

esting or important aspect. Ruddel has captured the flavour of Canada both in the text and illustrations.

Canadians and their Environment depends largely upon illustrations and captions to tell its story and therefore it is upon the quality of these illustrations the book must stand. Unfortunately it is here that several problems are apparent. The selection of the illustrations seems uneven at times; for instance, in the lumbering section there are four photographs of logging trucks operating in British Columbia but only two of steam engines, neither of which is representative of the era and one of which is incorrectly labeled (p. 68). The caption of the six animals on p. 22 provides only the names of five. In other instances the photograph citation has been missed (pp. 16 and 78, for example). In the photograph (p. 76) of the museum diorama of a mine cart at Glace Bay, N.S., we need to know that the cart is a replica, but I would sooner know why this mine was recreated than that the walls were made with a rubber mould. Finally, as aesthetically pleasing as the bird's-eye view of Los Angeles may be, it is difficult to understand why it is included in a book on *Canadians and their Environment*.

One technique used in this book that the reviewer found especially interesting was the interweaving of photographs of artifacts with other illustrations. The placement of the shipwright's tools with the historic photograph of the shipwright's shed makes effective use of this technique (pp. 46, 47). Again an illustration of rail tongs was placed beside a photograph of men laying railroad tracks (p. 41). In other cases, however, the purpose of the photograph is not clear. Does the photograph of the "reconstituted" tin shop (p. 30) relate to the illustration of the village of Château-Richer in 1787? Why is the view of the Quebec City jail adjacent to the interior scene of a pulp mill? There are many photographs that show tools and equipment but relatively few of artifacts. Photographs of artifacts could have been used more extensively. The lumbering section, for instance, a major section of the book, contains only three photographs of artifacts despite the abundant remains of this industry. It is an intriguing book to read, however, and I hope that it will prove an inspiration for additional use of the combination of photographs of artifacts with historic photographs.

Robert Griffin

Material Culture Studies in America

Schlereth, Thomas J. *Material Culture Studies in America*. (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1982.) xvi, 419pp., ill. Hardbound \$22.95, ISBN 0-910050-61-9; paper \$15.00, ISBN 0-910050-67-8.

Every so often, when analysing the mass of detail that must be collected in order to study some aspect of research on material culture, it is important to sit back and take stock. Tom Schlereth's book produces this effect. It provides not only an assessment of the development of material culture studies in the United States, but also an almost Shakespearian vision of the mental development of any material culture researcher who works honestly and in a sustained way on his subject, through collection and description, analysis and interpretation, and the adoption, rejection, or adaptation of functionalist, structuralist, and any other form of preferred approach.

The book is a collection of articles divided into statements of theory, method and practice, with a substantial bibliographical section. It is introduced by Schlereth's essay on the history of material culture studies in America from 1876 to 1976. All the extracts are from American sources. Though reference is made in the text and in the notes to European specialists and to their general influence on individuals in America, this is nevertheless an all-American book. Should we then say the book is useful to American researchers only?

Before answering this question, let us look more closely at the contents. It is a book intended for teaching purposes. Clearly there is a considerable teaching requirement in the U.S.; the study of material culture (defined as "the study through artifacts [and other pertinent historical evidence] of the belief systems—the values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions—of a particular community or society, usually across time") is well on the way to finding its feet as a discipline. It has a substantial basis in museum collections, studies of vernacular buildings and technology, folk art and "Americana," field research and archives, with government involvement from the 1930s (Index of American Design, Historic Sites Survey of the National Park Service, Historic American Building Survey, etc). It has, according to Schlereth, its demonstrable stages of development with the age of description from 1948 to 1965 and of interpretation from 1965 onwards. Four generations of scholars have worked on trends which are usefully summarized and defined in tables as art history, symbolist and cultural history, using approaches which can be environmentalist, functionalist, structuralist, behaviouralistic, or relating to national character or social history. The latter provides a particularly strong source of stimulation in current work, with European influence being exerted through the writings of British labour historians such as E.J. Holsbaum and E.P. Thompson, and of French historians such as Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, and Philippe Ariès.

Each of the abstracts has a brief introduction in which the main tenor of the argument and its context are indicated. Under "statements of theory," six authors consider questions of words versus things, which taken together make a strong plea for the proper use of artifacts as three-

dimensional historical evidence that is as valuable as the written word, beloved of historians, provided it can be properly interpreted. An aspect that may characterize an American approach is the post-World War II emphasis on experimental archaeology and cultural symbol, now, however, being picked up in Europe. Museum practice in studying and presenting material culture is examined, at least from the point of view of social anthropology, and closer ties are urged between museum personnel and academic teachers. As part of the "theory," an effort is made to define folk art, Englishman William Morris being singled out as a role model. The subject is followed into the world of mass production, and slots into the current upsurge of interest in the recording and analysis of twentieth-century material culture (which Sweden has been pioneering in the so-called SAMDOK project, the name being an abbreviation of *samtids dokumentation*, "contemporary documentation").

The "statements of method" cover questions of connoisseurship of artifacts, going beyond the merely aesthetic to include regional character, and of design as a reflection of mental and manual processes. These are widened into the establishment of a model for artifact study based on an object's five basic properties — history, material, construction, design, and function — and on four operations in relation to it — identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and

interpretation. This model is partly applied in looking at the Coke bottle. The cultural landscape is also examined as an aspect of material cultural, and as a background to it.

Most space is given to "statements of practice," with examples from various fields: mortuary art, hall furnishings, household technology, building in wood, service stations, specific crafts and craftsmen, and the like. All are well worth reading carefully; all extend the teaching value of the book.

Schlereth has produced a volume that can scarcely fail to influence and develop the study and teaching of material culture in the U.S. Similarly, it can scarcely fail to have influence in Europe. It is compactly written and must be savoured and reread; even the footnotes should be examined closely. The tables that sum up research trends are of much value in themselves, and, though they relate to the U.S., they mirror comparable developmental stages in Europe. It will be a matter of much interest to see who in Europe will have the courage to try to parallel this excellent piece of work, so that the best practices on both sides of the Atlantic may become mutually available, and any essential differences in approach may be pinpointed and analysed.

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