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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

James G. Blaine: Architect of Empire. By Edward P. Crapol, (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2000).

Professor Edward Crapol of William and Mary College has produced a concise, very readable biography of Blaine that focuses primarily on the Mainer's interests and activities as they related to foreign policy. The book is the fourth publication in a series called "Biographies in American Foreign Policy," which is edited by Joseph A. Fry. The target audience is undergraduate and graduate students, but given Crapol's clear writing style and the lack of professional jargon, this book will no doubt enjoy a much broader appeal.

Crapol's interpretation of Blaine's foreign policy is implicit in the subtitle of the book. Architects are those who create the blueprints for a structure; their work precedes actual construction. Architects are known for their rational adjustment of means to ends. Without that kind of conscious, purposeful activity, buildings will not stand. The same might be said for empires.

And it is the purposeful construction of blueprints for empire that Crapol goes about documenting. He argues that Blaine was, like William Seward before him, a cosmopolitan with a sophisticated understanding of the needs of the American political economy. Whether it was Blaine's support for the gold standard, reciprocity, the acquisition of Hawai'i, or his Pan-Americanism, Crapol argues that the Mainer was astutely aware that the United States had to have greater access to foreign markets if the country was to come into its own as a great power.

Blaine was, therefore, a transitional figure, making the shift, for example, from unqualified support for protection to a more sophisticated and savvy policy of reciprocity which would sacrifice some narrow or marginal economic interests for the good of the economy as a whole. And what Blaine believed the overall economy needed, was open access to more markets, opportunities for investment, and other accouterments of informal empire.

This interpretation may not sit well with some. After all, there are still many Americans, scholarly and otherwise, who just cannot quite mouth the word "empire," when it comes to the history of the United

States, especially when the issue or enterprise in question is not formal colonialism, but less direct and explicit exercise of power. And yet it is the latter, the informal mechanism of empire, which Crapol does such a good job of documenting.

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Ancient Sagadahoc. By E. J. Chandler. (Privately published, 1997. Pp. 256. Paper.)

Maine Rubicon: Downeast Settlers During the American Revolution. By John Howard Ahlin. (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1966, 3rd printing, 1997. Pp. 224. Paper. \$19.50.)

Chandler's book exhibits a huge passion for his subject, the history of the Sagadahoc from 1602 to 1676, defined broadly but imprecisely as that area of coastal Maine at the mouth of the Kennebec River. With its potential for easy profit from fish and fur, this region lured such early Europeans as George Popham, whose 1607 colony lasted less than a year. Chandler's heroes are the Englishmen who established fishing stations and trading posts on the islands of Monhegan and Damariscove. Not only did these fishermen welcome the Pilgrims to the New World, the book's cover proclaims, but without their generosity, the Pilgrims "might not have been successful." In buttressing his arguments, Chandler shows his familiarity not only with historical, genealogical, and archaeological sources of information, but he also demonstrates an intimate knowledge of the geography of the region.

Unfortunately, Chandler's book does not convey his knowledge to his readers. The material is poorly organized, and his logic cannot be followed easily. While the book does include endnotes, bibliography, and index, it has only two maps (one serving as a kind of template for place names used in successive periods). The maps are poorly reproduced, and Chandler assumes, for example, that the reader knows that Cushnoc is now Augusta. Trying to make sense of the early geography of Maine, I gave up and pulled out DeLorme's *Maine Atlas*, which helped considerably.

In the process of explaining the complicated story of conflicting land claims between would-be Sagadahoc settlers and profiteers, Chandler used the Parker family as a kind of organizing device. It does not work

well, even though several generations of Parkers were involved in the region's early history. Chandler often interrupts his narrative for several paragraphs to explain, for example, which John Parker is which. Chandler might have done better to have centered his narrative around the Gorges family.

For me, the two best chapters in Chandler's book were those describing the plantations at Winter Harbor and Richmond Island, which were established between 1635 and 1640. Here Chandler has some solid contemporary sources to draw upon. These chapters include an interesting discussion of how a fishing station operated and some thoughtful definitions of such items as a "stage" (a kind of warehouse, according to Chandler). Still, the book does not serve as a good introduction to the area. Confused, I finally turned to Edwin Churchill's more succinct and readable chapter in *Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present* (1995) to straighten out just what was really important in the history of seventeenth-century Maine.

John H. Ahlin's *Maine Rubicon*, on the other hand, can be read for both pleasure and information and requires no outside help. Organized with care and clarity, it is also written well and includes excellent maps. It focuses narrowly on the history of "eastern Sagadahoc," defined as the area from Penobscot Bay eastward, in the period from 1775 to 1783. (Obviously Chandler and Ahlin defined "Sagadahoc" quite differently.) Ahlin's book concerns particularly the actions of the new English towns in the St. John and Machias river valleys during the American Revolution. It is an engaging combination of social history, military history, and biography.

At the outset of the Revolution, the people of eastern Maine contended with uncertainty about land titles, scarcity of food and other provisions, isolation from the rest of Massachusetts, unpredictable Indians, and unpredictable neighbors in Nova Scotia. These difficult circumstances were unlikely to produce the kind of rabid nationalism that erupted in Machias on June 12, 1775. On that day a group of men from Machias, guns firing, attacked and captured the British ship *Margaretta*. This was the Maine Rubicon. Ahlin explains "the open and actively aggressive behavior of these people" as the result of their frontier conditioning. "Vulnerable to British attack . . . , they stood alone, weak and poorly armed . . . but holding to a feeling of infant nationalism despite apparently overwhelmingly odds against them." The capture of the *Margaretta* was the last great victory for Down-East Maine. A rash attack on Fort Cumberland in Nova Scotia eighteen months later ended in disas-

ter. John Allan's subsequent expedition to the St. John River was also a dismal failure. Even the privateers plying the Maine coast, Ahlin suggests, did not greatly benefit the American cause.

Ahlin deserves high praise for his ability to grasp the mentality, not just of the American rebels but also the Nova Scotia loyalists and the four major Indian groups in Maine. His chapter titled "The Indians: Allan-Francklin Rivalry" contrasts the different approaches of John Allan, Superintendent of the Eastern Indians, with that of Michael Francklin, his counterpart in Nova Scotia, as they vied for the help of the Indians.

The Maine Rubicon belongs in every library in Maine. *Ancient Sagadahoc* has a narrower appeal. It will chiefly benefit those readers already equipped with a strong understanding of the region's seventeenth-century history and archaeology.

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The AIDS Project: A History. By William David Barry, edited by Susan Cummings-Lawrence. (Portland, Maine: X-Press Copy Services, 1997. Pp. 107. Paper).

The AIDS Project: A History is an inspiring chronicle of the efforts of a group of Portland area community activists, gay and straight, to forge Maine's response to the terrifying public health crisis caused by the spread of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The book focuses on the evolution of the AIDS Project (TAP) from its origins in 1985 to its arrival as a well-respected non-profit organization with a full-time staff of fifteen and a network of more than two hundred volunteers delivering client services and outreach information to thousands of Maine citizens.

These days, nearly two decades into the epidemic and in an era in which much of the paranoia that once surrounded the subject has been dispelled by public education, it is easy to forget how utterly frightening the subject of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was in the early 1980s. Two decades ago the virus was spreading rapidly through the population by means of unprotected sexual contact, the sharing of hypodermic needles by drug users, and the dissemination of contaminated blood products. This was a time when the nation's news

media at first ignored the subject and later spread hysteria about it. Government officials in Washington refused to acknowledge the extent of the threat or to mobilize the federal health establishment to combat it. In this period of denial and inaction, it was clear that the affected communities would have to mobilize to save themselves from impending disaster. *The AIDS Project: A History* is one of the few published accounts describing a community's response to the threat posed by HIV.

The author, William David Barry, begins by sketching the history of Maine's gay and lesbian community before the AIDS epidemic. Given that in Maine, as in many parts of America, homosexual activity was a crime until the 1970s, the paucity of documentation is not surprising. Barry identifies a number of prominent gay or lesbian authors or artists who lived or summered in Maine, such as Marsden Hartley, Winslow Homer, May Sarton, and Mary Ellen Chase. He proceeds to describe the social and political ferment caused by the advent of the gay liberation movement in the 1970s and the struggle played out at the Maine Legislature in Augusta to enact meaningful anti-discrimination laws.

As the 1980s began, AIDS seemed to many Maine people to be a distant threat posed primarily in urban centers like New York and San Francisco, and its victims were perceived to be almost exclusively gay men. In 1982 this complacency came to an abrupt end when two Maine residents were confirmed as AIDS victims. The state's health-care professionals had virtually no training or resources to deal with the rapidly evolving epidemic. In May 1983, thirteen individuals, including leaders of the gay and lesbian and health care communities in Portland, held a meeting "to map out strategies for public education." Thus began a grassroots mobilization to cope with the emerging crisis. Pamphlets outlining safe sex guidelines were published and distributed. Our Books, a gay and lesbian bookstore located on Pine Street in Portland, became the site of a series of meetings, and in short order *Our Paper* was established to serve as a source of information and support for Maine's geographically dispersed gay and lesbian community. Clearly an enormous public education challenge lay ahead. With the support of Ingraham Volunteers, Inc., a part-time AIDS hotline was created in August 1985. The hotline led to recognition that some sort of formal organization was needed to provide an array of client services and outreach programs.

The rest of the book describes a succession of executive directors and board presidents who led TAP through its organizational and funding challenges and forged partnerships with leaders of the health care, religious, political, and business communities. Barry's narrative is enhanced

by a number of photographs, an extensive list of footnote citations, a useful list of acronyms, and an index of names.

Perhaps the most compelling feature of Barry's book is its description of the scores of individuals who contributed to the struggle against AIDS. Among these were noted gay novelist and essayist John Preston, community outreach specialist Vincent Boulanger, AIDS educator Peaches Bass, gay activist Fred Berger, nursing professor Kristen Kreamer, and businesswoman Jean Gannett Hawley. Most remarkable was eighty-year-old Frances W. Peabody, who had been active in child welfare and historic preservation in Maine for decades. When her grandson was diagnosed with AIDS in 1983, Frances Peabody joined the struggle. Over the following decade, she became in many ways the heart and soul of TAP, serving as a board member, volunteer, and fund-raiser. At a public celebration of her ninetieth birthday in 1993, "Frannie" spoke for many others when she said: "No part of the [AIDS support] job is easy, because it's a sad and tragic situation. But if you feel you can help people, then that keeps you going. As a result of this activity, I've learned a great deal about life, and about other people. I'd say I've received ten times more than I've given."

The AIDS Project of Portland began as a precariously funded hotline. It briefly flirted with disaster due to financial and management problems in the late 1980s, but by its tenth Anniversary in 1995, it had become a focused and well-respected agency with an annual operating budget of \$750,000. By then, an estimated 290 residents of Maine had died of AIDS, and state health authorities estimated that more than 2,500 were HIV positive. As the AIDS Project begins its second decade of operation, the challenge is bigger than ever.

Although this book is relatively narrow in scope, focusing on one institution rather than the larger question of how AIDS has changed Maine society or how treatment and services are made available to AIDS sufferers, it is nonetheless an important contribution. The challenge now posed to other scholars is to build on this study and to add to the growing literature on the gay and lesbian community in the State of Maine and across America.

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