

***The Lumberjacks.* By Donald Mackay (Toronto: McCraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978. Pp. 319, introduction, maps, photographs, drawings, notes, glossary of logging terms, bibliography, index. \$19.95)**

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given some insight into the local "ceilidh" and broadside traditions. The editor has done a good job of finding segments of his interviews with the singer that readily complement the items in his repertory. In addition, Ellison Robertson's tasteful illustrations are highly evocative of the songs to which they relate. The book as a whole is well produced and effectively organized.

This collection is valuable in so far as it is one of the few that centres on the repertory of an individual singer and his song tradition. One would hope that Ron MacEachern will compensate for the omissions in this volume by producing a more extensive work in the future. Amby Thomas is an interesting, articulate man and a thorough examination of his songs and singing would make for a fascinating study.

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### **The Lumberjacks**

By Donald Mackay

(Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978.

Pp. 319, introduction, maps, photographs, drawings, notes, glossary of logging terms, bibliography, index. \$19.95)

The North American lumber industry is without question one of the most thoroughly and best documented workingman's occupations. Canadian accounts, like those concentrating on the United States, appear in periodicals and books beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Logging was big business by 1900; rapid industry growth and its geographic spread from east to west prompted numerous treatments, including several ambitious attempts at industry-wide surveys on both sides of

the Canadian-American border. Since the First World War there has been a steady stream of regionally focussed social and economic histories, reminiscences, and collections of lumberjack folklore, not to mention the flood of Bunyania-inspired popularizations. One would expect, as is the case, to find a high proportion of overlap in this wealth of published material.

Seasoned woodsmen and folklorists immersed in logging-related literature or fieldwork will indeed find much that is familiar in *The Lumberjacks*. That said, let it be emphasized that Donald MacKay has compiled a highly informative and distinctive book on Canadian lumbering and loggers. In fact, given the close parallels linking the Canadian-American labor force, work settings, routines, equipment, camp life, and recreational camaraderie, *The Lumberjacks* is arguably the best single work now available if one wants a richly detailed, grassroots sense of the pre-1950s industry as a whole.

MacKay traces the rise of Canadian lumbering from its early 19th-century roots in Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick. He devotes a chapter to cable-and-steam logging on the British Columbia raincoast, and two brief ones near the end of the book to the unionization movement, and to liquor consumption in and out of the woods. A somewhat peripheral and overly tedious section - in this reviewer's opinion, at least - recounts major forest fires. The author openly eschews consideration of "such important issues as ecology, reforestation, or even the companies or mill towns to any extent" (9). Instead, the bulk of the twenty chapters focus on life in the lumberwoods as known firsthand by the "axemen, sawyers, teamsters, river drivers, rigging slingers, and foresters who cut and hauled from the birth of the industry until the 1950s when internal combustion replaced steam on the west coast and horses in the east" (10).

And it is in these topical units (e.g., "Green Gold: The Timber Cruiser," "The Seasons: Spring - River Drivers," "Beans Everlasting: Cooks and Cookees," "The Migrants") that MacKay fully displays his skills as distinguished journalist, social historian, and painstaking interviewer of some 130 people, the majority of the latter being elderly former loggers contacted throughout Ontario and Quebec.

Though the author frequently paraphrases and weaves in direct quotations from various previous accounts, including some diaries discovered during archival sleuthing from Halifax to Victoria, we are never far removed from reminiscence gleaned from living resources. Woodsmen teamsters recall what horse skidding was like, including the hazards of loading and hauling; old-time river drivers convey the pride that came with their hair-raising work; foremen are encapsuled in colorful anecdotes that reflect great respect for management of temperamental crews, for seeing to it that demanding or simply tedious jobs got done; and, in a long chapter of special note for research in folklife foodways, cooks are remembered for their relative merits and ingenuity in making the best of lumber-camp fare. In addition, one finds unusual bonuses such as several pages devoted to the absorption of almost 9,000 WW II German P.O.W.s into northern Ontario pulpwood camps, a phenomenon that begs for further inquiry and study. All of this is supplemented throughout with approximately 180 carefully identified and captioned illustrations obtained mostly from archival and industry sources. Several Canadian paper companies contributed to the author's research, as did a travel grant from the Canada Council - once again, evidence that documentation of occupational folklife can attract significant public sector support.

While on balance *The Lumberjack* is a

first-rate, engrossing treatment of its subject, there are some shortcomings that need mention. MacKay, for example, says nothing about his fieldwork procedure beyond identifying informants by name and location where the interviews were taped. The interviews are undated but by implication occurred during the past decade or so. Certainly folklorists and oral historians will regret the absence of that testimony, though it is perhaps unfair to chide this author (whom, we are informed on the dust jacket, "has had a 30-year career as a journalist and broadcaster in many parts of the world") for adherence to familiar feature-writing practice. MacKay has not written for specialists alone; he seems to have had in mind a larger reading audience that shares his life-long fascination for woods work and the men who shaped it.

But this same enthusiasm here and there leads the author to assert as fact, with inadequate citation or additional corroboration, certain contestable claims picked up from readings or interviews. We are told, for instance, that "Lumberjacks considered it unlucky to sing *Peter Emberley* in the bush" (111). If so, why has this folk ballad composed in memorial tribute to occupational sacrifice been so often collected from woods singers? Similarly, MacKay writes: "Crusty old foremen were known to hire a good singer or fiddler even if he was not much of a logger" (240). Really? A number of respected scholars of woods musical tradition have dismissed this romantic notion, based on their own field interviews. The author also emphasizes that bunkhouse singing, dancing, game playing, and storytelling declined rapidly after the First World War and were virtually gone by the 1940s era of radio and Sunday movie (240-246). The transition to new forms of entertainment definitely did occur in the woods, yet other reports leave little doubt that the older pine camp tradi-

tions continued alongside the new until well into the 1950s and pulp work. MacKay himself indicates as much in introducing a logger's recollection of tales about Joe Montferrand (better known as "Joe Muffraw") at the conclusion of an interesting though disappointingly short chapter on the French-Canadian strongman folk hero. Perhaps most unsettling, however, are the instances where highly atypical comments from individual loggers are allowed to slip by without corrective counterbalance (e.g., "... you never heard any dirty songs in-camp" (230)); and, in at least one case, MacKay's words ("... no one wore a coat around camp, no matter how frosty it got..." (231)) are contradicted by the book's visual evidence (see pp. 119, 212, 241). Someone should have caught these flaws, along with a couple of inaccurate book titles in the bibliography (e.g., Fowke, *Lumber* (sic) *Songs from the North* (sic) *Woods*) and MacKay's omission of page numbers in footnoting.

The last chapter of *The Lumberjacks* is entitled "Ghost Camp." MacKay takes us to an isolated wilderness setting along the northeast shore of Lake Superior. Here, at Pukaskwa, logging camps flourished from 1917 to 1930. What remains today are the ruins and memories. The author retreats, allowing a handful of his informants to have their say about what it was once like. The words ring with tribute and nostalgia; they are consistent with the entire spirit of the book and Donald MacKay's straightforward, descriptive prose. The curtain drops with a coda from Harold Green, a Sault Ste. Marie woodsman who got his first taste of lumbering in 1910 at the age of 16. "Those camps were rough-and-ready," he says, "but there were great men in those days. You worked with great men, great workers; they could lay their hands to practically anything. I never saw anything like those men anywhere else. There never will be." *The Lumberjacks* deserves wide readership. It is a

beautifully produced volume and well worth the price.

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**A diable-vent, Légendaire du Bas-Saint-Laurent et de la Vallée de la Matapédia.**

Par Hélène Gauthier-Chassé.  
(Montréal, Les Quinze Editeurs, 1981.  
Collection *Mémoires d'Homme dirigée par Jean-Pierre Pichette*. Pp. 142, cartes, ill., musique. \$8.95)

Après une gestation longue et ardue, Hélène Gauthier-Chassé nous présente un merveilleux petit légendaire plein de souplesse et de délicatesse en plus d'un certain mordant constamment retenu. Les légendes, par ce qu'elles ont de poignant aux tripes et d'ultime dans nos croyances et superstitions, sont difficiles à traiter; il faut y aller sur la pointe des pieds, presque avec des gants blancs, ce que l'auteur réussit à très bien faire.

Elle a choisi pour nous faire connaître sa matière d'entreprendre un voyage un brin touristique avec en poche le "guide vert" des légendes. Pour ce faire, son territoire a été divisé en trois pôles culturels, soit Trois-Pistoles, Rimouski et la Vallée de la Matapédia. Elle nous entretient donc des différentes légendes les plus représentatives de chacune de ces régions. Et comme le dit le vieil adage, "tout commence par une chanson", Mme Gauthier-Chassé ne faillit pas à la règle puisqu'elle nous introduit à ses propos par une chanson de son père traitant justement de ces légendes qui ont tant absorbé notre imagination.

C'est à l'automne 1977 que l'auteur entreprend de faire les quatre mois de terrain qu'elle juge nécessaire à la