

**John Lorinc, Michael McClelland, Ellen Scheinberg and Tatum Taylor, eds. *The Ward: The Life and Loss of Toronto's First Immigrant Neighbourhood* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2015), 320 pp., ISBN: 978-1552453117.**

While there is a substantial body of literature about the history of Toronto, works depicting life in ethno-cultural neighbourhoods, with the exception of Spadina, are rare. This volume helps fill the gap. It is composed of sixty short essays, by approximately fifty authors, including the editors. The pieces display a diversity of themes, writing styles, descriptions, analyses, and laments. The collection makes for fascinating and informative reading, for scholars, students and the general public. It provides more than a snapshot of the life and times of Toronto's first gathering place for immigrants and industrial workers. Maps, photos and sketches bring the text to life.

John Lorinc is a journalist and author of three books. His introduction provides a valuable and concise history, and his five essays discuss specific aspects of that history. Michael McClelland is an architect whose essay on "Alternative Histories" closes the volume. Ellen Scheinberg is a past director of the Ontario Jewish Archives who contributes seven essays, five of which spotlight Jewish life. Tatum Taylor is a community preservationist whose essay is on storytelling.

The Ward was the shortened name of St. John's Ward, land that been donated by the Macaulay family, part of the Family Compact of Upper Canada, situated north and west of Yonge and Queen Streets, which were the limits of Toronto in the 1840s. The Ward's northern boundary was College Street, and its western limit was University – an area of 0.57 square kilometres. It was Toronto's first suburb. Initially, its purpose was to build a new Anglican Church, Holy Trinity, to serve Toronto's growing population of poor and indigent souls, at the behest of Bishop John Strachan in 1845. Its first residents were Protestants, who worked at the port and in the fledgling manufacturing industries. They were joined by sailors on furloughs, and members by the African-Canadian community who had arrived via the Underground Railroad, and became professionals and port and railroad workers. This community built the British Methodist Episcopal Church. As Toronto's population increased following Confederation, another six churches were established, flimsy cottages were built on unpaved streets and alleys, and stately homes on the main avenues. By 1880, a thousand people predominantly of Anglo-Celtic and African origin had settled, joined by the initial Chinese, Italian, and Eastern Europeans Jewish arrivals, creating the first diverse ethno-cultural neighbourhood in the city.

By 1900, the Ward had transformed into a slum. Fueled by the Great Migration, squeezed between the financial district to the south, the commercial strip on Yonge St., the prominent homes and institutions on University, and the Legislature and the University of Toronto to the north, the municipal authorities were hard put to pro-

vide services to the neighbourhood. Its residents lived in shacks, teeming tenements, and 'rear houses' that could only be accessed through basements. In 1908, a survey revealed that ten percent of homes had running water. A *Globe* editorial in 1905 "fretted about an 'influx population foreign in race, speech and customs'", singling out Russian Jews. Three years later, the paper intoned: "Practically the whole Ward is a city ghetto." (15-16) By 1908 it housed 11,000 people and 18,000 in 1917, rivalling the densities of the worst slums in London and New York. Of these, Jews were the primary ethno-cultural group. The Ward is also where many of its denizens worked, shopped and prayed. Peddlers, street hawkers, produce stands, street musicians, and artisans clogged the streets, as did sweat shops, from the "stern fortifications" of the four Eaton's factories that by 1913 employed between 6500 and 9000 people, to those who slaved at their sewing machines doing piecework at home. (135)

The conditions aroused reformers. Among them was William Lyon Mackenzie King who wrote four articles for the *Mail and Empire* in the summer of 1897 after his graduation from The University of Toronto. Myer Siematycki writes in "King of the Ward" that they were the first articles on immigrant immigration in Canada. The last article, 'Toronto and the Sweating System' was, according to Siematycki, a "blockbuster". (58) In 1911, Charles Hastings, the new medical officer of health, commissioned a report on slums, including The Ward that immediately led to the demolition of outhouses, the installation of sewers and the prevention of unsupervised construction. As John Lorinc writes in "'Fools Paradise': Hastings Anti-Slum Crusade," by his retirement in 1929, the living conditions in the Ward were similar to today's Kensington Market. (91-94) From 1945 to the 1960s, much of the Ward was razed, and today is undergoing further development under the moniker, "The Discovery District"

Approximately twenty essays profile the Black, Italian, Chinese and Jewish experience, and several more are biographical, including Ellen Sheinberg's piece on Gladys Smith, alias Mary Pickford. Scheinberg's contributions on Jewish life include depictions of bootleggers, Christian missionaries, newsboys, schvitzes (steam baths) and Queen Street merchants. Ruth Frager writes about the Eaton's Strike of 1912, Jack Lipinsky on the construction of the Goel Tzedec Synagogue on University Avenue in 1907, Richard Dennis on tenement landlords and Deena Nathanson on peddlers. This reviewer's favourite piece is a three-page essay by Howard Moscoe, a long time municipal politician, about his grandmother, Getel Shumacher, who arrived with her husband in 1908 and lived first on Centre Avenue and then Edward Street (the current site of U of T's dental school). Her husband Percy was a peddler, so to supplement his meagre income, Getel dispensed bootleg whiskey by the shot. Although her daughter told Moscoe that it was actually Getel's brother, Shmuel, who was the criminal, and that Getel merely took over on the Sabbath, Getel was charged with assault and illegal possession of liquor in 1925, for which she paid a fine of \$50 and spent a week in jail. (36-38)

*The Ward* is a treasure of analysis, whimsy, and description of the life of poor Torontonians immigrants a century ago. It was the first gathering place for non-Anglo-Celtic minorities. Today, the greater Toronto area is home to about two million people, whose origins are African, East Asian, Mediterranean and Eastern European. Their predecessors' first home was the Ward. This work is a fitting evocation of their lives and a welcome volume accessible to scholars, students, and the general public.

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