

of the novel, I was riveted. I mean, think about it: all of these drawbacks are just things we haven't seen in a mystery/thriller/ghost story before. A lawyer that is as corrupt as the accused; a main character fighting not to know the truth; a whole town that forgets. Those are pretty interesting in themselves. Maybe the interest in the novel should come from the fact that it is so different than others: literary, character-driven, a mixture of genres, exciting, funny. This novel does what I wish others did—reach for more than has been reached for before. I just wish the reader could have grabbed all of it too.

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*Music of the Alaska-Klondike Gold Rush: Songs and History* by Jean A. Murray. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1999. xvii, 440pp., maps, photographs, illustrations, bibliography. ISBN 1-889963-13-5 (hc), \$54.95 US or ISBN 1-889963-14-3 (coil), \$35.95 US. Reviewed by Rachel Grantham.

Is there anything left to know about the great Klondike Gold Rush? Simply by asking the right questions and putting in ten years of dedicated research to answer them, Jeanne A. Murray has filled at least one gaping hole in the history.

A sociologist, amateur musician, and longtime Alaskan, Murray has compiled a fascinating, focused compendium representing stamper musical life in the Yukon and Alaska at the time of the Klondike Gold Rush. *Music of the Alaska-Klondike Gold Rush: Songs and History*, is a collection and re-publication of almost one hundred Rush-related songs, properly placed within the context of personal and community history and culture.

In her preface, Murray describes her project as having begun with the simple question “What was the typical gold-miner singing at camp?” She soon found herself asking who that miner might have been, why he remembered the song, and how he might have thought to pack an instrument up the Chilkoot trail. From there, the reader discovers more than the music of the typical gold miner, but that of an entire society of newcomers, from the child singer Margie Newman performing at the Dawson Monte Carlo to Chechako Lil, living on the banks of the Tanana River, immortalized in a song parody.

Murray draws upon song references in published and unpublished accounts of the day—letters, memoirs, poems and newspaper articles—to create a popular song spectrum that covers the period of the mid-1800s to 1905. She

divides the near-one hundred songs into three categories: 1) songs and parodies by gold seekers; 2) songs about the gold rush by professional musicians; and 3) popular music recalled in diaries and other accounts of the Gold Rush. This third category, taking up half the book, is valuable as a resource for dramatists, film-makers, and multimedia artists and historians.

Murray's work included tracking down innumerable references to songs and music of the day, both in the Yukon and Outside, locating the music either through oral or written records, transcribing, and in some cases, arranging the work for simple piano accompaniment. An ample general introduction highlights the importance of music in stamper society, where the hauling of pianos over passes is seen as positively heroic. Throughout the book, the author interweaves musical memories of gold-seekers, vaudevillians and other folk with the songs themselves. Period photographs and illustrations show people posing proudly with pianos, banjos and other musical paraphernalia. Murray also furnishes overviews of musical events such as minstrel shows, Sunday services, and informal outbursts of opera arias.

All songs are meticulously re-notated, consistently mimicking period fonts for the lyrics. On a practical level, the coil-bound version of the volume is perfect for use on a piano, though it mars the centre of at least one two-page photo spread.

The publishers missed an opportunity—perhaps a duty—to reproduce the sheet music covers in full colour. Since Klondike gold rush history tends to be a black and white affair on paper, full colour reproductions of such covers as “Rory, Bory, Alice,” “Golden Nugget” and “The Old Green Mountain Home” would have been an important contribution. Miniaturized colour versions of three other popular songs do appear on the back of the book as consolation.

Many of the songs highlight the sentimentality and the prejudices of the age. Murray acknowledges blatant racial slurs where they exist in the lyrics, and makes substitutions.

One subject to which Murray gives less than her usual thoroughness, is, oddly, her favourite. Harry Anthony, bursts into “La Donna é Mobile” as his dogs rest in their traces on a brilliant Arctic morning on the Black River, in the Yukon. According to the narrator of the story we learn that Anthony is a professional singer from the concert halls of Edmonton. Murray herself provides no further clues as to how this man ended up so far from home, singing to his dogs. And, regrettably, the two references to that particular story in her book are erroneously indexed.

Little is written, too, about most of the professional composers of the Klondike songs. Perhaps this is an area that could be further researched for later editions. And could room have been made in an appendix for great post-Gold Rush songs such as “Along the Yukon Trail,” which appeared in 1914?

Since Murray hints that she has yet another volume waiting in the wings for such material, perhaps she could discover whether equivalent popular songs specifically written about the Gold Rush exist in other languages.

The University of Alaska has also produced a companion recording (CD) featuring a relatively small selection of Yukon-Alaska Gold Rush songs from the book. Though not unpleasant, the production suffers from a lack of direction. In the case of the music hall song, the performers give insufficient attention to the varying moods of the lyrics, though singing with varying interpretations of pitch. The folk singers fare better.

Beyond mere words, facts and photographs, this passionately researched collection provides the music-lover the emotional and aesthetic connection that many find in the poetry of Robert Service and the fiction of Jack London. As the only existing book of the music of the Alaska Klondike Gold Rush, Murray's book is truly a golden treasury.

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