

There are a few questionable identifications of the plants pictured, although verification of such determinations from photographs alone is often difficult. The photograph labelled "hedge bindweed" (top, p. 134) appears more likely to be "field bindweed" (*Convolvulus arvensis*), and why is the lower right photograph labelled "wild morning glory", another name for the same species, *C. sepium*, as "hedge bindweed"? The taxon represented by the photographed plant called *Castilleja acuminata* (lower right, p. 146) seems uncertain, but perhaps it is the white-inflorescence form of *C. coccinea*. Other questionable identifications include the following: "smooth fleabane" (lower left, p. 179) which could well be "rough fleabane", *Erigeron asper*, instead; "thin-leaved snowberry" (top right, p. 156) which at the least is certainly atypical with such coarsely toothed leaves; and "silvery groundsel", *Senecio canus* (lower right, p. 191) where the grayish leaves at the base uncertainly belong to this plant.

While I have attempted to point out some of the various technical flaws for the readers' benefit, these are indeed relatively minor and do not detract substantially from the overall impressive quality of this volume. The book is well-edited with few spelling and grammatical errors noted. Its 5½" x 8½" dimensions should make for handy field use, although the binding of the paperback edition seems unlikely to hold up well under rough usage. In conclusion, I would highly recommend the book for anyone with an interest in the prairie flora or general natural history, and equally for all levels, from elementary school children to adults, and from inexperienced nature-lovers to professional botanists. The price is surprisingly low when one considers that there are several color reproductions on almost every page. Can any prairie naturalist afford not to obtain a copy of this book? — Vernon L. Harms, Fraser Herbarium, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

CRIDDLE — DE — DIDDLE — ENSIS

ALMA CRIDDLE. 1973. Published by Alma Criddle, 19 - 303 Furby St., Winnipeg, Man. R3C 2A8. 288 pp. \$8.00

In my youth, I heard the Criddle name mentioned in tones of awe such people as Mrs. Priestly and A. Lawrence. Later, I read many important contributions to natural history written by Norman and Stuart Criddle. I was therefore overjoyed to learn that a book-length biography of the Criddle family had been published.

Percy Criddle settled near the Assiniboine River, 25 miles south of Brandon, in 1882. At 38 years of age, like many other pioneers, he knew almost nothing about farming. Fortunately, he was strong; or, perhaps, Percy walked 50 miles to and from Brandon in just over 15 hours.

Percy brought from England a legal wife and four young children between two and seven years, and a former mistress and their five children between eight and 13 years. The two families formed one menage, the children totally unaware of the blood relationship until many years later. Percy's two women and 30 children represented many mouths to feed but also a potential labour force which he used to advantage.

Few pioneers kept such a comprehensive diary, and perhaps no other family had such an interesting story to tell. Percy was a man of many accomplishments and wide interests, educated at Heidelberg University, the son of accomplished artists, and was himself well-trained in music, a talented organist with a fine tenor voice. Percy became the local Justice of the Peace and Game Guardian. He also served as the local expert in fields as diverse as astronomy, natural history, law, medicine, music and sport.

The Criddles built a cricket pitch, four grass tennis courts, a nine-hole



Criddle Home, Aweme, Manitoba

John Lane

course, a skating rink and a loggan slide on their farm, and Percy encouraged his children in sports. Stuart and Talbot once achieved headlines in Winnipeg newspapers for their unexpected prowess in a provincial tennis tournament, where these farm lads "put Treesbank on the map." Talbot was still able to win the Western Manitoba singles tennis championship when 60. Maida once won a ladies' golf match using a single rowed club, and another time she defeated the lady champion from Winnipeg.

Although Percy was the dominant pool trustee for nearby Aweme Pool for all of its 32 years, he did allow one of his children to attend school. His wife, Alice, taught them all at home.

Indeed, Alice Criddle, who married Percy before she learned of the misdeeds and her five children, is the "unguarded heroine" of the Criddle story. Maud Criddle, Talbot's daughter and Percy's granddaughter, gives us a sense of "the strength of character, the firmness of spirit, the fortitude and ingenuity . . . (the) self-discipline, patience and stamina" of this diminutive but remarkable pioneer woman. Alice had the rare advantage of a University education, was fluent in several languages and well versed in literature and natural

history. She was the gracious hostess at "St. Alban's", which became the cultural and sport centre for miles around.

Alice taught her children well and they became careful observers. Evelyn became an expert meteorologist and weed inspector. Stuart became a taxidermist, a breeder of lilies, sunflowers and corn, and a mammalogist of continental repute, who published important life history studies of prairie mammals. But it was Norman Criddle who made the greatest contributions to natural history.

At the age of five in England, Norman first collected caterpillars for his mother and learned which butterflies resulted. He began to help his father collect butterflies in a serious way at Aweme at age eight. In 1901, Norman developed a method of combatting the grasshopper scourge, using a mixture of Paris Green, salt and manure or sawdust, spread around the edges of grain fields. The Dominion Department of Agriculture promoted this "Criddle mixture" throughout the west.

Next, Norman collaborated with Dr. Fletcher of the same department to produce the watercolour paintings for Dr. Fletcher's book, *Farm Weeds of Canada*, and then for *Fodder and*

Pasture Plants. In 1913, Norman was appointed entomologist to the Canadian government and they soon built him a laboratory on the Criddle farm. Norman published 125 papers about birds, mammals, flowers and especially insects, and studied the life cycle of more than 70 species of grasshopper. He had "remarkable biological judgement which was controlled by study and guided by a great breadth of mind nurtured upon wide and thoughtful reading in science, literature and art." No less an authority than Hoyes Lloyd stated in his obituary that "Canada in losing him has lost her best field-naturalist."

The entire family had an affinity for nature. Chickadees came and ate from their hands, and the book includes a photo of redpolls swarming over Maida. Percy's diaries recorded some firsts, including the first raccoon for the area in 1883 and the first house sparrow in 1897. However, this book tells us much more about the Criddles themselves than about their observations.

Additional research might have corrected a few omissions and errors. Although his knowledge of Canadian birds was decidedly limited, Percy began sending migration dates to Washington in 1884, a fact omitted from this book. Norman was an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union, not a counsellor and Past President, an error which was copied from his obituary in the *Canadian Entomologist*.

We owe Alma Criddle a debt of gratitude for her skillful use of Percy and Norman Criddle's diaries as the main source of material for this book. Carol Scott provided the initial encouragement for writing it, and the surviving members of the family contributed their reminiscences.

The unusual title of the book, *Criddle-de-diddle-enis*, is explained in chapter 19. In 1883, Percy Criddle was visited by English naturalist and author R. Miller Christy, and his young friend Ernest E. Thompson (Seton). These men admired Percy's already creditable butterfly collec-

tion. After their departure, Percy humourously recorded in his diary that his "new friends anticipate brilliant future and immortality, owing to my possible discovery of some new insect or other in this unexplored district which will be of course called Criddle-de-diddle-enis or some other fancy family name."

This interesting book may be obtained through the Blue Jay Bookshop, Box 1121, Regina. —C. Houston, 863 University Dr., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7J 0J8.

THE AMERICAN ROBIN

A Backyard Institution

LEN EISERER, with line drawings by Martha R. Hall. 1976. Nelson Hall Publishers, 325 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago 60606. 165 pp. \$12.50 US.

This book is a readable description of the life style and natural history of the American Robin. The feeling of the author and others who strive to live in harmony with the natural world is well expressed in the dedication, "To Robins everywhere, may they continue to prosper beyond the human reckoning of time, and California Condors, that they may forgive us for what we have done."

Under the heading "Hey, Wait! That a Robin?" Chapter 1 describes the range of the robin's contact with human beings in North America at various times of the year and at various geographical locations. The following chapters treat differences between the six races of robins, migration to nesting areas, and stages of the life cycle, again with special reference to contact with human beings and their "nests" or "territories".

The diet of robins is discussed in detail, with particular regard to variations at different times of year and stages of maturity of fledglings. The fact that robins cultivate fruit is discussed separately without accepting all the claims of crop damage that are made.