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Review of *Winnipeg Beach: Leisure and Courtship in a
Resort Town, 1900-1967*. By Dale Barbour.

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Winnipeg Beach: Leisure and Courtship in a Resort Town, 1900–1967. By Dale Barbour. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011. xiii + 211 pp. Photographs, maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. C\$24.95 paper.

The back cover designates this book as “history,” but, like the best social history, it offers much to a broad range of other disciplines, including women’s and gender studies, cultural geography, folklore, and cultural studies. Though modest in size and aims, *Winnipeg Beach* is a superb example of how a scholar fascinated with everyday life can link it with broader social movements.

Manitoba’s answer to such waterside attractions as Coney Island and Blackpool, Winnipeg Beach saw tremendous social change over the nearly 70 years Dale Barbour explores. The dates correspond to “the lifespan of Winnipeg Beach as a tourist destination, from its creation by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1901 to the demolition of its dance hall, roller coaster, and boardwalk in 1967.” Barbour traces the complexities of the town’s development as a primarily heterosocial space for socializing and as a destination for families; its meaning as a paradoxical mixing of nature and culture; and its class and ethnic associations (in contrast to exclusive white, elite, British locations like Victoria Beach). He indicates the CPR’s role, not only in providing a mode of transport for Winnipeggers to visit the town, but also in developing facilities for tourist use, including a hotel, dance facilities, and pier.

Barbour shows that despite its mainstream associations in terms of sexuality and ethnicity, Winnipeg Beach’s early users included (for the most part closeted) gay and lesbian folks and a (geographically constrained) Jewish community, among others. Because of the profusion of tourist accommodations, women had opportunities for economic control not usually associated with urban areas at the time. Barbour notes that young people sometimes enforced the town’s ethnic boundaries, but also undermined them by socializing together. After World War II, however, teenagers became associated with moral panic related to sex and liquor. Throughout, however, the boardwalk and beach were locations for social mixing. Now a Provincial Park, the locale currently betrays little of its history as an “industrial saturnalia.”

Drawing extensively upon a wide range of sources—literary, archival, and periodical as well as bibliographic—Barbour also conducted interviews and consulted other oral history sources. In a welcome departure from too much history, which fails to include the actual words of those who experienced the time and place under consideration, Barbour quotes extensively from interviews as well as from sources contemporary to his discussion. But the book is more than just a congeries of quotations. Barbour also weaves in classic and current social theory, using a variety of sources from Mikhail Bakhtin and Judith Butler to Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, Joan W. Scott, and Gill Valentine. *Winnipeg Beach*, nevertheless, remains eminently accessible and readable. The illustrations offer more

than a diversion: they further clarify many of Barbour's points, such as the changing dimensions of the beach during low- and high-water years.

Undergraduate and graduate students and general readers alike will find *Winnipeg Beach* a useful book.

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