

and memoirs written in Japanese. Such writings, even if they are not as poetic as Kitagawa's work, would provide additional insights into one of the most tragic events of modern Canadian history, the removal of the Japanese from the coast and the confiscation of their property.

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*Farming the Frontier; The Agricultural Opening of the Oregon Country, 1786-1846*, by James R. Gibson. Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1985. Pp. 264.

"Canadians," James Gibson writes, "should not forget that they were dispossessed of part of their rightful Columbia heritage, a heritage whose economic potential in general and agricultural possibilities in particular were initially and successfully demonstrated by the Hudson's Bay Company," (p. 205). Such a conclusion reflects a persistent resentment of the British assessment of geo-political realities on the west coast of North America in the mid-nineteenth century. With the signing of the Oregon Treaty in 1846 the northern boundary of the United States, the 49th parallel, was extended to the Pacific. This extension involved the surrender of British interest in a substantial area north of the Columbia River. The Oregon Treaty, therefore, marked the failure of the attempts by the HBC to secure the integrity of its operations in the Cordillera: henceforth new solutions would be required. It is the first of these points, the structure of HBC activities before 1846, which provides the major focus of Gibson's study.

The area west of the continental divide posed serious problems for the new HBC which emerged from the merger of 1821 — problems sufficiently serious to require personal investigation by Governor George Simpson in 1824, 1828 and 1841. Looming above even the unresolved issue of political sovereignty was the question of the profitability of the fur trade. "Everything," Simpson observed on his 1824 visit "appears to me on the Columbia on too extended a scale except the Trade" (p. 16). Simpson's fertile but parsimonious mind generated a variety of solutions to these difficulties, but two were of particular importance for Gibson's study: a push for self-sufficiency in the Columbia Department and a quest for diversification beyond the strict confines of the fur trade.

The first of these solutions involved the elaboration of agricultural production in the Cordillera, thus reducing the costly importation of

foodstuffs. Efforts in this direction took two principal forms. First, agriculture at and around the established HBC posts was expanded. Minimally this involved the cultivation of vegetable gardens, but, given the topographic, climatic and edaphic variability of the region, a good deal more was possible in some areas than in others. The most favourable locations were on or near the Columbia River, and south of the 49th parallel (Ft. Vancouver, Ft. Colville). At these locations agriculture included the cultivation of cereals and the raising of livestock.

The success of "post" farming and the agreement to supply the Russian-American Company (RAC) with foodstuffs prompted the HBC to adopt a second approach to agriculture in the Oregon Country. This took the form of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company (PSAC). Nominally a separate company, but owned by the HBC, the PSAC operated agricultural establishments at Cowlitz and Nisqually, both south of 49°N. The production of these farms, the former primarily arable and the latter pastoral, was geared towards export markets (Alaska, Hawaii and Britain). Agricultural production, then, was also a part of the diversification of HBC activities in the Oregon Country. Lumber and salmon were also being exported by the 1830s.

Yet the very success of these operations in the Columbia Department had some unintended consequences which, in due course, contributed to the denouement of 1846. The most significant of these was the opening of the Willamette valley to settlement. This flowed into the south bank of the Columbia and had always been viewed as prospective American territory. The HBC, therefore, had largely ignored the area, but it proved attractive to the retired Company employees who were the initial settlers. Their success and the quality of the environment contributed towards the Willamette valley's becoming the principal destination for the growing influx of American settlers during the 1840s. These new immigrants, with their political preferences, were in a substantial majority by 1845, "when up to six thousand (settlers) occupied the valley" (p. 135).

Two other groups were participants in the early agricultural frontier of the Oregon Country: missionaries and Indians. Neither, by Gibson's account, were very successful in this endeavour. The Indians, already greatly reduced in numbers by 1840, were prepared to adapt agriculture to their migratory round of activities rather than adopt an agricultural lifestyle. The missionaries were perplexed by such a preference and confounded by their own attempts at farming, in part by unfamiliar environments.

Gibson's study is a logical extension of his previous work centred on

the operations of the RAC. He is, therefore, well placed to examine the interaction of the fur trade and agriculture in the Oregon Country. Moreover, as he points out, the study fills an important gap in the existing literature. "Farming the Frontier" assembles, in a clear and straightforward manner, a body of detailed information on agriculture and the fur trade. As such it is an important contribution and will be required reading for anyone seriously interested in the operation of the fur trade in the Cordillera.

Yet the rather narrow focus of Gibson's study leaves this reader with the sense of an opportunity not fully grasped. Despite the solid empirical foundation he has established, Gibson has not pursued some of the broader, and intriguing, issues which his study raises. One obvious topic concerns the nature of the cultural divide created (or perhaps confirmed) by the Oregon Treaty. Did the agricultural developments and the social forms in which they were embedded, as described by Gibson, have any lasting impact upon the development of American society in the Pacific Northwest? More significant, from a Canadian and British Columbian perspective, is the question of the lessons learned by the HBC and the British government from the events which culminated in the Oregon Treaty. Surely there was more involved than the recognition of a lost heritage. How far, for example, did the loss of the Columbia help to shape colonial society as it developed, once again, around the fur trade and agriculture on Vancouver Island? To ask such questions is to ask for a different and more ambitious study than that undertaken by Gibson. "Farming the Frontier" provides some of the information necessary for a re-assessment of our understanding of economy and society in the Cordillera before the gold rushes. Let us hope that Gibson will not be content to let matters rest here.

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*"We Were the Salt of the Earth!" The On to Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot*, by Victor Howard. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1985. Pp. 208; 43 illustrations.

The Canadian Plains Research Centre is to be complimented for bringing out a book that marks the fiftieth anniversary of the On-to-Ottawa Trek in 1935, and author Victor Howard (a.k.a. Victor Hoar) for producing a popularly written though closely documented account of