

Fortunately, *Vancouver's Fair* wanders from its narrow purpose to explore "the social dimension of the fair and what it reveals about the urban community" which the authors label "not an explicit part of this study" (p. 5). Unfortunately, these intrinsically valuable excursions are not well integrated and tend to deprive the book of shape. Furthermore, analysis of matters external to the association is inconsistent; the importance of economic conditions for passage of money bylaws for the exhibition is an example. Prosperity is credited for passage in 1910 (p. 16), but the severe depression of 1913 is not mentioned in connection with passage in that year. Defeat in prosperous 1927 is attributed to inadequate cultivation of public opinion, passage in 1930 to remedial action in that regard: "In a time of increasing economic distress, the exhibition association had succeeded in having its largest ever by-law request passed by the electorate" (p. 72).

There are annoying flaws at the level of detail, some involving factual error. The map of 1908 ward boundaries (p. 14) locates Hastings Park within the city, although (as suggested on p. 19) it was not. (The difficulty is that this map superimposes 1908 ward boundaries on the city outline of 1911, following annexation of Hastings Townsite.) The map of 1912 ward boundaries (p. 38) correctly locates Hastings Park in Ward 7, but shows five of the other seven wards with boundaries no ward ever had. The fair is said on page 4 to have "been held annually . . . since 1910"; in the 1940s it was not held for five years (ch. 7). There are inconsistencies in the form of index entries: "Bethune, Alexander" (for an alderman and later mayor) *vs.* "McSpadden, Mr. (alderman)" (for George McSpadden).

*Vancouver's Fair* is a frustrating book. It is not merely an administrative and political history, but its "social dimension" is poorly integrated and as a whole it lacks sharpness of focus as a result. It could have been more satisfying if Breen and Coates had done either more or less.

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*The Boundary Hunters: Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaskan Panhandle*, by Lewis Green. Vancouver and London: University of British Columbia Press, 1982. Pp. 214; maps and photographs.

A treaty between Great Britain and Russia signed at St. Petersburg in 1825 stipulated that the boundary between British and Russian territory

in northwestern North America would commence "from the southernmost point of the island called Prince of Wales Island, which point lies in the parallel of 54 degrees 40 minutes, north latitude." From there it would follow the Portland Canal to 56 degrees north and then along "the summit of the mountains situated parallel to the coast as far as the point of intersection of the 141st degree of west longitude," which meridian it would follow to the Arctic Ocean. Should the summits of the mountains parallel to the coast prove to be more than ten leagues inland, the boundary "shall be formed by a line parallel to the windings of the coast, and which shall never exceed the distance of 10 marine leagues therefrom." In 1825, when neither Russians nor British quite knew what was island and what mainland or much more about the topography than that the whole coast was exceedingly rugged, this was probably as clear a statement as possible. It served well enough until some years after the United States purchased Alaska in 1867. But if the fur trade could get along without precisely defined boundaries, placer gold mining could not. With the mining rushes it became imperative to locate the boundary. The Canadian government, measuring ten leagues from the outer coast of the islands, thought it lay close along the mainland coast. The American government, measuring ten leagues from the mainland coast, thought it lay much farther inland. There could be no argument about the 141st meridian or about 54° 40' North, but the landward boundary was an inevitable bone of contention. Finally in 1903, after much international wrangling, a fair amount of Canadian and American surveying in extraordinarily difficult terrain, and some years after Klondike, an Alaska Boundary Tribunal decided for a boundary that was closer to the American than the Canadian version. The two Canadians on the Tribunal refused to sign; Laurier felt that Canadian territory had been sacrificed in the interest of Anglo-American entente. Nevertheless, the boundary was settled — but only approximately and on paper. It still had to be surveyed. Over the next fifteen years, in some of the most rugged and least known terrain anywhere, this would be the work of Canadian and American survey parties.

Lewis Green, a geologist with some familiarity with the territory in question and an appreciation of the science of surveying, has told the story of these events. In his telling the tale is less about diplomatic manoeuvring than about men in the wilderness: at first trying to locate the 141st meridian approximately; then during the Klondike trying to establish the boundary on the Chilkoot and White Passes; then, meticu-

lously, surveying the boundary decision of 1903. The telling is full of rivers in flood and upturned boats, drenching rain and wet snow, crevasses, mosquitoes, starving horses and able men doing a job. Here and there Indians come into the story, but essentially the book is about the tracing of a line through wilderness. It rests on a good deal of research in various archives, it is clearly written and the text is usefully supplemented by maps (not quite enough of them) and photographs. All in all it is an attractive, interesting book about a topic of some importance and much intrinsic interest. But it is not a rivetting book, and it is not because it is neither by a master story teller nor by one who has mused about the implications and meaning of this particular venture into the wilderness.

Part of the problem of telling a good story rests with the documents. The surveyors were professionals used to hardship, and their letters and journals are an understated record that, much to the credit of these remarkable men, does make more difficult the telling of their story. Still, one wonders what a Pierre Berton would have done with the same material. And, for a university press publication, one wonders whether telling a story is all there is to it. Lewis Green is not looking for meaning, or even for principal themes, behind his record of events. The subject hardly seems to warrant such introspection, and yet a Canadian-Alaskan boundary survey was also a particular relationship between men and nature mediated by the cultural background of the surveyors and by their setting. So approached, an account of a boundary survey could also have been a study of an important strand of the Canadian experience with nature. The scientific survey of wilderness early became, and remains, a Canadian pattern. To be sure, such a book would have required an author who was rather more an intellectual historian than a geologist. Lewis Green has done what he could, and if *The Boundary Hunters* is taken for what it is and not for what it might have been then it is a solid account of brave men doing a daunting job in extraordinary circumstances. Just how extraordinary, it seems to me, is caught in the question of an amazed Porcupine River Indian when first confronted by a pack horse. "Where you catchum?" he asked the surveyors.