

Norman Creighton, edited by Hilary Sircom

*Talk about the Valley*

(Halifax, Nimbus, 2001), 186 p.

This delightful little book is a treasure of text, photographs and sketches of and about the Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia. It is not an oral history strictly speaking but "Talk" had its beginnings as oral narrative. Norman Creighton was a broadcaster for CBC in the 1960's and 1970's and this is the second volume of his essays prepared for broadcast over various CBC radio daytime programmes. Creighton was also the creator and writer of the popular Maritime noon-hour radio drama "The Gillans." Editor Hilary Sircom has skillfully gathered from six hundred "talks", voice portraits of the places, people and way of life in the Annapolis Valley. Some portraits are based on historical figures like William Hall from the Valley who was Canada's third winner of the Victoria Cross in 1858 and the first person of African origin to win one. Other portraits like The Man with a Curse on His Field are based on the oral traditions of one valley community. Still others are observations - historical and contemporary - about such mundane items as the Front Door Key, the Ice-Box or the Brass Spitton.

This is a wonderful book for dipping into for short well crafted vignettes of rural Canada. Given that Creighton's tapes still exist in the archives, a CD of the actual broadcasts included with this book would have been a wonderful addition. For now, the stilled voice of Norman Creighton will have to be left to the reader's imagination, and his word tapestry left to the printed page.