

The conventional Christian rhetoric of many of the third chapter's texts also seems far from any aboriginal roots. This is not to say that an Indian tradition or perhaps a bundle of merging regional traditions do not exist. But I suspect that it could only be isolated by much closer study of particular Indian styles of oratory and storytelling, or of particular Indian attitudes to nature and society — together with the effect of European influences on these modes of thought — as expressed in a more continuous and complete body of texts.

This book is essentially a reference work and a stepping-off point. Non-academic readers may wish to dip into it rather than read through. Some of the items required to illustrate the more conventional religious and political sentiments are just plain dull. But the book also brings together such fascinating texts as the commentaries on European life by an anonymous Micmac chief (1676), Joseph Brant (1786), and George Henry (1848). The reader will also find Tecumseh's and Ocaita's speeches of reproof to their backsliding British allies in the War of 1812, Maquinna the younger's defence of the potlatch in 1880, James Settee's vivid account of the Ojibway-Sioux battle of 1824, Deskaheh (Levi General's) haunted 1925 broadcast in exile on Six Nations political rights, and Lenore Keeshig-Tobias' elliptical and mysteriously significant poem on the Trickster.

The various criticisms stated here are largely offset by the value of having this material available and placed in its broad historical context. Whether or not the author succeeds in delineating a tradition as such, she has clearly done a most creditable job in bringing together a good variety of classic texts. *First People, First Voices* should show Indian and non-Indian readers alike that the search for a historic Indian view of the Canadian experience is well worth the effort.

**Bennett McCardle**  
Historical Research Services  
Ottawa

**Mining Photographs and Other Pictures, 1948-1968: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton.** BENJAMIN H.D. BUCHLOH and ROBERT WILKIE, eds. Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the University College of Cape Breton Press, 1983. xxviii, 277 p. ISBN 0-9196-1625-9 \$25.00.

In recent years we have become used to the premature release of badly prepared illustrated books on a wide variety of topics. Such books frequently do little more than exploit a recently uncovered collection by simply reproducing it in some garbled form without attention to the integrity of the photographs they display. While they often deserve little more than the local attention they achieve, this book rises above its purely local subject matter to present us with some universal paradigms Canadian scholars all too often ignore. It also demonstrates that the intellectual input necessary for such books is certainly equal to what one might consider acceptable for a traditional monograph.

Leslie Shedden's studio in Glace Bay was like hundreds of others that serviced the photographic needs of small and large communities across Canada. Begun by his father, David Thompson Shedden, early in this century, it was taken over by Leslie

on his return from service in World War II as an air photographer. In the twenty years covered in this volume's selection, his studio captured the decline of one of Canada's most celebrated mining communities. His photographs not only captured its people at work and at play — albeit mostly on ceremonial or honourific occasions — but also its buildings and industry in a way few others have. What distinguished Shedden from countless counterparts was his commission as official photographer for the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation — the industrial giant that dominated industrial Cape Breton for much of the twentieth century. In that capacity Shedden recorded ongoing changes in the industry from the perspective of its personnel and technology. Most of this industrial photography, destined for DOSCO's various public relations ventures, was commissioned to reflect favourably on the corporation and its management of the industry.

These two apparently distinctive elements of Shedden's activity recorded passageways in the lives of his subjects that are often as perceptive as they are prosaic. The selection presented here is about equally divided between his industrial and community work. Taken individually, his photographs may not appear particularly notable, though many are obviously of high quality. The reproduction for this volume is probably as good as a book of this sort can achieve — a tribute no doubt to the skill of the technicians at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Shedden had a sharp eye for detail and composition, conveying a great deal of the flavour of his community in his photographs. Commonplace family portraits and photographs of weddings abound, but there are a great many very interesting and unique ones as well. Shedden did a great deal of location work and in the process documented the changing face of the commercial community of Glace Bay. His streetscapes alone repay careful attention from anyone interested in the commercial transformation of urban Canada during the 1950s and 1960s.

Shedden's industrial photography includes a few obviously posed shots of underground work; only occasionally were workers captured in approximations of work situations. Taken mostly at the behest of DOSCO, these photos mainly record technological innovations the company introduced in a final fling at profitability following the war. Frequently it is the incidental photos probably never intended for publication by the corporation that are the most revealing, for they often caught miners unawares in various situations.

Shedden, who lives in retirement in Glace Bay, revealed no hidden agenda for his work. Technical difficulties in lighting the murky depths underground were a greater problem than interference by the corporation. There seems a certain awe-struck quality in some of the work photographs, but that was probably as much a reflection of any neophyte's experience underground as any deliberate attempt to create an image on his part.

What distinguishes this volume from so many others of its ilk is the inclusion of some very informative supporting material. Co-editor Robert Wilkie offers a strong contextual introduction to the volume, outlining first the history of the Shedden studio and its position within the Glace Bay community. He also provides an assessment of the objectives of DOSCO in commissioning Shedden's work. Along the way he captures a sense of the community and the tremendous cohesiveness that bound its labouring people together during confrontations with a corporation headquartered in far-away Montreal and managed by a succession of "experts." He

very properly portrays the photo collection as “a critical link between a social history, a group of cultural forms and the people who lived that history and that culture.” Wilkie has a great deal to say about the nature of a photographic archive and its integral qualities for informing us about the nature of communities.

Don Macgillivray of the University College of Cape Breton provides a spirited, balanced, somewhat anecdotal overview of the emergence of Glace Bay’s worker community, emphasizing the strength of the workers’ unique cultural heritage. He lays to rest commonly held assumptions regarding the barrenness of community life in coal mining towns, particularly in communities where the shared heritage of a common rural community is so powerful an influence. He also rescues the workers from the benign condescension of middle-class or outside observers who have so often and so casually ignored the great depth of their personal relationships and the solidarity that has always characterized their relationship to capital. What Macgillivray’s essay has to do with Shedden’s photographs is left unclear, but it does provide a fine contextual statement that stands on its own.

The longest of the book’s three essays is by photo-historian Alan Sekula of the University of Ohio. He addresses the depiction of work in both pre- and post-photographic eras from the earliest graphics of the encyclopaedists down to the present. Sekula’s sweeping essay is eclectic, discursive, and probably too broadly cast for this volume, but it is filled with insights that labour and community historians everywhere and archivists, no matter what their interest, should be confronting. Essentially, he argues that photographs and other illustrations of the work world have always been commissioned for very specific purposes. Central to our understanding of their documentary impact must be an explicit understanding of the context surrounding their creation. Quite apart from the quasi-artistic qualities always inherent in any photograph, a wealth of culture is transmitted by composition and subject if only we train our eyes to see true depictions of the relationship between labour and capital. His explicitly Marxist frame of reference projects a decided bias, but his assessment of the emergence of industrial photography in an international setting is a *tour de force* of significant proportions deserving a wide readership and strong response from a variety of ideological perspectives. The centrality of the relationship between technology and the process of production is the key, he argues, to any understanding of the purpose of most industry-sponsored photography of work.

This volume is part of a series developed by the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design called *Source Materials of the Contemporary Arts*. It is a fine book — intelligently conceived, beautifully executed, and deserving of a much wider audience than it is likely to get if viewed as yet another work of limited regional or local significance. Shedden’s photographs are worthy of study and consideration on their own terms, no matter what the context of their creation; their combination here with intelligent text and exemplary reproduction is a decided advance over most books of the sort. One can only hope that more of our cultural institutions will soon turn their resources to similar innovative, cooperative ventures exploring aspects of our non-verbal heritage.

**Del Muise**  
Department of History  
Carleton University