

## *Places to Grow: Public Libraries and Communities in Ontario, 1930-2000* By Lorne D. Bruce

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Inspired by Silvio's example, Richard was determined to follow. He had become familiar with Montreal, where another brother had offered him work, and so it was not strange that this bright Guelph lad should enroll in medicine at McGill. Financing his education was a continual problem, and even after he married Polly, the daughter of an American diplomat from Texas, Richard hitch-hiked each weekend back to Guelph in order to approach various businessmen seeking loans. *Alice Street* includes a number of heart-warming stories of the people, many from the Italian community, who showed faith in him with their support. In 1955, during his last year at McGill, Richard contracted tuberculosis meningitis and spent a year recuperating in the Freeport Sanatorium in Kitchener. His experiences in "the San" and the people he met there are carefully recounted in the book. Once recovered and back in Montreal, and with a growing family in tow, Richard's dream of being a graduate of a world-class medical school became a reality in 1957.

Following his internship, Dr. Valeriotte and Polly decided they wanted to settle in a warm climate. They chose Fairfield, California, where he established a flourishing

practice and also built up a second business as developer of apartments for senior citizens. In 1989, at age 60, Dr. Valeriotte retired from his medical practice and turned his business interests over to his five children. Now he had the time to fish and write. Reminiscing frequently took him back to Guelph and the old neighbourhood where many memories came to mind. *Alice Street* is the outcome of these return trips to his childhood haunts.

Richard Valeriotte's story helps one understand the obstacles many Canadians faced during the time of his youth. *Alice Street* gives a view from behind the closed doors of one family as it struggled to hold onto a normal life through turbulent times. Dr. Valeriotte's experience is proof that with sheer determination one can achieve success. The book demonstrates that no matter how difficult the situation, anything is possible. I particularly encourage young people to read *Alice Street*; it could help them understand, as well as value and appreciate, the times and lives of their forebears. I found *Alice Street* to be a poignant and charming little book.

Linda Hope  
Peterborough

### *Places to Grow: Public Libraries and Communities in Ontario, 1930-2000*

By Lorne D. Bruce. Guelph: The Author, 2010. v + 490 pages. Softcover. ISBN 978-0-9866666-0-5

In *Free Books for All* (1994), Lorne Bruce—librarian at the University of Guelph and library history enthusiast—chronicled the public library movement in Ontario from 1850 to 1930. *Places to Grow*, his newest publication, is a companion piece to this earlier work. This book is an ambitious 490-page survey of public libraries in Ontario from 1930 to 2000

and serves as an important insight into the development of the public library system in Ontario. Within this time period the public library became part of the social fabric of the community. As Bruce writes, "Canada was gradually developing a national identity with shared responsibilities, a common purpose, and recognition of diversity that transcended English-Canadian

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Lorne D. Bruce

culture and dominion-provincial-municipal boundaries.” (p. 8)

*Places to Grow* is structured chronologically with each chapter covering a ten-year period, thus giving the reader a convenient timeline. I particularly liked the way Bruce linked events that were happening in Canada and paralleled them with libraries' responses. For example, in the Depression libraries refocused on education for unemployed people. Another example was the adoption of the library bill of rights in response to the increase in “offense literature and more explicit descriptions.” (p. 146) Libraries were taking a more active role in ensuring that the public had access to all materials, offensive or not. It may surprise younger librarians that some of the issues raised in *Places to Grow* cannot be taken for granted.

Three themes jumped out at me and I consider them essential to the message of *Places to Grow*. One is the development of library cooperatives. In 1930 a provin-

cial commission recommended that small rural libraries in Ontario form County Library Associations in order to equalize urban-rural differences in the ability to provide satisfactory service. Since libraries were dependent on a per capita grant, rural depopulation was putting township and country libraries in a precarious position. In 1947, this initiative culminated in the establishment of County Library Cooperatives, leading eventually to formation of the Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service (North) in 1984, empowered to oversee activities such as interlibrary loan and the coordination of cost-sharing programs province-wide.

Library expansion is another of Bruce's themes. In the decades from 1930 to 2000 we see a shift away from the era of Carnegie Libraries, in which wealthy individuals financed the construction of library buildings and their operation, to a period of government funding and control. During the 1960s, in particular, many of the Carnegie buildings were either demolished or abandoned in favour of new facilities that showcased such features as expanded children's areas, individual study areas and open stacks. The educational role was being augmented with responsibility as community places where groups of people could congregate, and by 2000 it was normal for libraries to be reaching out to all citizens. Public libraries came under the wing of Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation in 1995.

An advance in the professionalization of librarians, and the application of modern organizational principles to library management, constitute a third major theme in *Places to Grow*. Regulations in 1946 listed five classes of certification, from 'A' (people with an undergraduate or graduate degree in library science) to 'E' (those with a course in librarianship). Over time,

however, government grants to library boards were redefined, becoming based on the number of certified librarians they employed, the higher the qualification the greater the grant. One year training courses declined in importance relative to professional degrees such as Bachelor or Master of Library Science. The result was that the number of highly qualified librarians in Ontario rose by 50 per cent between 1955 and 1995. In addition to certification, in the 1970s librarians were starting to join unions, seeking better pay and improved working conditions; Canadian Union of Public Employees took the lead here.

*Places to Grow* is meticulously researched, drawing upon such sources as journal and newspaper articles, national studies and reports. Archival photographs, tables and charts supplement information found in the text. *Places to Grow* is perhaps a little too researched, however. It is very dense and at times Bruce provides so many

facts that his meaning and intention become obscure, particularly for readers who are not familiar with the topic. Details of per capita grants for libraries, of the make-up of library boards, or of the ever-changing legislation and reports are almost overwhelming. Perhaps improved organization would overcome this weakness. However this flaw can be overlooked, bearing in mind that Bruce is consolidating material scattered over seven decades. *Places to Grow* is particularly suited for academic readers or library enthusiasts, yet enlightens the general reader with a good overview of the history of public libraries in Ontario.

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## *From Queenston to Kingston: the Hidden Heritage of Lake Ontario's Shoreline*

By Ron Brown. Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2010. 284 pages. \$26.99 soft-cover. ISBN 978-1-55488-716-3. ([www.naturalheritagebooks.com](http://www.naturalheritagebooks.com))

**T**he Lake Ontario shoreline, at the heart of the most urbanized region in the country, witnessed during the second half of the twentieth century an unprecedented transformation that obliterated both physical and cultural features which had characterized earlier settlement patterns. As a society we often neglect and forget what remains as testimony to the imprint on this land of those generations which preceded us. Ron Brown aims to discover and identify traces of these pasts in our midst and to reveal to his readers something of the rich and diverse legacy created by the human use of the earth, with attention pri-

marily to the period since permanent occupation by Europeans commenced.

In his presentation he follows the Lake Ontario strand from Niagara Falls west to Dundas at the head of the lake and then north-east to the St. Lawrence River. Each identifiable settlement, whether short-lived or long surviving, receives separate attention. These vignettes comprise almost all the text; they are introduced by a brief introduction acknowledging the physical geography of the region as well as the main themes of the peopling of the land and the economic restructuring of the space over more than 200 years.