

Columbian enterprise, "because there is a strange, perhaps a determined, silence in his journals at this point."

We hope, then, that when Professor Hopwood writes the biography of Thompson which we are promised, he will indeed carry out his own prescription of testing Thompson's assertions against all the available evidence. Meanwhile we have to thank him for making much of Thompson's best writing accessible to the general reader for the first time.

Carleton University

RICHARD GLOVER

Gastown's Gassy Jack, by Raymond Hull and Olga Ruskin. Gordon Soules Economic Research, Vancouver, 1971, 48 pp.

John Deighton, the man who won the wets, by building the saloon around which coagulated the town that would become the city of Vancouver, was a man of several parts. All of them well lubricated. In his time he was a sailor, a steamboat pilot, a prospector and a publican. Yet only recently has Gassy Jack — as he was called because he was highly gifted with the gab — become of interest to residents of the city he sired with some help from the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. For at least the first half-century of Vancouver's development John Deighton was something considerably less than a household word, and it is not unfair to suspect that much of the attention he is receiving belatedly derives from the renaissance of Gastown as the liveliest quarter of the city.

As Raymond Hull and Olga Ruskin have described in their little book on Vancouver's first citizen (in the broader sense), Deighton was a colourful figure. But a noble figure he was not. The colours are those of an ill-assorted collage: red-white-and-blue overlaid with venous purple and a very off-white. Now that we know more about him than we knew before, we are still not charmed by him. His statue, centring Gastown, remains as a monument to the skid row whose tone he set rather than to the evocation of a pioneer cast in the heroic mould.

One reason for our resistance to being beguiled by the master of Deighton House is that his history is only sketched by the facts, his character never fully fleshed, even by anecdote. The cause of his death is itself the subject for conjecture, posthumously, in a rumbling appendix of the Hull-Ruskin biography.

The authors may therefore be almost forgiven their lapses into School-girl Style, with its use of the terminal shriek (!), to try to add verve to

their material. They are necessarily limited, as they deal with "the life and times of John Deighton," to the times more than to the life. They do a good job of dressing the stage. We learn new things about his family background, with its inconclusive evidence that he was born to the bar sinister as well as to the tavern variety. We follow him to sea, to the goldfields of the Forty-niners in California, to the helm of the Fraser River stern-wheeler portaging the panhandlers to sandbars where wealth glinted delusively, and at last to the Deighton saloon in New Westminster and the celebrated hegira to Burrard Inlet with his Indian woman, his cur, his barrel of whisky and his indestructible loquacity.

The story is fully told and well researched, yet requires only 48 pages. We learn more about Jack's character from his photo than we do from his correspondence, which falls well short of Voltaire's. His grave in New Westminster is unmarked, we are told, and we know only too well why: we have not learned to care about John Deighton. He is a distant ancestor who died less than a century ago.

Plainly what our burly, black-bearded anti-hero needs is not so much a history as a legend. Nothing less can save him. Now that we have a framework of facts of his life, we wait for the hand of fiction to weave the apprehensible image, something we can grasp as we do King Alfred's clinkered cakes and Paul Revere's midnight gallop.

The substance is there in sufficient amount, as Raymond Hull and Olga Ruskin have taken laudable pains to show. Jack's fate now lies with the Muse.

ERIC NICOL

John Jessop: Gold Seeker and Educator, by F. Henry Johnson. Vancouver: Mitchell Press Limited, 1971. Pp. 181. \$6.50.

This biography of British Columbia's first provincial superintendent of education is the culmination of Henry Johnson's efforts to trace the history of schooling in the Pacific province. It follows numerous articles and an earlier monograph, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*. Why a biography of the relatively unknown John Jessop? Johnson suggests a number of reasons that "compelled" him to bring to life "one of the ghosts of history." There was the desire to place on record Jessop's brief (1872-1878) tenure as superintendent and to assess his impact on subsequent educational developments. Secondly, Johnson sought to establish Jessop's major role in the earlier decade of the 1860's "in establishing the