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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Confederates Downeast. By Mason Philip Smith. (Portland, Me.: Provincial Press, 1987. Pp. 240. Paper \$11.50.)

In his thoroughly researched *Confederates Downeast*, Mason Philip Smith tells an interesting story that sustains attention. Readers will gain a great deal of new understanding about Maine during the Civil War years and will see some parts of the war in a new light.

Two of the three major stories which Smith tells — the attempted robbery of the Calais bank and the seizure of the revenue cutter *Caleb Cushing* in Portland — are fairly well known. In 1966 Smith himself published an article on the former event. But Smith's careful research in the National Archives provides new information about the backgrounds and later careers of the individuals involved, and these details add interest to the narrative.

If ever a bank robbery was destined for failure, the Calais expedition was. Not only had the leader, William Collins, told his brother, a Maine minister, of his plan, but one of his group of four robbers was a spy for the federal authorities. (This individual, William Daymond, had served in the Union Navy, the Confederate Navy, and the Union Army — from which he deserted — in the five years between his arrival from England in 1859 and the Calais bank robbery attempt in 1864.) Information supplied by Daymond and Collins's brother turned the robbery attempt into a disaster.

That the four would-be robbers were confronted by four armed bank officials and a crowd of armed Calais citizens is less surprising than the reaction of some Maine people to William Collins at a later point in the story. The leader of the bank raiders escaped from the state prison at Thomaston and swam the St. George River on a cold November day. Still wearing his prison uniform, Collins was warmed and fed by two Maine families at whose homes he happened to seek help.

Smith's eye for detail enlivens the scenes: the crews of the vessels captured by the *Tallahassee* are put ashore at Friendship, Maine; a Portland crowd jeers the crew of the *Caleb*

Cushing under the impression that the southern-born lieutenant was involved in a plot to give the vessel to the Confederates; the crowd must be forcibly restrained as Confederate raiders pass through; Lieutenant Charles Read, whose raids on northern shipping were brilliant, had graduated at the bottom of his 1860 class at Annapolis; John Clibbon Brain, captor of the *Chesapeake* and the *Roanoke*, was a crook and a confidence man before, and again after the war, and died a pauper in Florida.

Confederates Downeast is nicely illustrated with some excellent photographs. Perhaps because it was typeset in one state and printed in another, the book contains an unusual number of typographical errors, some of which are merely disconcerting, and many of which are major. Some words are repeated, others are omitted, and elsewhere capital letters appear in strange places. Phrases such as “could only provide the steamer a single steamer” (p. 158), “Communicating with those ashore shore” (p. 160), and “had underestimated estimated Brian’s determination” (p. 177) indicate that a failure to proofread occurred somewhere in the publishing process.

These, however, are comparatively minor weaknesses in this valuable addition to Maine Civil War literature.

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THE SOURCE: A GUIDEBOOK OF AMERICAN GENEALOGY Edited by Arlene Eakle and Johni Cerny. (Salt Lake City, Ut.: Ancestry Publishing Company, 1984. Pp. 786. \$39.95.)

Genealogy can be an enjoyable, satisfying, and fascinating pastime, much like solving a mystery with an intensely personal denouement — one’s own line of ancestors. It is exciting to discover a family connection that opens up several other connections. But this quest can also have its dead ends: where does one look to find the names of great-great grandmother

Mary's parents? *The Source* is a reference book for both the novice genealogist and the experienced.

The Source was edited by two professional genealogists. Their object was "to identify, locate, and interpret all of the basic manuscript, microfilm, and published record groups currently available for genealogical research between the beginnings of European colonization in America and 1910." The latter date was chosen because it is the last federal manuscript census available for research under the restrictions of state and federal privacy laws. They do not intend this present volume to be a "how-to" book; instead, their goal is to identify sources available to novice and professional genealogists.

Sprinkled throughout the book are cautions about the reliability of the source material and notations of special problems that might be encountered as the material is consulted. In general the editors impart an understanding of genealogical sources gained through years of doing professional work. The introduction identifies and describes the types of source material available. This section also evaluates "how-to" books, offers an article on census indexes and spelling variants, and closes with legalities (rights of privacy and the copyright law as it affects the genealogist).

The major portion of the book is divided into three sections: major record sources (vital, census, church, court, land-tax, military, institutional, and business and employment records); published genealogical sources (city directories, newspapers, genealogical tools and indexes, and compiled biographies); and special resources (tracking immigrant origins, sources for urban ancestors, native American research, sources in the Spanish and Mexican Southwest, black, Asian American, and Jewish-American research, the computer and the genealogist, and hereditary and lineage society records). Each chapter on sources begins with an information guide indicating types of information to be found in those records covered by the chapter, a chart showing the years those records cover, and "clues" that one should consult in these records. In the chapter are photocopies of actual records and maps, as well as charts

describing the documents available, the years that are covered, special problems encountered, and often information as to the resources in each state. Each chapter closes with an extensive bibliography. The chapter entitled "Tracking Immigrant Origins" focuses on each country of emigration with a brief description of the years of emigration, the route most often followed to the United States, a map of the states showing the settlement patterns of that national group, a chart with the locations of special collections and descriptions of the holdings, and again a bibliography for further research. One of the appendices is a state-by-state listing of places to write for vital records with cost of copy and special instructions.

This book will be especially useful to Maine-bound genealogists. As a resource book, it can be used in arranging a fruitful "plan of attack" at the kitchen table and in providing addresses so that information can be requested through the mail. It suggests other resources that might be overlooked: interlibrary loan systems for books and microfilm (the authors describe the material available and give addresses for specific information) and the Genealogical Society of Utah branch library in Hallowell, Maine.

The Source is an appropriate title for this book. It provides a wealth of details on possible sources of information and on what to expect and what can be gleaned from the sources. This book belongs in the reference section of every library and on the bookshelf of the serious genealogist. It provides readers with the means to increase the quality and depth of the research they have undertaken and with ideas about new places to search when they are at a "dead end."

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