

medicinally in various ways — as a diuretic and for the treatment of nervous exhaustion, the latter most effective when “taken by blue-eyed, fair-haired women.” Skipping to the last entry, *Aster* (“star”) was variously used as salad greens, as a headache cure, as a sanity restorative and as a treatment for mothers of stillborn infants. The book concludes with a short glossary, a reading list of selected references and an index to common and Latin names of the plants.

Shortgrass Prairie is a fact-filled account of the history and ecology of the high plains grasslands in the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains. It draws extensively on the scientific literature to speculate about the genesis of grasslands and what maintains their variety and beauty. Stories are recounted of the early explorers and settlers — some like the artist George Catlin finding the prairie exquisite and others reacting to it with distaste. For the latter, the west was “won” with barbed wire, the water-pumping windmill and John Deere’s steel plough. Striking colour photos show landscapes under clear and stormy skies, and the intention of showing “some of the grandeur and some of the small, secret delights of one type of prairie that has been neglected in the literature” has been accomplished.

In consulting various authorities on the ecology of the shortgrass prairie the authors uncovered areas of ignorance that are important if we intend to manage grassland national parks and rangelands. We do not know what the grasslands used to be in their native state, intermittently grazed by migrant herds of bison that may have numbered in the tens of millions. We suspect that the way we graze cattle on the range is destructive to bison-adapted grasses. We do not have any “natural” shortgrass prairie by which to judge how well or how poorly ranchers have looked after public lands. We do not know how long it takes to bring a prairie back to health after protracted over-grazing. We suspect that grasslands once ploughed can never be restored to their primeval state; we cannot resurrect the past and only with luck and hard work will we be able to preserve the fragments of semi-natural grassland that still remain.

The task is worth the effort. Every piece of wild nature preserved is symbolically important. Wildness is the unpossessed, and the lesson all humanity needs to learn is that possession of nature, working our will on every part of the world, is the road to environmental destruction and the ruination of the race.

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Wild Rice and the Ojibway People, by Thomas Vennum, Jr. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988. Pp. 357.

What an unusual and complex hybrid! An account of the relationship between a plant and a people written by an ethnomusicologist and published by a local historical society. In the very personal account, *Wild Rice and the*

Ojibway People, Vennum delves into biology, history, anthropology, sociology, economics, law, and politics. With obvious dedication to his subject, he has collected together and referenced most thoroughly, a huge body of information. This is the most ambitious attempt in recent time to bring together all aspects of wild rice lore.

Despite the good intentions there are many weaknesses. The style is rambling and repetitious, often straying far from the immediate subject. Especially in chapter 5 the author digresses to make dubious comparisons with other commodities such as maple sugar and to discuss general Native customs associated with gathering. In this same chapter, the section 'Setting Up' deals mainly with moving to the rice areas, a topic already covered in the introduction.

With the exception of verbatim transcriptions of conversations with Natives, little of the content is original. As verbal statements, these quotations might be interesting and informative; unedited on the printed page, they are disjointed and soon become tiresome to read. Unfortunately, the author has been unwilling or unqualified to offer any critical comment or pass judgement on the veracity of this and other anecdotal material.

Vennum has managed to remain reasonably objective when discussing the legal, political and sociological issues. However, his credibility is severely damaged by his failure to ensure the technical and biological accuracy of many of his statements and sources. As well, there are a number of inconsistencies and contradictions in the text: despite the assertion in the caption to figure 7 that the boats are being pushed, they are clearly being bow poled as in figures 14 and 17; 'hard rice' (smoke dried) is described as being used for seed although dry rice rapidly loses its ability to germinate; the practices of the Fort Alexander Indians at Lac du Bois described by Lloyd (1939) are taken as still current; airboat harvesters are confused with combines and their effects are incorrectly described; the moisture content of finished rice is determined by the processor and has nothing to do with the development of smaller grain by paddy growers.

On page 248, Vennum gives a distorted impression of the politics of paddy development in Canadian Ojibway lands by inaccurate and incomplete quotes from Lithman (1973). The Fisher River Reserve, not on the eastern but the western side of Lake Winnipeg, has been confused with Fort Alexander. The first quotation was attributed by Lithman to "Indians involved in the work of the provincial Indian organization", and not made, as Vennum claims, by a resident. The university botanist who received the research grant was not resented by the community but, according to Lithman's footnote 43, "it should be mentioned that the Indians who worked directly with this botanist found him easy to get along with and commended him for not not having 'hangups' about Indians."

The final chapter is particularly disappointing. Most of it is spent bemoaning the problems of past and present, very little in offering any solutions or plans for

the future. The clock cannot be turned back but there is every reason to hope that with sympathetic help from the population at large the most important aspects of the native culture associated with wild rice can be recovered and sustained.

A previous reviewer, quoted on the cover of the book, commented that it has something new and illuminating for everyone and is thoroughly researched, carefully documented and written to be read. While one cannot doubt her sincerity or that of the author, they should both be as concerned for the factual accuracy of the material as for the pleasure it gives in the reading. True illumination does not come from the inaccuracies and false impressions with which this manuscript is liberally laced. An author, writing outside his area of expertise, has a particular responsibility to check the accuracy of his statements and sources.

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Sudeten in Saskatchewan: A Way to be Free, by Rita Schilling, edited by Anna Szumigalski. Saskatoon: Apex Graphics, 1989. Pp. 194, maps, photographs.

On 29 September 1938, Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom concluded the Munich Agreement, setting the stage for incorporation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland into the Third Reich. Residing in the region were numerous anti-Nazi Germans, among the first of Hitler's enemies to stand up and be counted. Since their lives were endangered by annexation and because they were generally members of the Social Democratic Party or trade unionists associated with it, party leaders at once began a frantic search for places of refuge for them and their families. Some made it to safety. Others fell into the hands of the Gestapo and not infrequently became inmates of concentration camps like Dachau.

Among the escapees were 150 families, all told about 1,000 people, who were settled on farms in the St. Walburg-Loon Lake-Goodsoil district of Saskatchewan in 1939 by the Canadian government and the Canadian National Railway (CNR). *Sudeten in Saskatchewan* is an account of their European and Canadian experiences as revealed to the author in numerous interviews. From time to time, but in substantially less detail, it also deals with a similar sized group of Sudeten German refugees simultaneously placed on land in British Columbia's Peace River region by federal authorities and the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The first four of the book's seventeen chapters deal with such European topics as growing support for Hitler in the Sudetenland during the 1930s and the violence it precipitated; the backgrounds and activities of a number of anti-Nazi Germans; the Munich Agreement, and the flight of Sudeten opponents of fascism to Prague, London and elsewhere. Also discussed is agreement by