

points out the possibilities for further development. It warrants a serious examination from concerned members of both constituencies.

Del Muisse

---

Peacock, David and Suzanne. *Old Oakville: A character study of the town's early buildings and of the men who built them.* Willowdale, Ont.: White/Hounslow Productions, 1979. 138pp., ill., index. \$16.50.

Oakville, Ontario, is many things to many people. It is a gracious lakeside community, an industrialized city that is home to (among others) the Ford Motor Company, and a dormitory suburb located some thirty expressway kilometres west of Toronto. Readers of *Old Oakville* would never suspect the latter two. This recent addition to the burgeoning small-city vanity press – conceived in the tradition of Peter John Stokes's much-admired *Old Niagara on the Lake* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) – ignores much of the reality that is Oakville. It chooses instead to illustrate and describe forty-five houses and shops with nineteenth-century beginnings and locations near Lake Ontario, a safe distance from the factories and the highway.

Each building is treated to a textual character study researched by Suzanne Peacock and accompanied by an attractive and sensitive pen-and-ink drawing by her husband, David Peacock, (himself an advertising man who commutes to Toronto). Many entries are also illustrated by photographs, mostly old views or newly-taken details, or by a second drawing.

These character studies, like the town, are many things: architectural history (despite the authors' denial in the preface), genealogies of the houses and their owners, physical descriptions, and brief reports of contemporary status. The stylistic discussions are generally perceptive and sound even if the sequence of styles follows in the main the somewhat obsolescent terminology proposed in Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson, *The Ancestral Roof* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1963). The human history is well-researched and interesting to read.

Where the book lets us down is in its failure to present the buildings as they really are (just as it failed to do the same with Oakville as a community). This omission is motivated by selectivity, not dishonesty. Drawings of the commercial buildings simply omit all details of the ground floors and their new storefronts; those of the houses often leave out certain altered portions or under-

play unwanted textures or details. In the few cases where both a drawing and a photograph are offered (for example, Potter's Folly, pp.97-99), we can appreciate the subtle interpretive changes in proportion and detail.

As a result the reader gains little understanding of the structure as historical artifact or of its contextual setting. Those primary documents, the building themselves, remain obscure. The reader is treated instead to the authors' nostalgic and idealized perception of Oakville as it might be, conveyed through seductive drawings and a text that sometimes reads like advertising copy. The James McDonald House, for example, "is endowed with a glow gained from long-time affection," and boasts hardware providing "proof that good design and good workmanship ... are forever functional and forever fashionable" (p.26). Another subtle time-warping device is the presentation of the date of the building's original construction in large 24-point type, ahead even of its name; a careful reading of the text often reveals that most of what stands today is the result of later alterations or a recent "restoration" (used a synonymous with "repair" or "renovation" since many of the restorations described do not – as the word should denote – go back to an earlier point in the building's history).

The careless approach to history is epitomized on the rear of the dustjacket. The blurb incorrectly cites the names of the Canadian Inventory of Historic Building, the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee, and the Ontario Heritage Foundation – the three institutions most central to preservation in Ontario! Editor John Robert Columbo should have caught these.

These criticisms said and done the fact remains that *Old Oakville* is a handsome book – a delight to look at, to read, and to hold. David Peacock's fine design complements his drawings. The volume reveals a great deal about Oakville's rich architectural heritage and does it with distinction.

Harold Kalman

---

Summers, Jack L.; Chartrand, René; and Marrion, R.J. *Military uniforms in Canada, 1665-1970.* Canadian War Museum, Historical Publication no. 16. Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1981. Also published in French as: *L'uniforme militaire au Canada, 1665-1970.* 192 pp. \$29.95 hardbound.

The questions most asked in military museum circles seem to be concerned with the minutiae of uniforms. This minutiae is of course important to those charged with re-