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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Sanford and Springvale, Maine, in the Days of Fred Philpot (1985. Pp. 104. Second edition, revised, 1993); *Alfred, Maine: The Shakers and the Village* (1986. Pp. 104. Revised edition, 1992); *Sanford and Springvale, Maine: A Backward Glance* (1988. Pp. 112); *A Cluster of Maine Villages: Sanford and Springvale, Acton, Shapleigh and Alfred* (1991. Pp. 104); *Villages On The Mousam: Sanford and Springvale, Maine* (1995. Pp. 104), by Harland H. Eastman (Springvale, Maine, by the author).

Public fascination with historical photographs is seemingly boundless. Interest in such matters has resulted in the publication of increasing numbers of illustrated volumes depicting life throughout America, as it was lived a century or more ago. In Maine, books based entirely on collections of old and often rare views of communities, both large and small, began to proliferate some two decades ago at the time of the national Bicentennial. Interest in such works continues unabated. Among the recently issued studies of this type is a particularly valuable series of five volumes begun in 1985. Compiled and captioned by one of the state's foremost antiquarian book dealers, Harland H. Eastman, these books concentrate on the York County towns of Sanford (which includes Springvale village), Alfred, Shapleigh, and Acton. Running roughly a hundred pages each, they provide "a backward glance" at scenes that, in many cases, have been entirely obliterated by the passage of time.

Four of Eastman's books contain similar subject matter and are based almost entirely on the work of Fred C. Philpot (1856-1925), a Limerick, Maine, native whose photographs demonstrate a fine mastery of lighting, composition, and subject matter. The author reviewed hundreds of negatives and photos owned by local historical societies, libraries, and private collectors before making the final selection for his books; based on the

quality and high level of interest of those he did choose, this task must have been a difficult one. Thankfully, as well, a format was chosen that allowed for almost full-page reproductions of each scene, which enables readers to examine numerous details usually too small to notice. Accompanied by lengthy captions that reveal the author's expertise on matters of local history, the photographs depict people, places, buildings, and events in a handful of adjoining southern Maine communities.

Through Eastman's commentary, the past comes alive once again. Some of the most interesting photos depict celebrations, work scenes, store interiors, leisure-time activities, and the aftermaths of fires and floods, but every view contains something of significance to warrant its inclusion. Pointing out numerous changes that have taken place since the photos were taken, the author does not hesitate to mention that much of the historic character of Sanford, and Springvale village in particular, was destroyed in the name of progress when urban renewal swept through Maine in the late 1960s and early 1970s. An underlying reason for publishing many of the photos seems to be to caution other Maine towns against following similar actions. The Alfred, Maine, volume is perhaps the most valuable of the five reviewed here, for the first fifty pages contain a remarkable selection of photographs showing the former Shaker village, which existed from 1793 to 1931 on the outskirts of Alfred Village. In assembling this section, the author was able to tap into the priceless collection of photographs located at Sabbathday Lake, now the last functioning religious community of its type in the world. In the author's introduction, the late Sister Mildred Barker, who once resided at Alfred, is given credit for identifying many of the people in these rare Shaker photos. A very useful "bird's-eye view" of the Alfred Shaker village with some forty-four buildings identified precedes the photos and provides context for many of them. The second half of the book features classic photos of Alfred village, which became York County's "shiretown" in 1806. Like those in the previously mentioned volumes, each view presents a fascinating look at village life many years ago. The inclusion of a period map of this village, and one

for each of the villages in the other volumes, would have been helpful in locating each scene or building mentioned. Perhaps if future editions of these books are published, this feature could be incorporated. This minor criticism aside, these volumes represent a valuable contribution to Maine history.

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Ties of Common Blood: History of Maine's Northeastern Boundary Dispute with Great Britain. By Geraldine Tidd Scott. (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1992. Pp. 445. \$32 Paper.)

Geraldine Tidd Scott's *Ties of Common Blood* covers familiar ground for those who have studied one of the most troubling issues of the early years of Maine statehood. When the American War for Independence ended, the Treaty of 1783 was supposed to have determined the boundaries between the new United States and what became Canada. The maps that were used in drafting the treaty were somehow misplaced, so that a 12,000 square mile area of what in the British view was "miserable pine swamp" became an international issue that could easily have led to war.

Resentment over the British occupation of eastern Maine during the war of 1812 and the arrival of statehood in 1820 combined to bring the northeast boundary to center stage. States' rights became an issue for Maine (and Massachusetts, which still controlled Maine's northern timberlands) as the

national government struggled to settle a vexing issue of Anglo-American relations. Border skirmishes between Maine and the Province of New Brunswick, culminating in the bloodless "Aroostook War" of 1839, made settlement increasingly necessary.

The arbitration proposal of the Dutch King in 1831, the rise of colorful Maine political agitators who figure prominently in the controversy, such as William Pitt Preble and Francis O.J. Smith, the alleged use of "slush funds" to influence Maine newspaper opinion, the clash of competing political agendas of the Maine Whigs and Democrats, the building of fortifications and the arming of men, plus much more, are all part this fascinating story. The fact that Daniel Webster and Lord Ashburton appeared to agree so quickly after such prolonged struggle, and settle this issue in 1842, is just one of many surprising "twists" in this incredible chapter of American diplomatic history. What motivated both men politically and diplomatically is another part of this remarkable story as well.

Maine was finally persuaded to accept a compromise based on the belief that the British claim was what was intended in 1783. Later evidence, once other maps used in 1783 were conveniently found in 1843 after the treaty's ratification, showed that the whole disputed area was supposed to have been Maine's.

This is the first comprehensive discussion of Maine's role in the settlement of its boundaries since Henry S. Burrage's *Maine in the Northeastern Boundary Dispute*, which appeared in 1919. Ms. Scott has produced a study based on a wide variety of sources. Her bibliography is extensive, and the book contains some very useful appendices, ranging from census records of Aroostook County to lists of saw mills in New Brunswick.

The book is not without flaws, however. It is weak in its analysis of evidence and conflicting claims and motives. It also contains many long quotations, which clutter the text without clear intent. The author erroneously claims that Toronto, not Quebec City, was the capital of Lower Canada (p. 4) and for some reason takes an entire paragraph out of a *New England Quarterly* article by J. Chris Arndt and uses it to end Chapter 1.

This reviewer would also have enjoyed the book more had the author “fleshed out” the leading characters in this dispute and described the scene more completely. As the book stands, the participants are one-dimensional and the whole of northern Maine appears nondescript. To those of us who have visited several of the sites discussed in the book, it seems a shame that readers are left without an appreciation of the area.

These reservations aside, the book will continue to be a useful source for those interested in learning about Maine’s role in a controversy which is all but forgotten today.

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