

maritime history publication, but such a critique would be somewhat unfair as the author did not aim to provide an analytical book; instead he presents a descriptive and highly visual history of a maritime industry that no longer exists. Nevertheless, even for the analytical maritime historian, the two volumes are of substantial value as they provide a starting point for future work on the subject. Both volumes include an index and a bibliography, adding to the utility of the books for future historical research.

The publisher should be lauded for the high quality of the reproductions and especially for not shying away from reproductions of black and white photographs that include real black and white rather than shades of grey. With a retail price of US\$59.99 per volume, each of which is a 9-inch by 12-inch hardback volume with more than 280 illustrations, the books are reasonably priced. Even if a maritime historian may not be interested in steamships or navigation on the Hudson River and in New York Harbor, *The Boats of Summer* will make a good summer read that helps to illustrate that mass tourism on the water is by no means a phenomenon unique to the early twenty-first century.

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Gibson, James R. *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: Voices of the Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841*. Revised edition. McGill-Queen's Indigenous and Northern Studies Series, no. 106 McGill-Queen's University Press, 2024

[xvii] + 511 pp., maps, illustrations, plans, tables, bibliography, notes and index

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This, the seventh volume in McGill-Queen's Indigenous and Northern Studies Series, tells the history of the Indigenous people of the West Coast of North America in the critical first years of contact through the contemporary accounts of seafarers and traders. The objective is to bring alive the voices of the fur trade. The work is a compilation of extracts from logbooks, letters, and other primary documents in the vernacular English of the often semi-literate seafarers and traders. Author James Gibson admits that important voices are missing, including the Indigenous people who are the primary subject of the story and the Chinese people at the terminal point of the trade in furs. Interspersed is the author's commentary on all aspects of life and especially trade, including controversial matters like violence and slavery.

In the preface we meet the problem of nomenclature for Indigenous groups and communities, with historical names maintained throughout. Similarly geographic names are often phonetic renditions of the Russian or Indigenous names of the time. The first line warns us that the book is a cornucopia of languages and archaic vocabularies.

The first chapters are a chronological treatment of the ebb and flow of exploration, and political and diplomatic history in the period covered, ending with the ascendancy of the Hudson's Bay Company in what is now Canada. Chapter 5, "The China Market," is focused on the terminus of the trade at Canton (Guangzhou); the mechanics and diplomacy of the trade; and the wider aspects of China as a market for fur, which largely determined the characteristics of the trade. Chapter 6, "The Modes of the Trade," describes the trade among the Indigenous people at the outset of the period. Chapter 7, "The Problems of the Trade," describes the familiar problems accompanying the trade: disease, alcohol, and violence. Subsequent chapters show the proliferation of commodities and routes, the attempt to adapt to the dearth of sea otter pelts, and the end of the trade with the virtual extinction of the sea otter, *Enhydrata lutris*.

Language plays a major role throughout, requiring the reader to be attentive, given that the trade took place in the languages of trading European nations, Polynesian, a plethora of Indigenous languages, Chinese languages, and the languages of trade known as "Pidgin." The profusion of vernacular renditions of common words and sometimes arcane words in a multiplicity of dialects requires constant reference to outside sources in order to follow the action. Gibson can also be folksy and informal, unusual in an academic treatise, but it conveys meaning to speakers familiar with the vernacular: "Regardless of who showed the Haidas how to grow spuds, nobody had to tell them how to hawk them" (279). We are introduced to archaic Spanish measures for grain and other commodities, which are explained in a note. Indigenous people are introduced in the preface as "the so-called Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian (Ts'msyen), Nootka (Nuu-chah-nulth), Salish, and Chinook (Lower Chinook, Clatsop, Willapa, Wahkiakum, and Klathlamet)" (ix), which is the only introduction to modern naming; thereafter historical names are used exclusively referring to Indigenous people. The author's language is deliberately elastic. Quotations may be long or short extracts or phrases and individual words sewn into the text and annotated. The result is a dense text that makes for very slow reading.

Physically this book packs an immense amount of information into a compact, portable, and functional package. The paper is acid-free matte,

with comfortable large-font print. Notes are voluminous. The bibliography is thoughtfully arranged; for instance, primary sources are divided into unpublished and published. Sources include a wide selection of publications and primary sources, like Hudson's Bay Company post logs and other documentation. Tables show individual vessels engaged and economic indicators of the trade.

Graphics are weak. There are three sketch maps. Inside the front cover is a projection of the globe with the ships' route from Boston round Cape Horn; up the coast of the Americas to the range of the sea otter; from California to Alaska; to Hawaii for supplies and on to China; and finishing the voyage by continuing west to reach home port by completing the circumnavigation. The second map is of the approaches to Canton. The third map, inside the back cover, presents the West Coast, showing the outline of physical features of the coast, major Indigenous communities, and trading posts.

The book is highly successful in that it transmits a huge amount of information and provides extensive tools to help us understand, verify, and continue pursuing the many questions raised. Some of the author's conclusions are highly questionable: if the rosy picture painted is accurate (307), what happened so that by 1867, scant years later, communities had been wiped out wholesale by epidemics and the residential school system could begin?

This book deserves to be read by scholars studying the West Coast of North America or the termini of the fur trade: China and Boston/Western Europe. Anyone interested in Canadian studies or living in Western Canada, most especially in British Columbia, should read this book to understand their own history. Libraries in Canada need at least one copy, remembering that time is required to read this work.

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Thunder Bay, Ontario

Goodall, Stanley; edited by Ian Buxton. *Diary of a Wartime Naval Constructor*

Seaforth Publishing, 2022

xi + 307 pp., illustrations, index

ISBN 9781399082709 (hardcover) CA\$53.82

Biographies and autobiographies of naval constructors are fairly rare beasts. While there is a wealth of tales of naval daring and many 'biographies' of individual ships, there are fewer books that feature the naval constructor