

est in workers' family lives. He was also very difficult to work with, and some of his management style resulted in his skipping the country to take another job at General Dynamics Quincy Shipyard in Massachusetts.

Overall, the book carries out its basic mission, and little more. It recounts the ups and downs of shipbuilding work and identifies the company's bright spots over a one hundred and seventy-year history, both among the construction contracts and among those who made the shipyard work. The book is profusely illustrated with images from countless sources. Yet, there are almost no photographs of ships under construction that would tell more about the yard's technical approach to shipbuilding. To the "shipyard's past and present employees and their families," the book is a nice keepsake for the generations who dedicated their lives to building and repairing ships.

To the historian, though, *Tall Ships and Tankers* is a disappointment. Even when compared with other corporate histories, it leaves much to be desired in its dearth of contextual treatment of the historical fabric. Although it focuses on the dealings of upper management, it is far from being a useful business history of the sort provided by Moss and Hume on the Harland and Wolff shipbuilders. Nor does this book have the depth of a general history such as Lin Snow's history of Bath Iron Works. Relatively little political context is provided on both the provincial and national levels. For example, there is no clue given whether the ascendancy of the Parti Québécois in 1976 had anything to do with the shipyard's bad publicity and its subsequent sale to a group of Quebec businessmen, organized as the Société de construction de navale. And, shouldn't we be surprised that almost nothing is mentioned about the long

hegemony of British Protestants in a shipyard full of French Catholics? Only minimal treatment is given to the politics behind Canadian shipbuilders' long subjection to and eventual freedom from government preferences for British shipbuilders. This reviewer also would like to have seen more detailed history on the organization and application of new shipbuilding technologies.

The book falls particularly short, though, in its handling of labour history. Not only was the story of labour given short shrift, the book needed more labour statistics, showing changes in wage rates, employment figures, hours worked, piecework policies, benefits, and the like. Certainly, one important story that is missing is whether or not women ever joined the production force, particularly during the Second World War.

It is painfully apparent that Dr Marcil had limited access to corporate archives after the Canada Steamship Lines period, and most of the sources she used for the shipyard's last twenty or so years were interviews and published sources, usually cleansed for public consumption. Despite the fact that the book is replete with notes, few cite sources of information.

Corporate histories, commissioned by corporations, are a difficult breed apart from histories coming out of the academy. They usually have very specific missions and limit the freedom of the author to tell the entire story. Considering these typical limitations, Dr Marcil has helped to save a large piece of shipbuilding history that would likely otherwise have been lost forever. Shipyards, like the companies that run them, are artifacts of human endeavor. They ought to be studied and fully interpreted, in context, for the benefit of generations to come.

## Jamie Benidickson, *Idleness, Water and a Canoe: Reflections on Paddling for Pleasure*

HALLIE E. BOND

Benidickson, Jamie. *Idleness, Water and a Canoe: Reflections on Paddling for Pleasure*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. 299 pp., 30 illus. Cloth \$55.00, ISBN 0-8020-0945-X; paper \$17.95, ISBN 0-8020-7910-5.

Jamie Benidickson undertook a very ambitious project, and a very worthwhile one — nothing

less than a "study of the place of the canoe in Canadian life." His subtitle reveals his general approach, and the reader should keep this approach in mind. While there is a good deal of history in the book (much of it fascinating and not well explored elsewhere) the book is indeed "reflections," rather than a history, since the usual standards of historical scholarship and

organization have been unevenly applied. This ultimately reduces the value of this work to the historian or student of material culture.

While this is nominally a book of reflections, they are not the author's reflections like another recent work on riparian life, John Jerome's extremely well-done *Blue Rooms: Ripples, Rivers, Pools, and Other Waters* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997). Jerome develops his own observations, buttressing them with references from human and natural history, and presenting them in his own eloquent and elegant style. Benidickson has used the essayist's random "reflective" way of organizing his work, but he uses other people's observations, sociological studies, recent news items and historical vignettes.

The wide variety of sources Benidickson uses will intrigue students of material culture and Canadian studies. He relies heavily on first person published accounts, but also includes biographical material, contemporary advertisements, political cartoons, sculpture and popular literature.

An interdisciplinary book like this could have benefited from even more illustrations, and ones that were integrated in the text rather than collected in two sections. Most of the illustrations are well chosen to complement the text, but some, like the ice-canoe photo and the photo of the dragon boat, seem to be only peripherally connected to the story.

Benidickson explores three major themes: the attractions of recreational canoe use, the practice of wilderness travel, and the cultural legacy of canoeing. He is strongest on the themes to which his "reflections" style is best suited: why people paddle for pleasure and the experience of canoeing. While none of this is directly about canoes as material objects, the book is useful to the student of material culture in establishing a context for the development and use of canoes for recreation.

Why *do* people paddle for pleasure? Benidickson discusses the attractions of solitude, the spiritual aspects of the wilderness, and the benefits of outdoor exercise to both the body and the character, but he neglects to discuss actual physiological benefits. It is surprising, for example, that he did not explore the scientific claims for the "balsamic vapours" and ozone of the woods that were believed to revitalize the body as the solitude of the woods revitalized the spirit or the "wilderness cure" for consumption.

Benidickson's anecdotal style is well suited to exploring the experiences of a wide variety of people who have paddled for pleasure, many

of whom have been neglected by most historians. The discussion of children's summer camps is particularly useful. His chapter about canoeing women is strongest when he discusses women of the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, he hasn't uncovered any surprises about nineteenth and early twentieth-century women and occasionally uses a somewhat patronizing tone.

Exploration of how canoeists paddle, build boats and camp form the weakest parts of the book. The essayist's style leaves large gaps in themes, which the historian would wish more systematically explored. The technology of canoe design and production is perhaps the most significant of these and one of particular importance to the study of material culture. Benidickson's chapters "What Kinda Boat Ya Got?" and "The Craft and the Craftsman" attempt to sort out and establish a chronology for the development of Canadian canoe types (an admittedly murky story) but they almost totally neglect to include the influence of the pressure of the market. For a Canadian book, it is particularly surprising that there is very little discussion of the famed cedar-strip method of construction, the market which brought it about, and its advantages for factory production.

Benidickson is not rigorous in his use of the historical method. He often neglects to examine systematically change over time. In many cases, his evidence is solely prescriptive — literature, advertisements, or what people said about themselves; rarely does he test the conclusions drawn from this type of material with statistics or other, more objective sources. He also makes factual errors throughout the book, as well, which raise concerns (founded or not) about the rest of his work; he confuses the early unplanked type of canvas canoe (which did not take off) with classic cedar-canvas construction (which revolutionized canoe building), and he gives the wrong date for the establishment of the New York State Forest Preserve. He has not used the most up-to-date sources in some cases; his secondary work on the Adirondacks is eighteen years old and has been superseded by several, much more thorough works.

It is surprising that Benidickson doesn't define "canoe" until chapter nine, and then he makes no reference to the characteristic narrowness of the type. This seems to indicate a very broad notion of canoes and canoeing. The object-conscious historian will notice that Benidickson often uses as examples anecdotes about decked sailing canoes and open cruising canoes of the cedar-strip or wood-canvas type

interchangeably, and even occasionally includes evidence from the history of sculling.

Benidickson is also vague on the definition of "pleasure paddler." His examples include early visitors to the wilderness who were under the care of professional guides as well as the members of the ill-fated Wallace-Hubbard expeditions in Labrador in the early part of this century. The former I would not define as "paddlers" since they were passive with regards to the actual transportation. The latter were certainly not in the bush for pleasure or recreation — Dillon Wallace and the Hubbards would have described themselves as explorers.

*Idleness, Water and a Canoe* is an absorbing look at the people who have paddled canoes as canoeing moved away from its origins as utilitarian transportation. The book gives context to the way in which the evolution of paddling paralleled the evolution of thinking about the wilderness from consumable resource to thinking about the wilderness as a repository of spiritual values — a fundamental evolution in the development of outdoor recreation. What Benidickson does not elaborate on, although he includes much evidence of it, is a third phase in the evolution of paddling for pleasure in this century. In the twentieth century, much canoeing has completely lost its connection with destinations. This development began

around the turn of the century when many of the canoes on the water were being paddled by people who rented them at city liveries such as those on the Charles River in Boston and paddled around for an hour or an afternoon. In the late twentieth century, many canoeists repeatedly shoot short stretches of rapids, "portaging" to the head of the run by car. Just being in a canoe is the aim.

Jamie Benidickson has given us an overview of the place canoeing has had in Canadian life for a century or more with evidence that almost always assumes a very close connection between paddling a canoe and what many would call "the wilderness experience." Non-Canadian readers may wonder if it isn't just an accident of geography that the wilderness experience in Canada is primarily gained from the quarterdeck of a canoe, for in the United States the reactions to wilderness Benidickson explores have been gained — and philosophized about — not only from a small boat, but from the back of a horse or on foot. What Jamie Benidickson has given us is not only a look at one place of the canoe in Canadian life, but the suggestion that the strong connection between canoeing and the distinctive Canadian landscape has much to do with the place of the canoe in Canadian *consciousness*.

## Richard Hoffmann, *Fishers' Craft and Lettered Art: Tracts on Fishing from the End of the Middle Ages*

WENDY R. CHILDS

Hoffmann, Richard. *Fishers' Craft and Lettered Art: Tracts on Fishing from the End of the Middle Ages*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. xv + 403 pp., illus. Cloth \$60, ISBN 0-8020-0869-0; paper \$24.95, ISBN 0-8020-7853-2.

Richard Hoffmann's *Fishers' Craft and Lettered Art* is a book packed with information for the historian, the literary specialist, and the angler. Although it is far less written about than sea fisheries, fresh water fishing is nonetheless well recognized for its importance to the diet and economy of communities so far inland that sea fish came only salted, smoked, or dried. Professor Hoffman's book is most welcome as a further contribution to the recognition of its importance. It is not a general history of freshwater fishing (although it gives a succinct historical overview), but a detailed analysis of

three early treatises on fishing from Germany and Spain. Specialists will find intriguing references not only to baits and artificial flies, but to lines, rods, lead weights, pots, traps, and lift nets. The three are *How to Catch Fish* (Wie man fisch und vogel fahen soll); a tract in 27 chapters and associated texts first printed by Jacob Kobel in Heidelberg in 1493; *Tegernsee Fishing advice*, circa 1500, the so-called Tegernseer Angel- und Fischbuchlein, from manuscript Cgm 8137 in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich; and Fernando Basurto's *Dialogue between a Hunter and a Fisher* printed in Zaragoza in 1539. All three are provided in parallel texts with extensive textual and historical notes, as well as extremely interesting introductions and commentaries.

The first short printed treatise is essentially a collection of recipes for bait, both for line