

Oakville, we watch the unfolding of a prosecution following the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan to end a relationship between a white woman and a man of colour in 1930. Finally, we learn of the arrest and prosecution of a Nova Scotia Black woman, following her decision to sit on the (whites-only) main floor of a movie theatre, rather than being relegated to the balcony in 1946.

Backhouse's storytelling method is valuable on a number of fronts. First, it easily draws the reader into the text and the past, bringing characters and their actions to life. Second, it allows Backhouse to show that while racism has been deeply rooted in Canadian society, it has not been monolithic. She provides evidence of resistance and protest, of compelling cross-currents inside the courtrooms, of individuals who stood up against the institutionalized laws of racial discrimination. While the paradigm of white supremacy may have been dominant, the six stories suggest that those espousing theories of white supremacy were not speaking in a moral vacuum, and that their theories did not go totally uncontested. This serves as a reminder of the continuing need to resist discrimination, and to remain committed to the goal of crafting a society which can, with legitimacy, refer to itself as a north star of freedom.

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Voices of Women Historians: The Personal, the Political, the Professional. Eileen Boris and Nupur Chaudhuri, eds. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999; photographs; xx +295 pages; ISBN 0-253-21275-8; \$19.95 US.

For those who argue that historians should distance their personal experiences from the analyses of the sources they study, and even the topics they choose to study, this riveting book of essays should give sufficient cause to reconsider. In this volume twenty women historians trace their intellectual developments and paths of historical inquiry as they intersect with the personal, political and professional context of their lives. These women are connected to one another through their

association with what began as the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession (CCWHP), which spawned the Conference Group on Women's History (CGWH), which has now become the Coordinating Council for Women in History (CCWH), an affiliate of the American Historical Association (AHA). The CCWHP was organized because the few women who pursued or held PhDs in the 1950s and 1960s found the profession of history virtually closed to women. Some major departments had no women on their faculty. Women were discouraged from applying to programs, refused funding, and ignored by advisors. These historians organized their small numbers into a support community and an effective professional association. Through the CCWHP they helped one another advance professionally and pressure the premier association of historians in the United States to open the processes of the profession to include women and other "minorities." Gerda Lerner's article in particular can be taken as a "how to" guide for any marginalized group in history, or any other academic discipline, to fight for inclusiveness.

For most of these women, their struggle to find a place in the academy coincided with their involvement in civil rights, protests against the war in Viet Nam, and the second wave feminist movement. All the while most negotiated the pressures of marriages, divorces, births of children and, for some, sexual awakenings. These personal memoirs reveal how and why they came to explore, through teaching and research, socialist feminism, radical feminism, liberal feminism, postmodern and poststructural theory, maternalism, theories of the state, and the equality versus difference debates.

The greatest strength of the volume is the often brutal honesty of the authors; there is a great deal of introspection and self-criticism. Almost all admit to mistakes and insecurities to a degree that I doubt a similar volume of male historians would contain. However, these women do not see mistakes as failures; they are lessons. One of the youngest historians, Nancy Raquel Mirabel, emphatically declares, "I can't wait to make more mistakes"(266). While all can lay claim to overcoming enormous odds, many suffered disappointments in their careers. And the few non-white voices in the volume articulate the deeper complexity of obstacles facing Black women, Latinas, and

foreign-born women.

It would have strengthened the book to include more women of color, particularly those with more seniority. The editors acknowledge this point, but the fact remains that as a chronicle of the lives of women historians this is an incomplete story. The book also has an inconsistent thematic focus; some essays are largely an institutional history while others barely touch on the CCWHP at all. These minor criticisms aside, this book is a valuable text for women's history and women's studies courses at all levels.

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Suitable for the Wilds: Letters from Northern Alberta, 1929-1931. Mary Percy Jackson, edited by Janice Dickin McGinnis. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995; ISBN 0-8020-7187-2; 264 pp.; \$18.95.

Companions of the Peace: Diaries and Letters of Monica Storrs, 1931-1939. Monica Storrs, edited by Vera Fast. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999; ISBN 0802082548; 246 pp.; \$19.95.

I was privileged to read both these books in a snowstorm on one of the Gulf Islands. It forced me to stay inside, waist high snow preventing more than short forays to the woodpile. The books were so gripping that I hardly regretted my quiet isolation. The first person accounts, in letters and diaries, so intensely conveyed their authors' lives, daily exigencies, and perceptions, that it was easy, seventy years later, to imagine myself their neighbor, perhaps their friend. Certainly, I liked both these women. They were smart, creative, energetic, adventurous, and brave. Does this sound like the beginning of an adulatory children's encyclopedia article? Perhaps. Both women knew what it took to be admired. They each created a persona, clever and competent, befitting an educated English woman who knew how to tell and to live her appropriate women's narratives, who could bring all her resources to the northern Canadian frontier, Storrs a missionary to the Peace

River country of British Columbia, Jackson a doctor to the Peace River country of Alberta. Only rarely did either evince another self, one less witty and cheery, one occasionally doubting herself, a self lonely and sad - but this self rapidly receded and the self-made bravery and competence reappeared.

They certainly needed those qualities to survive well on that frontier; and they did. Storrs came to the north with an Anglican organization called Companions of the Peace, commissioned to perform church services, to establish Sunday schools, and especially to create connections among the women in the Peace, so isolated that some of them had never seen another woman for years. Jackson came as a doctor, ministering largely to pregnant and laboring women, and seeing a lot of tuberculosis and accidents. Their good humor allowed each of them to travel long distances in temperatures sometimes lower than 40° below; sometimes eighty miles in two days on horseback; sometimes in cars that fell through the ice. Both were so dedicated to the mission they had defined for themselves, and to the capable characters they had created as personae, that they were able to do their work with great good humor.

They were both enabled in their goals, however, by the freedom, the autonomy, and the strong sense of self they derived from leaving England, for a socially acceptable purpose, arriving in a frontier where smart women were appreciated and where there was plenty for them to do. They got adventure in a good cause. In 1932 Storrs wrote that "Brother Wolf is away till Holy Week. That gives me five Sundays in St. John's Church and I am trying with great trepidation to speak on some of the fundamental questions...." (51). Jackson later recalled that "the freedom to be an independent woman... was largely the result of the isolation in Alberta that I could not have had in England" (39). In 1929 she wrote home that she was glad of her brother's going to South Africa, "but I *should* have been envious if I'd been still stuck in England. I am seeing life, you know. Sometimes I can hardly believe that this is me!"(93).

What liberation! These women's freedom was both possible for themselves and acceptable to their neighbors because of their obvious middle class status; their privilege exempted them from certain judgements. For one thing, the people of the district understood that the work they had to do, and