

Hans Dommasch's photographic compilation, *Prairie Giants*, is the sort of "coffee table" book westerners will be sending as gifts to friends and relatives in the east. It is an unassuming labour of love devoted to that prairie icon, the grain elevator. The book is a visual delight from cover to cover.

Dommasch's "Preface" is an extremely interesting, and too brief, account of his encounter with the prairie landscape, and its archetypal symbol. Many people born and raised on the plains tend to take their surroundings for granted, and it is worthwhile to read an immigrant's account such as this to obtain a sense of the awe that others find in our landscape. Brock Silversides's "Introduction" is useful and solid.

The real beauty of the book is, of course, the photography. The colour and reproduction are very good. Dommasch is to be congratulated for his selection of the photographs, although one could complain that there are not enough, and the book could have been longer. Not surprisingly, given the vastness of the backgrounds, the photographs which attract one the most are those which cover two pages. The landscapes covering pages 93 and 94, and pages 98 and 99, are particularly striking. There are many evocative scenes, but perhaps none more than that on page 122, which shows three partially destroyed Alberta elevators. Given the current changes in the grain handling system and the present rural crisis, the symbolism is almost overwhelming.

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Window on the Past. Archaeological Assessment of the Peace Point Site, Wood Buffalo National Park, Alberta by Marc G. Stevenson. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1986. Pp. 145.

At some point prior to Pond's penetration of the Athabasca region in 1778, the Beaver and Cree Indians arranged a truce, ending warfare between themselves which had extended throughout the protohistoric period. This event took place at Peace Point, on the lower Peace River. In this monograph, Stevenson reports the details of two episodes of archaeological research at Peace Point, as well as the findings of archaeological survey in the vicinity.

Peace Point is a magnificent archaeological site. It represents a relatively rare occurrence in the boreal forest: the coincidence of a protected, depositional environment with a locale in which there has been intensive prehistoric human occupation. Beginning just over twenty-two hundred years ago, alluvial sediments began to accumulate at Peace Point. Within were embedded eighteen distinct occupation surfaces, formed over paleosols.

The site has abundant stone artifacts, numerous features such as hearths, and an inventory of well-preserved faunal remains, including bison, moose, caribou, elk, black and grizzly bear, beaver, muskrat, waterfowl and fish. Frequent accumulation of sediments has also made for a record of great fidelity. One occupation surface at the site appeared to preserve, in a pattern of waste stone flakes, the outline of the kneeling craftsmen.

Stevenson's monograph is mandatory reading for those interested in western Canadian, and certainly, Subarctic prehistory. His analysis is comprehensive, and for the most part occasions few questions. There will be objections to the evidence for microblade technology at Peace Point, and other investigators are likely to dispute typological comparisons, especially for such outmoded constructs as the "Canadian Tundra" tradition. Stevenson goes much beyond reporting, however, as he strives to wring information concerning the economic and social organization of the prehistoric natives from the record at Peace Point.

Herein lies the great strength of the work and yet its greatest weakness. The sample proportion for the site is extremely small. The block excavation undertaken was just under twelve square metres. This yielded roughly 190 square metres of occupation surface. Relative to the enormous extent of the site, it is more than conceivable that any variability in the assemblages from different surfaces arises simply from sampling error. Despite this, Stevenson presses home arguments for such complex and elusive topics as site function, gross economic strategy of the site occupants (were they collectors or foragers?), and patterns of mobility.

The reader is left with the feeling that the research is overwhelmingly theory driven. Stevenson follows Binford closely as he seeks explanations for the patterning in artifact distributions around features like hearths. While we do require increasing sophistication in such arguments, some readers may balk at the emphasis on situational and proxemic constraints over human behaviour. The spatial organization of both Beaver and Cree camps, for instance, has powerful supernatural antecedents. And there are certainly ethnic differences in the pragmatic use of space. These last factors influencing site formation processes are often arbitrary and irreducible. Stevenson's universal sequences of occupation and abandonment for sites, or set etiquettes for behaviour around hearths, will ultimately be misleading without attention to these other orders of cultural life.

The sense of theory overcoming evidence is apparent when Stevenson applies his model of site occupation. He speculates that a unique cluster of over five hundred stone tools and large flakes from the Eaglenest Portage site in the nearby Birch Mountains was gathered up from that site just before its abandonment. This would be plausible, but for the indications of spatial distribution (the artifacts came from an extremely small area), of raw material (nonlocal kinds of stone are overrepresented), and morphology (every artifact edge shows extensive wear). On the contrary, these evidences

all suggest transport in a container, with deposition occurring at the beginning of a period of site occupation.

In any case, Stevenson's ideas make for provocative reading. He is to be commended for his initiative in undertaking the work at Peace Point, and for showing the enormous potential of the site. That potential must be explored, for there is one regret about this episode of research, quite beyond Stevenson's control. The only diagnostic projectile point recovered came from a recent occupational surface. Prehistoric studies in northern Alberta desperately require a chronological framework, and this can only come with the recovery of more time-sensitive artifacts in archaeological contexts like those of Peace Point.

Because Peace Point yields such a precious record, and because it is subject to long-term attrition through ice push and other forms of erosion, we can only hope the site will receive the additional investigation and protection it so richly deserves.

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Whelan by Eugene Whelan with Rick Archbold. Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1986. Pp. 322; *Hawaiian Ordeal: Ukrainian Contract Workers 1897-1910* by Michael Ewanchuk. Winnipeg: Michael Ewanchuk, 1986. Pp. 192.

As one of a number of books by active or retired politicians to appear on bookstands recently, readers interested in certain subjects will welcome *Whelan*. Written in a colloquial style and referring periodically to certain by-products of the livestock industry, it touches on such varied matters as the flag debate and the quality of stetson hats. However, all but minor portions relate to three specific topics: Whelan himself, "a working man's and working woman's Liberal" and "honorary westerner," agriculture and politics.

Early chapters deal with Whelan's pre-House of Commons years, 1924-62. Described are such things as growing up with eight siblings and a widowed mother on a farm in Essex County, Ontario, during the Depression, quitting high school to do industrial war work, people and events shaping Whelan's ideas and character, and participating in local politics and various farm organizations ranging from the community cooperative to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Also mentioned is his failure to win a seat in the Ontario Legislature in 1959, the only election he lost save the 1984 Liberal leadership contest.

Subsequent chapters deal with Whelan's twenty-two years in the House of Commons in such capacities as a parliamentary secretary, chairman of the House Agricultural Committee and Minister of Agriculture, a position he began to covet soon after becoming a Member of Parliament. Discussed