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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Manly Hardy (1832-1910): The Life and Writing of a Maine Fur-Buyer, Hunter, and Naturalist. Compiled and Introduced by William B. Krohn. (Orono: Maine Folklife Center, 2005. Pp. 345. Notes, illustrations, bibliography. \$19.95.)

As the title of William Krohn's book suggests, Manly Hardy participated in three occupations that contributed to his intimate understanding of the Maine woods. Hardy's thoughts on this topic appeared in a variety of now-obscure publications, and this volume in the Northeast Folklore series makes the best of these writings available to the casual reader. For those who want more, Krohn's annotated bibliography lists over 150 additional publications.

The articles describe two extended stays in the north woods and provide natural histories of several species of concern to modern-day wildlife experts. At least as valuable is Krohn's seventy-eight page introduction, which describes Hardy as a complex, controversial, and sometimes contradictory figure: a sickly child who displayed incredible stamina as an adult; a life-long hunter who championed the cause of conservation; a private individual who gained a wealth of information in conversation with Indians, trappers, and clients. Nor are Krohn's ample footnotes to be ignored, since they explain events and terms Hardy assumed were common knowledge among his contemporaries.

Taking on the family fur business in Brewer when his father died in 1864, Hardy cultivated a practical viewpoint on wildlife and its uses. By the late 1800s Maine was a leader in American game and fish conservation, but the state's new laws were not always compatible with rural folkways, as Edward D. Ives made clear in his 1993 book on downeast poacher George Magoon. Hardy advocated sustainable hunting, equitable enforcement, and upright wardens, but above all, he demanded due consideration for "the man brought up in the woods" (p. 39). He spoke for the traditional subsistence hunter in an age that saw wildlife — and the woods itself — in a very different light.

In many ways, Hardy was analogue to another iconoclastic figure who helped define the Maine woods for America. Between 1846 and 1857 Henry David Thoreau made three trips into the territory Hardy traveled a few decades later on, and although Hardy seldom mentioned Thoreau, their differing viewpoints — one emphasizing spiritual com-

munion and the other woods work — illustrate a longstanding tension in north-woods literary images that Dale Potts explores in fascinating dissertation recently completed at the University of Maine. (See his article in this issue.) In some cases, Hardy literally followed in Thoreau's footsteps — across Northeast Carry, down the West Branch to Chesuncook, and across the infamous Mud Pond Carry, where Thoreau and a companion became desperately if not hopelessly lost. Both excelled at narrative description, and both helped fix the idea of Maine as wilderness in the American mind, Thoreau in *Maine Woods* (1864), and Hardy in the numerous articles annotated in Krohn's bibliography.

Unlike Thoreau, Hardy gleaned his understanding of nature from a lifetime in the wilds — hunting, trapping, and buying furs. His articles provide an intimate view of the trappers' life and work, including a makeshift winter camp where he and a partner “had to lie edgewise and pass in the dogs over us, using them for pillows” (p. 174). Hardy saw Thoreau's “wilderness” as a workplace and described chance encounters with trappers, loggers, and Indians as casually as though he passed them on the streets of Brewer. Where Thoreau considered creatures of the woods alien and mysterious, Hardy spoke of them in intimate terms. Otters traveled under the ice by blowing a bubble against the frozen surface and breathing it in repeatedly; bears differed in disposition and mental capacity. “If men who think that animals do not reason will try trapping bears or raccoons for a few years they will observe some things which will surprise them” (p. 134).

Readers might be put off by Hardy's apparent disregard for animal suffering and his proclivity for casual violence toward animals, but in fact, this was standard stuff in Victorian adventure stories. In his classic *Oregon Trail*, Francis Parkman showed a similar interest in shooting anything that moved on the Great Plains. This might be difficult to understand today, but it was precisely this lifelong engagement with wildlife that gave Hardy's conservation argument caché in Maine and across the nation. His conservation was a practical matter — unlike Thoreau's — but in some instances he expressed a very impractical affection for certain animals: otters at play and the anthropomorphic beaver won his sympathies. “They have done more for the State, than the State has done for them, and although a hunter and formerly a fur dealer, I should like to have them have a ‘square deal’” (p. 264).

What is to be gained from this book? A rich and varied appreciation for north-woods creatures and an entertaining narrative drawn from the lives and adventures of a little-known community of Maine woodsmen.

Hardy introduces us to the conflicted world of Victorian-era game conservation and gives us a perspective on the early compromises that make up today's rules of engagement with wildlife. And if that wasn't enough, we gain from these well chosen articles a view of the Maine woods vastly different from that of Hardy's predecessor, Henry David Thoreau. In the spirit of seeking alternative opinion, this book deserves the attention of Maine readers.

Richard W. Judd
University of Maine

The Grand Old Man of Maine: Selected Letters of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, 1865-1914. Edited by Jeremiah E. Goulka. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. Pp. 334. Cloth. \$39.95.)

More than forty years ago, in an undergraduate course in Maine history taught by the late Robert M. York, this reviewer learned of the immense role Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain played in the Civil War. This book of letters, superbly edited by Bowdoin graduate and attorney Jeremiah Goulka, underscores what Dr. York taught his students all those years ago, and it completes the story of Chamberlain's remarkable life following the war.

In his foreword to Goulka's book, eminent Civil War historian James M. McPherson of Princeton University points out that it took Michael Shaara's novel *The Killer Angels* to begin the process of bringing Chamberlain's accomplishments to light. Once this transformation began, Ken Burns's 1990 Civil War documentary catapulted Chamberlain to the top tiers of well-known figures in that conflict. The film "Gettysburg," which soon followed, completed the process of making Little Round Top the best-known point on the Gettysburg battlefield tour, thus expanding the general's reputation. McPherson emphasizes the severity and long-lasting effects of Chamberlain's war wounds, which did not kill him until he was eighty-five years old. He also summarizes Chamberlain's postwar career as Governor of Maine, president of Bowdoin College, and tireless promoter of Civil War memory.

In his introduction, Goulka briefly reviews Chamberlain's Civil War fame then notes that until recently scant attention was paid to the Gen-

eral's postwar career. John J. Pullen's *Joshua Chamberlain: A Hero's Life and Legacy* and Diane Smith's *Fanny and Joshua: Enigmatic Lives of Frances Caroline Adams and Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain* deal with the subject in some detail. Goulka's collection of letters, however, provide further insight into his thinking on a variety of subjects, including the war but also on a multitude of other issues that confronted him during his long life. Goulka explores the dimensions of Chamberlain's persona through a number of prisms, including his exemplification of Victorian manhood, his relations with veterans and their struggles for pensions, his leadership roles, his record as educational innovator, and finally his role as a husband and father. Through these letters, readers gain insight into the thought and character of this complicated man.

Goulka has also supplied his volume with a bibliographic essay on Chamberlain sources, a glossary of terms and abbreviations, listings of significant political figures between 1865 and 1914, names and identities of those mentioned in the letters, brief correspondent biographies, and an enumeration of letter repositories; he also includes an excellent index.

In this limited space, it is difficult to choose representative letters to quote ever so briefly. Goulka has done a yeoman task of annotation, since almost every page has useful footnotes providing context and identifications. Probably no letter is so poignant as the one the General writes to his wife just prior to her death on October 18, 1905. Their relationship was not always a tranquil one, but Chamberlain did his best to pay tribute to her in this excerpt: "I am nothing & you will forgive me if I cannot write — you are going where friends dearer & more worthy will love to cluster around you — you can scarcely need to think of one so sad & distant as I shall be. But Fannie — may God bless you — do not think that I can ever forget in my darkest hours the gleam of white light you have shed upon my soul. May God bless you as He blessed me when I was suffered to know you — He will bless you — I feel it in these tears — unmanly though they be. He will bless you. My blessing too Fannie, and may peace be yours."

Chamberlain's superb sense of historical drama was perhaps best captured by his attendance at Grant's 1885 funeral in New York when he ended a letter to his wife as follows: "The great men of the nation were there. But nothing seemed great to me — but what has gone; except the multitude that crowded miles on miles, & the tokens of mourning that overshadowed the city. Grant himself seemed greater now than ever. And he is."

In a letter written on his fifty-ninth birthday to his mother (apparently an annual event), Chamberlain expressed his deep appreciation for all her sacrifice on his behalf and “tender care and faithful guidance & good instruction.” He then goes on to say that “perhaps I have not made all that was possible of my life: but I trust God has still use for me, and has spared me through so many perils and so many years, for a blessing somewhere yet to be given and received.” This is quite a modest statement from a man who possessed such an outstanding military record, and who served as governor of Maine and president of Bowdoin College.

Despite all the success of his earlier life, Chamberlain was forced by bleak economic circumstances to plead for a patronage position in order to survive. Congress was reluctant to fund veteran’s pensions, so for the last few years of his long life Chamberlain served as Surveyor of Customs at Portland, second to the Collector. It was a humiliating position for him, but he made the best of it since the limited responsibilities gave him time to speak about his war experiences and work with veteran’s groups in preserving Civil War memory. With all this and more in mind, it is clear that Goulka has produced a book that will be consulted for years to come, particularly among those wishing to document Chamberlain’s life following Appomattox.

Stanley R. Howe
Bethel Historical Society

Israel Washburn Jr.: Maine’s Little-Known Giant of the Civil War. By Kerck Kelsey. (Rockport, Maine: Picton Press, 2004. Pp. 198. Paper. \$18.50.)

Israel and Patty Washburn must have been proud parents. Of their seven sons, four served in Congress at the same time. Elihu, who moved to Illinois and added an “e” to the family name, has earned the greatest historical attention due to his shepherding of Grant’s career. Now Israel Jr., their only political son to make his career in Maine, has received the contemporary biography he richly deserves. Kerck Kelsey’s enthusiastic *Israel Washburn Jr.* traces Washburn’s life from his youth in Livermore to his law practice in Orono and his career in Maine and national politics.

Israel Washburn Jr. was born in 1813, the eldest child in a family of

moderate means but strong traditions of public service. His father and grandfather had both been legislators in the Massachusetts General Court prior to Maine's statehood; his father and uncle served as local magistrates; and his father held the position of town selectman. At age twenty-three, Israel Jr. set off to read law and begin a law practice. He hung his shingle in the timber town of Orono, where he quickly became active in local Whig politics. In 1841 he was elected to the state legislature and in 1850, to Congress. His tenure in Congress spanned the tumultuous 1850s. The Kansas-Nebraska Act turned him into a single-issue politician fighting the expansion of slavery. Perhaps his greatest legacy from this period was his leadership in the creation of the Republican Party.

In 1860 Washburn agreed to be nominated for governor. His tenure as governor was brief — two one-year terms — as he became frustrated with the office and the creeping centralization of power in Washington. Although he refused to accept renomination, he managed the logistics of deploying 50,000 Maine troops while in office. Maine had two other wartime governors (Abner Coburn and Samuel Cony), but Washburn is considered the state's "War Governor." Indeed, he is remembered more than Kelsey acknowledges; Washburn is often listed with Massachusetts's John Andrews as one of the great war governors of the nation.

After refusing renomination in 1862, Washburn was appointed Collector of Customs for the Port of Portland, the top federal patronage job in Maine. Washburn held the post for thirteen years before James G. Blaine pushed him out. Washburn lived out his final years as an elder statesman, serving on boards, receiving honorary degrees, pursuing business ventures, building a mansion on his family homestead, and enjoying the honor of having a town named after him. He died in 1883.

Kerck Kelsey's enthusiasm for his subject is manifest. His biography of Washburn is a labor of love, intended for the general reader who is interested in learning more about Maine's prominent nineteenth century figures. A descendant of Cadwallader Colden Washburn, Kelsey is a trustee and historian for the Washburn-Norlands Living History Center, the museum at Washburn's family home. To some extent, Kelsey's work might be viewed as an analog to the books that museums publish to accompany major exhibits. Like such works, though, it can stray towards hagiography. Perhaps Washburn was as honest and selfless as Kelsey presents him to be, but Kelsey's reliance upon such uncritical documents as Victorian eulogies for evidence of Washburn's character is unsatisfying. Because of this, despite Kelsey's excellent presentation of Wash-

burn's life, the reader never really gets to know Washburn the man.

This may be Washburn's own fault, however; he may have been historically unknowable, at least until he started keeping a personal journal late in his life. This journal reveals a puritanical and moral man and elder statesman, charitable towards many, concerned about the centralization of political power in Washington and the character of the Gilded Age, and angry at Blaine for repeatedly blocking him from a Senate seat and for depriving him of his Collectorship.

Notwithstanding these reservations, Kelsey has performed a great service. We may be grateful that Washburn finally has his own biography.

Jeremiah E. Goulka
Washington, D.C.

Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life. By Charles C. Calhoun. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004. Pp. 294. Paper. \$20.)

Charles Calhoun writes that "Longfellow is a man whose name most Americans still recognize but whose work scarcely anyone reads." His excellent biography makes Longfellow a real person, not just a name, and argues convincingly that at least some of his poems ought to be read again.

Like many natives of Maine, Longfellow made his name and fortune elsewhere. He visited Maine regularly after his late twenties, but Cambridge, Massachusetts, was his base for four extensive trips to Europe and world fame. He enjoyed a happy childhood in a loving home, traveled widely from the age of nineteen, learned languages easily, held prestigious academic positions, married an heiress, lived many years in a large mansion, and knew success far beyond his early dreams. Yet he also endured more than his share of anxiety and heartbreak: he buried two wives and a baby daughter, and his eldest son worried Longfellow with his impulsive enlistment in the Civil War and his extravagance. Longfellow himself fought many ailments, including depression, during his seventy-five years.

He enjoyed enormous popularity in his time and for perhaps a generation afterward, until Modernism emerged and all things Victorian declined. Fittingly, he met the Queen and visited his friend Tennyson;

less predictably, when close to death, he hosted Oscar Wilde for breakfast. Two years later (1884) Longfellow's bust was unveiled in the "Poets' Corner" of Westminster Abbey. He is still the only American poet to be so honored. His poetry and novels always sold well, and few of his contemporaries found fault: only Margaret Fuller's reasoned criticism and Poe's bitter diatribes sounded sour notes. After Poe's death Longfellow wrote that "the harshness of his criticism I have never attributed to anything but the irritation of a sensitive nature chafed by some indefinite sense of wrong." He also corresponded for many years with Poe's mother-in-law/aunt, sending her books and money.

Yet he did not win acceptance by opposing new ways or by pandering to the prejudices of his time. In his teaching at Bowdoin and at Harvard, he championed progressive methods, and pioneered in mediating the European classics to American audiences. An abolitionist when they were scorned and even hated, he identified with other oppressed and dispossessed people, including the Jews ("The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," one of his best poems) and — in his most famous works — the Native Americans and the Acadians.

Though ranking Longfellow behind his great contemporaries Whitman and Dickinson, Calhoun obviously likes the poetry as well as the poet. He discusses *Hiawatha* and *Evangeline* in some detail, summarizing their content and analyzing their poetic form. He rejects the view of the former as a racist work, arguing instead that it reflects the poet's desire for peace and his fears of sectional warfare in the pre-Civil War decade. Longfellow also recognized that England and France had failed in their struggle for Hiawatha's land. Calhoun asks: "what makes us think that we shall endure?"

Likewise, Calhoun traces *Evangeline's* seven-year gestation and retells its story. He reminds us that its heroine "survives by her wits over a sprawling, untamed American wilderness . . . [t]he great American theme of conquest is subtly undermined by this persistent little Acadian farm girl." No wonder this imaginary person became the "foundational myth" of Acadian ethnic identity.

In a biography of less than 300 pages, Calhoun could hardly be expected to do more than highlight some favorites in Longfellow's vast collection. These are mostly shorter pieces: many of the sonnets, especially the six Longfellow published with his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "The Fire of Drift-wood"; "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls"; and two unusually self-revelatory poems. At the age of thirty-five *Mezzo Cammin* reviews his life and looks forward at the traditional half-way

mark. Nearly forty years later in *The Cross of Snow* he reflected on the greatest tragedy of his life, his second wife's death by fire.

For such a famous man Longfellow has had few biographies: the most recent is Newton Arvin's 1963 study. Calhoun's reappraisal, based on manuscript sources, especially letters and journals, packs a great deal into its 262 pages. One of its greatest strengths is his ability to put his subject in the context of place and time. He knows Longfellow's Portland, Brunswick, and Cambridge as well as anyone can, and seems to have followed him on his many travels. He makes Longfellow's family and friends real, and does well with a man whose son-in-law remembered as kind and helpful but guarded by an "impenetrable reserve ... who exhibited a certain distance even from his own children."

Richard Condon
Farmington