos used by Charlie Conway of the Department of Geography at Memorial University to reconstruct a composite map of the city. It is not as impressive when reduced to a book-page size, so the authors invite the reader to "visit our website at <http://storytelling.concordia.ca/occupied/> to zoom in on the wartime city. It works much like Google Earth, c. 1942" (109). Big, fold-out maps made for Sharp and Sawyer's chapter, superimposed on a 1932 map, are also available online.

Part 2, "Remembering Wartime St. John's," is made up of four strong interpretative essays that explore the interactions between the old and new, and how the lives of the locals changed with the arrival of all these newcomers (not to mention the new phenomenon of living in a blacked-out city). They signal how well the boundary between once-compartmentalized military and social history can be dissolved. Barbara Lorenskowski considers "The Children's War." Though she sometimes detours into a cultural studies homage to British and American work on childhood, she lays out an intriguing social geography of the city while stressing gender differences. Steven High, as part of a wider research project that will also consider wartime Halifax and Montreal, weighs the pros and cons of the friendly invasion, and concludes that it was not always the case of the Americans from the prosperous republic to the south winning a popularity contest over the Canadians; Canadian troops were liked as well. The categories of "Canadian" and "American" were also refracted by these troop movements. Many Newfoundlanders came to see that Canada included French Canadians and that the American base was segregated, with no African-Americans as part of the Fort Pepperrell deployment. Popular culture is effectively assessed by Jeff Webb in a chapter that considers the influence of the American USO in providing modern movies and music, and he concludes that it was not such a dramatic change since American popular culture was already known to Newfoundlanders in the pre-war decades through movies and radio. During the war, the overriding cultural tensions seem to have stemmed from the access that St. John's women had to American men at the base and at clubs, as dates and dance partners, as opposed to the infrequent contact St. John's and Newfoundland men had with Americans (except those who found employment on the bases). An effective biography of another sort comes into play in the essay by Gillian Poulter and Douglas Baldwin, "Mona Wilson and the Canadian Red Cross," which focuses on the woman who was appointed to be in charge of the Canadian Red Cross efforts in the city. Born in Toronto's elite Rosedale neighbourhood, Wilson had trained as a nurse at Johns Hopkins and served in American base hospitals in France in 1918 (and subsequently in war-ravaged Siberia and Dubrovnik), and had thus built up experience in public health care among civilian and refugee populations. Her St. John's office was in the Caribou Hut, a hostel where "military personnel, merchant seamen, and civilians could meet and relax" (226) – a home away from home. Wilson came to St. John's from an assignment in

PEI, so she knew of rural poverty; but her diary reveals her shock at the deprivations in Newfoundland, with a tuberculosis rate three times that of Canada's and its infant mortality rate double the national average (239). Even in times of scarcity, she mobilized support for the needs of wounded sailors and merchant seamen rescued from the North Atlantic, including organizing volunteers to stuff "comfort bags" for survivors. Poulter and Baldwin note how "the appointment of an eminently capable woman like Mona Wilson to a position in which she outranked many men was deemed appropriate, especially since it freed another man for war work on the front lines" (245).

The volume concludes with a single essay in Part 3. An essay by Ken Coates and William Morrison, "The Occupation of St. John's in Global Perspective," offers a "world history" framework to position the American Newfoundland bases not simply as a story with local impact, but rather as a "cultural mingling" that should be seen as "part of a global phenomenon that has been called the 'American Rampant'" (251). This is a phrase that they developed in a 1991 article and later expanded upon in a book-length study on the Alaska Highway the following year.¹ This St. John's base, they argue, was part of the "first worldwide expansion of the United States" (251) and contributed to the establishment of the American Empire that dominated for the half century after the end of the war. Whether or not it was the first – given the Spanish-American War, which added the base in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and the occupation of Puerto Rico in the 1890s and, in the Pacific, footholds established in Hawaii and the Philippines – they nonetheless re-focus the reader to a wider landscape, including elsewhere in Canada with the Alaska Highway and oil pipelines in the Northwest Territories, and a forward air base in Frobisher Bay. Steven High is to be congratulated for including this "world history" perspective, which helps avoid any parochial fixation on St. John's alone.

Throughout the volume, there is a sense of the two-pronged friendly invasion establishing the roots of the varied geographies of the post-war future of Newfoundland. Perhaps the bigger shift was the declension away from the British world to one that was more North American, sometimes leaning towards the dynamic American orbit while often suspicious of the Canadian link, and this, of course, played out later with the contentious 1948 votes that led Newfoundland to join the Canadian Confederation in 1949. Poulter and Baldwin even end their chapter on Mona Wilson with the assertion that "the maternal nature of the services provided by the Red Cross had blurred the division between military and civilian and set the groundwork of future relations between Canada and Newfoundland" (248). While the Americans are presented as part of the "over-sexed and over here" wartime juggernaut, it is interesting that none of the authors note the fact that New England fishermen had been going to the Grand Banks for 300 years and that Boston and New York wholesale merchants supplied St. John's enterprises in the 19th

1 See "The American Rampant: Reflections on the Impact of United States Troops in Allied Countries during World War II," *Journal of World History* 2, no. 2 (1991): 201-21, and *The Alaska Highway in World War II: The US Army of Occupation in Canada's Northwest* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

century; there was a long-standing maritime familiarity, and perhaps the “Americans” as a group could have been unpacked and not just portrayed as a behemoth.

But whether it was the Canadians or the Americans occupying St. John’s, an added bonus of this volume is the incidental photo history – a war-time freeze-frame of ordinary streets and buildings as well as harbour infrastructure and the Battery outport landscape; these present a visual urban biography of sorts, waiting to be read by anyone curious about the appearance of the pre-off-shore oil-boom city.

St. John’s was not the only North American city that found the war just outside its harbour. The Canadian equivalent was Halifax; its harbour was also filled with convoys and naval vessels and its streets clogged with more people than it could accommodate, which was made worse by family members coming to stay near their relocated military partners. *Halifax at War: Searchlights, Squadrons and Submarines 1939-1945*, by William Naftel, a Parks Canada historian, offers a dense summary of detail garnered from oral histories, newspaper accounts, and some secondary histories with a level of detail hard for even a native Haligonian to keep straight. The footnote numberings are in sequence across seven chapters, starting with footnote 1 on page 7 and ending with 564 on page 248, and the running total is a constant reminder of the close detail (e.g., some 82 footnotes draw everyday life material from the *Lunenburg Progress-Enterprise* newspaper). To be fair, I should point out that Naftel is also the author of a companion volume, *Wartime Halifax: The photo history of a Canadian city at war – 1939-1945* (Halifax, NS: Formac, 2009), which probably explains the starkness of the “Searchlights, Squadrons and Submarines” 285-page text-only volume.

Some parts of *Halifax at War* are quite intriguing, especially the beginning and closing chapters. Naftel starts with the German Zeppelin *Hindenburg* in July 1936 making a slow pass over the city and harbour on its way home from its New Jersey passenger terminal, an ominous reconnoiter, and ends with a well-written and focused chapter on the havoc of the VE Day riots, when many sailors and others looted stores and trashed streetcars in a drunken rampage that lasted for more than a day. He sees the riot as the culmination of festering sores between the visiting military and the over-crowded, over-priced, and over-regulated town. A telling early marker of that resentment was the short-lived Ajax Club, which beginning in December 1941 tried to fill part of the huge demand for social drinking spaces. Dolly McEuen and other women tried to provide an alternative to the illegal drinking speakeasies by creating a place where sailors could get “a glass of beer in decent surroundings” and check out books and newspapers. They were soon shut down, the Ajax Club lasting a little more than two months before temperance and prohibition advocates succeeded in persuading the Liquor Commission not to renew their license. But that discussion (162-7), almost gets lost in the dense, everything-of-interest assemblage of fact. The chapter sequence conveys some sense of the narrative intent better than the book’s main subtitle: “A Declaration of War,” “The Military Presence,” “In Transit,” “A Hard-working City,” “Day by Day,” “Scarcity among Plenty,” and “The End and the Beginning.” Unfortunately the dense text and sub-headings within these chapters, used in some cases only for one or two paragraphs such as the inventory of industrial capacity employment nodes, echo the detailed compilations in Rider’s Charlottetown volume.

The old adage of a picture being worth a thousand words, so effectively used by High et al. for St. John's, and squandered by Rider for Charlottetown, comes into play in Naftel's treatment of urban Halifax in a time of war. An excellent supplement to Naftel's highly detailed textual history can be found online in a digital exhibit by Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management: '*An East Coast Port': Halifax in Wartime, 1939-1945*' (<http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/eastcoastport/>). The web material includes three introductory essays, two of them by Naftel. One 5,400-word essay, on "East Coast Port," contains 64 hyperlinks to historical photos and other discussions, and a second essay, with five hyperlinks, offers a 2,700-word introduction to the war diary notes and clandestine photos of the official Press Censor H.B. Jefferson, who is quoted extensively by Naftel in his *Halifax At War* volume. Other digital links take the reader to the Ajax Club and convincingly convey what a special place it was. There are even links to five silent movies shot during the VE riots.

Given the choice of writing extensively in a book-length manuscript, with over 500 footnotes, or adapting to the discipline of a 5,000-word essay with a plethora of linked documents and images, the likely educational dividend, moving forward, seems to lie with the virtual archives. The provincial archives no doubt covered the considerable costs in digitizing the material, and someone needs to pay for server space in a pre-cloud setting, but for the outside client – be they educator, student, or lay person – the computer portal seems the most effective avenue for engaging the social history of a city at war.

The last book in this quartet is also on Halifax, but for a different period. David Hood's *Down But Not Out: Community and the Upper Streets in Halifax, 1890-1914*, focuses on several streets – Argyle, Grafton, Albemarle, and Brunswick – which ran between the Citadel and its barracks above and the port wharves and its sailors below. It was the center of the legal and illegal liquor trade and of the sex trade that often accompanied it. Hood is concerned with the lives of the upper streets' residents, many of whom struggled to get by in conditions of extreme poverty as well as incarceration in Rockhead Prison and/or the poorhouse (also known as the City Home). Police Court records reveal the most frequently heard charges, mainly variants of drunk and disorderly or assault, and identify offenders who appeared more than four times. Records of stays in the City Home also show many repeat visitors, which Hood sees as evidence of a tolerant and understanding institution rather than one that turned away citizens who were deemed to be recidivists. It is a sensitive portrait of marginal lives, befitting someone who worked in social work for a number of years in Halifax.

Hood's work is yet another perspective on urban biography, as he has crafted a sympathetic portrayal of five individuals that, at the same time, illustrates that these individuals were part of wider patterns of life on and in the upper streets. Thomas Berrigan, a child of a poor Irish Catholic family, died while a night watchman at the City Home – a place he found himself as an inmate on many occasions during his life. Ellen Peterson, who came from Windsor to Halifax in her late teens and worked as a domestic servant, is never found in the census or directory but only in the records of the various social welfare institutions, the prison, and the City Home. Charles Clarke, a black saloon keeper and brothel owner on Albermarle, was often in the courts as was Sarah Shephard, also black as well as a saloon and brothel keeper. A

fifth character, Alfred Jones, was a British sailor who drank too much, became an alcoholic, and was routinely brought before the court. Hood follows their lives, and deaths, as part of an interrogation of extreme poverty and the economic strategies of those who were caught in its trap. Their circumstances, and many other “ne’er-do-wells,” are traced across five chapters: “Poverty and Destitution in Halifax,” “Blurred Lines between Rough and Respectable,” “Profile of a Community,” “Conceptions of an Underclass,” and “Looking Forward through the Past.”

Down But Not Out is based on Hood’s doctoral dissertation in history at Carleton University, and it would have been a better book had it undergone a more thorough editing of the dissertation discussion of dueling paradigms. A considerable amount of that finds its way into extensive footnotes, but too much remains in the main text – of interest to few except a small academic audience. There is also, at times, an obsession with drawing different conclusions than those offered by Judith Fingard for an earlier mid-Victorian Halifax around the important issue of whether an underclass existed in this area. Hood argues that there was a stable neighborhood, in terms of the long tenure of property and evidence of residents raising families, even if the parents’ lives were troubled. A closer inspection of the morphology of these streets – a mixture of housing, grocery stores, taverns, and clothing shops – that drew on Goad’s atlas maps to supplement the city directory summaries would have been useful. A few more images would also have helped. The directories, newspapers, and Goad’s atlases will be online one day, no doubt, and the manuscript census too, but not likely the detailed police court records or those of the social institutions used by Hood (especially given privacy laws). And yet there is always a partial visibility in the available newspaper records. If a brothel was raided, it was the woman who found herself named in the newspapers, in the court, and in prison records. The middle-class male customer was not arrested, and was not named. Hood notes that newspapers did not offer a full exposé on when reformers mobilized, nor a full coverage of the liquor trade (from prominent brewers and distillers through to distributors, saloons, and customers).

Given the extent to which the military presence is a central focus in the works by High and Naftel discussed above, it is worth noting that for Hood the garrison culture hovers over his streets and its inhabitants. He writes eloquently on this topic, noting that “British military personnel . . . managed to wreak economic and social havoc in Halifax for more than a century” (114) and that they “normalized public revelry” (118). Even after the end of Halifax as an imperial garrison in 1908, reformers trying to clean up the area of the upper streets “were met by a spectre that loomed large in the hearts and minds of many Haligonians. It wore a red coat and carried a bottomless flask and it would stand for only so much order and decorum. It also made the liquor trade the lynchpin of the local economy” (124). Both High and his co-authors as well as Naftel nibble around the edges of the sex trade and the associated role of alcohol, but there are few oral histories of prostitutes in this period.

Authors write for many reasons, and publishers judge whether there will be a market for books of a certain size and with a certain number of associated images. If the customer is a library, sufficient volumes are sold for the press to be encouraged to further the print run or seek more books of that ilk, whether for the academic or the “trade” market. The trade market often likes coffee-table books, but only with a light dose of accompanying text. Military history seems to be a constantly successful

market and, sadly, further chapters will be written given the current conflicts. Intertwining military and social history has brought forth interesting studies. The nostalgia market, and heritage tourism, is re-commodifying many places, and heritage walking tours are routinely featured in the brochures in many visitors' centres. When smart phone apps can download information about a place or building, or provide myriad historic images as well as a serious scholarly essay that supports a historic marker, then traditional print media gets squeezed. Furthermore, e-books, e-journals, and virtual museum exhibits are all creating new opportunities and constraints for traditional publishing. The balance of words and image, and of the space for scholarly lexicons and sidebar academic debates, continue to shift.

Urban biography provides a broad stage for accumulating small facts with the hope that people get the big picture. The History of Canadian Cities project in the 1980s got the balance right for that era of publishing, with relatively inexpensive books that had many large images and a shorter efficient text. Insiders to the urban community being illustrated no doubt appreciated the visual and textual cues, and could add their own familiarity with the place and build in their own memories of change (or landmarks that persist). Rider and Naftel, both of whom assembled a phenomenal amount of detail on place, likely have hours and hours of slide-shows to offer, all with fascinating material for the right audience in Charlottetown and Halifax, one show at a time; but they both seem to have had little editorial encouragement to trim their texts to highlight a few central arguments. As in most cases, less is more. Perhaps it is the editor that holds the key to urban biography – largely absent in those two works, but very evident in High's *St John's* and the dissertation committee for Hood's research. For all that, each of these books was written honestly and with passion for its subject, and with their help the corpus of work on Atlantic Canadian urban history has grown.

DERYCK W. HOLDSWORTH