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The Wood & Canvas Canoe: A Complete Guide to Its History, Construction, Restoration, and Maintenance

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Missionaries,” resulting in “Wars and Migrations,” yet nonetheless “The Survival of the People,” and “The Abenaki Today.” Twisting but persisting, through time and space, the interrelated Abenaki groups of northern New England and southernmost Quebec are now politically resurgent.

Calloway’s assignment was to tell their story simply, from the dynamics of the colonial “triple” Abenaki/French/English frontier to those of today: Abenaki/Canada/USA. He has done so, admirably. His Vermont perspectives challenge some Mainers’ assumptions. For instance, Odanak (St. Francis) and Wolinak (Becancour) — the two historic Abenaki relocation centers in Quebec — really are closer to Vermont than to Maine. Lovewell’s or Dummer’s War in Maine, which brought Abenaki defeats, had its mid-1720s counterpart in Grey Lock’s War from Vermont, which sent unstoppable Abenaki raids southward repeatedly. Calloway’s attractive volume is profusely illustrated, including 14 color photos, several maps, and diagrams. It has usage potential well beyond high school.

So, finally, here are the books!

Alvin Hamblen Morrison
SUNY College at Fredonia

The Wood & Canvas Canoe: A Complete Guide to Its History, Construction, Restoration, and Maintenance. By Jerry Stelmok and Rollin Thurlow. (Gardiner, Me.: Harpswell Press, 1987. Pp. 181. \$15.95.)

Maine’s inland waters play a more significant role in the state’s history than is generally recognized, and canoes were a key vehicle in the days when rivers were the roads. In commenting about the earliest development of this craft, the authors tell us that “nothing nearly as elegant or versatile was developed by cultures in other parts of the world with similar climate and terrain, though in many cases the materials were at hand and the need obvious.” Indeed Cartier, Champlain, and other early

European explorers of this part of the world noted and made use of canoes.

Yet while this book purports to be a complete guide to the history and other aspects of the wood and canvas canoe (a late-nineteenth-century innovation), it falls short of that mark. It does, however, fill a niche badly in need of filling. Information on this topic is widely scattered, some of it in old journals, some in hard-to-find early catalogs, some in private hands, some in the minds of precious aging few, some in dusty corporate filing cabinets. It is wonderful to have at least some of it pulled together, and this book is a beginning.

The authors sprinkle the book with very readable, if brief, corporate profiles of several of the "giants." Old Town and E. M. White, for example, are two household names in canoe building history, and good sketches of each are given. Moreover, the text is often supported with fine early photos of prominent individuals, events, or corporations. The illustrations drawn by Stelmok are excellent. They enhance, clarify, and support the text very nicely.

But this book is not without its shortcomings, many of which an editor easily could have remedied. There are numerous spelling errors, and at least one mismatched photo caption. There is neither a bibliography nor an index. Given the scattered nature of the existing records, an annotated bibliography would have been particularly useful here, and not unusually demanding. As it stands, one can only guess about the sources consulted and the depth of research done. Moreover, this reader's copy had been cut improperly in production, resulting in some text disappearing in the gutter margin. Quality control was generally lacking. This is sad, because the concept of the book was a good one, its layout good, and its cover photo particularly handsome. All in all, this book is useful and readable, but lacking in the attention to substance and detail that might have placed it among the classics in its field.

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