

ranches like Douglas Lake and the Gang Ranch do in fact help to keep vast areas of the countryside, for the time being at least, out of the hands of the speculative developers, who are even more negative in their deeds than the men who merely set out to accumulate vast areas of grazing land and turn a fair profit on the deal.

I do not of course attribute any of the reflections in which I have been indulging to Mrs. Woolliams. She clearly sees the record of the Douglas Ranch as an admirable one, and given her husband's role as one of the managers it is hard to imagine her thinking otherwise. When she does criticize former owners — as she does William Studdert and Frank Ross — it is mainly because they starved the ranch of funds in order to make the greatest personal profit. She never at any point suggests that there was anything less than beneficial to humanity in the long task of land-grabbing that ended in a single man controlling about 800 square miles of British Columbian land.

Whatever one's view on the social morality of what she is describing, it must be said of Mrs. Woolliams as an industrious amateur historian that she has written her book with a respect for fact and a clear style which makes it possible for both those who admire and those who deplore the achievement she narrates to have a very lucid idea of what they are discussing. As a piece of localized agrarian history *Cattle Ranch* is interesting to the end. It will doubtless give comfort to those who believe in unlimited free enterprise in the use of the land, just as it will give plenty of ammunition to those who believe — even if they have no use for state control — in some more communally oriented form of land use. Good history tends to serve all sides in an argument.

*Vancouver*

GEORGE WOODCOCK

*The Rainbow Chasers*, by Ervin Austin MacDonald. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1982. Pp. 272.

Ervin Austin MacDonald's biography/autobiography of his father, his family, and himself, *The Rainbow Chasers*, is a memoir of the frontier, of "westerling"; both Frederick Jackson Turner and Wilfrid Eggleston in action. The father, Archie from Bytown, never could settle down, at least not until almost too old to go much further; by that time, 1907, he had arrived at Lac des Roches "at the end of the road from the 70 Mile House and at the beginning of the old trail to Little Fort on the North

Thompson River." At 29, in 1868, he had left the Ottawa Valley and had become a prospector chasing the elusive one-big-strike to California, to Nevada and to Montana. Before the end of his odyssey he had met Indians and had fled from them; had broken legs while driving cattle to railhead at Revelstoke; and at 57 had become a widower with five small children. Soon afterward he was homesteading in Alberta, living through a brutal winter and a prairie fire and other catastrophes sent to test such heroes. But then, just recovered from a bout of pleurisy — "It's living indoors that does it to me, boys!" — he saw in a dream "the nicest layout for a ranch that you could ever hope to find. It was on a beautiful lake, with open fields sloping down to the shore." And they were off again. Sure enough, they found it. There on the lake they lived happily, not for ever but at least until 1929 when Archie died, the sons sold the property and, with their wives, moved out.

Most of the book is about life on that ranch by that lake so far off the beaten track. It is the stuff of western romances, factual or fictional: the deer and the moose; blizzards, frozen lakes, forest fires; fishing and hunting; and fiercely individualistic people. Visitors with news. Indians who stop only an hour or so, only long enough for one of the women to have a baby. From wily Old Cashmere, a somewhat less than Noble Savage, Ervin learned to make snowshoes and set traps. From Ike Simmons he learned why spruce is ideal for stretchers for drying a marten, mink or muskrat catch. Ike also taught him how to make skis: which tree to choose and why, how to cut the planks, and then how to heat them in a five-gallon can before shaping them. Like many such books, this one too is a "how-to-survive-in-the-wilderness" book, one filled with such gems as how and how not to make portable smudges in the mosquito-plagued world; how to bake bread and bannock; and, in fact, how to build an oven in which to do the baking. Mr. MacDonald is also describing the growth of a frontier community, from trails to corduroy roads, from shacks to cabins to houses to new houses, from a few families to those attracted by the earlier ones. In such a way a farm becomes a settlement with a store and then a school, and entertainment becomes a dance or a sleighing party rather than a freight haul pitting horse against horse, driver against driver.

Though informative, the book is not a great one. It lacks life and form. The prologue holds some promise that Ervin MacDonald can tell a story, and the first chapter about logging on the Ottawa is a fast-paced, factual version of the beginning of Ralph Connor's *The Man From Glen-garry*. But there the promise is broken: the action stops, and stops short.

When following the MacDonalds from Edmonton to Tête Jaune and down the Fraser, readers are surely exhausted, not emotionally, not from tensions created by the telling of the tale, but physically from reading it, from tripping over the details. Discrimination — selection and rejection — is the essence of art, but little is evident here. No doubt Mr. MacDonald can tell a real knee-slapper of a story, but he does not write one: he ignores such technicalities as conflict, climax and resolution. What is more, unlike Odysseus Archie MacDonald as a character is too good to be true, and like most too-good-to-be-true characters he is often boring. If only he would swear, or sin, just occasionally! When writing about himself MacDonald creates a more immediate interest, but still fails to give form and shape to his hundreds of good stories.

*The Rainbow Chasers* is, therefore, flat — plate-flat. One wonders what Eric Collier or Rich Hobson or Bill Hillen would have done with such material.

*Simon Fraser University*

GORDON R. ELLIOTT

*The Columbia is Coming!* by Doris Andersen. Sidney, B.C. Gray's Publishing Ltd. Pp. 205, \$9.95.

In the wake of the Klondike Gold Rush, hundreds of immigrants and settlers came to the British Columbia coast to exploit the stands of virgin timber or to harvest the boundless shoals of fish. Logging camps, canneries and isolated settlements sprang up, particularly on the islands and inlets of the Gulf of Georgia. Social services for these loggers and fishermen were non-existent, due to the isolation and distances involved. This gap was filled by the churches — in the north by the Methodists, and in the south by the Church of England in Canada. The latter's Columbia Coast Mission, whose story is sympathetically told by Doris Andersen, was largely the work of two men, John Antle and Alan Greene, who carried out an itinerant ministry to soul and body, in a variety of tiny ships, up and down the coast for sixty years.

Antle was a seafaring Newfoundlander, who combined nautical skills with a vital concern for the welfare of the scattered inhabitants of this vast coastline. He quickly realized that medical aid was the most urgent requirement, and recruited a series of doctors to accompany him on his missions of mercy. Authoritarian and paternalistic, he nevertheless built up the Columbia Coast Mission into an indispensable part of the British