

Arctic Profiles: Introduction

In the next ten pages, *Arctic's* readers will encounter material noticeably different from what usually appears in the journal. The following biographical sketches of men who have shaped our understanding of northern Canada are the first in a series that will run through the next dozen or more issues. As Editor of the Arctic Profiles series, I would like to make a few introductory remarks about its audience and objectives. First, the series should provide *Arctic's* specialized scientific readership with glimpses into a more subjective and human element that has influenced the history of arctic development. I expect journal subscribers will take greatest interest in those profiles dealing with contributions made outside of the individual reader's own expertise; thus, a geologist will likely gain more from the following sketches of Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Johann Miertsching than he will from future profiles of Charles Camsell and J.B. Tyrrell, fellow geologists probably already within the reader's ken. A knowledge of fields other than one's own is especially important in a multidisciplinary subject such as northern studies. Nevertheless, I hope the specialist reader will find some interest even in those profiles of personalities who have figured in his own area.

The second objective of the series is to reach a far less informed audience. I have in mind both the general public and the student. Books of a related nature seem to be either coffee-table editions with prices that prohibit wide use in schools, or juvenile pieces that sacrifice human individuality and historical accuracy for the sake of pot-boiling adventure. I do not know of any appropriate resource material of this sort currently available for the secondary and post-secondary level; by collecting these profiles after they have appeared serially in *Arctic*, much of this situation can be remedied. In fact, by using the same plates prepared for journal printing, the collected edition can be produced quite inexpensively. In turn, the volume can be offered at an extremely low price, which is essential if a wide audience is to be reached. In order to realize these savings, however, publication of the book must be held off until all of the sketches have appeared serially.

These profiles make no attempt to be exhaustive, nor are they encyclopedic in their approach to biography. The

titles listed under "Further Readings" should direct any curiosities aroused by the sketches themselves, the selected titles being limited, for the most part, to books readily available in libraries or in reprints. The pieces have been written by authors who have a sound familiarity with their biographical subjects; more important, I have searched for contributors who can make significant insights into the personalities of their subjects, and are able to do more than list biographical data that could be found elsewhere. In the case of Richard Finnie's profile of Stefansson, for example, we have a valuable firsthand impression of Stefansson by one of the few men still living who knew him well. Of course, should the reader desire more factual biographical information, the selected readings can be consulted.

The list of personalities is no more exhaustive than are the individual profiles. Certainly one cannot omit such names as John Franklin, Alexander Mackenzie, and Henry Hudson from a series on the opening up of the North, but for every one of these celebrated figures, there are other less familiar men and women whose efforts have been instrumental in the gradual unveiling of arctic and subarctic Canada. Thus, names such as Thanadelthur, John Hornby, Moses Norton, and Mina Benson Hubbard demand attention alongside the more celebrated ones, very quickly swelling a list of "worthies" far beyond the proposed one hundred profiles. Should this series prove successful, I suppose a second one could follow. But for now, I hope to provide stimulating and accurate reading of a non-specialized nature that can extend our own horizons and give human dimensions to the discoveries of an increasingly technological and analytical age. I trust the series will be of interest to *Arctic* subscribers, and I welcome any correspondence that might improve it.

Richard C. Davis
Guest Editor
Arctic Profiles