

Salmon: Our Heritage, by Cicely Lyons. Vancouver: British Columbia Packers Limited and Mitchell Press, 1969. 768 pp. \$12.50.

Salmon: Our Heritage is the most recent evidence of a heightened interest by laymen and academics in the history of British Columbia's salmon industry. Acquisition of the early records of J. H. Todd and Sons and the Anglo-British Columbia Packing Company, theses by Keith Ralston (*The 1900 Strike of Fraser River Sockeye Salmon Fishermen*) and W. M. Ross (*Salmon Cannery Distribution on the Nass and Skeena Rivers of British Columbia, 1877-1926*), and Hugh McKervill's book, *The Salmon People*, all have contributed to this renewed interest. Ralston and Ross concern themselves with particular problems of the salmon canning industry on the Fraser and Nass and Skeena rivers. McKervill's book is a well-written, though controversial attempt to portray the type of people involved in the industry. Lyons' volume has a much broader purpose — she attempts to analyze the first one hundred years of the salmon industry in British Columbia. The author, an employee of British Columbia Packers Limited, was indeed fortunate that her position afforded consultation with many documents of that company hitherto unavailable to historians. On the basis of such information, as well as the valuable document collections in the Provincial Library at Victoria and the Special Collections Library at the University of British Columbia, together with the varied number of university theses and other published works, one could reasonably expect a definitive history of the industry.

Lyons documents the areal expansion of salmon canning along the British Columbia coast, the increase in the number of cases and species canned and the rise in the number of canneries that persisted into the 1920's. Case studies describe the history of early canneries and the pioneer efforts of entrepreneurs such as Alexander Ewen, Henry Bell-Irving and Henry Doyle who founded and developed the industry during its infancy. In these case studies the author focuses her attention on changes in ownership, production records and local management with particular reference to the canneries that were eventually incorporated into British Columbia Packers Limited. In the latter half of the book Lyons describes some of the technological advances in the salmon canning industry and the diversification of company production away from a total dependency on salmon together with the concomitant and progressive decline in the number of canneries and increasing concentration of canneries in the Vancouver and Prince Rupert areas. Included throughout the book is the fascinating history of British Columbia Packers and its gradual domination of the

salmon industry in the province; the introduction of untried products into markets in Eastern Canada, Europe and other areas of the world; and the problems of a declining industry in a province that is still largely dependent on the primary processing of raw materials.

The author makes some attempt to correlate development of the salmon industry with the economic, social and political life of the province. The close association between important men of the salmon industry such as R. P. Rithet, J. A. Laidlaw and J. H. Todd and the rise of Victoria as the centre of the province's economic and social life gave the salmon industry an aura of respectability and a degree of political influence. Later with the formation of limited companies, the emergence of Vancouver as centre for the industry and the rise of lumbering and mining industries, the dominant influence of the salmon industry on the life of the province began to diminish. Lyons fails to probe fully the nature of the early relationships or the implications of the later decline. Attempts to tie developments in the salmon industry to broader historical trends in British Columbia and Canada are largely unsuccessful as the author records events but provides little analytical discussion. References to the Atlantic Charter (p. 449), to the raid at Dieppe (p. 458) and to the entrance of Newfoundland into Confederation (p. 487) are largely irrelevant to an assessment of the importance of the first one hundred years of the salmon industry on life in British Columbia.

Throughout the book the reader is deluged with a mass of interesting statistical and factual data on the industry. In this sense Lyons work is a valuable handbook of material which previously had been unpublished, but it is by no means, as the Forward claims, "a history with a unique flavour and emphasis." The book lacks a major theme. It fails to weigh some inviting questions concerning the role of salmon canning in its first one hundred years. First, to what extent can the salmon industry be regarded as a foreign dominated industry? Second, to what degree has the industry contributed to the economic prosperity of the province? Third, how has the industry affected the political and social life of a province whose economic development is intimately linked to a natural resource base? Merely recording factual information in an encyclopedic manner does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the industry's development. Chapter Three, for example, discusses the initial development of salmon canning in British Columbia but provides little explanation of why canning developed when it did, the degree of dependency on San Francisco capital or the importance of salmon salting to the initial success of a canning enterprise. Moreover, the expansion upcoast to the Skeena River,

and later to Rivers Inlet and the Nass River, is not probed fully, especially with regard to the differences in capital financing between the Skeena and Fraser canneries. Later, in Chapter Eight, the author is concerned with the sale of many canneries that occurred in the late 1920's and the general decline in the number of operating plants. The year by year events of the industry are recorded for the period, but there is little analysis of the reasons for the great turnover in ownership and the effects of these ownership changes on the consolidation of operating canneries along the coast.

Cicely Lyons' concern for an interest in the salmon industry is attested to by the diligence with which she has pursued completion of this lengthy volume. We are indebted to her for assembling much interesting data and later historians will assuredly benefit from this work. Lyons' devotion to the salmon industry, and her concern for the species on which the industry is based, makes it all the harder to conclude that we still lack a systematic and rigorous, historical analysis of British Columbia's salmon industry.

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Bella Coola by Cliff Kopas. Mitchell Press Ltd., Vancouver, 1970. 291 pp., illus., index.

Cliff Kopas, a journalist, makes no claim to be an historian. His aim is purely "to perpetuate the thrilling story of Bella Coola and its people," to communicate to his audience his obvious and understandable love of this small coastal village. The author's goals are limited but laudable, and this book will, no doubt, enjoy a measured success in the gift shops of Victoria, although a more varied and more imaginative selection of photographs might well have enhanced its souvenir value.

More a series of descriptive vignettes than a chronological accounting of Bella Coola's past, Kopas' volume ranges over the usual recitation of eighteenth and nineteenth century explorers, Indian life and customs and the entrance of fur trader and missionary. The work of B. F. Jacobsen and the establishment of the Norwegian colony at the turn of the century make the Bella Coola story unexpectedly unique. Kopas' anecdotal treatment only accentuates the lack of that real meat of historical writing — good localized histories of this and similar towns.