

Today it is less of a world, and its people, true to themselves and their place, and their history of trapping, ranching and Empire, are out of place — denied the very time in which they live. Time here is an old time. It once prevailed throughout British Columbia, but is now found only in silted mountain pockets.

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Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50, by Jill Wade. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994. xiv, 250 pp. \$24.95 paper; \$45.95 cloth.

Jill Wade ably demonstrates the validity of her closing sentence: "the history of housing activism in Vancouver is one to remember and celebrate." For, in a text which is readable and urbane yet packed as tightly with information as people were in the 1940s Vancouver housing stock, she reconstructs a highly instructive local history that reprises a significant episode in post-war transatlantic culture. The weft and weave of volunteer, professional and municipal, provincial and federal organizations that she deftly discloses and reconnects add considerably to the literature on regional Canadian politics from the Armistice to the Korean War, as it does to that on urban geography, sociology, and architectural history. In particular, Wade's socio-political explication of public housing developments on the west coast compares with N. Glendinning and S. Mathesius's broader study of the British high rise public housing published in 1994.

Wade also deserves plaudits for insisting on the primacy of detailed information upon which she presents reliable analyses and convincing historical interpretation. She draws upon a comprehensive range of sources from national, provincial, and city archives, nicely balanced by the more vital if diffuse record of journalistic report and individual reminiscence. Thus she corrects such entrenched conventional wisdom as D. Holdsworth's romanticized picture of Vancouver housing; which was largely derived, in company with much other architectural historical writing, from scrutiny of middle or upper class conditions. Not far from the Garden Suburb, Queen Anne-cum-Arts and Crafts structure of the west side lay a rickety and, thanks to the Depression, increasingly deprived fabric of tenements, boarding houses, cabins, shacks, and even hobo-camps. Their spectral presence in the urban

landscape is proven through Wade's wide and meticulous research, injected with added reality by her judicious selection of illustrations.

Among these images of social deprivation and official action are several that bring forward the chief characters in Wade's work. One is the inanimate but inescapable physical scene manifesting, say, the panoramas of the Wartime Housing Limited subdivision erected for the North Vancouver shipyards or the agrarian Richmond site of Burkeville built for the Boeing plant on Sea Island. Another is the people active in forging reform, from the artist B.C. Binning standing in front of his innovative flat-roofed low-cost Modern post-and-beam West Vancouver house to the demobilized veterans marching through downtown Vancouver intent upon securing the old Hotel Vancouver as temporary accommodation. Wade also presents such other important movers as Helena Gutteridge, the idealistic city councillor determined to see the provision of inexpensive public housing, and Leonard Marsh, the Beveridge-trained sociologist who compiled the Federal Advisory Committee on Reconstruction Report IV on Housing and, once on the faculty of the University of British Columbia, the 1950 project for rehabilitating the Strathcona area that would be realized partly in the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation McLean Park Complex.

Equally effective is the account Wade offers of the events at the national level. There, as elsewhere, elected officials evidently shared the instinctive fear of intervention harboured by bureaucrats. In adopting a commercially anchored *laissez-faire* approach to the social trauma of the 1930s, they allowed the lobbying of the finance industry to emasculate both the Dominion and National Housing Acts. This tendency was lessened in the post-war era when the recent experience of national mobilization, central planning and the application of technology enjoined a broader political consensus for public spending on social infrastructure. Indeed, Wade's assiduous retrieval of the politics of politics brings excellent material to the understanding of the confluence of polity and Modernist architectural ethos in this period. And, as indicated, students of society, from its familial to financial aspects, will discover much of value.

Finally, Wade is to be commended for maintaining an appropriate historical focus. She avoids over-extended forays into the complex history of European and North American housing policy and design while still pointing the reader to relevant material. Similarly, she does not delve too deeply into allied cultural movements, with the possible exception of the Art-in Living Group which, with Binning, among its

members promoted in 1945 a Modernist planned neighbourhood to replace the blighted east side. Moreover, she displays a refreshing courage in incorporating some polemic in her summation, especially remarking on the power of local activism.

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