

Pioneer Days in British Columbia, Volume 3, edited by Art Downs (Heritage House Publishing Company, Surrey, B.C., 160 pp., 1977, \$5.95).

Local history is usually quite dull, but some of North America's most colourful legend and folklore comes from the Canadian west coast. The third volume of *Pioneer Days in British Columbia* is a selection of short articles which originally appeared in *BC Outdoors* magazine. Some of the contributors were themselves pioneers. Others are descendants or friends of pioneers. A few, such as Harold Fryer, are experienced writers and their articles have a polished quality lacking among the amateurs.

Of the 24 articles, seven deal with transportation ranging from a short note about a blacksmith who developed a technique to put snowshoes on horses to a detailed account on the construction of the Alaska Highway. Other transportation stories cover the use of sleighs, stagecoaches, sternwheel paddlers, pioneer aircraft and automobiles. There is nothing on trains although some railway stories have been included in earlier volumes. One is left with the impression that the settlement of British Columbia was in large part a struggle to get from one place to another with perseverance and ingenuity being the main qualities required of pioneers.

The story of the first car to reach Hazelton is particularly fascinating when one remembers that Hazelton is in the northern interior and no roads linked it to the south in 1911. The trip started in Seattle and for the sceptics there are photographs of the Studebaker driving along creek beds, over swamps, and through forests. It was even dismantled and carried over mountain passes on its way to a triumphal arrival in Hazelton 38 days later.

Several articles deal with that most colourful event in BC history, the Gold Rush. The story of the Stikine Trail tells of the overland route to the gold fields which was even more dangerous and tor-

tuous than the famous trail of '98 over the Chilkoot Pass. It is a story of heroism, degradation, terror and beauty that has been told and retold many times. However, it bears repeating for the level of human expectations has increased so drastically in the last 115 years that we may soon be as incapable of appreciating the ordeal of the "Overlanders" as we are of comprehending the vastness of the universe. Another article, *The Gold Rush Saloons*, explains in the more understandable terms of wine, women and song why it was all worthwhile.

All in all, this is not a bad book. Unfortunately, the editor did not see fit to provide any introductory material to place the articles within an overall historical and political context. On the other hand, the stories themselves are enough to make the point that British Columbia was a land for the rugged and the hardy. This may go a long way to explaining some present attitudes of residents of that province. The photographs are marvellous and as for the text, well, the book makes a welcome contribution to the lore of western Canada.

George Rickard

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