

critics by saying: "When people talk to me about the lonely cry of the steam whistle in the middle of the night on the prairie, I say bullshit!"

The steam whistle has given way to the airhorn. The water tanks are all gone. The grain elevators, for decades the trademark of the prairie landscape, are rapidly vanishing. Fortunately, all these important artefacts of our Canadian heritage are faithfully preserved in this book.

Nicholas Morant's Canadian Pacific is an important addition to the historical literature of the CPR and, indeed, of Canada. It advertises itself as a book of photographs – as a book to be shared and enjoyed. But, in fact, it achieves a

much greater objective. It is a book that gives us more than just enjoyment. By using the medium of photography, a medium whose truthfulness and objectivity would be difficult to surpass, it documents the evolution of a great Canadian enterprise – one that, for over a century, pervaded every aspect of Canadian life, be it economic, political, or social. This book helps to preserve part of a vanishing Canadian heritage – the CPR steam trains that did so much to unite and develop Canada as a nation. Our profound gratitude goes not only to Morant, but also to Garden and all those dedicated individuals who helped to craft this wonderful work.

*The Forgotten Side of the Border:
British Columbia's Elk Valley and Crownsnest Pass*

Wayne Norton and Naomi Miller, editors

Kamloops: Plateau, 1998. 238 pp. Illus., map. \$19.95 paper.

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EARLY writing of BC history arose out of the pride of local residents in what they saw as the accomplishments of the comparatively short span of settler society. It reflected mainstream British Columbians' preoccupation with their own province and a traditional "million-miles-from-Ottawa" feeling (applicable also, on this marginal edge of European colonization, to London and New York). With the rise of institutions like the provincial library and archives and, later, the universities and colleges, scholarly insights have taken their place alongside popular history.

Strangely enough, British Columbia academic history has been a bit of a "scholarly deficit" field. Many of those trained in provincial history departments have sought their research topics in other specialties, while British Columbia has not had the influx of scholars from other areas and schools that has characterized, say, the twentieth-century study of the Canadian Prairies. The result has been a small number of academic historians confronting a dauntingly large endeavour.

Yet, in many respects, this picture is a lopsided one. British Columbians, as Margaret Ormsby, the doyenne of

BC historians, has reminded us, have always been literate – an immense body of popular history exists in tandem with academic writings. Some members of the academy have rejected these works, arguing that methodological deficiencies make them less than useful. This view, in itself, reflects a parochialism that they often condemn in non-academic writers. It also sounds somewhat like a case of sour grapes – envy at the much wider reception of popular works than of academic tomes: Pierre Berton rather than George Glazebrook or even Harold Innis. Popular historians, especially locally based ones, are not deserving of such condescension. They bring to their task an arguably superior sense of place and of the historical concerns of their fellow citizens. In any case, history as a discipline has been (and should continue to be) open to anyone prepared to make a strict examination of evidence without requiring either the Latin tags of lawyers or the special jargon of the social scientist. What the future writing of BC history in particular demands is the collaboration of academic and popular historians, a joint effort that can be productive in every sense.

The Forgotten Side of the Border presents the results of just such a collaboration exemplified in the persons of the editors and backed up by the list of contributors. Editors are Wayne Norton, who has graduate training in history and scholarly publications to his credit, and Naomi Miller, an enthusiastic historian of the region and long-time editor of the *B. C. Historical News*. “The forgotten side” is the British Columbia part of the Crowsnest Pass-Elk Valley corridor on the south-eastern border of the province, whose historical treatment the authors con-

sider to have been neglected, both compared to the rich literature dealing with the Alberta side and as a part of the BC historical record. This neglect they set out to rectify, at least in part.

The text is divided into two parts, the first giving a general picture of the area. Several of its articles are by professionally trained historians and present a conventional picture of “development” – stories of entrepreneurs like William Fernie, James Baker, and Michael Phillipps, and stories of the creation of railways and coal mines. However, also included in this section is an intriguing article by Noel Ratch, which neatly dissects the legend of a “curse” allegedly put by the Ktunaxa people on settler activities.

The heart of the book is Part 2, which features the often colourful highlights of individual communities, although these again echo patterns of birth, life, and death common to BC resource towns. The stories of the little settlements that came and went often consist of reminiscences by former citizens or accounts pieced together from fragmentary sources. The histories of hospitals and hotels, hockey teams and cultural groups, appear side by side with grim accounts of the mine disasters and the labour strife that haunt coalfields. Most captivating are the brief recollections of tiny places like Crowsnest – three pages that may be its only appearance in the historical record. Others, better known, like Michel, Natal, and Hosmer, also get their due. Overall, the pieces by sixteen of the twenty-four contributors give a picture of change, interesting in itself, but also available to be melded into larger studies of provincial history.