

*Historical Atlas of British Columbia and the
Pacific Northwest: Maps of Exploration*

Derek Hayes

Vancouver: Cavendish Books, 1999. 208 pp. Illus., maps. \$49.95 cloth.

BY PETER H. WOOD

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HISTORICAL ATLASES RESEMBLE art exhibits. They draw together numerous images in suggestive new patterns or familiar old ways, and they provide written commentary in the form of extensive interpretation or minimal references. They focus on a narrow subject and brief period or they follow a theme across broad sweeps of time and space. They offer careful viewers a whole array of visual and intellectual connections and insights, confirming or challenging prior expectations. And, at best, the creator of a good atlas, like the curator of a fine exhibit, draws in a wide audience with varied interests, backgrounds, and attention spans. These patrons are fascinated, surprised, and engaged, and they leave wanting to return and venture through the display again. "There was so much there," they say; "I simply couldn't take it all in on the first visit."

Interested readers will make more than one visit to Derek Hayes's *Historical Atlas of British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest*, which takes as its subject the complex region of Alaska, Yukon Territory, British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon, or "roughly the area that remained unknown on the maps of the world until the late eighteenth century" (8). Readers are greeted at the start by an apt quote from George Bowering: "Geography writes history on the

northwest coast of America" (2), and the entire book represents an extensive proof of that theorem. Some atlases use chapters to designate sections, just as some art exhibits employ different rooms to display specific themes or cover separate periods. But if this atlas were a map exhibition, it would fill one vast hall, for Hayes discusses and illustrates over 130 subjects, one after another, sometimes several to a page, without any decisive breaks. His topics begin with the cartographic speculations that preceded the eighteenth-century Pacific voyages of Vitus Bering, James Cook, and George Vancouver, and they end with the Alaska boundary settlement of 1903 and completion of the Canadian Northern Railway in 1915.

It has been nearly 120 years since Hubert Howe Bancroft published his *History of the Northwest Coast* (1884) and more than sixty years since the appearance of Henry R. Wagner's *Cartography of the Northwest Coast to the Year 1800* (1937). Scores of useful primary and secondary sources have appeared since then, and many are cited in the book's ample bibliography. Hayes has used recent scholarship in composing his succinct and informative entries. Moreover, he has selected each image in terms of its historical significance, visual interest, and narrative value, reminding us that in the end "the choice is ultimately a personal

one, tempered by availability" (7). The end result is a varied and informative array of illustrations from well over 300 historical maps (180 in colour) plus an assortment of additional photographs and engravings.

This affordable book introduces us to scores of maps – large and small, famous and obscure – and puts them into fascinating context. We learn which Russian charts Cook carried with him and why David Thompson's maps were so accurate. We see several of the rare maps laid out by First Peoples, such as the schematic outline of the Continental Divide, provided by the Blackfoot chief, Ackomokki, to a Hudson's Bay Company surveyor in 1801. We also see the fantastical side that is an integral part of exploration: early editions of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift included a careful map that located his land of Brobdingnag off the Northwest Coast, just beyond the equally mythical

Straits of Anian.

On the one hand, this is not the kind of cartographic survey, complete with detailed references for each map, that appears in classic studies of other regions, such as the recently revised third edition of William P. Cumming's *The Southeast in Early Maps* (1998). Nor, on the other hand, does this book offer the demanding, expensive, and tremendously useful maps that modern cartographers create to shed fresh light on historical issues and developments. For that one must turn to works such as the impressive *Historical Atlas of Canada* (which, strangely, Hayes does not cite). But volumes like this one help provide the groundwork for more specialized studies. Helen Hornbeck Tanner edited her intriguing international *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* in 1987. Perhaps someone is now at work on a similar border-spanning volume for the First Nations of the Northwest Coast.

*Islands of Truth:
The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island*

Daniel W. Clayton

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000. 330 pp. Illus., maps. \$85 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

BY RICHARD WHITE
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ISLANDS OF TRUTH is an important, imaginative, and provocative book that sails in the long wake of Michel Foucault and Edward Said. Daniel Clayton is less interested in what really happened in the imperial encounter between the British and the Nuu-cha-nulth peoples of Vancouver Island than in the variety of truths

about the encounter constructed from experience and ideology. The power to narrate – “to sustain some truths about land and people and to denigrate and marginalize others – is a constitutive feature of Western dominance.”

Clayton takes these normal post-colonial concerns and adds a sensitivity