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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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R.C. Richardson, Matthew G. Hatvany, Andrea Constantine Hawkes, Todd Knight, Andy DeRoche, Sarah Anne Wendel, Joel Eastman, Charles W. Horne, and Gary Atwood

BOOK REVIEW

***THE LONG ARGUMENT:
ENGLISH PURITANISM AND THE SHAPING OF NEW
ENGLAND CULTURE, 1570-1700.***

By Stephen Foster. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1991. Pp. xx + 395. Cloth. \$39.95.)

New England Puritanism is unquestionably a well worked field. The last decade alone has seen the publication of Hambrick Stowe's *The Practice of Piety* (1982), Gura's *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory* (1984), Stout's *The New England Soul* (1986), and Hall's *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* (1989). But the historiographical past still broods over the present, and it is Perry Miller's celebrated trilogy of books which stands out most prominently, a "historical artifact in its own right," says the author of this new volume, and a landmark with which all present-day historians of American Puritanism must come to terms. Significantly, however, it is a historian of English Puritanism Patrick Collinson – to whom Foster appears most indebted.

This book's title and sub-title help to explain why. The author is correct in saying that "the distinctive feature of the study that follows is its transatlantic approach." What Foster attempts is to restore to the "American Puritans the previous history their authorized interpreters implicitly denied; one might almost say the object has been to restore to American Puritanism the process of history itself." Such a re-evaluation requires, Foster insists, that the New England saga should cease to be regarded as a largely self-contained process; Miller's fixation with the "New England Mind" and the "New England Way" needs to be abandoned. "The New England Way," he argues, "was neither uniquely American nor a simple English transplant, but a further and continuing development in America of an ongoing and long-running English process of adjustments." The first generation of American Puritans, in short, needs to be seen as being "in the midst of their argument (in both senses of the term) when they stepped ashore."

Puritans on both sides of the Atlantic had a "special kind of cosmopolitanism transcending the intensely local and regional

loyalties by which most Englishmen gained their identity.” Some of the actors in the drama of English Puritanism and that enacted in New England were, of course, the same; John Winthrop and Richard Mather are but two who immediately spring to mind. The English Revolution in its origins, course, and consequences had a profound significance on both sides of the Atlantic. English Puritans such as William Perkins, John White of Dorchester, and Samuel Clarke all have a secure place in Foster’s narrative, even though Increase Mather occupies an unrivaled position as “the supreme tactician.” Foster claims that “no single man in New England had exercised so much influence since the death of the elder John Winthrop, and no clergyman ever had.” Considerable though his impact was in the later Great Awakening, the famous English preacher George Whitefield, by contrast, “spoke as a poorly informed and credulous tourist...cocksure and anything but knowledgeable.”

This is a densely detailed and argued book and one which historians of Puritanism on both sides of the Atlantic will read with profit. Bibliographers, too, will be greatly interested in what is said here about book prices, print-runs, and reprints of theological titles. Foster, it is true, has far more to say about the clergy than about the laity and in a real sense his book is a study of the ways in which they exercised and lost (through lack of political skill and disunity) the initiative. It is also a stimulating account of how “New England Puritanism finally succumbed to its own centripetal forces.” The witchcraft trials are considered largely in terms of their impact on Increase Mather’s leadership and on the unity of the Puritan “Movement.” Later clergymen would hardly have felt in a position to emulate the boldness which permitted the Reverend Samuel Sewall to awaken Boston with a dramatic fanfare of trumpets early on the morning of January 1, 1700 to welcome in the new century.

R.C. Richardson
King Alfred’s College
Winchester, England

BOOK REVIEW

THE SALEM WITCH CRISIS.

By Larry Gragg. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992. Pp. x + 228. Cloth. \$45.00.)

Americans have always been fascinated with the Salem witch trials, and historians have been writing about that early brush with the occult practically ever since it occurred. As a result of the "information explosion" of the last two decades, however, academics have employed all means of economic, judicial, psychological, and quantitative analysis to accentuate and explain the unfolding of events in Salem. While this type of intensive historical analysis merits attention for the new knowledge it imparts, it has also continued what Gragg labels "the historian's old dilemma: history as art versus history as science."

Accordingly, Gragg has declined an analytical approach in this narrative history of the Salem witch trials. Believing that "history is first and foremost a good story," the author has rendered the large extant body of witchcraft literature in simple, straightforward terms, believing that in this manner it will become more accessible to "the general reader." Unfortunately, Gragg fails to clarify his conception of the general reader, for while the analytical constructs of authors like Paul Boyer, John Demos, and Stephen Nissenbaum may be beyond the reach of the average high school student, they are well within the means of attentive adult readers – as exemplified by the popularity of *Three Sovereigns for Sarah* (1985), a popular public television production based on the work of Boyer and Nissenbaum. In addition, it must be said that this volume is based on previously exploited primary resources, and contributes little new knowledge to the understanding of the witchcraft crisis in seventeenth-century America. As John Demos wrote in his *Entertaining Satan* (1982), studying this phenomena should be "more than an exercise in parochial reconstruction. Comparison, contrast, pattern, even 'laws of human behavior': such are the alluring possibilities that beckon scholars to witchcraft."

These criticisms aside, it as a basic introductory novel for "general readers" that *The Salem Witch Crisis* serves its audience

well. In presenting the story, the author makes clear to the reader that America's pioneers inhabited a mental world radically unlike the environment of this century. Early Americans concluded that unexplainable phenomena stemmed from the supernatural, and as a result they acted on what they believed to be true, even though it may not have been necessarily right. The author asserts that the best way to "appreciate the unique experience of Salem Village is to explore the particular decisions made by the individuals involved and their consequences." The people of Salem Village were dynamic individuals, Gragg contends, and their actions reveal to us that "people are not passive victims of historical change but active participants who exercise some control over their lives" and who help to determine the outcome of history.

Matthew G. Hatvany
University of Maine

***A HOME FOR EVERYMAN: THE GREEK REVIVAL
AND MAINE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.***

By Joyce K. Bibber. (Lanham, Maryland: American Association for State and Local History, 1989. Pp. vii + 209. Cloth. \$28.50).

A large number of Greek Revival structures have survived in twentieth-century Maine, and Joyce K. Bibber has written a book that can help one appreciate the many details and characteristics of this style of housing which reflected the prevailing taste in building for all classes of Maine citizens from 1820 until the onset of the Civil War. Professor Bibber spends substantial time at first in examining the presumed reasons and inspirations (technological improvements aside) for the wholehearted embracing of the Greek Revival home – empathy for the Greek struggle for independence from the Turks in 1820; the emphasis on "things Greek" that American educators thought represented true culture; and a "kinship with ancient Athens" Americans felt

BOOK REVIEW

to be the only earlier form of democracy. That Mainers identified with their domestic architecture and were, or at least aspired to be what they built appears to be Bibber's thesis. It was thus disappointing that she flippantly ends her book with the statement that "architectural styles come and go, and no special explanation is needed as to why Greek-influenced homes were seldom built after the Civil War." Did this style really just pass away "in the normal course of events," or did its ending represent, as with the Civil War itself, a crisis in democracy?

Except for the last chapter, in which Professor Bibber speaks of the workmen and architects, people themselves, particularly as dwellers in Greek Revival homes, are noticeably absent from this book. Along with the re-energized ideal of democracy prevalent in Jacksonian America at this time, there was an emphasis on women's proper place being within the sphere of her home. What influence or part did a Maine woman have in the planning and overall decision to make her home into a "Greek temple?" And if she had none, what does this reveal about gender relationships in the first part of nineteenth-century Maine? These are questions that could have been broached in her book, along with the many other insightful propositions she does periodically advance.

Professor Bibber devotes most of her book to the discussion of the actual construction details that denote a Greek Revival house. Here a brief glossary of terms might have been helpful for those not as familiar with entablatures, pilasters, or crossets and thus might have trouble digging their meanings out of the text. But Bibber's decision to use instructive drawings instead of photographs helps compensate for the lack of a glossary, and the manageable size of *A Home for Everyman* lends itself as a field guide to a reader's own exploration for examples of the Greek Revival in rural and urban areas all over Maine.

Andrea Constantine Hawkes
University of Maine

THE GUNPOWDER MILLS OF MAINE.

By Maurice Whitten. (Gorham, Maine: M.M. Whitten, 1990. Pp. x + 324.)

The Gunpowder Mills of Maine, by Maurice Whitten, gives an account of four Maine gunpowder mills in the nineteenth century. The mills Whitten deals with were located in Gorham-Windham, North Buckfield, Camden, and Warren. Whitten relies mainly on business records and newspaper accounts to convey to the reader a sense of the industry's prominence in Maine, particularly during the Civil War. He also gives numerous accounts of the explosions that occurred in the mills.

The first chapter explains the process by which gunpowder was made in the mills, and is quite detailed. The core of the book is separated into four sections, each dealing with one of the four gunpowder mills. The remaining two chapters detail the later stages of the gunpowder industry in Maine, and include a discussion of the development of "smokeless" powder and a brief explanation of why the industry dissipated in Maine at the end of the nineteenth century. Whitten attributes this to the rise of larger companies or trusts that monopolized the industry. Other reasons Whitten cites for the elimination of small gunpowder companies include the development of alternative explosives and the increased competition due to westward expansion.

Whitten's book is fairly limited in scope. As a local chronology of events taking place at the respective mills, and as an explanation of the importance of Maine's gunpowder industry in the period, this work serves well. However, Whitten might have gone deeper into contextual issues. For example, a great deal of content is devoted to newspaper accounts detailing the perils of this line of work. Yet Whitten makes no mention of complaints or calls for safer conditions, which doubtless there must have been. Nor does Whitten mention the problem of worker safety as a possible reason for the industry's demise, even though the evidence he presents in the book suggests this may well have been the case.

BOOK REVIEW

Nevertheless, *The Gunpowder Mills of Maine* is a good account of a forgotten industry in Maine. It details well the process behind the making of gunpowder in the nineteenth century and the dangers inherent in the process.

Todd Knight
University of Maine

IN THE HANDS OF PROVIDENCE: JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

By Alice Rains Trulock. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pp. 569. Cloth. \$34.95).

Trulock provides an interesting and detailed account of the life of Joshua Chamberlain. Her flowing style skillfully interweaves Chamberlain's own words into the text. She covers his entire life, but focuses particularly on his exploits with the Army of the Potomac. The almost 200 pages of endnotes reflect the prodigious research Trulock undertook in creating this work. Her research paid off, and this book offers many interesting new details concerning a man about whom much has already been written.

Trulock does, of course, include many events and incidents that appear elsewhere. Willard Wallace's 1960 biography of Chamberlain, *Soul of the Lion*, used many of the same sources and gave similar descriptions for several key pieces of the Chamberlain story. Certain occurrences from his youth, his years at Bowdoin, from Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Appomattox, and so on will sound familiar to readers who know Wallace's version. Some of this material has also been treated in John Pullen's *20th Maine*, Michael Shaara's *Killer Angels*, or Ken Burns's recent documentary – to name only the most well-known examples. But Trulock's methods are sound and her citations all legitimate. Furthermore, the result is a good one. Indeed, the repetition of previously told highlights soothes and reassures the reader who knows any of the above works. Chamberlain comes across as an old friend.

Trulock also succeeds in telling us a lot of new things about our old friend. She far outshines Wallace in her description of Chamberlain's life before the war. His days as a student and then teacher come to life, and provide insight into his later actions in the war. His courtship and marriage are also covered in depth, as are his relationships with his children. Perhaps most interesting is Trulock's information about Joshua's brothers, including many of their words taken from primary documents. The brothers tell us much about Joshua before and during the war and are also worthy of study themselves.

The text, then, contains a fair amount of new material. Perhaps equally intriguing, however, are the photographs and notes. Trulock utilizes many excellent photos of Chamberlain, his family, and other soldiers. (Wallace used virtually none.) Not only do the notes contain many useful sources, but they also reveal some neat details. For example, a note regarding the famous charge down Little Round Top at Gettysburg offers a slightly new explanation. Trulock suggests the possibility that Chamberlain never actually ordered the charge, and that it instead occurred spontaneously. She certainly does not emphasize this view, but by acknowledging it she outdoes all previous treatments of the episode. In any case, this is just one portion of the very rich section of notes.

In the Hands of Providence is not without its faults. The text occasionally strays a little too far from Chamberlain into a general rehashing of the war. The battles and movements of the Army of the Potomac, described in literally hundreds of other books, take up more space than necessary. Repeating this general information does not have the same positive effect as repeating the key incidents of Chamberlain's life. This flaw, however, is not enough to outweigh all of the book's strengths. Trulock's work will be sought out by anyone interested in nineteenth-century Maine, the Civil War, or Joshua Chamberlain.

Andy DeRoche
University of Maine

BOOK REVIEW

*HURRICANE ISLAND:
THE TOWN THAT DISAPPEARED.*

By Eleanor Motley Richardson. (Rockland, Maine: Island Institute, 1989. Pp. xviii + 124. Paper. \$12.95.)

General Tillson Davis of Rockland, Maine, bought Hurricane Island in 1870 and established the Hurricane Granite Company, which furnished quarried and polished granite for such important structures as the Washington Monument. From 1870 until 1914 various distinctive groups were brought to this island because of their special talents in working with stone. Italians, Swedes, Finns, Scots, Irish, and native Yankees made their homes on Hurricane Island. They married, gave birth to children, and were buried in the island's small cemetery. In that small plot, the almost unreadable stones, worn by the weather and time, still remain as a poignant reminder of their lives and work. In this book, Eleanor Motley Richardson has collected story, picture, fact, and oral history, all of which she weaves into a delightful mix that is fun to read.

The author is a fourth-generation summer resident of North Haven in the Fox Island Thoroughfare group and a descendent of an original Hurricane Islander. Her mother would often drop the day's work and sail her family to Hurricane Island for a picnic and a ramble. The research for this book started as a high-school project which was finished some thirty years later. Its impetus, however, was a picture shown to the author as a child by her grandfather after one of the day sails. The picture showed a busy, bustling town that in no way bore resemblance to the quiet, almost idyllic and enchanted island of the author's playtime experience. This book, then, is the reconciliation of two childhood images.

Starting with the stories told to her by her grandfather, Ms. Richardson has researched town records and legislative documents, interviewed and taped original Hurricane Islanders, and poked for pictures and remembrances of the times. With the aid and cooperation of the Island Institute, a variety of private

BOOK REVIEW

citizens, and the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, the author presents us with an account of the thirty-four tumultuous years of the town's history. All the history that could be packed into many larger mainland towns is certainly represented here. At one time, this 150-acre granite outcrop had a population of 1,000 stonecutters and their families. It had a town hall that entertained touring thespian groups, two concert bands, and a Catholic church. The school boasted two teachers, sixty-five students, and the second highest per pupil expenditure ratio in the state. At the same time, labor strife and various other social and economic developments taking place on the mainland were keenly felt twelve miles out at sea.

The island offered up its granite for many prominent edifices still with us today, among them, the Suffolk County Courthouse in Boston, the St. Louis Post Office, the Boston Fine Arts Museum, the Metropolitan Bank Building in New York, and some of the paved streets of Havana, Cuba. The operations prospered until the advent of asphalt and concrete and the death of the last manager.

The use of the photos preserved by the Outward Bound School or located or taken by Richardson and her husband brings the book to life. There is no doubt that this book is a labor of love. The modern photos are almost works of art. They tell wordless tales of the abandonment of the equipment and works on short notice, and present the paradox of a vibrant island world caught in a frozen stillness. Thanks go out to Ms. Richardson for sharing this with us, to the Island Institute for sponsoring her work, to Hurricane Island Outward Bound School for helping preserve the past as a gift to the future.

Sarah Anne Wendel
University of Maine

BOOK REVIEW

***HOME FRONT ON PENOBSCOT BAY:
ROCKLAND DURING THE WAR YEARS, 1940-1945.***

By Paul G. Merriam, Thomas J. Molloy, and Theodore W. Sylvester, Jr. (Rockland, Maine: The Rockland Cooperative History Project, 1991. Pp. 330. Cloth. \$25.00).

Home Front on Penobscot Bay should serve as a model inspiring every community in Maine to undertake a history of itself during World War II. Paul Merriam, Thomas Molloy, and Theodore Sylvester organized the Rockland Cooperative History Project, recruited volunteers – including John Knight, Betty Holmes Knight, and Terry Economy – and divided up the work. Each of the members wrote his or her own “Youthful Recollections” of the war years, and Sylvester conducted interviews with ten representative persons. Then the principal authors researched and wrote essays on major topics – government, education, crime, fires, shipbuilding, fish processing, railroads, and military facilities. The recollections, interviews, and essays then became the basis for a five-chapter narrative history written by Merriam.

The narrative begins with an introduction to Rockland, then a chapter of background, followed by three chapters on the war years. Merriam observes that Rockland was impacted early by the outbreak of World War II in Europe. Off the coast of the city the U.S. Navy maintained a speed and rudder trial course that came to be used extensively as the defense buildup increased. Snow’s shipyard soon won Navy contracts for wooden minesweepers, patrol boats, and salvage vessels, and Rockland was selected as the site of a Navy section base and air station. The city was also placed in the national spotlight when President Franklin Roosevelt landed there on August 16, 1941, and held a news conference on his return from the signing of the Atlantic Charter.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, military and civilian defense activities increased. Owners of fishing boats were organized into a coast information service, and six trawlers were taken by the Navy and refitted as coastal patrol vessels. The Navy

took over a hotel as a barracks and mess, and a roller skating rink for use as a drill hall. As the number of servicemen in the area increased, a USO was created and a Servicemen's Club set up. Fraternal organizations and families entertained the men and women. Nighttime dimout and blackout regulations were issued, air raid wardens appointed, and air raid drills conducted. Shortages of meat, sugar, and butter developed, and these were eventually rationed along with tires, gasoline, and other strategic commodities. Necessity brought forth substitutes such as oleo for butter, ice milk for ice cream, and horse meat for beef.

As the draft and defense industry drew off men, women were recruited for the military, State Guard, Civil Air Patrol, Women's Motor Corps, Women's Fire Department Ambulance Corps, Air Warning Service, Civilian Defense, and Red Cross. When males refused to volunteer to serve on the local Ration Board because of personal attacks on members, women stepped in to fill the vacancies and end criticism. High school students were encouraged to volunteer for the Victory Corps, which assisted the fire department, and many also took part-time jobs. Families planted victory gardens and preserved the produce at a canning center at the high school. Everyone participated in seven War Loan Bond Drives, and Rockland was able to have a ship, the *USS Rockland Victory*, named after it.

The war stimulated business. In addition to the impact of military personnel and construction, the local textile mill and sardine canneries received defense contracts. Many local residents took jobs at Bath Iron Works, riding to work on a company bus, the Maine Central Bus Line, or in car pools. As early as April 1943, local leaders were already thinking about the postwar economy, and during the war they fought a Navy plan to close the air station and lobbied to keep the new section base as a permanent Coast Guard station.

By August 1944 the war in Europe was going so well that dimout and blackout regulation relaxed. The shipyards cut back on work forces, and after the German defeat in May, wartime vessel rules were lifted, and the canning center closed for lack of interest. On the night of August 15, Rockland celebrated V-J

BOOK REVIEW

Day, even though the official event did not take place until September 4. Merriam concludes that the war changed Rockland forever. Many residents left to be exposed to a larger world, and some never returned. Those who remained were given new responsibilities, learned new skills, formed new associations, and met new people who moved to the area.

Part Two contains the "Topical Essays," which are based on primary sources and are very detailed. Although they lack footnotes, an excellent general bibliography is provided. Most persons who lived through the war period will delight in reading Part Three, "Youthful Recollections." Paul Merriam collected tin foil, tooth paste tubes, and milkweed pods for the war effort. Thomas Molloy remembers schools changing the salute to the flag from a straight-arm "Nazi" style to a hand across the heart. Frederick Tripp reports on the bodies of German sailors washed ashore on Criehaven Island. An Honor Roll of men and women from Rockland who served in the war follows. Another product of the Cooperative History Project was the editing of a film on Rockland in 1940 titled "A Portrait of Our People," which is available for purchase on video cassette at the Farnsworth Museum.

Home Front on Penobscot Bay is a remarkable accomplishment. Every community and historical society should purchase a copy and begin planning its own cooperative history of World War II.

Joel W. Eastman
University of Southern Maine

***THE HISTORY OF BROADCASTING IN MAINE:
THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS.***

Ellie Thompson. (Augusta, Maine: Maine Association of Broadcasters, 1990. Pp. 112. Paper. \$15.95.)

When one thinks about the substantial number of radio and television stations in Maine that have come (and in some cases gone) in fifty years, one can understand the monumental task undertaken by Ellie Thompson in this history of Maine broadcasting. Thompson's book is a respectable attempt at organizing Maine's broadcasting history from the 1920s to the 1970s. In endeavoring to pack information about so many stations into a limited number of pages, the author inevitably leaves the reader desiring far more detail. It is clear that this hundred-plus page account, generously garnished with pictures, only scratches the surface of Maine broadcasting's fascinating story.

One of the book's great strengths is also its great weakness. Written under the auspices of the Maine Association of Broadcasters, it contains much information supplied by the owners and key players at various stations. While the information is no doubt quite reliable, the text has an insider's tone, as if these folks are communicating with each other rather than to the reader.

I am not certain that I can recommend this book as a "must purchase" for the layperson. For those interested in broadcasting, it is an essential read, due to its discussion of how and when radio and television stations started (and in a few sad cases collapsed) over a half century. Such accounts have their intriguing side, particularly in detailing how prominent radio stations like WABI, WCSH, WRDO, and WGAN were started, how station call letters often stood for their owners or places of origin (WGUY and WGAN for original owner Guy Gannett, WFAU and WCOU for founder Faust Couture, WCSH for place of origin, the Congress Square Hotel) and how pioneering broadcasters had to overcome primitive early technology and advertising sales resistance.

Ellie Thompson takes care to mention virtually all Maine broadcasting stations of the era, with some personalized detail

BOOK REVIEW

concerning start-up, key personalities, adventurous moments, and the links in ownership or affiliation with regional and national networks. With so many stations to cover, however, Thompson leaves out or glosses over several important events and personalities that helped define Maine broadcasting's first half century. Perhaps the most glaring omission is the 1965 start-up of Channel 7 (then WEMT, now WVII) in Bangor, making that city virtually the smallest three-network market in the United States.

The highlight of this book is the poignant story of Thompson Guernsey, written by Fred Thompson (no relation to the author), and aptly subtitled "The Eccentric Genius from Dover-Foxcroft." This account reminds one of Ken Burns's recent PBS documentary of three early radio pioneers, particularly the tragic story of Edwin Armstrong. Like Armstrong, whose development of FM radio was years ahead of its time, Guernsey's attempts to bring television to Boston in the 1940s and his invention of a miniature picture tube were ill-timed. But though Guernsey ended up a recluse and bankrupt, Thompson's account happily reveals his successful development of WLBZ radio and notable successes promoting the Maine wilderness for tourism. Among Guernsey's prominent guests over the years were Jack Benny and his entire radio troupe.

It is clear that much more must be written to do full justice to Maine's first fifty years of broadcasting. Ellie Thompson's ambitious endeavor cannot be rated a definitive account, but *The History of Broadcasting in Maine* is nonetheless a new and valuable resource for those who wish to explore this topic in the future.

Charles W. Horne, Jr.
Brewer, Maine

NEW COMPASS POINTS.

By Roy P. Fairfield. (Saco, Maine: Bastille Books, 1988. Pp. x + 256. Cloth. \$19.95).

In his book, *New Compass Points*, Roy Fairfield explores the history of twentieth-century Saco through a mixture of scholarly and “imaginative” traditions. The scholarly tradition, in this case, can be defined as academic history; the imaginative tradition refers to an alternative way of writing history, such as through myth. Fairfield writes that traditional history is perfectly acceptable, but that it should be combined with this imaginative approach in order to produce a more personal and complete analysis. He cautions that *New Compass Points* is not meant to be an exhaustive chronicle of life in Saco, but rather a primer, designed to encourage discussion.

The book is divided into two sections. The first is a brief summary of Saco’s history from 1900 to the mid-1980s. It is very much like a movie newsreel, in the sense that it only touches on various topics in Saco’s history, such as its political figures and architectural styles. The account is designed to stimulate memories in those familiar with Saco during this time and offer a concise, although erratic, overview to those who are not.

The imaginative analysis enters into the book in the second section. Fairfield creates eleven paradigms, each focusing on a different aspect of this imaginative tradition. He then applies the history of twentieth-century Saco to each paradigm to demonstrate what, in outline form, it would look like if written in that particular manner. Fairfield’s paradigms range from Marxist theory and anthropological and sociological analysis to curious poetic and futuristic approaches. Thus he views Saco’s history from a number of different angles in order to bring to life new perspectives and provide an overall deeper understanding of the subject.

New Compass Points is a very provocative book because it presents history in ways many people have never experienced it. In doing so, it provides something for almost every reader. Some will find the first section comfortable, like reminiscing with a

BOOK REVIEW

life-long resident. Others will find the suggestions made in Fairfield's paradigms thought-provoking and creative. A few may even synthesize the two and use the book as a base to push deeper into Saco's history.

Many, though, will emerge from reading Fairfield's book with only a cursory understanding of the subject. He presents a large number of facts, but there is no way of checking them because, except for Fairfield's personal observations, no sources are cited and no bibliography provided. Moreover, they are not placed into any constructive context. Dates, places, and names are superficially explained. Aside from their purpose in providing a background for Fairfield's paradigms, there is little connecting them.

The organization of the book also presents some problems. Fairfield suggests some sophisticated theories, but does not arrange the text so that one perspective leads into another. Exploring the possible interactions between them is left to the reader. In addition, some sections contain only random thoughts that further segment the flow of narrative and analysis.

It is difficult to criticize *New Compass Points* too harshly because in some regards it is a unique book. In bits and pieces it provides a wonderful glimpse of certain aspects of Saco and of Roy Fairfield's life as a young boy in that town. As a history of twentieth-century Saco, however, it is not quite up to the task. In the introduction to the second section, Fairfield asks, "What is History?" He defines it, in this book, as a sequence of theories that he hopes will provide a deeper insight on his subject. Yet understanding a subject historically requires more than theory. It demands a larger understanding of the events involved and the relationships that tie these events together. *New Compass Points* does not provide this general understanding, but it does suggest a point – or several compass points – from which to start.

Gary Atwood
University of Maine