

*The Greater Vancouver Book: An Urban Encyclopaedia*

Chuck Davis, Editor

Vancouver: Linkman, 1997. 882 pp. Illus., maps. \$39.95 paper.

*The Georgia Strait: What the Hell Happened?*

Naomi Pauls and Charles Campbell

Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1997, 199 pp. Illus. \$19.95 paper.

BY JONATHAN BAKER, J.D., *Vancouver*

Chuck Davis is a man of prodigious talents. In addition to being a great limericist, Davis is a journalist, a television personality, and a compulsive collector of facts. *The Greater Vancouver Book* is a tribute to both his love of history and his administrative talents. This urban encyclopaedia boasts more than 200 writers and nearly 400 articles covering history, environment, politics, clocks, boats, personalities – the works.

The scope is prodigious and intriguing. Some of the best historical pieces in the book are by Davis himself, who applies an investigative reporter's discipline. The problem with a few of the items by others is that this discipline is sometimes lacking.

Gillian Lunde's history of Science World begins in the middle. She starts with a deserved tribute to Barbara Brink and the Junior League of Vancouver but suggests that the dream of establishing a science centre began in 1977. Science World actually began in 1973. The fathers of the organization were Maurice Egan and Ernie Fladell who, with funding obtained by a Local Initiatives Program (LIP) grant, set up an Arts and Sciences Centre. A serious omission is the role of Haig Farris. Without Farris's herculean efforts, the institution would not exist.

Catherine Gouley's history of Granville Island appropriately acknowledges the role of Ron Basford, the federal minister who steered the project through Cabinet, and Russel Brink, the staff person who reported to the Granville Island Trust. She should have mentioned the western head of CMHC, King Ganong, and the first trust, all of whom had far more to do with the concept and its implementation than is ever acknowledged. Architect Norm Hotson is generally credited with the concept. It was, however, Ganong and the trust who gave Hotson his instructions to come up with a scheme that preserved the road system, the scale, and the industrial character of the island.

The book provides an impressive chronicle of cultural institutions. There are, however, some major omissions. For example, there is virtually no mention of the Vancouver Academy of Music. Scant reference is paid to the process by which federal LIP grants, conceived by the Trudeau government to create municipal leaf-raking jobs, were used to develop cultural programs. The Vancouver Social Planning Department was the first in Canada to use these funds to make work for unemployed artists. The money was administered by an

advisory committee that included Jack Shadbolt, Arthur Erickson, Tony Emory, and critics Max Wyman and Christopher Defoe. Out of this came Canada's first Art Bank, the Contemporary Art Gallery, the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Science World, the Children's Festival, Tamanhus Theatre, City Stage, and the first *Vancouver Book* itself – to mention a few.

Donna-Jean MacKinnon's biographical sketch of Vancouver's mayors furnishes an interesting look at the long list of people occupying that largely ceremonial position. A reference to some of the top bureaucrats would have been even more interesting. Cecil Green, the founder of Texas Instruments, once explained in a *Science World* speech that he intended to locate that company in British Columbia but had so much trouble getting permits from the city engineer of the day that he and his wife hopped in their Model A Ford and went off to Texas. Given their importance it is curious that there is no mention of the city managers who have actually run the city. The index makes no reference to Fritz Bowers, who became the city manager in the mid-seventies, or to joint managers Gerald Sutton-Brown and Lorne Ryan, both of whom held the city in an iron grip until Mayor Art Phillips brought in his own cultural revolution.

Ernie Fladell contributes an article on festivals. He covers his own substantial contributions admirably but leaves the impression that everything started the year he was hired to run the Children's Festival which, in fact, had been started two years earlier. Very little mention is made of the Vancouver International Festival, which brought in virtuoso artists from around the world at a time when

Vancouver had about five good restaurants and mostly amateur theatre.

*The Georgia Straight: What the Hell Happened?* chronicles the transition of the *Georgia Straight* from an underground newspaper to Vancouver's alternative paper. One gets the impression from Part One (1967-1972) that only the unreadable happened in the early seventies. Dr Eugene Schoenfeld's syndicated columns, in which he answers questions such as whether "to attempt to become an auto-fellatioist – would be stretching things too far," are as good as it gets. Alderman Harry Rankin contributes a letter in 1967 – "What Makes a Hippie" – in which he tries to figure it all out. "This 'opting out' doesn't make sense to me," he says earnestly. "I believe we can only make society better by chipping in and doing our share." I scanned the early years for something quotable. An anonymous letter-writer reviewing a satirical effort entitled "Anne Panders" described it as "unbelievably juvenile ejaculation." That pretty well sums up Part One (1967-1972).

The paper's adolescent years include a mix of writers such as Stan Persky and Tom Shandel. "What Makes Bruce Eriksen Run," by John Faustmann offers a few insights into the late councillor. Bob Mercer's piece on the opening of the Arthur Eriksen court house, and his prediction that after a year everyone would hate it, is at least readable. A column by none other than Doug Collins of *North Shore News* notoriety excoriates artists on the grant circuit as welfare bums. Ho hum.

Then it happened. The *Straight*, in about 1986, metamorphosed into one of Canada's best alternative papers. Strangely, the collection does not include any of the commentaries by its

staffer Charlie Smith, who is a distinguished journalist, investigative reporter, and analyst by any standard. John Master's "Stupidville," dealing with the 1994 Robson Street Riot, is an intelligent piece of writing and is in marked contrast to the *Straight's* coverage of the Gastown riots about twenty years earlier. The "Green Shadow," by Andrew Struthers, earns comparison with columns by Mordecai Richler. He describes his arrest and subsequent trial during a Clayoquot protest. While he is asleep in his underwear the police suddenly arrive.

I sat up. Right in front of me a Zodiac hit the beach. Five cops in bright red survival suits spilled out. Still groggy from sleep, I ran into the bush wearing only my underpants.

I had imagined the scene of my arrest very differently. Back in town, I'd pictured it this away:

me and the police would talk it over, then they'd nod and slap the cuffs on me in a matter of fact way. Since I'd arrived at the camp, a second fantasy had eclipsed the first. In it, I was dragged from under the bumper of a logging truck while cameras rolled and loggers cursed and my eco-buddies sang "One Tin Soldier" in the background. But this was like nothing I'd ever imagined. I was being chased through the bush in my underpants, and not a camera in sight.

As I marvelled at the difference between fantasy and reality, I noticed Pierre, the local cop, coming through the trees. He was tracking me, just like a Mountie in some old movie. Then I thought, "Hey ... he really *is* a Mountie. And I'm his man!" I was trapped in the dark underbelly of the Canadian Dream.

*Fur Traders from New England:  
The Boston Men in the North Pacific, 1787-1800*

Briton C. Busch and Barry M. Gough, Editors

Spokane: Clark, 1997. Northwest Historical Series 18.

137 pp. US\$29.50 cloth.

BY JAMES P. DELGADO, *Vancouver Maritime Museum*

**T**he maritime fur trade was the first European commercial incursion into British Columbia's waters. Beginning in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the trade opened the Northwest Coast of North America to a Pacific Rim and Atlantic economic system. It also had a profound and lasting impact on the region's Native inhabitants, who were active partners in the trade.

The maritime fur trade of the Northwest Coast has been the subject of a number of works in both the United States and Canada, most recently James R. Gibson's *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods* (1992) and Richard Somerset Mackie's *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (1997).

In *Fur Traders from New England: The Boston Men in the North Pacific*,