

the California market. He concludes that even in this innovative state, local implementation of a coherent planning policy was halting and uneven, and left much work to be done in the wake of the dislocations of the early 1930s. During the New Deal community builders found a vehicle to aid implementation of their agenda—the Land Planning Division of the Federal Housing Administration. Using loan guarantee eligibility as a lever, the FHA induced local governments and private developers to protect residential land with zoning restrictions, and to plan subdivisions that were coordinated with master plans for local development. In addition, the Land Planning Division took an active role in assessing the design of the individual lots and homes within the subdivisions. The community builders were enthusiastic supporters of all of these initiatives, and the NAREB and other closely aligned professional planning organizations supplied many of the administrators who actually implemented the program. Weiss argues that by 1940 the planning techniques which community builders had pioneered two decades earlier in the most expensive subdivisions were finally extended to residential housing projects regardless of price.

Weiss presents a convincing argument that the evolution of the urban planning agenda in the United States was in large part a product of the interaction among private developers, their professional trade organizations, and government. The book has one important shortcoming, however. The community builders consistently argued that competitive pressures in the urban real estate market were the major impediment to enlightened urban planning, and explicitly advocated licensing and public regulation as barriers to entry. In fact, at times the book resembles an anthology of the familiar arguments that trade associations use to rationalize protection from the rigors of competition in the name of the public good. Not once does Weiss challenge these claims. He does document, however, that the market share of the largest developers increased in the most populous urban centers after the planning agenda was in place. The increased concentration may have reflected scale economies, or, as the community builders argued, an optimal market structure in which large developers internalized some of the externalities associated with urban development. Weiss should have considered, however, that the form of urban planning which the community builders sought resulted in greater concentration than was necessary to achieve the urban planning goals which they advocated. If so, planned urban development may have been accomplished in the 1950s without the sprawling “miracle[s] of Levittown” that Weiss extols. In spite of this reservation, I found *The Community Builders* to be a concise and well documented account of the development of urban planning in the United States.

KENNETH A. SNOWDEN, *University of North Carolina, Greensboro*

In Its Corporate Capacity: The Seminary of Montreal as a Business Institution, 1816–1876. By Brian Young. Toronto: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986. Pp. xix, 295. \$30.00.

In 1816, the Seminary of Montreal included among its seigneurial holdings the island of Montreal. By 1876, seigneurial tenure had been largely abolished and the seminary had become a major investor in Canadian railways, banks, and other enterprises. Brian Young’s analysis of the seminary’s business dealings over the intervening half-century provides insight into the economic (and social and political) history of Central Canada in the nineteenth century. Young, with the aid of the Montreal Business History project, is able to base his work upon the systematic study of thousands of notarial records and commutation contracts, hundreds of account books, and a variety of other primary sources from government archives and the seminary’s own vaults. Much of the information obtained is presented in over fifty pages of appendices.

The author tries to characterize the commutation of seigneurial tenure as the

transition from feudalism to capitalism in Canada, an approach which many economic historians would consider inappropriate. However, beyond the occasional reference to exploitation or extracting surplus, the approach does not interfere with the analysis. Still, one must question the degree to which the author has supported the assertion that the emerging group of industrialists sought the abolition of seigneurial tenure as being incompatible with the new capitalist order. To be sure, the need to pay "lods et ventes" (5 to 6 1/4 percent of the transfer price) to the seigneur when land was transferred from one censitaire to another was unattractive to industrialists who wished to build expensive plants on their land. After 1840, however, commutation to freehold tenure was possible on a voluntary basis. Montreal's leading industrialists—Redpath and Molson, for instance—commuted their holdings to freehold tenure. The seminary was not a reactionary institution, but rather recognized the forces of change and simply tried to maximize its wealth (within social and political constraints). A comparison of commutation payments with market prices was not possible, and the analysis of the timing of commutation is short, but it appears that industrialists were able to obtain freehold tenure from the seminary at reasonable prices. Why then push for forced commutation (with government subsidies) in the 1850s? There must have been some perception of a large negative externality in leaving rural censitaires within the seigneurial system. The book provides little insight into what this could have been. Due to the nature of the records, the rural censitaire receives little treatment (except to note that nonpayment of seigneurial dues was common early in the century when the seminary was unsure of its legal position). Moreover, the author recognizes that the seminary may have been atypical.

One can quibble with some of the conclusions Young reaches. The assertion that the seminary and other Montrealers engaged in philanthropic activities to maintain social control appears overdone, for example. On the whole, however, the book is a careful description of the evolution of a rather interesting institution in a time of great change, based on extensive study of primary evidence. It is of interest not just to students of Canadian history but to all who are interested in how institutions affect and are affected by economic development.

RICK SZOSTAK, *University of Alberta*

Wood and Water: The Story of Seaboard Lumber and Shipping. By E. G. Perrault. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986. Pp. 320. \$24.95.

In the last few years several new, important, and informative works on Canada's lumber and timber industries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have appeared. British Columbia's timber industry, in particular, has been the focus of many of these publications. E. G. Perrault's book is in this tradition and a useful addition to that literature. Although other publications describe either individual firms or the lumber industry of that province in general terms, Perrault attempts to bridge the two approaches by describing an organization made up of several firms in the industry which was established to create and enlarge foreign markets for British Columbia's wood products after the 1920s.

The most interesting chapters of the book are those that start with the factors which led up to the formation of Seaboard Lumber, Seaboard Shipping, and Seaboard International in the 1930s, and then carry the story of these organizations forward to the 1980s. The introductory materials which precede these chapters is sketchy, unsatisfactory, and described better by a more thorough analysis outside of the present study. The author is at his best when he is describing Seaboard's reactions and decisions to changing economic conditions and markets around the world, as well as the organization's attempts to deal with the problems of war and the emergence of new markets.