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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Maine Sea Fisheries: The Rise and Fall of a Native Industry, 1830-1890. By Wayne O'Leary. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996. Pp. Xii + 391. Maps, Illustrations. Cloth. \$55. Paper. \$24.95.)

Maine Sea Fisheries relates the rise and decline of the a deep-sea fishery in the nineteenth century. O'Leary analyses how this industry grew to be the nation's most productive fishery in the 1860s, and he details the subsequent decline into insignificance by the 1890s. He examines the Maine sea fisheries at local, regional, and national levels, painting a bleak picture of market forces ruthlessly squeezing local fishermen out of competition with larger, better-capitalized firms. O'Leary traced the rise and fall of the Maine sea fishery in numerous studies published by federal, state, and even Canadian governments. In so doing, he is able to create a compelling picture of Maine's importance as a fishing region, and of the forces that promoted and later eroded the smaller independent fishing operations "down east."

In the process of studying Maine's sea fisheries, O'Leary also examines the nature of American capitalism. He considers the sea fishery as an industry rather than as a cultural and social phenomenon, thus avoiding the romanticism that plagues much maritime history. The result is a stark look at the life of a fisherman. No "rugged individuals," engaged in heroic feats, will be found in this book; instead one finds a hazardous industry in which one storm might leave a port with dozens of widows and scores of fatherless children. Chapter 8, "the Hard and Dangerous Life," analyzes the hazards fishermen and fishing communities faced. O'Leary finds it was the hardships that fishermen endured, combined with market economics and technological change, that led to the decline of the state's sea fisheries.

O'Leary emphasizes the positive role of the federal government in promoting the American sea fishery. The cod bounty, established by Congress in the 1790s, provided Maine's poorer fishermen with the funds that allowed them to keep their vessels

repaired and outfitted without restoring entirely to credit. As market forces propelled the nation toward a laissez-faire commercial policy, the cod bounty became more difficult to defend. In 1866 Congress abolished it, stripping smaller operators of a valuable source of income at a time when technological changes required them to build more modern and more expensive vessels. The demise of the bounty system forced Maine's smaller and poorer fishing ports out of competition with larger and better-capitalized firms in Portland, Gloucester, and Boston.

Technological change hastened the decline of independent fishing entrepreneurs. The use of nets and seines could increase one vessel's catch ten-fold, but Maine fishermen were slow to accept the new technology, a fact O'Leary attributes to geographic isolation and lack of concentrated capital. Massachusetts ports adopted the new technology far more quickly, largely because they were better able to finance technological change than Maine's isolated and smaller fishing enterprises. Yet at no point does O'Leary bemoan the "progress" that increasingly denied Mainers access to the sea fisheries; his analysis leaves that judgment to the reader.

O'Leary has conducted extensive research, putting various governmental reports to good use as the factual backbone of this extensively footnoted work. Parallel with this massive research, he has set forth on a rigorous intellectual journey; O'Leary is not constrained by the romantic temptations of local or maritime history, but instead places Maine's sea fisheries within an economic and historical perspective on capitalism. The overall effect is highly satisfactory, and recommended for those with a serious interest in the topic. (This is no read for the timid.) *Maine Sea Fisheries* is an effective and at times compelling study of humanity's relationship to the sea.

Joshua M. Smith
University of Maine

A Lantern in the Wind: The Life of Mary Ellen Chase. By Elienne Squire. (Santa Barbara, California: Fithian Press, 1995. Pp. 208. Paper. \$10.95.)

Elienne Squire, a former English student of Mary Ellen Chase at Smith College, documents her teacher's achievements in the form of a literary biography with related stories about Chase's life. Squire's book is based on Chase's diaries and her letters to her family, her close friends, and her editors and publishers. Book reviews and newspaper articles about Chase's novels and her letters to her readers also serve as a way to reexamine her writings and her lively personality. The result depicts her life as a harmonious union of a ambitions: a prolific novelist and an enthusiastic teacher at the University of Minnesota and Smith College.

Mary Ellen Chase was one of the most widely-read authors in the 1940s. Her book, *Windswept*, published in 1941, was acclaimed a literary success. Its royalties alone helped keep Chase affluent. Interestingly, Chase wrote this book not for the money or her early ambition as a writer, but for the simple spiritual joy that she experienced at her rural cottage, also called *Windswept*, and her desire to capture the beauty of the scene.

Squire reminds us several times that Chase needed privacy for the creation of her works. That was the very reason why Chase was driven to the setting of *Windswept*, a house on Petit Manan Point, where she found "a precipitous headland, cut by the fierce tides, the only sounds those of wind and water" (p. 116). The view of Schoodic Point and Mount Cadillac and the charm of the simple country life inspired Chase. She named the house *Windswept* because the trees were "bright, windswept, sparse, gaunt from many gales of wind" (p. 117). She focuses on an immigrant family's three generations, showing how they adjusted to their new environment and how their culture and traditions benefitted the local society. The house symbolizes the spiritual roots planted by the newcomers.

Writing about Maine people was exactly what Chase wanted to do, ever since she and her father visited Sarah Orne Jewett in

1899 at her house in South Berwick. This meeting was an inspiring moment for the twelve-year-old. To Jewett's question, "What do you mean to do when you grow up," Chase answered, "I want to write books as you do...good books, too, all about Maine" (p. 36). Chase's admiration for Jewett lasted a lifetime, and she achieved her dream of writing books about Maine.

Squire notes that Jewett's *Deephaven* influenced Chase's novels. Like Jewett, who described Deephaven as a once-prosperous seaport, Chase wrote about changes in the fictional village of Petersport in her novel, *Mary Peters*. The main character witnessed a sad transformation in a village neglected by locals who could not resist their materialistic desires. However, Squire comments, Chase's objective was not to chronicle the decline in Maine moral values, but to show how Maine people struggled to adjust to change at the beginning of the twentieth century.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., seemed to be the only male friend Chase was attracted to. Chase's friendship with Rockefeller started in 1949 when he asked her to write a biography of his deceased wife. As her work progressed, the friendship became deeper. Squire observes that Chase sensed some hint of romance in Rockefeller's letters, and she dreamed of his marriage proposal, although she would have refused it politely. This fantasy was crushed when Rockefeller confessed his new love for the widow of a college classmate. Chase confided in her diary: "They are very happy and I rejoice" (p. 152).

Another significant factor in Chase's success was her life-long friendship with Eleanor Shipley Duckett. She met Duckett at Smith College, where Chase taught literature and Bible study and Duckett taught classical languages and literature. Until Chase's death in 1973 they stayed together as soul mates, colleagues, and travel companions. The two women followed the example established in Jewett's relation with Annie Fields; they were united in a spiritual bond, not just a sexual attraction. Mary Ellen Chase, as portrayed in this book, was an invincible writer who overcame severe illness, injury, and the death of close friends and family members. Although Chase produced a

number of novels and short stories about Maine, its history, and its people, she is not mentioned in a recent anthology of Maine literature entitled *Maine Speaks* (1989). Squire's biography, on the other hand, introduces the reader to Chase's works in chronological order and reminds us of her important contribution to preserving Maine's cultural legacy.

Keiko Takahashi
University of Maine

Red Diamond Regiment: The 17th Maine Infantry, 1862-1865. By William B. Jordan, Jr. (Shippensburg, PA: White Maine Publishing Company, 1996. Pp. x + 438. Cloth. \$30.)

"Bayonet! Forward": My Civil War Reminiscences. By Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. (Gettysburg, PA: Stan Clark Military Books, 1994. Pp. 328. Cloth \$25.)

William B. Jordan, Jr. has given us a thoroughly researched and engaging account of a regiment that has needed a more comprehensive history for some time. Jordan met the challenge with a narrative that not only details the whereabouts of the regiment distinguished by its conspicuous red diamond insignia but provides a broad sweep of life for the ordinary Civil War soldier.

No one will finish this book retaining any semblance of the romanticism that surrounds the Civil War. Jordan documents the constant battle fatigue, the overpowering smell of rotting flesh, the diseases, the lack of sanitation, the thoroughly unsavory food, the terrible suffering resulting from often mortal wounds, and the constant attention to burying the mutilated dead. He misses little in his account of longings for the Pine Tree State, of the importance of news from home, of the exploitation

by sutlers, and of the occasional assembling to witness yet another execution for desertion.

One of the particular strengths of the book is Jordan's extended accounts of fraternization between northern and southern troops, especially when officers were absent. Troops developed a system to communicate, trade tobacco and coffee, and exchange newspapers. Card playing was a regular activity, and both sides listened attentively to the other's band. They even agreed to fire warning shots high over the opposing side's heads to indicate when hostilities were on again.

Jordan has not neglected to relate ongoing events in Maine, as they related to the regiment. He records recruitment efforts, supply shipments, the arrival of dead and wounded in Portland, and various local campaigns to support the war effort. The regiment served with the Army of the Potomac from Fredericksburg to Appomattox. During this three-year period, it suffered more casualties than any other Maine unit. It played a significant role at Gettysburg by withstanding Hood's onslaught, and it had its metal fully tested at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Petersburg.

Jordan's book contains extensive endnotes, a respectable bibliography, and a very useful regimental roster, which indicates that most troops were raised from Cumberland, York, Oxford, and Androscoggin counties. Photographs include some of the Regiment's leading figures. Jordan's book should be the standard source for this regiment for some time.

In "*Bayonet! Forward,*" Stan Clark provides readers with a convenient collection of speeches and recollections by Joshua Chamberlain, who in the words of the editor "is fast becoming one of America's greatest loved folk heroes." Brewer-born Chamberlain was educated at Bowdoin and Bangor Theological Seminary. A professor of rhetoric, oratory, and modern languages at Bowdoin, he had no military training prior to the Civil War, but absorbed better than most the essentials of strategic warfare soon after his induction. He became one of the most honored and decorated commanders of the war. Based principally on this record, he was easily elected four times governor of

Maine, and later became Bowdoin president and a leading figure in Maine until his death in 1914.

This book provides a useful selection of Chamberlain's memories of the war from Fredericksburg to the Grand Review of the Army of the Potomac. It also includes a assortment of some of his most significant pronouncements from the dedication of the Twentieth Maine monument at Gettysburg to his oration on the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. All of this is supplemented by several maps and over a dozen photographs.

For those wishing a convenient source of some of Chamberlain's most significant statements, this book is indispensable.

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