

originally established. T. E. Ladner himself was part of this early community and looked upon "those who arived on the cushioned seats of railroad trains" with some disdain.

Above the Sand Heads is much better than most of British Columbia's local histories. Edna G. Ladner has done an excellent job in presenting her father's memoirs and deserves far more credit than she allows herself. The result is a local history which is essential reading for serious students of British Columbia's late nineteenth-century history and a thoroughly enjoyable work for the general reader.

Vancouver

DUNCAN A. STACEY

Exile in the Wilderness: The Life of Chief Factor Archibald McDonald, 1790-1853, by Jean Murray Cole. Don Mills: Burns and MacEachern Ltd., 1979. Pp. xviii, 268, \$15.95.

Jean Murray Cole's biography of her noteworthy ancestor, Chief Factor Archibald McDonald, is widely and exhaustively researched. It follows his career from his birth as the thirteenth and youngest child of a Highland Scot tacksman in Glencoe who, although an episcopalian, had fought as a youth with the Jacobites at Culloden in 1745, through McDonald's enlistment as "clerk and agent" in the Earl of Selkirk's service in 1811 at the age of twenty-one years, through his acceptance of a clerkship in the Hudson's Bay Company's service in the spring of 1820, to his retirement as Chief Factor at Fort Colvile on the Columbia River in 1844. McDonald settled at St. Andrews on the Ottawa River, sufficiently close to Montreal to enjoy the company of colleagues who had settled in the environs of the former metropolis of the fur trade. He lived the life of a gentleman farmer until his death in 1853. The author provides a short postscript, giving brief sketches of the lives of his children.

The experience of reading the biography can be likened to a new perception of an old and familiar painting. As the events of the Selkirk period and the later fur trade pass in review the author's focus on McDonald does not give rise to new and different interpretations. Rather, in allowing as much as possible the words of McDonald and his contemporaries to cast events and detail circumstances, Cole conveys a sense of previously unnoticed subtleties of texture and hue, eliciting insights that enlarge the understanding and appreciation of what had been considered as defined and complete. The movement of a party of settlers under McDonald's direction in the winter of 1813 from Churchill to York emerges as a noteworthy human accomplishment. The enervating effect of the Nor'Wester threat on the colonists in Red River is expressed nowhere else as graphic-

ally. Equally useful is the author's portrayal of McDonald's quandary when Selkirk's death closes one career avenue and leaves little choice, should he aspire to a social position of consequence, but the fur trader's life of exile.

To Cole, McDonald's subsequent career reflects the success of an exile in a community of exiles. Without much comment the author presents the view of some observers, including George Simpson, who had reservations with respect to McDonald's demeanour. In time, however, he proved to be an excellent agent of the Hudson's Bay Company's interests, pressing their advantage in an innovative, resourceful and responsible manner. McDonald moved very comfortably in the social world of the officers of the fur trade. In social interchanges the author sees him as kind and as loyal as he was affable and fun-loving. An additional facet of his make-up is revealed in his fascination with natural science. In 1825 he befriended the young botanist David Douglas on his visit to the Columbia. Through him he met, while on furlough in London, Sir William Hooker, member of the Royal Horticultural Society and Keeper of the famous Kew Gardens. McDonald was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable supplier of samples of the flora and fauna of the Columbia region.

The author views McDonald's family life as equally exemplary. His first "country wife" was Raven, daughter of the noted coastal trading chief, Comcomly. Shortly after the birth of McDonald's eldest son, Ranald, she died. McDonald's second wife was Jane Klyne, the mixed-blood daughter of Michel Klyne, the post master at Jasper House. She would bear him eleven children. Rather than abandon her for a more suitable wife when his career warranted it, a practice not unknown among his colleagues, McDonald saw to her education, apparently sufficient for their purposes and those of the children until they were old enough to be sent away to school. Jane Klyne McDonald appears to have made the transition from a daughter in a post master's family to the wife of a Chief Factor with no difficulty. One cannot help, however, but wonder.

In relation to the native peoples of the west McDonald and his kind were neither conquerors nor immigrants; they were the exiles who occupied the commercial garrisons. Their interests were the means of exploiting resources that were available to them. It was in this light that they viewed the native peoples and their relations with them. While McDonald was sufficiently knowledgeable concerning the ways of the native peoples for the purposes of the trade, his awareness and interest in them does not appear to have extended to their lives as aspects of the human condition.

Garrisons, whether military or commercial, have been notorious for disregarding the sensitivities of those among whom they reside. McDonald's life of exile in the fur trade exemplifies the garrison experience. Neither McDonald nor the author seems to have much concern for or interest in the lives of native peoples beyond the walls of the Hudson's Bay Company's trading posts.

Jean Murray Cole's biography of Chief Factor Archibald McDonald is a valuable addition to the traditional literature on social life in the fur trade. Both in what it discusses and in what it ignores it casts a most useful light on the fur trade experience.

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J. E. FOSTER

Coast of Many Faces, by Ulli Steltzer and Catherine Kerr. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre. \$29.95.

There is no better summing up of the message of this fine book than the remarks it quotes by the sculptor Bill Reid. Reid was speaking at the raising of his great new pole at Skidegate in June 1978. "I think that something new and wonderful is happening here," he said. "A new breed of offshore people is coming to be, from the people of all the races from all over the world who have assembled on these islands, together with the original inhabitants, the Haidas. I hope in time something will form that will be distinctive, unique and valuable in the world, and I hope that this pole in a way symbolizes that destiny."

The only qualification I would make to Reid's statement is that already a unique and distinctive way of life exists on the coast, and has existed for a long time, and that the text and illustrations of *Coast of Many Faces* testify marvellously to its variety and its vitality.

Ulli Steltzer is one of the finest photographers on the west coast and, indeed, in North America. Perhaps not the least notable characteristic of her work is the philosophic attitude that seems to inspire it. Though she is a remarkable craftsman and her photographs are usually excellent in both composition and tonal quality, they are never mere formal exercises or mere capturings of evanescent appearance, of the changing surface of nature. At their best they are always populated, and humanity is Ulli Steltzer's real subject: men and women living in their environment, men and women living with each other, men and women facing the searching lens. They are seen with understanding, and — where it may be necessary — with compassion, but the mood never slips on the one side into sentimentality or on the other into mockery.