

6-1-1990

## Nobleboro: A History

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### Recommended Citation

Vickery, James B.. "Nobleboro: A History." *Maine History* 30, 1 (1990): 39-41.  
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol30/iss1/17>

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immigrants; and the rise of the middle class of merchants and entrepreneurs. It was the wives and daughters of the upper classes who formed the new group of community minded and benevolently motivated women with sufficient leisure to lend themselves to the performance of "good works." Largely through the voluntary efforts of such women, a wide range of charitable organizations, including orphan asylums, was created throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In an intelligent and sensitive way, Barry places their efforts in the context of their times, their class, and their family and community affiliations, giving thoughtful attention to the unique personal qualities and talents of some remarkable women, such as Eliza A. Dickerson Burrington of Belfast, who founded the Children's Aid there, and later Margaret Payson who became noted as a pioneer in child welfare in Maine.

At the same time Barry is mindful of the limitations of private charity, and he sees, too, that doing good stemmed from mixed motives, not always prompted by exclusive regard for the well-being of the recipients of benevolent attention. He is too good a historian to assume simple cause and effect, and so he weaves his tale with ample regard for the complex thread of events that surrounded the eventual creation of Sweetser-Home. In the process of describing its history, William David Barry tells us much of great interest about the people of Maine and about events that shaped the development of this state.

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*Nobleboro, A History.* By Robert E. Dunbar and George F. Dow. (Damariscotta, Me.: Lincoln County Publishing Company, 1988. Pp. 288. \$25.00.)

Residents of Lincoln County will welcome this town history, celebrating its bicentenary of incorporation. This is the first history ever published about this community and resulted

from the efforts of the local historical society, whose members assisted with the book's research and preparation. This is a definitive history of the town from colonial times to the present. The authors have consulted early records, diaries, letters, and newspapers, thoroughly documenting their account.

Throughout its history Nobleboro has remained a rural community, but in recent years, because of nearby lakes, rivers, and seacoast, some 37 percent of its population are non-resident "summer people." While in former times farming and fishing were the predominant occupations, modern residents find employment at the Bath Iron Works, while professional persons work in adjacent towns. Nobleboro reached its peak population in 1860 with 1,438 inhabitants, but in 1984 had dropped to 1,196. In recent years, Nobleboro has a Planning Board to preserve the town's scenic beauty along with its tidal waters, beaches, and wetlands.

The town's colonial development dates from 1625 through a land grant from Indian sagamores; however, no actual settlement occurred because of property disputes that had to be resolved. Settlement began after the American Revolution; nevertheless, the town by 1790 contained 1,206 inhabitants. Before incorporation this area was known as Walpole, but it was later named for Arthur Noble, its Boston-based proprietor.

The authors have surveyed all aspects of the town's military, economic, and social past; especially interesting are the sections on fishing and shipbuilding. There once was a boom in alewife harvesting, but ship building became a major enterprise, having at its height some twenty-six shipyards. In this section, the authors might have consulted a valuable resource, Volume V of Fairburn's *Merchant Sail*. Farming during the 19th century became the major occupation, producing for market such commodities as butter, apples, eggs, wool, and in recent years Christmas trees.

Chapter 12 deals with the rich heritage found here in old houses, the oldest dating from 1767. This discussion might have been strengthened by providing more details of architectural styles and the names of local house builders.



The Damariscotta Mills baseball team of 1921-22. Baseball was a focus of recreational activity in the Nobleboro area, as it was throughout America by the 1920s. Courtesy Nobleboro Historical Society.

This local history is an all-inclusive one — well written, containing ample photographs, bibliography, and index. Nevertheless, this reviewer is puzzled by the fact that there is no mention of Henry Beston and his wife Elizabeth Coatsworth, both prominent writers, who lived in Nobleboro overlooking the Sheepscot River. George Dow, a retired professor of agriculture and life science at the University of Maine and currently president of the Nobleboro Historical Society, and Robert Dunbar, a professional writer, have provided a real service to local history with this important book.

James B. Vickery  
Bangor

*Tides of Change: A Guide to the Harraseeket District of Freeport, Maine.* By Bruce Jacobson, Joel W. Eastman, Anne Bridges. (Freeport, ME.: Freeport Historical Society, 1985), Pp. 81, paper, \$

*Tides of Change* is a unique local study that combines historic community profiles with ecological descriptions of the Harraseeket Historic District of Freeport, Maine, to illustrate