

BOOK REVIEWS

Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America, 1792: Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra and the Nootka Sound Controversy

Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra. Edited by Robin Inglis and Iris H.W. Engstrand, foreword by Michael Maquinna, translated by Freeman M. Tovell

Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012. 192 pp. Illus. \$34.95 cloth.

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THE HEART OF this work, and its *raison d'être*, is the report of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, dated 2 February 1793 at San Blas, Mexico. This document is not a diary or journal; it was concluded six months after the proceedings recounted and described. The report was intended for the viceroy of New Spain and for the king of Spain, and it is a useful summary from the position of the Spanish commandant's meeting with Captain George Vancouver at Nootka in late August the previous year. Bodega y Quadra

and Vancouver were, respectively, Spanish and British commissioners sent to implement the particulars of the Nootka Sound Convention. It is no surprise that agreement could not be met for Bodega y Quadra's vaunted demands were unacceptable and Vancouver held tenaciously to his own authorized position. It is thus rather fascinating to read Bodega y Quadra's narrative alongside that of Vancouver's, the latter printed in W. Kaye Lamb's *Voyage of George Vancouver*, published in definitive edition by the Hakluyt Society.

From our own distant viewpoint, the social gathering of mariners from rival empires meeting at what must have seemed like the ends of the earth, on the margin of a great continent of as yet unknown value and one still shrouded in geographical mystery, seems but an enchantment in our time and space. Maquinna and the First Nations, observers and participants in the larger drama, and hosts to the visitors in Maquinna's Big House for hereditary dances, speeches of honour, and a sumptuous feast of the finest foods of ancestral lands and seas, could hardly have known that, over the dinner parties aboard ship in which the Spanish supplied the "eatables" and the

British the “drinkables,” the destiny of Vancouver Island was being worked out. The outcome depended on a successful exchange of letters that might reach an agreed conclusion. That proved to be mission impossible.

Bodega y Quadra’s charm exudes from this work, and in his opening sentence he pats himself on the back by saying that the king of Spain “thought fit to support this part of America with appropriate honor,” and after consulting the ranking authority, named Bodega y Quadra commandant at Spain’s Pacific base at San Blas in 1789. When he reached Vera Cruz, news had arrived that Martínez had seized British-owned ships and property at Nootka. Bodega y Quadra hastened to San Blas, readied its warships, examined Russian establishments in the far north, and sent means of strengthening Spanish interests at Nootka and in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. It is clear that the Spanish had been caught flat-footed for, having feared the Russians in the north, they now found the British and the Americans trading on the Northwest Coast from the Columbia River north to the Gulf of Alaska. Overcome by events, the Spanish court sent instructions to Bodega y Quadra to proceed to Mexico City for consultations and orders. He was told to embark on a frigate for Nootka to meet the British there. Not thinking a frigate enough, Bodega y Quadra added another frigate, a schooner, and two goletas, or small schooners. Bodega y Quadra wanted a show of strength and he arranged it to his satisfaction. In the afternoon of 29 April 1792 he anchored in Nootka. The report recounts the arrival and departure of vessels, most importantly H.M. storeship *Daedalus*, with supplies for Captain Vancouver’s ships then making their survey of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Georgia

Strait and waters north. There are few revelations here. But the arrivals and departures assure us of how busy Nootka was in those days for it was the centre of North Pacific shipping, with tentacles to Alaska, the Hawaiian Islands, China, and Mexico, to say nothing of European and American ports. The report notes the arrival of Vancouver’s ships, also that of the goletas of Alcalá Galiano and Valdés and their early departure south.

Evocative and carefully chosen illustrations accompany this work, principally View of the Bay of Friendly Cove from the Spanish Establishment, courtesy of Archivo y Biblioteca, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación. It shows six sailing vessels anchored, with room for more, and a few days later ten vessels were there, the greatest number ever collected together in this sound. The artist of the cover illustration on the book is strangely not signified in this work. Good maps and a serviceable index aid the working scholar and serious student of history.

The introduction for this work forms the first part of the book and dwarfs the report itself. Instead of briefly introducing the main characters of this compelling story, with all its dramatic sequence, and then dealing with the essential differences of the positions of Bodega y Quadra and Vancouver, we are treated with a reiterative narrative. That subject was examined elsewhere to great satisfaction by Warren Cook in *Flood Tide of Empire* and in Freeman Tovell’s *Far Reaches of Empire*, his biography of Bodega y Quadra. A critical edition of a document should necessarily provide footnotes to take up and discuss the issues brought forth in the document as and when they arise.

This handsome book takes its rightful place as a classic in Northwest Coast history. It is a great credit to

a devout team of translators, editors, and advisors who have made it into a first-class book. As Chief Michael Maquinna of Mowachaht First Nation, Tsaxana, British Columbia, rightly says in the foreword, this work helps to rekindle interest in this period of history: "This publication of the journal of Bodega y Quadra, an honored guest of my ancestor in 1792, adds significantly to our shared heritage."

Is It a House? Archaeological Excavations at English Camp, San Juan Island, Washington

Amanda K. Taylor and Julie Stein, editors

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011. 182 pp. \$30.00 paper.

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SYNTHESIZING archaeological research results from the Salish Sea can be a time-consuming task because of the international boundary that currently divides the region. This is further complicated by the rise of cultural resource management archaeology on both side of the border, where few research results are published and data repositories include state, provincial, and federal agencies, all of which have different restrictions to access. While it is possible for archaeologists to gain access to most of these documents, the hurdles involved dissuade most of us from attempting to do so. For this reason, the publication of *Is It a House?* provides an easily accessible contribution to the archaeological record of the region that will undoubtedly be a point of common

reference to researchers working on both sides of the border.

In general, the book is a report on the analysis of materials collected during archaeological field school investigations carried out in one area (Operation D) of the English Camp site (45SJ24). Initial excavations of 1950, led by Adan Treganza of San Francisco State University, were followed by those in 1988, 1990, and 1991 by the University of Washington. The purpose of both series of excavations was to test a horseshoe-shaped depression suspected of being the remains of a Coast Salish house. However, upon excavation, deposits were found to lack house floors, post holes, and hearth features, which are commonly found in other house excavations in the area (e.g., Grier 2006). Despite the lack of these features, the editors of this book asked all the contributors to consider the spatial distribution of the materials being analyzed for evidence that could be used to determine whether this depression was indeed a house.

Following an extremely brief introduction to the volume and a review of household archaeology in the region (Taylor and Stein), in Chapter 2 Faith presents a summary of research methods and results from the 1950 field school. Chapter 3 (Parr, Phillips, and Stein) provides a description of the research methods used in the later field schools. The difference in field methods between these two eras is striking. In 1950, no screens were employed, excavation was primarily by shovel, and no backfilling was undertaken. In contrast to this, field schools conducted in 1988 and 1990 used extremely fine-grained and detailed excavation methods. In 1991, these rigorous standards were relaxed so as to complete the excavation units that had been opened.

Site mapping and the stratigraphy are presented in Chapter 4 (Stein, Taylor, and Daniels). Overall, the stratigraphic profile drawings are extremely detailed (every shell in the midden is depicted), but, for the most part, they seem to lack clearly differentiated stratigraphic divisions, scales, keys, and locations of radiocarbon samples. Photographs are included but are black and white and of such a poor quality that little can be gained from them. Stratigraphic divisions, referred to in the volume as facies, are presented in Harris diagrams. Overall, however, the presentation of these results in this manner is unsatisfactory in a published document.

The remaining chapters in the volume report on the analysis of materials collected during University of Washington excavations: sediments (Stein, Green, Sherwood); chipped stone artefacts (Close); ground stone artefacts (Chao); bone and antler tools (West); mammal bones (Boone); bird bones (Bovy); shell (Daniels); and fish bone (Kopperl). As with her other work in the Gulf Islands (Stein 1992; Stein et al. 2003), Stein's geo-archaeological approach to studying shell middens is thorough and detailed and employs methods rarely used in Northwest Coast archaeology, including grain size analysis, measurements of pH, percentage of organic matter and carbonates, and the use of micromorphology. Close's approach to the analysis of chipped stone tools from the site is unique in Northwest Coast archaeology, not so much because it examines the *chaîne opératoire* of lithics from English Camp as because it draws upon Bordes's (1961) Old World lithic typology and is written up in seeming disregard for the local cultural historical sequence and typology devised by Donald Mitchell (1971). Close's chapter provides far

more interpretive material than do the other chapters in this volume, and her discussion of the sexual division of labour, and the reflection of this in the lithic assemblage, provides much food for thought. The last chapters in the volume are for the most part descriptive lists of the objects found during excavations, with some consideration of their spatial distributions.

It is disappointing that the research question that binds all chapters together, and is the title of this book, is not answered in a satisfactory manner. Upon the completion of each chapter the authors seem uncertain whether the spatial distribution of materials reflects that of a Coast Salish (or any) structure. The concluding chapter (Taylor) provides no further guidance as to whether this initial research question has been answered. Overall, a great deal of time and effort has gone into this question, yet the answers given are ambiguous. The publication of this volume will undoubtedly serve as a cautionary tale to other archaeologists desiring to conduct household archaeology on the Northwest Coast: choose the location of your project carefully and be certain it is a house before investing enormous amounts of time and labour in excavation and analysis.

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Exploring Fort Vancouver

Douglas C. Wilson and Theresa E. Langford, editors

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011. 128 pp. illustrations, maps. \$24.95 paper.

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THIS FINE volume is truly a "must" for those with more than a passing interest in the origins of the multi-ethnic area of the Pacific Northwest Coast, from the Aboriginal inhabitants to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian, American, British-French-Canadian, and even Spanish colonial powers and their impact on the formation of the far western coasts of Canada and the United States. Academics and the general public interested in the fur trade history of this region can locate a plethora of books and articles, but finding publications that deal with its archaeological record is much more difficult. Archaeological excavations have been conducted for decades on fur trade posts, but little

information has made it into the popular press. This volume is a start towards correcting this imbalance.

The book consists of seven chapters written by academics working on-site and/or serving the US National Park Service in the Pacific Northwest. It begins with the historical background and the founding, over the winter of 1824-25, of Fort Vancouver by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC); it charts the post-1848 decline and the HBC fort's transformation into the US military base Fort Vancouver, which, in 1879, was renamed Barracks Vancouver; and it continues with the site's reinvention as the base of the First World War Spruce Production Division, its emergence as a regional centre of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression, and its transformation into a training and administrative headquarters for the US Army during the Second World War.

The major theme of ethno-cultural identity is assisted by large and clearly visible photographs of artefacts that illustrate discussions of the various historical identities of fort personnel and proximate populations. No less than ten non-Aboriginal and thirty-seven Aboriginal ethnic groups worked in, or near, the fort during the fur trade period (10). Of particular interest is the identification and discussion of gender and other stratifications within the nineteenth-century colonial and multicultural society and their transformation by Victorian politico-social-economic ideals.

Another interesting theme is technological change in fur trade and military fort periods, from stone tools to the lingering homemade medieval technologies of the HBC, to imported products of nineteenth-century industrialism, to early mass-produced objects. Examples range from

hand-forged items produced by HBC blacksmiths, to nineteenth-century innovations like stamped metal nails, to modern wire nails. Other artefacts embedded with social meanings include glass beads, ceramics, and other items imported from Europe and Asia.

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century globalization is a theme one might not expect in a populist volume. The book considers, for example, a mid-nineteenth-century teacup and saucer excavated at the HBC fort. Portraying the British East India Company and the Sino-British Opium Wars, the cup and saucer symbolize contemporary syncretic acculturative movements in which tea consumption was both a refreshment and a statement of political-economic and social status.

The ability of artefacts to elicit excitement and awe for specialists and laypersons alike is exemplified in the book's examination of health practices and moral issues. An ethno- and historical-archaeological approach provides a fascinating, but all too short, discussion of diet and disease from the fur trade era (when treatments for disease were startlingly primitive to twenty-first-century eyes) to the establishment of base hospitals during the second and first world wars. An image of early nineteenth-century surgical instruments, including saws and drills for amputations and trephinations, accompanies a text that also considers the epidemics that nearly exterminated Aboriginal populations on the Pacific coast.

The final chapters summarize and explain why, after more than six decades of archaeological investigations, Fort Vancouver's history is significant for an understanding of the past, present, and future of the region. For someone with more than a passing acquaintance with fur trade archaeology in British

Columbia – including several years directing archaeology field schools at Fort Langley – this volume rekindled a desire to reread the historical treatises I first encountered decades ago and to find recent and sometimes obscure works noted in the bibliography.

Printed on high-quality paper with numerous maps, illustrations, and colour photographs, this volume is far more than just “eye candy,” and the text is an interesting amalgam of popular and academic historical themes. As the early nineteenth-century fur traders might have said in the then-common Chinook jargon: “This is one skookum book!”

Canada's Entrepreneurs: From the Fur Trade to the 1929 Stock Market Crash: Portraits from the Dictionary of Canadian Biography

J. Andrew Ross and
Andrew D. Smith, editors

Toronto: University of Toronto
Press, 2011. 580 pp. Illus. \$39.95
paper.

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Columbia*

THE EDITORS of *Canada's Entrepreneurs* assembled this book to appeal to a wide variety of Canadian readers (including non-academics), to inspire instructors to incorporate more business history into their courses, and to showcase the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (DCB) (xxv). It is difficult to predict whether these goals will be met, but a review of *Canada's Entrepreneurs* is essentially a review of the DCB, for

Canada's Entrepreneurs, aside from a nine-page introduction, consists of sixty-one biographies previously published (but here published without the detailed references) in the fifteen volumes of the DCB. In the preface to the volume, the general editors of the DCB boast that the DCB is "generally recognized as the most authoritative of all national biographies" (x). Perhaps it is more appropriate to quote someone without a vested interest in saying so. In his remarkable *Champlain's Dream* (2008), the Pulitzer Prize winner David Hackett Fischer stated: "By comparison with the first British Dictionary of National Biography, and the original Dictionary of American Biography, the DCB/DBC is superior in coverage, documentation, and quality of writing" (557).

Fischer's qualified praise gets at the current strengths and the weaknesses of the DCB and, thus, of *Canada's Entrepreneurs*. The biographies published in *Canada's Entrepreneurs*, like the biographies in the DCB – including the freely available online version – have undergone nothing more than very minor revisions since they were originally published in the DCB (although the biographies in *Canada's Entrepreneurs* are supplemented by updated suggestions for further reading). While many – even many of the older ones – are still the best available short biographies, others have been superseded. Furthermore, because other national biographies are being updated, bold claims of the superiority of the DCB are growing less convincing over time. Readers might wonder whether this reality has influenced the choice of biographies. The most prominent representative of the Hudson's Bay Company chosen for inclusion is John McLoughlin, not George Simpson – an odd choice

unless you consider the publication of biographies of George Simpson that supersede his DCB entry. The original DCB was made possible by a bequest of a Toronto entrepreneur, and other entrepreneurs have added their gifts over the years. Perhaps gifts from other Canadian entrepreneurs or government departments will make possible its updating.

Readers of this journal may be interested to know that seven of the biographies (those on Maquinna, John McLoughlin, William Van Horne, Robert Dunsmuir, Fanny Bendixon, Francis Jones Barnard, and Chang Toy) have a primary or important connection to British Columbia. Each of these biographies, and many others, are, of course, also freely available online.

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Kilts on the Coast: The Scots Who Built BC

Jan Peterson

Victoria: Heritage House, 2012.
272 pp. \$22.95 paper.

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DESPITE THE title, this is not a comprehensive history of the Scots in British Columbia. The best overview remains the BC chapter in Ferenc Morton Szasz's *Scots in the North American West, 1790-1917* (2000), which the author, Jan Peterson, fails to cite. What we have, essentially, is a

series of biographical sketches of Scots who arrived on Vancouver Island as Hudson's Bay Company employees, some of them to work on the farms established in the Victoria area but most of them as coal miners in Fort Rupert and Nanaimo. Readers will find little new in the biographies of elite figures such as James Douglas and Robert Dunsmuir, but Peterson does make use of the HBC archives as well as the diaries and correspondence of lesser-known individuals such as the coal miner from Ayrshire, Andrew Muir (though we are not informed where his journal is located). We learn about the specific community in which each of these pioneers originated, the names of the vessels that carried them to the Pacific coast, who they and their offspring married, what jobs they did, what streets they lived on, how they died, and even who attended their funerals as well as the names of their more successful local descendants. The result is an impression of uninterrupted upward mobility (despite a propensity for hard liquor), but there is no attempt to discuss broader social issues found in studies such as John Belshaw's uncited *Colonization and Community: The Vancouver Island Coalfield and the Making of the British Columbian Working Class* (2002).

In addition, the title implies that these Scots carried Gaelic traditions to the west coast even though the majority of those examined were Lowlanders from Ayrshire or Orcadians who did not share the language, tartans, clans, or bagpipes of the Highlands. Indeed, apart from the cover illustration of Charles Ross with his First Nations wife and three of their children, there is not a kilt to be found in the book's many family photographs. Despite the claim that the Scots' "ability to assimilate new influences enabled them to maintain

their culture and give it relevance for the next generation and those to come" (245), one is left to wonder if there was a common sense of Scottishness among these groups of settlers or whether this is simply a romanticizing product of later generations. Are Highland games, Burns suppers, and pipe bands sufficient proof that "the Scottish tradition remains strong" (247) in British Columbia, as Peterson concludes, or are they essentially reflections of a lingering sense of anti-modernity in today's homogenizing urban society?

Finally, the subtitle suggests that the west coast was essentially an empty space, waiting for the arrival of the enterprising Scots to "build" a society from the natural resources at hand. Despite the occasional reference to Aboriginal wives and Aboriginal labour (overshadowed by descriptions of Aboriginal atrocities), this is also the impression created by phrases such as "Vancouver Island remained undisturbed for thousands of years until the Hudson's Bay Company made its headquarters at Fort Victoria" (16). In short, despite this book's packaging, it is essentially a local history aimed largely at descendants of the Scots pioneers of Victoria and Nanaimo. As such, it is not recommended for those looking for a comprehensive, balanced, or analytical study of the Scots in British Columbia, nor is it written in the engaging style one might expect from popular history. However, it does provide interesting glimpses into the experiences of a number of pioneer immigrants who carved out new lives on Vancouver Island in the middle of the nineteenth century.

*Caring and Compassion:
A History of the Sisters of
St. Ann in Health Care in
British Columbia*

Darlene Southwell

Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing,
2011. 296 pp. \$29.95 cloth.

LISA PASOLLI
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TODAY, MOUNT St. Mary Hospital, an extended care facility in Victoria, is one of the last visible legacies of the Sisters of St. Ann's contributions to health care in British Columbia. But for more than 150 years, the Sisters were a vital presence in nursing and health care provision in British Columbia. In *Caring and Compassion*, Darlene Southwell makes use of the Sisters' rich archives to recount in clear and engaging detail their role in St. Joseph's Hospital and Nursing School in Victoria, Mount St. Mary Hospital, as well as in smaller hospitals in Campbell River, Smithers, Oliver, and Nelson. Southwell's study serves as a nice companion piece to Edith E. Down's *A Century of Service: A History of the Sisters of St. Ann and Their Contribution to Education in British Columbia* (1999).

The history of the Sisters of St. Ann dates back to 1858, when four Sisters arrived in Victoria from Quebec. As their ranks grew over the next several decades, so too did the scope of their health care services. Southwell provides thorough financial and administrative histories of those services and peppers her narrative with the life stories of remarkable Sisters. The most compelling parts of the study come when Southwell uses those stories as a lens on British Columbia's broader social,

political, and economic conditions. St. Joseph's patient registers and the employment of Chinese men for kitchen and grounds work, for example, adds to our picture of the deeply entrenched racial segregation and tension that characterized late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century British Columbia.

Caring and Compassion is primarily a popular (and celebratory) history of the Sisters of St. Ann, but in mining the Sisters' archives Southwell brings out an important story about the history of social welfare in British Columbia. In particular, we gain insight into the private, religiously and community-based provision of caring services by women in the province's early years. As Southwell notes, the Sisters were (and are) often an "invisible presence in health care" (61). In their home visits and community-based work, the sisters were "forerunners to the modern public health nurse and social worker" (55). But one of Southwell's central themes is that the Sisters' work should not automatically be relegated to the sphere of feminine, charity-oriented – and thus somehow less professional – welfare provision. They played an important role in the modernization and standardization of health care services in British Columbia. Several of the sisters, for example, were among the founding members of the BC Hospital Association in 1918; they regularly pursued postgraduate education and accreditation; and St. Joseph's was an important site for the training of medical technologists and the adoption of modern techniques such as blood transfusions in 1945 (the first hospital in Canada to do so). Southwell reminds us that, rather than occupying a place on the periphery, the Sisters' story should be among the central threads of the history of health care in Victoria and British Columbia.

*The Principal's Office – And
Beyond. Vol. 1: Public School
Leadership in British Columbia,
1849–1960*

Thomas Fleming

Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 2010.
448 pp. Illus. \$33.95 paper.

*The Principal's Office – And
Beyond. Vol. 2: Public School
Leadership in British Columbia,
1961–2005*

Thomas Fleming

Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 2010.
360 pp. Illus. \$33.95 paper.

PATRICK A. DUNAE

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THIS STUDY considers the development of public education in British Columbia mainly from the perspective of school principals. The author is a prominent scholar in the field of education history and a provocative critic of education politics in British Columbia. The first volume describes an optimistic epoch that began with the Public School Act, 1872. The public education system flowered in the Edwardian years, flourished in the 1920s, survived the Depression, and emerged brighter than ever after the Second World War. Sharing the progressive visions of school inspectors and senior bureaucrats in Victoria, principals guided their schools through the baby boom of the 1950s. That decade, as Fleming describes it, was a golden age for public education (1:383). The decades that followed were unsettling for school administrators.

The second volume describes the challenge of managing schools in the 1960s, a period of social upheaval. In the 1970s, when the education system was decentralized, the authority of the principal's office was diminished. Fleming is critical of government policies in the 1980s, particularly legislation that separated principals and vice-principals from teachers in collective bargaining agreements and allocated them to separate professional associations. He is scathing in his assessment of the 1990s provincial educational program known as Year 2000. He depicts the educational landscape today as a quagmire in which the provincial government and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation wrestle constantly for control of public education. He points to the teachers' strike in 2005 as an example of a dysfunctional system. (This book was published before the 2011–12 teachers' strike.) Fleming calls for a different structure, built around single-school sites instead of school districts. "A new and deconstructed system built around individual schools would move school principals to a position front and centre in public education," he argues. "In a system where elected or appointed leadership has been absent for more than three decades, and where district administrators shuffle warily around trustees and special interest groups, the principal's office as a platform for leadership in the twenty-first century cannot help but emerge as public education's best hope" (2:343).

This study is based on an extensive range of sources, including interviews with retired principals. The ten chapters in the two volumes are accompanied by over fifteen hundred endnotes. But endnote conventions are not consistent within chapters, and it is difficult to keep track of citations from one chapter

to another across the two volumes. And, remarkably, this study does not have a bibliography; rather, it ends with a six-page appendix showing the names and dates of tenure of education ministers, deputy ministers, and district superintendents. Most of that information is available in the Annual Reports of the Public Schools of British Columbia. A cumulative bibliography would be much more useful to readers. On the other hand, several statistical tables that have questionable value to the narrative could have been discarded, along with irrelevant historical photographs. The photograph on the cover of the book is also puzzling. It shows a group of about sixty children standing in front of a school. The archival image is not credited and the school is not identified, but it looks like Beacon Hill School in Victoria. Judging from the style of the children's clothes, the photograph may have been taken soon after this elementary school was opened in 1914. It's a nice picture but does not convey the focus or purpose of this study. A photograph of William ("Bill") Plenderleith (1:437) might be more appropriate for the cover. It shows a nattily attired administrator sitting at his desk with an open notebook and pen in hand, ready for action. An exemplar of a twentieth-century schoolman, Plenderleith served as a school principal, inspector, and assistant superintendent before retiring from the Department of Education in 1966. He and his colleagues (including female administrators) played a significant role in the development of British Columbia. Thanks to Fleming's engaging, well-written study, their contributions will be more widely appreciated. No less valuable, *The Principal's Office* highlights some of the challenges that a more recent generation of public school

administrators have experienced, while offering some interesting ideas for educational policies in the future.

The Library Book: A History of Service to British Columbia

David Obee

Vancouver: British Columbia Library Association, 2011. 264 pp. \$50.00 paper.

TOM SHORTHOUSE

University of British Columbia

ACCEPTING the challenge to produce, within a fixed deadline, a comprehensive overview of the evolution of libraries in British Columbia must have been daunting. Works of this sort are most often destined to grow old, respected but unread, in archival settings. But Dave Obee and a cross-section of knowledgeable people, working in the field and beyond, have sidestepped that fate, succeeding admirably in compiling a serious work of social history. It is eminently informative, readable, and yes, entertaining; a creditable production that celebrates libraries, librarians, and dedicated citizens who combined to found and sustain what has become a major provincial public resource. Its publication coincides, appropriately, with the one-hundredth anniversary of the British Columbia Library Association.

The range of years explored in various levels of detail is broad, beginning with descriptions of small book collections that accompanied eighteenth-century explorers and later, notably, those of the Royal Engineers (1858), whose donated volumes formed the basis of what is now credited with being the first formal

public library in the province: New Westminster (1865).

Records indicate interesting restrictions and outcomes when book stocks and financial resources were limited. In Nanaimo, women were allowed to borrow but children were not. In 1887 Victoria, a proposed referendum supporting a mostly free library, in which young people could “spend a pleasant evening in other than the usual and seductive haunts” (23), was initially defeated. In Vancouver, bookshelves were at one time closed to the public and volumes had to be retrieved by staff because, to quote an early librarian, “bookworms had no conscience” (26).

In those early years and into the new century, lending libraries were eventually established in all regions, benefiting considerably by the passage, in 1891, of the Free Libraries Act. But public institutions faced a host of challenges: devastating fires, financial crises, world wars, epidemics, and, especially, the Depression of the 1930s, when public libraries afforded much-valued warmth, congeniality, and advice to unemployed men who, it is reported, often left their socks “on the radiators to dry” (106) but whose continued daily presence also reinforced the value of reading in tough times.

Many notable names in the pioneering years of British Columbia’s library world are memorialized in the pages of this volume. Among them are Andrew Carnegie, whose celebrated gifts to Canada of 125 public library buildings resulted in three permanent sites in the province. A fourth was offered but rejected in the City of Nelson on the grounds that many locals there disapproved of the donor’s “false and vicious economic principles” (49). We also learn of the vision, hard work, and resilience of such dedicated

personages as Alma Russell, Ethelbert Scholefield, Helen Gordon Stewart, Eliza Machin, Margaret Clay, and John Ridington, to name a few. Among their many accomplishments were the earliest training course in librarianship (1913), the development of regional library systems, and the founding of the first academic library – at the University of British Columbia (1915). The era also witnessed the establishment of a wide-ranging bookmobile system to serve outlying areas then lacking library service. In years to come, the highly charged case involving one John Marshall, who was fired from that mobile service at the height of the 1950s “Red scare,” provides an instructive parable on the continuing issue of intellectual freedom.

The astonishing transformation of libraries during the past fifty years forms the basis for the final one-third of this volume. From manual card catalogues to digitized online formats, from stereotypically quiet enclaves to bustling civic commons, the many changes in all public, university, and college libraries and their extraordinary services are explored in detail. And the fascinating cast of characters, too many to list in a book review, who proposed, collaborated, fought for, and shepherded this reinvention of the role of libraries in our society, are duly celebrated here as well.

A coffee-table-shaped volume, this welcome history is profusely illustrated and indexed with excellent timelines and appendices. It is highly recommended.

*Liberalism, Surveillance,
and Resistance: Indigenous
Communities in Western
Canada, 1877-1927*

Keith D. Smith

Edmonton: Athabasca University
Press, 2009. 324 pp. \$39.95 paper.

HEATHER DEVINE
University of Calgary

THE NEGOTIATION and signing of the numbered treaties with First Nations groups in western Canada, followed shortly thereafter by the opening of the territory to Euro-Canadian settlement, served to consolidate the country's sovereignty over the vast territories beyond the Great Lakes in the face of American expansionism in the late nineteenth century. The treaties also functioned as a means to provide unfettered access to the land and natural resources needed for the expansion of free market capitalism. Unrestricted markets, facilitated by a limited form of government, became the means by which ambitious, energetic individuals might fully realize personal prosperity and enjoy the democratic freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly with their fellow citizens.

Or so the tenets of classical liberalism would have one believe. But as Keith D. Smith points out in the introductory chapters of *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance*, the benefits of liberal ideology were unevenly distributed among the masses. In particular, the colonization and subjugation of indigenous peoples, and the expropriation of their ancestral lands, was what made liberal ideology, and market capitalism, feasible for the Euro-Canadian majority. In order to sustain the new status quo, federal

and provincial governments created interconnected governance structures intended to limit indigenous resistance to these changes. One of these governance structures was the Indian Act, a powerful piece of legislation that has regulated most aspects of daily life in First Nations communities since its inception. The Indian Act was enforced with the help of a far-reaching system of surveillance that employed Indian agents, police, clergy, non-Aboriginal citizens, and even First Nations people themselves to spy on their associates and to report back to the authorities.

Smith's book examines the relative effectiveness of government surveillance through a comparative analysis of how these intelligence-gathering programs were instituted in two adjacent, but very different, jurisdictions. He compares government administration of the southern Alberta region, comprising the reserve communities of Treaty 7, to the southern interior area of British Columbia, which later became the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) administrative region known as the Kamloops-Okanagan Indian Agency.

Smith concludes that, due to the lack of a DIA bureaucracy in the region, which resulted in looser policy enforcement and community surveillance, the First Nations of the BC interior had far more freedom of movement and cultural autonomy in their own traditional territories than did the First Nations of southern Alberta. Because the First Nations of the BC region lacked the protections negotiated through treaties and enforced via the Indian Act, however, their traditional lands were constantly under threat by encroaching settlers. Conversely, the Treaty 7 communities were confined to reserves, a regional DIA bureaucracy was present, and policy enforcement and other intrusions on aspects of daily life were

far more oppressive. On the other hand, they were able to fend off large-scale seizures of their territory.

Overall, Smith concludes that “disciplinary surveillance” of Aboriginal peoples, as employed by the federal government, has persisted to the present day, despite the evidence of sporadic resistance by individuals and groups. What makes this book even more timely is the fact that the Canadian government continues to monitor the activities of Aboriginal people who resist incursions on their indigenous rights and territories. Evidence of this persistent surveillance is exemplified by recent newspaper advertisements placed by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service in the spring of 2012, seeking to hire speakers of Aboriginal languages for intelligence-gathering activities.

*Creative Subversions:
Whiteness, Indigeneity, and the
National Imaginary*

Margot Francis

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011. 252 pp.
\$32.95 paper.

CHRIS HERBERT

Grand Valley State University

IN *Creative Subversions*, Margot Francis starts from the premise that some of the key images that inform Canadian national identity, such as the beaver, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), national parks, and Indians are “public secrets” whose exploitative histories are known but not generally discussed. Unsurprisingly, Francis’s analysis of these images reveals that Canadian identity was, and remains, an assumed white, heterosexual, male, and anglophone identity. Francis’s project

is therefore twofold. First, she details the development of these images, revealing that, while they may appear to be relatively neutral and benign, they actually support a variety of racial, gendered, and classed assumptions. The very banality of these images hides their critical role in shaping national identity. Second, noting that many Canadians have internalized these images, Francis examines the efforts of various artists to foster discussion about the public secrets that lay at the heart of national identity by critiquing and playing with these images. Each chapter follows this two-part organization.

The first three chapters on the images of the beaver, the CPR, and Banff are very strong. For instance, in the chapter on beavers, Francis traces how that image has been shaped by the fur trade, political cartoons, and slang usage. In each case, Francis reveals how the image of the beaver has served to legitimize a white, male, heterosexual, and anglophone population as the “real” Canada. The chapters on the CPR and Banff are just as engaging and insightful. Francis’s analysis of the history of national parks in Canada and their meaning for national identity will ring particularly true to anyone familiar with the substantial literature in the United States on its national parks system (a literature I wish she had engaged more substantively).

Arguably, the heart of the book is Chapter 5, which deals with indigenous responses to images of Indians. Throughout the first three chapters, images of Indians appear again and again. For example, Canadian settlers explicitly contrasted the supposed strong work ethic of the beaver (with whom they identified) against the perceived improvidence and laziness of the Aboriginal population. Francis therefore devotes an entire chapter

to exploring some historical and contemporary ways that Aboriginals have challenged these images of themselves, at the same time that they have sought to unsettle an uncritical acceptance of multiculturalism that often relegates indigenous peoples to the sidelines, only to bring them to the centre when a demonstration of Canada's diversity and tolerance is needed (think of the quasi-Aboriginal mascots of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics).

Just under half of the book is devoted to artistic responses to these images that are, at times, compelling, shocking, and hilarious but also fairly limited in impact. Performance art, videos, sculptures, and paintings reach a small audience, and, as is evident from Francis's insightful analysis, fewer still will grasp the critiques of national imagery embedded in these works. But if the art that Francis discusses falls short of offering a meaningful path to unsettling and overturning banal national imagery, they do highlight the contradictions and ironies embedded therein, opening the door for others to advance their critiques and to begin to unsettle the meanings of these images on a broader scale.

*Retail Nation: Department
Stores and the Making of Modern
Canada*

Donica Belisle

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011. 320 pp.
\$32.95 paper.

NICOLAS KENNY

Simon Fraser University

R*etail Nation* is a thought-provoking study of the intersection between a rapidly growing consumer economy

and the formation of culture and identity in Canada between 1890 and 1940. During this period, argues Donica Belisle, department stores, especially Eaton's, Simpsons, and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), emerged as the dominant forces of Canada's retail scene. Through modern sales, advertising, and management tactics, mail-order catalogues, bulk buying, and cash-only policies, these stores positioned themselves not only at the helm of the Canadian economy but also as leading players internationally, becoming more profitable than many leading American and European giants.

But to Canadians, department stores promised more than dry goods and fancy frocks at competitive prices. In the early years of the country's existence, they styled themselves as heralds of modernity, builders of democracy, nationalism, and citizenship. Just "what kind of Canada did department stores help to create?" is the book's underlying question (240). The answer is well articulated, though it comes as no surprise: it was a Canada of white, anglophone, masculine and middle-class privilege, in which women, minorities, and workers were alternatively victimized or instrumentalized in the construction and promulgation of this vision. The book focuses on English-Canadian stores, and, aside from occasional references to Dupuis Frères or to shoppers in St. Boniface, the particular dynamics of retail in French Canada receive little attention. Readers of this journal, in particular, will note Eaton's belated arrival on the west coast, the prevalence of local giants Woodward's and Spencer's in the BC market, as well as the significance of the 1935 Vancouver HBC store riot as part of a broader, but largely unsuccessful, critique of mass retail during the period.

Belisle draws fruitfully from a vast historiography on department stores, both Canadian and international. She adds to it by looking not at a specific company or facet of the industry but, rather, by portraying the rise of department stores more generally as a cultural phenomenon – one that was inspired by trends across the West but that took a specific shape in Canada’s particular social, ethnic, and regional mix. Belisle’s rigorous analysis of the gendered, racialized, and imperialist language that permeated advertising material, labour relations, and interactions with customers allows her to explore in detail the hierarchies and discriminations on which the stores self-consciously built and sold their vision of the nation. Of course, these attitudes pervaded Canadian life at the time, and historians have documented their prevalence among intellectuals and politicians, in places of work and education, and in theatres and streetcars. Department stores fed into and reflected this broader discourse, but there are parts of the book in which Belisle gives the impression that it originated with the Eatons and the Simpsons of the country, somewhat overstating this aspect of her argument. The book’s undeniable strength lies above all in Belisle’s critique of the stores through an engaging recounting of the experience of shopping or working in department stores. Citing customers’ letters, memoirs, employee newsletters, press accounts, and works of fiction, the author takes us into the bustling aisles, exploring the feelings of anticipation and disappointment that went along with consumerism as well as the anger and frustration felt especially by women, either as mistreated customers or as commodified employees.

Though widely criticized by reformers, small business owners,

feminists, and labour groups, department stores ultimately saw their heyday end as of the 1940s, with new forms of competition. Belisle astutely notes how the outpouring of nostalgia provoked by the closing of Eaton’s and the selling of the HBC to American interests at the turn of the twenty-first century attests to the lasting power of the close association between mass retail and Canadian identity. In emphasizing the gender, race, and class hierarchies on which this particular understanding of Canadian identity rests, and especially in shedding light on the way business interests continue to market an insidious “branded nationalism” in the country, *Retail Nation* makes a timely and important contribution to Canadian scholarship, one that is likely to attract a broad readership.

*The Good Hope Cannery: Life
and Death at a Salmon Cannery*

W.B. MacDonald

Halfmoon Bay: Caitlin Press, 2011.
215 pp. b/w photos. \$26.95 paper.

KENNETH CAMPBELL
Victoria

UNTIL POSTWAR technology allowed for the centralization of salmon canning, the industry relied on numerous canneries located close to the fishing grounds. More than two hundred canneries were scattered along the BC coast, and apart from those in urban centres, most were self-contained seasonal communities in which several hundred people lived and worked for a few hectic months. Most of the canneries have vanished. One of the few to survive is Good Hope Cannery

on Rivers Inlet. Unlike other survivors, however, such as North Pacific Cannery on the Skeena River and Gulf of Georgia Cannery at Steveston, Good Hope is not a museum. It lives on as a sports fishing lodge.

In *The Good Hope Cannery*, W.B. MacDonald not only narrates the history of the cannery from its origins in 1895 as one of Henry Bell-Irving's string of plants for the ABC Packing Company to its recreation as a fishing lodge by grandson Ian Bell-Irving in 1970, but also takes us on his own journey of discovery. He shares the experience of uncovering archival clues, ranging from the vital information he has uncovered to the actual objects that contain it. "The book itself is in superb condition," he writes of an old company letter book, "its spine straight and strong and its pages intact" (43). Fortunately, ABC Packing is one of the best-documented of the fishing companies, and MacDonald makes good use of Bell-Irving's notebooks held at the City of Vancouver Archives as well as the extensive ABC Packing Company records at UBC Special Collections. In addition, there are numerous excerpts from published sources, largely personal experiences and memoirs, adding to the multiple viewpoints we get of Good Hope and its Rivers Inlet context.

MacDonald also lets us tag along as he meets some of the thirty people he interviewed for the book, often describing the encounter as well as the stories they shared with him. The interviews are one of the strengths of the book, giving a variety of personal points of view. Complementing them are more than ninety images illustrating Good Hope and other establishments in Rivers Inlet. Only a handful come from institutions; the majority were contributed from family albums,

making this a unique collection of photographs gathered from diverse and mostly private sources.

Curiously, there are no maps. One showing the locations of the canneries in Rivers Inlet, all mentioned in the book, would have been helpful. Given the importance of archival sources, it is surprising that a plan of the cannery village based on the 1924 Fire Insurance maps was not included. There is no index, nor are the excerpted materials specifically referenced, though a bibliography and a list of sources give some help for researchers. Overall, the book deserved more rigorous editorial care as it contains several instances of missing words from the text and factual errors (such as the location of Good Hope on the west, rather than the east, side of Rivers Inlet).

The literature focusing on life in cannery villages is slim. K. Mack Campbell's *Cannery Village: Company Town* (2008), gives an overview, while the two museums have short histories in print: *Everlasting Memory for North Pacific* (1995) and *The Monster Cannery for the Gulf of Georgia* (2011). Michael Olson shares personal knowledge in *Porcher Island Cannery* (2006). *The Good Hope Cannery* stands as a significant addition. Written in a refreshing style and presenting a wealth of personal memories and images, this is also the fullest treatment of a single cannery village on coastal BC.



*Our Friend Joe:
The Joe Fortes Story*
Lisa Anne Smith and
Barbara Rogers

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2012.
180 pp. \$21.95 paper.

JOHN DOUGLAS BELSHAW
Vancouver

AS ONE *Daily Province* journalist put it in 1916, “to write an article about English Bay without referring to Joe Fortes, would be like Hamlet without the Prince” (118). For nearly forty years the legendary lifeguard and erstwhile swimming instructor was a fixture in the West End. His funeral was an enormous public event, and his legacy is recalled in a memorial at Alexandra Park, in the name of a Vancouver Public Library branch, and likewise in that of a downtown restaurant. Few politicians of the era were similarly treated. This new biography sheds light on why Seraphim “Joe” Fortes is so deeply etched into the narrative of early Vancouver.

What we know of Fortes is circumscribed. He served drinks in a Gastown saloon (another job that put him in the open) and lived in a tiny tent/cottage on English Bay (which afforded little privacy). His front yard was the beach, a public space. His size, colour, and reputation made him stand out wherever he went. But his personal relationships, his relationship with his family in the West Indies, his place and date of birth, his beliefs, even the pronunciation of his last name – was it For-tez or Fortz? – are uncertain. In *Our Friend Joe* phrases like “it is safe to assume” recur throughout. We know a little about Fortes and it is safe to assume from those details that

he, for example, attended Mass (as a good Catholic should), followed the tragedy of the Titanic with interest (as a lifeguard ought), or had friends to help him move house (as a bartender might). In other words, mysteries remain.

Fortes was part of an early wave of immigrants who came to Vancouver before the railway, before the fire, before incorporation. He is both typical and atypical of those around him in the city’s first days. Like his newcomer neighbours, Fortes spoke with an accent fashioned abroad. Global movement was a ready possibility for this generation: the path to Granville took Fortes first to Liverpool then around Cape Horn. Like so many others, Fortes had to be a jack-of-all-trades to get by. And he had to get by in a colonial setting in which power relations disadvantaged non-whites. He had to fit in. Fortes’s strategy, it seems, was to hide himself in plain view, to be so obvious as to be part of the scenery. Few of his contemporaries, however, would find their image passed from hand to hand around the world on postcards.

What was it that made Fortes outstanding? Certainly he saved many lives along the beach – the estimates run from two dozen to more than a hundred – which is, of course, what lifeguards do. And, despite Fortes’s own efforts to address the problem of poor swimming skills among the general public, drowning was a much greater risk in the Edwardian years than it is now. His memorial states “little children loved him” because he demonstrated infinite patience, enjoyed teaching the basics of swimming, and was something of a genuine hero of the sort we usually call “unsung,” all of which goes some way to answering the question of why Fortes remains interesting to us.

And then there's the issue of race. *Our Friend Joe* does not attend to this head-on, and perhaps that is as it should be. This is not a conventional "scholarly" text; remarkably, neither Sherry Edmunds-Flett's entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* nor sports historian John Wong's article "The Unbearable Lightness of Being Black" are cited. But it is a highly sympathetic biography, and it is written to be accessible to the widest audience. It will inform another generation's understanding of the pre-Depression city and its people, and it does so with a sensitive appreciation of not only Fortes' life but also his times. The authors show, too, how surprisingly tenuous Fortes's situation was throughout his aquatic career, and they are able to make some sense of how Fortes became worthy of his stature.

But it cannot be denied, when his contemporaries looked at Fortes, more than any other thing they saw: a black man. Occupation, character, sexuality, creed, economic status – none of these categories of perception could trump skin colour in the age of "White Canada Forever." The authors speculate that the Anti-Asian movement that reached a fevered pitch in the first decade of the century may have caused Fortes to feel "some degree of concern on his own account. He had been subjected to the occasional derogatory remark" (84). Indeed, his whole life in Vancouver was boxed in by derogatory, racially framed practices. Fortes held a string of low-status jobs – for example, as "a porter and shoeblack ... widely considered to be among the lowliest, most menial of jobs" (30) – and even his lauded career as a lifeguard was neither secure nor especially remunerative. Fortes plunged into bureaucratic cracks where the police and the Parks Board seemed happy to keep him. Recognition

came his way, to be sure. Probably no other black Vancouverite has been so weighted down with medals and honours and interviews, all of which were richly deserved. And yet the journalists who built Fortes's reputation – even those reporting on his final fatal illness – consistently described him as the "coloured lifeguard" (135). Nor, in some cases, could they resist transcribing his words into a drawl straight from the Old South; perhaps a Trinidadian accent bounced off their cloth ears, but it is more likely that, in Vaudeville-era Vancouver, a black man was meant to say things like "lil," "Ah'm alright," and "the fus' John Collins I ever mixed was fo' George Keefer ... who said it was jus' fine!" This confusion carries over to Fortes's funeral, when Holy Rosary Cathedral's organist (the delightfully named Adele Heritage) gets things under way with Stephen "Camptown Races" Foster's blackface minstrel hymn, "Old Black Joe" (135). The same song rings out at the unveiling of the memorial fountain five years later (142). Not captured in this book but worth noting are these mealy words of inclusion offered by the Province on the occasion of Fortes's death: "whitest heart in blackest skin." He is, finally, "our friend, Joe," the man with whom everyone appears to be on a first-name basis, an informality that extends even to his headstone. All very chummy until we remember that he ought to be "Mr. Fortes." It is impossible to escape the sense that Fortes was seen because he was black. Would a white lifeguard have attracted similar attention? Certainly none has.

Wayde Compton has written elsewhere on the ironic invisibility of black Vancouverites. He observes: "A scattering, an integration, partly forced, partly wanted, has made for no place, no site, no centres residential or

commercial, no set of streets vilified or tourist-friendly, and no provincial or federal riding that a politician would see as black enough to ever rate the wooing of a community vote.” Was Fortes somehow representative of this elusive demographic? Smith and Rogers claim that Vancouver’s “coloured population” showed up for the memorial unveiling and the Reverend U.S. Robinson – surely no Catholic? – spoke on their behalf (143). Did Fortes’s selflessness purchase respectability for other black Vancouverites or did his Catholic, West Indian identity separate him from black Protestants who hailed from Nova Scotia and the States? How, one wonders, did he see himself? *The Sun* wrote approvingly of Fortes in 1925: “No city, province or nation can afford to be without its heroes.” In a city that has made a cult of physical fitness, perhaps we can now see Fortes as he might have liked: as a man who was at home in his body and who did great things with it.

Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West

Nayan Shah

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 347 pp. Maps and illus. US\$27.95 paper.

HUGH JOHNSTON

Simon Fraser University

NAYAN SHAH observes that historians get it wrong when they privilege permanent populations over transient, the nuclear family over other domestic arrangements, and polarized rather than various gender roles. He complains – fairly – that historians omit much vital human experience or treat

it as non-normative. And when race is part of the story, they miss more. To answer that, Shah has undertaken the formidable task of illustrating what they have been leaving out, bringing to light a hidden history that has, nonetheless, unmistakably left its evidence. What he has to work with is the legal record – the instances in which the law has dealt with a particular group of marginalized people. His subjects are South Asian migrants to the United States and Canada whose stories emerge from civil and criminal court cases in California, Washington, and British Columbia. His period is the early twentieth century – the two or three decades that followed the first arrival of South Asian migrants in these jurisdictions. His period is defined by his sources, and this is justified because, as Shah observes, the record dried up as the number of transient South Asian immigrants declined.

Shah explains that his research began in the University of Chicago Law Library with his discovery of a 1928 compendium of California sodomy cases. These involved Punjabi and Chinese defendants, and they led him to searches in California court records and later British Columbia and, as his frame of reference grew, took him to murder cases, divorce petitions, civil suits over property, citizenship cases, and business partnership disputes. In these cases he has found material illustrating South Asians living on North America’s racial-sexual borderlands; and all this he has marshalled into a comprehensive picture. The research he has undertaken is formidable, in terms of number of library and archival collections he investigated, his energetic testing and sharing of his findings before going into print, and the specific instances he has uncovered. It appears that he has identified nearly everything

that the legal record can yield – for example, more than one hundred cases of illicit sexual relations between South Asians and whites, Chinese, or Native American males.

One might ask if this many cases has any statistical significance, in a record extending over two decades or more, for a floating population numbering, at its peak, many thousands. But that is not the point. The stories that Shah tells of interracial marriages, business partnerships, personal attractions, seductions, solicitations, entrapments, betrayals, assaults, and souring disagreements are all richly suggestive of the adverse social and legal environment that his subjects had to negotiate. His descriptive writing about individual incidents is clear and straightforward, although his analytical sections can lapse into passive constructions and loose generalizations. And the research, while amazingly extensive, is understandingly far from exhaustive. Shah has not caught up with all of the secondary literature touching on his ambitious project, nor has he fully plumbed the archival collections he has searched. That said, this is an impressive book full of engaging detail that lifts the veil on a realm of experience we need to incorporate into our general history.



*Lillian Alling:
The Journey Home*
Susan Smith-Josephy

Halfmoon Bay: Caitlin Press, 2011.
272 pp. \$24.95 paper.

PEARLANN REICHWEIN
University of Alberta

IN 1929, Lillian Alling reached the coast of Alaska on her way to Siberia. Her three-year walk across North America began in New York City and ended at Cape Wales, where her footsteps disappeared after nearly ten thousand kilometres. Did she ever get to Siberia? The diaries of formal expeditions are noticeably absent from the story of an obscure working-class Polish immigrant who was likely a domestic worker in Toronto and New York. The book frames Alling's walk as a persistent journey home rather than as a heroic epic. Her journey is not singularized but well situated amid reports of other walkers, including women, who crossed through British Columbia to points north, often following Aboriginal trails or railways prior to road systems. Some solo travellers sought media notoriety, but Alling tried to avoid publicity on a migration far more private than public.

Smith-Josephy rigorously excavates many local voices that commented on Alling and, simultaneously, the geographies along her route. Stories of Alling's journey unfold other narratives about people and place. Her trip along the Telegraph Trail from Hazelton to Atlin garnered local attention and news coverage. Alling was observed most in regions with few people. In sparsely populated districts, Alling stood out on her quest to reach Siberia, and news travelled quickly up the telegraph

line despite a lack of roads. She left few traces of herself. As a traveller, her story exists as an intertextual narrative told by others in newspapers, memoirs, recollections, and legends. It's also documented in records of her interactions with border officers, police, judges, and jails. Sidebars, maps, and references support the main text, along with excellent archival photo illustrations depicting the route.

The author carefully probes and tests the many accounts of Alling's journey. Her research investigation through archival records, genealogy, fieldwork, and other sources is explicit. Combined methodologies engage readers in historical and speculative detective work that will appeal to mystery solvers through popular history. Bizarre stories persisted about Alling's carrying a stuffed dog on her trip north. Fictitious first-person accounts of meeting Alling were also concocted by professional writers, as Smith-Josephy's literary analysis posits. Her careful deconstruction of tall tales, legends, and myths is astute and well researched.

How did Alling's story end? Smith-Josephy hypothesizes that Alling reached eastern Siberia only to arrive amid Soviet turmoil. Here the author takes account of indigenous travellers from the Chukotka Peninsula who frequented both sides of the Bering Strait and acted as ferrymen, but she stops short of indigenous oral history sources, which future research might uncover. Based on Chukchi travel patterns, stories of contemporaneous travellers, and unexpected information, the author speculates that Alling reached her goal. Legends of Alling's journey by foot and the discursive production of historic geographies along her route are reminders of global patterns of migration and intercontinental travel

among the working class. Solo travellers in northern environments were woven into wide social networks and cross-cultural interactions inflected by class, gender, region, technology, and the state – as stories of Lillian Alling underscore.

*I Just Ran: Percy Williams,
World's Fastest Human*

Samuel Hawley

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2011.
260 pp. \$23.95 paper.

RUSSELL FIELD
University of Manitoba

A FEATURE attraction at the 2012 London Olympics was Jamaican Usain Bolt's attempt to repeat his feat of four years earlier in Beijing, when he won gold medals in both the men's 100-metre and 200-metre sprints. Canadians might be forgiven if they had forgotten that, eighty years earlier, the Los Angeles Olympic 100-metre sprints featured the final race of Vancouver's Percy Williams, who, like Bolt, was trying to repeat Olympic sprint success. Celebrated at the time as the "world's fastest human," four years earlier Williams had shocked the sporting community by winning both the 100-metre and 200-metre races at the 1928 Amsterdam Games. Before his career was cut short following a leg injury suffered in 1930 while winning the 100-metre gold medal at the first ever British Empire (now Commonwealth) Games, Williams would retire from competitive racing as the 100-metre world record holder (10.3 seconds).

Williams' unexpected rise to sports stardom and the status of national hero is the subject of *I Just Ran*, a new

biography by Kingston, Ontario-based writer Samuel Hawley. Williams's slight stature, his recovery from a teenage bout with rheumatic fever, and his sudden emergence as a world-class sprinter while still a Vancouver high school student working with Bob Granger, a part-time coach and school custodian, are the ingredients of the familiar underdog-makes-good narrative. However, if Williams was, in the aftermath of his unexpected victories in Amsterdam, "the flesh-and-blood representation of how the country viewed itself and what it wanted to be" (4), his fame came with few monetary rewards. And, as Hawley chronicles, Williams was as eager to leave behind the strictures of nineteenth-century amateur sport for a career in business as he was to continue running in international meets.

Throughout *I Just Ran* Williams comes across as a reticent public figure, weary at having his every move chronicled and reluctant to reveal his private thoughts for public consumption. Hawley consults the runner's diaries to make this private figure public, but these often reinforce the sense that Williams wanted his life unexamined (and, in his exasperation, the young sprinter also reveals moments of cultural insensitivity). To fully sketch out the context of his character, Hawley makes extensive use of contemporary newspaper coverage. As a result, Williams-the-athlete-in-the-public eye is very much the focus of this biography, and considerably less attention is paid to his private life, post-sport career, and eventual suicide. Newspapers are also not entirely unproblematic sources. As Bruce Kidd (*Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 14, 1 [1983]) details in his examination of the press coverage of the Onondaga First Nations long distance runner, Tom

Longboat, the early twentieth-century sport press constructed narratives of public figures that often reinforced classed, gendered, and racialized stereotypes. The discourse surrounding Percy Williams, the national hero and amateur exemplar, reflected this process.

Hawley uses Williams's competitive career to shine a light on the life of the early twentieth-century amateur athlete, which, in contemporary accounts, was framed in altruistic light, with sport pursued by men (amateurism in its earliest incarnation was almost exclusively for men) just as interested in the values of healthy competition, fair play, and sportsmanship as in winning. Indeed, Vancouver reporter Robert Elston writes: "Percy Williams retains something of a classic amateurism in spite of all temptations" (236). Williams, however, was not immune to the financial temptations that lurked beneath the surface of amateur competition. According to Hawley, even in the late 1920s, track athletes were receiving under-the-table payments from promoters eager to enhance ticket sales at their meets by attracting high-profile competitors with "discreetly passed envelopes ... typically containing just a few hundred dollars" (167). The rules of amateurism and the harsh penalties for disregarding them were administered from Toronto by the Amateur Athletic Union, and east-west tension pervades Williams's running career. For Vancouver's civic leaders and newspaper journalists, Williams might have been a national sport hero, but for their purposes he represented the Terminal City. He was British Columbia's sprint champion "standing up to the arrogant East" (4).

*V6A: Writing from Vancouver's
Downtown Eastside*

John Mikhail Asfour and
Elee Kraljii Gardiner, editors;
foreword by Gary Geddes

Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press,
2012. 150 pp. \$19.95 paper.

JOHN DOUGLAS BELSHAW
Vancouver

V6A IS A POSTAL code prefix in Vancouver. It is, thus, an artificial geographical space defined by a bureaucracy housed far from V6A itself. It runs from Burrard Inlet south to False Creek and Great Northern Way and between Carrall Street and Clark Drive. As it happens, V6A actually makes some sense. It neatly encloses the city's oldest neighbourhoods: Gastown, the dockyards below Alexander and Powell streets, Chinatown, Strathcona, and the commercial thoroughfares of Main, Hastings, and Cordova. It contains and has contained railyards, industry, gas works, shipyards, warehouses, restaurants, big department stores, a street-level drug mart and high-end shoe-tiques, million-dollar condos and social housing projects, craft-breweries and beer parlours, pretty tree-lined streets in a little village-like setting and stunted freeway overpasses, ethnic enclaves, single room occupancy hotels, schools, churches and temples, and most of the city's welfare industry. I could go on. The point is that, of all Vancouver's postal codes, this one neighbourhood deserves to be known principally as the most socially, economically, culturally, and physically diverse. Instead it is known across Canada as the nation's poorest postal code, the downtown eastside, or just the blighted "DTES."

It would be a matter for some debate as to whether V6A is more sinned against than sinning, but it is without a doubt more written about than written from. This collection tries to right the balance a bit. It brings together voices from the neighbourhood, writers whose "humanity and craft" – not their public profile or press releases – recommend their work for inclusion. The common denominator is the Carnegie Community Centre's Thursdays Writing Collective, which was founded by editor Elee Kraljii Gardiner. This is where co-editor John Asfour encountered the circle and where the idea of an anthology took root. The thirty-three authors whose forty works appear here include members of the collective, along with non-members; about a third of the contributions are republished from other venues, from which we may conclude that there are accomplished authors in the group. Given the number of actively productive writers in the DTES, the collection could easily run to several volumes. And this is another thing about the V6A neighbourhood: is there any other community in Vancouver wherein one finds so much creativity? Answer: No.

There is not a single offering in this book that will not touch the reader. In some cases (Cathleen With's "Super Phat Angel Baby" and Henry Doyle's "Death Isn't Lonely," for example), the writing will touch the reader with jumper-cables. Overall, this is not a walk in the park (unless that park is Oppenheimer). The number of stories and accounts and poems that one might categorize as positive, hopeful, or cheerful is tiny. There are haunted nights, averted glances, horrifying surgeries, depression, the spectre of suicide, and cruelty – always the cruelty of people, fate, and gods. Poverty is a constant presence. Regardless of

whether one chooses an austere life in the service of one's art (as in the case of Michael Turner's musicians at "441 Powell") or something that is the lot of poor immigrants, the mad, or the multiply-medicated, if resilience was truly a virtue these tales would rank among the most virtuous imaginable.

Choosing a favourite is a bit like picking out the most appealing pup from a litter of scabby mongrels. There is beauty and love but, sorry kids, no transcendence in the work-a-day horrors that former school teacher Anne Hopkinson recounts in "The Eight Year Olds." Try to read it without crying. Go on. I dare you. Brenda Prince's "Dance Lightly" teaches us how not to judge, no small feat in twenty-two lines. "Immaterial," by Jonina Kirton, similarly shows us standing in the shadows and footprints of others:

what he does not know
is that days earlier
a man stood there only
to fall over the edge
the dead weight
of his despair
dragged him to the bottom

Lara McElhinney writes about invisibility in a way that is utterly without mawkishness: "I wonder about our religion that tells us we are so small, dirty, insignificant, and wrong, and yet so loved. It's a pimp's line, all right" (106). And Irit Shimrat, who, "from gefilte fish / from Manischewitz wine and Strub's pickles," transforms "belongings" into something that approaches "bearings," of which we all lose a few along the way. Wayde Compton provides a unifying comment about needless sentimentality in his encounters with the memory of Hogan's Alley (one of several ghost towns within V6A) and those who used to live there:

"Why, they seem to be saying, do our grandchildren and their friends – mixed, integrated, educated – care about this old alley so much, this place that seems to have been the least of our achievements?" (117).

Is there room for criticism of a collection of such heart and, in many places, anguish? Possibly. V6A, as a neighbourhood, has always been about more than marginality. The editors broaden the geographic reach of V6A but they don't get very far from the street. Would a contribution from a John Fluevog or a Bob Rennie improve the lot? Who knows? Where, though, are the working women and men who wait tables, bash metal, and run little shops? The editors decry the "poorest postal code" epithet, what they call "a schoolyard nickname that won't wear off," and then present a collection of writings that exclude utterly any view of the East End that suggests a robust and functional set of human relations. Gary Geddes is critical of a "rapacious ... and heartless" capitalism, and so am I; but this is a neighbourhood that housed the city's first sawmills: it is where Vancouver capitalism began, where its main boulevard of commerce once was, and it has a voice and a place in V6A as well. The end effect of the collection is to confirm the stereotype: it's a tough place to live. And maybe it is, but that's not the whole story by a long shot.

By way of a final comment, the editors might have addressed the issue of appropriation of voice. In an area that knows something of residential and commercial gentrification, there is a risk that art might be similarly overtaken. As a reader, I am carried by these poems and stories; as a social scientist, a voice inside keeps asking about authenticity. Compton's piece is the only sample of non-fiction in V6A,

or is it? It isn't necessary to say that this poem arose from the author's own and real experience while this story did not; rather, there is honesty and necessity in saying that this is a mix. And then one may say: provenance be damned, all of these contributions bring the reader closer to the chequered soul of this city.

The Encyclopedia of Commercial Drive to 1999

Jak King

Vancouver: The Drive Press, 2012.
584 pp. \$40.00 paper.

VANESSA COLANTONIO
Vancouver

CAFES, PASTA and pizza restaurants, very affordable produce markets, carnivalesque community events, and grassroots political demonstrations: all of these are the kaleidoscope one envisions when picturing the East Side Vancouver neighbourhood of Grandview. The retail and social artery of that neighbourhood has, for well over a century (despite all of the changes over that time), been the busy thoroughfare of Commercial Drive, specifically between the major east-west streets – Venables, to the north, and Broadway, to the south.

In 2011, author and long-time resident of “the Drive,” Jak King, published the first book in his series of very local histories about the neighbourhood: *The Drive: A Retail, Social and Political History of Commercial Drive, Vancouver to 1956*. Very well received by BC and local historians, *The Drive* took one on a fascinating walking tour of the street, filled with stories and anecdotes about places and events, through good times and bad.

Earlier this year, King followed up with a second volume, this one a reference book: *The Encyclopedia of Commercial Drive to 1999*. Less an easy walk down memory lane than a practical research tool, the *Encyclopedia* fills in the fine details about each of the residents and business owners (roughly fifteen thousand total) who lived and worked on the Drive during most of the last hundred years. King gathered the information for the ten thousand-plus alphabetical entries by using a wide variety of local newspapers as well as such historical business and residential directories as *Henderson's* and the once popular library resource *Criss-Cross*. For many entries (e.g., Boulton's Grocery or most of the residential listings), he finds scant information, while for many others (e.g., Frank E. Frost and his business Frost's Dry Goods), his annotations are mini-biographies. In both cases, King draws from the anecdotes of the first book, from articles from the now defunct neighbourhood newspaper the *Highland Echo*, and from the recollections of other long-time residents and local historians.

In his introduction, King points out that “there is no historical narrative or analysis here; just data about a very specific place and time period” (4). True enough, but between both of King's books, particularly the *Encyclopedia*, one can easily see a valuable research source for creating feature articles, documentaries, or even historical fiction or film treatments. This is an all-purpose resource that will benefit many in the years to come.

*The Life and Art of Mildred
Valley Thornton*

Sheryl Salloum

Ganges: Mother Tongue Publishing, 2011. 176 pp. \$39.95 paper.

ERIN RAMLO

University of British Columbia

SHERYL SALLOUM'S new book *The Life and Art of Mildred Valley Thornton* explores why this important BC artist has generally been ignored in the historical record and cultural landscape of this province. Given that she was a prolific local painter, with a career that spanned over forty years, Salloum considers why Thornton may have been left out of our galleries and museums, our stories and our minds. With this text – at once biography, critique, and historical review – Salloum seeks to rectify this stunning omission from British Columbia's artistic canon. She explores both the life and work of the indomitable Mildred Valley Thornton – painter, author, and advocate for BC's First Nations – in this newest edition of Mother Tongue's *Unheralded Artists of BC* series.

Born in 1890 in rural Ontario, Thornton settled in Vancouver in the 1930s and was captivated by the people and spaces of this province. The result was a collection of sweeping and evocative canvases detailing British Columbia's First Nations peoples, communities, and landscapes, which she continued to paint until her death in 1967. Throughout this text, Salloum builds the story of a woman who believed strongly in the artistic, literary, and cultural legacy of her city and province. As a writer for the *Vancouver Sun*, as a member of the Poetry Society and the Community Arts Council,

and as a lecturer and advocate for First Nations communities, Thornton defied the norms and expectations of her time, straddling the line between mother, artist, activist, and public figure.

Using historical documents, the artist's own letters and journals, interviews, and stunning reproductions of her canvases, Salloum crafts a detailed and nuanced image of Thornton, her career, and her reception by both the public and the art world. The text approaches the controversies and questions that surrounded Thornton's work, including the potential for appropriation of First Nations iconography and her being perceived as a dated figurative painter in a world of burgeoning modernism. Salloum includes a detailed account of Thornton's struggle to sell her paintings before her death: she had hoped that the works would remain as one large collection in a public institution and that the proceeds might fund First Nations educational scholarships. Her work, however, was not sufficiently prized by galleries, government, or philanthropists at the time and, rather than living on as a contiguous public historical record, has ended up mostly in the loving hands of a diversity of private collectors.

This is certainly not a theoretical, or even an overly critical, art historical text. It is, however, an informative, well-researched, and engaging book about an artist whom history has, for the most part, forgotten. Salloum's text seeks to recapture and reanimate these beautiful paintings and the story of their artist, thereby allowing readers to decide for themselves where Thornton should sit in the cultural canon of this province and this country. Including, as it does, beautiful full-colour plates, Salloum revives interest in Thornton's

painting in the best way possible – through the work itself.

For, as you flip through this text, there is no denying the painterly skill of Mildred Valley Thornton. There is no denying the sweeping emotional impact of her portraiture or the sheer historical significance of her collection. Politics and stylistics aside, these pieces capture a moment in our collective histories that certainly should not be forgotten.

*The Opening Act: Canadian
Theatre History, 1945-1953*

Susan McNicoll

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2012. 330
pp. \$24.95 paper.

JAMES HOFFMAN

Thompson Rivers University

THE WRITING of Canadian theatre history, as an academic field of study, is a latecomer, with the first wave of academic articles and books appearing only in the mid-1970s, along with the founding of the Association for Canadian Theatre History. In the first decade or so, until wide applications of critical theory added deeper cultural perspectives, many of the books, articles, and conference papers were little more than selected compilations of raw historical data, usually presented with a note of triumphant discovery – as if to say, yes, we have a Canadian theatre and here is convincing evidence that something important happened!

The Opening Act, as a richly detailed record of a hitherto little recorded period in our theatrical history, follows this same course, chronicling many of the personalities and companies of the postwar years until July 1953, when the

Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada opened its first season of plays and marked, for many observers, the beginning of the country's sustaining professional theatre. Susan McNicoll is correct in insisting that there was in fact much professional theatre happening in Canada during the years preceding that "glorious summer" and that its stories need to be told – and celebrated.

And stories she has, many of them, of pioneering and colourful thespians struggling with few theatres in which to perform and perilously miniscule budgets with which to work, nonetheless staging well received productions of popular and, occasionally, Canadian plays. Most companies enjoyed only a scant golden year or two before folding or transmogrifying into another company. An example, described in colourful narrative, is the Ottawa Stage Society, which by its third play, the sell-out hit Shaw's *Pygmalion*, had developed a winning "love affair" with local audiences, surely abetted by exceptionally talented actors such as the eighteen-year-old Christopher Plummer.

But by 1949, with expenses outrunning box office revenues, censorship issues (the company rented the La Salle Academy, a Catholic boys' school, and had to submit scripts to a priest for approval), and failed appeals, the company faced closure – only to be followed by the formation of the Canadian Repertory Theatre, notable for premiering Canadian plays such as Mazo de la Roche's *Whiteoaks* (attended by the Queen Mother) but also sputtering away in financial indebtedness by the mid-1950s.

A major strength of the book is McNicoll's letting the players tell their own stories – indeed, it was the discovery of theatrical clippings of her father, the actor Floyd Caza, that inspired the

book. Accordingly, she interviewed about fifty theatre folk, including major figures like Christopher Plummer, William Hutt, and Amelia Hall, whose testimony alone lends major credence to her point that significant professional stage work was done in this period and that it constituted an important training ground for Canada's subsequent, better known, professional theatre. As Plummer states, in a chapter introduction: "It was one of the proudest, golden times of our kind of identity and creativity."

There are many more figures, lesser known but important ones, some of whom will be familiar or at least certainly of interest to BC readers, such as Thor Arngrim, Dorothy Davies, and Andrew Allan, and there are finely detailed narratives of Vancouver's three important companies in those formative years: Everyman, Totem, and Theatre Under the Stars. This is an indispensable, highly readable compendium of the essential characters of a critical period in our theatrical history. The book is richly illustrated with around four dozen photos, many of them production shots, including some of Floyd Caza, to whom the book is dedicated.

While McNicoll has done very well in assembling the stories, she has not provided much either in the way of documenting her materials or in acknowledging other pertinent sources. She quotes around fifty people, for example, but nowhere indicates the sources or dates of the citations; in addition, important published articles on some of the companies are neither referenced nor suggested as further reading, such as Denis Johnston's article on Totem Theatre in Sherrill Grace and Jerry Wasserman's *Theatre and AutoBiography*, or my own on Everyman Theatre in *BC Studies* (issue 76).

*Architecture and the
Canadian Fabric*

Rodri Windsor Liscombe,
editor

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011. 336 pp.
\$39.95 paper.

CHRISTOPHER MACDONALD
University of British Columbia

BROAD IN SCOPE and filled with both insight and intriguing fact, *Architecture and the Canadian Fabric* positions itself in a productive cleft between architectural and political discussion – discussion largely attentive to the perennial interest in locating our elusive national identity. The breadth of interest is revealed historically, ranging from European settlement through the present, and topically, ranging from the progeny of vernacular culture to aspects of our most privileged material heritage. While varied to an extreme, the contributions overall demonstrate an originality of focus and a persistent attempt to locate architectural production in a complex and often nuanced formative realm.

In both the editorial introduction and subsequent commentary, the overarching theme of the collected essays is pointed in avoiding any claim to being comprehensive; rather, the aim is to suggest that this miscellany of highly specific examinations of Canadian-built fabric carries an implicit sense of nationhood and place symptomatic of our collective mosaic spirit. In the book's inclusion of an extraordinary range of topics, this tactic is no doubt successful, if at odds with an overarching clarity of purpose.

The project represents the outcome of a recent academic symposium and retains evidence of the authors' differing

degrees of confidence. Several chapters read as though they are transcripts of dissertation defences, frustratingly interrupted by innumerable footnotes and efforts to establish intellectual provenance. This unevenness disrupts the ultimate continuity of the text and prompts a lingering question of curatorial discretion.

Against the breadth of concern evidenced in the collection of writing, individual chapters are remarkable for their extreme sense of introspection and topical focus. Very few of the contributions, however, attempt to locate their interests within the larger critical gaze of the collection. For instance, the evocation of “big box” culture is timely and lucid in its own terms, yet draws attention to a topic that could be usefully measured against the wholesale renovation of our cities’ historical cores through the voracious creation of inner-city malls. The thoughtful review of the emergence of the Quebec bungalow type is equally engaging, but how might it be further enriched by reference to, say, the contemporary artefact of the “Vancouver Special”?

Without question a sense of collective context may be inferred by the accumulated reading of the chapters, and the “what if” questions suggested here constructively speak to an element of provocation in the writing. Yet there remains a concern regarding this accomplished work: the question of an intended audience. As a primer for a certain kind of interdisciplinary course in cultural studies, some chapters serve as more explicit points of departure than others – whether in terms of research methodology, critique, or writing – but ultimately the whole remains decidedly uneven.

More positively, this collection serves to entice a more sustained

consideration of the relation between the messy realities of social practice and the production of this thing called architecture. As such, it includes both surprises and delights while providing an important step forward in cultivating critical discourse in an unquestionably fertile field of enquiry.

*Edward S. Curtis, Above the
Medicine Line:
Portraits of Aboriginal Life in
the Canadian West*

Rodger D. Touchie

Vancouver: Heritage House, 2010.
191 pp. \$24.95 cloth.

DAVID MATTISON
Victoria

OF ALL THE dozens of professional photographers who have directed their cameras at North America’s first human settlers, no name is more synonymous with the words “Indian” and “photographer” than that of Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952). During the first three decades of the twentieth century he embarked upon and completed, at great personal and financial sacrifice, a photographic and ethnographic documentation project of selected North American Aboriginal populations. His often truly magnificent photographs, along with oral testimony (including transcribed songs he had recorded on wax cylinders from village elders and others), was supported by the writings of explorers and ethnographers. Sold by subscription as collector tomes, Curtis’s life work was published between 1907 and 1930 in a series of twenty volumes simply entitled *The North American Indian* (NAI).

Each volume was accompanied by a portfolio of photogravure plates. The Northwestern University McCormick Library's set, completely digitized and freely available online both there and through the Library of Congress (photographs only), comprises 1,506 photographs in the volumes and 722 portfolio photographs. On 10 April 2012, a complete subscription set of the NAI was auctioned at Christie's New York for \$2.88 million, double the previous record from seven years ago. The twenty-volume set originally sold for between \$3,000 (1907) and \$4,200 (1924).

Touchie intended his work to fill a gap in the Curtis literature by concentrating on Curtis's years in British Columbia and Alberta. Around two-thirds of the book covers British Columbia, chiefly the coastal communities, and Alberta First Nations. During part of his time in British Columbia in the early 1910s, Curtis also created the first motion picture centred around an Aboriginal population. The Kwakwaka'wakw people starred in a melodramatic screenplay entitled *In the Land of the Headhunters*, which premiered in Seattle and New York in December 1914. This film has its own incredible history and was restored and re-released twice (1974 and 2008, respectively) after a print was first located in 1972. The remainder of the book serves as an introduction to Curtis, the man and the photographer, and his remarkable legacy, the fruits of which he did not live to enjoy since the project essentially left him financially ruined, divorced, and at odds with his brother, Seattle photographer Asahel Curtis (1874-1941), who also worked in British Columbia and, much earlier, in Alaska and Yukon during the Klondike gold rush.

Touchie's book, a fairly handsome and heavy (for its size) presentation due

to glossy paper stock, is not intended as an academic or scholarly reassessment of the Curtis legacy. In some ways, though Ralph Andrews's focus was different, Touchie's analysis and admiration of the Curtis legacy, which has also undergone a new appreciation by some BC First Nations, reminded me of Andrews's book *Curtis' Western Indians* (1962). I found myself often wondering about the dates of certain events and wished for a life chronology, including when each NAI volume was published. Touchie addresses the difficult linguistic issue of First Nations names by including a table of past and present usages for each of the BC and Alberta populations visited by Curtis. While the index enhances the utility of his slim volume, the bibliography, which includes selected websites (one containing a detailed chronology), only covers works referenced by Touchie. Although he reproduces many Curtis images and, through captions, places them within their NAI context, there is no real comparative analysis of Curtis's work against that of other amateur and commercial photographers who were also documenting First Nations cultures in British Columbia and Alberta.

Taking My Life

Jane Rule

Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2011. 277 pp.
\$19.95 paper.

CAMERON DUDER

Vancouver

IN 2008, when researching Canadian women authors, Linda Morra discovered an unpublished autobiography written by Jane Rule

in the 1980s, just before her retirement from writing, in which, with frankness and humour, she recounts her life up to the age of twenty-one. *Taking My Life* is a fascinating account of Rule's early years and a glimpse into the influences on her development as a writer.

Jane Rule was born in 1931 in Plainfield, New Jersey. Her family moved often because of her father's employment, and the book describes their relocation to California, to Chicago, to Missouri, and then again to California. The importance of place in Rule's life is apparent throughout, particularly in her memories of the family summerhouse, "South Fork," where her strong connection to nature was established.

Rule was a keen observer of people, and the book is peppered with witty anecdotes about family interactions. She writes extensively about her brother Arthur, whose erratic behaviour and callousness caused the entire family great distress, and she reveals the pain she felt as their closeness declined and he became indifferent towards her. Rule subjects herself to similarly detailed observation, and she is very candid about anxieties she suffered as a child and her struggles in adolescence. She was mocked about her height – 1.8 metre (six feet) at age twelve – and her deep voice, and she stammered when nervous, resulting in her being fearful and socially awkward.

Rule's intellectual and moral development is a recurring theme in the book. She was intellectually curious, but she had little tolerance for subjects she saw as of little use. Even as a teenager she had a clear sense of purpose. To the dean of Mills College, where she enrolled as a student a month before her seventeenth birthday, she said: "I [want] to learn to understand and then tell the truth. I [want] to be a writer"

(117). Although her anger towards authority and her impetuosity meant that her interactions with teachers and peers were not always smooth, Rule inspired considerable affection, and her transgressions were often treated leniently.

During her adolescence, Rule gradually became aware of her desire for women. At sixteen, she formed a relationship with an older, married woman, Ann Smith, whose portrait of Rule is the book's cover image. Although it was an ambivalent and only sometimes sexual relationship, it was with Ann that she came to the clear realization that she was not attracted to men.

Unlike many a lesbian, Rule did not have schoolgirl crushes but, rather, wanted to be "in the literal sense of the word, remarkable" to her teachers (82). She became close to several of her female teachers who shared her intellectual and artistic interests. She responded to good teachers and, luckily, had several. She wrote: "I was arrogant and hopeful, willing to earn their attention with hard work, passionately loyal to those who taught me well, disdainful and rude to those who didn't" (81). The bluntness for which Rule was known later in life is clearly evident here, in these stories about her younger self.

Taking My Life concludes when Rule is a young adult and has gone abroad with her lover Roussel: "In the cold winter flat ... I made my first real home, learned after a fashion to cook, to entertain friends, to live with a lover and to write my first, unpublished novel. In that process, I also began to learn how to live with the baggage of my life, its rhythms of failure and rebirth" (227). Morra suggests that Rule's autobiography should be seen as a *Künstlerroman*, a story of Rule's

“moral, intellectual, artistic and sexual development. If we accept it as a Künstlerroman, it becomes evident why Rule would conclude [it] with her twenty-first birthday: she had come of age, and had grown into her calling as a professional writer and mature adult” (232).

Taking My Life greatly increases our understanding of the formative years of an author whose contributions to British Columbia were social, political, and legal as well as literary. In addition to her writing, Rule became known for her speaking and activism on lesbian and gay issues, in particular the Little Sister’s Book and Art Emporium’s legal case against Canada Customs. Rule would eventually publish numerous novels, short stories and essays, but she regarded her first novels as unpublishable. Her breakout work, *DESERT OF THE HEART* (1964), which proved to be her most famous novel and, in the 1980s, was made into an internationally celebrated film, was not published until Rule was in her thirties. By the age of twenty-one, however, Rule had known she was a writer. *Taking My Life* helps us to understand how she got there.

*Long Beach Wild: A Celebration
of People and Place on Canada’s
Rugged Western Shore*

Adrienne Mason

Vancouver: Greystone Books,
Douglas and McIntyre Publishers,
Inc., 2012. 192 pp. \$24.95 paper.

PHILIP VAN HUIZEN
University of British Columbia

Long Beach Wild is the kind of book that academics are often quick

to dismiss. It’s popular history, after all (academics, of course, preferring unpopular histories), by a freelance writer whose many previous works include children’s stories, tales about shipwrecks and sea monsters off Vancouver Island, and a science book about spiders. Almost predictably, Mason makes no attempt to situate *Long Beach Wild* within any larger literature; indeed, Bruce Braun’s *The Intemperate Rainforest* (2002), arguably the most influential academic work that focuses on the same northwest coast of Vancouver Island, doesn’t even make it into the bibliography. But Mason’s take on Long Beach is more than “just” a popular history. Having lived in Tofino for the past twenty years, Long Beach has basically been part of Mason’s backyard, and, as its subtitle suggests, her book is a thoughtful “celebration” of her attachment to the place and a look at others who have felt the same.

After a quick summary of the area’s geological and Aboriginal history, Mason dedicates the bulk of her attention to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus we learn of fur trading, gold rushes, shipwrecks, ranching efforts, RCAF bases, resort tourism, hippies, and, finally, Long Beach’s transition into Pacific Rim National Park in 1971. The stories are told in a positive fashion, although Mason does deal empathetically with the forced relocation of Japanese residents during the Second World War and the displacement of long-time residents like Peg Whittington when the area became a national park. Peppered throughout are Mason’s personal experiences tramping all over the “greater Long Beach area” as well as little vignettes that explain the workings of such phenomena as sea otters, mud flats, and surf schools.

Mason is at her best when she's writing about the type of things that have been her bread and butter for a long time. She has a knack for making even sea kelp and tree bark fascinating, and she does a wonderful job of explaining how humans and the non-human world have interacted throughout Long Beach's history. I'm not sure, exactly, what her argument is about this relationship between people and place, beyond that one exists, but the stories are interesting enough that I often forgot about this quibble.

My larger criticism, though, has to do with Mason's treatment of Aboriginal history in the area, which seems incomplete. As Mason herself tells the reader, the only people still allowed to reside in Pacific Rim National Park are the members of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations who live in Esowista, an ancient village just a stone's throw from Long Beach. Their ancestors have a prominent place in the opening chapters of the book, but the twentieth-century history of the Tla-o-qui-aht who continue to call Esowista home is left virtually untold. A better engagement with the recent past of this community would have made for a more inclusive "celebration."

As it is, though, *Long Beach Wild* is a beautifully written book by an obviously passionate resident. It will be of interest to anyone familiar with the area as well as to those who enjoy Vancouver Island history.

Texada Tapestry: A History

Heather Harbord

Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing,
2011. 288 pp. \$32.95 cloth.

*Edge of the Sound: Memoirs of a
West Coast Log Salvager*

Jo Hammond

Halfmoon Bay: Caitlin Press, 2011.
272 pp. \$24.95 paper.

*The Sunshine Coast from
Gibsons to Powell River*

Howard White

Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing,
2012. 160 pp. \$34.95 cloth.

HOWARD STEWART

University of British Columbia

HEATHER HARBORD'S *Texada Tapestry: A History* is the only one of these three books that calls itself "a history." Yet together they illustrate the remarkable range of local histories coming out of coastal British Columbia. Jo Hammond's *Edge of the Sound: Memoirs of a West Coast Log Salvager* is an intensely personal history of forty years of life, love, and death while chasing stray logs on the shores of Howe Sound. Howard White's updated *The Sunshine Coast from Gibsons to Powell River* is another in Harbour's series of "coffee table books with content" on different regions around the inland sea, and it offers the usual bit of history along with everything else – geography, current affairs, gossip, and just plain interesting tidbits. Together the three tomes present a rich collage of

settler life on the east side of the Strait, north of the big smoke.

"Texada Tapestry" is a misnomer; it is more of a well-written patchwork than a tapestry: first a tiny bit of pre-contact Aboriginal history and natural history, then a detailed history of resource exploitation on the Strait's largest island, and finally an extensively researched social history. Harbord's own deep history as a former geology librarian at London's Royal School of Mines serves her well. The long list of mining and quarrying operations that have transformed the face of Texada Island since the 1880s – iron, gold, copper, limestone – is richly documented. We learn of the overblown "Texada iron scandal" that brought down Premier Amor de Cosmos moments after British Columbia had joined Confederation and of the more substantive gold and copper boom that put the town of Van Anda on the map by the turn of the century. Harbord's descriptions of these and many other mining stories are thoroughly researched and engagingly written. The island's logging story, though important for the place, is less unique on the shores of the Strait of Georgia than is Texada's prolific mining. The logging section suffers a bit from the author's greater distance from the subject. Could Texada's forest industry really already be reaping the benefits of climate change?

On our way through the mining and logging stories we learn a little about the labour and racial tensions that emerged among the island's often large communities of miners and loggers. But the real social history only starts when we switch to a chronological account of "Texada's People." Like the resource history, it is mostly an interesting read that reflects the author's many interviews with several generations of island people. The division between the

mining and logging stories, on the one hand, and the "people's stories," on the other, is too sharply drawn, and this is the main weakness of an otherwise well-wrought book. Harbord's decision to organize her rich material this way is understandable. Turning this patchwork history into an integrated hybrid would have taken considerably more time. Perhaps this will be the second edition?

Jo Hammond, like Heather Harbord, is a transplanted Briton with a "royal" connection (Hammond was in the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir). Hammond's, like Harbord's, is also a very local history. That's where the similarities between the two books end. Hammond's memoir from the "edge of the Sound" is a close-up story of the life of an immigrant woman who meets a local log salvager and then embraces him and his life of pulling valuable stray logs from the chuck. I must admit I never watched the renowned Bruno Gerussi's version of life as a professional beachcomber on these waters, but I suspect that Jo Hammond's account is rather more accurate. This is a story, as environmental historian Richard White would say, of people who knew their environment through work not play (though there are some fishing and hunting scenes too). There is clearly love for the place, this beautiful western edge of the sound, but it is a place that serves humans and not the other way around: it is not a pristine wilderness to be cherished like brittle china.

Most of the love in Hammond's story is for a person, not a place. In fact, her book reads more like a diary than a memoir, and this is both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. It is "herstory" and the story of the love of Hammond's life, told not by a great writer but by a woman remembering a rich life shared with one who is

suddenly no longer there. Along the way we learn a lot about log salvaging and life on the lower Sechelt Peninsula. Despite a wealth of dialogue the prose is curiously flat in many places. All is forgotten, though, in the reader's fascination with Hammond's final dialogue as her now dead husband begins to amiably haunt her with his irrepressible mix of cryptic practical advice and wry humour.

Howard White's book is a robust and quirky blend of pictures, facts, and anecdotes about the Sunshine Coast meant to help us see the bigger picture amidst a thousand smaller ones, a cosmopolitan sweep all the way from the eastern shore of Howe Sound to the southern reaches of Desolation Sound. It reflects White's life as a resident of Pender Harbour, square in the middle of the coast about which he writes, and his career as editor of the press that has published most of the histories written about it in recent years.

As in this book's 1996 edition, White has mostly organized his material geographically from Gibsons, Sechelt, Pender Harbour, Jervis Inlet, and Powell River. This distribution betrays his bias in favour of those parts from Jervis Inlet south. Whatever the place, White makes masterful use of the stories of local residents – Aboriginals, writers, loggers, artists, loafers, entrepreneurs, and many more – past and present. Every page is graced with high-quality colour images that tell their own parallel stories, sometimes related to the text but more often not.

In his long introductory section, White works hard to explain the unique character of this beautiful, convoluted stretch of shoreline. Like many over the years, he prefers to view the redolent histories of great industrial enterprises that have emerged in places like Van Anda, Powell River, and Port

Melon as anomalies. He hints that such occasional incursions from the industrial world outside – places where “muckers” will spend their lives – are not true reflections of the trenchantly independent, bohemian, and laid back “loafer” soul of the place. I fear White is indulging in wishful thinking here and that the personality of the place in the twenty-first century will remain rather more schizophrenic than that. The often damp Sunshine Coast will continue to suffer fits of intense industrialization of the sort one sees on Malaspina Strait and Howe Sound, cheek by jowl with the anarchistic, artistic, and sybaritic impulses expressed by places like Roberts Creek and Pender Harbour. No, struggles between the muckers and the loafers are not done yet – witness the Sechelt peoples' inexorable dismantling of the gravelly hills behind town. But this is probably not the right message to incorporate in a book destined, by its glossy format and despite its many cogent insights, to live far more on coffee tables than in university libraries.

