

As with many pioneers in the Far North, whether artists or not, Laurence spun tales around himself, creating a web of glamor and fantasy that spilled over into his private life. There seems to have been another wife and two children living in England at the time he married in 1928 in southern California. Nor are humble beginnings part of his life story. His biography, written by his second wife after his death, is full of undocumented facts that Woodward wisely ignores in this volume, such as a grandfather who was first governor of Australia and the accreditation of his talent by the well-known American artist Edward Moran, who was "astounded" when shown the paintings of the ten-year-old Sydney. Lessons at Moran's studio soon followed (Laurence, 1974).

For the historian a lack of sound biographical information can have a devastating effect on analysis. By careful research Woodward has traced the roots of Laurence's style.

That Laurence knew Moran and many of the other well-known artists of the time is established by his years of residence in New York, where he studied at the Art Students League and exhibited at the National Academy of Design in the 1880s. Equally important to his development was his connection with the art colony of St. Ives, on the coast of Cornwall.

Laurence moved with his first wife to the English seaside art colony soon after their marriage. Here perhaps the greatest landscape artist of the 19th century, J.M.W. Turner, had worked, while in 1883 Walter Sickert and the well-known expatriate American James Whistler had spent the winter painting the town, harbor, and coast of "the picturesque town," as did Canada's Emily Carr in 1901. During these years in England, Laurence exhibited with the Royal Society of British Artists and the Royal Academy, as well as exhibiting at the Paris Salon in 1890. Woodward tells us that though Laurence was part of these established groups, he seems to have been more of a follower than a leader. By 1903 we find the artist alone in Alaska. Perhaps the responsibilities of two children and the promise of a pot of gold in the Far North were too strong a pressure to resist.

Though at first glance Laurence's paintings appear to have links with French Impressionism, there are major differences. Like Monet or Renoir, Laurence shares an interest in light, but the technique to achieve the effects are very different. The Impressionists juxtaposed dabs of color, such as blue next to yellow, forcing the eye to make the merger to green. With this seemingly disjointed approach to paint, a feeling of light fleeting over an object miraculously occurred, and with it a glowing illusion of the world. Even more surprising, this vision of an ephemeral moment in time had a solid base in scientific concerns with the prism. On the other hand, Laurence's paintings, though filled with incandescent color, achieve their unity of effect by a single overall tone: a subtle darkening and lighting of a particular hue mixed not on the palette, but directly on the canvas. The effect, like that of the Impressionists, is a unifying one, but the concept, rather than scientific, is one of poetic mood. Nature is perceived through veils of atmosphere and mist, creating a fountain of romantic sensibilities and a more personal reaction to the subject. Many beautiful examples are reproduced in the Laurence catalogue. Especially compelling are the paintings of Mt. McKinley, with blue and mauve suffusing the canvases.

For the reasons above, Woodward shows Laurence's style to be linked not to the Impressionists but to the Tonalists, a smaller New York school whose interests, rather than scientific, were "unashamedly poetic and subjective" (Corn, 1972). The Tonalists found their inspiration from the French Barbizon School, whose members painted *en plein-air* and enclosed their scenes in "envelopes of mist," as well as from John Constable, the revered English landscapist, the Dutch painting of the 17th century, and the 19th-century Americans John Whistler and George Inness. But not until two ground-breaking exhibitions in 1972 and 1982 were the Tonalists seen as a cohesive group, rather than as individual painters employing watered-down adaptations of various European styles. In his analysis Woodward has drawn extensively from two shows, Wanda Corn's *The Color of Mood, 1880-1910* in San Francisco in 1972 and

Tonalism: An American Experience (Gerds, 1982), mounted ten years later in New York City.

Until this Anchorage Museum exhibition, Alaska's geographical isolation has kept Laurence's reputation outside the mainstream of North American art. Even at home it was not until 1957 that his work was honored with a public exhibition. By then response was so enthusiastic that the building was renamed the Sydney Laurence Auditorium. Today in Alaska Laurence's paintings are found in the lobbies of banks and hospitals and many private collections, while reproductions are readily available.

Like Tom Thompson to Canadians, Sydney Laurence's art has a mythic power for Alaskans, a power that raises questions for the non-Alaskan lacking first-hand knowledge of the northern landscape. Mt. McKinley is a dominant theme for Laurence's paintings and seems to achieve a totemistic status. The non-resident may well wish to know why. What is its height? How much higher than the mountains around it? The artist's many depictions of the gorgeous snow-capped peak towering over the land below is reminiscent of the romantic exaggeration of Albert Bierstadt or Edward Moran, American artists whose canvases half a century earlier had captured the grandeur of the West. Yet except for the painting *Arctic King*, the titles are mainly factual labels. Is *Arctic King* Laurence's own term or that of all inhabitants? For other images, such as *Going to the Potlatch*, a lively scene of a boat charging through the waves under sail in a brisk wind, this viewer wishes more. What about the people, the time of year, a description of a potlatch? Even without documented evidence of Laurence's response to such questions, general geographical and historical information could be presented.

Woodward has provided the reader with a beautiful coffee-table book and a valuable analysis of the artist's contribution to the mainstream of art history. Laurence's work will now be enjoyed beyond the West Coast and the North. There is, however, a growing need to expand art analysis beyond the confines of stylistic concerns to a deeper understanding of the underlying context of the subject. A future exhibition will be able to do this by building on the sound base of this fine study of Alaska's "painter of the North."

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JOURNAL OF A BARRENLANDER: W.H.B. HOARE, 1928-1929. Edited and annotated by SHEILA C. THOMSON. Privately published, 1990. (Available from Sheila C. Thomson, Box 4435, Postal Station E, Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B4.) xii + 186 p., black and white photos, maps, bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$24.95.

Most tourists visit the Barrenlands during the short but relatively benign summer. They arrive and depart via charter airplane and travel with the aid of indestructible plastic canoes, accurate topographic maps, lightweight dried foods, and warm, waterproof synthetic clothing. Many carry high-frequency radios in case an emergency evacuation is required. Scientific researchers and government officials conducting field work in the Barrens generally

are accustomed to even greater levels of logistical support, security, and comfort. Although the tundra still offers its share of inclement weather, isolation, and adventure, modern equipment and methods of travel have made it a safer and less intimidating environment in which to live and work. These technological advances undoubtedly have made it difficult for many people to appreciate how man's relationship to the northern wilderness has changed during the last sixty years.

The best way to derive a sense of what travel in the Barrenlands once was like is to read the accounts of explorers, traders, scientists, and missionaries who roamed the wilderness north of the 60th parallel during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. The classic writings of Hearne, Back, Pike, Hanbury, Tyrrell, and Douglas are prime examples of works that provide a sense of history and place. *Journal of a Barrenlander* is another book that will assist anyone seeking to develop a better understanding of what travel on the Barrens was like before airplanes began to shrink the vast northern distances, when the courses of many rivers remained unmapped and most travel was by dogsled and canoe.

This small volume presents the journals of W.H.B. "Billy" Hoare, who, with A.J. Knox, journeyed north and east from Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, to the Thelon River in 1928-29. The journals, edited and annotated by Hoare's daughter, Sheila C. Thomson, describe one of the last federally sponsored northern investigations conducted without logistical air support. On the surface, the journey was unremarkable. Hoare and Knox had been assigned by the Department of the Interior to investigate the recently established Thelon Game Sanctuary. The two men entered the Thelon area via a previously traveled and mapped (albeit somewhat inaccurately) route — Pike's Portage, Artillery Lake, and the Hanbury River — and conducted no original scientific research during their 19 months in the field. And yet *Journal of a Barrenlander* recounts an impressive story.

Hoare and Knox attempted to transport more than three tons of supplies by dogsled and canoe from Fort Reliance, at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake, to the Thelon River, where they planned to establish a permanent warden's post. It took them more than seven months of tedious and arduous labor to move their outfit approximately 500 km to the Thelon River. For day after day, the men ferried supplies from one cache to another. Inaccurate topographical maps, break-up, freeze-up, inclement weather, and the sheer physical task of transporting so much equipment all helped delay their progress, and they did not begin work on the cabin at what would later be called Warden's Grove until the end of October. Hoare barely survived a dunking in the Hanbury River in November 1928, and the men had to fend off starvation while building their cabin and during the return to Fort Reliance, which they reached on 13 December.

I found their dogged determination admirable, especially when I recalled my own experiences on the Barrens. In 1977 and 1978, I overwintered at Warden's Grove with five other men. After paddling from Fort Reliance to the Thelon River, we were resupplied by Twin Otter. Much to our chagrin, the plane delivered 4000 kg of food and equipment to a lake 4 km from our camp, and we had to portage all of it back to Warden's Grove. This was a tedious task, but it pales in comparison to what Hoare and Knox accomplished.

Hoare and Knox returned to Warden's Grove the following spring. They spent three months exploring the area around the Hanbury-Thelon River junction and then completed their journey by canoeing eastward to the Baker Lake post. The results of Knox and Hoare's work in the Thelon Game Sanctuary were summarized in an official publication (Hoare, 1930) that omits much of the drama and exertion of their journey.

Sheila Thomson has taken pains to ensure that *Journal of a Barrenlander* presents a precise version of Hoare's field notes. She has supplemented the journal entries with material from a slightly expanded account of the trip written by Hoare at Warden's Grove in the spring of 1929; these inclusions, as well as her editorial comments, provide further useful information. Because all sup-

plemental materials are clearly indicated in the text, they do not detract from the accuracy of the published account. The book is nicely designed, especially considering that it was privately printed, and is illustrated with detailed maps. An interesting appendix by Kenneth L. Buchan describes the early mapping of Campbell and Smart Lakes, where Knox and Hoare were forced to transport their outfit over an unexpected 20 km series of portages.

An unavoidable shortcoming of the journals are their lack of detail. Although the entries provide a good summary of Knox and Hoare's itinerary and daily activities, they are generally terse and provide few details about the history of the area, life on the trail, or interactions between the two men. Even after finishing the book, I was left wondering how the men *felt* about the arduous portages, cold, subsistence on near-starvation rations, and inaccurate maps that contributed to their exertions. Nor are there many observations on natural history or people encountered during the trip. In this way they are less rewarding to read than the essentially contemporary journals of P.G. Downes (Cockburn, 1985, 1986), which are rich in self-analysis and human and natural history.

Journal of a Barrenlander deals with a relatively minor story in the history of northern travel and exploration. Thus it will be of primary value to those with scholarly or strong avocational interests in the history of the Barrenlands, particularly the Thelon Game Sanctuary. However, I recommend it to anyone who would like to develop a better sense of what travel in the North once was like — particularly those of us foolish enough to have complained about carrying a few weeks of food and equipment over a portage of a mere two or three kilometres.

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SCIENCE IN NORTHWEST ALASKA: RESEARCH NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES ON FEDERALLY PROTECTED LANDS. Compiled and edited by D.M. HOPKINS, W.H. ARUNDALE and C.W. SLAUGHTER. Alaska Quaternary Center and the University of Alaska Museum. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1990. Occasional Paper #3. 95 p., 2 tables, 3 maps, 15 black and white photos, bib. Softbound. US\$5.00; US\$3.50 for handling to the U.S. or Canada (all costs prepaid).

The volume is a brief summary of a symposium and workshop held in Anchorage 26-27 September 1987 to address the "wise management" of more than half of northwest Alaska now in federal U.S. control due to passage by the U.S. Congress of the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act of 1980. More than 100 scientists, land managers and Alaskan Native participants attended the sessions. The symposium and this published summation reflect the intensive involvement of diverse interest/user groups in addressing future research needs in the area, especially indigenous Native people, who were acknowledged as needing to be involved in all phases of planning and policy making regarding needed research.

Five brief chapters present the authors' summary of the complex blend of biology, ecology, archeology, resource management, baseline study needs, fire ecology, Native hunter/user views and land manager concerns.