

Book Reviews

Alberni Prehistory: Archaeological and Ethnographic Investigations on Western Vancouver Island, by Alan D. McMillan and Denis St. Claire. Theytus Books and the Alberni Valley Museum, 1982. Pp. 219.

This attractively presented volume is primarily an archaeological site report detailing the results of two seasons of excavation at Shoemaker Bay and a further season of regional archaeological survey in Alberni Inlet.

Acknowledgement and introductory sections should remind the reader of the unique nature of archaeological research and publication. Rarely does a full-scale report such as this become available in fewer than ten years after the initiation of field work. Typically, by the time such a volume is published the work has involved co-operation and funding from several institutions and the co-ordination of the activities of dozens of assistants including field workers, draftsmen, artists, photographers and specialists in the analysis of various materials.

The first chapter deals with the natural environment of the study area. It is followed by chapters on regional ethnography and history. Drawing together information from the published ethnographic literature and interviews with their own native informants, the authors relate a complex picture of native life. In the last century many groups appear to have experienced shifting territorial boundaries. Skirmishes, if not actual wars, often seem to have been motivated by a desire to obtain territory. In a few cases the same locality changed hands several times. These descriptions are enriched by a seeming cacaphony of native names whose pronunciation and consistency of spelling are assisted by the volume's first appendix, prepared by Randy Bouchard.

Next is a chapter on the archaeological inventory covering sites in the Alberni Valley, Alberni Inlet and Barkley Sound. The results are presented in a clear and direct manner. Unfortunately there is no attempt to explain site patterning. This points up a dilemma in archaeology. When

archaeologists attempt to understand the rationale of site distributions, a principal theme has been the correlation of site locations with the distribution of resources or resource complexes. Where richly detailed native traditions, especially origin myths for specific settlements, are preserved they rarely mesh with "scientifically" derived explanations based upon local resource-settlement correlations. It is this reviewer's opinion that historical particularistic explanations such as those from the ethnographic record are most valid for understanding site distributions *within* an area the size of that encompassed by this site inventory. But when considering much larger areas such as the entire British Columbia coast, ethnographically derived explanations are less useful and correlations of settlement data with major variations in the distribution of resource complexes may be the most productive approach.

The next chapter analyzes the archaeological remains from the Shoemaker Bay site, a large shell midden. The authors observed five major stratigraphic units. There is evidence of human use of the site throughout most of the time span represented by these units. Cultural materials are grouped into two intergrading units named Shoemaker Bay I and II. The non-archaeologist may find himself confused because the cultural units are numbered from the bottom up and the stratigraphic units are designated from the top down. A Radiometric date indicates that the initial occupation of the Shoemaker Bay site was about 2000 B.C., with full-scale use of the site not starting until about a thousand years later. Abandonment is estimated to have taken place some centuries after the most recent 14^{C} date of A.D. 820.

More than 3,000 artifacts were recovered during two field seasons. These are described in a clear and well-organized manner, although the reproductions of many of the photographs of the stone artifacts are so dark as to obscure surface details. In contrast, the photographs and ink drawings of the bone specimens are of excellent quality.

An appendix by Greg Monks explores the quantitative similarities of the artifact assemblage to others on the south coast. Interestingly, the artifact complexes throughout the site's occupation suggest strongest affinities with sites in the Gulf of Georgia rather than with the closer Nootkan sites. In contrast, food remains indicate knowledge and use of west coast marine foods. Food remains are analyzed in detail in an appendix by Gay Calvert and Susan Crockford. Another appendix by Neal Crozier and James Amos describes the archaeological soil matrix.

In summary, by combining history and ethnography with a traditional archaeological site report the authors have produced a document of

interest to a wide audience. In addition to its anticipated professional audience the volume ought to be popular in local schools and libraries.

Simon Fraser University

PHILIP M. HOBLER

The West: The History of a Region in Confederation, by J. F. Conway.
Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1983. Pp. 261.

John F. Conway, a sociologist at the University of Regina, has written a lively account of western discontent within the Canadian political and economic structure. His west includes British Columbia but excludes "the Yukon and the Northwest Territories." The story is "told through the most dramatic events characteristic of the West's uneasy place in Confederation," from "the Riel Rebellions of 1869 and 1885," through the rise of agrarian populism and the growing self-consciousness of the working class, the devastation caused by drought and depression in the thirties and the impact of potash and petroleum, to current confrontations emerging out of the National Energy Policy, the "patriation" of the constitution and the collapse of the boom in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

"Concession and compromise," Conway asserts, have "always stopped short of redressing the structural sources of the West's unhappiness." Western discontent arises from "a contradiction historically rooted in the very political and economic structures of Canada, as the nation was established and developed" (p. 5). Confederation was intended to create in British North America a structure that would at once be acceptable to the substantial French-speaking and Roman Catholic minorities (a majority in Canada East) and maintain a British presence in the northern part of the continent. This presence west of the Great Lakes would be reinforced by the entrepreneurial enterprise of the established colonies and by British immigration.

The "structural" difficulty arose from the principles of representation by population and the rule of the majority as applied in a federal system. Federal statesmanship had to deal not merely with three entities roughly balanced in population, but also with an increasing number of political entities in the western hinterland. A balancing act, not beyond the competence of a political gymnast, became a display of the juggler's art that involved clubs that varied more in weight than in colour or shape. Finally a northern magus, convinced that Canadian survival depended less on internal manipulations than on the assumption of fuller responsibilities in

an increasingly threatening and threatened world, managed to administer to his fellow Canadians a strong dose of constitutional realism.

The medicines of bilingualism and patriation, though widely hailed as long overdue, did not affect the "structural" difficulty that arose from disparities in population. The federal government, by sheer weight of votes in the House of Commons, continues to be seen by the west as at least potentially dominated by the two central provinces. In the eyes of the west a federal political party, whether in or out of office, is apt to pursue policies that are in the interest of the centre but not necessarily in those of the other regions.

This structural difficulty, Conway suggests, can only be overcome by federal policies that convince at least the majority of western voters that the west needs Canada. "But," Conway asks, "does the West need Canada?" (p. 3). Confederation was a plan "conceived by the business and political elites of the . . . colonies, inspired by the elite of . . . Canada, for no other reason than to assure their futures" (p. 7). The federal state, and here Conway quotes the late Donald Creighton, was to "clear and prepare the way for the beneficent operation of the capitalist" (p. 11). "The West must be filled not only to expand the domestic market for protected industrial capitalists but also to make the CPR viable and increase the value of the vast tracts of land held by the Hudson's Bay Company . . . and by the CPR consortium . . ." (p. 24). By 1913 "wheat was king, wheat had made Confederation work" (p. 30). But "the myth of the Prairies as a land of homesteaders is false . . . they were involved in a highly sophisticated capitalist agriculture concerned with the extensive industrial cultivation of cash grain crops for a distant market . . ." (p. 32).

These quotations hint at the direction and flavour of Conway's analysis of the sources and manifestations of western alienation. To have compressed so much into 261 small pages of large and admirably clear print is no inconsiderable achievement. Yet some readers might be assisted by a fuller consideration of the changes that western society has undergone since 1870. John Diefenbaker was "the first truly western prime minister" (p. 175), but the Alberta voters who turned out the Social Credit incumbents in 1958 were a different generation from those of 1935, and in very different material circumstances. For a sociologist, Conway seems to skate rather lightly over attitudes to property in an immigrant society.

Conway has a solution. Indeed he has two, but he reluctantly discards proportional representation at the federal level because it "would lead to uncertainty and the horrifying prospect of never having a comfortable

majority" (p. 238). He calls instead for a new national policy and a new economic strategy for national development. "Canada . . . needs serious economic planning and active government intervention at federal and provincial levels in order to achieve regional justice and balance" (p. 240). This proposal may not seem to differ very much in substance from the rhetoric of the established parties, but it does address with greater frankness the nostalgic yearnings of western Canadians for a world in which not only political parties but even most of the machinery of government would wither away.

Edmonton, Alberta

L. G. THOMAS

Russian Shadows on the British Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1890: A Study of Rejection of Defence Responsibilities, by Glynn Barratt. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983. Illustrations; notes; bibliography; index. Pp. xvii, 196. Cloth, \$26.00.

Although there were Russian influences upon the history of the Northwest Coast and British Columbia from the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, it is easy to forget their presence and to focus totally on the much more obvious impact of the United States. The overwhelming strength of American military and naval power in the latter nineteenth century made investments in British Columbia militias and coastal defences appear almost pointless. Lack of population and of a British commitment to risk conflict for territories so far isolated from major markets and commercial routes made defence planning a permanent nightmare. When there were scares of Russian raids, privateering activities or even invasions, the British and Canadian authorities could not agree about the responsibility for funding coastal artillery or paying the costs of an adequate defence program.

Barratt's study of the shadowy Russian presence hinges upon perceived dangers, the international relations of Britain and Russia, and Anglo-American relations. Following the War of 1812, Britain did not press the case for sovereignty over the Oregon territory. Fur traders of the North West Company and, after amalgamation, the Hudson's Bay Company feared Russian-American collaboration to freeze out or severely limit the British presence. From the 1820s through the 1840s, the fur company agents were much more committed to Northwest Coast claims than was the British government. Occasional clashes with the Russians such as the

Stikine River Incident (1834) caused concerns but did not threaten a major rupture. Neither Britain nor Russia were strong enough in the North Pacific to make it the source of conflict. Indeed, as the two nations approached the Crimean War, both sides agreed to declare their Pacific outposts as neutral.

The Crimean War underscored the defensive weaknesses of the Vancouver Island colony. Though a few Royal Navy vessels visited Esquimalt harbour, Governor James Douglas fretted about shortages of manpower and arms to repel a Russian attack. The colony came closest to the fighting in the autumn of 1854 when naval vessels carrying wounded men put in at Esquimalt after the disastrous Anglo-French raid on Petropavlovsk. It was at this time that the well-known Crimea huts were built to serve as hospitals. There were also fears that the Russians might take advantage of American friendship to arm privateers in San Francisco for raids on the British Columbia coast.

The Crimean War did not end Anglo-Russian rivalries. From time to time, war scares in Europe focused attention upon British Columbia. The ports of Victoria and Esquimalt and the valuable coaling station of Nanaimo were seen by some observers to be obvious targets for Russian attackers. The possibility of a Russian-American alliance or entente remained as a chronic worry to Vancouver Island colonists as well as to some British and Canadian leaders. However, the Russian sale of Alaska to the United States came as a blow to the supporters of British Columbia who predicted an American effort to extend their control over the entire coast. Moreover, the removal of the Russians from immediate proximity did not end the perceived threats posed by their Pacific naval squadron. While the first Russian visitors aboard the corvette *Kalevala*, arriving at Esquimalt in September 1862, presented little danger to Vancouver Island, the Russian effort to construct a strong ocean-going navy from the 1860s to the 1880s kept alive fears of raids. The existence of a Russian Pacific squadron posed at least theoretical dangers — particularly since the British squadron was spread between Chile and Vancouver Island. South American interests and conflicts drew the attention of warships also assigned to protect British Columbia.

For British Columbia residents, each incident between Britain and Russia renewed concerns about a naval raid. The refusal of Britain or Canada to spend sufficient funds for defence or drydock facilities left the province exposed. Reports published by a Russophobic British and local press deepened concerns about undefended Esquimalt, Victoria and other settlements. Efforts to raise militiamen to operate obsolete artillery

batteries depleted other militia units and illustrated continuing weaknesses. In 1878, during a period of apprehension caused by threatened British intervention in the Russo-Turkish conflict, the Russian screw corvette *Kreiser* under Captain P. Nazimov arrived at Esquimalt. While the exact cause of the visit never has been clarified, it seems that spying was a major factor. Even with incentives such as this, Britain and Canada refused to spend enough money to prepare adequate defences. Through the 1880s, Britain pressed Canada to offer financial assistance to defend Esquimalt naval base, while the Ottawa authorities chose to view the port as an imperial rather than national base. Despite perceptions of a Russian menace to British Columbia, Canadian politicians evaded their responsibilities and depended upon the presence of Royal Navy warships.

Barratt is a little ambivalent about the real threats posed by the Russian Pacific naval squadron. Given the power of the United States after 1865, one can understand Canadian fatalism and unwillingness to invest in defences that could deter only a secondary opponent such as the Russians. Despite good relations with the Russians, the United States would not have accepted significant intervention in British Columbia. After the Alaska purchase, a Russian naval adventure at Esquimalt might well have precipitated a permanent American occupation. Following the Civil War, the United States presented the French interventionists in Mexico with a clear ultimatum that they must depart. Barratt places Russian activities into context and illustrates the political difficulties with the defence of British Columbia. The book is a most useful addition to the history of British Columbia and to Pacific affairs through the nineteenth century.

University of Calgary

CHRISTON I. ARCHER

Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands, by Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1983.

Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands is an ethnographic and ethnohistorical account of Coast Salish people of the northern Gulf of Georgia region on the coast of British Columbia. The book is directed to the general reader with little or no knowledge of Northwest Coast Indians or of anthropology. The presentation is well organized, highly readable, and covers a region which has been neglected in the ethnographic literature of this area.

A general background discussion places the Sliammon people in the context of British Columbia native people and their cultures. The people and their culture are followed from prehistoric times to this century. Various aspects of culture are treated briefly but adequately, with a good balance of ethnographic description and vignettes of Indian life.

The book is profusely illustrated with maps, charts and photographs showing the locale, the people and their artefacts. Series of pictures illustrate techniques such as salmon preparation, basket weaving and making a canoe bailer. A good selection of older photographs of the area and the people is included. These date from about 1875 through the early decades of this century.

The authors include brief discussions of early Spanish and English voyagers to the area and provide passages from the journal of Menzies as well as Spanish accounts of encounters with the natives in the 1790s. These are followed with an excerpt from the diary of James Douglas recounting a Hudson's Bay Company trading expedition to the area in 1840. These selections provide informative glimpses of Indian-white contact prior to the advent of missionaries and settlers.

There is a section on the influence of the Roman Catholic missionaries who first visited the area in the 1860s and whose influence was considerable, despite infrequent visits in the early years.

Finally, the authors provide a discussion of the manner in which the Indian reserves were established, a lucid description of the work of the Indian Reserve Commission and the McKenna-McBride Commission. Selected statements by Indians to the Indian Reserve Commission and the McKenna-McBride Commission convey an understanding of the concerns of the Indians, and the reader is indebted to Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy for including these materials. One wishes they had continued their account of these people, their culture and their concerns to a more recent point in time.

It is regrettable that the book, otherwise so well produced, should have been designed in such odd-shaped format. It does not fit on a small-sized shelf, but on a larger shelf it becomes lost between standard-sized taller books.

Victoria, B.C.

BARBARA LANE

Voices: A Guide to Oral History, edited by Derek Reimer, David Mattison and Allen W. Specht. Victoria, B.C.: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Sound and Moving Image Division, 1984. Pp. vi, 74.

British Columbians can be proud of a work which does credit to their province and deserves a very wide circulation. Intelligently constructed and superbly produced, *Voices* is for many reasons second to none among the guides now available on oral history in the anglophone world. The work avoids the dry approach and the concern for technical minutiae which abound in Willa Baum's works. It eschews both the strident, crusading tone found in Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past* and the simplistic, almost patronizing style of guides such as Sitton, Mehaffy and Davis' *Oral History*. *Voices'* great achievement, and what makes it excellent, is its success in being simultaneously a practical guide for undertaking oral history interviews and a good theoretical analysis.

No mean feat this, because the distance between theory and practice in oral history is very wide. It is possible to be an expert on its place within the larger discipline of history without having once conducted an interview and, at the other extreme, to have undertaken many excellent interviews without ever having written a word as a historian. The ten years' experience garnered by the staff of the Sound and Moving Image Division of the Provincial Archives in not only choosing people to interview and conducting the interviews but in editing and producing the forty volumes of the *Sound Heritage* series makes them ideally equipped to transcend the gap between theory and practice and to publish a work as excellent and as enjoyable as *Voices*.

Voices is important for another, quite separate reason. From the beginnings of the fur trade, at every stage in its history, British Columbia has been quintessentially a society of immigrants. Their experience both journeying here and in becoming part of our society has left comparatively little trace in the standard historical sources. If put down on paper, the records are most likely to be found in the distant lands the immigrants left and to which they sometimes wrote back. Much more frequently, their experiences never reached paper. British Columbia has been, moreover, a peculiarly regional, even fragmented society. The historical development and diverse character of the little communities on the Island, along the lower Fraser and in the interior valleys have been largely overshadowed in the official records and on newsprint by events in the province's twin metropolises.

Oral history provides the unique means of capturing those experiences

before time hurries them away. It is still possible (as was done just weeks ago) to interview a ninety-two-year-old woman who came to British Columbia in 1919 and whose memories, still lucid, describe a small immigrant community in the interior which lacked a newspaper and which had no local historian. If *Voices* succeeds in accelerating and facilitating the already considerable activity among individual enthusiasts, local history societies and academic historians striving to tape record such memories before death intervenes, then this work will have done no small service for British Columbia's history.

Voices serves, finally, as a fitting conclusion to the *Sound Heritage* series which, like so much else of value, has been swept away by the provincial government's hunger for budget cuts. If the book does stimulate an expansion in the practice of oral history, then there is at least the consolation that at some future date, in more humane and opulent times, the series may be revived, drawing upon the tapes inspired by this guide.

Buy *Voices*, read it, enjoy it, but above all use it. And, if you do, please make sure that copies of the resulting tapes reach a safe public depository, so that the voices of our common past may continue to speak to us. *Voices* is available at \$4.50 from the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Sound and Moving Image Division, Victoria, B.C. v8v 2R5.

University of British Columbia

RODERICK J. BARMAN

Phillips in Print: The Selected Writings of Walter J. Phillips on Canadian Nature and Art, edited by Maria Tippett and Douglas Cole. Volume VI, Manitoba Record Society Publications, Winnipeg, 1982. Pp. xxxiv, 156.

Walter Phillips has received considerable attention in the last decade despite the fact that, according to Tippett and Cole, he was only a "minor figure" in the Canadian art scene during his lifetime. His work has been the subject of a recent National Gallery exhibition and catalogue, a grand coffee-table celebration by Roger Boulet and now this volume from the Manitoba Record Society. The reasons for the lack of acclaim in earlier years and for his substantial reputation today are evident in this attractive volume.

Phillips was born in Great Britain in 1884 and spent his early years there and in South Africa. An artist and art teacher, he joined the stream of British emigrants to the Canadian west in 1913 and there remained

for the rest of his life, first in Winnipeg, then in Calgary and Banff (1941-57) and finally Victoria, where he died in 1962. He sketched and worked with watercolours in his early years and then, almost by accident, participated in the international revival of colour woodcuts in the 1920s. He became Canada's finest artist in the medium and enjoyed some international recognition during the decade. Teaching and writing and a few sales of art work sustained his family thereafter but he never regained the popular acclaim or matched the output of that happy period.

One of the many enterprises begun by Phillips in this era was a newspaper column on art and artists which was printed in the *Winnipeg Evening Tribune* from 1926 to 1941. He also wrote articles for various periodicals and a book on the colour woodcut. These writings provide the heart of *Phillips in Print*. The volume also contains twenty-four reproductions of Phillips' etchings, watercolours and woodcuts, three of them in colour, and a strong introductory article on Phillips' career by the editors. Tippet and Cole have done an admirable job in weaving a pleasant, readable narrative from what must have been an extraordinary collection of odds and ends on the art world, nature, Canadian art, the artists of western Canada, and the art of the woodcut. That the volume is coherent and enjoyable is a credit to their editorial skills.

As one might suspect from his art, Phillips was raised in and respected the English watercolour tradition of Cotman and Turner. He put a premium upon skill and craftsmanship in the creation of works of art and believed that the revelation of natural beauty was the artist's great task. His writing reflected these opinions. On occasion his prose is striking, especially in passages concerning natural beauty ("the blue peak soared in a sky of citron"), but it was usually more commonplace. His opinions on the purpose of art ("Walls without pictures do tend to imprison the mind") were rather ordinary, and his animosity toward modern tendencies in art was strident. He struck a note familiar to modern readers of Tom Wolfe, for example, in his argument that "modernism" was a "world-wide hoax, originally perpetrated in the interests of a group of Parisian art-dealers. . . ." The student of Canadian culture will learn something of the artistic community in the inter-war years, however, and will be impressed especially by the sense of isolation current among western Canadian painters. Phillips noted the lack of western patrons of the arts in several of his essays and, indeed, claimed that the demand for artistic works in the region would not sustain "two painters' families." He lamented that the work of James Henderson, Eric Bergman and Thomas Fripp was not known in the east, whereas Montreal dealers actually had

waiting lists of buyers for works by several painters, and Toronto (“indisputably the Canadian centre for literature and art”) would inevitably become the home of ambitious artists and authors.

As Tippett and Cole suggest in their introductory essay, Phillips chose the wrong style and the wrong home if he sought national recognition. His was the era when the art world worshipped the “new,” when Canada required its painters to forge a “national identity,” and when the “east” dominated the country’s cultural organs. Phillips’ adherence to a British vision and a traditional Japanese technique was out of fashion; his disdain for the “grim and moody” landscapes of the Group of Seven (“no warmth, little sentiment and no humor”) buttered few parsnips; his own “small or quiet or delicate” perspective, though favoured increasingly by western Canadian patrons in the decades since his death, was out of tune with the times. This attractive volume — the design and typeface would have delighted Phillips himself — reminds us of his virtues and his achievement.

University of Manitoba

GERALD FRIESEN