

*Kindling the Spark, The Era of One-Room Schools:  
An Anthology of Teachers' Experiences*

Vancouver: British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association, 1996.  
212 pp. Map. \$19.50 paper. (BCRTA, 550 W. 6th Avenue,  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2)

BY PATRICK A. DUNAE, *Malaspina University-College*

When the BC Retired Teachers' Association was established in 1945, Max Cameron was completing his landmark *Inquiry into Educational Finance*. The provincial government accepted Cameron's recommendations and, in 1946, over 600 school districts were consolidated into seventy-four large administrative units. In the process, hundreds of small rural and assisted schools, many of them one- or two-room structures, were closed.

At the time, the public welcomed the new order. Many of the old schools were primitive affairs, and consolidation meant that rural children could enjoy some of the educational amenities that had previously been the preserve of "lucky city kids." But there was much to be said about the old days, when schools and communities, teachers and pupils, were closely connected. With that in mind, and to mark its fiftieth anniversary, the BCRTA recently asked its members to share their memories of their first years of teaching. A selection of their responses forms the heart of this charming and evocative book.

All told, over sixty contributions are included. Most of the submissions are brief, two- or three-page sketches. Ten of them are about teaching in the prairie provinces, one (the longest) recounts Bernard Gillie's experiences as a school inspector in the Arctic in the 1950s; one (the most academic) is a reprint of an article by Thomas

Fleming and Carolyn Smyly on the indomitable Lottie Bowron, who served as British Columbia's Rural Female Teachers' Welfare Officer between 1929 and 1934. The majority of the contributions are reminiscences from teachers who taught in this province, in remote places like Loos and Pass Creek, between 1919 and 1945. Three-quarters of the sketches are written by women.

The main features of their stories may be familiar to readers of this journal, from the scholarly works of Professors Barman, Calam, Fleming, Sheehan, Sutherland, and Wilson. Some of the ground in this book has also been covered in *Floating Schools and Frozen Ink Wells* (1985) by Joan Adams and Becky Thomas. But there is a freshness and vitality here, a sense of immediacy and intimacy, that has not been captured elsewhere.

The book is rich in detail. Consider, for example, Kory Callaghan's recollections of the school at Chezacut in the 1920s:

There were ten regulation desks in assorted sizes, teacher's desk and chair, a four-foot high heater and big wood box, homemade painted blackboard and a sand-table, something I was never to see in any other classroom; a few shelves holding some government textbooks, a box of plasticine, and not much else except a bucket for water and a cup. (13)

One teacher recalls how her mastery of the Maclean Method of Writing landed her her first job at Heriot Bay on Quadra Island; another how Doukhobour parents in Glade berated her for promoting militarism when she lined up children for a relay race on Sport's Day.

Some of the teachers report petty injustices, but in the main they have fond recollections of school trustees and inspectors. Indeed, perhaps the most striking aspect of this anthology is its up-beat and affirmative tone. "My heart still warms at the memory of those happy years" (44) is a typical comment.

One closes this book with a sense that, for many practitioners teaching in rural schools was not so much a searing experience as it was a character-building one. Eleanor Anderson, who taught in floating schools on Desolation Sound and Toba Inlet in the 1930s, conveys the sentiments of many of her colleagues in this book:

Those first three years of my teaching career gave me many experiences I had never expected to have. Besides the ones I have recounted, I learned to teach ten grades in a one-room school, to deal with a very backward child who was constantly beaten by his father, to walk boomsticks, to row a boat, to enjoy boating, to understand a bit about the logging industry and to appreciate the beauty of British Columbia. I also came to realize that I loved teaching, and knew I had made the right decision when I decided to attend the Vancouver Normal School (79).

This anthology was compiled under the leadership of Gale Lindenthaler, with the assistance of Lillian HOLETON and Loma Robb. *Kindling the Spark* is illustrated with photographs and enlivened with pen- and ink-drawings by Sarah Walker.

### *The Maritime Defence of Canada*

Roger Sarty

Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996. 223 pp. Illus., maps. \$20. paper. (Vanwell Publishing, 1 Northrup Crescent, St Catherines, ON L2R 7S2)

### *Jericho Beach and the West Coast Flying Boat Stations*

Chris Weicht

Chemainus: MCW Enterprises, 1997. 288 pp. Illus., maps. \$39.95 paper. (Chris Weicht, Box 85, Chemainus V0R 1K0).

BY PETER N. MOOGK, *University of British Columbia*

**H**istory is a matter of perspective. James A. Boutillier's collection of papers, *RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968* (1982), provides

the view of retired senior naval officers as well as of academic writers. That collection might be styled the view from the ship's bridge. Roger Sarty's