

# Book Reviews

## An Expedition

**Looking Far North.** The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899. WILLIAM H. GOETZMANN and KAY SLOAN. Viking, New York, 1982. xxvi, 244 pp., illus. \$17.95.

Surely the Harriman Expedition of 1899 marks one of the more extravagant episodes in the history of American science. The story of how the idea of the expedition hatched in the business-weary mind of railroad tycoon Edward Harriman, how biologist C. Hart Merriam assembled on short notice a complement of able scientists, and how a party of 46 passengers sailed aboard the luxury steamship *Elder* from Seattle to Siberia and back again in a period of two months is well told here.

The text provides a detailed account of the organization, conduct, and aftermath of the expedition. Scientific results are appraised in an epilogue, and members of the expedition are classified according to family connections or professional

qualifications in the appendix. The roster of passengers lists 11 members of the Harriman family group, 23 scientists, three artists, two each of physicians, preparators, photographers, and stenographers, and a solitary chaplain.

Before members of the party had set foot on board, Harriman had appointed most of them to membership on various committees. In addition to the five committees for as many different branches of natural science, there were committees for big game, lectures, library, literature and art, and music and entertainment. For the benefit of the last, a piano and organ were loaded aboard at Seattle on 31 May, along with the cases of champagne. Between the numerous stops along the Canadian and Alaskan coasts for making collections and scientific observations, the *Elder* was a floating university.

Despite all frills, the authors conclude that the expedition was a serious scientific venture. Proof can be found in the handsome multivolume series of reports,

edited by Merriam and published between 1904 and 1914. The seven volumes that treat of botany and zoology contain descriptions of hundreds of new species. Highest marks, however, are given to G. K. Gilbert for his account of glaciers and glacial processes.

A major objective of the authors has been to impart an understanding of the Victorian people who joined the expedition, and thus to help the reader experience Alaska as they did. To that end they have reproduced many photographs taken in the course of the journey, including some superb landscapes by E. S. Curtis. Also they have enlivened the text with quotations from private sources, some of which tell how the voyagers really felt about the way things were going. For example, one day on the long trip home a travel-weary Harriman refused to walk around the deck to view a rugged coast, declaring, "I don't give a damn if I never see any more scenery!" About the same time John Muir confided in his journal that the main aim of the expedition had been game-hunting and that whatever might come out of the effort would be "mere reconnaissance."

Reconnaissance, yes, but not mere. Aside from the published reports, the records show that members of the expedition perceived that there were already two Alaskas: one the majestic wilderness to be preserved, the other a treasure-laden frontier to be exploited along with its native inhabitants. As the authors point out, this troublesome double vision persists today, the oil rush having succeeded the gold rush. "History," they conclude, "does not always offer consolation."

CLAUDE C. ALBRITTON, JR.  
*Institute for the Study of Earth and Man, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas 75275*



B. K. Emerson and Grove Karl Gilbert during the Harriman expedition. [From *Looking Far North*]

## Evolution by Metaphor

**The Extended Phenotype.** The Gene as the Unit of Selection. RICHARD DAWKINS. Freeman, San Francisco, 1982. xii, 308 pp. \$22.95.

One of the wonderful things about evolution is that there are so many different ways of looking at it. In this entertaining and thought-provoking book Richard Dawkins points out that Darwin himself could not decide. He quotes the historian R. M. Young's observation that by its later editions Darwin's book should have been entitled *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection and All Sorts of Other Things*. In-