

*Vancouver Voters, 1886: A Biographical Dictionary*, edited and compiled by Peter S. N. Claydon, Valerie A. Melanson, and members of the British Columbia Genealogical Society. Richmond: British Columbia Genealogical Society, 1994. xviii, 903 pp. Photos, map. \$75.00 paper.

Scholarship comes in many forms. We usually move from conceptualization to primary research to reconceptualization into publishable form. The end product is some distance from the primary research underlying it, just as the research process has likely moved the project away from its initial conceptualization. With *Vancouver Voters*, the authors have stopped somewhere between the second and the third stages of scholarship. The end result is still quite close to the primary research stage, meaning that we can each integrate relevant information into our own projects. We are not dependent on the authors for reconceptualization and interpretation.

*Vancouver Voters, 1886*, compiled under the auspices of the British Columbia Genealogical Society (BCGS), contains biographical vignettes and genealogies for about 415 of the 528 persons on the first Vancouver voters list, which was compiled in October 1886. For the remainder, all that was located was property owned or some other such basis of voter qualification. The typical largish entry also includes a biographical sketch, along with birth, marriage, and death dates for the voter and his family and descendants so far as possible up to the present day.

The voters' list was, of course, a skewed document that in no way equated to the Vancouver population of the day. The young city, which was spun into existence by the completion of the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), only extended from the waterfront south to 16th Avenue, west to Trafalgar, and east to Heatley. Its thousand or so residents did not equate either to the 499 who voted in the first civic election in May or to the 528 making it onto the first voters' list, which was compiled after the fact. According to the Vancouver charter of incorporation, "male or fem sole of the full age of 21 years being a freeholder, householder for at least six months pervious to such election, or preemtor or leaseholder for a term of not less than six months resident within the said city shall be entitled to vote, but no fem sole shall be qualified to sit or vote as mayor or alderman." In other words, residence was not a requirement if one were a property owner, and many on the list were absentee landlords and/or speculators. Just five women were on the voters' list.

It is the biases in the voters' list that makes the volume fascinating reading, rather like constructing a jigsaw puzzle on the exercise of power. What did it mean that CPR promoters Donald Smith and Richard Angus, and such household names in British Columbia history as John Robson, Robert Dunsmuir, and the Oppenheimer brothers, voted alongside long-time Burrard Inlet residents Ben Springer and Joseph Mannion and likely newcomer "Mrs. M. A. Coffey," a woman whom even the BCGS could not track down?

The research that went into *Vancouver Voters, 1886* is overwhelming. Footnotes confirm the authenticity of each piece of information, thus maximizing its utility. The research model used to link past and present is exemplary in terms of the now-familiar dialectic between freedom of information and right to privacy. In the first stage of research, BCGS members scoured the public record, including the City of Vancouver Archives, newspapers, and cemetery lists. In the second, descendants who could be located were invited to fill out, in as much detail as possible, a questionnaire on their family. Another round of research confirmed the accuracy of responses to the questionnaire and followed up new leads. Descendants were then asked to check the resulting family history for accuracy, confidentiality, and omissions. In practice, only a small minority of descendants could be tracked down.

As a work of genealogy, *Vancouver Voters, 1886* is a tour de force. Its date of publication was originally scheduled to coincide with the 1986 Vancouver centennial, but it did not appear until nine years later. There was always one more branch of a family to locate, one more birth or death date to verify. The BCGS's decision to bring families up to the present day also extended the task, perhaps a bit more than was necessary to reveal the significance of the 1886 voters' list. Nonetheless, we are all in the BCGS's debt.

*University of British Columbia*

JEAN BARMAN

*On the Highest Hill*, by Roderick Haig-Brown. Introduction by Laurie Ricou. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1994. Photos. xxvii, 319 pp. \$27.95 cloth; \$15.95 paper.

Best known for his naturalist writing and juvenile fiction, genres which have not received much serious consideration in the Canadian literary canon, Roderick Haig-Brown also wrote two adult novels: