

**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**Les 25 ans de**

**L'Association canadienne d'histoire de l'éducation**  
**The Canadian History of Education Association**

## **Born in Calgary: CHEA / ACHE's Founding Conference**

**Robert M. Stamp**

The Canadian History of Education Association / Association canadienne d'histoire de l'éducation began at the University of Calgary, sparked by a hallway conversation between Nancy Sheehan and myself sometime during 1979. Nancy, Dave Jones, and I all taught history of education courses to pre-service teachers and graduate education students. The three of us had collaborated on a book of readings, *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1979). And we had faithfully attended routine, biennial get-togethers of educational studies profs (historians, sociologists, philosophers, comparative educators) from the three provincial universities – Alberta, Lethbridge, and Calgary.

“Wouldn't it be great to have a conference of just historians?” Nancy asked that morning as we chatted in the hallway of the Education Building. But why confine it to the three Alberta universities? Less than thirty seconds later, we agreed that a national conference was in order. Thirty minutes later, we had brought Dave on board, and arbitrarily constituted ourselves a three-person organizing body of a Committee for the Study of Educational History.

The timing seemed appropriate. So much innovative work had been done in Canadian educational history during the 1970s. So many strong journal articles from colleagues coast to coast. Such a profusion of strong master's and doctoral dissertations at schools from UBC east to OISE and beyond. Such strong links with historians in other sub-fields of Canadian history.

How to give the conference some punch? We decided to invite papers on “relationships,” that is, “the way in which a number of topic areas within history relate to educational history.” We asked Chad Gaffield (Ottawa) to address the relationship between demography and schooling, Susan Houston (York), juvenile delinquency and education, Neil McDonald (Manitoba), political and educational history, Alison Prentice (OISE), feminism and educational history, J. Donald Wilson (UBC), ethnic and educational history, and R.L. Schnell and Patricia Rooke (Calgary) on childhood, family, and schooling.

And how to entice our colleagues to Calgary in mid-winter, since January/February 1980 seemed the best time for our presenters? Fortunately, the U of C's history department sponsored an annual interdisciplinary Western Canadian Studies Conference every

February. Perhaps educational historians would more likely travel for two conferences rather than one. With the support of history department colleagues such as Doug Francis, Howard Palmer, Tony Rasporich, and Don Smith, we piggybacked our conference on theirs, co-ordinating our publicity and mailing.

Our one-day conference was announced for February 14, 1980.

"Canada's size and winter cold notwithstanding," reminisced John Calam (UBC), "established scholar and graduate student alike journeyed to Calgary." They addressed themselves to "plans whereby explanations of Canada's educational past might gain from promising new work which for some time had been eroding nostalgic, albeit pioneering interpretations."

"Little need be said of the business session," continued Calam. "It proved mercifully brief. Several of its conclusions formed the basis for a constitution. Foremost was the Association's purpose of promoting the study of educational history in Canada." Specifically, the group elected Susan Houston as its first president, CHEA / ACHE was off the ground running, and the pattern of biennial conferences was soon put in place.

The heart of the founding conference was the presentation and discussion of the six invited papers. They were published the following year as David C. Jones et al., eds., *Approaches to Educational History* (University of Manitoba: Monographs in Education, 1981), with John Calam's above comments opening the introduction to the text. The papers were:

Susan E. Houston, "Late Victorian Juvenile Reform: A Contribution to the Study of Educational History"

J. Donald Wilson, "The Picture of Social Randomness: Making Sense of Educational and Ethnic History"

Alison Prentice, "Towards a Feminist History of Women and Education"

Neil G. McDonald, "Political Socialization Research, the School and the Educational Historian"

Chad M. Gaffield, "Demography, Social Structure and the History of Schooling"

R.L. Schnell and Patricia Rooke, "The Institutional Society: Childhood, Family and Schooling"

CHEA / ACHE has come a long way since that cold February 1980 day in Calgary: a profusion of scholarship, a respected journal, the broadening of membership both nationally and internationally. But one theme continues to infuse the association, and it was present almost twenty-five years later when CHEA / ACHE made a return visit to Calgary for its 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference: the interest in interdisciplinarity.

