

**PRAIRIE PERSPECTIVES:
GEOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS**

Edited by
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Preface

The 25th annual meeting of the Prairie Division, Canadian Association of Geographers was hosted by University of Regina in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan between September 28 – 30, 2001. Conference facilities and accommodation were provided at the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa Resort Hotel. The conference attracted a record of over one hundred delegates including several from outside the Division. Fifty papers were presented in a series of four concurrent sessions spanning Saturday morning. Two field trips were staged on Saturday afternoon. In the first of these Alec Paul and Randy Widdis guided a group of art connoisseurs, train spotters and fellow imbibers on a tour of Moose Jaw's mural district, rail yards and selected hostelrys. A second field trip led by Janis Dale and David Sauchyn set out to examine the Pleistocene geomorphology of The Dirt Hills. Breakdown of the bus transportation resulted in a pleasant sunny afternoon hike along the gravel to the small community of Spring Valley. After a couple of hours delay the arrival of replacement transportation enabled completion of the field trip with a visit to the Claybank Brickworks Museum. At the Saturday night banquet Professor John Warkentin of York University delivered a warmly received keynote address on *How Canada got its Regions*. This was followed by the customary high spirits of the annual slide competition in which Brandon University presented the winning slide in most categories.

Of the fifty conference papers, twenty-one are presented in this volume. In keeping with tradition in *Prairie Perspectives* they include several authored in whole or in part by graduate students. As such they represent their first contributions to scholarly publication. As a whole the papers reflect the wide diversity of interest of prairie geographers and the wide range of research tools and methods employed in modern geography. Beckey Hamilton uses evidence from personal correspondence to account for the pattern of homestead choices among French-speaking settlers in the Gravelbourg-Meyronne area. William Rannie trawls the Hudson's Bay Company archives to establish the relationship between historic floods on the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. The perceptions of focus groups are central to Doug Ramsey, Bob Annis and John Everitt's study of community and health care provision in southern Manitoba. Dendrochronology and dendroclimatology feature in Irene Hanuta's reconstruction of climate over

the last 120 years at a site in southern Manitoba. At a much broader scale, Ge Yu and Xiankun Ke use pollen analysis to reconstruct Canada's climate during the last millennium. Remote sensing is employed by Xulin Guo to delimit Saskatchewan's prairie ecosystem. The utility of geographic information systems (GIS) is demonstrated by Greg Lewis, John Everitt and Dion Wiseman in their analysis of crime in Brandon.

The large number of papers precludes detailed introduction of each in this section. Instead, the reader's attention is drawn to a number of themes around which the volume is organized. In the first of these several papers focus on aspects of fluvial geomorphology and water management. For example, Nathen Richea's study of streamflow characteristics in Duck Mountain provides base level data through which water resource managers can establish strategies for dealing with competing development pressures and climate change. A second theme focuses on the reconstruction of past geographic environments. Roderick McGinn's interpretation of the sedimentary sequence in the Glacial Lake Proven basin fits this theme. A number of papers focus on environmental impacts stemming from urbanization processes or resource development activities. This theme is evident in Eva Sadowski's paper on the impact of road de-icing salts on amphibian populations in Toronto's Humber and Don River watersheds. Several papers focus on regional identity or regional delimitation. Ben Moffat, for example, provides a cartographic and tabular synopsis to explain the origins of western Canadian identity and alienation. Rural restructuring forms the basis of yet another theme. In this context Bob Walberg and Doug Ramsey draw attention to the political process and socio-economic issues attending the establishment of a large-scale hog processing plant in Brandon. Last but not least the opening and closing papers in this volume represent two of the last collaborative works of Paul Simpson-Housley. Both papers focus on one of Paul's major research interests, namely the representation of geography in works of literature. In the opening paper Paul combines with Allison Williams to examine the concept of sense of place as conveyed in Grey Owl's (Archie Belaney) *Pilgrims of the Wild*. The volume closes with Paul and Elizabeth Scarborough transporting the reader to Peru. Here in José María Arguedas' novel *El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo* they explore the use of the sierra and costa as metaphors for contrasting aspects of the human condition.

The success of the Moose Jaw conference would not have been possible without the assistance of many individuals. Alec Paul and Randy Widdis are to be commended for their primary role in arranging the conference facilities and designing the program. Marilyn Lewry and Linda Paul did much to ensure a relaxed atmosphere for delegates by providing a trouble free registration process. Mark Coté's management of the

technical equipment enabled smooth running of the paper sessions. A special thanks is extended to the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative (PARC) for providing funds to help defray the cost of the field trips and banquet.

The editorial process has been a lengthy one. I would like to thank the many reviewers from Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia for providing their critical assessments of the papers. I thank the authors for their attention to scholarship and their patience in responding to my many emails. Special praise is reserved for Teri Rogoschewsky who worked tirelessly in providing secretarial assistance both prior to the conference and during the editorial process. Finally, publication of this volume would have been impossible without the technical and production assistance of Weldon Hiebert at University of Winnipeg.

Bernard D. Thraves
University of Regina
August 2002



**Paul Simpson-Housley
1943-2002**

Paul Simpson-Housley, who passed away in March 2002, had been a professor of geography at York University in Toronto since 1984.

Paul's academic career started with a B.A. from Bristol University in England in 1964 where our paths first crossed, and a Dip. Ed. from Liverpool in 1965. He taught school in Glasgow, Scotland and in New Zealand. His long association with the prairies began around the end of the 1960s when he spent a couple of years teaching high school in Briercrest, a small town about 40 km southeast of Moose Jaw. In 1974 he became the first student to complete a Master's in geography from the young department at the University of Regina. His record of completing the program in sixteen months still stands, and following the immortal advice of

Ed Dale, then professor and head at Regina, he decided to "go straight to the Ph.D." at University of Otago in New Zealand.

Growing up in D.H. Lawrence country in the Notts/Derbyshire coalfield of England's East Midlands left its mark. Paul developed an abiding interest in geography and literature which stretched to environmental perception and hazards and the psychology thereof. Although he had a series of short-term appointments – mostly at University of Regina, but also at Bishop's and Concordia – between 1978 and 1984, it was the tenure-track appointment at York which finally gave him the opportunity to pursue his writing and research agenda and to work productively with a stream of graduate students. Geography became his life, and he became a geographer of distinction.

He loved conferences and came to as many Prairie CAG meetings as he could. It was fitting that his final PCAG meeting was the September 2001 25th Anniversary event in the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa in Moose Jaw, the first Canadian city that he had come to know well thirty-odd years earlier. Meetings of the Great Plains-Rocky Mountain Division of the AAG he liked too. At his first of these, in Boulder, Colorado in 1983, he organized a special session on geography and literature which provided

the seed for his first book, co-edited with Bill Mallory and entitled simply Geography and Literature – A Meeting of the Disciplines.

His sabbaticals and research leaves at Cambridge University were especially beloved. He worked at The Scott Polar Research Institute and wrote books on both Arctic and Antarctic explorations. He loved his teaching too, and almost always brought one or two of his graduate students to conferences. Those of us who were privileged to attend the Devil's Lake, North Dakota PCAG meeting in 2000 saw him give a masterful after-dinner speech – or was it a poetry recital? – on polar exploration – or was it environmental perception?

Paul had many friends on the prairies. One of his greatest pleasures was to visit with Elroy Trithardt in Kipling and enjoy the rural and small town life that had been his introduction to Canada. He had telephoned me a few days before his untimely death and shared another of his passions, talking about the upcoming World Cup of soccer. He was a faithful friend and a valued colleague. We will miss him very much.

Alec Paul
University of Regina