

Ancient Inventions

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"IT'S CHOCKABLOCK WITH CURIOUS LORE...[James and Thorpe] have amassed scores of persuasive testimonials of primeval ingenuity."

--The Boston Globe

We in the twentieth century tend to assume that our era has a monopoly on the inventions of clever machines, labor-saving devices, feats of engineering, and advanced technology. But as the authors of this fascinating and eye-opening book reveal, some of humankind's most important and most amazing inventions actually date back thousands of years. Historian Peter James and archaeologist Nick Thorpe have pooled their expertise in amassing this compendium of human ingenuity through the ages. Together they conclusively prove that our ancestors, however long ago they lived and whatever part of the globe they occupied, were brilliant problem-solvers. Written with the pure joy of discovery, *Ancient Inventions* reveals that:

- * Medieval Baghdad had an efficient postal service, banks, and a paper mill.
- * Rudimentary calendars were being used in France as early as 13,000 B.C.
- * Apartment condominiums rose in deserts of the American Southwest a thousand years ago.
- * The ancient Greeks used an early form of computer.
- * Plastic surgery was being performed in India by the first century B.C.
- * The Egyptians knew about effective contraceptives.
- * Flamethrowers were used in battles waged in tenth-century China.

Brimming with odd facts and entertaining curiosities, written with zest and humor, comprehensive and fun to read, *Ancient Inventions* is a wonderful celebration of the endless inventiveness of the human mind.

"This presentation of the discoveries and innovations of the ancients will fascinate."

--Booklist

"Thoroughly researched...It is doubtful that anyone could examine [this book] without coming away enlightened in one of its broadly ranging areas."

--Library Journal

AN ALTERNATE SELECTION OF THE QUALITY PAPERBACK BOOK CLUB AND THE NATURAL SCIENCE BOOK CLUB

You leave your seventh-floor apartment, curse the congested traffic that delays you, and stop at a fast-food restaurant on your way to have cataract surgery. You live in Rome in A.D. 25. *Ancient Inventions* entertainingly demonstrates that there is indeed little new under the sun. The book is divided by the authors (Centuries of Darkness, LJ 3/15/93) into convenient, browsable sections such as "Sex Life," "Military Technology," and "Communications," each one presenting fascinating evidence of the extent to which human knowledge can be extinguished. Cute rather than hilarious in its humor, *Ancient Inventions* is thoroughly researched and profusely illustrated; it is doubtful that anyone could examine it without coming away enlightened in one of its broadly ranging areas. This work will be used as much for its historical information and accounts of ancient daily life as it will be for recreational reading. *Historical First Patents* is an overview of over 80 granted U.S. patent applications, with emphasis on the familiar: Howe, Whitney, Bell, and others whose names are closely associated with a specific device. Each entry consists of the historical developments leading to the invention, a biographical description of the inventor, and the story of the creation of the invention itself. A patent drawing accompanies most entries, although some contain a reproduction of the first page of the published patent in print so

small as to be useless. The writing is rather stilted (Lincoln's entry mentions three times in the first three paragraphs that he was the only president to receive a patent), and some obvious errors have not been caught. Some of the patents included here are for items discussed in *Ancient Inventions* and known thousands of years earlier, such as artificial limbs, cylinder locks, and anesthesia. Of the two books, *Ancient Inventions* contains information more difficult to locate elsewhere and will serve the broadest audience. Both books are appropriate for school, academic, and public libraries.

James Moffet, Baldwin P.L., Birmingham, Mich.

Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. This presentation of the discoveries and innovations of the ancients will fascinate the casual reader as well as technology, science, and history buffs. Historian James and archaeologist Thorpe define the ancient period as the time before A.D. 1492, analyzing the evolution of inventions from brain surgery to playing cards, and putting into perspective the accomplishments of many diverse cultures while laying to rest some "distorted Western views of history." Denise Perry Donavin

Other Books

Archaeological History Of The Ancient Middle East.

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