

Highway began at Dawson Creek and ended at Fairbanks, it never went beyond Big Delta, because from there the Richardson Highway, begun in 1905, connected Fairbanks (p. 149).

*University of Alaska Fairbanks*

CLAUS-M. NASKE

*Salmon Canneries: British Columbia North Coast*, by Gladys Young Blyth.  
Lantzville: Oolichan Books, 1991. 180 pp. Illus. \$19.95 paper.

There is only one way of summarizing this local history of the salmon canneries that were so central a feature of the Naas and Skeena River systems: a labour of love. Gladys Young Blyth grew up in Bella Coola and worked at Namu Cannery. For many years Namu was the largest cannery on the central coast. In 1940 Gladys met her husband, and they moved to Prince Rupert, where her involvement with the canning industry continued. I had an opportunity to travel to the north coast in the late spring of 1982 as part of the Fish and Ships Research Project sponsored by the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at The University of British Columbia. Gladys gave us a tour of the North Pacific Cannery Village Museum located in nearby Port Edwards. As curator of the museum, her love of the industry was evident in the breadth of her knowledge and in the care she took in collecting and displaying artefacts connected with the fishing industry.

What comes through in *Salmon Canneries: British Columbia North Coast* is the vibrancy of the industry beginning with the construction of the first salmon cannery north of the Fraser River in the late 1870s and named Inverness (Alexander Ewen is credited with having built, in 1870, the first salmon cannery in British Columbia: Anniesville on the Fraser River). Gladys provides a profile of thirty-eight canneries, including dates of construction and operation; owners; where available, survey maps that illustrate the layout of the buildings; and a wealth of photographs culled from archives throughout the province. The growth of the industry hinged on being able to build a cannery on a site where salmon came to spawn in great numbers. This was especially important in the years before gas-powered engines made the fishing fleet more mobile. It was also important in the years before refrigeration techniques could be developed to preserve the catches. The height of the salmon runs corresponded with the warmest days of summer and thus the fish spoiled quickly unless it was processed immediately. The technique of canning proved especially effective and

lucrative, since a cannery could be built at relatively low cost immediately adjacent to the spawning grounds. The biggest concern was having fresh water available to clean the catches and for human consumption. In addition, sawmills provided wood needed for construction of buildings and for the crates needed to pack the cans of salmon which were then loaded on to steamers to be shipped south. In this way, salmon canning created both direct and indirect employment and spawned its own seasonal communities all along the major river systems.

The importance of these canneries in providing aboriginal peoples living on the northwest coast with employment is evident in the rows of housing marked "Indian Huts" on the 1923 survey maps. Most maps also indicate separate lodgings for Japanese fishermen and Chinese cannery workers, each group having its own "bunkhouse." The photographs graphically illustrate this diversity in ethnic background and also depict the segregated nature of the employment practices of cannery owners and managers, each group working together on its own in predetermined tasks and separated from others by the imposed social constructions of race and gender.

All of this changed when technological developments allowed the fishing fleet to travel over greater distances and to preserve catches in refrigerated holding tanks. In addition, mechanization of canning lines allowed greater efficiency in processing but at higher costs in the infrastructure. The result was consolidation of processing and closure of outlying plants which in turn led to the loss of a major source of employment to numerous Indian villages which had come to include the canneries as part of their seasonal migration. Of the original thirty-eight plants, Gladys indicates that only three were still operating in 1989: New Oceanside, the Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative, and Babcock Fisheries Cannery, all located in the city of Prince Rupert. Many of the canneries listed and described in *Salmon Canneries: British Columbia North Coast* have been completely dismantled. Gladys also notes that there are 223 known and documented sites. But all that is left of most of them are artefacts taken from the canneries, photographs, survey maps, and people's memories. Nevertheless, the North Pacific Cannery, located on the north shore of Inverness Passage, has been designated a site of national historic and architectural importance by the Historic Sites and Monument Board of Canada.

For those who have an interest in the fishing industry of British Columbia, this book will be a welcome addition to their libraries. Because it is printed by Oolichan Books between soft covers, it is inexpensive. Here, in one book, readers will discover a variety of interesting facts and a wealth

of photographs, including pictures of the labels and trademarks of the various canneries. For those whose knowledge of the industry is slight, this little book might just get them hooked!

*University of Waterloo*

ALICJA MUSZYNSKI

*The Dunsmuir Saga*, by Terry Reksten. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991. x, 290 pp. Illus. \$29.95 cloth.

Although Terry Reksten refers to the widespread image of Robert Dunsmuir as "King Grab" and recognizes why he and his son, James, were such unpopular employers and politicians, she is less concerned with public images and issues than with the internal dynamics of a troubled family. Indeed, the book could have been titled: "Three Generations: Making and Dissipating a Fortune."

Drawing on his knowledge as an experienced coal miner, the Scottish-born Robert Dunsmuir "discovered" the Wellington mine in 1869. A talented entrepreneur, over the next few years he developed the mine and a San Francisco market for its high quality coal. When he died unexpectedly in 1889, he was a provincial cabinet minister, the chief collier of Vancouver Island, and a major investor in such ventures as the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway, the Albion Iron Works, and the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company. He left a fortune of approximately \$15 million.

His middle-aged sons James and Alexander had only modest positions in their father's businesses. Reksten suggests Robert had good reason for limiting their responsibilities. The brighter son, Alex, was an alcoholic; the "stolidly obedient" (p. 33) James was a "simple-minded man" with modest ambitions (p. 156). Indeed, in 1900, when he was the province's leading industrialist, James was surprised to be accused of conflict of interest when he accepted the premiership of British Columbia.

Robert had left his entire fortune to his widow, Joan. Only after much badgering did she transfer parts of the Dunsmuir corporate empire to her sons; a dispute over the price of the Wellington Colliery permanently estranged her from James. Family relations were further complicated when Alex died in 1900, forty days after marrying his long-time mistress. With the exception of an annuity for his widow, who died little more than a year later, Alex left his entire estate to James. Subsequently, Alex's step-daughter, a New York actress, and Joan Dunsmuir sued for a share of the estate. A succession of courts ruled in James's favour; Joan died before she could launch a final appeal and the step-daughter ran out of money. The legal bills had been over a million dollars.