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Reviews

Alaska, an American Colony. By Stephen Haycox. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002. 392 pages. \$29.95 cloth.

Stephen Haycox, professor of history at the University of Alaska-Anchorage, provides a remarkably erudite history of Alaska. It is my impression that if Haycox overlooked any secondary sources, major or minor, pertaining to Alaska's history in writing this book, he knew about them, had read them, and decided that they were insignificant to the story he sought to tell. And if I am to guess about Haycox in his professorial role his students benefit from rich, detailed lectures full of well-digested knowledge about how Alaska came to be as it is today.

This is not to suggest that Haycox has not contributed to the primary research literature pertaining to Alaska. He has done significant work on Tlingit/non-Native relations in the southeast. He provides an especially enlightening assessment of the role played by attorney William Paul, a Tlingit educated in Indian boarding schools in Sitka and at Haskell Institute in Kansas before entering law school. Early in his career Paul succeeded in promoting Indian rights, including property rights, within the Alaskan territorial legislature to which he was elected, and also within the U.S. Congress.

The history Haycox relates is seamless, if derivative, moving from the expansion of European traders into the Far East and Alaska to the struggle between conservationists and business interests over opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil extraction. From the outset, Haycox interprets the history of Alaska as an account of the expropriation of land and resources by people and businesses located outside Alaska and the dislocations and dependencies these actions caused among natives. He writes that non-native functionaries for companies and the czars stationed in what became Russian America, as well as non-Native immigrants to Alaska when it became a state, suffered similar dislocations and dependencies. A central element of dependency is that non-local persons own domestic resources, whether processed or raw, that move from local areas to distant places where they are traded and, if necessary, processed and traded. The profits accrue to owners in distant locales, maintaining dependencies among people in the areas from

which the resources are removed. The local economies remain dependent on modest transfers to maintain business activities in the hinterland.

Haycox demonstrates that beginning in the eighteenth century Europeans began venturing into Alaska for commerce, principally to extract resources for the Asian and European markets. This desire for resources dovetailed with quests by European nations (mainly Spain, France, and Russia) to claim new territories. Haycox uses about a third of his text to show how the Russians, French, British, and Spanish sought footholds in what is now Alaska and northward along the Pacific coast from San Francisco. Haycox skillfully weaves distant events (such as the Napoleonic Wars, the Russian-Turkish Crimean War and economic turmoil in China) into his narrative to explain how Russia gained recognition of the land it had claimed north of 54° north latitude and sold this territory to the United States in 1867.

In the earliest periods of the occupation of the Aleutian Islands and southeastern Alaskan coast by Russian *promyshlenniki* (independent trappers), Haycox points out that these interlopers dominated the native populations, depriving them of power over their local economies and communities while exploiting their labor, often in a brutal fashion. As the trade in sea otter pelts grew, investors in European Russia underwrote *promyshlenniki* to harvest pelts in their behalf. Aleuts were coerced to harvest sea otters to depletion in the Aleutians, then relocated to Kodiak Island and southeastward along the Alaskan coast to hunt sea otters in these areas.

As competition among the Russian investor groups who funded operations in Russian America increased, influence by one group of investors within the Czar's court prompted Czar Paul to allow a merger of two competing investor groups that created a monopoly to control Russian America. It was aptly named the Russian American Company (RAC). Its investors were private, although some were in the Czar's government. The RAC, not the imperial government, controlled Russian America.

Promyshlenniki and Aleut trappers sent the pelts owned by investors on ships commissioned by them. In turn, these trappers received modest payment for the labor and goods that they provided. Profits accrued to the investors of the RAC. Although investors assumed some risks, they were of a different order from those taken by trappers working from kayaks in seas prone to violent storms and dangerous currents in an area that can become enshrouded within moments in fogs that don't lift for weeks.

Yet Haycox also demonstrates that early in the period of Russian occupation, Russian Orthodox priests were sent to several island and mainland villages in which the RAC operated. As a rule, these priests were exemplars of New Testament Christianity, accommodating Christian principles with native traditions, training natives for the Orthodox priesthood, ministering to ailments and problems within their skills and resources, and lobbying church and the czar's regime on behalf of natives.

The RAC, much like the investment groups that preceded it, experienced considerable difficulty and expense in provisioning Russian America and moving goods from Russian America to market. Provisions were sought in San Francisco, Hawaii, Chile, and the Asian Pacific. Ships foundered, goods were lost, expenses increased, and revenues dwindled.

Quite remarkably, during the entire Russian tenure in Alaska, there were never more than 863 persons scattered throughout RAC installations at any one time. There was, then, scant infrastructure in the way of docks, piers, roads, buildings, communication systems, or health delivery systems of any sort.

At mid-century, population growth along the Pacific Coast of North America, combined with the difficulty of provisioning and maintaining Alaskan operations and moving goods to market, prompted Russia to sell Alaska to the United States. In anticipation of this purchase, Americans poured into southeastern Alaska with little knowledge but unbounded hopes of economic successes.

Haycox takes the reader through Alaska's booms and busts, and its quest to gain local political authority, representation in Congress, and statehood. None of these steps was easy, due in large part to the transient nature of a population that swelled during boom times and deflated during busts. The Alaskan economy has cycled through several booms, the largest of them linked to the extraction of natural resources.

Because Alaskan territory was the property of the U.S. government, land could not be purchased or claimed. In response to lobbying for the development of Alaska, in 1891 Congress included the territory in a Western Lands Act that made it possible to create town sites, survey, and sell lots to citizens, while providing eighty-acre homesteads, free, for trade and manufacturing. This occurred as whaling in the Bering and Beaufort seas was drawing as many as 200 boats per season, and as salmon fisheries were being opened in the southeast and near Kodiak Island. Canneries were soon opened with capital from Seattle and San Francisco, while fisherman and cannery laborers were brought in from the Philippines on a seasonal basis. Cannery communities swelled during the summers and were left to caretakers throughout the winter. Personnel, as well as the products processed, were long distances from their markets, creating provisioning and transportation problems similar to those experienced by the Russians.

A gold strike in the Klondike lured 5,000 people to southeastern Alaska, and thence to the Klondike, by 1897. By 1898 more than 100,000 people headed for the Klondike—of whom 40,000 reached their destination. Paraphrasing Haycox, the closer the boomers got to the north, the more they learned by observation and experience and the greater the likelihood that they would give up. Long, dark, bitter cold winters in places without infrastructure and services challenged non-natives.

Beginning in 1898, in response to both the gold boom and growing commerce in fishing and whaling, Congress passed an Alaska Homestead Act that provided land free and for purchase, offered rights-of-way for various types of transportation (railways, roads, trolley lines, wharves, and docks), and provided land for agriculture. To accommodate the growing, if transient, populations that formed so quickly, in 1899 Congress divided Alaska into three regions, assigning each a judge. And to accommodate commerce created by extraction of gold in the Klondike and elsewhere, Congress extended the 1872 Mining Claims Act to Alaska, thus allowing persons to stake claims on property owned by the federal government.

In 1898 gold was discovered in beach sands at Nome; within a year the population of the city increased from zero to 20,000. Fairbanks enjoyed a similar boom. Athapaskan natives along the Yukon participated in the boom by cutting and selling firewood to the steamers that plied the Yukon and to the industrial mining operations that opened there. They also sold their labor as pilots for the ore-bearing ships on the Yukon. However, natives did not own or control any of the mining operations.

By 1910 successful gold mining required dredges and hydraulic equipment. Gold extraction had become industrial mining, controlled by businesses outside Alaska. The influenza epidemic spread through Alaska in 1910 taking many lives, while destitute prospectors, small entrepreneurs, and camp followers relocated from Alaska.

Although long distances from market will always remain a problem in Alaska, free rights-of-way and the free mining claims benefited the Alaska Syndicate (Guggenheim, J. P. Morgan, and Kennecott). The Syndicate built a rail line to serve its copper mine, docks in Cordova to move ore to its smelters in the lower forty-eight, and purchased the twelve largest canning operations in Alaska. The Alaska Syndicate vertically monopolized copper mining (extracting, transporting, milling, and selling) while seeking to horizontally monopolize Alaska's other major commercial enterprise, salmon.

Haycox shows how the history of Alaska is an account of booms and busts based on the extraction of natural resources, whether renewable or not. The most recent boom was triggered by oil. In between the booms, as populations dwindled and leveled, the public sector has been the backbone of Alaska's economy. During World War II, the U.S. military created and occupied bases, pouring money and infrastructure into Alaska, while during the Cold War the Department of Defense maintained many bases while developing a communication alert system across Alaska. The military continues to contribute to the Alaskan economy today.

The public sector survives on transfers from the federal government through a plethora of agencies that manage land and resources, provide protection, provide services, and so forth. During boom cycles, state and local public sectors grow through taxation of business enterprises.

Although the story is too complex to summarize, it is significant that the purchase of Alaska made the United States the owner of nearly 400 million acres. Non-natives who migrated to Alaska sought not only some home rule and control over local affairs, but also ownership of property and management of wildlife and other natural resources. Alaska achieved statehood in 1958, but because the rights of natives to land, water, and other natural resources had remained unresolved, the state's control over land and resources was extremely limited. Importantly, the oil discovered on Alaska's North Slope could not be extracted until native claims had been met. While the state gained some authority over natural resource management, this authority could be and has been rescinded in instances when the state has violated federal law.

In 1971, after about six years of negotiations among natives (Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts) and federal and state representatives, Congress passed the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and, soon thereafter, the Alaska Native Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

These acts created twelve regional for-profit corporations. Each encompassed a geographically contiguous area comprising several villages. Of the 208 villages distributed among the regions, each was incorporated as a non-profit. Some of the land owned by the regional corporations was conveyed to the village corporations and then to individuals.

ANCSA permitted multinational corporations to build docks in Valdez on Prince William Sound, a pip line to move oil from the North Slope, and to drill for and pump oil from beneath the shallow waters of Prudhoe Bay, thus creating Alaska's most recent boom.

After finishing the book, I'm impressed by its exhaustive scope, yet also by how little space natives receive. This is not to say that Haycox totally disregards natives: He discusses Tlingit responses to non-natives who established operations near their communities, mentions the manner in which natives were employed on the fringes of boom developments, and reviews the significant contributions of natives to framing ANCSA. But this is not an ethnohistory that uses journals, newspaper articles, diaries, notes, and accounts of traders, trappers, salesmen, housewives, and so forth to convey a picture of how natives accommodated to non-natives and how and in what ways natives coped with expropriations, exploitation, and domination.

Haycox uses the anthropological term *acculturation* to account for U.S. policies toward native Alaskans, principally to describe the replacement of native customs (acts, sentiments, objects, ideas, and so forth) by western customs. Acculturation is a hoary term in social science, polyvalent and laden with controversy. It doesn't work well as a shorthand explanation; indeed, it fails to explain anything.

Also, Haycox's use of the term *colonial* to describe Alaska is easy to confuse with the colonies and colonial administrations that characterized German, French, British, Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish colonies throughout Africa, Asia, and parts of the Western Hemisphere, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet it is consonant with the way in which several historians have reinterpreted western American history in the past three decades.

These minor criticisms do not detract from Haycox's history. I know of no other competitors. He has provided a grand sweep of Alaska's past, together with an excellent understanding of how Alaska came to be as it is today.

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The Archaeology and History of the Native Georgia Tribes. By Max E. White. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002. 176 pages. \$55.00 cloth.

Archaeology has long held a fascination for the public. It is the most popular field in anthropology, and there are many organizations devoted to the inclusion of the public in archaeological endeavors and education. Although covering only the state of Georgia, Max White's *The Archaeology and History of*