

***Devine's Folk Lore of Newfoundland in Old Words, Phrases and Expressions, Their Origin and Meaning. P.K. Devine (Comp.).***

W.F.H. Nicolaisen

Volume 15, numéro 1, spring 1999

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds15\\_1rv03](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds15_1rv03)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-1430 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Nicolaisen, W. (1999). Compte rendu de [*Devine's Folk Lore of Newfoundland in Old Words, Phrases and Expressions, Their Origin and Meaning*. P.K. Devine (Comp.).] *Newfoundland Studies*, 15(1), 125–126.

*Devine's Folk Lore of Newfoundland in Old Words, Phrases and Expressions, Their Origin and Meaning.* P.K. Devine (Comp.). St. John's: Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland (Folklore and Language Publications), preface by Philip Hiscock. V, 81 pp., illustrations, 1997 (orig. Pub., 1937), \$9.95, softcover, 0-88901-317-9.

## W.F.H. NICOLAISEN

MORE THAN SIX DECADES have passed since P.K. Devine's *Folk Lore of Newfoundland* was first published in 1937, and it has been out of print for much of that time. Although scholarship has moved on in leaps and bounds in those sixty years and institutions like the Department of Folklore at Memorial University and publications like the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* have set new standards in the systematic collection, expert organization, and rigorous investigation of Newfoundland folklore and speech, it is nevertheless gratifying to be able to obtain Devine's seminal, pioneering work.

The new edition is on the whole a facsimile reproduction of the original, with a brief, informative Preface by Philip Hiscock, Archivist of the Folklore and Language Archive at MUN. It therefore not only contains the complete alphabetical word list of the author's original compilation but also the advertisements which Gerald S. Doyle, Devine's cousin who largely financed the publication, had placed in the book. These are for students of folklore and popular culture in themselves a corpus of evidence well worth examining, even if only to be intrigued or amused by those pre-war attempts at encouraging the readers of Devine's collection to purchase "Three Flowers Talcum," a jelly dessert called "Lushus," "Cough Savers" for quick relief, "Scott's Emulsion" ("Now Muvver can I lick the spoon?"), and such like.

As Devine (1859-1950) collected the vocabulary he presents over many years, seemingly concentrating on much that he regarded as old or obsolescent in his time, his word list reflects lexical usage and folk custom that, in many instances, go back well into the nineteenth century. From a modern point of view we might criticize the lack of recorded context, or even performance, which is so important to a proper evaluation of the evidence, but we can hardly blame the author for having lived too early for the concepts to have been implemented in his own labour of love. There is a limited amount in his otherwise impressive lexical inventory (6-59) that one would, in itself, call folklore but brief accounts of "Superstitions, Phrases and Weather Lore" (59-61), "Proverbs and Sayings" (61-62), "Some Expressive Terms" (63-66), "Weather Lore" (66-70), "Superstitions and Local Phrases" (70-77), and "They Learned in Nature's Book" (79-80) distill from these word lists important aspects of the folk culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and provide additional insights into the accumulated folk wisdom of the time.

By all accounts, the impact of the original edition was considerable. If the reprint is similarly successful this is likely to be for somewhat different reasons: perhaps nostalgia for an age gone by, curiosity about the quaint and colourful, or, probably most importantly, a welcome glimpse of a document representing a significant phase in the study of the language and lore of Newfoundland. This reviewer is glad to have a "classic" he had so far only heard of but not seen on his shelves.