

A HISTORY OF MINING ON THE KENAI PENINSULA. BY MARY J. BARRY. *Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1973. 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches, 214 pages, illustrated. \$7.20.*

The first discoveries of gold in what is now Alaska were made by the Russians in 1850, but they were more interested in furs than mining, so there was little done with gold until after the sale of the territory to the United States. After the discoveries of gold in southeastern Alaska in the 1880s, activity was renewed in the Kenai Peninsula in 1888, and by 1896 there were several thousand people mining and prospecting in the area. The rich discoveries in the Klondike overshadowed all other discoveries in the Alaska-Yukon area, and the majority of the men from the Kenai Peninsula, as well as other gold mining areas, went to the Klondike. So it is not surprising that very little has been written about mining in the Kenai Peninsula, even though the area produced significant amounts of gold over many years and had the first producing coal mine in what is now Alaska.

Mary Barry fills a major gap in the historical data on Alaska with her excellent history of mining on the Kenai Peninsula. Even though she had close personal knowledge of the area for many years, the extensive research that she obviously did makes her book very valuable. Besides the historical data and detailed facts on mining activities, Mrs. Barry includes sketches of many interesting characters that could be expanded into other books. I have never been sure whether mining attracted interesting characters or whether they are the type of people that were more adventuresome. In any event, the characters that explored and developed the Kenai area were of the same breed that explored in other parts of Alaska, and all of them played a most important part in the development of what is now the State of Alaska.

The mining historian might feel that Mrs. Barry has too many anecdotes about people, and the person reading for pleasure will undoubtedly feel there are too many facts, and I would have liked to see more stories about some of the people I knew personally — but one book cannot be all things to all people. Therefore, I recommend the book as being sufficiently factual for the historian, and interesting for the general reader.

Patrick H. O'Neill

CANADA 1896-1921: A NATION TRANSFORMED. BY ROBERT CRAIG BROWN and RAMSAY COOK. *Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974. 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, 412 pages, illustrated. \$12.50.*

This is one of a succession of volumes being published under the general title of *The Canadian Centenary Series*. The project, under the editorship of W. L. Morton and D. G. Creighton, was inspired by Canada's hundredth anniversary and is the first general conspectus of the structure (physical, economic, social, political) and history of the country since the publication of *Canada and its Provinces* earlier in the century. If the other volumes maintain the admirable standard of *Canada 1896-1921*, their publication will constitute a national service.

The work of Professors Brown and Cook covers the period of Canadian history that recorded greater changes in the character of the country than is found in any other comparable quarter-century. Of course the scale of Canadian change and development was vastly greater in the decades after the Second World War, but the quality, nature and direction of Canadian life changed more radically in the earlier period. No other years witnessed such alterations in the country's international status, its social mores, its geographic and constitutional expansion, its racial admixture and, above all perhaps, its vision of itself as both a united and a fragmented people. These changes are recorded carefully, described graphically, and interpreted wisely by the authors.

It would also be difficult to find a better example than that provided by this book of the change that had taken place in the content of Canadian historical writing in the last couple of generations. Until comparatively recently, even the most ardent young Canadians were almost always bored by the lectures and the textbooks with which they were bombarded in school and college. Canadian history — the story of one of the most dynamic and fascinating of nations — was presented as a tiresome recital of comparatively unimportant military, political and constitutional conflicts and problems. The warm and exciting annals of the country's basic social and economic life were almost entirely ignored. The best of the present generation of Canadian historians, certainly including Brown and Cook, have avoided this mistake — to the great advantage of everyone.