

use of minutes of the Calgary City Council, the minutes and reports of the Calgary Planning Commission, or even building by-laws. Perhaps in a future work, the full evidence will be examined.

Brian M. Owens
City Archivist
City of Calgary Archives

Farming the Frontier: The Agricultural Opening of the Oregon Country, 1786-1846.
JAMES R. GIBSON. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985. 265 p.
ISBN 0-7748-0219-7 \$29.95 cl.

In focussing on the agricultural activity in the Oregon Country before the 1846 boundary treaty, James R. Gibson has tackled a neglected and misinterpreted period and has shed light on it. Firmly based on a mass of raw data, the book is clear, concise, well-ordered, and readable, and manages a satisfying balance between a wealth of detail and the logical development of an argument.

Gibson attributes the neglect of the pre-1846 period to “the ethnocentric bent of American historiography” and “the inaccessibility, until recently, of the archives of the Hudson’s Bay Company.” (p. 5) Americans prefer to concentrate on the later period when British and Canadian influence in the area had diminished. Gibson, however, is under no such constraints. A major theme throughout his book is the strength of the British claim to the area and the dependence of the few American pioneers on the support of the Hudson’s Bay Company. A major advantage which Gibson has over earlier researchers is his familiarity with the resources in the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives. Through his study of these sources, he has been able to document in lively detail the “laborious and largely successful efforts” of the Company’s servants who “tested the agricultural resources and proved the agricultural potential of this sprawling and diverse region.” (p. 5) A major result of this research is to reverse John S. Galbraith’s earlier conclusion that the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company was a political and economic failure.

Within each of the four units into which the book is divided — Post Farming, Company Farming, Homestead Farming, and Mission Farming — Gibson discusses the origins, results, and problems of each effort. The discussion of the activities of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company occupies two-thirds of this book. Directing and dominating the operations of both these companies is the controlling figure of Governor George Simpson. John McLoughlin, James Douglas, William Tolmie, and other familiar “West Side” figures appear, but Simpson prescribes, cajoles, and commands as he organizes the farming operations for the benefit of the fur trade. He issues specific instructions on every operation from the selection of immigrants with “as few useless hangers-on and children as possible” (p. 110), to the penning of cattle (p. 121), and the breeding of ewes (p. 122). If Simpson’s boundless energy and far-ranging expertise required further proof, Gibson has provided it.

These chapters also provide helpful reference aids to those interested in general Company operations on the Pacific Northwest Coast. Almost forty pages in the first unit are devoted to capsule histories for some seventeen posts. The account provided of the formation and history of the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company is particularly clear in elucidating its interconnections with the Hudson’s Bay Company. From the research

conducted for his 1976 book, *Imperial Russia in Frontier America*, Gibson was familiar with the Company's relations with Russian America. His familiarity with the relevant sources makes his evaluation of the Company's success particularly convincing.

The importance to this volume of the correspondence, reports, and journals of the Hudson's Bay Company is readily apparent. The quotations liberally sprinkled through the text are well-chosen and apt. Whether eloquent or earthy, as in the discussion of the effects of a steady diet of salmon (pp. 25-26), they invariably advance Gibson's argument in a vivid way. Occasionally the transcriptions are confusing when abbreviations are rendered as unfamiliar words, such as "condons" instead of either "cond^{ons}" or "cond[iti]ons" (p. 10), but this is a minor quibble.

The most effective of the thirty tables are also the twenty-three based predominantly on Hudson's Bay Company Archives documentation. Yearly fluctuations in the number of Hudson's Bay Company servants, cultivated acreage, number of livestock, or output of grains can be seen at a glance. It is only in the last two chapters where scattered sources are used, that the tables prove less helpful. In Table 23, data on the American migration via the Oregon Trail for seven years is based on the gleanings from some fifty different sources. There are almost equal numbers of question marks and figures, and five qualifying remarks are necessary. Perhaps a footnoted narrative would have been more effective in such cases.

The major disappointment in the book is the quality of the map reproductions. Poorly focussed and murky, printed on the same paper as the text, they serve little more purpose than to break up the prose. Names and features are very difficult to distinguish. In two cases the maps are spread across two facing pages, with detail disappearing into the gutter. It is embarrassing to see the maps from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, especially those by Mervyn Vavasour, so poorly represented. Another minor point is Gibson's idiosyncratic citation style. Admittedly, the system used in the Archives and developed in Britain can be confused by the term "dorse," abbreviated to "d," to designate the reverse side of a folio. But there is little advantage in introducing a new system using "v" (presumably for "verso"). The notation "D4/90:195v" would appear to have few benefits over the Archives' version, "D4/90 fo. 195d."

In his "Prologue," Gibson modestly criticizes his own 1968 article on farming in the Pacific Northwest as "too compendious and marred by typographical errors." (p. 227) His latest product can be described as "compendious" in the positive meaning of brief but comprehensive. It is also remarkably free of typographical errors. And beyond its technical merits, the book is well-organized, and well-researched. Aids to the reader include a helpful index, and the excellent bibliography and footnotes.

Judith Hudson Beattie
Hudson's Bay Archives
Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Building Beyond the Homestead: Rural History on the Prairies. DAVID C. JONES and IAN MACPHERSON, eds. Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1985. 235 p. illus. ISBN 0-919813-07-0.

The articles in this volume consist of papers presented at a conference on rural prairie history held at the University of Victoria in February 1984. The theme of the conference,