

Book Review: E.J. Dailey: The Last Adirondack Trapper, 1889-1973 By Scot Dahms. 2018. 296 pages.

As the trapping industry continues to evolve in the face of urbanization and the animal rights movement, it is wise to look back at the pioneers of our industry. History is important because it helps us appreciate our ideological ancestors as well as learn from their stories, experiences, advice and failures. Mr. Dahms has helped us to do that by compiling information about the life of a trapper who truly did it all, named EJ Dailey. Dailey had the unique opportunity to trap before, during and after America transitioned from an agricultural society to an urban one. For example, EJ was an early user of the automobile for running a trapline. He was truly a trapping Renaissance Man. He was a trapper, fur buyer, lure maker, writer of at least 5 books and scores of articles and trapping advocate.

Dahms focuses his biography on Dailey's life as it related to trapping. Dahms, usually in chronological order, relates EJ's life on various traplines, his trapping partners, his work as a writer for Fur-Fish-Game, his political life as a founder of the American Trappers Association and advocate for furbearer conservation. It is said that there is nothing new under the sun and that if you wait long enough you will see history repeat itself. Dailey's life certainly proves that as the struggles he had with the Anti-Steel Trap League, hunter groups, unscrupulous trappers, trap thieves, and the predator control agency run by the Federal government mirrors challenges for trappers have today. Dailey's responses to these challenges can speak to us today by helping us reflect on our own behavior. While I cannot affirm every choice Dailey made (his treatment of trap thieves could get one in real trouble today), I appreciate his integrity and convictions. For example, Dailey strongly supported wildlife conservation. He believed that trappers should restrain from trapping until fur was prime and that proper regulations should be established to ensure that furbearers were not overharvested. While those principles may be taken for granted by most trappers today, I suspect they were quite novel in his day.

For those looking for inspiration, this is the book for you. Dahms peppers the book with many of Dailey's priceless quotes, such as "It isn't the amount that I took from the grounds that really counts, but the amount that I left there to propagate for future seasons." If those who fail to learn from the past are condemned to repeat it, then it behooves trappers who love this industry to learn from those that have gone before, such as the life of EJ Dailey.

Stephen M. Vantassel, FurTaker magazine.