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Review of *The Beginnings of Canadian Meteorology* by Morley Thomas

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The Beginnings of Canadian Meteorology. Morley Thomas. Toronto: ECW Press, 1991. 308 pp. Illustrations, references. \$40.00 cloth.

The emergence of "global warming" as a prominent organizing theme in science and social science can be seen, for example, in the first issues of this journal. Our ability to anticipate future climates rests on our appreciation of current and past climates. Recognizable precursors of our standard meteorological instruments date from the seventeenth century, yet the systematic collection of standardized data from a sufficiently dense network of sites is, in most nations, barely a century-old activity. A history of meteorology can be doubly useful in providing reviews of early efforts at data collection and in providing context for current questions. Who better than Thomas to tell the story of the first meteorological observations in Canada and the organization of the national meteorological network. Thomas, undoubtedly the doyen of the Canadian climatological community, has had a long career in the national meteorological service collecting, organizing, analyzing, and explaining data.

The story begins with establishment of a geophysical observatory in Toronto by the British army in 1839, three decades before Confederation. In 1855, G. T. Kington arrived as the director and, almost as an afterthought, professor of meteorology at the young University of Toronto. Kington proved to be an active, efficient bureaucrat, ably arguing the case for a standardized meteorological service with the new national government and establishing procedures for measurement and reporting of data. The purpose, he wrote, was the "collection of Meteorological statistics and their arrangement in forms suited for the discussion of sundry physical questions [and the] practical utilization of the facts and principles thus acquired, especially in the prognostication of the weather" (pp.203-04). As a researcher, however, Kington was cautious to the point of reluctance. He responded to requests for data, but climatological analyses did not really begin until well into the twentieth century. He wanted to avoid forecasting because the physical principles were not well known. He was ambivalent to the use of telegraphy and the issuance of storm warnings, eventually bowing to pressure from the United States' interests in Canadian data. Contemporary American concerns with a theory of storms do not seem to have been matched by the Canadians.

Meteorological data for the Prairies begin first with a British expedition to observe the transit of Venus at Hudson Bay in 1768-69, and subsequently from journals kept at Hudson's Bay Company posts. Thomas hardly mentions these sources, and does not mention historical reconstructions that have been achieved from phenological interpretations of those journals. The first regu-

these sources, and does not mention historical reconstructions that have been achieved from phenological interpretations of those journals. The first regular, continuous station in the modern sense began in 1871 in Winnipeg, operated under the authority of the Bishop of Rupert's Land. At the same time, a private observer at Fort Gary began a decade of reports for the Smithsonian's telegraphic network.

Some themes seem timeless. Government support for the meteorological network wavered and was chronically insufficient. A single strong personality directed the development of the scientific effort. Interpersonal rivalries sometimes got in the way of data collection. U.S.-Canada tensions were endemic, with Kingston "threatened" by signs of American encroachment into Canada's data realm.

Thomas' approach is that of narrative chronology, focussing on personalities and events in the development of the infrastructure of Canadian meteorology. The telling is marred by repetitions, unimportant facts weakly integrated into the story, and by lack of an analytical critique of key scientific ideas and advances of knowledge. Nevertheless, Thomas' well-referenced book will serve as a touchstone reference and, in all events, tells an interesting story. **Paul A. Kay**, *Department of Environment and Resource Studies, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario.*