

note that the "Battles of the War of 1812" is actually a subset of another series entitled *Adventures in Canadian History* that will cover topics from the war to the opening of the Canadian West and is targeted for children twelve and up.

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CANADIAN INVENTORS: BOMBARDIER AND BEYOND

Inventors: Profiles in Canadian genius. Thomas Carpenter, Camden House, 1990. 160 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-920656-93-5.

Thomas Carpenter's *Inventors: Profiles in Canadian genius* is an excellent little study. In eight chapters the author discusses nine Canadian inventors and their remarkable contributions. We receive fascinating insights into the creative lives of Thomas Willson (who gave us acetylene, which revolutionized a whole series of industrial processes), Abraham Gesner (whose work permanently altered the world's petrochemical industry), Reginald Fessenden (whose wireless radio changed the course of history) and Mabel Bell (the wife of Alexander Graham Bell and the inspiration behind the Aerial Experiment Association that gave Canada its first manned flight).

One of the most interesting chapters explains how Georges-Edouard Desbarats and his partner William Leggo invented the process that enabled the publication of photographs in newspapers and worked out production methods that made the use of the process widely usable. The result, of course, was the transformation of the print medium. Another Canadian invention that altered the print medium was made by William Stevenson, an industrialist and one of the most important British espionage figures during World War II, as well as an inventor; he gave the world the wirephoto. The result was another communications revolution, one that began "a new era in illustrated journalism," as Britain's *Daily News* put it in 1922.

Carpenter also discusses Sir Sandford Fleming, a longtime chancellor of Queen's University and an important railway engineer, who made a major contribution to the development of "standard time." Without standard time, modern communications and transport could not function, and Carpenter is correct when he notes that Fleming's clever system "transformed the modern world" (45).

Of the nine inventors discussed by Carpenter, J. Armand Bombardier's name is probably the best known. He invented the tracked vehicle, now universally called the "Ski-Doo," that enabled people in snowy areas to move freely during long northern winters. The Ski-Doo had a profound effect on the lives

of millions of people, and was, indeed, a "triumph over winter" (135).

The brief summary above makes clear the importance of Carpenter's nine Canadian inventors. They were key architects of the twentieth century; their influence was global as well as national. We should know about their contributions and we should understand something of their lives. Thomas Carpenter makes this an easy task. His book is well-researched, accessible to young readers, and interesting to people of all ages. *Inventors: Profiles in Canadian genius* makes an important contribution to the knowledge of our heritage and is highly recommended.

Donald Swainson is a professor of Canadian history at Queen's University. His many publications include *The buffalo hunt – jointly with Eleanor Swainson* – Sir John A. Macdonald: The man and the politician.

EARLY NOVEL HAS NOT SURVIVED ITS AGE

St. Ursula's convent, or The nun of Canada. Julia Catherine Beckwith Hart. Ed., Douglas G. Lochhead. [Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts Series, 8.] Carleton University Press, 1991. 237 pp., \$12.95 paper. ISBN 0-88629-140-2.

Shortly after it was published in 1824 one reviewer found *St. Ursula's convent* to be "a heterogeneous account of shipwrecks, battles, slavery in the mines, changing children, the atrocity of an avaricious friar, &c." (xxvii); another, lamenting the misery of "the tedious labour, the hard task of reading through, and the still harder one of keeping awake while reading, the dull, the namby-pamby, and common place pages" of innumerable novels such as this one (xxviii), thought that *St. Ursula's convent* might, despite all its flaws and excesses, appeal to juvenile readers, whom he couldn't resist associating with "the sickly meridian of circulating libraries, and the depraved taste of maiden aunts, and boarding-house misses." Unfortunately, the opinion of the first reviewer was well founded: this novel has not improved over the 170 years since it was written. Unfortunately, too, the second reviewer is certainly now wrong in the more generous part of his judgement: Julia Hart's tale, apparently the first truly Canadian work of fiction, is very unlikely to hold much appeal for younger readers today.

The value of *St. Ursula's convent* is entirely historical, as a sort of musty landmark in Canadian literature. The value of the present edition of this work lies in the labour which Douglas Lochhead has put into a learned study of the text, its author and the circumstances of its creation. To the scholarly reader the volume offers an interesting introduction and evaluation, together with 37 pages of end matter consisting of notes, bibliographical data, textual emenda-