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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Landscape with Figures: Nature & Culture in New England. By Kent C. Ryden. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001. Pp. 317. Paper \$19.95.); and *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century.* By Joseph A. Conforti. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Pp. 384. Paper \$19.95.)

These two important books by faculty members of the American and New England Studies Program at the University of Southern Maine provide significant insights into the New England past and how it has been interpreted through the centuries. For those focusing on Maine as part of the New England historical dynamic, there is much to be learned and analyzed here.

In *Landscape with Figures*, Kent Ryden conducts a personal tour of noteworthy transitions in the world we associate with New England. His work is strongly influenced by that of William Cronon regarding the meaning of wilderness, virgin land, and the level of human influence upon the natural world. Ryden characterizes his study as a quest to develop his “historical, topographical, and ecocritical sensibility” (page 201). Maine readers will be interested in his review of Henry David Thoreau’s three trips to the northern part of the Pine Tree State. An accomplished surveyor and map maker, Thoreau masterfully combined these two pursuits with his keen observation skills and polished literary style to create his posthumously published *The Maine Woods*. Ryden analyzes Thoreau’s assessment of the human impact upon this portion of Maine and draws his own conclusions about the role of logging in the course of the state’s history.

From Thoreau, Ryden explores changes in the landscape by walking with Walter Hale on Hale’s farm in Sebago, Maine. Inspecting stone dumps, a charcoal kiln site, and the impact of dairy cow operations, the author came to appreciate the use of the land for agricultural and economic purposes. By the time of Ryden’s writing, most of the land had re-

turned to forest, and it was only through Hale's interpretation that the signs of past activity could be correctly and comprehensively "read" for their cultural, financial, and ecological implications.

Another Maine example of the importance of landscape and its historical significance is the Cumberland and Oxford Canal, which opened in 1830 and was largely abandoned by 1872. Designed to connect the Portland waterfront to the Sebago Lake region, this transportation link was supposed to be a boon for trade, but from the beginning it was plagued with financial shortages and competition from rail interests. Ryden observes the relics of this once busy technological marvel (which overcame formidable natural obstacles), including the ruins of the locks, depressed areas filled with stagnant water, abandoned tow-paths, and stone abutments lying forlorn in forested locations.

One final example of a Maine operation, in this case made possible by the presence of the canal, was the gunpowder mill at Gambo Falls in Gorham. The sulfur and saltpeter arrived by canal boat from Portland, and charcoal was obtained from the nearby forest. Both the canal and the gunpowder mill, once symbols of the power of technology and man's attempt to alter the course of nature, are now obscure survivals hidden by forest growth and largely re-conquered by natural forces. "Places have valuable lessons to teach us" notes Ryden, if the observer is willing to tread the fine line between the natural and cultural.

Joseph A. Conforti's thoughtful *Imagining New England* offers a number of observations and conclusions that will give the historian pause. Conforti begins by asserting that New England "developed as America's first strongly imagined region" due to "its early historical consciousness and high rate of literacy and cultural production." Early on, Puritanism gained a powerful imaginative hold on the region, but changes in the relationship with old England and in colonial living conditions led eventually to a Revolutionary generation that possessed "the most well-developed collective identity of any American region." In the antebellum period, New Englanders intensified their cultural distinctiveness. During the middle years of the nineteenth century, emphasis on Yankee values, celebration of the Pilgrims, and the ordering of the New England village, among other influences, came into vogue. Following the Civil War, the Colonial Revival inspired confidence among Yankee traditionalists faced with rising foreign immigration and industrial and urban pressures. In the twentieth century, the "imaginary center" of authentic New England moved in a northerly direction, to what Conforti terms "Old New England." To some observers, New England appeared to be in decline after

World War II, but that was not the case. As the century wore on, the rise of the high technology and electronics industries was accompanied by creation of several important historical institutions, such as Plimouth Plantation, Old Sturbridge Village, and Strawberry Banke, which increased our knowledge of the New England experience.

Readers intent on learning how Maine fits into these generalizations will not be disappointed. Beginning with Capt. John Smith's characterization of the Maine coast as a "country rather to affright than delight," to Jedediah Morse's view of Maine people as "hardy" and "robust," to Timothy Dwight's vision of a place with "dissolute characters" such as loggers and fishermen, to Robert Herrick's declaration in the 1920s that Maine was the new heartland of the Old New England, there is a steady cultural evolution according to Conforti. The rise of tourism after the Civil War brought the lobster into vogue as a much appreciated delicacy. The Maine coast was celebrated in the paintings of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Fitz Henry Lane, and Winslow Homer. In addition, Conforti focuses on Old York as an outstanding example of the gentrification of a once-neglected coastal village — a premier exemplar of the colonial revival.

Finally, Conforti uses examples from Robb Sagendorph's *Yankee* magazine, which in the 1930s became strongly anti-New Deal, holding up Maine and Vermont after the 1936 presidential vote as the embodiment of "authentic" Yankee values. He even proposed a Yankee party, while his magazine emphasized the glory of the Maine coast, the success of L.L. Bean's business, the writings of native son Robert P. Tristram Coffin, and John Gould's celebration of the Pine Tree State's town meeting tradition.

All of the above and much more awaits the reader attempting to comprehend the New England experience in its national context and hoping to celebrate Maine's part in keeping the New England tradition alive and well.

STANLEY R. HOWE
Bethel Historical Society

A Good and Wise Measure: The Search for the American-Canadian Boundary, 1783-1842. By Francis M. Carroll. (Buffalo, New York: University of Toronto Press, 2001. Pp. xxi + 462. Cloth \$70. Paper \$29.95.)

Much has been written on the boundary dispute between Canada and the United States following the Treaty of Paris of 1783. The northeast portion of that boundary, which affected Maine so centrally, was part of this struggle, which was eventually settled by the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty. Up until the publication of this book, Howard Jones's *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty: A Study in Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1843* (1977) was considered the defining work on the subject, but Francis Carroll has provided new information and an enlarged perspective that sheds additional light on the topic.

Specifically, Carroll focuses on the labors of the land surveyors who were so essential in documenting the case for each side. He also examines closely the search for distinguishing features that indicated the boundary, around which so much controversy raged. Using cartographic and testimonial evidence, Carroll follows the relationship between surveyors and those who evaluated their progress. Rich in detail, the book also provides the most comprehensive bibliography available on the boundary settlement, which will be of interest to those concerned with primary sources and recent scholarship.

For Maine readers, there is much to contemplate, since the northeast boundary that separated this state from New Brunswick and Quebec was such an integral part of the Webster-Asburton negotiations. From the Treaty of 1783, which was supposed to establish Maine's eastern and northern boundary, to the various attempts at determining the boundary following the War of 1812, then on to the arbitration of the King of the Netherlands, and finally to the threat of the Aroostook County "Pork and Bean War," which precipitated a renewed effort to end chances of hostilities between the British and the Americans, this controversy has attracted the attention of a number of historians, writers and scholars. These include, but are not limited to J. Chris Arndt, J. R. Baldwin, Samuel F. Bemis, Henry S. Burrage, Albert B. Corey, George J. Gill, Wilbur D. Jones, Richard Judd, Thomas Le Duc, David Lowenthal, William L. Lucy, Geraldine Tidd Scott, Edgar Crosby Smith, John F. Sprague, C. P. Stacy, R. D. and J. I. Tallman, Israel Washburn, and Donald A. Wise. Undoubtedly, the leading defender of Maine's position was William Pitt Preble (1783-1857), a Portland attorney, former Maine Supreme Court Justice, and later U.S. Minister to the Netherlands. Car-

roll observes that Preble's role was not always productive, and to underscore this point, Carroll quotes historian Robert V. Remini, who characterized Preble as "an incompetent, vain, abrasive hot head, and a self-righteous prig" — hardly the ideal qualifications for delicate diplomatic negotiations. In contrast to Preble, F.O.J. Smith (1806-1876), former Maine legislator and U. S. Congressman, played a leading part in turning opinion in the Pine Tree State toward compromise, with newspaper columns he signed as "Agricola." His efforts, approved by Secretary of State Webster, were rewarded with dollars from the President's secret fund.

In the final analysis, the question of the northeast boundary came down to the desire on both sides to avoid further conflict. The British were primarily interested in preserving enough territory for a military road to connect the Maritimes with Quebec. To ensure this passage they were willing to make concessions elsewhere, particularly by yielding approximately 6,500 square miles of territory between Lake of the Woods and Lake Superior. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, was quoted as saying that it would not be prudent to go to war over a few miles of "miserable pine swamp." In the meantime, Secretary of State Webster had to pacify Maine and Massachusetts (the latter state still retained large tracts in its former territory), whose leaders were resolved to retain every acre of the American claim. In addition to monetary inducements from the federal treasury (\$150,000 to each state), Webster used an unusual ploy to placate these two states by presenting a red-line map presumably marked by Benjamin Franklin at the treaty negotiations that ended the American Revolution. This map allegedly supported the British claim, which he used to convince the representatives of Maine and Massachusetts that they should accept the compromise before the British discovered it and demanded the entire 12,000 square mile region. The irony was that after the 1842 Treaty was ratified, negotiators learned that the British possessed an authentic map — that supported the American claim.

Lucidly written with impeccable scholarship, Carroll's book will be the most authoritative study on this topic for years to come.

STANLEY R. HOWE
Bethel Historical Society

John Ford in Focus: Essays on the Filmmaker's Life and Work. Edited by Kevin L. Stoehr and Michael C. Connolly. (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, England: McFarland & Company, 2008. Pp. 244. Cloth. \$39.95.)

For one hundred ten years, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was the single reigning national celebrity for the city of Portland, Maine. Longfellow arguably was the nation's most renowned poet when he was immortalized with a statue erected at Congress and State streets in Portland in 1888, six years after his death. Five and a half years after the Longfellow statue materialized, the Feeney family of nearby Cape Elizabeth welcomed a son they named John Martin Feeney. Young Jack Feeney spent most of his childhood in Portland, blissfully unaware that someday he too would be celebrated with a statue in Portland recognizing his preeminence in the arts. With his name changed to John Ford and a record four Oscars for Best Director, the American cinema's most celebrated movie-maker earned his statue in 1998, erected at Gorham's Corner in Portland twenty-five years after Ford's death.

It took Portland nineteen years longer to recognize Ford than it did Longfellow, and that simple fact underscores the complicated relationship John Ford had with his native state. Despite a number of published biographies about Ford, very little has been written about how the State of Maine shaped his life. Into that breach stepped Kevin Stoehr and Michael Connolly, who edited a substantial volume of articles titled *John Ford in Focus: Essays on the Filmmaker's Life and Work*. Stoehr, associate professor of humanities at Boston University, and Connolly, associate professor of history at Saint Joseph's College in Maine, both call Portland their home and have been involved in various projects to celebrate John Ford's life and work.

John Ford in Focus covers the director's roots in Ireland, his birth and childhood in Maine as a member of an Irish Catholic immigrant family struggling to make a living in a city dominated by a Yankee Protestant aristocracy, his decision to follow his brother Francis' lead and move to Hollywood to work in the movies that he first saw as a theater usher, his emergence as a first-rate director after years of apprenticeship, and his prime years when he forged a distinctive style that has influenced national and international directors ever since. Of particular interest to followers of Maine history and culture is the richness of Ford's Maine experience in shaping his life. Articles by co-editor Connolly, Matthew Jude Barker, and Margaret Feeney LaCombe are the principal sources of

the Maine content. Ford is described as feeling like an outsider for much of his youth. Unlike many of their Irish brethren, the Feeneys opted for the agrarian life in the Spurwink section of Cape Elizabeth, until unease over discrimination forced the family to move to various Irish-American neighborhoods in Portland. Ford's father made his living as a bartender in prohibitionist Portland by charging for various entertainments (like a blind pig) and technically furnishing the booze for free.

Compounding John Ford's outsider status was the fact that he was bookish and sickly, losing an entire year of school to diphtheria and seeking refuge by reading and observing the world around him. The Maine content in *John Ford in Focus* points to the Portland Observatory as a true refuge for Ford. From there he could see the Portland Head Light, Mount Washington, and the open sea. The articles also highlight the role of high school mentors such as Marada Adams, Lucien Libby, and William Jack. Adams taught Ford basic principles of art that he never forgot. Libby taught English and so inspired Ford that the director named one of the ships in the World War II classic *They Were Expendable* the *Lucien Libby*. Portland High School principal Jack told Ford that he had "tremendous potentialities" and encouraged him to skip college and "go west" to seek his fortune.

The articles that trace Ford's Irish roots and analyze his movie-making style complete the picture that started on a Cape Elizabeth farm. Co-editor Stoehr, Ford's grandson Dan Ford, and various historians and film scholars present the complicated facts behind the deceptively simple, visual filming style that defined Ford as a lover of Ireland, America, the sea and that great western vista, Monument Valley. But these articles also underscore his understanding of the dark and complex side of culture and humanity, a world he first experienced in Maine and later portrayed in now recognized classics such as *The Searchers*.

With its academic approach, *John Ford in Focus* is sometimes difficult to follow, especially if one is expecting the gossipy anecdotes that often make biographical works entertaining to read. But if one is genuinely interested in how Mr. Ford became such a widely recognized artistic icon, it is worth taking time to read and reread these articles, recognizing that it is quite possible to find something new with each reading, just as one is likely to find something new with each viewing of a John Ford film.

CHARLES HORNE
Bangor

Styles Bridges: Yankee Senator. By James J. Kiepper. (Sugar Hill, N.H.: Phoenix Publishing, 2001. Pp. 270. Cloth. \$24.95.)

Students of Maine's twentieth-century political history readily think of Senators Margaret Chase Smith and Edmund S. Muskie as the leading native figures of their times. Both were accomplished senators, both claimed the national spotlight, and both sought (though unsuccessfully) their party's presidential nomination.

What such students may not realize is that a third Maine native in the last century was also a major figure in the Senate, claiming the national spotlight and seeking (also unsuccessfully) his party's presidential nomination. There is a twist, however, as Styles Bridges, though born, raised, and educated in Maine, sought his political fortune in New Hampshire. Styles Bridges, who served from 1937 to 1961, was widely regarded as one of the ablest and most significant senators of his generation. Despite his reputation, very little was written about Bridges until Professor James Kiepper's biography.

If one is interested in historical politics, this book is a "must-read." Professor Kiepper has meticulously researched the details of Bridges' life, which began in 1898 on a farm in West Pembroke, Maine, and ended sixty-three years later after a quarter century in the national spotlight. Following graduation from the University of Maine and work as a county agricultural agent, Bridges moved to New Hampshire to edit a farm journal. Just over a decade later, he was governor of New Hampshire, and two years after that, one of its youngest senators ever. Throughout his life, Bridges overcame considerable adversity, which included family tragedies, periods of ill health, the loss of his savings in the 1929 stock market crash, and resistance from some of New Hampshire's political elders. Kiepper frequently underscores how Bridges succeeded, using native charm, down-home "smarts," and Yankee thriftiness.

Kiepper provides a brisk tour of Bridges' accomplishments. In 1940, he was regarded highly enough to garner support for that ultimately unsuccessful Republican presidential bid. Two years later, President Roosevelt chose Bridges and three other senators to secretly appropriate billions of dollars to build the atomic bombs that were used to end World War II. By the 1950s, Bridges was considered one of the half dozen most powerful political figures in Washington, with a reputation as a consummate "bridge builder" (his surname being appropriate) in his own party and deal-maker with the Democrats. Though Kiepper clearly admires Bridges, his book presents the flaws in the senator's career. Perhaps most

controversial were charges of corruption arising from Bridges' propensity to collect cash for favors done to benefit constituents. Kiepper points out (and a foreword by Robert Novak concurs) that Bridges' money-taking was well within the common practice of the day. The Senator was investigated a number of times, but always managed to clear his name, and New Hampshire re-elected him by increasing majorities each time he ran.

A minor flaw in this book concerns occasional lapses on dates. A 1954 Bridges re-election poster is reproduced here, but labeled from 1959. The photo of the opening of Pease Air Force Base is incorrectly dated 1954, instead of 1956. Professor Kiepper erroneously writes that Senator Joseph McCarthy's initial election was 1948, rather than 1946. These quibbles aside, my principal criticism is that it does not go into more detail concerning Bridges' legislative achievements. How did Bridges manage (with three other senators) to conceal two billion dollars in order to fund the A-bomb? When Lyndon Johnson began his rise to the Senate majority leadership, he found Bridges "too powerful and shrewd to be gotten around," writes Johnson biographer Robert Caro. Kiepper points out that Bridges held court in a hideaway office near the Senate floor, where many legislative deals were made, but once again, there are few accounts of specific bills where Bridges' intervention made the difference.

In fairness to Kiepper, Bridges apparently chose to operate behind the scenes and without much fanfare. Kiepper cites Pennsylvania Senator Hugh Scott's account of how Bridges mediated between conservatives and moderates of the Republican party to secure moderate Thomas Kuchel's election as GOP whip in 1959 after the more conservative Everett Dirksen had been chosen minority leader. Scott remembers Bridges quietly "working the room" and obtaining the desired result.

Still, *Styles Bridges: Yankee Senator* shines most when we discover just how effective Bridges could be when he put his charm and knowledge to work. Professor Kiepper provides rich detail of Bridges' New Hampshire campaigns, the senator's thriftiness (he bought \$30 suits and had them re-cut when the styles changed), and his impact on a whole generation of New Hampshire politicians. That alone makes this fascinating and readable biography worth one's time.

CHARLES HORNE
Bangor

Giving Voters a Voice: The Origins of the Initiative and Referendum in America. By Steven L. Piott. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003. Pp. xii +330. Cloth. \$39.95.)

Giving Voters a Voice is a difficult book to review. On the one hand, it is a carefully crafted, well-researched, and very well documented account of the early twentieth century origins of the initiative and referendum process in America. Interested readers will get an in-depth look at the process by which populist sentiment at the end of the nineteenth century took form and how in twenty-two states citizens devised legal ways to directly shape public policy. The historical monograph examines the many different ways individuals, groups, and the press pushed hard in a variety of locations for the initiative and referendum processes. Those concerned with the subject will find a great deal of scholarly material assembled.

On the other hand, the general topic, while an important aspect of the history of American public policy, is broken down into chapter couplings such as "South Dakota and Oregon" or "Montana and Oklahoma," a format which may or may not appeal to all readers. The section on Maine (coupled in Chapter Four with Missouri) is quite short, covering only ten pages. But even with that small a narrative, it is possible to get the flavor of the populist demand for citizen input into the state's political and economic business. Much of the driving force for that reform was economic. Piott points out that as in other states, the large land owners and industrialists often had an inordinate and unfair impact on the course of legislation. In Maine, for example, approximately 50 percent of the state was in large ownerships, but these owners paid only one-ninth of the state's taxes.

Spurred by *Somerset Reporter* editor Roland T. Patten, the pro-initiative forces gathered strength after 1902. In 1906, Republican and Democratic parties put initiative and referendum planks in their party platform, and both gubernatorial candidates supported this essential legislation. In 1908, the recommendations for an initiative and referendum law were passed unanimously by both houses in the Maine Legislature, and in September of that year, the measure was approved in a popular vote by a of 2-1 margin. All sixteen Maine counties voted in favor of the process. A basically conservative electorate had overwhelming enshrined in law the public's right to initiative public policy and vote on legislative proposals.

Of course, as with all reforms, the reformers soon found out that the

powerful forces which opposed these reforms could turn them to their own advantage, for they had overlooked the ways the referendum process could be manipulated. Regrettably, but understandably, the author does not take the Maine situation beyond 1918, and it will be left for future historians to flesh out Maine's ballot measure history from that date to the present.

This is definitely a book for specialists and for those interested in turn-of-the-century American populist politics. The casual or generalist reader will find the entire work perhaps too specialized for her or his needs, although it should be placed in libraries with a public policy emphasis.

CHRISTIAN P. POTHOLM

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Androscoggin County, Maine – 150th: A Pictorial Sesquicentennial History, 1854-2004. Edited by Michael C. Lord and W. Dennis Stires. (Auburn, Maine: Androscoggin Historical Society, 2003. Pp. 208. Cloth. \$20.)

Due to a concerned neighbor who insisted that the nearest "suitable" hospital for my birth was in Lewiston, I was born in Androscoggin County and have had a longtime and pleasant association with that region for many years. Therefore, the history of this county published in celebration of its sesquicentennial was a welcome addition to my library. Michael C. Lord, executive director of the Androscoggin Historical Society in Auburn, who served as editor, assisted by W. Dennis Stires, director of the Center for Experiential Living and Learning in Livermore, have performed a masterful task of coordinating nearly two dozen authors from various communities, who contributed to specific sections of this book. Profusely illustrated with both historical and contemporary photographs and maps, the book provides revealing insights into the history of the thirteen towns and two cities that comprise the county. Beginning with its Abenaki origins, Canyon Wolf contributes to our understanding of the pre-English residents. She has also written a companion to this book that provides additional information for those wishing more details. An overview of the county's history dating from 1854 is

found in Michael Lord's chapter, which also presents a useful chart detailing from which of the older counties (Cumberland, Kennebec, Lincoln, and Oxford), the various towns that make up Androscoggin County today were taken. In addition, Lord provides a brief economic history of the Great Falls region at Lewiston and Auburn. Of further interest is the editor's account of the county's environmental history, beginning with the first industrialization to the times when residents living along the river were plagued with noxious odors and unpleasant looking waters. As the twentieth century came to an end, there was a noticeable change for the better in the Androscoggin's water quality. From this point on, the book includes a chapter on each town or city, all of which are followed by useful bibliographies. Here is presented all kinds of information from the location of Greenbacker Solon Chase's farm in Turner, to the history of Shiloh, which once boasted the largest Bible School building in the world, to internationally famous Poland Spring, to the dedication of Maine's largest "cathedral" in Lewiston in 1938. Churches, grange halls, and other public buildings receive prominent attention, as does farming and industrial development. Among the individuals featured with long associations with the county are U.S. Senator William Frye, who represented Maine for many years and served as acting Vice President of the United States after McKinley's assassination in 1901, State Representative Louis Jalbert of Lewiston, long known as "Mr. Democrat," and noted author and editor John Gould of Lisbon, who continued to write for the *Christian Science Monitor* right up until his death in 2003 at the age of ninety four. In the center of the book, there is an engaging color spread of several pages with a variety of contemporary scenes.

This said, it is my belief that the book's editors missed opportunities that would have made this a stronger study. They might have included more details and analysis of the county's history from the 1850s down to the present. There are also some noticeable gaps and distortions. For example, there is considerable information on the history of the now defunct Bliss College, but almost nothing on Lewiston's Bates College, one of the nation's leading liberal arts institutions. These reservations aside, for those interested in learning about the Androscoggin County region, this book provides a remarkably useful introduction. The editors and authors are to be congratulated for combining so many images and so much information between these two covers. The book will be consulted for years to come.

STANLEY R. HOWE
Bethel Historical Society

Down on the Island, Up on the Main: A Recollected History of South Bristol, Maine. Compiled and annotated by Ellen Vincent. (Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, 2003. Pp. 258. Cloth. \$30.)

This book's cover photo of fishermen working on their nets perfectly introduces a town that has always depended on the sea. Though the "days when fish were plentiful are over, lobsters and clams are still important. They are scarcer too, though, and lobsters no longer sell for "three for a quarter." Memories of those South Bristol men and women, and the hundreds of photographs they and others took and saved, are the raw material of Ellen Vincent's "recollected history." She artfully arranged them, however, and linked them into a coherent story; a personal art project became a community work, as Gordon Bok says in his introduction.

The sixteen townspeople who explain the photographs and tell their stories are pictured toward the end of the book. Born between 1900 and 1925, they convey memories that cover the twentieth century, especially its first half. The two world wars, which took many townsmen to strange places and ended the lives of three of them, and the Great Depression are the principal national events they recall. During the hard times of the 1930s, "money was very scarce . . . jobs were very, very scarce, and people had to figure very closely. Cigarettes were sold in stores one at a time, a penny apiece."

Especially then, but always to some degree, men and women had to be versatile, like Afton Farrin, Jr., who remembered, "I fished for forty-five years, I guess, maybe fifty. Even when I was going to school, I still fished in the summer. In the winter I worked in the woods somewhat — I cut a little pulp and sawlogs and stuff. And then I had chickens, too — broilers, mostly. Then I had a few gardens, trying to raise some things. I used to sell corn, I remember, and strawberries. . . . I had sheep at one time too." The witnesses picture a simpler life style. Before the electronic era, children played outdoors in all seasons. In spring, summer, and fall it was marbles and baseball; in summer, as one remembered, "we used to play around the water all the time. . . . We didn't do much swimming — the water was too cold . . . I guess I was twelve or thirteen before I learned to swim, and that was out of necessity. I was threatened by my father, 'either learn to swim or stay out of those skiffs.'" In winter they skated, slid, and skied, also enjoying horse races on the ice. Men hunted in the fall; two remember when Babe Ruth visited with his "big fancy gun and . . . a bottle of booze shoved down each pocket, and big hunting

coat on.” Indoors, boys and girls played basketball and card and board games. “Christmases were nice family days,” with free trees and simple decorations and presents. As one woman remembered, “the Christmas presents were nothing like now.”

South Bristol in the first half of the twentieth century, even without television and the internet, was hardly isolated. Radio came in the 1920s (though “it wasn’t too efficient”) and there were movies once or twice a week. Above all, however, different ways came with the summer people. By the 1880s, as the offshore fishing declined and metropolitan areas to the south grew wealthier and more crowded, visitors came, and townspeople built boarding houses and larger wooden hotels (which burned regularly) in South Bristol village and at Christmas Cove on Rutherford Island. Soon, some of the folks “from away” wanted their own “cottages,” and local carpenters provided them at Christmas Cove and on Heron Island.

As far as we can learn from Vincent’s book, South Bristol escaped much of the usual tension between natives and visitors. But some intramural tempests broke the normal calm. South Bristol’s secession in 1915 from Bristol left bitterness on both sides. Another “great rift in town” broke out after the Masons decided that they needed to use both floors of the hall they owned and had previously shared with the Redmen. After the latter group’s eviction, “even families split up, or neighbors didn’t speak to each other, and this went on for a long time.” South Bristol people generally lived in peace, however, often sharing the hard work and helping those in trouble. With all the toil and uncertainty, there were good times as well. The tradition of cooperation obviously continued in the production of this excellent book. Perhaps more towns will do their own versions of *Down on the Island* and enrich our knowledge of a lost Maine.

DAVID CHAPLIN
Brunswick