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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

A History of Maine Built Automobiles, 1834-1934. Edited by Richard and Nancy Fraser. (By the editors, P.O. Box 39, East Poland, Maine. 1991. Cloth \$43.95. Paper. \$24.95, plus \$4.00 postage and handling.)

A History of Maine Built Automobiles is a reference book containing primary source material on Maine-built automobiles during the first century of their construction and use. The book is divided into three parts, but the first, "Maine Built Automobiles [by years]," is the largest and most useful. The entries are predominately newspaper and periodical articles organized chronologically and then alphabetically by the name of the vehicle, company, or inventor. Included also are automobile manufacturing companies located elsewhere which were organized under Maine's then lenient incorporation law. The bulk of the articles are from the *Horseless Age*, with a few taken from similar trade periodicals. Newspapers are also a major source. Most heavily relied upon are the Lewiston newspapers, the *Journal* and the *Sun*.

The beginning date, 1834, is the year in which Bowdoin student Cyrus Hamlin constructed a working model of a self-propelled, steam-powered vehicle. This model is still on display in the physics laboratory at Bowdoin, and it was demonstrated as late as the 1940s. The editors credit Maine Supreme Court Judge Richard D. Rice of Hallowell with designing, commissioning the construction, and operating the first steam-powered automobile in 1858. It was not until the 1890s that numerous inventive individuals began constructing steam and then gasoline-powered motor cars, and making efforts to manufacture them for sale.

Edwin F. Field of Lewiston built a steam carriage in 1887 and in 1903 organized a company to manufacture steam cars. However, he died in 1909 without apparently having produced any additional vehicles. Field's work may have had some

influence on Kingfield's F.E. and F.O. Stanley, who saw the carriage in 1887. In 1902, the twin brothers organized the Stanley Motor Carriage Company under Maine law, although the plant was located in Newton, Massachusetts.

The first Maine inventor to construct vehicles for sale in Maine was evidently Alvin Orlando Lombard of Waterville. Lombard first built two steam passenger vehicles, but then switched to manufacturing huge, lag-tracked log-haulers. The company built eighty-three of the "Lombards," switching from steam to gasoline, and then to diesel before operations ceased in 1934. Casco Motors of Sanford built gasoline-powered motor trucks from 1922 to 1929. Numerous companies built a small number of steam and gasoline-powered passenger cars, with concentrations in Portland, Augusta, Kittery, and Lewiston.

Part Two is entitled "Early Maine Automobile Laws and Prohibition of Autos in Certain Towns." It consists of the legislative debate over regulating automobiles for the years 1903 through 1925 and of special state and local laws limiting or prohibiting the use of automobiles in certain towns, such as Bar Harbor. Part Three, "Automobile Topics of Interest," includes eight sections covering racing, early highways, Maine-made auto accessories, license plates, chauffeur licensing, title requirements, and trivia. Section Two, "Hill Climbs and Automobile Racing," documents how important the level sand beach at Old Orchard was to the promotion of the automobile, as it was later to airplanes. Section Five, "History of Maine License Plates," by Philip Dolan, consists of a five-page narrative of the evolution of the license plate and a nineteen-page alphabetical listing of every type of license plate ever issued in the state.

A History of Maine Built Automobiles represents a remarkable amount of diligent digging for original material on the early automobile in Maine. As a collection of primary sources, it does not offer thorough, definitive data on any individual topic, with the exception of license plates. However, its four-page index provides relatively easy access to the raw material with which researchers may begin a study of a particular inventor or vehicle, and local historians may learn what automobiles were built in

their communities. The Frasers deserve a great deal of credit for achieving their goal of bringing “to light this early part of Maine history which was almost lost.”

Joel Webb Eastman
University of Southern Maine

Crossing Lines: Histories of Jews and Gentiles in Three Communities.
By Judith Goldstein. (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992. Pp. 320. Cloth. \$23.00.)

Belying the notion tMaine is ethnically homogenous and its history can be understood by studying the Anglo Protestant majority, books like C. Stewart Doty’s *Acadian Hard Times* and James Mundy’s *Hard Times, Hard Men* provide, respectively, compelling histories of Maine’s Franco-Americans and Irish-Americans. Judith Goldstein offers another missing chapter of Maine history in her finely researched and powerfully presented book, *Crossing Lines: Histories of Jews and Gentiles in Three Communities*.

Examining the communities of Bangor, Mount Desert, and Calais, Goldstein explores the history of the Jewish community in each location. While she details the impact of such luminaries as Jacob H. Schiff and Henry Morgenthau, Sr., one of the many strengths of this book is its attention to the presence and influence of less-known people like Dr. Lawrence Cutler, Abraham Rudman, and Sarah and Arthur Unobskey.

Providing richly detailed social histories, Goldstein separately examines each of the three communities. She highlights Bangor’s burgeoning fame as America’s lumber port, its distinguished architectural style, and its commitment to cultivating a special place as a commercial and cultural oasis on the edge of the great northern woods. Into this city, ruled by Protestant values and traditions, came Russian Jews, searching for a place

where they could establish homes and a life after escaping the violence and poverty of Russia and Russian-dominated Poland. Never more than a significant minority, the Jewish population of Bangor numbered 168 families with 838 individuals by 1910. These numbers represent a small reflection of the tremendous surge of immigrants coming to the United States from eastern Europe.

While small in number, Bangor's Jewish community made its mark. Beginning as peddlers, the Russian immigrants climbed the economic scale, becoming shopkeepers, manufacturers, tailors, and skilled laborers. Along the way they created their own community, ruled by its own values and traditions. Congregation Beth Israel was first organized in the 1880s and dedicated its first synagogue in 1897.

Yet this small community was not without serious challenges and struggles. Retaining their identity through observance of religious laws and rituals was never easy. Breaking through Bangor's rigid class lines proved to be an undertaking many decades in the making. It would be persons of the second and third generations, such as Abraham Stern, Mimi Stern, and Lawrence and Catherine Cutler, who would establish new possibilities for Bangor's Jewish community. These later generations embodied the prospects only imagined by early immigrants.

A different experience for Jews, Bar Harbor's history provides a provocative angle on the intersection of wealth, power, and nativism. Ranking second only to Newport, Rhode Island, Bar Harbor became the destination of choice for the wealthy, well-heeled, well-established families seeking respite from their urban cities and homes. By the late 1890s, summer residents, or "rusticators," came to enjoy the spectacular natural beauty of Mount Desert in extravagant summer "cottages." Yet as Goldstein points out, simply being rich did not guarantee access to the circles of power and influence which followed wealth. Like Newport and Saratoga, the Catskills, and the Adirondacks, Bar Harbor did not welcome even wealthy and successful Jews as members of their summer playground. On Mount Desert it was only the "exceptional" Jew that found respect and tolerance, but

even then, as Goldstein discovered, only one at a time. Jacob Schiff and Henry Morgenthau, Sr., were able to gain entree into the inner circles of this summer community. Yet beyond them, only a few powerful Jewish leaders and businessmen tried the summer life in Bar Harbor, and only then intermittently.

Bar Harbor's year-round Jewish population remained small. The handful of Jewish immigrants were enterprising but not particularly cohesive. They did not establish any Jewish institutions. Yet like their Gentile counterparts, they were able to cash in on the booming summer trade, finding success and recognition as merchants and business owners.

In Calais, Goldstein found a very different picture of another small Jewish community. Led for many years by Sarah Unobskey and her sons, Arthur, William, and Charles, the Jewish community in Calais found a tolerant city that showed no overt signs of anti-Semitism. The Unobskey family, business leaders in Calais, owned a clothing department store and real estate. They shaped and led a Jewish community that by the 1920s was cohesive and successful enough to establish its own synagogue. Congregation Chaim Yosef, named for Sarah Unobskey's deceased husband, was in 1926 the first and only synagogue in Washington County. The vigor of the Calais Jewish community could not overcome the economic decline of the St. Croix region. By 1974 Congregation Chaim Yosef was closed. The Unobskey's business, resident on Main Street for three generations, shut down when Sarah's grandson moved to Bangor.

Goldstein restores to Maine history the story and lives of people too often ignored and overlooked. *Crossing Lines* gives us history from the viewpoint of those whose perspective is often obscured. This book reminds us that even regions like northern New England are not as homogeneous as they are presumed to be. Maine history is richer for the details, descriptions, memories, and activities that *Crossing Lines* restores to their rightful place.

Celeste DeRoche
University of Maine

Revolution Downeast: The War for American Independence. By James S. Leamon. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. Pp. xviii + 302. Cloth \$29.95.)

Professor Leamon's account of Maine's Revolutionary period is a jewel; it covers all aspects — economic, religious, and military — of those troubled years. His extensive bibliography and illuminating footnotes attest to the thoroughness of his research, extending over two decades. The list of secondary sources is exhaustive, including many unpublished studies. He also took full advantage of recent specialized studies by historians like Gordon Kershaw, Stephen Marino, John Ahlin, Alan Taylor, Ronald Banks, and George Rawlyk. This is truly the first comprehensive study of the whole period, and it is doubtful that any future historian will be able to surpass it.

The author first sets the stage with an overview of Maine in the early 1760s. A small, scattered population of 23,000 stretched along the coast from Kittery to Machias and up the rivers of western and central Maine short distances. Falmouth was the largest town, heavily dependent upon the mast and West Indian trades. All of Maine was heavily dependent upon Boston. The Congregational church was dominant. Merchants topped the social and economic ladder, with slaves at the bottom. In between were the clergy, lawyers, doctors, lesser merchants, artisans, craftsmen, farmers, tenants, and day laborers. Although all incorporated towns were entitled to send representatives to the governing body — the General Court — only a few did. Maine was grossly underrepresented throughout the entire period. Time, distance, travel difficulties, and expense militated against sending men to Boston.

When Great Britain turned to the American colonies for help in defraying the costs of colonial administration and defense with the Sugar Act (1764) and the Stamp Act and Townshend acts (1768), Maine's response closely followed Boston's. In Falmouth a "respectable" mob seized the stamps and consigned them to a bonfire. Enoch Ilsley's "smuggled" W.I. goods, which had been confiscated by customs officials, were "rescued" by

friends. In Scarborough, the town's wealthiest citizen, Richard King, had his properties ransacked and destroyed by a mob made up of his debtors. He was harassed for years at great financial loss to his interests.

The Coercive acts of the 1770s rallied Mainers against the Mother Country. After the British closed the port of Boston in retaliation for the Tea Party, Maine's towns aided their capital by sending firewood, fish, and livestock to nearby ports for overland distribution to Boston. When a boycott of British goods was proposed by the Boston Committee of Correspondence, there was a very uneven response. However, in Gorham and Brunswick, it was very positive; soon vigilantes led by Phinney (Gorham) and Thompson (Brunswick) were scouring the countryside terrorizing individuals suspected of supporting the Coercive acts.

Samuel Thompson was the principal figure in the capture of Lt. Henry Mowat of the *Canceaux* in May 1775 – much to the discomfort of Falmouth's leading citizens. The events surrounding the burning of Falmouth by the same Mowat in October of that year are fully covered, including the looting of Falmouth houses by visiting militiamen who did nothing to deter Mowat's incendiaries.

Maine was vulnerable once the war started – the coastal area and river towns to British warships, and the interior to Indians. Defense by the militia was suspect. Always there were problems of time, supply, pay, family responsibilities, a disinclination to serve away from home, lack of training, and other complications. Too often militias were ineffective, as at Bagaduce in 1779. Some successes would be recorded at Boothbay, Wiscasset, and especially Machias, where the able John Allan was in charge.

Allan, a Nova Scotia refugee, was appointed superintendent of Indian affairs and under difficult circumstances did a magnificent job of keeping the Indians friendly throughout the war. Less successful were his efforts and those of fellow refugee Jonathan Eddy, when they took the offensive against Nova

Scotia. There were some notable privateering successes, but others were nothing but highly camouflaged piracy.

Bagaduce, 1779, saw the arrival of British forces to establish a capital for a new colony, New Ireland, to be populated by Tories. It evoked an immediate but disastrous response from Massachusetts. This worst American naval disaster prior to Pearl Harbor is usually blamed on a divided and indecisive leadership. Leamon faults the militia as well — men who were incompetent and knew their leaders were too, who avoided service when summoned, who deserted at every opportunity, and who ran when attacked. Certainly there was a shared responsibility from the top to bottom.

British control at Bagaduce brought an intensification of Tory activities in the whole Penobscot region. It was a bitter kind of warfare — neighbor against neighbor. Not many lives were lost, but homes were destroyed, gardens and crops ruined, and livestock driven away or killed. Very much the same kind of warfare was being waged in Georgia and South Carolina after the British had captured Savannah and Charleston, and Leamon often compares the two situations on the fringes of the conflict.

One of the disastrous consequences of the war was that trade and fishing were badly disrupted, to the great distress of Maine people. Inflation was a serious problem for everybody — most especially those on fixed incomes, including servicemen and their families, widows, and clergymen. Creditor-debtor relationships were topsy-turvy. Heavy taxes, frequent government requisitions, food shortages, personal antagonisms — including patriot-Tory differences — combined to make this period chaotic. The effects were not quickly dispelled.

When Massachusetts turned to constitution making, it seemed as though most Mainers could have cared less. As always, Maine was underrepresented. When the document was presented to the towns for approval, Mainers turned out in pitifully small numbers. Leamon says, “self-preservation — economic and military” was of more concern than “the form of a state government to which few towns even sent representatives — but on which they were so dependent.”

In 1785 the initial move to establish Maine as a new state began with a handful of Portland-Gorham gentry, men who hoped to gain political clout free from Boston domination. Exceptions were out-of-towners Samuel Thompson and William Widgery. Never large, the movement fizzled after a few poorly attended conventions held in Portland. Concessions by Massachusetts, the radicalism of Shays's Rebellion, and the prospects of federal union helped spell its demise. When separation again became an issue after the turn of the century it would have Jeffersonian leadership – William King, John Holmes, John Chandler, Albion Parris, and William Pitt Preble, with strong support among religious dissenters (Baptists, Methodists) and recent arrivals that added to the burgeoning population in the back country and coastal communities down east.

Between 1780 and 1820 Maine's population grew rapidly. Much was heard of squatter's rights and absentee landowners, Methodists, Baptists, Universalists, Christians, Shakers, Jeffersonians, and Federalists, as Maine's struggle for greater freedom in all aspects of life intensified. The old order was challenged on all fronts. In fact, Leamon's parting words indicate that this change in the direction of freedom was the "most enduring legacy of the Revolution."

The immensity and complexity of Leamon's task in writing this book are surpassed only by the brilliance of the accomplishment. This is indeed a whale of a book!

Robert M. York
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Night Boat to New England. By Edwin L. Dunbaugh. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992. Contributions in Economics and Economic History no. 128. Pp. xviii + 370. Illustrations, maps, drawings, appendix, index. Cloth \$49.95.)

With the publication of *Night Boat to New England*, Edwin L. Dunbaugh provides a fitting backdrop to his earlier work, *The Era of the Joy Line: A Saga of Steamboating on Long Island Sound*, published in 1982. Professor of humanities at Webb Institute of Naval Architecture in Glen Cove, New York, Dunbaugh tells in his carefully researched, comprehensive history the story of the overnight steamers that plied the waters of Long Island Sound, Massachusetts Bay, and the coast of Maine during the Victorian era. A great number of these grandly appointed and famous steamers are illustrated in this volume, which was published under the auspices of the Marine Museum at Fall River.

The subject of many books published over the years, steam navigation along the New England coast has long held a fascination. The period covered by the book is a lengthy one – from 1807 to approximately 1901 – but the author successfully weaves a chronological narrative that incorporates a great deal of material about many of the vessels themselves and the companies that operated them. Beginning with the early steamboat era, the author moves quickly into a period when railroad feeder lines became important and widespread. Other chapters cover the Vanderbilt era of the 1840s, the years of the Fall River Line and stability before the Civil War, and the later influence of wealthy entrepreneurs like Jim Fisk and Jay Gould. A section covering the depression and recovery of 1873-1880 is particularly instructive in shedding light on how New England's steamship lines (and railroads) were affected by the worst financial panic to hit America since the 1850s. Those with a serious interest in steam navigation will no doubt find something of appeal on every page, but thanks to Dunbaugh's easy writing style and solid research, the exciting and often dramatic story of these coastal steamers will appeal to the general reader as well.

Night Boat to New England chronicles the colorful stories of many of the better-known overnight steamers, starting out with Elihu Bunker's experimental *Fulton*, which began running between New York and New Haven in 1816, to the Fall River Line's palatial *Priscilla*, which took its maiden voyage out of Fall River in June 1894. Those with a specific interest in the Maine Coast will not be disappointed, for the book includes a number of sections dealing with the once-profitable routes along the Maine shore. Here one can read of such early vessels as the *Patent*, which in 1823 ran a regular schedule from Boston to Bath, with stops at Portland, under the newly formed Kennebec Steam Navigation Company. Competition soon developed, as other Maine-based enterprises were created, including the Boston and Bangor Steamship Company, the Eastern Steamboat Mail Company, the Portland Steam Packet Company, and the Eastport Eastern Steamboat Company, among others. The author delves into the importance of Maine's rivers, most especially the Kennebec and Penobscot, to the livelihood of these various companies. Dunbaugh's commentary ends rather abruptly at the turn of the century, when the Long Island Sound lines were absorbed into the New Haven Railroad's system and the Maine Coast lines were purchased by Charles Wyman Morse of Bath, who combined them into the well-known Eastern Steamship Company. But for those seeking further information on these steamship lines and their twentieth-century activities, the author has included a short but useful bibliographical essay. This volume is highly recommended to anyone interested in the history of transportation along Maine's coastal waters.

Randall H. Bennett
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