

**MARITIME PROVINCES PREHISTORY.** By JAMES A. TUCK. Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Canadian Prehistory Series, 1984. 102 p., 3 maps, 8 colour, 20 b&w illus., index, glossary, bib. Cdn \$8.00

Until recently, no readable reference was available on regional archaeology in Canada for the unspecialized reader. Despite continuous fieldwork programs operated by a number of university faculties, government agencies and museums, knowledge of much of Canada's prehistoric past was largely confined to a few hundred anthropologists, their students and a handful of keen lay enthusiasts.

With the publication of *Ontario Prehistory* by J.V. Wright in 1971, the National Museums of Canada launched a series of provincial and regional prehistories that, with the most recent addition of James A. Tuck's *Maritime Provinces Prehistory*, now number six. The books, which sell for less than \$10 each, are attractively printed, contain both black and white and colour illustrations, and are bound in an easily handled eight-square-inch format that lends itself to use as a desk reference.

Tuck, who also authored *Newfoundland and Labrador Prehistory*, begins by apologizing for the meagerness of the data he has been able to gather in his writing, giving as part of the explanation the poor preservation inherent in the Maritimes' environment. One does tend to wonder, however, at the limited amount of fieldwork evidently being practised in the Maritimes, a dearth that becomes increasingly obvious during the course of reading this book. Most of the publications mentioned by Tuck are in excess of five years old, and in fact only a handful of archaeologists are presently working there, despite the "real resurgence of interest in the prehistory of the Maritimes" (p. 1) claimed by Tuck. The blame falls largely on federal, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island government cultural agencies and universities, which have shown an appalling lack of interest in their own archaeological resources. This shameful situation is the more shocking when one considers that this part of the world loses up to a metre or more of its shoreline each year, a problem frequently lamented by Tuck. He points out the consequences in the chapters dealing with the period prior to 2500 B.P., when coastal sites are a rarity, despite evidence to the contrary in adjacent regions, such as Labrador, with less coastal erosion.

*Maritime Provinces Prehistory* is divided into three main sections that cover time periods labeled by Tuck as the Palaeo-Indian Period (11 000-9000 B.P.), the Late Pre-Ceramic Period (5000?-2500 B.P.) and the Ceramic Period (2500-500 B.P.). The divisions are approximate and artificial, reflecting the current state of knowledge of the area. A further two chapters describe respectively a hiatus in the archaeological record from 10 000-5000 B.P. and burial ceremonialism. The latter chapter, easily the book's most absorbing section, outlines the value of burial excavation in fleshing out the scanty evidence to be found through standard archaeological techniques.

The principal criticism I have about the book is that, although it meets its objective in gathering together the available evidence in an easily understandable format, it remains rather dry reading. The text covers a number of site excavations and their results without giving the reader a tangible sense of cultural life. Although he makes some tentative connections between historic ethnographical descriptions and evidence from the archaeological record, Tuck avoids speculation to a degree that would do credit to an academic report. I find the lack of imagination somewhat oppressive in an account meant to stir the interest of the public. In his preface Tuck states that he has attempted to stick to the "facts"; nevertheless this reviewer believes that some of the strictly factual data might well have been omitted in favour of more interpretive ideas. The illustrations are repetitive, consisting mainly of images of stone tools and weapons and examples of sites under excavation that show features of particular interest, yet they never attempt to show, for example, what the various house forms described in the text might have looked like. A single archival photograph of two men playing a dice game called *Waltex* (not *Waltus*, as Tuck writes) is used.

That Tuck is capable of evocative writing is beyond doubt, and his occasional indulgences in this text provide welcome relief from an otherwise factual progression:

... The air would have been decidedly smoky as the frequent backdraughts ... made the fire smoulder. But the aroma of a stew of meat or fish simmering in a large clay pot would provide a welcome distraction. . . . (p. 51)

Few errors were discovered. A reference to "unique" specimens of prehistoric woven textiles (Plate 14) might have mentioned that a number of similar examples have been recovered from historic period sites. There also appears to be something amiss with the last sentence of the accompanying text for Plate 10, since no two uncemented examples of the sherds illustrated appear to be from the same vessel. Of more substance is the tendency to confuse the reader with information that may in any event be of interest only to archaeologists, such as in the seemingly conflicting section on the Laurentian Tradition on page 20. Tuck suggests that polished-stone tools frequently assessed as Laurentian by archaeologists actually belong to the Maritime Archaic Tradition; however, he does not explain the latter until much later. The coastal/interior distinction in the first paragraph on page 23 is therefore a source of confusion to the reader for several pages; few will have the patience to reread the section in light of the explanation on page 30.

On the whole, *Maritime Provinces Prehistory* is a brief, readable account of the current state of knowledge in this region. Like the others in the series, it is handsomely produced and will be a welcome addition to libraries of professionals and students as well as to the average interested reader. Information is factual and easily referenced, and the language is happily free of the jargon that so frequently shuts out the very audience we hope to reach.

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**BLACK WOLF: THE LIFE OF ERNEST THOMPSON SETON.** By BETTY KELLER. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. 240 p., photos, index. Cloth. Cdn\$19.95.

The name Ernest Evan Thompson will likely ring few bells, but many *Arctic* readers will immediately recognize the name of Ernest Thompson Seton, author of *Wild Animals I Have Known*. The latter sobriquet is but one of many tried on by the subject of Betty Keller's book, yet it is the one by which Seton is best known and the one he finally adopted permanently. Northern specialists and enthusiasts will also recognize Seton as the author of *The Arctic Prairies* (1911), his chronicle of a 2000-mile canoe journey into the treeless regions east of Great Slave Lake. He is most celebrated, however, for his stories and paintings of wild animals and for his developing conservationist principles, although Seton's brand of conservation will seem vulgar and self-serving in comparison to environmental attitudes of the 1980s. He was, nevertheless, a major precursor of today's conservationist movement, as well as a leader in the promotion of woodcraft and, ultimately, of the Boy Scouts of America.

Although Keller's biography deals with many of these facets of Seton's life — especially Seton's desire to be recognized as a naturalist — her attention is generally focussed on Seton's private life. She perceives Seton's private life largely in terms of his family life, both as one of eleven children in the family of Joseph Logan Thompson and as the husband of Grace Gallatin Seton and later of Julie Buttree Seton. As one often realizes in reading the biographies of men of genius, knowing them through their accomplishments and the products of their genius is