

## Compte rendu

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### Ouvrages recensés :

*The Canadian Encyclopedia*. James Marsh, editor, Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1985. 3 vols, Pp 2089, illus., index, ISBN 0-88830-269X, \$125

*The Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*. Toronto and Québec, University of Toronto Press and Presses de l'Université Laval, 1985. Vol. VIII (1851-60), Pp xxxvii + 1129, indexes, ISBN 0-8020-3422-5

*The Papers of Joseph Henry*. Nathan Reingold, editor, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution, 1985. Vol. 5 (Jan. 1841-Dec. 1843), Pp xxxviii + 506, illus., index, ISBN 0-87474-123-8, \$US 45.00

par Richard A. Jarrell

*Scientia Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine / Scientia*

*Canadensis : revue canadienne d'histoire des sciences, des techniques et de la médecine*, vol. 9, n° 2, (29) 1985, p. 175-176.

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## A CLUTCH OF REFERENCE WORKS

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A number of curiosities cross the desk of an editor; some, you pass along quickly to the book review editor, others you linger over. I must confess a lifelong love for reference books, so these fall into the second category. Almost no reader can have escaped from some of the hoopla surrounding the publication of *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. At \$125 a set--if you can still find one available--the encyclopaedia is one of the Canadian bargains of all time. It is greatly superior to its predecessors: the quality and number of illustrations, maps and coverage makes it an essential part of anyone's library. The three volumes have entries on some of the darnedest subjects and I must concur with William French of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* that it is impossible to read a particular entry without reading half-a-dozen totally unrelated articles just for fun. The history of Canadian science, technology and medicine received short shrift in the *Encyclopedia Canadiana*, so how does it fare in the new work? Happily, very well indeed. Thanks to the efforts of the science editor, Adriana Davies, and the biography editor, Mary Maude, our subjects are well represented. Lengthy articles on the history of science, of technology and of medicine are joined by shorter pieces on various institutions such as the NRC, provincial research councils, medical education, technical education and related topics. More contemporary are articles on science and society, research and development, science policy, the Science Council, mechanical engineering, medical research. These overview articles are supplemented by many short biographical notices and entries on individual inventions such as Silver Dart, telegraph, telephone and the snowmobile to name a few. The encyclopaedia is probably the single most useful compendium of biographies of Canadian scientists, engineers and physicians anywhere as it includes those still alive and active along with the long dead and forgotten. To give an idea of the coverage, just turning the pages from the beginning of M to the end of MA alone, we find notices on chemists Otto Maas, Charles McDowell, R.H.F. Manske, and Léo Marion, on botanists John Macoun and Marie-Victorin, on physicists J.G. MacGregor and J.C. McLennan, on engineers A.G.L. McNaughton, J.A.D. McCurdy and C.J. Mackenzie, on physiologists and physicians A.B. Macallum, E.W. McHenry, J.J.R. Macleod, J.P. McMurrich and Sir Andrew MacPhail, on ornithologist Thomas McIlwraith, on astronommer Andrew McKellar, meteorologist Patrick McTaggart-Cowan, oceanographer C.R. Mann, marine biologist K.H. Mann, explorer Sir Robert McClure, agriculturist A. Mackay and manufacturers Daniel and Hart Massey.

Two annoying features of the work are the lack of a list of articles written by contributors--we only have their names--and a marginally useful index. Finding items or information that is not immediately obvious will require some serendipity on the part of the reader. A French-language version is expected in another year, making the encyclopaedia available to everyone in the country. Overall, this is a splendid achievement and, for our fields, should not likely be superseded for many years.

*The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* is, to my mind, every bit as good as the other great national biographical dictionaries such as the *DNB* or the *ADB*. With its extensive bibliographies, it in fact surpasses the others, at least from the historian's point of view. The latest volume to appear, covering those who died between 1851 and 1860, is up to previous standards. There are, naturally, very few scientists, engineers or physicians of note listed, there being so few in the country before mid-century. Amongst those listed are teachers and writers such as Jérôme Demers, John Holmes, Michel Bibaud and A.-D. Duchaine, explorer David Thompson, agriculturist William Evans, physicians Andrew Holmes and James Barnston, and scientists C.R. Prescott, J.F.W. Johnston and the Count de Rottermund. The list of manufacturers, led by John Molson the younger, of physicians and of engineers and surveyors is surprisingly long but consists of men with only the most marginal interest to our subjects. Only a few gaps remain now in the coverage of the 19th century but those now working on early 20th century topics will have a long wait.

Of some slight interest to historians of 19th century Canadian science is the latest volume of the Joseph Henry papers, edited by Nate Reingold's team at the Smithsonian. These volumes are handsome and well organized, although sometimes awkward to use given no list of correspondents or subjects. This volume covers the 1841-43 period when Henry, America's pre-eminent physicist of the early 19th century, was at Princeton. The Canadian content is slight: John Henry Lefroy, recently arrived to take over the Toronto Magnetic Observatory, visited the USA and met Henry. A brief correspondence is included in this volume. Otherwise, this volume's value is to provide a context for contemporary North American science, as Henry was in touch not only with the most important American scientists such as the Sillimans, Torrey, Bache, Loomis and Morse, but with European savants such as Oersted, Berzelius, Quetelet and Henslow. Illustrations and excellent notes recommend this series for comparative studies.

Richard A. Jarrell