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Book Reviews

Albert V. Benson

Yves Frenette
Glendon College

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BOOK REVIEWS

Kiah Bayley: Founder of Maine Institutions. By Arthur T. Hamlin. (Newcastle, Me.: Lincoln County Publishing Company, with assistance from Bangor Theological Seminary and Lincoln County Cultural and Historical Association, 1986. Pp. xv + 132. \$18. Paper, \$9.50.)

Inquiries c/o the author, RR #1, Box 549, Wiscasset, Maine 04578.

Kiah Bayley was one of the truly influential men in early nineteenth-century Maine, being the principal founder of the Bangor Theological Seminary and of Lincoln Academy, Newcastle. He was also an overseer of Bowdoin College, a founder of the Maine Missionary Society, and was indirectly involved in the founding of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions. Yet very little has been written about his life.

Although Bayley left few documents relating to his life and work, Arthur Hamlin has done a remarkable job in piecing together information, records, letters, and other sources relating to Bayley's career. Fortunately, the extensive journals and correspondence of Jonathan Fisher, pastor at Blue Hill during the same period, are available. Fisher and Bayley had similar backgrounds: both experienced relative poverty; both obtained a college education; and both served long pastorates in rural, coastal communities. Insights from Fisher's well documented life were important in filling in the gaps left by official records of town, seminary, and state.

Kiah Bayley was born in Newbury, Massachusetts, March 11, 1770. Prior to 1775 the large Bayley family moved to Newbury, Vermont. Kiah, whose unusual name was probably a contraction of Hezekiah, entered Dartmouth in 1789, the first of his village to seek a college education. Following graduation, he moved to Wrentham, Massachusetts. There he lived with and received practical instruction in pastoral duties from

Nathaniel Emmons. It was here that he met Abigail Goodhue, who became his wife and served as an important source of strength and happiness throughout his life.

Bayley was called to Newcastle, Maine (then part of Massachusetts), in 1797, remaining there until 1823. His life was both busy and productive, consisting of local pastoral duties and extensive travel to fulfill numerous obligations and commitments. Hamlin's work brings out forcefully the life this man dedicated to his community, his state, and his God. It could be argued that Bayley had no equal in his field in Maine at that time.

In 1823, at the age of fifty-three, Bayley left Newcastle and returned to Vermont. He lived in Hardwick for his remaining thirty-four years. Why Bayley left Maine, bringing to an end his professional career and his service to the state, is not clear, but dissension and discord in the parish at Newcastle appear to be the cause. Very little is known of his remaining life in Vermont, but certainly his most productive and significant years were over.

Mr. Hamlin has written a most interesting and readable biography of this influential man, whose importance to Maine has in the past not been fully appreciated. This history is long overdue, and we should be most grateful to Arthur Hamlin for performing this service and for writing such a fine biography.

Albert V. Bensen
Damariscotta, Maine

The French-Canadian Heritage in New England. By Gerard J. Brault. (Hanover, N.H., and Montreal: University Press of New England and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986. Pp. xiii, 282. \$25. Paper. \$12.95.)

On the back cover, publishers of this book have indicated that it is a contribution to Franco-American studies and to social history. Herein lie both the strengths and weaknesses of *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England*.

For his contribution to Franco-American studies, Gerard Brault deserves commendation. This is the first volume since Robert Rumilly's *Histoire des Franco-Américains*, published in 1958, that treats Franco-Americans as the subject of a general survey. And because Brault has chosen to write in English, the authors of future American history textbooks will find it possible to include more than a few sentences about this important immigrant group. As the 665 endnotes and twenty-three-page bibliography attest, Brault has read most of what has been written on Franco-Americans.

Brault describes the evolution of Franco-Americans from the immigration period beginning in the late nineteenth century through the institutional flowering in the 1920-1960 period, and ends with an assessment of the contemporary situation. As is common in ethnic studies, the author starts his story with a description of "the roots of Franco-American culture," namely, a look at Quebec peasant society. Brault adds an innovative touch by including a chapter on his own family history, which illustrates the experiences of generations of French Canadians and Acadians since the founding of New France. This chapter provides a fine model for genealogists and family historians, who too often merely compile lists of names and places.

From Quebecois housing and food patterns to the dominant conservative ideology, from newspapers to celebrities, from the many problems with the Irish-controlled Catholic hierarchy to the story of Assumption College, from the adoption of a Franco-American flag to federal subsidies in bilingual education, not much is lacking in Brault's description. The book offers something for everybody, from the Franco-American tracing family roots to the high school student looking for information about Franco-American history and life.

But this survey of "la Franco-Américanie" can hardly be considered social history. The author provides no interpretive framework, choosing instead to "let the facts speak for themselves" (p. xi), as though selecting and organizing facts could be absolutely objective. Biases emerge. For instance, Brault's

decision to devote ten pages to folklore and barely one to the important Sentinelle Affair mythicizes the Franco-American experience and minimizes the divisions within the group. Still, this eclectic approach leaves the impression that the author had difficulty weighing divergent interpretations.

The first chapter, "The Roots of Franco-American Culture," contains extensive descriptions of architecture, furniture, and clothing patterns, the religious calendar, the stages of life, and folklore. Despite the narrative weight of these details, Brault does not effectively argue their significance. Certainly material conditions played an equal or larger role in shaping French-Canadian attitudes in New England.

It would be difficult to use *The French-Canadian Heritage* as a college text, since its organization manifests the very weaknesses one hopes students will learn to transcend: lack of criteria in selecting sources, little distinction between trivial and significant facts, no strong theme giving unity and meaning. It is unfortunate that such criticism must be leveled at the first contemporary survey of Franco-American history. Brault's attempt is honest and his work will be helpful in many ways. Even the specialist will find a good deal of useful material in the information contained in the book. It is encouraging to see two prestigious presses lending their support in the relatively undeveloped area of Franco-American studies. Yet it is precisely from such presses that we should expect the editorial standards that would have resulted in a better book. The first synthesis of Franco-American history still awaits its author.

Yves Frenette
Glendon College
Toronto