ditt would have had difficulty in learning the truth about that theft because the desecrators had been very quiet about the escapade themselves, but of Mr. Potter, Mr. Ludditt should have been aware. And should have been content to bring out the history, and keep away from current events and editorial comment.

In spite of this carping though, and because of the problems of writing and producing local history, these books would be worthwhile and interesting if only for having been done — *The Surrey story*, the first about Surrey; and *Barkerville days*, refining and expanding earlier work. But again, such efforts need leadership from the professionals. Leadership and encouragement. And from both local and provincial governments. Subsidies, perhaps?

Simon Fraser University   GORDON R. ELLIOTT

S.S. Beaver: The ship that saved the West, by Derek Pethick. Mitchell Press Ltd., Vancouver. Ill. index. 160 pp. $9.75.

The career of the Hudson's Bay Company's S.S. *Beaver*, the first steam vessel in the North Pacific, covers the years 1836 to 1888, a period that spans the transition from wilderness to civilization, the discovery of gold, the birth of the colony of British Columbia, the establishment of responsible government and the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. She played a part in every major development of the era, and thus a history of the *Beaver* must in itself comprise a history of the men and women who brought this province into being.

Derek Pethick has written a scholarly and detailed account of the faithful little steamer from her launch on the Thames in 1835 to her death on the rocks of Stanley Park 53 years later. He has consulted all available log books, (many are unfortunately missing), her fur books in the Provincial Archives, the invaluable correspondence of Simpson, McLoughlin, Eden Colvile and other Hudson's Bay officials, and the files of contemporary newspapers during her later years. He gives an interesting account of recent salvage work on the *Beaver*'s wreck, and devotes a chapter to the authenticity or otherwise of the surviving *Beaver* relics. The number of these must be as numerous as those of the true cross, and some are equally spurious.

The exhaustive footnotes show the extent of Mr. Pethick's research,

particularly into the lives and pedigrees of the various masters of the *Beaver*. The numerous illustrations include practically every known drawing or photograph of the *Beaver* extant, as well as a facsimile page of her "skin book" and pictures of many of the known relics.

One can question the choice of a sub-title for the book, "The ship that saved the West." The *Beaver* was certainly an important factor in preserving the west coast fur domain for the Hudson's Bay Company, but it is an over-simplification to suggest that she saved the West from anything, except perhaps from the Americans.

The author, after some apparent soul-searching, decided to use the impersonal pronoun "it" when referring to the *Beaver*, instead of the traditional "she." It is a pity, for the effect is a lack of warm feeling for the subject, as if he was writing of just an ordinary piece of machinery. His excuse is: "The *Beaver* had many virtues, but charm was not one of them, and it had neither ancestors nor descendents." She may not have had charm, but she had plenty of character, and every steam vessel ever to operate on the coast can claim to be a descendent.

The writer's research is meticulous, although there are a few minor errors of omission or commission which it seems captious to mention. On page 9 he says that Governor George Simpson attempted in 1838 to reach the coast by canoe. Simpson did in fact reach Fort Langley via the Fraser conyon in a memorable canoe voyage. On page 19 he refers to the vice-president of the London Board of Trade. This should of course be President of the Board of Trade, a cabinet post. In a footnote on page 49 Captain J. A. Scarborough is called Herbert George Scarborough, an obvious misprint. His description of the seizure of the *Beaver* by the Americans in 1851 omits to give the amusing detail of how Captain Charles Stuart fled to British waters in a canoe to avoid arrest and thus lost his command. On page 73, Captain Stewart should be spelled Stuart, and on page 78 Whitby's Island should be Whidbey Island. In a footnote on page 86 Mr. Pethick says he can find no authority to support a story that the *Beaver* was borrowed by the American authorities to transport soldiers during the Indian Wars of 1856. He should have dug a little deeper for the account of how the ship was loaned in January 1856 by Chief Factor W. F. Tolmie at Nisqually is well documented in histories of Washington Territory. In a footnote on page 106, Mr. Pethick questions whether Captain William Mitchell ever commanded the *Beaver*. He was in fact the watchman in charge when she was laid up as a powder magazine. And on page 98, the reference to the *Beaver* on the Stikine

River is in fact to another vessel of the same name, an American stern-wheeler.

These are minor matters in a book that is a valuable addition to the library of British Columbiana. The volume is handsomely produced with good paper and wide margins, and is a credit to the designer, John Houghton, and to the publishers, Mitchell Press.

Vancouver   NORMAN HACKING

Alexander Mackenzie and the North West, by Roy Daniells. London: Faber and Faber, 1969. 219 pp., maps and photographs. $6.00.

Canadians have been reluctant to endow their historical figures with the qualities of legend, or to accord them symbolic lustre. With few exceptions, our history is peopled with men and women who are strictly life-size, if not a bit prosaic. Such is not the case with Alexander Mackenzie as portrayed by Roy Daniells. In this brief, popular account the author has emphasized both the symbolic and legendary aspects of the Mackenzie character and accomplishment. In doing so, he has produced a book of considerable interest.

The author's approach is, perhaps, partially explained by the fact that he is not an historian in the professional sense. Instead, he is a poet and literary scholar who was, for many years, head of the English department at the University of British Columbia. It is not surprising, then, that his book is rich in allusions to classical literature and freer in terms of speculation and conjecture than most historical accounts. In giving his imagination a wider freedom than many historians would allow, Professor Daniells is often thought-provoking and sometimes unconvincing. It is fascinating to think of Mackenzie's voyages in relation to Homer's *Odyssey* and to compare his leadership with that of Caesar. It may also be fruitful to consider his arduous and, in terms of his goal, unsuccessful trip to the Arctic as, "a parable through which to interpret Canadian history." However, there are times when the author proceeds from the specific to the general with unsettling facility. For example, in writing of Mackenzie's easy relations with Athapascan-speaking Indians, Daniells concludes that, "He was temperamentally averse to violence and had, in any case, no means of making more than a token show of force. To this day, Canadian diplomacy, even in the international field, is marked by deliberate