

In his address at the closing banquet S.F. Wise noted that the conference took a step forward not only in the study of the Western District, but also in the development of the study of local and regional history. *The Western District* is worth reading, not only for its value as a source on the district, but also as an example of a well-prepared volume of local history. It is to be hoped that conferences and publications such as these will stimulate public and academic awareness of the value of local archives. New archival endeavours at the local and regional levels depend very much on these demonstrations of the research potential of the documents in their areas.

**Mark Walsh**  
Municipal Archives  
Windsor Public Library

**Francis Rattenbury and British Columbia: Architecture and Challenge in the Imperial Age.** ANTHONY A. BARRETT and RHODRI WINDSOR LISCOMBE. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983. 391 p. illus. ISBN 0-7748-0178-6 \$29.95.

The Rattenbury saga is an intriguing one. For several years following the publication of his fascinating biography in 1979 we have waited for a study of the architecture of Francis Mawson Rattenbury. The authors of *Francis Rattenbury and British Columbia* state in their preface that they “decided to combine architecture and biography” rather than to treat Rattenbury’s architecture exclusively. Barrett and Liscombe’s approach to the man as well as his work was made possible through access to unpublished primary documents, principally family letters written by Rattenbury to his mother, Mary Ann (Mawson) Rattenbury, and to his sister, Kate Jones. The authors quote extensively from Rattenbury’s letters, providing a host of explicit and highly pertinent references to his professional career and his work. Even more fortunate for Barrett and Liscombe is the fact that they found in Rattenbury’s letters an astonishingly detailed chronicle of the architect’s practice. This is especially fortuitous as a disastrous fire in 1910 destroyed the offices of Rattenbury and those of a number of his colleagues in Victoria.

Francis Rattenbury was British Columbia’s premier architect virtually from the time of his arrival in Vancouver in 1892 until the early 1920s. The authors trace aspects of his family history, youth, and formative years in England, including early architectural work done while he was with his uncle’s firm of Mawson and Mawson (later Mawson and Hudson) between 1885 and 1892. Undoubtedly lured by imperial boosterism, the twenty-five-year-old Yorkshire-born architect immigrated to Canada and established his practice in Vancouver. Within months of his arrival, Rattenbury won the single most important institutional commission of his career, the British Columbia Parliament (Legislative) Buildings. Success infused the young architect with confidence, and he proceeded to supervise his prestigious project with skill and flair, if not bravado. As the Parliament Buildings were nearing completion, Rattenbury threw himself enthusiastically into a parallel career as a business investor, combining a sense of late Victorian imperialist confidence and a youthful nose for speculation. His first such adventure led him to start a steamship firm in the Yukon at the height of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898. The scheme quickly ended in failure, but Rattenbury was not dejected, merely tantalized by the hope that he would eventually have an entrepreneurial role in the settlement and building of the northern interior of British Columbia.

Rattenbury's principal calling in life, however, was that of an architect. He was the quintessential one-man practitioner. He thrived on challenge. His great talent as an architect obtained him key commissions for court houses, bank buildings, and railway hotels, reaching a climax with the famous Empress Hotel completed in 1908. Rattenbury was well versed in a variety of styles, but unfortunately Barrett and Liscombe have detracted from their own strong analysis of his various works by suggesting that he might have entertained contemporary notions of change, progression, and alternate idioms. The reader is left wondering whether the authors intended to compare him with innovators and even avant-garde members of his profession at the time. Such discussion is not pursued. "A child of the Victorian era," they declare, "he remained a conservative eclectic." Indeed, he was successful because he understood precisely what institutions and the establishment demanded of the most public, conspicuous, and expensive form of cultural expression, the art of architecture. Whether commissions from government, leading commercial firms such as banks and railway companies, or individuals who self-consciously tried to be role models for their time and place, Rattenbury's works reinforced the notions of permanence, fitness, and confidence exemplified in the most significant architecture of each generation. The authors provide detailed descriptions of his buildings, plus a host of information about their construction, stylistic antecedents, and context. An appendix listing Rattenbury's architectural works and designs is an excellent resource for researchers. There are separate appendices on Rattenbury's letters and his drawings of the Grand Trunk Pacific hotels and stations now kept in the Public Archives of British Columbia. The authors have used a number of illustrations, including period photographs, reproductions of plans and drawings, and contemporary drawings of floor plans of important domestic commissions.

**Douglas Franklin**  
Heritage Canada Foundation

**Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920.** STEPHEN SKOWRONEK, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. x, 389 p. ISBN 0-521-23022-5.

There is a current and widely held view that the state itself is the greatest obstacle to effective government and that powerful self-serving bureaucracies have gained an inappropriate and debilitating influence. The result, particularly in North America, has been a mounting political attack on "all-consuming bureaucracies." It is this new challenge to the administrative state that motivated Stephen Skowronek's timely study. Noting that not since the Progressive era has the management of government come under such concentrated attack, Skowronek sets out to examine what happened then (1877-1920) and to discover what might be significant in light of the contemporary situation.

To examine the American state's response to industrialism, the author presents his analysis in three parts. Part one offers background in the form of a review of the state-building problem in early American political development. In much greater depth, the second part focuses upon the last decades of the nineteenth century. Shaped by the