

Maine History

Volume 41
Number 3 *James Berry Vickery III, 1917-1997*

Article 8

10-1-2002

Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Bennett, Randall H., William David Barry, and Charles W. Horne. "Book Reviews." *Maine History* 41, 3 (2002): 253-261. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol41/iss3/8>

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BOOK REVIEWS

History of Belfast in the 20th Century. By Jay Davis and Tim Hughes, with Megan Pinette. (Belfast, ME: Belfast History Project, 2002. Pp. xxvi & 561. Hardcover \$90.00 and \$5.00 shipping. Order from Tim Hughes, 14 Ocean Street, Belfast, ME 04915.)

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a wave of interest in local history developed as a result of the nation's centennial celebration. In Maine numerous town histories were published during this time, but only a very small number came close to matching the scope of research and writing represented by Joseph Williamson's monumental two-volume *History of the City of Belfast, Maine*, originally issued in 1877 and 1913, and since reprinted twice. A distinguished Belfast jurist and historian whose authoritative *Bibliography of the State of Maine* (1896) remains an essential research tool. Williamson laid the foundation for the recently published update to his own work, titled, appropriately, *History of Belfast in the 20th Century*. Running to nearly 600 pages and containing over 500 illustrations, this new survey of the Waldo County seaport and shire town took seven years to compile under the auspices of the Belfast History Project, an effort led by physician Tim Hughes and journalist Jay Davis with support from local historians, townspeople, scholars, and, among other funding sources, the Maine Humanities Council.

Like Williamson's Belfast histories, this new book mirrors the earlier volumes in its professionalism and breadth of coverage, the latter made possible by an exhaustive review of twentieth-century newspaper files of the *Republican Journal* and *Waldo Independent*. Supplementing this important source material are numerous first-person accounts, including a number of recent interviews with older residents in the community. Interesting as well as informative, these narrations are interspersed throughout the book and help convey what it was really like to live in Belfast after 1900. Packed with fascinating details, the book is written in a lively, easygoing style that is a marked departure from the dry recountings of Williamson's day.

The book begins with a prologue entitled "Hussey's Historic Ride," whereupon we find ourselves touring Belfast's elm-shaded streets in Waterville attorney Charles Hussey's steam-powered automobile, the first motorcar to visit the community. With its machine foundry, wharves,

railroad, shoe factory, prosperous farms, and lumber and shipbuilding industries, Belfast's prosperous past was then still very much in evidence, but, as we soon learn, major changes and difficult times were ahead for Maine's seventh city. Much of the book is devoted to a discussion of how this once-thriving seaport was transformed into the blue-collar "Broiler Capital of the World" following World War II, a period when local unemployment nevertheless remained high and Belfast ranked as one of the poorest communities in the East. In the 1980s the poultry industry unraveled and then disappeared altogether, opening the way for an economic and cultural revitalization led by a wave of newcomers. Like its richer neighbor, Camden, Belfast has since been re-discovered, and new jobs and the threat of suburban sprawl remain hot topics.

The authors have wisely divided the main text of this huge book into three sections or "eras," each beginning with a concise synopsis and a timeline summarizing important local events year by year, followed by chapters that relate to dominant themes within each era. The usual subjects found in town histories—religion, education, transportation, and industry—are here, but this history stands apart from others of its class in its willingness to address topics of a more controversial nature that influenced the character of this "city" of just over 6,000. The 1933 murders of four Belfast citizens by "crazy Adrian Jones," the various tensions resulting from downtown Belfast's transformation into a center for arts-related activities in the 1990s, the sometimes overbearing ways of the multi national credit card corporation MBNA (a major player in the region's economy), and efforts in 2001 to prevent Wal-Mart from building in the town are just a few among many such intriguing subjects.

Not surprisingly, the *History of Belfast in the 20th Century* concludes with a series of appendixes that cover everything from lost landmarks and unusual weather statistics to lists of municipal officials, veterans, and local sports champions. Leaving little, if anything, out, the authors have also inserted a useful bibliography and lengthy index, the latter an essential tool for locating specifics within the voluminous material presented in this fine work. Anyone with an interest in Belfast or, for that matter, in the history of Maine during the last century should own this book. For those planning similar publications on their own towns, it will serve as an excellent model of how local history can be recorded and preserved in ways that are both entertaining and instructive.

RANDALL H. BENNETT
Bethel Historical Society

At Home With The General: A Visit to the Joshua L. Chamberlain Museum. By Allan M. Levinsky (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 2001. Pp. 48. 19 black & white illustrations. Paperback \$6.95.)

Portland's Allan M. Levinsky, former television broadcaster and newspaper editor, has written a short, illustrated, and useful monograph on the Brunswick home of General Joshua L. Chamberlain (1828-1914). The history of the house will be as interesting and important to some readers as its association with Maine's most celebrated Civil War hero will be to others. Indeed, the impressive Victorian structure began as a humble Cape Cod style house. Built for retired mariner Jesse Pierce in 1825, it was originally situated on Brunswick's Potter Street. Enlarged with an ell and barn a few years later, it went through seven more owners and renters including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow before Chamberlain bought it in 1859.

A native of Brewer, Joshua Chamberlain graduated from Bowdoin College and Bangor Theological Seminary before securing a position as instructor of religion at Bowdoin in 1855. That same year he married the talented Frances C. Adams (1825-1905). In short order they had two children, Grace (1856-1937) and Harold (1858-1928), and had barely settled at 4 Potter Street when the Civil War erupted. Chamberlain, as most Mainers know, volunteered and led the Twentieth Maine in the regiment's profound moment of glory on the slopes of Little Round Top. Later he was seriously wounded, promoted to Brigadier General, and took part in the Confederate surrender ceremony at Appomattox.

Upon returning to Maine, General Chamberlain was elected Governor (1867-1871), was made president of Bowdoin (1871-1883), and helped quell the Greenback rebellion in Augusta. During these heady times the family house was moved to the more select corner of Potter and Maine Streets and thoroughly remodeled by the Chamberlains. Paralleling the family's success, the house grew in size and style. However, business reverses led Chamberlain to accept a job as surveyor of the port of Portland. His move to the city and the death of his wife led him to buy a new house in Portland on Ocean Avenue in 1909. He resided there until his death from an old war wound in 1914.

The house on 266 Maine Street in Brunswick was left to daughter Grace and it stayed in the family until 1939. Thereafter it became a tenement, mostly occupied by students. Through neglect the house deteriorated, almost to the point of demolition until the Pejepscot Historical Society purchased it in 1983. Restored to its former glory, it is now a historic house museum run by the Society.

Using photographs and floor plans, Levinsky takes the reader on a room-by-room tour of the premises explaining the original use of each and their present function. While most of the rooms are used to display Chamberlain materials (including his saddle, boots, and the bullet that caused his fatal wound), attention is paid to the buildings earlier and later years. Indeed, the author notes the history of visitors to the house including Helen Keller. Weaving oral and written accounts together with descriptions of each room, Levinsky provides the student, scholar, and general visitor with a solid, enjoyable guide to the complex history of a Maine home and its colorful occupants.

WILLIAM DAVID BARRY
Maine Historical Society

“Do Your Job!” An Illustrated Bicentennial History of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, 1800-2000. By Richard E. Winslow III. (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall for the Portsmouth Marine Society, 2000. Pp. xxii & 305. Cloth \$30.00.)

For two hundred years the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, has proven its worth in the defense of the United States. Persevering through technological change, appropriation cuts, closure orders, political neglect, downsizing, and wartime production schedules—not to mention the most recent round of state boundary dispute discussions—the Shipyard has remained economically competitive where other long-established naval shipyards have been forced to close in the post World War II period. In celebration of this longevity, Richard H. Winslow III has written a full-length history that now takes its place among four earlier books on the “Yard,” the first having appeared in 1876. Winslow’s *Bicentennial History* is also the fifth work the author has created for the Portsmouth Marine Society, an organization that has, with this volume, published twenty-six books concerning the maritime heritage of the Piscataqua area.

Named for its proximity to the nearest post and customs office in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to which U.S. Navy mail was directed, the Naval Shipyard (until 1945, the “Portsmouth Navy Yard”) was officially established on fifty-eight acre Fernald’s Island on 12 June 1800. This island site, connected to Kittery by a bridge in 1825, was particularly well

suiting for this purpose because it had easy access to the sea and was easily defended by outer harbor forts. The availability of an experienced workforce of shipwrights, as well as nearby resources of stone, wood, and naval stores, were also determining factors in the decision to locate the first government-owned shipyard here.

In his coverage of the first hundred years of the Yard's history, the author demonstrates his skill at unearthing information from a wide variety of sources by providing interesting details concerning the careers of Navy Yard-built ships, such as the role played by the USS *Saratoga* (launched in 1842) in the opening of Japan to the West in the mid-1850s. Likewise, he notes a number of U.S. Naval vessels that have temporarily called the Yard home—in particular the venerable USS *Constitution*, which was overhauled and restored for service at the Yard between 1857 and 1860. During the Civil War, an acceleration of facility improvements and ship construction took place during which time the Yard's civilian workforce jumped from 207 employees in 1860 to 2,563 in May of 1865. The author proudly points out that Yard vessels and naval captains participated in virtually every major and minor Civil War naval expedition, including the decisive sinking of the British-built Confederate raider *Alabama* by the USS *Kearsarge* in the English Channel off Cherbourg, France, on 19 June 1864.

A recurring theme in this well-written history is the Yard's struggle for survival during times of relative peace, a problem dealt with as recently as 1999 by the "outleasing" of underutilized buildings for non-military commercial purposes. Without a steady stream of contracts or appropriations from Washington, the period from the end of the Civil War to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 witnessed serious cutbacks in the Yard's workforce, with a consequent decline in the local economy as former naval employees sought jobs elsewhere. Besides providing for an improved defense of Portsmouth Harbor and helping to maintain the new "steel navy," the Shipyard housed, fed, and otherwise cared for some 1,600 Spanish prisoners of war during the country's brief conflict with Spain.

During the years from 1900 to 2000 the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard truly became "a part of the international scene," and the author devotes more than half of the book to this important century in the Yard's history. The choice of the Yard in 1905 to host negotiations that ended the war between Russia and Japan, resulting in the famous "Treaty of Portsmouth," seems prescient when one considers the Yard's impending transformation into the Navy's foremost center for submarine design,

development, and construction—a subject thoroughly covered in the author's 1985 book, *Portsmouth-Built: Submarines of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard* (also published by the Portsmouth Marine Society). During World War II alone, the Yard constructed over seventy submarines, with four actually launched on the same day. The November 1969 launch of the nuclear powered USS *Sand Lance*, after four years on the ways, brought to a close a distinguished tradition at the Yard. Over the next two decades nearly every aspect of the Yard's activities would come under close scrutiny, with many of its components modified, reduced, or shut down as a result of the Navy's changing priorities.

Under its new status as an overhaul and repair facility, the Yard has remained open to the present, albeit under the shadow of continued military base closures around the country. The thorny question of the exact legal location of the Shipyard, exacerbated by Maine's policy of taxing the earnings of Yard employee spouses, even though they worked in New Hampshire, is covered well in the last section of the book; a resolution, in Maine's favor, was not brought down by the Supreme Court until after this history was published. The author concludes the book with a series of valuable appendices, including lists of ships and submarines built or overhauled here during the past two centuries. Containing a fascinating collection of old photographs and maps, "*Do Your Job!*" *An Illustrated Bicentennial History of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard* is a well-conceived volume that provides a lasting record of our oldest Navy yard's many accomplishments.

RANDALL H. BENNETT
Bethel Historical Society

Super U: The History and Politics of the University of Maine System. By James Libby. (Rockport, ME: Picton Press, 2000. Pp. 194. Hardcover \$19.99.)

When the University of Maine System (UMS) was established in 1968, a new layer of bureaucracy comprised of a single chancellor and board of trustees was entrusted to bring order and rationality to Maine's land grant university state-run colleges. Thirty-three years later, many of the original objectives of the University of Maine System, a.k.a. the Super U, remain unrealized or only partially fulfilled. Concerns about un-

necessary duplication of services and institutions, raising the percentage of Mainers who seek higher education, geographically broadening the availability of graduate study programs, and developing a smoothly operating community college system helped create the UMS, but all of these concerns are still problems that challenge the current UMS “powers-that-be.”

Professor James Libby attempts to explain how the UMS has developed in *Super U: The History and Politics of the University of Maine System*. Using research models, comparisons to other state systems, and considerable historical detail, Libby analyzes how the UMS, with its unified system of governance, has developed and survived over the years, despite falling short of some of its original goals.

This is a book that can be read with two frames of mind. The academic frame will appreciate Libby’s careful use of models and comparisons, placing the UMS under the microscope and attempting to understand its structure and workings. The taxpayer frame will be looking for the simple explanation for Super U’s survival. Such an explanation must take into account unfulfilled goals, the costs of maintaining the chancellor’s office, repeated reports calling for restructuring of the system, and controversies between the UMS officials and the many governors and legislatures that have come and gone since the Super U started.

That is why *Super U* needs to be read carefully. The intermingling of historical accounts with political and institutional analysis is sometimes confusing. Understanding how the UMS has worked over the years does not necessarily answer why the UMS has survived for so long. Even though Libby was a state senator with a clearcut political point of view, he is also a scholar who does not want to pass final judgment without turning over all the academic stones. For those who only want to know why the Super U is still here after all these years, Libby’s historical accounts provide at least some clues. Libby details the experiences of the five governors and seven chancellors who have served over the lifetime of the UMS. It should be noted that while the governor appoints the UMS trustees, it is the trustees who choose the chancellor.

In spite of the chancellor’s basic independence from the governor, there has been a tendency for the chancellors’ tenures to roughly parallel the governors’ terms. That point, stressed by Libby, underscores the importance of the various controversies presented in his historical account. The more academically inclined reader might wonder if it matters that the first chancellor, Donald McNeil, encountered controversy when he purchased an expensive home in Cape Elizabeth, far from most of the

Super U's campuses. Does it matter that McNeil's successor, Patrick McCarthy, attempted to quit and create a UMS-sanctioned teaching job? Does it matter that the next chancellor, Jack Freeman, quit after just two weeks on the job? Does it matter that Freeman's successor, Robert Woodbury, entered office under a cloud of suspicion about a plan to move some University of Maine graduate programs to the University of Southern Maine? Does it matter that Woodbury's successor, J. Michael Orenduff, was arguably forced out for wanting on-line educational courses?

It matters when one understands that Chancellor McNeil became associated with the free spending years of the governor who established the Super U, Kenneth Curtis, and that Curtis' economically tight-fisted successor, James Longley, did what he could to push McNeil out. It matters when one realizes that Chancellor McCarthy lacked a doctorate when he vainly sought that teaching position, ended up staying in office through virtually all of Governor Joseph Brennan's tenure and became bogged down with Brennan in the turf war over graduate studies at the Southern Maine and Orono campuses. It matters when one sees that Chancellor Freeman was a potential political issue in the 1986 gubernatorial campaign because of objections to his salary increase. It matters when it becomes clear that Chancellor Woodbury, with incoming Governor John McKernan's concurrence, scuttled the plan to transfer some graduate studies from the University of Maine to Southern Maine, despite supporting this proposal as University of Southern Maine president, prior to becoming chancellor. It matters when one considers that while Chancellor Orenduff shared a high-tech orientation with Governor Angus King, Orenduff's advocacy of a separate on-line "college" was ahead of its time and widely opposed within the UMS campuses.

With his historical accounts and political and institutional analysis, Libby finally takes the reader to the year 2000. At that point Governor Angus King had principally deferred to Chancellor Terrance MacTaggart in the latter's efforts to raise enrollments and increase participation by Maine students in all of the UMS campuses. Libby describes the emergence of Visiting Boards for the campuses and contrasts the mounting number of reports and proposals to reform and restructure the UMS, including the ironic support of former Governor Curtis for a plan to defer more to the individual campuses and decentralize the system.

In the end, Libby applies his careful academic analysis and historical detail to a final report card on how the Super U has done in fulfilling its original goals. Not surprisingly the Libby report card is mixed, suggest-

ing that the Super U is probably here to stay, but not without possible reforms in the future.

The academic reader will likely applaud the care Libby has placed into his analysis. The taxpayer reader will realize that in the end Libby's book is more about how the Super U has developed rather than why it has survived. Even if a taxpayer is tempted to believe that modern bureaucracies simply survive despite all odds against them, a definitive explanation for the Super U's survival will have to come, if ever, in a future book. Professor Libby, with his demonstrated knowledge of the Super U, has proven himself well qualified to write that book.

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