

## BOOK REVIEW

Review of *On site with Maurice Haycock, artist of the Arctic: painting and drawing of historical sites in the Canadian Arctic*, by Kathy Haycock (2007). Toronto: Edgar Kent Publishers. 112 pp. ISBN 978-0-88866-655-0

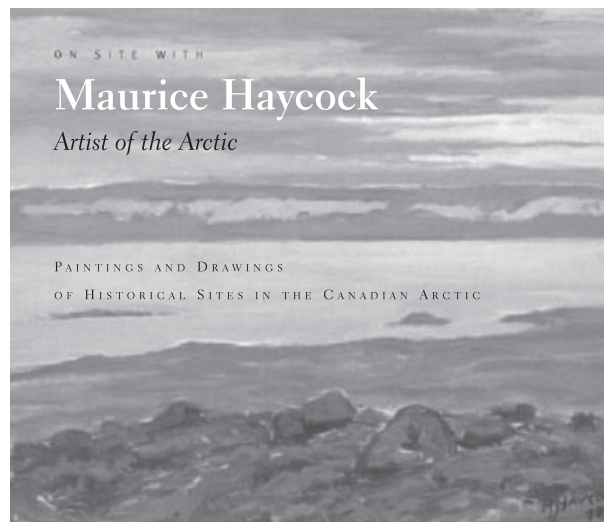
It's not surprising that Maurice Haycock's art project combines aspects of a geological survey with characteristics of the practice of the dominant Canadian landscape painters of the early 20th century. His father was a professor of geology at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, and Maurice chose to follow in his footsteps, graduating from Acadia in 1926, and then going on to Princeton University where he received a PhD in Economic Geology in 1931. He then joined the Bureau of Mines in the Canadian Department of Resources and Development in Ottawa, where he worked until his retirement in 1965. Young Haycock took summer jobs every year between 1918 and 1931 with the Geological Survey of Canada, which gave him invaluable field experience, and in 1926, as a break before undertaking graduate work, he accepted a 15-month assignment with the Survey in the eastern Arctic. Returning near the end of August 1927, he boarded the government supply ship *The Beothic* in Pangnirtung, which was that summer carrying the well-known "Group of Seven" artist A.Y. Jackson and his friend, the famous scientist and amateur painter, Dr Frederick Banting. It was a chance encounter that ultimately would bring a significant new dimension to Haycock's life.

The geologist began painting in the late 1930s, just around home initially, but then increasingly wherever his work with the Bureau of Mines took him across the country. He held his first commercial exhibition in Ottawa in November 1945, and not long afterwards connected with Jackson again, and began painting with him in the Gatineau region. In 1949 they arranged to meet at Port Radium on Great Bear Lake, and the following year painted on the Barren Lands. Then in 1961, and again the following year, Jackson joined Haycock on flights to mines in Labrador, and two years later they flew to Whitehorse, from where they explored as far north as Dawson and west into Alaska.

Following his retirement, Haycock began to focus his painting trips on a specific programme—the documentation of important historic sites in the Arctic—and he soon

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also began to imagine his efforts culminating in a publication. Because of his training, skills and professional connections he was able to travel widely throughout the Arctic over the next 15 years, even to the North Pole, and the stock of sketches of historic sites that he had purposefully sought out and explored was close to comprehensive. By the time of his death in 1988 he had a draft manuscript to accompany the images, but apparently no prospective publisher. *On site with Maurice Haycock* has been assembled by one of his daughters, Kathy Haycock, from an early draft of her father's manuscript and images of paintings her sister had kept. (Her own share of her father's paintings and his most recent draft manuscript were destroyed by fire in 2003.)

She has done a remarkable job. The book is handsomely designed and presents the material, both visual and textual, in a clear and direct fashion. Presumably following her father's plan, it is divided into four major sections: sites documenting the earliest cultures in the North; sites of remains of early European exploration—the search for the Northwest Passage; sites related to the search for the Franklin expedition; sites related to the race for the North Pole. The images—colour reproductions of paintings made following his retirement—are accompanied by his texts, blending historical context with personal narratives of his visits. In an introduction he states that the paintings have not been selected on the basis of "artistic merit . . . , but because of the significant events that took place at these locations" (p. 15). However, he makes no special claims for their efficacy as

documents; rather “In all cases, I have tried to grasp and share the feeling of this beautiful land” (p. 15). Haycock’s project is, finally, a later 20th century manifestation of the programmatic claiming of the land by right of artistic

exploration undertaken by the “Group of Seven” earlier in the century, an assertion of identity through a sense of place promulgated by A.Y. Jackson into the mid-1960s. In this resides its distinct charm, but also its deeper meaning.