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Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820

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the Republican Party, in which Maine is one of its major examples. The reference is to *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856*, by William E. Gienapp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Not only does Wescott's work provide the basis for Gienapp's conclusions about Maine's part in the process, but Gienapp acknowledges his debt to Wescott.

There is little doubt that new light would be cast on the beginnings of the Republican Party in Maine were modern computer techniques employed to update Wescott's study. There is also no doubt that as it stands this work will remain one of the fine scholarly achievements of the last twenty-five years.

Edward Schriver
University of Maine

Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820. By Alan Taylor. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1990. Pp. xiv + 381. \$35. Paper \$14.95.)

With justification historians of Maine have lamented their profession's lack of attention to the state's history. While this is still true in a general way, it is less so regarding the topic of the Maine frontier. In 1970, Charles E. Clark published his ground-breaking work on the settlement of northern New England's eastern frontier during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Five years later, Gordon Kershaw followed with his study of the Kennebec proprietors. Now comes Alan Taylor, assistant professor of history at Boston University, with a fine new study of life and agrarian protest on Maine's post-revolutionary frontier. In the spirit and style of the "new social history," Taylor brings into focus the "inarticulate" settlers — most of whom left few documents of their own. Taylor skillfully extracts his data from town and tax records, genealogical

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accounts, probate and court records, as well as the more traditional sources, such as newspapers, pamphlets, and the company records and correspondence of the great proprietors. The result is a major contribution not only to the frontier history of Maine, but to American history in general.

Taylor's work emphasizes anew that developments in Maine did not occur in a regional vacuum. The tripling of Maine's population in the twenty years following the Revolution and the consequent agrarian unrest were part of a national pattern evident as well in the western regions of Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and in Vermont. Americans continued to struggle among themselves over the nature of their new republic long after they had gained independence from Britain.

In their conviction that physical occupation and improvement of land conveyed ownership, and that ownership of land was essential to freedom, Maine's interior settlers clashed with the great land monopolizers, such as the Pejepscot Proprietors, the Kennebeck Company, and individuals like Henry Knox. These merchant-politicians advanced claims to millions of acres between the Androscoggin and Penobscot Rivers for speculative profit based merely on legal documents and acts of the legislature. The Revolution had opened the way to economic opportunity to settlers and proprietors alike, but their interest and social visions were mutually exclusive.

Taylor provides a scathing description of leading proprietors and their business transactions. Taylor's sympathies lie with the settlers in their struggle to resist the proprietors' demands. In the course of this struggle, Maine's back country developed what Taylor calls a "counter culture" — a republican ideology infused with millennial Christianity from new evangelical sects. Back country settlers viewed the great proprietors as agents of the Devil or as Tories in disguise, still trying to deprive the people of the fruits of the Revolution. Such images justified violence against proprietors and their agents — the sheriffs, surveyors, and settlers willing to compromise with the proprietors. Calling themselves "Liberty Men" and

later on "White Indians," settlers systematically terrorized their antagonists and destroyed their property. Not until 1807 did violence escalate into bodily harm, culminating two years later in the famous murder of Paul Chadwick, a back country "traitor."

Such extremism split a movement which, as Taylor points out originally, sought to defend property and order. Opposition collapsed when the rise of the Democratic Republicans failed to bring significant relief to Maine's frontier. Broken and disillusioned, the "White Indians" faced one of two bitter alternatives — either to compromise with the hated proprietors, or else to take up land anew in New York, Ohio, or — most ironic of all — under the British crown in Canada.

Liberty Men and Great Proprietors deserves to be read in conjunction with yet another recent contribution to the social history of Maine's rural interior, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale: the Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (1990). Ulrich's skillful explication of the Ballard diary provides a vivid account of family life and a woman's experience in the new settlement of Hallowell. *A Midwife's Tale* nicely complements the broader context Taylor provides in *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*. These two studies by Ulrich and Taylor, along with the two earlier ones by Clark and Kershaw, constitute a record of historical writing on the Maine frontier which, if not notable in quantity, is remarkable in its quality.

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The Embattled Northeast: The Elusive Ideal of Alliance in Abenaki-Euramerican Relations. By Kenneth M. Morrison (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984. Pp. x + 256. \$35.)

In his introduction, the author of *The Embattled Northeast* informs his audience that he was born near the ancient