

## Pacific Splendour

PHYLLIS REEVE *meets more explorers and naturalists  
who mapped and catalogued the West Coast 'Eden'*

*A Perfect Eden; encounters by early explorers of Vancouver Island.* Michael Layland. Touchwood Editions, 2016.

*In Nature's Realm; early naturalists explore Vancouver Island.* Michael Layland, Touchwood Editions, 2019.

Consider the case of Dr. Charles Wood. The first of Michael Layland's Vancouver Island books, *The Land of Heart's Delight; early maps and charts of Vancouver Island\** told the story of Surgeon Lieutenant Wood in 1862 as he accompanied Lieutenant Philip Hankin on an expedition across northern Vancouver Island from Kyuquot Sound on the west coast to the Nimpkish River near the east. He reported to Captain George Richards who in turn submitted survey results and maps to Governor James Douglas. In the second book, *A Perfect Eden; encounters by early explorers of Vancouver Island*, we learn that Dr Wood, also under the command of Captain Richards, had in 1860 accompanied Lieutenant Charles Mayne and four local guides on a two-day exploration of the Courtenay River. A few pages later Wood's cross-island trek

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across the island with Lieutenant Hankin is recounted in more detail than in the first book, and we learn of Hankin's skill in cooking fish curry. On both expeditions, Wood's personal focus had been on the collection of botanical specimens, and in the third book *In Nature's Realm; early naturalists explore Vancouver Island* his interests and skills come to the fore. Besides displaying his knowledge of natural history and geology and undertaking "arduous land explorations with the captain



and other surveyors," he more than fulfilled his role as ship's doctor: "he not only provided health care for the crew, but also responded with dedication to a raging smallpox epidemic among the local peoples." He writes of disappointment when "terrible conditions" forced him to abandon his equipment for collecting botanical specimens, but also of "a large patch of gentian in full and brilliant blossom" and of other flora and fauna including the grizzly bear, which if you encounter "it is wisest to leave unmolested." Richards commemorated Wood's contributions by naming for him a mountain and a range of hills, a cove, a bay and a collection of islets.

So this supporting character has his moment at centre stage. There are many others. For instance "the one-armed, polyglot, mixed-race hunter and expedition

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interpreter” Thomas Omtamny, a.k.a. Antoine, Tomo or “the Iroquois,” probably the son of a Chinook woman and a voyageur from the North West Company, and a loyal friend of Governor Douglas. He also interacted with Pemberton, and shared leadership of an expedition with another colourful character, Adam Grant Horne. The ubiquitous Chief Maquinna, a.k.a. Tsaxawasipa, met Cook and Malaspina, entertained Quadra and Vancouver, sketched a map for Peter Puget and provided a cross-island trail for Richards.

Layland’s first volume was all about the maps, but the more he learned about the maps the more interested he became in the mapmakers. By the time of publication he had amassed enough material for a “prequel” which would tell the stories of “those intrepid souls” and “intriguing characters”: how they came to this island described by Governor Douglas as “a perfect Eden,” what they did there, and how they interacted with each other. Current issues predispose us to assume the “encounters” in the subtitle of the second volume refers to European encounters with the people already resident on Vancouver Island. Such is certainly part of the intent. However, the stories turn out to be less straight-forward and more cross-cultural than we might have expected.

The newcomers were interested in trade, exploration, the Northwest Passage, and surveying, leading, alas, to appropriation and exploitation. There was little armed combat, but much diplomacy and a surprising amount of sharing.

**I**t all began — we’re not sure when. We know Europeans first arrived on the shores of Vancouver Island just over two centuries ago. We know they met people whose ancestors had lived there for millennia. This knowledge leaves a lot of years unaccounted for, and Layland begins by examining three possible and puzzling voyages which might have occurred in that interim.

He loves to astound by revealing what we should have known all along, if only we had thought about it. For instance, we should have figured out that Asian mariners

would have landed on the western shores of the Americas long before the Europeans blundered their long roundabout way here. We know the Venetian traveller Marco Polo reached China in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Might he also have reached Alaska and beyond? If he did, he might not have been the first. As long ago as the 5<sup>th</sup> century, an Afghani mystic Hui Shen may have led a “small group of Buddhist monks” on a mission to the kingdom of Fou Sang situated about latitude 50, the latitude of Vancouver Island. The story remains “an enduring mystery.”

A SECOND MYSTERY concerns the English swashbuckler — “raider” Layland calls him — and hero of the Spanish Armada, Francis Drake. A few years ago fans of west coast explorers were busy discussing a theory propounded by Samuel Bawlf, who had been British Columbia’s Minister of Conservation and Recreation in Bill Bennett’s 1975 cabinet, and as such responsible for the implementation of B.C.’s first *Heritage Conservation Act*. In his highly readable book *The Secret voyage of Sir Francis Drake 1577-1580* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2003) Bawlf argued that Drake beat Captain Cook to these shores by a couple of hundred years. Bawlf was not the first exponent of the theory, though he may have been for a while its most successful publicist. Layland does not name Bawlf among the researchers who have probed the evidence, perhaps because of misgivings about the level of scholarship involved, but he does seem to wish the story might be true: “In reality no one knows the whole story of this remarkable voyage of exploration and discovery. But for Vancouver Islanders, it is tempting to think that their home might have been part of it.”

The third unconfirmed arrival is Juan de Fuca, who gave his alias to the strait between Vancouver Island and Washington State. Ioannis Apostolos Phokas-Valianos, a native of the Greek island of Kefalonia, sailed under the flag of Spain. In Venice at the end of his career, disillusioned and penniless, he encountered an also-bankrupt but still hopeful English entrepreneur, Michael Lok. Juan spun a tale of his adventures on

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what might have been the west coast of North America, which Lok transcribed and published in a pamphlet on the probability of a northwest passage. He failed to raise financial backing for an English expedition to retrace the route, and after 1602 lost touch with Juan, whom he presumed dead. Layland argues diligently against the credibility of Juan's story as presented by Lok. There have been conjectures that Juan was part of Drake's "secret voyage".

Bawlf thought so, but Layland has to agree with the dismissal of such claims as tenuous or far-fetched. Yet, once again he seems reluctant to let the story go: "While most serious students of local history of that era retain prudent doubt about the reliability of Lok's transcript of Juan de Fuca's account, perhaps the last word on it has yet to be revealed."

With Chapter Two Layland enters the Enlightenment when voyages began to be carefully documented in the service of knowledge and commerce. If you are reading this essay, have ever spent time in or even consulted a map of British Columbia, you know something about most of these voyages. Many expedition leaders are the heroes of their own books. Captain Cook became an industry long before 1978, the bicentenary of his landfall at Nootka. What is different here is their coming together, their encounters with each other and the Indigenous people.

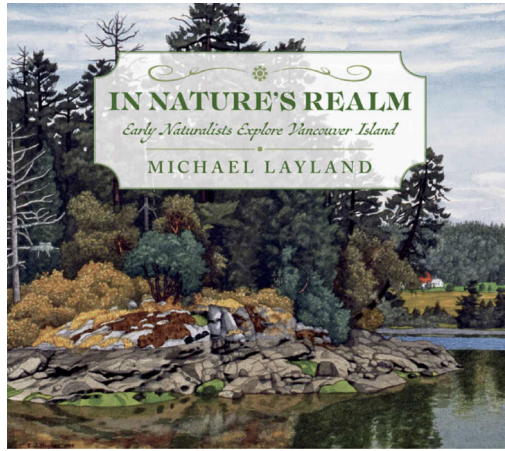
Imagine you are a member of the Mowachaht people based at what was to be named Nootka Sound in a year to be known as 1774. A ship full of spooky white men anchors but they do not come ashore. You are accustomed to interaction with the spirit world so are curious but not alarmed. You are also accustomed to trading with other resident peoples the length of the North

American coast, some of whom traffic in slavery. So you paddle out to them with some sea otter and seal furs to trade for whatever they might have to offer. Exchanges are made, and the ship does not stay long. Four years later, more ships arrive, and this time the visitors come ashore and stay for some time, setting up camp, repairing their ships, acquiring provisions, trading and becoming acquainted. Chief Maquinna meets their

leader Cook. The sojourners are interested in your silver spoons which they assume you must have acquired directly from unknown European visitors. They do not even entertain the possibility of your long-standing contact with people further south, where the Spanish had been present for a century and a half, nor do

they suspect the existence of an extensive inter-tribal network, or your expertise in repelling raids from other coastal tribes in long boats.

The first recorded encounter between Europeans and the peoples of the Pacific Northwest was made by the Spanish ensign Juan Perez, who did not land, followed by the Englishman Cook, who did land. Both were looking for something else when, as Layland's chapter heading indicates, they "chanced upon Nootka." Over the following decades more Spaniards came and more English. One French expedition led by Jean-Francois de Galaup, comte de La Perouse, in 1786 made an act of possession in Alaska on behalf of France. La Perouse, who had the benefit of Cook's findings and even of his instruments, like him, would perish in the exploration of the Pacific. All three failed to find a Northwest Passage, and all three missed the Strait of Juan de Fuca which would have led to the



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Salish Sea (Strait of Georgia), many islands, and the mainland.

Layland tells the stories of these encounters in some detail, often quoting from the journals and reports of the mariners themselves. If a reader is not familiar with these stories, and they are good ones, this is as convenient a place to start as any. The people who populate the stories, who encounter each other or just miss encountering each other coming and going around the globe, are the joy of this book.

They habitually named places for themselves and each other. Before the end of chapter two we have caught glimpses of the persons behind the islands we know as Vancouver, Quadra, Barkley, Hornby, Meares, and Bligh (“an excellent navigator and cartographer” but already displaying “a short temper and a prickly nature,” the characteristic for which the future commander of the *Bounty* would be forever known). Enthusiastic advocates of replacing such names would do well to learn the stories before presenting their petitions. In Layland’s book existing names and European neologisms co-exist. As Robin Inglis asserts in his foreword: “Sadly, Vancouver Island’s native peoples, who stride so colourfully through the pages of this particular book, would soon be largely swept aside ... But this is another story, essentially absent from these early, happier years of encounter and exploration.”

The Spaniards returned to “Nuca,” poised to take possession, but found themselves face-to-face with the Americans, the “Boston Men,” traders from New England, led by John Kendrick. Things got tense throughout 1790. The British and the Russians kept a prudent distance. Chief Maquinna and his people were willing to trade with all comers. The Spanish leader Esteban Martinez managed to alienate Maquinna as well as his own officers “by his

incompetence and drunken irascibility.” But there was no war. More reasonable commanders entered the narrative — Bodega y Quadra, Eliza, Quimper, Narvaez and others. There was much coming and going, many more encounters by interesting personalities and by the end of Chapter 3, the navigators had at last found the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the inland passage between Vancouver Island and the mainland. They skirted and anchored off numerous smaller islands, including my home island Gabriola.

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Chapter four belongs to Alexando Malaspina, a man of the Enlightenment “on a quest to acquire scientific knowledge, rather than for conquest or trade.” He and later his associates, notably Galiano and Valdes explored islands of various sizes, up and down the coast, confronting vicissitudes caused by sea and weather and inadequate ships, encountering among other notables

the Esquimalt Salish leader Tetacus and the British Captain George Vancouver, and completing the first circumnavigation of Vancouver Island.

Layland again senses a happy chance: “With hindsight, the chance meeting of Galiano and Valdes with Tetacus makes for a striking omen: two young aristocrats of the Spanish navy strike up a brief friendship with the lord of the spacious, sheltered anchorage that would become, first, the home port of Britain’s Pacific fleet, and then of Canada’s western maritime command.” These books are full of such happy chances.

By then Malaspina was off to the Sandwich Islands. Back in Europe, he would get embroiled in politics and litigation, with the result that documents revealing the full extent of his achievements were obscured for more than a century. Here on Gabriola



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we have a notable sea cave formation named for him, but we have to concede that he likely did not set foot on the island, despite a famous sketch by the expedition's draughtsman/artist Jose Cardero and a 20<sup>th</sup>-century mural by E.J. Hughes. Nanaimo's seat of higher learning was named for him until its upgrading brought with it the more prosaic title of Vancouver Island University.

And so the story goes on. Vancouver and Bodega y Quadra practised diplomacy. Vancouver narrowly missed the arrival of Alexander Mackenzie, the first to travel from eastern Canada to the west and leave the famous rock inscription "Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three." Vancouver's officers give more names to places: Puget, Baker, Whidbey, Broughton, Johnstone and Mudge, whose island I can see from my desk.

With the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the age of maritime explorers gradually ceded to the age of fur trade and settlement and the consolidation of national boundaries in response to "the Americans' growing bellicosity." The overriding personality is Sir James Douglas, chief Factor of the Hudson Bay Company, then Governor first of the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island and in 1866 of the unified Colony of British Columbia.

Exploration moved inland, across rather than around Vancouver Island. There was a need for arable land and a need for diplomatic strengthening of relationships with resident peoples and to prepare them "for an influx of British agricultural settlers. Layland does discuss and deplore the various "treaties," misunderstandings, and deceptions that were part of this diplomacy. Much depended on misguided assumptions about land use, but these are not his main focus.

Douglas employed many characters, some "officially" as surveyors and civil servants, others, like the guide and interpreter "Antoine" mentioned above, tended to turn up just when needed. There are many stories for Layland to tell. What of "Adam Horne's mysterious crossing to Alberni"? Or William Eddy Bamfield with his knowledge of the "locals," his strange death, and the misspelling

of his name for a place on the outer coast? Or the unsavoury Edward Stamp, whose mill at Alberni preceded his part in the early days of the Vancouver waterfront? It was rugged country, not all that well known even to its residents, and the journeys could be perilous.

The final major character is George Henry Richards. I said above that many of Layland's heroes have books to themselves. I have read Richards' *Journal* (Ronsdale, 2012), which is essential as a source, but not very lively. Layland adds context and an engaging style with his emphasis on encounters. By mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Governor Douglas had been lobbying for some time for action to address several growing concerns: "the increasing presence of American settlers and prospectors; the strong possibility of rich placer gold deposits along the Fraser River; and the ambiguity in the Oregon Treaty of 1846 about the location of the water boundary between U.S. and British territories on the Pacific coast." At the end of 1856 the Royal Navy's Hydrographic Service responded with the appointment of the experienced and extremely capable Captain Richards to the command of a multi-purpose surveying voyage. His mandate was not exploration as such but the retracing and amendment of earlier charts. Inevitably he and his team, which included such "place-names" as Mayne, Bedwell and Gowlland, made significant "discoveries," which they were from an outsider's point of view. The series of voyages involved three successive ships, the *Plumper*, *Hecate* and the legendary *Beaver*. His encounters and interactions with a number of coastal peoples inspired Richards to write: "I can safely say, having seen and had dealings with almost all the Native tribes in the world, I have never met a more friendly, harmless and well disposed set of people than those on Vancouver Island." Somehow their duties included welcoming Lady Jane Franklin, widow of the doomed Arctic explorer. Strange encounters indeed.

The persona of *A Perfect Eden* are in perpetual motion, intent on pushing forward, taking the necessary notes of the here and now before hurrying on to what came next.

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Among them were those who long to linger, to collect and preserve and describe in minute detail: to stand and stare. They are the protagonists of the third volume, *In Nature's Realm*.

Layland traces four phases of natural history on Vancouver Island. The first phase concerns the Indigenous Peoples, whose understanding of their ecosystem has only recently begun to be appreciated by the scientific establishment. The second phase deals with the first written records, left by the European explorers of the late 18th century, whose mandates included adding to the body of knowledge and to science both pure and applied. (Bligh, for instance, was commissioned to investigate the feasibility of transplanting breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies, but that is another story.) Then came the third phase, the era of European settlements and the flourishing of amateur collector-naturalists. Inevitably their enthusiastic sharing, sponsorships, and forming of groups and museums led to them being overtaken by the fourth phase of structured expeditions, sent by scientific bodies or government departments. The phases provide a useful framework, but they overlap, one phase never quite giving way to the next, and it is possible that the first three continue to co-exist with and nourish the fourth.

Only within recent years — Layland says “in the nick of time” — have scientists such as ethnobotanist Nancy J. Turner shown “that Traditional Knowledge can stimulate, confirm or question, and add to the reasoning and conclusions of the scientific method.” Turner has devoted her career “to bridging the gap between two mountains of cognition: that of scientific, Linnaean botany, and the wealth of Indigenous wisdom concerning the vegetable kingdom of this region.” I first encountered her work about 1980 when I assisted in a very junior capacity with the creation of a database at UBC’s Woodward Library. In those early times, creating a database was something exciting in itself, but even more exciting to me as I data-entered reams of unusual names and reclaimed wisdom was the resemblance to the sort of work my grandmother, one of

those amateur naturalists, had done fifty years ago in another part of the world. Here was discovery, vindication, and a feeling of things coming full circle, of everything old being new again.

This is a book of history rather than “natural history.” While Layland’s subjects focus on wildlife, he focuses on them. Again characters are numerous and intriguing. Some we have met before; some are new acquaintances. Some, like Governor Douglas in *A Perfect Eden*, loom large and cause other people to do things. As *In Nature's Realm* begins that directorial role is assumed by Joseph Banks, president of the Royal Society for more than 40 years and advisor to George III on the development of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. During his years at Kew he sent botanists around the world to collect plants and bring them back to what became the world’s pre-eminent garden. But in 1770 he was a young and snobbish whippersnapper, full of himself and destined to become one of Cook’s least favourite people.

Already a scientist and botanist of repute, Banks possessed the wealth and connections to get himself embedded into Cook’s first voyage, commandeering the captain’s cabin as well as much of the expedition’s resources and later upstaging the geographical accomplishments which Cook regarded as the main purpose of the voyage. The second expedition was assigned the German scientist Johann Reinhold Forster, whom Cook found as insufferable as Banks. On his third voyage, which included his visit to Nootka and is part of our story, Cook’s ships carried no extraneous scientists, so members of his own crew took on the natural history research and documentation. This worked better, even though some of them rushed to publication ahead of the official report and precipitately shared their findings with Banks, but by then Cook was past caring.

During the voyage he must have been aware of the meticulous notes and journals taking shape, especially in the work of Charles Clerke, William Anderson, and James King, all of whom contributed to the task and

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all of whom died of tuberculosis. Layland's thumbnail biography informs us, perhaps unnecessarily unless we are interested as he is in the human behind the history, that Clerke contracted the disease when "he voluntarily served time in London's notorious Fleet prison for a debt incurred by his brother." Anderson and Clerke died while still on the West Coast. King edited the official report and succumbed a year later. Definitive analysis of the report took nearly two hundred years. 1967-68 saw the publication of two important works: Theed Pearse's *Birds of the Early Explorers of the Northern Pacific*, the culmination of a lifetime's avocation; and John Beaglehole's scholarly annotated *The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*. Certainly sensing a kindred spirit, Layland follows Pearse's efforts as he poured over the descriptions left by Clerke and Anderson and struggled with identification of plants, animals, and birds.

Pearse also examined and extolled the work of Cook's artists John Webber and William Ellis, especially Ellis whom he felt had been unfairly neglected. Layland reproduces John Webber's drawing of a sea otter and his scene of Cook's men meeting Mowachaht people at Yuquot; and in glorious technicolor Ellis's paintings of a tufted puffin, a northern flicker, and a varied thrush. I am not sure why I find myself surprised and delighted to notice how closely his flicker and thrush resemble those at my suet basket. (I don't have puffins.)

Don't forget the Spanish. Colnett clashed with Esteban Martinez at Nootka, but despite some international tension, a naval officer Jacinto Casmano noted the strong singing of (probably) the winter wren, and Atanasio Echeverria painted butterflies

which were both accurate and "charming." Malaspina's expedition included two officers and brothers: "the elder, Antonio Pineda, took overall responsibility for 'natural history in all its branches'; his brother, Arcadio, for organizing the scientific records." We are treated to Jose Cardero's painting of a red-winged blackbird, as well as his sketch of seven Spanish

vessels crowded into Nootka cove in the spring of 1792. Among the European scientists and scholars with Malaspina was the Bohemian polymath Tadeo Haenke, who had studied mathematics, astronomy, medicine, mineralogy, and botany, spoke six languages, played the harpsichord and was employed at the court of the Austrian emperor Joseph II, the patron of Mozart and Salieri. Haenke's journey began as a frantic dash across several continents and oceans from Vienna to Cadiz, where he literally missed the boat, through

South America, observing and collecting all along the way, to Peru where he at last joined the expedition. His impressive collection on Vancouver Island became part of the "huge inventory" shipped by the expedition to Spain, but the accompanying documents became part of the messy dispute between Malaspina and the Spanish government. Haenke's Latin essay summarizing the physical character of the Nootka area, listing wildlife and vegetation, and commenting on the quality of the garrison's kitchen gardens, was not published until 1987. Layland provides pictures of one of Haenke's notebooks and of a specimen of alumroot collected in Nootka and sent to Prague where it remains, thanks to Emperor Joseph.

This is the fattest of the three books, but scarcely fat enough to contain the crowd who arrived on Vancouver Island with their pencils and paints and notebooks and instruments of measuring. No review can

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attempt to do justice to all, but some demand attention.

After the explorers came the traders, Americans and British. James Colnett was one who found time to make lists of vegetation and wildlife, encouraged by his ship's surgeon, the Scottish botanist Archibald Menzies. Menzies, who gets a whole chapter to himself, also sailed with George Vancouver. Vancouver like Cook was not best pleased to give deck space to scientific implements and storage, and the stage was set for complicated confrontation. Nevertheless, Menzies discovered such West Coast favourites as Garry oak, Douglas-fir, bigleaf maple, ocean spray, skunk cabbage, salmonberry, Oregon grape and Pacific rhododendron. The arbutus tree is officially *Arbutus menziesii* in his honour. Recognition of his work was delayed for many decades, much of the credit for his present prestige going to Eric Grove of the Natural History Museum in London. After the Second World War, while working on water-damaged specimens, Grove expanded his role to the identification and recording of specimens, making connections and greatly adding to the knowledge of collectors and their methods. Layland commemorates Grove in one of many "sidebar" pages which accompany the text. These inserts are infinitely preferable to notes stashed at the volume's end, and perform a function dear to the author, that of linking people and events across topics and sometimes generations, but unfortunately interrupt the narrative and sometimes set the reader adrift in momentary confusion. On the other hand, they prove a boon to the overwrought reviewer endeavouring to convey a sense of the book.

As time and Layland's tale progress, Joseph Banks yielded the role of background mover and shaker passed to his protégé William Jackson Hooker, Regius Professor of Botany at the University of Glasgow, who looms over the following chapters: "Naturalists in the Hudson's Bay Company era, Part I: Scouler and Douglas" (in which we learn that the Douglas-fir is named for botanist David Douglas, not for Governor James) and

"Naturalists in the Hudson's Bay Era, Part II: Gairdner, Tolmie, Grant and Jeffrey." A sidebar page acknowledges "the influence of London's Learned Societies" especially during the half-century 1820-70, when to be an amateur was no disadvantage socially. "It became perfectly respectable for grown men to study newts or collect butterflies ..." Ladies were particularly interested in botany and showed off their daughters' accomplishments in painting floral subjects. Members of the clubs met for dinners, lectures and discussions, recorded in published proceedings "that today comprise invaluable records of developing knowledge." The amateur status could blur into professional over the course of a generation or two. My grandmother (born 1862) emerged from the era with a lifelong avocation, during which she published papers, corresponded with scientists at Kew, was visited by professionals in her area of interest, and raised five botanically literate children, two of her sons and a grandson making her passion their careers.

The chapter "Naturalists with Naval and Military Expeditions," Part I - "Notes from the Wilkes, Kellett and Prevost Visits," follows ships on both sides of the 49th parallel, and re-introduces us to Captain R.H. Richards. Part II - "Contributions to the Missions' Biologists" brings back Dr. Charles Wood and some colleagues, among them scientists with the Boundary Commission the botanist David Lyall and zoologist John Keast Lord. There were naturalists with the Boundary Commission? As encouragement of settlers became part of the intent, reports analysed not only agricultural potential but also likely spots for sports fishing and grouse hunting.

THE SECTION "COLONIAL NATURALISTS" bring in more eccentrics. The somewhat hapless eponymous protagonist of Part "I: 'Strange things, wild men, new places ...' Robert Brown botanizes and explores" stumbled through Vancouver Island, producing an impressive list for an authoritative British ornithological journal, and republishing more than 40 papers as hundreds of popular articles, referring to other seekers he met



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along the way. “Part II: Two More Gentlemen Naturalists of the Colonial Era” introduces first James Hepburn, “a man of wealth who chose to dedicate his life to the study of natural history,” and impressed professionals with his skill as a preparator of specimens. Hepburn’s companion and assistant on most forays was Don, an enormous black Newfoundland dog, a surprisingly excellent retriever of even such fragile specimens as hummingbirds and eggs. Pym Nevins Compton in the course of an adventurous voyage from England via the Falkland Islands witnessed a battle between sperm whales and a pod of transient killer whales. On the west coast, he met and married his young bride, discovered the Alaska red king crab, painted pictures of wildlife and began a memoir, still unpublished but in the BC Archives. Layland shows us two of Compton’s paintings, a female big skate fish and a spotted ratfish, “a very ancient species still common along the Pacific coast.”

With John Macoun, the protagonist of two dedicated chapters, the natural history of Vancouver Island became part of the national history of Canada. He arrived in Victoria in 1872 as part of Sir Sandford Fleming’s reconnaissance survey for the projected transcontinental railway and for almost 50 years thereafter he crossed and recrossed the country and Vancouver Island on numerous expeditions and explorations. An autodidact who earned the nickname “Professor,” in 1881 he became the first Dominion Botanist, so appointed by Sir John A. Macdonald. He had already begun compiling his monumental *Catalogue of Canadian Plants*, published 1883-1909. A companion work was the *Catalogue of Canadian Birds*, co-authored with his son James and published 1887-1909. Equally distinguished in field and study, he also had a talent for meeting people with whom he could work and co-exist on friendly terms. One of these, not the most world-famous but the subject of a two-page insert in these chapters, was the Rev. George W. Taylor.

Taylor seems not to have neglected his vocation as Anglican priest while pursuing

his avocation of natural history. While specializing in conchology, he also became provincial entomologist, a charter member of the Natural History Society of British Columbia and a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He lobbied for a biological research station on the Pacific Coast, and when in 1908 the facility was established in Nanaimo, he was appointed curator. One of the amazing facts one learns from Layland is Taylor’s personal collection of limpets was the largest in the world. For some years he and his family lived on Gabriola, where a bay and a road are named for him — more place names come alive. Although the cover illustration for this volume, a painting by E.J. Hughes, is strikingly beautiful, my personal preference would have been for one of the several equally striking, equally beautiful views Hughes painted of Taylor Bay. It would have seemed appropriate, somehow. (See opposite page.)

Layland writes about art under the excuse of writing a chapter about “Women and Botany.” There were not until recently many women botanists, apart from the ladylike amateurs previously mentioned. He indulges in a full-page reproduction of “Wild Lilies” by Emily Carr, who he explains did not do botanical art but floral painting. Sophie Pemberton, Emily Sartain, and Carr’s early teacher, Emily Woods, did botanical art. Sarah Lindley Crease seems to have usually done botanical illustration. However one classifies them, the pictures are exquisite, and Layland can be forgiven for indulging.

All this enthusiasm, activity, and research needed validation and consolidation. Layland traces the development of institutions for natural history, particularly the Natural History Society and the Provincial Museum of Natural History, now the Royal British Columbia Museum, and contributes another colourful character sketch, this time of the Museum’s first curator, John Fannin, whose workshop at one time housed two activities, shoemaking and taxidermy. Fannin’s endeavours boasted eminent supporters, including Sir Matthew Begbie, whose contributions to the province’s history are often overshadowed by his



E.J. HUGHES, "TAYLOR BAY, GABRIOLA ISLAND" (1952)

unwarranted reputation as the "hanging judge." The rationale for the Museum, included besides the obvious need for research and classification, is the "concern that ethnographic objects were being removed from the province." Considering the interest beginning to be shown by American naturalists and narrated a couple of chapters later, the concern was timely. Not that Layland is hostile to his Americans, among whom he finds yet more interesting personalities, including several women; one of these, Annie Alexander numbered among her doctoral students "a man who would become the foremost scientific naturalist in the history of British Columbia, Ian McTaggart Cowan."

The benign climate of Vancouver Island still tempts over-enthusiastic nature lovers to introduce species from elsewhere. Layland relates a lamentable tale of one such attempt: "Importing Songbirds; a Sadly Failed Project." Most of Layland's topics could be explored indefinitely in separate book-length studies. He finds in entomology a clear example of the rift between the methods of the amateur and those of the professional scientist, but

has fewer than ten pages to tell the story of a dozen or more example of each. He has material for numerous biographies yet to come.

### Note on Illustrations

THE WEALTH OF information and the stories are overshadowed, but I hope not obscured, by the beauty of their presentation and lavish illustration. For *A Perfect Eden* Layland has combed archives, museums, and the internet for portraits of his major characters, and drawings by artists and draughtsmen who were on the spot: John Webber and William Ellis with Captain Cook and Jose Cardero with the Spanish commanders Galiano and Valdez. The best-known of the historical artists, the artist-explorer Paul Kane, in 1846-7 pattered about the shores of Oregon, Washington, and Vancouver Island, documenting First Nations cultures in more than 700 sketches and 100 oil paintings. Where contemporary images were unavailable or non-existent, the lack is more than supplied with splendid re-enactments by modern maritime painters

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such as Gordon Miller, John Horton, and Henry Heine. The author and colleagues provide recent photographs of important sites. Cartographer Angus Weller contributes several maps especially the enormously helpful double-page map of “Vancouver Island; Places mentioned in *A Perfect Eden*” without which a reader risks becoming hopelessly lost in the course of both this book and the next.

The naturalists of *In Nature's Realm* are more likely than the explorers to illustrate their work, illustration being part of the point. Consequently, this volume is, if possible, even more beautiful than its predecessor. Layland continues to draw from multiple sources, and again he does not hesitate to juxtapose images years or centuries apart if they match his text. A 1790 painting by Atanasio Echevarria of a surf scooter faces a 1961 Fisheries Research Board of Canada plate of a ling cod. Anachronistic painters John James Audubon, Alan Brooks, and J. Fenwick Lansdowne as well as numerous photographers contribute to the splendour, and to the impression of a community of naturalists and nature lovers encountering each across the years. Natural history illustrations inevitably carry with them a pang; the collection of specimens involved their killing and their preservation and pictorial documentation feels like a *memento mori*. Yet they too are exquisite — and of course educational.

THE STORY OF BRITISH Columbia has benefitted from a cadre of dedicated non-academic historians. Unfettered by thesis fashions in tenure track topics, by political correctness or the need to publish or perish, they follow their obsessions with integrity and scholarly precision, all the more precise because they care so passionately about their subject. Some are academics, but in another discipline. Others are historians, but write independently or in retirement. G.P.V. & Helen Akrigg (*1001 British Columbia Place Names*, *British Columbia Chronicle*

V.1 & 2) made self-publishing respectable. Others include John F. Boshier (*Vancouver Island in the Empire*), Geographer and planner Derek Hayes (*British Columbia: A New Historical Atlas*), politician Samuel Bawlf, already mentioned (*The Secret Journey of Sir Francis Drake*); artist Judith Williams (*Clam Gardens, High Slack*); and anarchist scholar George Woodcock (*British Columbia: A History of the Province*) who wrote about anything which caught his fancy. There are many more — I can think of at least a half dozen such chroniclers of Vancouver city alone — but I am quite sure such thinking can only lead to a tangent.

And now we are indebted to Michael Layland, trained as a cartographer with the Royal Engineers (British Army) and then in his civilian career engaging with mapping projects around the world, all the while indulging a personal interest in natural history and photographing butterflies wherever he happened to be. On the dust jacket of *In Nature's Realm* he presents as an “amateur naturalist”; *amateur* here must be interpreted in its full sense as one who pursues an interest purely for the love of it.

That is how we should approach these books — for the love of it — for the love of history as continuing connecting narrative full of chance encounters and surprising recognitions, for the love of maps and hummingbirds, of obsessive personalities and true adventures on land and sea, probably also for the love of place. I don't know how these books might appeal to readers who do not know British Columbia. Many of the characters — from Cook to Richards to Macoun had lives and careers reaching far beyond these shores. Besides, the stories both delight and instruct in the best Horatian manner.

Moreover *In Nature's Realm* has been awarded the 2020 Basil Stuart-Stubbs Prize for Outstanding Scholarly Book on British Columbia, a prize co-sponsored by the UBC Library with Pacific BookWorld News Society, publisher of *BC BookWorld*. Michael Layland is both amateur and scholar. ∅