

35 Best of B.C. Maritime Books

Armitage, Doreen. Burrard Inlet: A History. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2001.

This evocative history of a waterway tells the story of how an inlet has become home to one the most beautiful cities and North America's 3rd largest port. The characters who dot this tale are First Nations who settled the shores, explorers who arrived by sea and by land, loggers, fishermen, developers, and more.

Bannerman, Gary. The Ships of British Columbia: An Illustrated History of the British Columbia Ferry Corporation. Surrey, BC: Hancock House Publishers, 1985.

The colourful 25-year history of B.C. Ferries, its disasters and accomplishments, is told here in this popular and well-illustrated account.

Blanchet, M Wylie. The Curve of Time. Sidney, BC: Gray's Publishing Ltd., 1977.

Muriel Wylie Blanchet, a widow with 5 small children, narrates their many adventures and mishaps aboard the small 25' Caprice. The family spends their summers exploring the B.C. Coast, sometimes following in Capt. George Vancouver's footsteps, and sometimes surpassing him. The stories are told with blithe humour and against the backdrop of B.C.'s rugged and pristine coastline of the 1930's.

Coney, Michael. Forest Ranger, Ahoy: The Men – The Ships – The Job. Sidney, BC: Porthole Press, 1983.

The BC Forest Service has operated a fleet of ships and crews servicing the forest industry along the Province's rugged coast for the past century. A major look at a little known aspect of coastal history.

Delgado, James P. Racers and Rovers: 100 Years of the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club.

The story and the fables; the history up front and some of the fascinating stories behind the first one hundred years of Vancouver's premier yachting club. Wonderfully illustrated, with delightful anecdotes, it is a major contribution to the storied record of the Province's marine history.

Geddes, Gary. Sailing Home: A Journey Through Time, Place and Memory. Toronto: HarperFlamingo Canada, 2001.

Award winning poet and writer, Gary Geddes on a search for his roots, sails his 31-foot sloop on a meditative journey up the Inside Passage. An exciting and engaging voyage that begins when Geddes wonders what all the little asterisks on his charts are for.

Gough, Barry M. Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1579-1809. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980.

The first in a series documenting Britain's maritime expeditions and exploration of the B.C. Coast. The second and third books in this series continues the story of the Royal Navy's ascendancy in the Pacific, its protection of the fledging colonies along the coast, and later its perception of law and order in a very distant colony. (See also The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America 1810-1914, and Gunboat Frontier).

Graham, Donald. Keepers of the Light: A History of British Columbia's Lighthouses and their Keepers. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1985.

A record, lighthouse by lighthouse, of the extraordinary lives of the lightkeepers and their families who maintained the essential services to mariners along the southern waters of British Columbia's rugged coast. See Lights of the Inside Passage (1986) for a continuation of the stories but on the Inside Passage.

Greene, Ruth. Personality Ships of British Columbia. Vancouver, BC: Marine Tapestry Publications, 1969.

This well-researched book is the story of 37 of the more fascinating ships that sailed British Columbia waters. It includes such classics as the *HMS Beaver*, *Melanope*, *Princess Sophia*, *Princess Maquinna*, and *St Roch*.

Guild Gillespie, B. On Stormy Seas: The Triumphs and Torments of Captain George Vancouver. Victoria, BC: Horsdal & Schubart Publishers Ltd., 1992.

Captain George Vancouver, sent in 1790 to settle the Nootka Controversy and complete the charting of the Pacific Northwest began by Captain Cook, returned with exceptional charts and improved relations with the Spanish. However he died an impoverished man 4 years later. Written as if by the hand of Vancouver's oldest brother who wishes to set the record straight, Gillespie provides an engaging and accessible guide to Captain Vancouver's voyages.

Hadley, Michael L. God's Little Ships. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1995.

Established in 1904 by John Antle, the Columbia Coast Mission built outpost hospitals and clinics in remote communities, ran medical supply ships and a maritime parish that reached isolated camps and settlements. An interesting and essential chapter in the history of BC's coastal communities.

Haig-Brown, Alan. Fishing for a Living. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1993.

This collection of anecdotes and stories about the life of the men and women who fished for a living on the West Coast is well illustrated with unique photographs spanning 100 years of maritime history.

Hayes, Derek. Historical Atlas of British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest. Vancouver: Cavendish Books, 1999.

This is unique collection of over 320 reproductions of the original maps drawn by explorers, surveyors and natives, spanning four centuries of exploration and discovery. The history of the maps of the Pacific Northwest becomes a history of exploration in this well illustrated and documented collection of maps and photographs in black and white and, colour.

Hill, Beth. The Remarkable World of Frances Barkley. Sidney, BC: Gray's Publishing, 1978.

Francis Barkley, thought to be the first European woman to set foot on the BC coast, spent the first eight years of her married life to Captain William Barkley, trading and sailing around the world. Her 'reminiscences' are published here along with Beth Hill's commentary, both supplying a vivid portrayal of 18th century life.

Hill, Beth. Upcoast Summers. Victoria, BC: Horsdal & Schubart Publishers Ltd., 1985.

During the summers between 1933 and 1941, Francis and Amy Barrow explored the British Columbia coast, searching for and photographing First Nations rock art. This is a vivid account of their voyages to remote bays and inlets, the homesteaders they met, and a vanishing lifestyle.

Jensen, Vickie. Saltwater Women at Work. Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1995.

Open this book to any page and get a first-hand account of life at sea. She may be eight or she may be 97 years old; she may have worked on a deep sea or coastal freighter, a fishing boat, tugboat or water taxis. This is a wonderful collection of snapshots of the varied and unconventional careers of women at sea.

Johnson, Peter. Voyages of Hope: The Saga of the Bride-Ships. Victoria, B.C.: TouchWood Editions, 2002.

In the 1860's, four assorted ships sailed/steamed out from England bearing assorted young women who were intended to provide the 'civilizing' touch to the rough pioneering (male) frontier that was being established in British Columbia. For the first time, their fascinating stories have been brought together under one cover. Another look at the Province's varied maritime history.

Keller, Keith. Dangerous Waters: Wrecks and Rescues off the B.C. Coast. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1997.

Twenty-one hair-raising accounts of marine disasters, or near disasters are told here by the people who lived through them.

Kennedy, Liv. Coastal Villages. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1991.

With a deep personal involvement, the author delineates the history of many of BC's coastal communities. Finely illustrated with both historical and contemporary images, it is a record of a way of life that has drastically changed even while it was being researched and written.

Leighton, Ken. Oar and Sail: An Odyssey of the West Coast. Smithers, BC: Creekstone Press, 1999.

This lively log of a rowing voyage begins when Dr . Leighton, 66 years old and former head of Anesthesia at the UBC Hospital, sets off from Vancouver's Jericho Beach for Prince Rupert. Written with wry humour and a love of language, Leighton takes us on his journey through flood tides, surge channels, and dangerous crossings to the most beautiful and serene coves on the coast.

McLaren, Keith. Light on the Water: Early Photography of Coastal British Columbia. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1998.

A photographic history of the boats, ships and people along the coast of British Columbia, this collection of over 120 photographs, reproduced in fine large format, date from the 1850's to the 1940's.

Meggs, Geoff & Duncan Stacey. Cork Lines and Canning Lines: The Glory Years of Fishing on the West Coast. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992.

This is a photo book – but much more than the conventional coffee table one. It is a visual record, assembled from many sources, of the men and women, European, First Nations, and Asians that made a living in the amazingly varied aspects of the fishing industry on this coast, from the 1860's to the 1950's.

Nicholson, George. Vancouver Island's West Coast: 1762-1962. Victoria, BC: Morriss Printing Co, 1962.

European presence in British Columbia waters commenced on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. Here are fascinating stories of the people, companies and ships that plied those waters for some two hundred years.

O'Keefe, Betty & Ian Macdonald. The Final Voyage of the PRINCESS SOPHIA: Did They all have to die? Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 1998.

On October 25, 1918, the CPR's coastal passenger/freighter, PRINCESS SOPHIA was lost in Alaskan waters with all 360 people on board – except for a dog. It has taken nearly eighty years to unravel the complex stories behind and around the sinking. Here is probably the definitive statement on the worst maritime tragedy to occur on the BC coast.

Raincoast Chronicles. (One to Nineteen) Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing.

First published in 1972, this ever-popular, award winning series depicting West Coast history and culture has seen many reprints, and three collections.

Reksten, Terry. A Century of Sailing 1892-1992. Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 1992.

Although Victoria's annual regatta was a regular and well attended part of the celebrations for Queen Victoria Day, it was not until four boats from Washington went home with the top four prizes did Victorians organize their own yacht club in 1892. Published in 1992 this well illustrated narration of the VYC's history is a celebration of the Club's 100th anniversary.

Rogers, Fred. Shipwrecks of British Columbia. Vancouver: J J Douglas, 1973.

More Shipwrecks of British Columbia. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992.

Shipwrecks are an integral part of life at sea, an aspect that all seafarers would hope never to encounter. But all landlubbers are enthralled by shipwreck accounts. In two volumes, the author has detailed several hundred of these trials of the human endeavor that have taken place on our coastline. Many of the wreck sites that he has personally visited are included in these well-documented accounts.

Rushton, Gerald A. Whistle Up the Inlet. Vancouver: J J Douglas, 1974.

Beginning in 1889, the ships of the Union Steamship Company were the lifelines for many people residing along 4,000 miles of rugged coastline. This company history is an adventure tale of sorts and a seminal part of BC maritime history.

Stacey, Duncan & Susan Stacey. Salmonopolis: The Steveston Story. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1994.

Steveston, once the largest fishing port in Canada, was a boomtown that served both the fishing industry and the surrounding farmland. This coffee-table book is fully illustrated.

Turner, Robert. The Pacific Princesses: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Pacific Railway's Princess Fleet on the Northwest Coast.

One of a trio of books covering the CPR's marine operations in and out of BC.

Wonderfully illustrated and absorbingly prepared and written, it covers the operations of the BC Coast Steamship Service with its 'miniature' ocean liners in all their history and glory.

Vancouver, George. Edited by K.W. Lamb. A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World, 1791-1795. London: Hakluyt Society, 1984.

Captain George Vancouver's meticulous surveys of the coast from California to Cook Inlet, produced exceptional charts of the Pacific coast of North America. Vancouver's journals, published in 1798, are reproduced and edited here by Dr K. Lamb, the Dominion Archivist and first Librarian of Canada, and the authority on Captain George Vancouver.

Vassilopoulos, Peter. Antiques Afloat: From the Golden Age of Boating in British Columbia. Vancouver: Panorama Publications Ltd., 1980.

Some of the best-known antique cruisers on the BC coast from 1900-1940 are featured in this well illustrated collection. It also includes background information on the builders, design, construction, and owners.

Walbran, John T. British Columbia Coast Names 1592-1906. Vancouver, BC: J J Douglas, 1971.

First published in 1909, this unrivalled and fascinating book provides detailed sources for most of the names on this coast.

White, Howard and J.A. Spilsbury. Spilsbury's Coast. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, [1987].

A coastal pioneer in so many senses, Jim Spilsbury made an indelible mark on this Province. In a most engaging and profusely illustrated book, Spilsbury depicts the marvelously varied life that has occurred to one whose home, for nearly a century, was the coast of British Columbia.

Wolferstan, W.H. Cruising Guide to British Columbia, Vol. 1: Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island from Sooke to Courtenay. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1987.

(See also Volume II for Desolation Sound, and Volume III for the Sunshine Coast). More than just cruising guides, these books provide interesting snippets of history, geology, exploration tips, and marine life. Also includes charts, maps, and colour photographs.