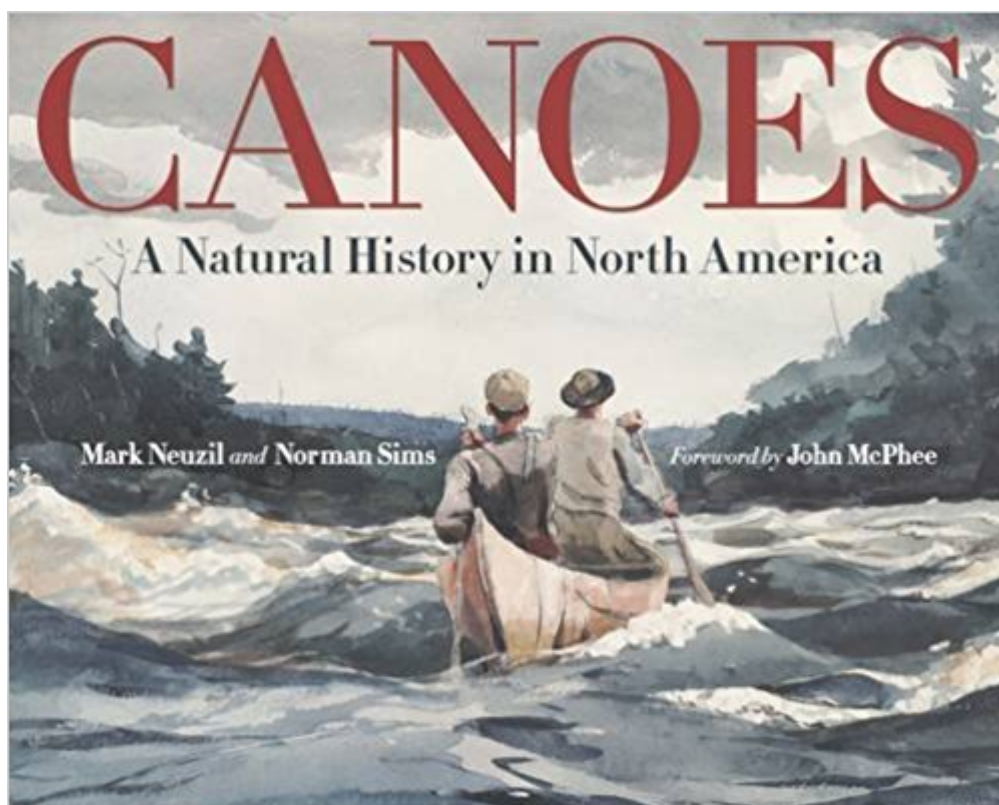


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# Canoes: A Natural History In North America



## Synopsis

Ancient records of canoes are found from the Pacific Northwest to the coast of Maine, in Minnesota and Mexico, in the Southeast and across the Caribbean. And if a native of those distant times might encounter a canoe of our day—whether birch bark or dugout or a modern marvel made of carbon fiber—its silhouette would be instantly recognizable. This is the story of that singular American artifact, so little changed over time: of canoes, old and new, the people who made them, and the labors and adventures they shared. With features of technology, industry, art, and survival, the canoe carries us deep into the natural and cultural history of North America. In the foreword by Pulitzer Prize—winner John McPhee, we dip into the experience of canoeing, from the thrilling challenges of childhood camp expeditions to the moving reflections of long-time paddlers. The pages that follow are filled with historical photographs and artwork, authors Neuzil and Sims describe the dugout and birch bark craft from their first known appearance through the exploration of Canada by fur traders, to the recreational movements that promoted all-wood and wood-and-canvas canoes. Modern materials such as aluminum, fiberglass, and plastic expanded participation and connected canoeists with emerging environmental movements. Finally, *Canoes* lets us hear the voices of past paddlers like Alexander Mackenzie, the first European to cross North America, using birch bark and dugout canoes a decade before Lewis and Clark went overland, Henry Thoreau, Eric Sevareid, Edwin Tappan Adney, and others. Their stories are a tribute to the First Peoples who, 500 or 1,000 or even 5,000 years ago, built a craft designed to such perfection that it has plied the waters fundamentally unchanged ever since.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Mark Neuzil and Norman Sims have written a wonderfully detailed biography of the vessel that made North America possible, treating it as a living, breathing personality. As enjoyable as a swift, steady, and smooth river, this is the ideal book for canoeists." — Roy MacGregor, author of *Canoe Country: The Making of Canada* "Canoes is that rare cultural history that manages to transport through its very subject: the North American canoe. This book is fascinating and thorough and wonderfully accessible. It's also the definitive work on the single most important conveyance in this continent's rich past. It'll carry you away like a beautifully crafted cedar strip canoe." — Peter Geye "This book is an outstanding overview of canoes with a lot of information that isn't covered anywhere else. I thoroughly enjoyed it." — Benson Gray, Wooden Canoe Heritage Association historian "Canoes is a fantastic adventure." — Washington Post "A fascinating cultural and technological history that, with its hundreds of color and black-and-white images, including many by renowned artists, is a visual as well as informative feast." — Booklist "Deep history...from the crudest dugouts through the most elegant cedar strips to featherweight polymers of today, with hundreds of color photos and a score of profiles of the people who made and paddled them." — Star Tribune "Lovely and practical." — Toronto Star "Whether you love to paddle, cherish the look of the vintage canoe hanging above your fireplace or simply just appreciate canoes, this book is for you." — Cabin Living Magazine "The coffee table-size book looks to be a must-have for paddlers and others with a penchant for the canoe's rich history." — Pioneer Press "Written from the environmentalist point of view, there's some interesting revelations and photos." — Ely Echo "No matter what era of the canoe story you might have a special spot for, this book will certainly take a cherished place in your library collection." — Paddle Making (and Other Canoe Stuff) "The coffee table-size book looks to be a must-have for paddlers and others with a penchant for the canoe's rich history." — Grand Forks Herald "This book is just superbly written, photographed and illustrated. It is the ultimate coffee table at the cabin book." — Trout Magazine "This nice, sturdy, cloth hardcover — printed on thick, durable glossy pages — is a good coffee-table book that can either be read from beginning to end or by cherry-picking through chapters of personal interest. Just short of 400 pages, the book is liberally illustrated with beautiful historic artwork and photography in vivid color." — The Recorder "Some of the eventual pride and creative care that goes into modern canoe-making must have gone into making this elaborate book of deep history with its commanding format as well as many historical and color photographs,

paintings and illustrations, not to mention professional writing and editing." •The Keene Sentinel"[Canoes] ... explores the humble canoe's outsized role in exploration, economic development, politics and popular culture." •Minnpost.com "A delightful book that satisfies both intellectual curiosity and artistic appetite." •American Whitewater

Mark Neuzil is a professor of communication and journalism at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of seven books and a frequent writer and speaker on environmental themes. A former wilderness guide and summer park ranger, Neuzil is an avid outdoorsman who began canoeing in the 1960s with his family. He is a past board member of the Society of Environmental Journalists and Friends of the Mississippi River. Norman Sims is a retired honors professor from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a past president of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies. This is his sixth book. A longtime whitewater canoeist and an active member of both the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association, Sims has a small collection of antique Morris wood-and-canvas canoes. John McPhee is the author of more than thirty books, including *Encounters with the Archdruid* (1971), *The Survival of the Bark Canoe* (1975), and *Coming into the Country* (1977). Since 1963, his articles and all of his books have appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine. He received the Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1977, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *Annals of the Former World* in 1999. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey.

A comprehensive history and up-to-date view of everything to do with canoes and canoeing. This book is well-researched and authoritative. The authors write from a perspective that seems to originate from many days paddling. It is apparent they have been around canoes for a good part of a lifetime. The appeal of canoe form, construction methods and canoe paddling shines through on every page. I really enjoyed the illustrations; the historical photos, the paintings, the portraits of early canoe-men and voyageurs. This book is write up my alley, the best ever on my favorite boat.

Bought as a gift for a canoe enthusiast but couldn't resist a peek inside. Large, heavy book. Will make a nice coffee table addition. Satisfied with the price and product.

Great historic reference including great photos/ illustrations. A great addition to any paddling enthusiast

Beautiful book. Great for anyone who would love to learn the history of canoes.

awesome book, beautiful photos, great read...if you like canoes or its history buy it

If you own or use a canoe for recreation, this book is for you. The writing is outstanding and the photos and art work are gorgeous. If you can't be out on the water enjoying your canoe, this is the next best thing.

Interesting and informative book. Bought it when I first heard about it.

A fine historical overview for anyone who loves canoes and wonders how their perfect shapes came to be. Includes everything from South American dugouts to Grumman aluminums and the modern corps of dedicated folks who restore and replicate the wooden classics.

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