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Review of Brandon: Geographical Perspectives on the Wheat City

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Brandon: Geographical Perspectives on the Wheat City. Edited by John Welsted, John Everitt, and Christoph Stadel. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1988. Maps, photographs, tables, notes on contributors. xv + 224 pp. \$18.00.

This valuable contribution to the regional literature on Canadian urban places was produced to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Brandon University's Department of Geography. The book demonstrates the depth, range, and degree of integration that a team of geographers can achieve. *Brandon* comprises eleven

chapters, a preface by the three editors, and a foreword by one of Canada's most distinguished historical geographers, John Warkentin, who reminds us that in regional studies "it is absolutely vital to understand the experiences of the people who live there, and who have lived there in the past."

Brandon is closely tied to the development of agriculture, particularly wheat cultivation, in southwestern Manitoba, and the provision of services to a dispersed regional population. Elements of the region's physical geography combined with human political, economic, and social processes, summarized in Chapter 1, are integral components in Brandon's evolution as the dominant regional center in southwestern Manitoba.

Brandon's location on the Assiniboine river is the most dramatic example of its connection to the physical environment (Chapter 2). In a broader sense, Brandon cannot be separated from its climate (Chapter 3) because of climatic severity and impact. Compared to many other Canadian cities, Brandon is at a relative disadvantage in winter discomfort and hazard, but enjoys a relative advantage in limitations to outdoor mobility and psychological state. These two chapters perhaps enable the reader to assess why people live, or do not live, in Canadian prairie communities.

Brandon's spatial growth (Chapter 4) is described for major historical periods and summarized through a conceptual mode of suburban development. This chapter and that on population structure and social areas (Chapter 5) enable the reader easily to identify characteristics that are simultaneously specific to Brandon yet akin to urban settlement processes in other regions.

Chapter 6 discusses the city's manufacturing sector in the context of the major locational concepts of industrial geography. Analyses of Brandon's city center (Chapter 7) and urban fringe (Chapter 8) provide insights and examples consistent with the broader literature on urban geography. Urban morphology and structure, however, are closely interwoven with

planning processes (Chapter 9), some subtle, others direct. On a broader scale, in conjunction with elements of the physical landscape, the interplay of decision makers establishes functional and spatial relations within the regional settlement system (Chapter 10).

The editors expect (Chapter 11) that Brandon will continue "to serve as the region's principal cultural and commercial centre" and "the degree of primacy within the settlement network of southwest Manitoba may increase." Although they cannot predict if Brandon's current state is actually part of a broader transition toward something unspecified, the book's editors believe that the city's primary role as a service center in agricultural southwestern Manitoba is secure.

In sum, this is a fine addition to the literature on prairie settlement because it addresses key topics and presents material of substantive and global relevance. Nobody visiting Brandon should leave home without a copy.

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