
Students of Antarctic history will need no introduction to the works of A.G.E. Jones, who for many years past has carried out indefatigable research on polar exploration and navigation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, shedding light on the personalities and achievements of little-known sealers, whalers, and explorers in polar waters. In this, his first book-length monograph, written in his customary economical style, Mr. Jones has shed light on a dimvery of land. The historical evidence discovered whittles down knowledge of magnetic variations. The historical evidence is much more fragmentary. The history of early Antarctic voyages has already been reconstructed. He takes a critical view of a midshipman, survives. Mr. Jones’s review of their voyage does no more than confirm Rupert Gould’s classic 1941 paper on the subject; there can be little doubt that the two men saw the rocks and peaks of Trinity Land on 30-31 January 1820 and that Bransfield was the first to chart the Antarctic mainland. As Mr. Jones remarks: “If rock is to be the criterion then priority should go to these two men.” A final chapter dealing with claims made for the American sealers Nathaniel Palmer again says nothing new. Palmer may well have discovered Deception Island in November 1820, but his mainland landfalls off the Antarctic Peninsula shortly after occurred ten months after the achievement of Smith and Bransfield.

We are left still undecided between Bellinghausen and Bransfield, a dilemma of no great consequence. This is a valuable summary of some very scattered material and a reminder to historians of the need to return again and again to original sources if the truth is to be established. Less praiseworthy is the quality of the book itself whose press work is unworthy of the publishers.

H.G.R. King
Scott Polar Research Institute
Lensfield Road
Cambridge CB2 1ER
England


Like Charles Camsell’s Son of the North and Erik Munsterjelm’s The Wind and the Caribou, Northern Traders is Archie Hunter’s memoir of the years he spent in the Canadian north. Sent by the Hudson’s Bay Company to Repulse Bay when he was 18 years old, the author worked in the fur industry until his retirement. He was moved about to Wager Bay, Pine River, Lac du Brochet, Telegraph Creek, and numerous other postings during his nearly 40-year employment with the Company, and consequently, Hunter’s account has a solid air of authority to it. Few, if any, are better qualified to speak about life in northern trading posts. Although his trading duties made his life somewhat more domesticated and perhaps less glamorous than Camsell’s prospecting and Munsterjelm’s trapping livelihoods, the geographic breadth of his postings and the length of his tenure in the north clearly qualify him as a significant spokesman for such an experience.

Hunter’s book is not concerned with evoking the landscape, nor with illuminating the relationship between the residents of the tiny posts and their wilderness environment. The focus falls instead on the social dimension of routine in these isolated northern outposts. The wilderness is not a primary actor in Northern Traders, as one might expect, but rather serves as a behind-the-scenes force that isolates these small cultural centers from the mainstream of Canadian society. In many ways, the response to life is similar to that found in small, prairie towns or Atlantic outposts, although the highly distinct regional environment — the “midnight sun”, the winter dark and cold, the dependence on game — shapes that response in a unique manner. Interestingly, whether the author is writing of his postings at Baker Lake, Lac du Brochet, or Churchill, a homogeneous and characteristic “northern” quality is brought out. In spite of the thousands of miles separating Repulse Bay from Telegraph Creek, Hunter responds to these settings as though — collectively — they constitute a distinct region that is clearly distinguishable from any region on the “Outside.”

The book gives the reader glimpses of some celebrated personalities — Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, who landed at Baker Lake to refuel, and Sergeant W.O. Douglas of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, for instance — but more significant are those of the many inhabitants of the posts, men and women who would otherwise remain nameless and unknown — the trappers, the Natives, the missionaries, the other traders. These people are the backbone of society in northern Canada, and they become the true centre of Hunter’s book. Who they are, what they do with their days, and how they interact with one another is perhaps the most important revelation of Northern Traders.

The book has a rather basic structure, one that is sometimes annoyingly simplistic and repetitious. Hundreds of anecdotes, usually less than one page in length and often no longer than five or six sentences, are arranged according to where they originated, that is, at which post. Other than this arrangement, one could almost shuffle the anecdotes without any serious loss to the book as a whole. There is no build-up of suspense or curiosity, nor is there any development in the attitude of the author. Perhaps “collection of reminiscences” is a more accurate descriptive term for Hunter’s book than “memoir”, for little of the author’s thoughts, feelings, or personal growth appear in this work; he becomes an observer of life at northern trading posts.
An easy, humorous tone runs throughout the book. This steady, uniform tone, largely created by the author's consistently mild understatement, makes many of the anecdotes particularly attractive, although the reader might wish Hunter had altered his tone somewhat when he describes events of dramatic potential. But perhaps the years intervening between the event and the telling, coupled with the author's modest refusal to see himself in a heroic light, make such a dry response inevitable.

_Northern Traders_ is easy to fault as a piece of story-telling, but as a piece of light reading involving an authentic social record of life in northern Canadian fur-trade posts during the middle of this century, Archie Hunter's book will no doubt be enjoyed by many who have visited similar outposts or wish they had.

Richard C. Davis  
Department of English  
The University of Calgary  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada  
T2N 1N4

**ADDENDUM**

Price and ordering information for _The Roger J.E. Brown Memorial Volume_, reviewed by N.W. Rutter in _Arctic_ 36(2), is as follows:  

Price Can$50.00. Enclose cheque or money order to the order of Receiver General of Canada (for first-class mailing, add $3.00 in Canada, $6.00 in U.S.). Order from Publications, Sales and Distribution, National Research Council of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0R6.

**BOOKS RECEIVED**

Books received unsolicited for which reviewers cannot be found within a reasonable length of time are listed here. All information available to us is included in this listing. The books are donated to the AINA Library.
