

## Book Reviews

*Pig War Islands*, by David Richardson; Eastsound, (Wash.); Orcas, 1971; pp. 362, illus. \$10.95.

*Pig War Islands* is a fascinating book — at least for those with sufficient knowledge of a frontier society, or sufficient imagination, to enable them to believe the almost unbelievable. For such a society is often an almost unbelievable one. It usually comprises a gallimaufry of “characters” — some “with a mission”, some “on the make”, some “on the lam” and some, as the Irish have it, “scarcely fit to be interfered with”. Doing one’s own thing is by no means only a recent phenomenon.

The life-span of such a society is always short. Compared to the first generation, the second is a colourless one. That, perhaps, is a good thing. Generation after generation of such as the first Olneys, Kellys and Browns, to name but a few, and of judges such as James Fry, might be more than even the most rugged individualist could tolerate.

The book consists largely of anecdotes — with only intermittent attempts at “interpretation”. But note is taken of the oft-repeated allegations that at least some of the Americans who strutted and fretted on the stages of the Gulf Islands were Southerners eager to generate hostility between London and Washington since that would redound to the disadvantage of the North in the worsening situation which was soon to culminate in the War between the States. Noted, too, is the allegation that General Harney, a man not without political ambitions, sought to exploit an opportunity to be the man on the white horse in the pageant of Manifest Destiny. But his less truculent — or should it be less imaginative — superior, General Winfield Scott, succeeded in working out with Britain’s Captain Hornby a jurisdictional compromise which effectively banked the fires of nationalism.

Recounted, too — and without comment — is the rather inconsistent behaviour of Sir James Douglas. At times the Governor was second to none in the matter of sabre-rattling. Yet when the chips — or better,

perhaps, the Northern Indians — were down, he refused to seize the opportunity to rid the islands of those he considered interlopers. The Haida, recurrently in the area to wreak vengeance for American treatment of the indigenous peoples, probably would have exterminated all American settlements in the Puget Sound area. But in every such instance Douglas used his enormous influence to prevent such an occurrence. As does Mr. Richardson, a reviewer must resist the temptation to speculate on what might have been.

Events which followed the shooting — on San Juan Island — of the pig with the predilection for potatoes would have tickled the fancy and prodded the genius of Gilbert and Sullivan. Claims for damages which resulted in the auction sale of the possessions of one of the disputants, including the sale, for two cents each, of sheep which were alleged to exist; attempts to round up the missing ninety-and-nine hastily abandoned when smoke on the horizon suggested the possibility of the approach of a British naval vessel; the expulsion without a hearing of trouble-makers, an expulsion which seems to have been much more effective and much less romanticized than the expulsion a century before of those who seemed likely to make trouble on the other side of the continent; the attempts by a railroad to claim all the islands as its own; the proposal of the *Toronto Globe* that a group of labourers be sent to spade San Juan into the sea with the understanding that the channel thus created be the boundary; the rumour that, in arriving at his decision, the arbiter of the boundary dispute would be guided by the outcome of a baseball game between a team representing Victoria and one representing Olympia: all these are part of the stuff of which the history of the islands is made.

The bloodthirsty will welcome the accounts of a plethora of murders — some marked by a touch of the bizarre. One was the result of a dispute over property, including a chamber-pot lid. And although there seems to have been no doubt about what had happened, a jurisdictional dispute between U.S. civil and military authorities delayed for seven years a final verdict. It seems only fitting that, when at long last the sentence of death was passed, the convicted man should make the most of an opportunity to escape.

But the annals of the administration of justice probably record no more extraordinary courtroom innovations than those which marked a murder trial of the early 1880's. The jury was made to swear that their verdict would be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; eyewitnesses to the slaying were not allowed to give evidence lest the facts prejudice the case; jury members were called upon to testify as to the good

character of the accused (a reversion to eleventh century practice?); and the worldly possessions of the slain man were confiscated and sold to pay the costs of the trial. This, it should be added, was not the end of the story — but the end was not one calculated to bring undiluted joy to the hearts of the morally rigorous.

Probably most Canadians entertain the illusion that our efforts to make more tolerable the lives of our disadvantaged neighbours reached a high point in the 1920's, when enterprising Canadians made available to those living south of the border consumption goods legal in Canada but illegal in the United States. But this was really a second effort. Fifty years earlier we were active in circumstances very similar. Then, of course, the consumption good was opium, legal in Canada but not in the United States. And in what may be a unique instance of vertical integration of enterprise, we even smuggled potential customers into the more attractive American market.

The language of the book is not unsuited to its general informality. There is no attempt to follow in the literary footsteps of a Gibbon or even a Creighton. Sentences with no principal clauses, phrases such as "bigger by a whisker", "smack in the middle of" and words such as "neatened" and "homeyness" are not out of keeping with the oral tradition of a frontier society. Less appropriate, perhaps, are such non-words as "transcursions", "scofflawry", "correspondential", which leave the disturbing impression of literary striving to create an impression.

All in all the book is quite worthwhile. In addition to providing a happy reading experience, it does point out, by implication, that the maintenance of law and order is not a wholly deplorable objective. Indeed it just may generate among some North Americans a long overdue realization that the protection of people from one another is just as important as is the protection of people from "the establishment".

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*Indian Rock Carvings of the Pacific North West*, by Edward Meade.  
Sidney, B.C. Gray's Publishing Company Ltd., 1971. pp. 92, 83 plates.  
\$8.00.

Petroglyphs (drawings carved into rock surfaces by use of stone tools) have been found in all parts of the world, wherever humans have been and rock surfaces were available. They range in time from the Paleolithic

era to (very probably) the present. The glyphs have been made for many and varied purposes: signs of direction for wandering tribesmen, records of events, religious ritual — and, occasionally, sheer “doodling” by a resting wanderer.

The North West Coast has, all along its shoreline, massive boulders, and occasionally, cliff walls of stone. From Alaska down to Washington, there are an extraordinary number of carvings: realistically drawn animals; fabulous creatures of myth, sometimes monstrous; humans; faces; masks — sometimes geometric forms we cannot now interpret; other designs depict “coppers”, the North West Coast shield-shaped symbol of surplus wealth. Many of these are repeated over and over, on a large boulder, as though many generations were virtually compelled to retrace some magical charm or formula. Perhaps, as Mr. Meade speculates, some are records of shamanistic quests or visions of power.

Mr. Meade has long been an interested student of this region, its ecology, the Indians within it, and all aspects of their lives which have come to his attention.

As the driving force which formed and developed the Campbell River Historical Society and Museum (he became its first president), he travelled widely. During his travels he became interested in the many carvings on the sea shore and the coastline. Eventually he undertook the long task of travelling to each recorded site, and photographing the carvings. They are so well photographed that in only a few cases was it necessary to resort to the use of chalk to “bring out” the lines of the carving.

Mr. Meade’s notes are very interesting on each site: on some, he sees different styles of drawing, as though several generations — or perhaps tribes — had made their record or ritual carvings. Some carvings are done so deeply and carefully that they merit the term “art.” These he notes and describes. He also notes the boulders or walls which denote changes in oceanic tidal levels, indicating that the stones now under water were carved perhaps several millenia ago, which is consistent with present geological and archaeological evidence.

All petroglyphs and pictographs (rock paintings) are protected in British Columbia by the Provincial Archaeological and Historic Sites Protective Act. Professor Duff, in his foreword to this book points out that this law is not automatic protection from wanton damage by individuals: respect for the carving, its history and its existence, is also necessary if they are to remain in good condition.

I confess that the publication of the excellent maps on the front and

back fly leaves of this book, makes me nervous, because it is a guide for the curiosity seeker as well as the serious traveller. We know that some individuals in this society, troubled by internal pressures and resentments they do not understand, take positive pleasure in inflicting wilful damage on property considered as public treasure or heritage. We also know of the foolish element of the public which paints names and dates in large letters on spots of interest. Many of these rocks are in remote regions, and therefore doubly vulnerable. Nevertheless, for those who value them and wish to understand more, Mr. Meade has recorded for all time these carvings *in situ* and as they now are — eroded only by wave or wind, unspoiled by vandalism. All 83 plates preserve for us this record of human activity, and to those who care and respect the past, this book is the most definitive and interesting guide.

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*A History of Victoria 1842-1970*, by Harry Gregson. Victoria: The Victoria Observer Publishing Co. Ltd. 1970. 246 pp. \$10.00.

Urban history is a broad and currently popular field, but with little agreement as to how it should be handled. While many argue that all urban development is essentially similar and that some form of model or theory is necessary to give meaning and understanding, others insist that every city is a distinct entity that should be studied by itself. This debate has continued for over 20 years, but for all practical purposes anyone writing about the city can proceed as he sees fit.

Harry Gregson, *A History of Victoria 1842-1970* is a traditional urban biography. It is not concerned with the process of urbanization, nor with the way that Victoria's development differed from that of other Canadian cities. Rather it is aimed primarily at a local audience. In a relaxed, chatty, anecdotal way it attempts to capture the highlights of the city's development from the time that James Douglas first viewed the area in 1842 up to the construction of the latest shopping centre and super market. Most of it is based on existing secondary literature, reinforced with material from newspapers, trade directories, diaries and interviews, but it is not footnoted. Although it sketches the entire history of the city, it concentrates on Victoria's development prior to World War I.

On the basis of the task that the author has set for himself the final

results are rather disappointing. There are a number of thoughtful, suggestive passages — whether on social distinctions in early 20th century Victoria, the influence of the civil service in shaping Victoria's character, the speculative frenzy of 1912, the rivalry with Vancouver and Seattle, or the nature of the tourist city of the 1950's and 1960's. Yet such material is overwhelmed by the abundance of detail that pours out page after page on the lives of prominent Victorians, their homes and their careers.

Chapter 5 "A Stormy Decade" is representative of the strength and weaknesses of the entire book. It treats the depressed years from 1871 to 1881 when the excitement which greeted British Columbia's joining of Confederation in 1871 turned to the disillusionment of the late 1870's. Not only did prosperity fail to materialize, but the city's population dropped from 7,900 to 6,000. Of this twelve page chapter approximately two pages attempt to explain Victoria's difficulties during these years. But the remainder concerns itself with the homes and activities of various local figures. Thus we learn that

Other notable homes built in the early 1870's were the Charles home at 1038 Fort Street (north side, west of Cook). It was on an acre of land. Wm. Charles was a senior Hudson's Bay Company official. Avalon Villa fronting on Beacon Hill Park was built in 1870 by Peter John Leech, who discovered the Leechtown gold. Peter Leech could have operated a travel agency without ever consulting a map. Before coming here with the Royal Engineers in 1858 he had served in the Crimean War and with General Charles Gordon in Khartoum. He then surveyed northern British Columbia, and on one trip was reduced to making soup out of a dogskin coat, being saved from starvation only by the arrival of some Kispiox Indians.

He laid out the Bella Coola townsite, managed a Hudson's Bay store and became city engineer of Victoria. About \$100,000 in gold was taken from the Leech River which is named after him. Leech was one of the lucky few to get a bride from the brideship *Tynemouth*. Mary MacDonald was one of four sisters in the ship and Mrs. Leech became well known as the organist in the Reverend Cridge's Reformed Episcopal Church.

By Chapter 15 we have moved from the 1870's to the early 1900's and to a consideration of "Tourism — The New Industry". But although the time span and topic have changed, the nature and scope of the writing are consistent.

Francis Barnard, it will be recalled, founded Barnard's Express services which monopolized freight and passenger services during the Cariboo gold rush when freight on a ton of merchandise from Victoria to the Cariboo was \$825. His son Harry was the typical businessman-politician of the era. He owned property all over town and his brother-in-law, J. Mara, was the most

powerful man on the Mainland, politically and financially. He was interested in mines and initiated transport companies in Kamloops and Revelstoke. Mara lived with his brother-in-law on part of the "Duvals" estate on Rockland Avenue, his address being 750 Pemberton and the Mara home and coachhouse still stand at the rear of "Duvals," both converted into apartments. Harry Barnard's friends included the Rithets, Dunsmuirs, Pooleys, Wards, Trutches, Kers, Macdonalds (senator), Creases, Turners and others whose connections embraced everyone worth knowing from San Francisco to Victoria and Vancouver to Ottawa and London.

This kind of material spills out haphazardly throughout the book. Undoubtedly it will be of interest to the knowledgeable Victorian, but for anyone not intimately familiar with the city and its prominent families the sheer volume of detail on a host of businessmen, politicians, ministers, and military officers makes for tedious, wearisome reading. All in all this study does not break any new ground in urban history, but it does contain a vast amount of information on Victoria. One can only hope that if the book is later revised the author will give it the time, care, and discrimination that it deserves. Maybe then the outsider too can share his affection for Victoria.

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