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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Boothbay Region, 1906-1960. By Harold B. Clifford.
(Freeport, Me.: Cumberland Press, 1982, Pp. 348. Cloth.
\$15.95.)

Everything you ever wanted to know about the Boothbay Region and lots, lots, more could be a subtitle for this 348-page volume recently published by the Cumberland Press of Freeport. Actually, it is a reissue of the book originally put out by Harold B. Clifford in 1961. As such, it can be said to be dated — or rather its subject placed in brackets. And yet such is the wealth of detail it handles that the reader can be satisfied with having the definitive work on what is covered.

There seem to be several types of local histories done these days. One type that has been appearing with more frequency is the short piece — an extended sketch, so to speak, catching the distilled essence of a community and usually accomplished in a breezy, even journalistic style. Another is the tome, sometimes in several volumes, encompassing a lifetime of effort and containing almost everything and everyone who ever graced the streets and names of the municipality in question.

Mr. Clifford's book veers toward the latter species. That it is not totally of the genre lies not so much in the truncated period it covers but in the fact that it took him only some two years to complete (it was not his only book, however, so it may be a volume in a series), and that there are bits of sprightly writing and anecdote sprinkled amid the general avalanche of details. It can also be said that it is not a scholarly work, full of learned footnotes, but a straightforward expository history.

That it is written for an audience with an interest in and knowledge of the Boothbay region is perhaps its strongest defect to an outside reader. Unless one has an intimate acquaintance with the local geography, it is easy to get lost and confused. (Alas, there are no maps.) The personalities written

about, unless one had some relationship to them, are not depicted with enough characterization to make them truly interesting. The flood of names — place names and people names — may bring nostalgia to any good ol' Boothbayer, but to a stranger they tend to create bewilderment and, eventually, ennui.

Thus, the non-Boothbayer tends to skim. There is simply too much to digest. But there are bits and pieces enough to strike one's fancy.

Boothbay began as Townsend, one of four townships laid out in 1729 by Colonel David Dunbar, the King's surveyor-general. Unfortunately, the author does not dwell on the choleric Dunbar, who was one of the more interesting and controversial characters in American history before the Revolution — a “bull-frog of the Hibernian fens,” as Massachusetts Governor Jonathan Belcher called him. Nor does he touch upon the drama of Dunbar's attempt to establish a new province in coastal Maine, to be named Georgia. This episode ended with an actual invasion by armed forces from Massachusetts and the demise of Dunbar's putative colony with its headquarters at Pemaquid. The author merely notes that Dunbar, who later went on to become the lieutenant-governor of New Hampshire, neglected to give deeds to his Scots-Irish settlers, and consequently they were harrassed by other claimants to the land.

In 1764, when Townsend applied to the Massachusetts General Court (or Legislature) to be incorporated, the act doing so named the town Boothbay, another intriguing tidbit of history that is not explained. Likewise, there is only a brief mention of the role of Boothbay citizens in the ill-fated Penobscot expedition that attempted to recapture Castine from the British during the Revolution — an expedition apparently sparked by a petition from Lincoln County men and one that rendezvoused in Boothbay Harbor; nor is there more than a tantalizing mention of the appearance of a Confederate raider that captured a Southport schooner in July 1863 and then continued on a daring foray into Portland harbor that ended with the schooner's capture.

Mr. Clifford might be forgiven such lapses, since the beginning of the book and events up to 1906 are merely a review of Francis B. Greene's *History of Boothbay, Southport and Boothbay Harbor*, published in 1906. Clifford's own purpose, as he states, was to "follow" Greene's "fine history." Having done so, he sets about to describe with exquisite detail how the area appeared in 1906. He posits a hypothetical cameraman, arriving from Boston to take pictures for commercial postcards. The photographer's perspective is a nice literary device, but one that falls somewhat flat, since the writer is not able to show us what the photographer sees; he simply lists various places — which mean nothing to those who don't know the landscape. Of somewhat greater interest are descriptions of the early herring and lobster industries and a brief history of the marine laboratory established in 1904 (and still operating) at McKown's Point.

And so on. The flow of facts continues unabated for 348 pages, no doubt bringing delight to anyone with genuine ties to the Boothbay region. But to those of us from "away," the only lively moments are when the narrative touches our fancy, whether it is a story of bootleggers captured during prohibition or a local brouhaha like the fight over the Memorial Library, remembered as the "bitterest controversy ever to divide the town."

Many pictures grace the book, and again, they are certain to have a distinct local appeal. Mr. Clifford's work is obviously a work of love and dedication. That he doesn't see the forest for the trees is a limitation solely for the non-Boothbay reader. *Aficionados* of the area will certainly want to have *The Boothbay Region, 1906-1960* in their collection.

Neil Rolde
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Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643. By Neal Salisbury. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. Pp. 316. \$19.95.)

Manitou and Providence is an impressive overview of Indian-white relations in early New England. Salisbury's masterful integration of Puritan politics, Indian power relationships, regional economic interaction and international and intranational colonial rivalries provides new insights concerning a period and topic that many have considered exhaustively analyzed. Moreover, as a talented ethnohistorian, he utilizes the techniques of cultural anthropology, archaeology, ethnography, and demography in his analysis of the historical evidence to achieve a balanced appraisal which conveys the actions and decisions of both Europeans and Indians within their own cultural contexts. An examination of the author's notes indicates a thorough command of the relevant sources.

Salisbury charges that historians of the English conquest of Indian New England have nearly always presupposed an inevitable outcome because of the incompatibility of the two cultures and the inherent moral superiority of the English. Yet, in *Manitou and Providence*, contrasts in culture have little to do with the conquest. A precipitous depopulation from epidemic diseases disrupted Indian societies and drastically altered long-standing power relationships. These circumstances provided Plymouth colony with plentiful arable land and a political/military power vacuum, factors which the author indicates were considered when the site was selected. The new colony's ability to insert itself into the trade network encompassing the New England-Atlantic Canada region insured its early success. Finally, a second epidemic and a massive influx of settlers established the English as the major power in southern New England.

The title, *Manitou and Providence*, is misleading since this work does not focus on Puritan and Indian religious concepts. The author compounds this problem by utilizing quotations concerning Manitou and Providence in the front matter of the book. While Salisbury effectively conveys the influence of Puritan religious beliefs on Puritan relations with the Indians, his discussion of Indian religious beliefs is very brief and is not integrated into his later analysis. Moreover, the title and the quotations focus the reader's attention on the clash of conflicting cultures — an interpretation the author seeks to discount.

One of the most impressive aspects of this book is its portrayal of the dynamic nature of Indian-white relations in early New England. Rather than provide a static picture of a particular period, the narrative leads the reader through complex circumstances that are constantly shifting and taking on new meaning. Salisbury interprets events in their immediate context as well as in the long-range historical view. The Indians, moreover, are more than mere objects of English decisions and actions. Tribal groups have varying degrees of influence and wield their power in a coherent fashion. Indian leaders with their own motivations and strategies play a pivotal role in determining the outcome of events.

A major difference between Salisbury and earlier historians concerns his perception of the Pequots. While others see them as a rising political and military force aggressively seizing the power previously held by other Indian groups, this author portrays them as a declining power. The Pequots, Salisbury says, had lost their monopoly on the trade of wampum beads and were at war with their Dutch and Indian neighbors. Desperate to maintain their economic position and diplomatic influence, they sought an alliance with Massachusetts Bay, even though that required a humiliating tribute payment. Later, additional Massachusetts demands made Pequot submission so onerous that they briefly attempted to shift their allegiance to their hated enemy, the Narragansett. It was this flirtation that raised English suspicions of the tribe. Subsequently, Massachusetts engineered the diplomatic isolation of

the Pequots, created a pretext for war, and crushed all remnants of the tribe.

The author's major focus is on Puritan-Indian relations. He enhances the reader's understanding of that topic by exploring its roots from the period of first contact. An overview of New England Indian culture is provided with appropriate distinctions made between the agriculturalists of the south and the hunting bands further north. Salisbury's description of Indian political and economic systems establishes the background for the later discussion of the critical, but often overlooked period of sporadic interaction with Europeans prior to the founding of Plymouth colony. These items, which would normally be condensed into an introductory chapter, encompass almost half of this study.

Likewise, Salisbury uses a regional approach to expand the traditional focus on the English and Indians in southern New England to include the influence of the Dutch, the French, and the Indians of the Maine-Atlantic Canada region. The result is a fascinating revelation of the complex interaction and interdependencies that affected the events in southern New England.

This impressive book is not without its shortcomings. The early chapters provide a static representation of Indian societies. While this is adequate, due to the introductory nature of the material, a more dynamic portrayal would enhance the reader's understanding of the changing circumstances of the Indian-white relations conveyed so impressively in later chapters. Also, Salisbury assumes a knowledgeable audience. Those readers unfamiliar with the internal religious and political disputes among the Puritans or the even less familiar English efforts to establish settlements may suffer due to the scant background material provided. This problem is also evident in the discussion of the Pequot War. Salisbury informs the reader that he differs with other historians on this topic without sufficiently arguing his case or refuting the other interpretations.

A work of keen insight, *Manitou and Providence* is also a well crafted literary piece; it offers enjoyable reading for those

with either scholarly or casual interest. That Salisbury can weave so many aspects of early New England history into a relatively brief and quite coherent study makes this book an excellent reading assignment for an American colonial history course.

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The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England. By Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982. Pp. xvi + 298. Cloth. \$28.00.)

Seventeenth-century Puritanism has long held an important place in historiography on both sides of the Atlantic, and a number of famous historians — William Haller, Perry Miller, and Christopher Hill, to name but three — essentially made their reputations by their treatments of this subject. Nor does the fascination with Puritanism show any signs of abating, as recent studies such as Sacvan Bercovitch's *Puritan Origins of the American Self* (1975) and Patricia Caldwell's *The Puritan Conversion Narrative* (1983) reveal. Despite the abundance of literature on the subject, however, it remains the case that we know far more about the social and intellectual aspects of Puritanism than about Puritan devotions, more about its theology than about Puritan religious experience, and more about public or private worship than about the religious life of the Puritan individual himself. Moreover, the secular-mindedness of the twentieth century has made it easier for modern historians to grasp the external economic and social ramifications of Puritanism than its inner spiritual momentum. It is all too easy for Puritanism to be seen simply as a historical "curiosity" and — as in Perry Miller's case — for

occasional flippancy to become an inadequate substitute for genuine understanding and sympathy.

Although some parts of this book rehearse what is already familiar, in other respects it helps redress the balance. The author, as well as being an academic historian, is also a Maryland pastor, and his central preoccupation is made abundantly clear in the book's title and subtitle. Even the general index, with its lengthy entries on conversion, devotions, grace, prayer, sermons, and sin, is an eloquent comment on the author's priorities; a separate index of biblical references leaves us in no doubt whatever. Using a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar source material — diaries, spiritual autobiographies, devotional manuals, meditative poetry — the author explores the Puritans' pilgrimage. Anne Bradstreet, Cotton Mather, Edward Taylor, and Michael Wigglesworth are quoted extensively. For the early Puritans, of course, the pilgrimage involved a literal, geographical experience of removal from the Egyptian bondage of England to the promised land. For later generations, the pilgrimage, though no less real, was purely an American phenomenon and was increasingly metaphorical and spiritualized. A convincing case is advanced for recognizing the contemplative as well as the active side of the Puritans' religion.

The Practice of Piety, then, provides much-needed reminders of the essential spirituality of Puritanism as well as further evidence of the links between England and New England in the seventeenth century. Densely packed with interesting ideas, details, and quotations, the book will be a useful quarry for others. "Use books as young swimmers use bladders," John Cotton advised his readers, and the prodigious output of the presses makes clear that good counsel of this kind was widely followed. But all was not easy. "There hath been in many professors," said the Reforming Synod of 1679, "an insatiable desire after land and worldly accommodations, yea as to forsake churches and ordinances, and to live like heathen, only that so they might have elbow-room enough in the world. Farms and merchandising have been preferred before the

things of God.” The book is well illustrated and carries, for instance, photographs of early gravestones (pp. 232-33) and some superb facsimile reproductions of the title pages of seventeenth-century Puritan devotional manuals. (Note, on p. 269, the 1665 Massachusetts edition of Lewis Bayly’s *The Practice of Piety*, translated into an Indian dialect for missionary purposes.) Moreover, the book is well organized and well written. Sentences like “They were iconopoietic and mythopoietic as well as iconoclastic and mythoclastic” are mercifully few.

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