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Book Reviews

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Carol Tonner, Laura Cowan, Libby Bishof, Stanley R. Howe, David Richards, David C. Smith, and Ed Churchill

BOOK REVIEWS

The Lobster Coast: Rebels, Rusticators, and the Struggle for a Forgotten Frontier. By Colin Woodard. (New York: Viking Penguin, 2004. Pp. viii + 372. Paper. \$16.)

Colin Woodard wrote *The Lobster Coast: Rebels, Rusticators, and the Struggle for a Forgotten Frontier* because he was concerned about preserving what is left of Maine's active lobstering communities. While development, tourism, and depleted fisheries have transformed most of Maine's fishing communities, Woodard asks how have lobsters and lobstering communities managed to persist? He finds answers in the history and culture of the lobstering communities and in the ecological study of the Gulf of Maine.

It is fitting that Woodard begins his study of the coast on Monhegan Island, where Native Americans and the first European explorers and settlers found rich fishing grounds. The author visited the island on "Trap Day," December 1, 2001, joining the community as they celebrated the beginning of lobster season by helping the lobstermen (and one woman, though "lobstermen" is the preferred term) haul their traps to the island wharf. Using his experiences on Trap Day, Woodard introduces the book's major themes – the history of the people, their current and historic collective decision-making process, and their resistance to community development.

In the next several chapters, Woodard provides a survey of Maine coastal history, including centuries of settlement and conflict over the land. He relates conflict between Native Americans and European settlers, between French and English settlers, between Massachusetts Bay and Maine settlers, between England and the colonists, and between scheming land proprietors and struggling fishing communities. According to Woodard, the settlers' heritage – including West Country English as well as later Scotch-Irish settlers, explains a certain feistiness that girds up the settlers' struggle to claim and retain the land. He relies heavily on Alan Taylor's excellent work, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*, to frame the struggle between settlers and large landowners.

This historical survey continues with the familiar story of the rise and fall of Maine's nineteenth century industries – fish, lumber, ice, granite, canning, shipping and shipbuilding, and of course, tourism. In

the twentieth century, coastal communities faced accelerated threats from declining fisheries and increasing tourism and development. Large foreign fishing boats – “factory-freezer trawlers” – arrived in the 1960s, adding to the rapid exhaustion of Gulf of Maine fisheries and prompting the United States to extend its territorial waters to a 200-mile zone in 1976.

Having established this historical base, Woodard turns to his second major theme – the lobstermen’s collective decision-making process. Observing the Monhegan lobstermen’s Trap Day discussion about whether or not to postpone the first day of lobstering (due to high winds and ocean swells), the author segues into the lobstermen’s long history of collaborative decision-making. For at least a century, the fishing community there has collaborated to protect the natural resources upon which its livelihood and culture depend. In 1907, the Monhegan lobstermen agreed to ban lobstering from July to December. In subsequent years, they agreed to throw back undersized and egg-bearing lobsters and set a 600-trap limit on each lobsterman. Likewise, other lobstering communities have moved to protect the resource through a variety of similar restrictions. Here Woodard refers to the work of Jim Acheson, whose 1989 book, *Lobster Gangs of Maine*, examines the lobstermen’s self-imposed conservation strategies. Acheson argued that the lobstermen’s self-regulation challenges Garret Hardin’s “tragedy of the commons,” which states that people destroy commonly held resources because their own self-interest trumps the common good. Thus, villagers in the past over-grazed the village commons to benefit their individual self-interest, and fishermen over-fished the oceans in pursuit of their own wealth. But Acheson points out that lobstermen have long understood the need to regulate their own behavior in order to protect the resource upon which they all depend. According to Woodard, “Maine lobstermen are clearly participating not in a ‘tragedy of the commons’ but a triumph” (p. 266). Maine legislators have codified many of the lobstermen’s rules and strategies, and increasingly the state turns to the fishing communities for their further input in regulating the fisheries.

The third theme introduced in the opening Monhegan vignette is resistance to development. Although tourists swarm the island throughout the summer, they will not find the restaurants, hotels, shops, or even transportation that they might expect; and if they fall in love with the place, they will not easily find a place to buy. In 1954, the island residents put three-fourths of the island into a land trust, protecting it from future development. While this action has not solved all of Monhegan’s prob-

lems (summer residents have bought up some of the island's property, creating a scarcity of housing for year-round residents), Woodard sees in Monhegan's land trust a model for other coastal areas under threat from tourism and development. Woodard calls for attention to what remains of Maine's authentic sense of place.

This book might disappoint some historians, who may note some gaps in the history – such as women's roles in these coastal communities. Others may bemoan Woodard's citation style that omits footnotes, though he lists his extensive references in the back of the book by page number. And some historians' eyes may glaze over during the lengthy descriptions of lobster habits and habitats, and the effects of ocean currents and tides. Yet it is the interdisciplinarity that makes this book so useful. As a journalist, Woodard has his own way of integrating the work of historians, anthropologists, economists, biologists, and ecologists. He himself refers to the study as “a work of synthesis.” What we lose in historical detail we gain in interdisciplinary links that enrich this work. Anybody interested not only in the history of coastal Maine but also in how that history helps us understand the current environmental pressures and possible solutions to those pressures, will benefit from reading this engaging book.

CAROL TONER
University of Maine

Writing on Stone: Scenes from a Maine Island Life. By Christina Marsden Gillis; photographs by Peter Ralston and Foreword by Philip Conkling (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2008. Pp. 169. Cloth. \$24.95.)

Christina Marsden Gillis's *Writing on Stone: Scenes from a Maine Island Life* is a tribute to Gotts Island and to her son Benjamin Robert Gillis. Ben, whose ashes are buried in the Gotts Island cemetery, died December 26, 1991, at the age of twenty-six, when his plane crashed on the Masai Mara game preserve in Kenya. The work is a testament to the past and to the way that history and memory inform our present and – more importantly – our understanding. Although its subject is loss and death, the generative power of Gillis's creativity affirms life, even amidst the incomprehensibility of death.

Gillis chronicles the loss and burial of her son and the deaths of other people whose gravestones surround Ben's in the Gotts Island cemetery. She focuses especially upon mysterious or inexplicable deaths. Miss Elizabeth Peterson, for example, died during the winter of 1926 in a fire that destroyed her house on a remote, exposed corner of the island. According to Gillis, "the event belongs to a place that imagination cannot penetrate," and she adds, the "story is one of not-knowing" (p. 146). To Gillis, "that makes it a quintessential island tale" (p. 25).

Gillis's preoccupation with loss leads her down the island's unpaved paths to explore the foundations and ruins of houses – a common feature of Maine's coastal islands. This inspection of foundations is part of a wider concern with the materiality of existence. She captures the ineffable quality of Maine's islands through attention to the concrete and mundane in the islanders' lives without electricity or cars. Details about their Portland Stove Company woodstove, furniture, wheelbarrow, halibut dinners with friends Lance and Marjorie, puppet shows, and the island children's fanciful "elf villages" ground her metaphysical insights and her imaginative visions in reality. Her images resonate with symbolic suggestion, but Gillis does not insist on their metaphoric value. Instead, her attention to events and artifacts follows the historian's empirical methods. She processes these facts in order to understand the island's past and present.

Although her subject is death and the island is rendered through concrete objects, Gillis validates *process*: "The so-called facts remain secondary to process" (p. 140). Gillis paints a picture that the reader can view, but she also renders an experience that the reader participates in. Most of the chapter titles or subtitles are participles that emphasize process: for example, getting there, docking, boarding, gathering, going places, no trespassing, and watching the wind.

This promotion of process means that we do not feel the loss of community as acutely as we feel the loss of individuals, the loss of buildings, and the loss of ways of life. Attention to local people (present and past), their personal idiosyncrasies, and their stories build a vital community. We meet Lyford Stanley whose Maine dialect enriches the Gillis's family vocabulary with expressions such as "shorten it up," Russie [Rut] Gott who formerly ran the mail boat that transported summer people, University of Maine English Professor Ted Holmes whose summer visits date back to writer Ruth Moore's era, Uncle Mont [Montell] Gott whose house still protects the local swimming hole, Gillis's long-time neighbor Carl, and even generations of island dogs. *Writing on*

Stone is a “summer person’s” story. Ironically, summer people are the only remaining “natives” of Gotts Island. Most year-round inhabitants of Gotts Island left by the late 1920s. Gillis lives in the “Moore House,” which belonged to Philip and Lovina Moore who cobbled together a living through maintaining a weir, lobstering, farming, and running a small store with the post office. Their daughter Ruth Moore (1903-1989) immortalized Gotts Island through her popular novels from 1940 into the 1970s. The title *Writing on Stone* is taken from lines in a Moore poem. Although full of loss, *Writing on Stone* lacks the bitterness, the violence, or the anger of Moore’s depictions of the dire lives of the remaining islanders. It also lacks the shame. For example, Moore’s novel *Candlemas* portrays the shame of patronage to families who prided themselves on their self-sufficiency.

Ruth Moore’s works belong in the Realistic tradition with authors like Theodore Dreiser. Gillis (a scholar of eighteenth-century British literature), on the other hand, is indebted to the Renaissance and Neoclassical pastoral, which was often chosen for elegies. *Writing on Stone* does not overly idealize nature, but rather recalls the transformative goals of the pastoral. In Shakespeare’s pastoral *The Tempest*, for example, Prospero’s magic creates a charmed island where the characters are transformed by learning the humane virtues of compassion and forgiveness. Prospero breaks his wand to return to the “real” world, but entreats the audience to learn humane lessons from his play and to take these lessons into their “real” lives. Like a play-within-a-play, *Writing on Stone* contains concentric circles of transformative places – whose boundaries mark “the point between the before and after in our lives” (p. 2). The cemetery is ringed by a picket fence just as Gotts Island is encircled by stone. Gillis remarks that “perhaps paradoxically, the cemetery, like the island, actually delineates a circle of the living. The task is to engage in a continuing re-animation of that circle” (p. 139). Gillis and her family have been transformed by the nature and magic of Gotts Island. Her book’s re-examination of Maine island life offers her readers the possibility of a similar “re-animation.”

LAURA COWAN
University of Maine

Owascoag, Black Poynt, Mayne: History of Black Point (Scarborough) Maine, ca. 1600-1800: A Narrative. By Patricia Bowden Corey. (Rockland, Maine: Penobscot Press, 2006. Pp. xv + 200. Paper. \$20.)

Patricia Bowden Corey's *Owascoag* is an edited and narrated collection of excerpted primary sources concerning the settlement efforts and daily lives of those who came to occupy Black Point (now Scarborough), Maine, from roughly 1600 to 1800. In her brief introduction to the work that follows, Corey warns her readers, "this is not a story or a novel, although for a person with a love of history, the material should be very interesting. It is not a genealogy, although families and facts are historically correct. It is a narrative, TOLD IN THE SETTLERS OWN WORDS" (p. vii). This caveat is important for potential readers of *Owascoag*, as is her note that the prose in italics throughout the manuscript consists of direct quotes from varied settlers, and the rest of the writing is Corey's own interpretation of events. Throughout the book, Corey is primarily concerned with conveying to the reader a sense of the everyday life of the settlers in this section of southern Maine, including accounts of the increasingly heated wars and skirmishes between the white settlers of the area and the Native Americans such settlements displaced. In her introduction, Corey laments that, in the extant seventeenth and eighteenth century written history of Scarborough, too much attention has been given to wars between the colonists and Native Americans. Thus, she attempts throughout the book to demonstrate to the reader that "the development of Scarborough would involve so much more" (p. vii).

Ms. Corey organizes the book chronologically, and includes chapters and primary sources that address: discovery (beginning with Samuel de Champlain in 1605); settlement (from fishing stations and trading outposts to families and colonies); varied Indian wars, raids, attacks and attempts at peace (1665-1677; 1688-1698; 1723-1749); and the interesting seventh and final chapter, "The Rest of the Story – A Tale or Two." In her attempt to give readers glimpses of settlers' daily lives, Corey includes first-hand accounts of prominent early families such as the Cammocks, Boadens, Libbys, and Hunnewells, excerpted from letters and diaries, as well as first-hand accounts regarding initial impressions of the native populations and the native landscape. She also devotes a good deal of her book to experiences of the local clergy, colorful court battles, local arguments, and settlements regarding competing land claims, and, inevitably, the many decades of conflict between the settlers and the Native

Americans. In the three chapters dealing with these wars, particular attention is paid to garrison life and defense. In the final chapter, local Scarborough residents will delight in evidence regarding the stuff of local lore and legend regarding the murder of Mary Deering, Joshua Scotow's gravestone, and Bagnall's pot of gold.

Though there is much of interest to the casual reader, genealogist, and amateur and professional historians alike throughout the book, the author's narration is somewhat confusing at times. Often, this reader was left wanting more of Corey's own interpretation and analysis of the primary sources she selected and excerpted throughout, as well as a more cohesive overall structure that would have tied the sometimes disparate threads of the work together. To this end, some lengthier transitions between topics to place the characters and events in question within the larger imperial, colonial, and Native American historical context would have been helpful. Nonetheless, the careful reader will find helpful secondary source references scattered throughout the detailed endnotes, and those familiar with the basic outlines of Maine's early history (particularly Scarborough) will be able to follow along.

As books published by Penobscot Press are primarily funded by their authors, it will be immediately evident to readers that Ms. Corey has a strong attachment to her material, and a clear and abiding love for genealogical and primary source research concerning Black Point/Scarborough – the home of her own ancestors. Indeed, this book will be appreciated by others interested in what early settlers of the area had to say about their everyday hardships and triumphs, as well as those looking for an introduction to the wealth of primary and early secondary source material available about the white settlers of Black Point (lamentably, much less material is available regarding Native American settlements and accounts of the Indian wars). *Owascoag* is, in the author's own words, her "feeble attempt to interest you in Maine History" (p. 176). The result is more than feeble, however, as the book is an eight-year labor of love, and the outcome of a good deal of careful primary source research in local libraries, archives, and historical societies. Despite their flaws, such works inspire the amateur Maine historian in all of us to go out to our own local historical societies and begin to comb through the centuries of primary sources just waiting to be read and given new life.

LIBBY BISCHOF
University of Southern Maine

Continental Liar from the State of Maine: James G. Blaine. By Neil Rolde. (Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, 2006. Pp. xv + 368. Paper. \$20.)

In this book, Neil Rolde, a former Democratic state legislator and U.S. Senate candidate, has attempted to provide readers with a more comprehensive and broad-based biography of one of Maine's most famous political figures, James G. Blaine. Born in 1830 in West Brownsville, Pennsylvania, Blaine did not enter political life in Maine until 1854 when he assumed the editorship of the *Kennebec Journal* following his marriage in 1850 to Harriet Stanwood, an Augusta, Maine, native. The *Journal* under Blaine's influence soon became an organ of the emerging Republican Party. In 1856, Blaine attended the first national convention of this new party. Two years later, he was elected to the state House of Representatives, where his considerable political skills were soon recognized. During his second term in the Maine House, he was elevated to the speakership, which in turn provided a launching point for his run for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1862. As a member of the U. S. Congress, he generally supported hard money policies, high protective tariffs, subsidies for railroads, and the Radical Republican Reconstruction program. Six years later, Blaine was the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, a post that complemented his considerable abilities as a skilled debater and his mastery of the intricacies of parliamentary maneuvering. From this post, Blaine developed a strong following that would be central to his political activities for the remainder of his life. It was during this period that Blaine was accused of using his office for private gain. Blaine responded with an impassioned defense, which seemed to answer many of the charges leveled at him, but he never was able to completely exonerate himself. It is this "cloud" that Rolde appears to focus upon in his title and treatment of this charismatic figure who attracted such political adulation throughout his career. Rolde attempts to deal with the issue of Blaine's legacy, but like most biographers of what one admirer called "the plumed knight," he has found it a challenge to sort out the enigmatical qualities of such a memorable national icon. As secretary of state in two administrations, Blaine took a special interest in Pan-Americanism and was ahead of his time in attempting to facilitate inter-American arbitration and trade reciprocity. His legacy in this field was mixed as he was an avowed imperialist and territorial expansionist, but he should be credited with initiative and creativity in his diplomatic efforts and recognized for his advocacy of fresh ideas that paved the way for succeeding administrations. Rolde praises Blaine for his leadership in

Pan-American activities, terming it his “crowning achievement” that he was able to organize the nations of the Americas so well.

Rolde is less convincing in his treatment of Blaine’s alleged moral lapses in accepting funds from railroads. A series of allegations of corruption such as the Union Pacific, Kansas Pacific, Little Rock and Fort Sumter affairs, plus the “Mulligan Letters,” all took some (depending on the observer) toll on Blaine’s reputation in an era when public standards of ethics left something to be desired. His vigorous defense was largely successful, but the taint of corruption was never completely eliminated. Rolde does not include in the bibliography more recent studies, such as that of Norman E. Tutorow (see his *James Gillespie Blaine and the Presidency: A Documentary Study and Source Book* published in 1989 in the American University Studies series). In this analysis, Tutorow points out that Blaine’s contemporaries at the 1876 Republican National Convention may not have been so heavily influenced by the “Mulligan Letters” as later historians have asserted. One very telling basis of support for this contention is the fact that, in the same year, Blaine was appointed by Governor Seldon Connor and then later unanimously elected with votes from both parties to the U.S. Senate by the Maine Legislature. Tutorow concludes that although these “scandals” undoubtedly affected him politically, “they have been blown up out of proportion to their actual significance” (p. 37). It is perhaps also indicative that Blaine was seriously considered for the presidential nomination four more times after 1876 (and actually won the nomination in 1884) when the financial activities that some saw as damaging to his reputation were “old news.”

Blaine was chairman of the Maine Republican Party from 1859 to 1881, but his influence continued with the elevation to that post of his loyal “lieutenant,” Joseph Manley. These leaders demanded a high level of orthodoxy, and this helps explain why Joshua Chamberlain’s U.S. Senate aspirations were never realized. With the frustration of dealing with former Governor Chamberlain firmly in mind, Blaine and other Republican “bosses” in Maine feared he could not be depended upon to carry the G.O.P. banner as they expected it to be presented. One of the keys to understanding Blaine was his complete devotion to the Republican Party, which may assist in explaining the lean and uncertain legacy of the man. There are no final victories in politics, but Blaine worked harder than most to ensure his party’s predominance, an impossible goal given human passions and changing electoral standards. Nevertheless, the Republican Party of Blaine, Manley, and their successors dominated Maine politics with only brief interruptions for many years until the

“Muskie revolution” in the 1950s. Rolde was among the party activists who helped carry out this transformation of Maine politics. He has added to our knowledge of Blaine’s Maine background, but his political bias throughout the book, in addition to his title and cover with its Blaine caricature, detract from providing a more balanced view of the man and his times. In addition, his sources are largely those already in print and many are of a secondary nature. Rolde’s neglect of more recent studies also affects his view of Blaine, who remains a perplexing figure still waiting for a comprehensive, thoroughly researched, balanced analysis. Until then, this book, written in a lively style and attractively presented, will be of interest to those readers wishing to learn more about this figure from the distant past, who carried such promise throughout his long political career, but left posterity an inheritance not matched by the record.

STANLEY R. HOWE
Bethel Historical Society

“No Flies on Bill”: The Story of an Uncontrollable Old Woman, My Grandmother, Ethel “Billie” Gammon. By Darcy Wakefield. (Orono, Maine: Maine Folklife Center, 2006. Pp. x + 188. Paper \$15.)

I received a copy of *“No Flies on Bill”* and this book review assignment with considerable trepidation. Based upon my experiences working at the Sabbathday Lake Shaker community for seven years and researching the history of the Poland Spring resort for twelve, I am skeptical about the veracity and utility of oral history. There is no question it can provide colorful texture to the past, but it also can be inconsistent, conflicting, and often verging on the incredible. I was also leery how an extended oral history could be presented in more than a predictably pedantic question-answer format. Finally, there were the objectivity issues. Could a granddaughter write anything other than a hagiography of her grandmother? Moreover, could I, who knew them both, assess the book with any sort of critical eye? As I read the story on a train trip from Wilmington, Delaware, to Boston, Massachusetts, my concerns receded away one by one like each station stop.

The project began in 1995 as an assignment for an oral history class at SUNY-Buffalo. It then grew into Wakefield’s master’s thesis at Emer-

son College and eventually into the book. Tragically, she never saw it published, as she succumbed to the fatal ravages of ALS, more familiarly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, in December 2005. The oral history spans most of the twentieth century (from 1910 to 1998), two countries (Canada and the United States), and a half dozen communities (Nictaux, Nova Scotia, and Augusta, Machias, Parkman, Livermore, and Livermore Falls, Maine). In four thematic sections and thirty-two chronologically organized and engagingly written chapters, the book follows the life of Ethel "Billie" Gammon from her birth in 1916 through her early teaching career, long and loving marriage, childbearing and rearing, care giving to various family elders, and creation and dedicated oversight of the Norlands Living History Museum, a role which she resolutely filled formally from 1973 to 1991 and then informally up until the time of her final illness and death. It was as the face, voice, and spirit of Norlands that many of us interested in Maine history drifted into the orbit created by her irrepressible and inescapable gravitational force.

On to this broad canvas of a long and full life, Wakefield paints not only a loving, warts-and-all portrait of her grandmother, who must be allowed her "idiosyncrasies" (p. 39), but also an insightful account of community and family life in Maine during the middle decades of the twentieth century. From the pressing poverty of Parkman to the busy domestic life of Livermore and the invaluable volunteerism at Norlands, the book illuminates the life of an individual, whose years spanned from the granting of women's suffrage, to a time when pregnant female teachers had to resign their posts, on down to the unimaginable independence of her granddaughter's generation. To the author's great credit, Wakefield avoids the temptation merely to celebrate the accomplishments of her much admired and beloved grandmother and addresses the social implications of the "good old days." Ruminations about race, class, gender, and ethnicity yield frank discussions about changing sexual mores and sharp critiques of politically incorrect terminology at best, and less tolerant views at worst, of African Americans and poor whites.

In sum, this is a model oral history, colorful indeed, yet still coherent and critical. It is given added poignancy and a heaping dose of irony in that the granddaughter, who set out to glean the wisdom of a grandmother whose guiding principle was "to die all used up," passed away long before her time (p. 179). Although it is sad that we have lost a talented writer and accomplished oral historian, Darcy Wakefield has graced us with an instructive tribute to a *bona fide* living legend of local

and public history, the inestimable Ethel “Billie” Gammon. There could be no finer legacy left for both these remarkable Maine women, separated by a half-century of experiences, but eternally bound by the inheritance of nature and lessons of nurture, than “*No Flies on Bill.*”

DAVID RICHARDS
Northwood University
Margaret Chase Smith Library

An Upriver Passamaquoddy. By Allan J. Sockabasin. (Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, 2007, Pp. xiii + 160. Paper. \$15.)

This is a wonderful book. Forty years ago I served on a special commission, appointed by Governor Ken Curtis, to investigate and report on the feasibility of creating a human rights law for Maine. About eight of us met several times in Augusta and Portland and held formal hearings at the Penobscot reservation near Old Town, and at the Passamaquoddy reserve near Princeton. As the legislature debated the ensuing bill, Governor Curtis support our work with a ringing endorsement of human rights legislation. The bill passed, a human rights Commission was established, and in conjunction with the rising emphasis on civil rights, we gathered books on minority history subjects and presented them to several high school libraries. But this was not as effective with Native Americans as with other Maine minorities, in part because of the turmoil over the Indian Land Claims issue, and in part because the literature on Maine Indians was thin.

Today we have a new edition on the life of the Penobscot people by Frank Speck, based mainly on interviews conducted in the style of long-ago anthropologists, and we have Fannie Eckstorm’s books on place names, native legends, and river driving. But as good as they are, these works are filtered through white eyes – in Eckstorm’s case the eyes of the daughter of central Maine’s chief fur buyer, who was also involved in tribal politics. Pauleena MacDougall, who lived on the Penobscot reservation for a time, has written an excellent work on the history of the Penobscot nation, as well as a marvelous book on ritual and the life of the spirit. There are other works, of course, but nearly all of them are about the Penobscot, with very little written about the Maine’s other tribes.

Alan Sockabasin is a Passamaquoddy. He speaks and teaches the language, which is much more widely spoken than Penobscot speech. He is an artist, a musician, a tribal leader, and a lovely writer. His book is a picture of the Passamaquoddy tribe in the years before the Land Claims case. In addition to interesting anecdotes, it has fine sections on hunting, fishing, art, teaching, and his mother's cooking and her effect on him while he was growing to manhood. The book is studded with wonderful photos, in which we are able to see the ancestors of the present Passamaquoddy going through their life's work. I opened this review by calling the book "wonderful," and so it is – but what a pity we have had to wait so long.

DAVID C. SMITH
University of Maine

(Editors' Note: *Bird & Bird Professor Emeritus David C. Smith died November 7, 2009, at age 80.*)

Rug Hooking in Maine, 1838-1940. By Mildred Cole Péladeau. (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing, 2008. Pp.190. Cloth. \$39.95.)

The definitive work on the subject, Mildred Péladeau's *Rug Hooking in Maine* will be the go-to reference for many years to come. In chapter one, Péladeau builds a historical base regarding rug-making in Maine by using an 1838 booklet on the first exhibition and fair held in Portland by the Maine Charitable Mechanics Association. She demonstrates widespread practices across the state and noted that many examples were hearth rugs decorating otherwise cheerless fireplaces during the summer. Péladeau explained that the introduction of stoves brought the demise of hearth rugs and noted the rapid replacement of earlier techniques by hooked rugs after 1860. Chapter two reviews the history of Waldoboro rugs. Identified by the 1870s, they gained wide-spread recognition in the 1920s and 1930s through articles in the *Antiquarian* magazine, a major New York auction, and advertisements published in *Antiques Magazine* by Waldoboro antiques dealer Warren Weston Creamer. Péladeau also identifies key characteristics of Waldoboro rugs. In chapter three, she convincingly demonstrates that the once "hyped" Acadian rugs were, in fact, Waldoboro rugs. This was a neat bit of historical analysis.

Minnie Light, discussed in chapter four, was a superb rug hooker

and also produced manuscript floral and other patterns. Hooking from 1880 until around 1940, she was especially noted for her floral rugs. It was stated that she also designed for E. S. Frost & Co.; that claim will be examined below. Chapter five examines the life and career of Edward Sands Frost, largely based on his own self-impressed but informative autobiography. His accomplishments were impressive and his role in the development of rug pattern manufacture illustrated the entrepreneurial and inventive spirit that was a part of the American spirit at that time. Péladeau also covers Frost's 1876 transfer of business to James A. Strout and Jerre G. Shaw, who soon thereafter adopted the name E. S. Frost & Company.

In chapters six and seven, Péladeau's in-depth research about E. S. Frost & Co. and the American Rug Pattern Company reveals the complex activities and interactions between these and other rug pattern firms, such as Gibbs Manufacturing Company, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She identifies such key advances as the shift from stenciling to printing patterns, and traces the complicated and significant patent-driven competition regarding rug-hooking machines. The several, often overlapping storylines prove at times to be rather hard to follow and might have been better organized. The next four chapters cover three twentieth century Maine rug creating groups: the Sabatos Industry, the Cranberry Island Rugs, and the Sea Coast Mission Rugs. All evolved in some way from the desires and conceptions of urban advocates of the Arts and Crafts and Ethical Culture movements as they interacted with rural American indigenous craft traditions, and all were influenced by the Abnákée rug industry carried on by Helen R. Albee near Pequaket, New Hampshire. The aim was for salable indigenous products created by local artisans. The Sabatos operation, carried out by Douglas and Marion Volk, strove for a "unique rug," using handcraft, natural materials, and urbanized Native American geometric designs. The non-commercial and time intensive processes and the difficulty in finding enough local artisans resulted in a small number of extremely expensive rugs which could not provide a real economic base. The Cranberry Island industry followed a different route. "It was not developed to supplement the income of the less fortunate, but to provide [winter] entertainment or amusement for a select group, while benefiting charity" (p. 112). The well-to-do members of the Cranberry Club hired a professional arts and crafts designer, used commercial dyes, and probably enhanced posh summer homes and New York habitations. The rugs were striking, often incorporating Maine natural forms. The Sea

Coast Mission rug industry was a different phenomenon. Sponsored in the 1920s by the Mission stationed at Bar Harbor, it was developed to provide supplementary income to inhabitants of the mid-Maine coast and islands and was driven by Alice M. Peasley of South Gouldsboro. Made up of individuals scattered across the area, the operation struggled with organizational and logistical problems. While the locally-inspired rugs benefitted from growing collector sentiments for folk art objects, problems with collecting, storing and distributing materials, training and maintaining a body of hookers, and marketing the rugs hindered operations. Finally, the arrival of the Great Depression ended the effort.

The hooked rugs of Marguerite (Thompson) Zorach discussed in chapter twelve reflect a new phenomenon, the rug treated as an object of fine art. Deeply immersed in the arts, Marguerite, along with her husband William Zorach, divided her time between New York and Robinothood, Maine. Focusing on embroideries and hooked rugs, she reflected Art Nouveau and Art Deco influences, as well as Fauvist colors, in her Modernist designs. The Zorach's daughter, Dahlov Ipcar, also created a hooked rug, *The Lion and the Tiger*, a superb creation that reflected many of the characteristics of her mother's work. Péladeau concludes with a scripted pictorial "Maine Sampler" that provides a superb overview of Maine rugs. It's great.

There are only a couple troublesome issues. The assertion that Minnie Light provided patterns to E. S. Frost and Company rests on a third generation report that she sold floral patterns to E. S. Frost, which was not true. Because Light's manuscript pattern of an elk was similar to Frost's, the author argues that she provided patterns to Frost and Company. In fact, it was more like that of Gibbs Manufacturing Company, which was a later variant of Frost's design (p.43); the same is true of an elk's head pattern (p.80). Unless period primary evidence surfaces to show otherwise, the only reasonable conclusion was that Light copied Gibb's patterns. The second problem is the extensive use of long quotations rather than the author digesting the key points and presenting the information in a historical narrative. Still, those are modest flaws. Built on extensive primary research and thoughtful analysis, the detailed essays examine diverse facets of rug-making in Maine. Much of the information is new, and several of the subjects had never received major consideration before. *Rug Hooking in Maine, 1838-1940* is a significant contribution to the history of Maine's material culture.

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