

Everyman's Heritage: An Album of Canadian Folk Life / Notre patrimoine: Images du peuple canadien. By Magnus Einarsson (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, National Museum of Man, 1978. Pp. 201, photographs, \$8.50 paper, \$12.50 cloth.)

Laurel Doucette

Volume 2, numéro 1-2, 1980

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081036ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081036ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Doucette, L. (1980). Compte rendu de [*Everyman's Heritage: An Album of Canadian Folk Life / Notre patrimoine: Images du peuple canadien.* By Magnus Einarsson (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, National Museum of Man, 1978. Pp. 201, photographs, \$8.50 paper, \$12.50 cloth.)]. *Ethnologies*, 2(1-2), 72–73. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081036ar>

alone to be there during the actual process. Often this information can be obtained only through oral interviews long after the building has been completed, supplemented at times by observations of details of construction technology during the demolition of a structure. The photographs of Mr. Simard's building of an oven are especially detailed and therefore valuable.

My objections to the book are minor. In the introduction the reader is referred to theorists who have dealt with the relationship of material culture to other aspects of culture (p. 3). The authors mentioned are archaeologists, and while I personally consider their writings important, I feel that the novice in material folk culture studies could benefit more from consulting recent writings by folklorists, of more direct relevance to studies like the Blanchettes'. Not mentioned in the bibliography, but most obvious are Michael Owen Jones' *The Hand Made Object and Its Maker*, and Henry Glassie's *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*.

In discussing a marked increase in the number of ovens constructed in the 1950's, the authors mention that their informants explained this was due to the increasing costs of farm machinery and fertilizers at the time (p. 35). By baking bread in outdoor ovens, money could be saved for other purposes. While this may be a manifest reason for such an increase in local residents' minds, the saving of money is obviously a constant concern among farmers, and more fundamental cultural shifts may have contributed to this building increase.

Finally, the authors might have attempted to analytically comment on the oral traditions surrounding the ovens, instead of primarily listing them. This is probably the weakest section of the book, although the general interest reader would have little time, no doubt, for a structural or metaphorical study of oral genre themes.

The Bread Ovens of Quebec is an important book for many reasons. As a popular work aimed at the general public, it demonstrates the importance of mater-

ial culture research within the study of traditional cultures. This work is an exemplary study for Canadian architecture scholars on what is often considered a minor building form, demonstrating the complexities and importance of such forms. Finally, the Blanchettes' book provides the vernacular architecture scholar generally with a fine study of one of the many outbuilding types that are still poorly understood in part because of a romantic over-attachment to other forms like the barn. Before we can understand the entire outbuilding complex, more studies like the Blanchettes' are needed.

Gerald L. Pocius
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland

**Everyman's Heritage: An Album of
Canadian Folk Life / Notre patrimoine:
Images du peuple canadien**

By Magnús Einarsson

(Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, National Museum of Man, 1978. Pp. 201, photographs, \$8.50 paper, \$12.50 cloth.)

This publication of the National Museum of Man would have been better called by its French sub-title, *Images du peuple canadien*, for it presents, in 177 black and white photographs, a panoramic view of Canadian life in a variety of geographic locations from the earliest days of settlement to the present. Unfortunately, the book has the general appearance of a discount coffee-table book, and as such is not likely to appeal to popular taste, in spite of the fact that many of the photographs are of ethnographic interest and some are of definite artistic merit.

This volume, however, claims to have significance far beyond the mere presentation of a series of photographs. As stated in the Introduction (page 12), it is intended

as a companion piece to the folk culture section of the permanent exhibition at the National Museum of Man: a statement through photographs of the range of Canadian folk traditions. While the exhibit to a large measure succeeds in the fulfillment of its aims, the book fails. Rather than a coherent, meaningful image of an essential part of our culture, the publication presents a confusing mixture of unrelated photographs divided into unrelated subject areas. There is no natural progression from one section of the book to another, nor any meaningful relationship between chapter headings, some of which are generic ("Passages", "Belief"), while others are not ("Exploration", "Survival"). Even within specific chapters, the impression created is one of confusion. For example, although introductory remarks to the chapter on belief discuss informal ritualistic practices or "superstitions", most of the photographs in this section depict aspects of formal religion. Similarly, the chapter entitled "Passages" includes photographs which portray occupational and recreational activities, along with those which are clearly related to rites of passage.

Many of the photographs are interesting in themselves, but taken from the context of their respective collections (which are unfortunately not fully credited), they lose a great deal of meaning. Moreover, the individual items, despite their intrinsic value, are not well handled. Photo captions, which are uneven in style and tone throughout the book, feature stereotypic terms which would be considered undesirable or even offensive by the people named: "gypsy", "brave", "squaw". Ethnic groups are frequently not identified when such information would prove useful, but mentioned when the national origin of those pictured is of no significance. Photos depicting true folk traditions, those forming an integral part of daily life, are mixed with those portraying aspects of the ethnic revival, the self-conscious use of ethnic manifestations as mere symbols of cultural identity. An excellent example of this can be seen by contrasting the

carefully garbed and positioned Ukrainian carollers of page 146 with the exuberant (but unidentified) Maypole dancers of page 147. Both aspects of Canadian culture are of vital interest to the folklorist, but surely a distinction must be made. Finally, because of the uneven geographic distribution represented in the choice of photographs, the common stereotypes are maintained. The heirs to "Everyman's Heritage", it appears, are to be found chiefly among ethnic Canadians from the West, and in the province of Quebec.

From the point of view of the folklorist, however, the fault of this publication is much greater than the sum of the above criticisms. By publishing a series of disjointed photographs under the label of folk culture research (and this intent is clearly suggested by the detailed introduction to folklore as a scholarly discipline presented in the Introduction), the National Museum of Man is misleading the Canadian public as to the real nature of folk tradition, and by extension the real value of folklore studies. Because it creates the impression that the cultural traditions of our nation amount to no more than a miscellaneous configuration of unrelated images, this book argues against the continued application of public money to ethnographic research. If the directors of the National Museums of Man sincerely believe that Canadian traditional culture can be adequately summarized in 177 randomly chosen photographs, then there is no justification for the continued existence of a national institute for folk cultural research. If, on the other hand, they share the folklorist's awareness of the urgent need for scholarship of the highest quality to elucidate the cultural essence of our bilingual and multi-cultural homeland, they will allow the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies to fulfill its mandate of research and scholarly publication, and leave the production of picture books to others.

Laurel Doucette
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland