

engineering issues, but in reality he and Gzowski had to compromise on the engineering details. In spite of this rather awkward arrangement, the quality of work on this branch was recognized as being significantly higher than on the rest of the GTR.

The physical remains of this railway fall into three categories: the railway line itself, bridges and viaducts and finally the stations. The location of a railway line was of prime importance since it effected both construction and operating costs. White has an excellent description of how Walter and Frank worked for nine months in 1852 to survey three possible routes and then chose the best one. They did a good job because the present day CN line from Toronto to Guelph still uses the line that was chosen almost 150 years ago.

Water crossings ranged from small culverts to long bridges and viaducts. Much time and money was spent on building proper culverts that were largely invisible but were vital to the safe functioning of the line. Major bridges and viaducts were another matter. Here was a chance to use technology to produce impressive results. The line had to cross the wide valleys of the Humber, Credit and Grand rivers of which the Credit River was the widest. Originally Walter had designed a high timber trestle, but when the GTR took over the railway, it was decided to use brick piers. Instead of using expensive brick arches between the piers, the GTR took advantage of recent British experiments with long built-up wrought iron box beams. The Credit Valley viaduct was composed of seven 115-foot [35-metre] piers supporting eight 96-foot [29-metre] wrought

iron beams seven feet square [0.6 metres square]. The tracks ran along the top of the beam rather than inside of it, as in the Victoria Bridge. This viaduct has been held up as an impressive example of nineteenth century railway technology. In spite of the replacement of the wrought iron beams with steel ones and rebuilding one abutment in concrete, the viaduct still looks and functions as it was designed.

Stations were another class of railway structures that have survived. Stations in small towns, if properly designed and built, could last a long time. It was the stations in major centres that became too small and had to be replaced. The GTR built quite a number of standardized stone stations between Montreal and Toronto and it was decided to erect similar stations between Toronto and Guelph. It was the demolition of a number of the Montreal-Toronto stations in the 1970s that provoked an outcry, eventual recognition and their preservation. Remaining stone stations on the Guelph line include the ones at Georgetown and St Mary's.

This book has a lot to say about the Shanlys' relationship with the engineering profession and with their social and financial status. It also has a lot to say about engineering in mid-nineteenth-century Canada. White is able to clearly describe what engineers did and why. In doing so he takes a lot of the mystery out of engineering and railway building, making it understandable to readers. Let us hope that this book will appear in paperback some day, making it less expensive and more available to people interested in the subject.

## **Brian Young, *The Making and Unmaking of a University Museum: The McCord, 1921-1996***

**DELPHIN A. MUISE**

Young, Brian. *The Making and Unmaking of a University Museum: The McCord, 1921-1996*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill/Queen's University Press, 2000. 224 pp., illus., paper \$24.95, ISBN 0773520506, cloth \$65, ISBN 0773520491.

History has become part of Canada's everyday public discourse. Most discussions revolve round the capacity of schools, universities and

other public agencies to render our past significantly enough to ensure the nation's future and advance various political attitudes or reflect Canada's diverse experience. Who owns history and how ownership is to be exercised for transmission from generation to generation underlies much of the discussion. Everyone acknowledges heritage has the potential to contribute to the nation's political future. How much it will pander to popular

notions of suitable delivery systems and who will determine the content is at the core of many of these discussions.

Much of this debate is conducted in public, but much of it is a private process. This interesting historical polemic by McGill University history professor Brian Young offers an insider's account based upon his role as a participant in a major exhibit and as a university representative on the McCord Museum's Board of Directors. It is also partially a history of the institution from its inception, largely a reworking of an earlier publication, namely P. Millar, B. Young, D. Fryson, D. Wright and M. T. McCaffrey, *The McCord Family: A Passionate Vision* (Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992). All in all, it provides an interesting perspective on the subject of much museological speculation concerning virtually every museum in the country over the past decade.

The McCord Museum, like many other history museums founded earlier in this century, originated with the eccentricity of urban elites with disposable income and time, in this case of a member of the Montreal bourgeoisie/rentier class. In the latter years of the nineteenth century David Ross McCord began to gather material that he found interesting regarding Canada's history, concentrating particularly on Montreal's elites and their imperial reach during that city's heyday as Canada's economic engine. In the best tradition of nineteenth century eclecticism, his collecting featured everything from native keepsakes to material and documentary remnants of Montreal's successive transformations into Canada's foremost multicultural and multidimensional city in his day. Finding a home for that material would prove problematic. But, with help from well-placed friends, he eventually cajoled a group of philanthropists to fund its lodgment under its own roof, somewhat reluctantly cared for by McGill, where it mostly languished, closed to the public and gradually deteriorating for its first half century and more of existence.

The great heritage clambake surrounding the 1967 centennial of Confederation combined with the indomitable energy of Isabel Dobell, another descendent of that same Montreal community of wealth and talent, to transform the McCord into its modern incarnation located in the former student union building on Sherbrooke Street, close by the McGill campus. In the process the university gradually passed financial responsibility over to a new system of

grants in aid of museum activities administered by federal and provincial governments. Determined to use heritage as an instrument of state-making during the identity politics of Quebec's pursuit of distinctiveness within Confederation, those two levels of government, for a time at least, competed with each other to make the McCord participate in the pursuit of a new vision of Canada.

Manoeuvring around various traps associated with hunting down funding to support a lofty mission of research and teaching associated with McGill scholars provides the core for the most interesting part of the book. Young deals deftly with university administrators seeking to abandon the museum in the face of their own financial crises, but does not deal with the dynamism associated with the "democracy and dissemination" themes developed by Gerard Pelletier and others during the Trudeau years. Along the way we glimpse the interplay between Montreal's variously layered English elite and the imperatives of a university in transition. Isobel Dobell is paramount in his discussion. Her zeal in support of the McCord's collection and its transformation into a respectable museum is cast in heroic light; a grand knight/dame fighting the intransigence of the disbelieving university and manoeuvring the intricate politics of heritage within the context of the crises of Quebec in Canada. In fact, her connections to community and political elites facilitated a range of financial and other transfers of artifacts, etc. to the museum over her years as director from 1970 to 1975. She was instrumental in all museum activities not just for that short period of her directorship, but had become a well placed volunteer and advocate from the 1950s and continued until her retreat from active involvement in 1981.

Concentrating on Dobell and the cadre of volunteers and staff she attracted to the museum allows Young to set up an interesting dichotomy between a female dominated museum staff and the male dominant university administration and faculty. He stretched the analogy a bit to discuss relations between a hard political orientation of male university professors and the curatorial preoccupation of the museum's social history orientation, conveniently ignoring much of the inherent political content of the document and artifact selection that had determined much of the McCord's activities reflecting the lives of the Montreal elites. But it does allow for a convenient characterization of power relations

within the museum's troubled connections with not just the university but broader communities as well. Elliptically suggested is the true relation between economic power and control over the making of memory. Dobell was tolerated by both the university and the various government agencies providing funding so long as her museum did not challenge existing power relations between the community and the university. It never did; and continued to largely languish following the initial impetus associated with the move to the new quarters and the establishment of its profile as a vehicle for projecting the history of Montreal's past greatness as a centre of English Canada's elites.

What is curious is how and why the McConnell Foundation arrived on the scene following Dobell's departure to resuscitate the McCord, in the process further reducing McGill's role in its financing and management. Dobell had continued pursuing patronage and the McConnell's seemed to appear out of nowhere with a gargantuan bequest that would further transform the museum into a more public institution with drastic implications for its curators. It was part of a process occurring across Canada's museum community and continues to be the most significant issue of the past two decades. Stripping programming away from curators allowed transfer of policy and exhibit making to interpreters and programmers conditioned to maximize public participation and to please corporate sponsors. Young rightly characterizes this process as a sellout of the McCord's intellectual mission, an easy conclusion to draw from the circumstances. Young's direct involvement both as a visiting curator and as a member of the advisory

committee who lost in the power struggles that established the new regime colours this discussion, which climaxes the book.

There has been too little serious analysis of relations between museums and their various constituencies in this country. University museums are something of a special case and there have been ongoing crises regarding governance and mission statements, exacerbated by the financial crunch that so many universities have faced. At bottom, who pays the piper in calls the tune, but the tune has become much more expensive to play. The McCord struggled under Dobell's direction to find a sponsor who would allow it to remain a somewhat eccentric institution reflecting its creator's imagination. Its rather topsy growth and development after 1967 left it with no clear mandate in an era when the costs of running and maintaining the objectives became prohibitive. As the university withdrew, Montreal's English patrician community adopted it as its project, in the process transforming it with its own version of efficiency and relevance. The costs were prohibitive for the curators who lost their jobs and influence.

But the cause may not be entirely lost. The newest director, a proven and experienced museum professional in the person of Victoria Dickenson, gives promise for renewed integration between the museum and the university, a process pushed along by the continued strains of national unity. We can only hope that the future will provide scope for a renewed mandate that will encourage the return of the curators.

## Lilia d'Acres and Donald Luxton, *Lions Gate*

JOAN SEIDL

D'Acres, Lilia and Donald Luxton. *Lions Gate*. Burnaby: Talonbooks, 1999. 175 pp., illus., cloth \$34.95, ISBN 0-88922-416-1.

The Lions Gate Bridge, completed in 1938, has become an icon of Vancouver, blending utility and beauty in a remarkable urban landmark. Every day about 70 000 drivers cross the Lions Gate Bridge. The Bridge spans the First Narrows of Burrard Inlet, connecting the city of Vancouver

at Stanley Park with West and North Vancouver. Approached from Vancouver, the crossing is preceded by a causeway through the cool gloom of Stanley Park's forest. Vancouver sculptor Charles Marega's austere concrete lion figures guard the approach. Driving on to the bridge deck, views emerge on every side: up and down the inlet, across to the north shore mountains, the sky above. The Bridge's towers rise up and cables stretch in a graceful arc.