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The Voyageur



Synopsis

The Voyageur is the authoritative account of a unique and colorful group of men whose exploits, songs, and customs comprise an enduring legacy. French Canadians who guided and paddled the canoes of explorers and fur traders, the voyageurs were experts at traversing the treacherous rapids and dangerous open waters of the canoe routes from Quebec and Montreal to the regions bordering the Great Lakes and on to the Mackenzie and Columbia Rivers. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, explorers and fur traders relied on the voyageurs to open up the vast reaches of North America to settlement and trade.

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Customer Reviews

Grace Lee Nute's The Voyageur depicts significant figures in American and Canadian history who have received little attention. Indeed, Nute has written what many consider the classic exploration of the subject in this book that dates back to 1935. The book is divided into nine specific categories on such subjects as the voyageur's canoe, his journey, his songs, his life as explorer etc. Each section is compact, well-researched and fascinating. The section on voyaging is especially astounding when we consider these men would carry hundreds of pounds on their back when reaching a portage or place where they had to carry their canoes and accessories overland to the next river or lake for their voyage. It is astonishing for me to think, as a resident of the Lake Superior region, what it would have been like to traverse that great lake 300 years ago, to pass through the rapids at Sault Sainte Marie when there were no locks, to sleep under your canoe, to winter inland above the Great Lakes in the dead of winter when the temperature was forty degrees below zero. Nute's book is a

true tale of human courage, endurance, and determination, and she makes it clear the voyageur deserves much of the credit for many of the discoveries and explorations which are credited to other men, who never would have reached those places of discovery without their voyageurs' help. My only criticism of the book is that most of Nute's research is based in the early eighteen hundreds, and I would have preferred to hear more about voyageurs from the earlier years of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

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