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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

The American Genealogist, 1932-1965. 33 volumes, 9-41, bound in 11 volumes. (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1989. Approximately ten thousand pp. (roughly 912 pages per volume). \$91.50 per volume, \$840.00 per set, postpaid, Picton Press, Box 1111, Camden, ME 04843.

The last two decades of historical scholarship have witnessed a renewed interest in the importance of genealogical source material for biographical studies, as well as more general investigations into the peopling of the American nation. Long unavailable except in specialized libraries, certain collected works and genealogical journals are once again reappearing in new editions for a whole new audience of researchers. The recent reprinting of the hard-to-find years of *The American Genealogist* has once again brought Picton Press of Camden, Maine, into the forefront of genealogical publishing.

Often called TAG, this quarterly journal was founded by Donald Lines Jacobus in 1932 to provide quality research coverage on early immigrant families throughout the American colonies, with particular emphasis on New England. One of America's greatest genealogists, Jacobus was already well known by 1932 for his New Haven, Connecticut, research published in serial form as the *New Haven Genealogical Magazine* from 1922 to 1932. To maintain the good will won under the NHGM title, Jacobus began numbering TAG with Volume 9. The Picton Press reprint, produced in the high quality fashion (acid-free paper, case bound, Smyth sewn, hard cover bindings in linen with attractive stampings on the front cover and spine) for which this publisher has become well known, once more makes this gold mine of information available to those with an interest in the early settlement period of this country.

As David L. Greene, currently co-editor of the journal, writes in his introduction to the reprint:

The revolution that took place in genealogy in the 1930's was directed toward a critical use of sources and a dependence only on contemporary records and documents for genealogical facts. Difficult problems in identification were always to be discussed in full, and everything was to be carefully documented or documentable. Tradition was rejected except as a source of clues. In *The American Genealogist* these scholars unflinchingly exposed the errors of the past and showed through careful argumentation how genealogy should be done.

The results of this revisionist approach not only improved standards for genealogical research but produced a wealth of published material that remains a sound basis for similar studies today.

Within the thirty-three reprinted volumes of TAG there exists a veritable encyclopedia of source material, including nearly a thousand compiled articles on early colonial American families, four hundred scholarly studies on the ancestry abroad of American families, numerous source records arranged by state and county, and evaluations of genealogical writers of the day. In addition, the pages of TAG encompass a long series of articles on the principles of genealogy and research, as well as a valuable index, compiled by Jacobus, for genealogical periodicals published between 1932 and 1946. Besides the new introduction to the series by Mr. Greene, Picton Press has added a new consolidated subject index to the final volume, in addition to thousands of "Continued on..." and "Continued from..." notations throughout the reprint. Anyone with an interest in the early history of the Northeast will want to purchase or at least refer to this significant reprint. Libraries with collections of genealogical and local history material will surely want to acquire the entire set.

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The Western Abenakis of Vermont, 1600-1800: War, Migration, and the Survival of an Indian People. By Colin Calloway. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990. Pp. xxv + 346. Cloth \$29.95.

With his most recent book, titled *The Western Abenakis of Vermont, 1600-1800*, British historian Colin Calloway has provided us with a superbly researched and well-written Indian history of northern New England. Although the book's focus is on the Indian community of Missisquoi (Swanton, Vermont) in the Champlain Valley, its geographic framework is much broader. As the author explains: "Vermont's 'Indian troubles' seem comparatively sporadic, small-scale, and short-lived; however, viewed in a wider context, the Abenaki raids that permeated Vermont's frontier belong to a continentwide phenomenon of European invasion and Indian response....Indian-European skirmishes in the Green Mountains were details in that larger picture and governed by scenes elsewhere on the canvas, but they were an integral part of the panoramic clash of cultures on the North American continent."

Traditionally, the Missisquoi community occupied the western frontier of a territory inhabited by a variety of different Abenaki-speaking peoples ranging between Lake Champlain and the St. John River. Within this vast woodland region were two major dialect groups, usually identified as Eastern and Western Abenaki, each divided into several historically independent tribal communities. Although the division between both groups remains a bit arbitrary, Calloway concurs with ethnohistorian Gordon Day, director emeritus of the Canadian Ethnology Service, who concluded that the White Mountains of New Hampshire formed the probable boundary zone. Reflecting on the vaguely defined aggregate of Western Abenakis, Day observed that these tribespeople "have always been something of an unknown quantity to historians and ethnographers."

With his reconstruction of what actually happened on the Green Mountain frontier, Calloway provides a unique window on this historical meeting ground. Here, during a period of some

two hundred years, Abenakis and French, Mohawks and Dutch, Mahicans and English, as well as a host of other peoples, clashed and sometimes cooperated. Although he modestly disclaims to have written “the last word on the history of the Western Abenakis,” the author supplies us with a wealth of fascinating information, diligently culled from a large number of unpublished manuscripts, several doctoral dissertations, almost 100 published primary sources, and more than 250 secondary sources. Currently an associate professor of history at the University of Wyoming, he has coupled his painstaking research with insightful analysis, summing his findings up in eloquent conclusions and commentary.

Revisionism at its best, the book avoids fashionable stereotyping. Calloway forbears the temptation to portray Euramericans as generic “white men” – greedy and belligerent – and the Indians as noble sylvans. He allows us to appreciate the Abenakis as resourceful participants in the historical process of international power relations which came about as a result of the fur trade and European efforts to colonize native lands.

In the first two chapters, we are provided with some basic ethnographic information, including a brief discussion of northern New England’s tribal distribution during the early contact period, indigenous patterns of culture, and the upheaval due to the introduction of European trade goods, firearms, alien pathogens, and Christianity. Succeeding chapters outline the history of the western Abenaki, in particular those inhabiting Vermont and New Hampshire, more or less in chronological order, following them from one war to another until the late eighteenth century.

The final chapter discusses how the Western abenaki were conveniently written out of northern New England’s history. Debunking the popular notion that “the sad remnants had moved en masse to Canada,” he seeks to demonstrate that Indians have persisted in the midst of disruption and diaspora until today. Forming a marginal cultural enclave, Vermont’s Abenakis depended for their survival on a mixture of geographic

mobility, economic flexibility, and social adaptability, constituting “a fluid network of family bands, of which only the edges were visible to non-Indian observers.”

Following a period of intense Indian activism throughout North America, the native people in Vermont formally reorganized their community in the mid-1970s. Styling themselves the St. Francis-Sokoki Band of the Abenaki Nation, they established their headquarters at Swanton, near their ancient village on the Missisquoi River and began asserting their native rights in Vermont. Essential in this pursuit looms the need for historic documentation of their presence in the region. In writing this book, Calloway has supplied this impoverished Indian community with an invaluable service. Undoubtedly, it will be of great use in the struggle for federal recognition of their tribal status.

In an effort not to lose the reader on this sometimes bewildering historical journey, the author offers indispensable aids, including a concise chronology, tables, a glossary of Indian groups and communities, maps, illustrations, and an index. Still, there is a sometimes confusing array of different ethnonyms and orthographies. For instance, the author does not make it clear if the name Arosaguntacooks, here sometimes spelled Adgekantekokes or Asschincantecooks, refers to St. Francis Abenakis or to Androscoggin River Indians. Also the terms Onoganges and Owenagungas (pp. 72, 106, 301, etc.) seem confused.

Regarding the Mohawk raiding party to the Penobscot in 1662, it numbered 265, not 200, and they did not “set out to attack the Etchemins,” but Western Abenakis from the Connecticut Valley who apparently had taken temporary refuge among their allies at Penobscot. (See E.B. O’Callaghan, editor, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York*, vol. 13 [1855-1861], pp. 297-98.) Further, the book is not always clear on historical detail. It notes, for instance, that the Abenakis of Penobscot started “the massacre of the English garrison at Fort William Henry in 1757 (p. 172), but fails to mention that this appalling butchery occurred after the English had already capitulated.

lated, while they marched out in column.

Because of Calloway's focus on the Western Abenakis of Vermont and New Hampshire, the Eastern Abenakis receive only cursory treatment. Some of their exploits, however, deserve mentioning in this book – activities under Kennebec chieftain Robin Hood in the Connecticut River valley in 1666, for instance. As Calloway makes clear, there was also Western Abenaki activity in Maine. However, among the more regretful omissions is reference to the legendary warchief Paugus, a contemporary of Grey Lock of Missisquoy, who was killed during a clash between a party of Pigwacket and other Western Abenaki and the English under Captain Lovewell in the woods near Fryeburg in 1725. Although Calloway highlights the constant exchange of personnel and information between Western and Eastern Abenakis (and Maliseets and Micmacs), he misses a few important instances, such as the large council meeting at Penobscot Falls in 1767 when hundreds of Indians convened in a desperate effort to stop further English encroachment. Finally, in his brief discussion of Abenaki movement and interaction in the nineteenth century, I missed reference to the now extinct Indian community at Moosehead Lake (circa 1840-1930), which included well-known St. Francis Abenaki hunting families such as Annance, Nicolas, and Capino.

All these comments, of course, simply serve to point out that there is still work to be done. Kenneth Morrison's *The Embattled Northeast* (1984) deals with the history of the Eastern Abenakis of Maine, 1480-1727; we now need a more inclusive synthesis. I can only hope that this future volume will measure up to Calloway's finely wrought history. This book deserves nothing but the highest recommendation for anyone interested in the history of North American Indians or in the genesis of New England as a plural culture and society.

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Islands of the Mid-Maine Coast, Volume II: Mount Desert to Machias Bay. By Charles B. McLane with the collaboration of Carol Evarts McLane (Falmouth, Maine: Kennebec River Press, 1989. Pp. xviii + 383. Index. Cloth. \$45.

In the preface Charles McLane comments laconically that “island research becomes contagious.” Students of Maine’s coastal history should be thankful for the contagion. Its first product, *Islands of the Mid-Maine Coast: Penobscot and Blue Hill Bays* (1982), received widespread praise and still sells well. Volume two, done in collaboration with McLane’s wife Carol, covers Mount Desert east to Little River Island off Cutler. McLane plans to complete the series soon with a third book which takes the reader upwind from Penobscot Bay to the Kennebec. When finished, he will have provided historical sketches of about 700 islands. Antiquarians, professional historians, genealogists, sailors, tourists, rusticators, and anyone else interested in Maine’s coastal islands will be richer for the completion.

The format of this volume is almost identical to that of its predecessor. McLane groups islands in geographically logical “divisions.” Each has a brief introduction but is dominated by a heavily illustrated text sketching the history of individual islands. The longest of these sketches — largely because McLane includes excerpts from town records — covers the Cranberry Isles and extends thirty-three pages; at the other end of the spectrum many islands rate less than a page. McLane’s treatment, he writes, “continues to be in social or human terms rather than geological or ecological: that is settlement, ownership, usage” (p. xviii). He also continues emphasis on early inhabitation rather than modern gentrification. The one major change from volume one involves maps, which because they are specially drawn (by Joel Riggs) are much easier to follow. There was no general map in the first volume. The inside covers of *Mount Desert to Machias Bay* provide such a map and help the geographically oriented to satisfy yearnings to see just where all those islands are.

The contents, of course, are not identical. Each of the 180 islands discussed has its own historical peculiarities. The McLanes — Charles gives Carol special thanks for her assistance in research — have a good eye for the colorful and anecdotal. Those Cranberry Isles town records include passages like “Pauper John Pung was allowed half a pound of tobacco per month” and, three years later, “Pauper John Pung’s tobacco ration was cut from six pounds a year to four” (p. 70). Crowley Island inhabitants became increasingly impoverished in the late nineteenth century with resulting “deterioration of moral standards,” including illegitimacy and “hints” of incest, infanticide, and exchanging wives (p. 217). Great Duck housed a clinic run by Gestalt psychologists. An influential resident of Thompson’s Island, angered by selectmen in the town of Eden for raising his taxes, secured passage by the Maine state legislature of a bill separating Thompson’s from Eden and adding it to Trenton. The list could be extended.

Some readers may find the passages where McLane generalizes about his subject as intriguing as the colorful and anecdotal. His abstractions concentrate on two phenomena: the differences between islands to the eastward and those in Penobscot and Blue Hill bays; and the impact of those differences on patterns of settlement. Nature left the eastern islands with distinct liabilities: more fog, higher tides, and rockier and less fertile soil. Similar conditions on the mainland meant that early inhabitants moved into the interior. There was no coastal road system, and the railroad bypassed the region until the twentieth century. All this meant one thing to the islanders. They were even more isolated than their western counterparts. Family names in the censuses of 1800 and 1900 bore striking similarities. Island domination by a single or handful of families bred ingrownness, a sense of having been excluded from an increasingly modern world, and fierce regional pride. McLane doesn’t dwell on his comparisons, but they are rich with implications for the sharp divisions within the state’s literary and political communities today.

A final set of observations, addressed to potential readers who are either amateur or professional historians interested in Maine's coastal islands. McLane sees his and Carol's work as part of a continuing process of discovery. The authors left a paper trail of their own explorations. They have done a superb job accumulating information on, for example, the purchase and sale of land and very little on, again for example, the operations of local governance on individual islands or towns made up of several islands. No two people, however devoted, could exhaust the possibilities of the 700 islands on which records have been kept. "As history goes," Charles writes in the concluding paragraph on Trafton Island, "this is slim pickings for a sizeable island with two identifiable house sites, reliable water, moderate acreage to till, and a good anchorage. I wish my successor historians better luck" (p. 184). Message: go for it! Pick an island, a group of islands, or an island town, and plunge in. If you need inspiration, you couldn't do better than read *Islands of the Mid-Maine Coast, Volume II: Mount Desert to Machias Bay*.

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