

with a contribution by Elaine Groves Harp. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 2003, ISBN 0-7735-2517-3

BRIGHT SUMMER DAYS of the mid-twentieth century live on in Elmer Harp's photo album and memoir of his five pilgrimages to the Port au Choix area. One of the most eminent arctic anthropologists living today, Harp founded the Department of Archaeology at Dartmouth College and discovered Archaic and Dorset sites at Port au Choix. He conducted archaeological work in Newfoundland in 1949, 1950, 1961, 1962, and 1963, twice visiting the Labrador Straits in addition to the Great Northern Peninsula.

Readers will start with the photographs, a never-before-seen collection of colour prints made from Harp's Kodachrome slides. Colour images of the Great Northern Peninsula in the early colour era are few and far between, so this collection is an important record of a special time. Appearing in mid-2003, Harp's is the first collection of this sort in colour to be published. The best pictorials inspire the reader to learn more, and so does this collection. M.A.P. Renouf's introduction sets the volume in time and place and Harp's text is an enjoyable quick read. He introduces us to the place and the people as outsiders, and we slowly build up knowledge as the trips unfold. We grow to understand the comfortable social patterns into which Harp fell on each visit, and the Harps' affection and respect for their Newfoundland friends comes through on almost every page. Indeed, in one sense the book is a thank-you note to them, and this gives it an intimate feeling. This book will, I am sure, be popular among the current residents of the area.

Well-known persons appear as well — David F. Nutt, Doctors Charles Curtis and Noel Murphy, Lee Wulff, the Ingstads, George Decker (in a rare portrait on page 248), Claire and Farley Mowat, and William Fitzhugh — and there is a sense of social life from Governor General Viscount Alexander's vice-regal visit to Corner Brook, to Mrs. Eugenie Billard's humble funeral at Port au Choix.

Harp's writing is best when his topic is what is clearly his greatest interest, the archaeological work. His account of the discovery of the first artifacts (70-71) is exciting, and his writing can rise to the poetic, as in his charming list of "sights and sounds" (170, 180). I have some quibbles (for example, it would have been interesting to have followed the story of the Farwell family, once introduced to them during the account of the 1950 visit), but this is overall an excellent book. Harp and Renouf are both scholars and the book is tightly compiled, written, and edited. It is well laid out and the photographs are beautifully reproduced — among the most outstanding are the Vermeer-like portrait on page 191, the barrel of cod livers on page 186, the pose of Frank Cornick on page 237, and the well-composed photos on pages 177 and 179. But the sun is always shining, the sky and water always blue, and no wet and stormy weather appears in these images, though we know from the text that bad

weather often caused frequent work stoppages. Harp and company then stayed indoors, enveloped by the inhabitants' generous hospitality.

The book tells us a good deal about old Port au Choix, and the rural material culture in the mid-twentieth century. The slow process of modernization is evident. The painted houses and landscapes look current and fresh, but then one notices the cars, the vessels, and the clothes, and is reminded that these photos are 40 to 50 years old.

In short, this book is a delight, and can be appreciated on several levels. It gives a brief course on Northern Peninsula prehistory and on the years when the area was a new part of Canada. Early peoples and mid-twentieth-century people lived on the same land. The book is a poignant reflection on the short lifespan of man and the things that remain.

Joan Ritcey
Centre for Newfoundland Studies
Memorial University of Newfoundland