

to be faulted for her work: the book is designed as a narrative for the general reader, and it achieves that end.

*Anchorage, Alaska*

LOGAN HOVIS

*Images from the Inside Passage: an Alaskan Portrait by Winter and Pond*, by Victoria Wyatt. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1989.

Nineteenth-century photography often came about as the result of a restless, gold-digging, exploitative spirit. There was money in images of far places and peoples, and tourism fostered that market. The migration of two young Californians to Alaska in the 1890s, lured by dreams of frontier gold, was the initiating movement which was to produce the photographs here: eighty-eight plates of Indian portraits and views and some additional material selected from the archival holding of Winter and Pond's studio, which was active in southeast Alaska at the turn of the century (and did not actually close until 1956). The book was produced in association with an exhibit of these photographs at the Alaska State Library, and the manner of the text reflects a careful and somewhat pedestrian style of archival display.

Why these images were taken is an easier question to answer than how we can read and use them today. Photography, from its invention in mid-century, had provided an occupational opportunity for the person of artistic inclination who also needed to make a living. It was a new field, a modern technology but not so difficult as to be beyond the capacities of a moderately educated man. Lloyd Winter, we are told, had been an art student and portraitist in San Francisco before travelling to Alaska with romantic ideas of mining gold. He settled into photography, a secondary commercial exploitation of the region, when he bought an existing business in Juneau from a man named Landerking, who had been a machinist's mate, and brought in as partner Percy Pond, who had been a bookkeeper.

Victoria Wyatt provides these details while regretting the absence of diaries or journals which might tell us what was in the minds of this pair of photographers as they set up their shots. (Dual attribution is evidently necessary; Professor Wyatt does not venture any idea about which partner did what.) The broad motivation is not really in doubt: Winter and Pond took their Indian photographs because it was local colour — and saleable. They did not specialize exclusively in Indian photography, and they do not

appear to have had the ethnographic ambitions of an Edward S. Curtis, but they were serious enough about this side of their trade to publish two pamphlets on the Alaska Indians and their totems to accompany albums of pictures they produced. They used their own boat, the *Photo Friday*, for the necessary travel. Clan treasures and ceremonial artefacts were kept in the villages, where the longhouses and totem poles were also desirable photographic targets. They also appear to have developed good personal contacts with the Indians.

The result is an interesting, if conventional, set of Indian photographs. We see the familiar products of the conjunction of nineteenth-century camera and Northwest Coast Indian culture: dancers in elaborately beaded tunics, houses heaped with clan treasures, bands of potlatch celebrants gathered on northern beaches. Many of the photographs specifically register traditional objects: masks, poles, dancing blankets, nose-rings, and so on, because evidently these were available and established synecdochic expressions of Indian culture. Wyatt's observation that tourists wanted the kind of photographs they might have taken themselves provides a sensible explanation for a further range of photographs of contemporary scenes in an undressed, realistic manner: women street-sellers with baskets, tent-dwellers by the waterside, old women crouched in doorways — though there may also be a hangover here of traditions of street photography stemming from European practice.

Content appears to sufficiently explain some photographs of a general, public nature. But documentation, or the lack of it, undoubtedly reveals its importance in relation to portraits of individual Indians. There is an uncertainty here which brings to mind the general weakness of photography as ethnography. We do not know what went on before the shutter was opened, and this ignorance necessarily induces caution. Photographs, despite the claim of truth made by their exactitude, are notably vulnerable to challenge in terms of content and arrangement. This is most obvious in studio photography, where the carefully deliberated posing of subjects allows and perhaps encourages the dressing-up of figure and setting with properties that might be available but inauthentic; Professor Wyatt points to the anachronism in the fur capes worn by young Indian women who posed in the Winter and Pond studio at a date when the wool blanket had become the standard outer garment. She also identifies and pursues ceremonial objects which appear and reappear in different outdoor photographs, and were perhaps as casually introduced into those shots as studio properties. And, further to the question of truth, she notes and corrects looseness in captioning. A line of supposed "Chilkat dancers" on one Win-

ter and Pond print have been carefully identified by her, with the help of informants, as a group of Haida notables.

Documents, of course, are not a firm control and guide in all situations, but sometimes one is aware of how a simple register of business transactions could help. At least two portraits which appear here make the point: both show Indian women in white dress. One is a handsome young woman in a tasteful, fashionably tailored day dress — she might be the wife of a prominent man in the Indian community; the other shows two women in light and frilly sleeveless dance frocks. Were they dance-hall girls? If we knew who commissioned and paid for the sittings, some interesting social questions might be answered. A number of photographs in this collection support the view that Indians, too, kept photograph albums.

Such answers would bear upon the general function which Professor Wyatt sees this collection as serving: the registering of details of Tlingit and Haida life in the region at a time of contact with white trade and settlement. Put in terms of an issue, this is to ask a question. Was the contact a disaster for the Indians or a stimulus? Her answer is that the photographs show the adaptability and resilience of the strong Indian cultures of the Northwest. There is the simple record of continuance of traditional Indian activity and also, within the photographs, evidence of positive interaction between the cultures. Perhaps the best detailed support for this positive reading lies in the photographs of house fronts which show white architectural styles being taken over, while the ancient use of the house front to proclaim identity and status is retained. In one instance, a leading Indian of Wrangell, named Kadishan, builds a two-storey house with bay windows on both storeys which is placed facing the sea and, as photographs show, with two traditional totem poles raised before the bay windows. In another set of photographs, two Tlingit house fronts are shown bearing plaques inscribed with poems, in Longfellow's favourite metre, which identify the occupant, in more or less boastful terms, as a friend to the white man. In both these instances, there exists surrounding documentation to assist an understanding of the photographs.

Debasement and poverty, following contact, might alternatively be inferred from some of the pictures. Professor Wyatt does not seriously explore the question or build a context of social history around the photographs. The course of history in this century has proved the survival, in some fashion, of the Northwest Coast Indians, and there are other contemporary pressures which no doubt encourage her positive attitude in reading the past. It is worth noting, in this respect, that none of the original Winter and Pond captions which appear in this book contain doom-laden phrases

such as “vestiges” or “vanishing race” which are common elsewhere in white photography of the Indian at the turn of the century. Edward S. Curtis, of course, used just such phrases in arguing the urgent need of his comprehensive project to photograph the Indian cultures of North America before they became extinct. Curtis began his work on the Northwest Coast a couple of decades after Lloyd Winter arrived in Juneau, but their periods of activity overlapped; it is noticeable how much more successfully Curtis uses the still photograph. His photography may have been predicated on the cultural death of the subjects, but the pictures are dramatically full of life and always interesting to the eye.

Professor Wyatt says little about the aesthetics of the Winter and Pond photographs and, indeed, from one point of view there seems all too little to say. Photographically, the achievement is competent but unadventurous. A number of photographs taken outdoors possess a sense of life and visual interest derived, generally, from the drama of the setting. But attention to the plain visual record may dominate to the degree that the natural drama of a scene is actually suppressed. The plates which show the interior of the Whale House at Klukwan are cropped in a manner which reduces the perspective of depth; consequently the content appears all on one plane as detailed line and pattern. This is not an interior entered but a surface confronted, flat and iconic and unrevealing. Such a record may suit that side of ethnohistory which treasures particulars; it can also deaden the subject matter by making it dismayingly inert and, in its detail, recondite. The work of Winter and Pond presents at times a curious parallel to the symmetrical and two-dimensional art of the ceremonial blankets and house screens which they photograph.

As studio photographers, the pair regularly display the practices of an earlier generation. One or the other was evidently capable, at some date, of using light to invest scenes with tones of feeling: Professor Wyatt points, with an attention which suggests scorn, to the sentimentality of such a picture of a baby in a native sling. The majority of the portraits are plain, head-on, full-figure poses which lack such development and control of feeling; one consequence, as the figures confront the camera, is a sense of awkwardness and oddity. The anthropologist Margaret B. Blackman asks questions in her Preface about the stories to be read behind such enigmatic figures. Her remarks are not hostile and are directed towards appreciation of the powerful actuality of photography. But it should have been noted by someone in relation to this collection that photographs, with or without captions, can be enigmatic or not enigmatic: handling is the key. This book has the virtues of clear presentation and honest caution, but it remains

unnecessarily thin in explanatory surround, particularly in the area of photographic history, including aesthetics. Aesthetics should not be neglected for, finally, these photographs may be read as a silent restatement of the age-old idea that humans are essentially art-making creatures, whether white photographers or Indian weavers and carvers.

*University of Toronto*

ALAN THOMAS

*History of Music in British Columbia 1850-1950*, by Dale McIntosh. Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1989. Pp. 296; bibliography, index, photographs.

Dale McIntosh's *History of Music in British Columbia 1850-1950* is the first scholarly, monograph-length, regional music history to be published in Canada. Its appearance could herald a new stage in our awareness of our cultural selves — one that owes less to a narrative of national identity and more to local experience as the theatre of meaning.

The author chooses to focus on the traditional institutions of European classical music: the wind band (which receives the most expansive chapter), choral organizations, orchestras, theatrical companies, education, and musical festivals. His final chapter, "A Musical Potpourri," provides briefer descriptions of a fascinating range of other subjects, including instrument building, musical clubs, music publication, jazz, chamber music, dance bands, theatre music, and composition. Five of the chapters end with a useful checklist of organizations (Chapters 1-3) or works (Chapters 4 and 7). Within each chapter, a wealth of detail about who did what, where, and when is unfolded, not only for major cities such as Vancouver or Victoria but also for many smaller cities and regions. With a primarily geographic sub-organizational scheme, the sub-regional histories embedded within this provincial one go far to challenge the prevailing stereotype that the energy centres of Canada's music culture are exclusively the large cities. Twenty-eight plates of photographs complement and enliven the text of each chapter; perhaps a second edition of the book could provide an index of these.

McIntosh has an eye/ear for good anecdotes and, it seems, British Columbia has had a share of interesting and occasionally even unsavoury characters, ranging from the elusive Henry Green, the conductor who wouldn't be photographed, to the swindlers, choir director Charles Schaffer or orchestral conductor Ed Leewards (and "Mama"). We learn of idiosyncratic performance practices (the euphonium player who conducted with his foot, or the conductor who threatened to fine his players