Book Reviews

William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia, by Jean Usher. Ottawa, National Museum of Canada Publications in History 5, 1974. Pp. xii, 163; illus.

Although many books have been written about William Duncan, this is the first scholarly study of his work among the Tsimshian Indians of British Columbia. Hitherto, books on Duncan have been by missionary apologists; accounts of the heroic missionary, always aided by providence and sometimes by the Church Missionary Society, labouring among the savage heathen. Jean Usher's book is a welcome departure from this norm.

This volume concentrates on two aspects of Duncan's career: the mid-nineteenth-century missionary background out of which he came, and his work among the Tsimshian up to his departure for Alaska in 1887. The author argues, sometimes a little tenuously, that while Duncan was imbued with the ideals and values of his Victorian and Church Missionary Society milieu, the initial success of his mission at Metlakatla can be attributed to his ability to adapt to the traditional culture of the Tsimshian. The two propositions rest uneasily together. There is some confusion about whether Duncan demanded an absolute conversion, both religious and secular, from his neophytes. We are informed on subsequent pages that Duncan was an ethnocentric Victorian but that he took pains to "establish what had been the Indian way of dealing with situations" (pp. 80 and 81), and, later, that he "imposed an entirely new way of life" and yet his followers at Metlakatla became "bicultural" because "some elements of the system were not necessarily incompatible with the old Tsimshian ways" (pp. 88 and 89). Missionaries in many parts of the world were to discover that there were certain points at which it was easier to accept minor aspects of the indigenous culture than to insist on a rigid adherence to new standards. But I am not persuaded that Duncan's concession to traditional Tsimshian culture were anything but mini-

mal. Thus it is consistent, not ironic, that the eventual failure of the first Metlakatla was largely due to Duncan's inability to satisfy "the social needs and pride of rank of the Tsimshian chiefs".

Usher holds that in establishing his village at Metlakatla Duncan followed principles and policies laid down by Henry Venn, the secretary of the CMS from 1841 to 1872. It is important, when assessing the work of missionaries in remote areas, to concentrate not so much on current theorizing in the metropolis but on what the individual is doing in the local area. Individual personality was probably more important than general theories in determining the success or failure of a particular venture. If we examine what Duncan achieved at Metlakatla there is considerable evidence to support the view that he ignored rather than followed Venn's advice. Control of all village matters remained in Duncan's hands, he did not train a group of native ministers, nor, it turns out, did he translate much of the Bible into Tsimshian.

One of the potential pitfalls of the biographical approach, particularly in the area of culture contact, is the temptation to see motives and events only through the eyes of the individual being studied. In order to meet the Society's demand for regular reports on their activities CMS missionaries wrote voluminous letters and journals. So even researchers who are predisposed to be critical tend to be influenced by the missionary point of view simply by the sheer weight of the evidence. The author of this book generally succeeds in avoiding this danger. She argues convincingly and correctly that Duncan was not an original social thinker and the limitations in his character are made apparent. There is, however, one point at which Duncan's word is accepted too readily. After a few months at Fort Simpson Duncan went to preach in the houses of the Indians for the first time. There is the suggestion that Duncan was being used by the Tsimshian leaders and that, once he had visited one house, other chiefs extended an invitation so that they would not be ashamed. We are told that if this was the case then it was not apparent to Duncan. Particularly during his first months among the Indians, Duncan's perceptions are not necessarily evidence of Tsimshian intentions. There was in fact no reason why it should be apparent to Duncan that he was being manipulated.

I have other, perhaps more minor, reservations about the book. The frequent mention of Samuel Marsden as a positive example for Duncan's work is somewhat unfortunate since recent research has shown that the CMS mission to New Zealand was a total failure as long as Marsden remained its leader. There is some confusion on the question of whether

Duncan was (p. 109) or was not (p. 52) dominating and authoritarian in his running of the village at Metlakatla.

In spite of such reservations there is no doubt that this book is an important contribution to the writing of British Columbia's history. Apart from the rather frequent use of bloc quotes it is written clearly and well, and the well-documented arguments demand the attention of all students of Indian-European contact on the northwest coast. One hopes, however, that historians will not consider that Duncan's career has now been covered and that it is not worth further investigation. There are some aspects not dealt with here that still demand attention, and it may well be that Duncan is such an enigmatic figure that only after several minds have been brought to bear on his career will we fully understand it. Duncan's psychological make-up accounts for much of what happened at Metlakatla. The work of Neil Gunson on the London Missionary Society missionaries in the South Pacific could well provide many clues for a deeper study of Duncan's personality. Then there is the history of his second venture at New Metlakatla on Annette Island, Alaska, which still awaits attention. Jean Usher has said an important, but hopefully not the last, word on William Duncan.

Simon Fraser University ROBIN FISHER

The Surrey Pioneers, by Richard V. Whiteside. Vancouver: the author, 1974. Pp. x, 197; illus.; no price stated.

This exceptionally well-illustrated book is the product of a labour of love by the son of a pioneer Surrey family and a grant from the federal government's New Horizons programme. The photographs of pioneer homes, farms and businesses suggest that many early settlers earned a very good living from the forests and fields of Surrey, a municipality stretching from the United States border to the Fraser River, immediately south of New Westminster.

The brief, anecdotal sketches of ninety-three families who settled in Surrey before 1900 tend to be genealogical accounts. They do show that while Surrey was named after an English county and over a third of the heads of families included in the volume came from that country, many early settlers — including one native British Columbian — were Canadians by birth. In addition, there were a handful of pioneers from the United States, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Austria as well as from

Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The varied routes by which the early settlers reached Surrey from their home lands reveal a great diversity in experience. A few came directly but many spent some time in the United States or in eastern Canada, chiefly Ontario.

Since Mr. Whiteside makes no pretense of presenting a scholarly study or academic analysis, he does not tell us if he has attempted to compile a comprehensive list of Surrey's pioneers or has merely included those whose family photographs have survived. Thus the book is of little value to serious students of British Columbia history but it will appeal to its intended audience, the children and grandchildren of Surrey's pioneers.

University of Victoria PATRICIA E. ROY

Vancouver Ltd., by Donald Gutstein. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1975. Pp. 192; illus.; $5.95.

Have you ever wondered what Vancouver's most important marriages were? Or why Clark Bentall lives in a house and works in an office building? Or whether or not you're one of the real people? Or how to tell the good guys from the bad guys? Donald Gutstein gives his answers to these and other questions in *Vancouver Ltd.*, James Lorimer & Company's $5.95 contribution to urban scholarship.

Vancouver Ltd. tells us little of the city. It tells us plenty about Gutstein. He is guilty of ignoring the facts, of shoddy research, and of flights of dogmatic fancy. *Gutstein's Limitations* would perhaps have been a more accurate title.

As it stands, the book is a single-minded, self-centred bit of flim-flam in which Gutstein, using the royal "we", sets himself up as the arbitrator of tastes and the judge of all deeds that have shaped this city. If, as judge, Gutstein had presented a more balanced discussion of the city's development over the years, it might have been a worthwhile venture for both reader and writer alike.

Gutstein starts with the past and works his way into the present. He decries the opening up of provincial lands in the 1880s as "the most reckless give-away". He points out that "the CPR continued to clear land, grade the streets, and sell the lots". And one CPR employee had the gall to dream that Vancouver was "destined to become a great city in Canada". Gutstein is a proponent of the conspiracy theory of life and to him these are dastardly plots twisted to show that even from the begin-

ning "promoter and speculators" ruled the roost. Imagine, clearing the land so people could come to settle and live here.

Gutstein is stuck in a time frame which warps his observations, and therefore *Vancouver Ltd.* doesn't give us any insights into the past. He can't grasp the fact that once the railway was welcome. He can't grasp the fact that in the beginning people wanted the city to grow and develop. He can't grasp the fact that different times breed different attitudes. As a result, his comments on the Founding Fathers, the railway and the first settlers show a condescending arrogance and gnawing disgust. It is unenlightened history because Gutstein has taken neither the time nor made the effort to reach an understanding of the era.

Vancouver Ltd. is a book aimed at the present and if anything is to be gained from reading it, it would have to be in Gutstein's analysis of contemporary events. My frustration in this regard is that Gutstein probably does have something to offer. He does have a different perspective. Unfortunately, he articulates his confusion and not much more.

His confusion is most pronounced when he talks about the "people". Who are these "people"? The simplest definition is that they are the people that agree with the author at any given time. Depending on the chapter you read, it's implied that you are not "one of the people" if you own a house. You are not "one of the people" if you want to slow down growth, nor are you "one of the people" if you want to speed it up. You are not "one of the people" if you want to build housing, nor are you "one of the people" if you want to demolish it. You're not "one of the people" if you like too much open space, but neither are you "one of the people" if you like too little. In Gutstein's book, it's darn tough to be a "people".

Although Gutstein supposedly supports the people's involvement in decision-making, he condemns city council for deviously submitting the Harbour Park question to plebiscite. His concern at this approach is transparent. Few with his biases advocate a systematized process for reaching as many people as possible. The more you reach, the more chance there is some won't agree with you. The majority of the people of Vancouver didn't agree with Gutstein's assessment of the Harbour Park question. Gutstein explains the disparity between his view and the people's by saying: "the people were confused enough by the TEAM rhetoric to settle for buying the first block". What Gutstein really is saying is, isn't it too bad that all of the people aren't as smart as me? If people don't agree with Gutstein, then Gutstein says they've been bought off, they've been manipulated or they just don't understand.

Gutstein's political comments fall prey to the same distortion. One example should serve to lay to rest any claim that his observations of council in action are in any way valid. If an alderman disagrees with Gutstein's assessment, then Gutstein implies he doesn't care about people.

One of the votes used for Gutstein's assessment of aldermanic leanings typifies the problems he has with objectivity. An alderman had to vote against "allowing the Canadian Legion to change its funding arrangements with the CMHC, so that it could go ahead with a highrise for senior citizens over the objections of the residents of the area" to be one of Gutstein's good guys. To make it in Gutstein's good book, an alderman had to vote against a senior citizens' non-profit housing project which the city had initially encouraged. Gutstein's justification for this position is simply that "residents of the area would be unhappy because a highrise would block the view". This ignores the fact that short, fat buildings often block more view than tall, skinny ones. After council forced the Canadian Legion to re-design the building, it blocked not only more view but the street as well.

The highrise is used by Gutstein as a symbol of all that's bad. He neglects the fact that some people like living in highrises. They provide security and supply views. In fact, CMHC's *Beyond Shelter* suggests that these features make highrise designs very attractive to many senior citizens. In this case, however, Gutstein doesn't care about those senior citizens who are to be supplied with housing. He cares about the "residents of the area". Gutstein sets himself up as their spokesman. But is he really a spokesman for the "residents of the area"? After council decided to force a change in the design, a letter was received asking if council understood the new plan was going to "cut off light and air from two apartment blocks". The residents immediately affected by the building said "the only thing the highrise would have done was to provide a peg for the activists to hang a protest on. Can't you do something about this injustice? Surely the quality of our life does not have to be ruined because of a few activists' protests, does it?" Gutstein decided to ignore those most affected by the development, its next-door neighbours. He ignores them because they disagree.

The analysis of the False Creek agreement between the city and Marathon Realty highlights another of Gutstein's major problems: he refuses to be confused by the facts. According to Gutstein: "The city gave the green light for the CPR to proceed with its massive development, and to pocket the windfall profits picked up by the rezoning of the land. . . ." He claims the CPR made "a net gain of $23,460,000" while the city received

a measly "$12.75 million" in return. In summary: "City Council, again abdicating its responsibility to the electorate, has aided and abetted the CPR at every turn, giving the smooth CPR negotiators everything they ask for, and on occasion, even more than they wanted."

A brief look at the facts, all of which were available to Gutstein, suggests a different interpretation of how the negotiations went. A subdivision of the sort Marathon proposed would normally require a $10.5 million outlay for things like parks and utilities. In addition to standard subdivision costs, however, it was agreed that Marathon would supply $12.5 million worth of additional parkland; $1.5 million for school purposes; $1.25 million towards construction of a community centre with daycare, swimming, and other appropriate facilities (that figure is in 1974 dollars and escalates in line with inflation building costs); $3.5 million for the development of public open space (again that amount escalates with inflationary costs); $2 million extra for the construction of a high-quality public seawall; and $0.5 million for a perimeter road. This comes to a total of $21,500,000 additional expense for Marathon Realty and a total cost of $31,750,000.

In summary, in return for the city's actions which, if we accept Gutstein's figures, added $23,460,000 in value to the Marathon land, the people of Vancouver received added benefits amounting to about $31,750,000. Gutstein prefers to ignore this because he's trying to show that city councils give the people of Vancouver's assets away. The negotiations surrounding the north side of False Creek, in fact, show a council securing and improving the city's assets for everyone's benefit.

The real problem with *Vancouver Ltd.* is that anyone who knows anything about the city knows that Gutstein doesn't know much. He is an apprentice of the famed "excreta tauros sensos frustratur" (bullshit baffles brains) school of journalism. *Vancouver Ltd.* is the result of his apprenticeship.

Vancouver GORDON CAMPBELL

Fishing; British Columbia's Commercial Fishing History, by Joseph E. Forester and Anne D. Forester. Saanichton: Hancock House Publishers, Ltd., 1975. Pp. 224; $14.95.

With the publication of *Fishing* there is, at last, a book about British Columbia's fisheries which is worth buying. All facets of the industry from

its beginning to the present are described, and the extensive use of photographs, diagrams and maps enhances the value of this publication for the general reader. It is especially useful for its descriptions and illustrations of fishing techniques.

Those wishing to use it for academic purposes, however, will find it disappointing. Despite its wide scope, *Fishing* lacks footnotes, a comprehensive bibliography, and consistent in-depth research. It is a shame that the authors came so close to producing an excellent reference work and then wasted this potential. The exclusion of footnotes is especially baffling as that addition alone would have greatly aided the academic.

The authors also tend to romanticize the fisherman rather than present a critical evaluation of the industry's workers. They credit fishermen with fierce respect for the sea, but fail to mention that this is often overridden by a greed which leads to carelessness and death. Alcoholism is not described as the problem it is and no mention is made of the boredom at sea which often leads to alcoholism.

Romanticism is also evident when the authors describe early labour relations in the industry. Paternalistic management was, and is to a lesser extent today, a characteristic of the industry but this does not support the authors' conclusion that the canners and early fishermen worked together for mutual gain (p. 63). Company-owned gear more often than not meant that the fisherman was perpetually in debt to the company. This left little room for realistic bargaining. The contract system of hiring Oriental cannery crews was by no means a "voluntary one" (p. 126). Most early Oriental cannery workers could not speak English and thus had to work through a contractor or "boss Chinaman". Records at UBC's Special Collections show that the contractor was often in league with the canners to the detriment of the cannery workers. Royal commissions on Oriental labour emphasize the evils of the contract system.

In many cases certain themes are overdeveloped and other, more important topics are given only passing notice. The early period of labour organization is extensively described while the formative years of the present day unions, the 1930s, are virtually ignored. There is no excuse for this as there are at least two secondary works on the subject and the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union is very receptive to those doing research on the fisheries. Considering the scope of this book, the chapter on the Japanese seems far too extensive. This space could have been better employed discussing all the racial groups of the fishery. The description of early canning is excellent, but the accounts of the key innovations of the modern cannery — the butchering machine and the sani-

tary can — should have been developed further. Although there were at least five types of butchering machines, only the "Iron Chink" is mentioned. A further criticism is that as this is a history of the fisheries, more than one paragraph should have been devoted to modern fishing plants.

Several inaccuracies can be found in the text. More care should have been taken on dating the introduction of various techniques. The dates for the establishment of canning on the Fraser and Skeena are highly questionable, as is the date for the introduction of whaling. In North America the canning of salmon began in the east, not on the Sacramento. It is also highly unlikely that Alexander Ewen introduced the drift net to the Fraser, considering that the Hudson Bay Company was experimenting with nets at Fort Langley three decades earlier.

All these criticisms aside, this work is an excellent publication for the general reader and helps fill a gap in the history of British Columbia's staple industries. I would recommend it to anyone who wants to read a general history of Canada's Pacific fisheries.

Victoria DUNCAN STACEY