



Highlighting Rural Researchers

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Tom Mitchell

Brandon University Archivist (Emeritus)

GETTING TO KNOW TOM MITCHELL

Tom Mitchell (currently Emeritus University Archivist) is a long-standing member of Brandon University. Tom has deep connections to rural and remote life. As both of his parents grew up living on farms in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, he would typically spend summers growing up conducting farm work and fishing in local lakes and rivers. These interests have led Tom to further explore the realities of rural and remote life in Manitoba, and create a variety of resources that highlight the lives of those from the past. His experience and knowledge of rural Manitoba are also demonstrated by the multiple publications (and documentaries) that were informed through the historical record.

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Tom began his career in academia as a teacher within the Brandon School District where he taught history after the completion of his Master of Arts Degree from the University of Manitoba. With a continuing interest in pursuing writing and research opportunities, Tom then became a Learning Skills specialist in the Brandon University Student Services Office. Soon thereafter, Tom became the Dean of Student Services, and eventually University Registrar. From 1995 until his retirement in 2012, he served as University Archivist and taught Canadian history through the History Department. Throughout his administrative career at Brandon University, Tom carried forward a program of research and publication related to social and labour history. In recent years he has developed an interest in public history.

With Reinhold Kramer, he published a biography of Emily Hilda Blake and later a study of the Winnipeg General Strike. The latter marked a deep dive into the less-explored aspects of the strike, with a focus on the Citizens Committee of 1000 – a business group opposing the strike. These perspectives enhanced the understandings of the distinct roles of the state and civil society in the strike.

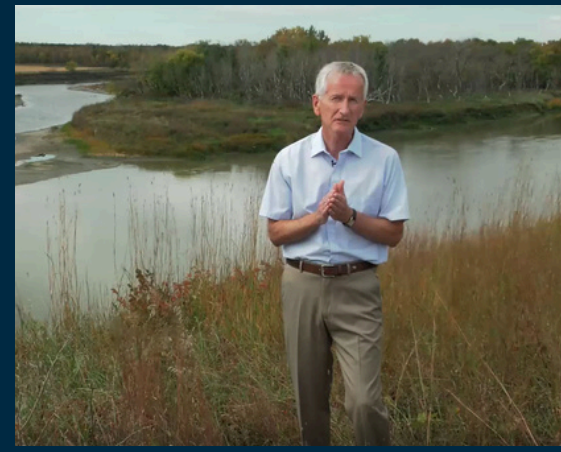
WHAT'S MORE

- *Tom's documentaries are all available on the Institutional Repository for Brandon University (IRBU)*
- *Tom's publications may be reviewed here*
- *Tom can be contacted with the following information:
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“A palimpsest is a sort of layered surface... think of a piece of paper that has been written on and then rubbed out, and written on and rubbed out, and written on again. I think of the rural landscape as a palimpsest.”

Tom has also made significant contributions to the [S.J. McKee Archives](#). He was instrumental in the development of the Archives and the acquisition of the Lawrence Stuckey photographic archive of rural Manitoba. Lawrence Stuckey was a professional photographer who documented the end of an era in Western Canada through his collections of extensive photographs and journals - depicting the rural landscape of the late 1970s. Tom also laid the foundation for recent work on the Manitoba Pool Elevator fonds completed by the current University Archivist Christy Henry that included the digitization the Scoop Shovel and fifty years of the Manitoba Co-operator. This digitization project has resulted in an incredible resource for those interested in the history of agriculture, transportation, politics, and culture in rural Manitoba.

Alongside these research and project opportunities, Tom has become a documentarian. What started out as a serendipitous activity to produce a film for MTS based on archival data, has resulted in the production of a variety of documentary resources. With information focusing on a variety of topics, Tom has worked to share perspectives of the past through the development of these informative resources.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Tom’s scholarly interests cover a vast variety of topics, extending to theoretical questions about the nature of the liberal state. His current research addresses the inquiry into Soviet espionage and the Gouzenko crisis of 1945-1946. With Reinhold Kramer, Mitchell is writing a book that focuses on how the liberal state defends itself against internal subversion and the tools it employed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Tom’s work exemplifies a profound dedication to both historical research and archival preservation. His contributions have enriched the understanding of the rural landscape in Manitoba, and demonstrated the importance of engaging in archival research. Tom’s career reflects a blend of scholarly rigor and practical archival work, addressing both the theoretical and tangible aspects of historical research. His efforts to digitize and preserve important collections at the S.J. McKee Archives have made significant resources available to researchers and the public – ensuring that the history of rural Manitoba remains accessible and well-documented. Overall, Tom’s work underscores the essential role of archivists and historians – public and academic - in maintaining and advancing our understanding of the past.