

# Maine History

---

Volume 49  
Number 2 *Maine Agriculture*

Article 7

---

6-1-2015

## Book Reviews

Libby Bischof  
*University of Southern Maine*

Edward J. Martin  
*University of Maine*

Greg Rogers  
*University of Maine*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>

---

### Recommended Citation

Bischof, Libby, Edward J. Martin, and Greg Rogers. "Book Reviews." *Maine History* 49, 2 (2015): 237-243.  
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol49/iss2/7>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact [um.library.technical.services@maine.edu](mailto:um.library.technical.services@maine.edu).

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Kennebunkport: The Evolution of An American Town, Volume One, 1603-1923.* By Joyce Butler. (Kennebunkport, Maine: Louis T. Graves Memorial Public Library, 2013. Pp. 448. Cloth. \$39.95.)

In the first of her two volumes of Kennebunkport's storied past—covering the years 1603 to 1923—Joyce Butler has provided a model example of the finest sort of local history. (Editor's note, volume two, covering the years 1923-2003, was published in 2014). The lengthy volume is carefully and thoroughly researched and makes good use of a trove of rich archival materials, including letters, diaries, photographs, ledgers, notes from political and religious proceedings, and a variety of newspaper articles. The book is deeply engaging, beautifully designed and illustrated, and a testament to the civic importance of an abiding knowledge of a shared past to the folks of Kennebunkport. Indeed, it is quite evident when reading George H.W. and Barbara Bush's foreword, Richard D'Abate's preface, and Butler's own introduction, that this book was born of a deep and steadfast love of place, as well as a profound respect for the ideals of community in Kennebunkport—past, present and future. D'Abate calls the book “an extraordinary gift” (10) to the town, and Butler's four decades of experience researching and writing about Kennebunkport for a wider audience certainly come to fruition in this work, which was commissioned by Kennebunkport's Louis T. Graves Memorial Library.

The book opens with a prologue where Butler pays her historical debts to Kennebunkport's previous historical chronicler, Charles Bradbury, and summarizes his 1837 *History of Kennebunk Port*, while including relevant updated information about the early years of British exploration, Native American life, and the development of colonial Maine. She highlights the town's postwar prosperity in the early years of Maine's statehood, noting, “In 1820, Kennebunk Port's valuation was the second highest in the state; only Portland was ranked higher” (48). The volume is organized into fourteen chronological chapters covering the town's early prosperity in maritime trades, the various name and boundary changes the town experienced in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the founding of churches and schools, the development of roads, bridges, and infrastructure, colorful stories about local notables, political challenges, Kennebunkport's relations with neighboring towns,

and its place in the larger history of Maine and the nation. Highlights include Butler's discussion of the successes and pitfalls of growing tourism in the area, as well as her ample use of the stories of townspeople as told through their letters and diaries.

Butler also reckons admirably with some of the challenges and less-lauded aspects of the town's past, including an informative discussion of anti-Semitism and discrimination in local hotels catering to tourists in the early-twentieth century. She quotes an item in the July 9, 1904 issue of *The Wave*, a prominent newspaper: "There seems to be little room for the Jews at Kennebunkport this year. One of the large hotels which last year harbored large numbers of them and which was really their headquarters has given notice this year that none will be accommodated. This is as it should be if Kennebunkport is to maintain its reputation" (384). Butler then notes that by 1920, "all but one of the more than twenty hotels in the Kennebunks did not accept reservations from Jews" (384). In this same vein, she closes the volume with an account of a large Ku Klux Klan meeting that drew 800 people to the town hall in Kennebunk in October of 1921, and notes that by 1924, Maine reportedly harbored 50,000 KKK members (433). While such discriminatory practices were certainly not unique to Kennebunkport in this era, Butler's inclusion of these incidents in her study makes for a richer and more complex history of the area, and reminds readers that Maine's tourist trade, while a tremendous boost to the local and state economies, was not always open to all comers.

While this book will certainly be of keen interest to coastal Maine residents in the Kennebunkport area (who will no doubt appreciate Butler's practice of referring to modern addresses and landmarks when talking about historical events and places), its usefulness as a scholarly resource will ensure it reaches a broader audience of those who enjoy studying Maine's history as well as researchers who are interested in colonial relations, maritime trade, small-town life, and the evolution of coastal tourism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. It should also be emphasized that this volume serves as a model for the effectiveness of collaborative efforts between local historians and local institutions—in this case Butler and the town's public library—in coming together to fund and fully realize a project of this magnitude. In a state where resources must be increasingly pooled and shared, the success of *Kennebunkport: The Evolution of An American Town* will hopefully inspire future partnerships between local historians and local libraries, museums, and historical societies working to preserve and propagate

Maine's past and inspire future generations who need now, more than ever, a balanced understanding of the past to guide us forward.

LIBBY BISCHOF  
*University of Southern Maine*

*Patriot on the Kennebec: Major Reuben Colburn, Benedict Arnold and the March to Quebec, 1775.* By Mark A. York. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012. Pp. 159. Paper. \$19.99.)

Mark A. York's monograph describes his ancestors' contributions to the Continental Army's failed assault on Quebec in 1775. In *Patriot on the Kennebec: Major Reuben Colburn, Benedict Arnold and the March to Quebec, 1775* York sets to rehabilitate the reputation of Reuben Colburn. Although York's work was written to correct Kenneth Robert's earlier erroneous account, it contributes to the study of Maine during the Revolutionary War by tracing the Colburn family's role in the preparation and conduct of this military disaster.

York's title, *Patriot on the Kennebec: Major Reuben Colburn, Benedict Arnold and the March to Quebec, 1775*, cleverly encapsulates his argument. According to York, Colburn was a Patriot who lived in the Kennebec town of Pittston and did everything he could to ensure Benedict Arnold's March to and attack on Quebec would succeed. After describing the Colburn family's migration from Dunstable, Massachusetts, to Pittston, Maine, York attributes Reuben Colburn's decision to side with the Patriots to unjust British timber regulations and unfair taxation. Once hostilities commenced between Great Britain and her colonies, Colburn travelled to Cambridge, where he met George Washington and Benedict Arnold. According to York, Colburn secretly agreed to undertake preparations for the march on Quebec at this meeting. These preparations included constructing 200 bateaux at Colburn's shipyard in Pittston and employing Indian scouts to gather intelligence for the upcoming March.

In contrast to Roberts, York argues that his ancestor completed these tasks to the best of his ability. According to York, Colburn should not be blame for the bateaux's deficiencies or for unintentionally informing the British at Quebec of a pending attack. Since only green timber was available, Colburn cannot be blamed for constructing boats that leaked. "The

fact that in August in a shipbuilding region all the available dried lumber was already in use is a pivotal point.”(39) Despite the bateaux’s deficiencies, Colburn and a company of carpenters accompanied the expedition as far as the Dead River and constantly repaired the boats they constructed. These problems were exacerbated by the fact that few of the soldiers on the expedition had experience operating bateaux. Hence, Colburn cannot be blamed for either the logistical difficulties or the spoilage of the expedition’s supplies.

York also argues that it was the Indian Eneas, not Natanis (who was one of Colburn’s Indian scouts), who informed the British of the pending attack. Colburn paid Natanis, Dennis Getchell, and Samuel Berry to scout ahead of the expedition. Although Arnold accused Natanis of going ahead of the expedition and informing the British of its presence, Natanis later rejoined the expedition. For York, Colburn’s familiarity with Natanis and Natanis’s return to the expedition are sufficient proof of his innocence. “Eneas, however, never returned, and the British were forewarned because it was the unknown Eneas who was in fact, the real spy”(61). Although Arnold was able to keep his army in the field when he arrived at Quebec by purchasing supplies from the French population with his own money, it was not enough to ensure the attack’s success. The poor health of Arnold’s men precluded a siege, while British preparations and the death of General Montgomery foiled the attack on Quebec. According to York, the failure of the attack and the association with Arnold, an infamous traitor, plagued Colburn after the war. Colburn was not able to secure payment for his services from either Federalist or Republican administrations. Colburn’s attempts to obtain compensation were also hampered by poor record-keeping. After the Embargo of 1807, the nation’s failure to compensate Colburn for his services contributed to this patriotic shipbuilder’s financial distress.

Although York’s book provides a valuable background information for visitors to Colburn House State Historic Site, his editor should have been more thorough. Careful proof reading would have eliminated the numerous contractions that plague York’s narrative. Despite these minor errors, York has constructed an engaging account of his ancestors role in Arnold’s March and an informative reference work that will answer any questions the general public might have about the Colburn House or its owner.

EDWARD J. MARTIN  
*University of Maine*

*Canoe Indians of Down East Maine*. By William A. Haviland. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012. Pp. 128. Paper. \$19.99)

William A. Haviland's *Canoe Indians of Down East Maine* offers a highly readable and concise account of over four centuries of history of the Etchemin (Maliseet and Passamaquoddy) Indians inhabiting the forests, lakes, rivers, and shores of the region between the Kennebec River and the St. John River. Haviland, an accomplished anthropologist, author, and activist for indigenous rights, combines history, archaeology, and anthropology in four chronologically arranged chapters. The author's background as an advocate also tints the text as it is made clear from the dedication page that "all the Wabanaki people" are the "real heroes of this story." The reoccurring theme of the work is that the Etchemin have been able to successfully adapt to changing conditions, ranging from the climate change of the post-Ice Age era to the emergence of a tourist-based economy in coastal Maine.

The first chapter of the book primarily utilizes archaeological evidence to trace the material culture, foodways, mobility, and burial practices of the regional peoples that would become the Etchemin. The narrative begins in the Paleolithic period and goes to the moment before contact with the French in the early years of the seventeenth century. Haviland's synthesis of archaeological work carried out over the past several decades depicts a dynamic people who adjusted to changing food sources and were in contact with other regional Indians as far afield as the Great Lakes. By about the first century BC they were beginning to abandon their year round coastal homes for a more mobile way of life that depended upon foraging, trade, and beaver hunting. The second chapter reconstructs the lived culture of the Etchemin by making use of not only archaeological sources, but also oral histories that have been collected by scholars such as Fannie Eckstrom and Frank G. Speck. Highly mobile communities made use of birch bark canoes to travel between seasonal villages and meeting spots. Diets were largely based on seasonably availabilities, different labor tasks fell along gender lines, and the core of the community was the family clan, based on a flexible notion of descent. It was generally a society of minimal violence as sachems or sagamos acted more as spokesmen than decision makers while warfare was not expansionist in nature. Attention is also given to the Etchemin world view, including the belief in inner spirits, their origin myth, and shamanism. Haviland concludes that before the colonial period, the Etchemin successfully survived in a sustainable manner.

The book's third chapter, entitled "Defending the Homeland," chronicles the Etchemin struggles to adapt to the post-European contact world of settlement, war, and disease. While the Etchemin were able to maintain a relatively peaceful existence with their French neighbors to the north and east, relations with the English and their Iroquois allies are characterized as being almost entirely hostile. Haviland provides a clear narrative of the potentially confusing series of colonial wars, raids, skirmishes, and treaties between the Down East Indians and their New England neighbors. It is during this period that the Etchemin were able to adapt politically by entering into the Mawoosheen Confederacy with the eastern Abenaki and later the Wabanaki Confederacy with the Micmac, Penobscot, and other regional eastern Algonquin speakers. Despite diplomatic and demographic pressures, the Etchemin were able to preserve their sovereignty into the latter part of the eighteenth century. The fourth chapter begins with the influx of settlers into Maine after the end of the Seven Years War. During the American Revolution the Wabanaki peoples inhabited a borderland between the warring British peoples. The author mentions service to the revolutionary cause by Penobscot couriers and warriors as well as by Etchemins working with Colonel John Allen at Machias. The latter part of this chapter details adaptation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and makes use of individual and family biographies. Perhaps the most fascinating is that of Frank Loring, the "cultural survivalist" (106) whose mobility enabled him to work as a storyteller, entertainer, guide, craftsman, and tribal advocate. The book closes with a brief overview of the contentious state and federal litigation between the Wabanaki and the state of Maine and the United States that resulted in the Maine Indian Claims Settlement of 1980, placing it in the context of the continued survival and adaptation.

Given the sweeping scope of the work, historians will be sure to find some points of contention with the author. If the Etchemin are the heroes of this story, then the Anglo-Americans and English interlopers of northern New England are surely the villains. One suspects that cooperation and accommodation had to exist at least at the individual level as the neighboring communities engaged in trade and other social connections. The violence of the colonial period is usually represented as part of an effort to assign guilt rather than a mutual phenomenon. For instance the 1694 Oyster River raid by a combined French and Wabanaki force that resulted in the massacre of over one hundred settlers is nowhere to be found. As historian David Ghere points out, some (but certainly not all) Indian-settler violence was the result of shared misun-

derstandings and cultural confusion regarding treaties, land sales, and language.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this minor criticism, Haviland succeeds in crafting an accessible history of the Etchemin for casual readers and students of history alike. His passion for the people in question certainly comes out in the text, which all the while maintains a clear thesis regarding the ability of the Etchemin to adapt to changing conditions. It would be equally at home on the shelves of those interested in Indian and Maine history in addition to being of value in a classroom setting. The book is full of excellent maps, photos, charts, and engravings and provides a select bibliography for those interested in pursuing parts of the Etchemin story in more detail.

GREG ROGERS  
*University of Maine*

NOTE

1. David L. Ghere, "Early Wars, 1678-1720," in *Maine: The Pine Tree State from Pre-History to the Present*, ed. Richard Judd et al. (Orono: University of Maine Press, 2011), 121.