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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Grog Ho! The History of Wooden Vessel Building in Camden, Maine. By Barbara F. Dyer. (Rockland, Me.: Courier-Gazette, Inc., 1984. Pp. 183. Cloth. \$29.00.)

The Emperess of China. By Philip Chadwick Foster Smith. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Philadelphia Maritime Museum, 1984. Pp. 331. Cloth. \$35.00. Paper \$17.50.)

“Uniquely and peculiarly qualified” describes the authors of these two interesting and useful works. Barbara Dyer is the doyen of that 400-or-so yards of Maine coast known as Wayfarer Marine. This parcel of shore encompasses what were once the building yards of Holly and Robert Bean, father and son. From her years spent at this vantage point, Barbara Dyer has acquired a familiarity with maritime Camden available to few others.

Philip C. F. Smith — “Chad” to his colleagues in the maritime and artistic worlds — is, perhaps understatedly, well qualified to write about the sea. He has been editor of the premier American journal of the sea, the *American Neptune*, and curator of the Philadelphia Maritime Museum. Smith wields a talented pen and, as the dust jacket and end papers of his book attest, a talented brush. Fortunately for Maine and the future of its maritime history, Smith has relocated in Bath. While neither his nor Dyer’s book concerns Maine’s “Cradle of Ships,” their works are of consuming interest to everyone interested in the state’s maritime past.

The interesting natures of the books stem in part from their geographic and chronological scopes. Smith follows the *Emperess of China* two-thirds of the way around the world to

Imperial Cathay. He gives John Green and Samuel Shaw, master and supercargo of the *Emperess*, ample opportunity to tell of the six-month voyage from their own accounts. Smith's presentation of the nation's epochal premier voyage in the China trade is enriched by four appendices. One offers particular insights and enlightenments; it lists "eighty-five imports and exports of Canton." These delights range from the mysterious to the tempting — from ambergries to whangee and beyond.

Another type of list in *The Emperess of China* impresses: the list of illustrations and maps contained in the book. Much of the reproduced art is from the collection of the Philadelphia Maritime Museum. The maps are from Smith's own pen. The paper, dust jacket, black-and-white artwork, and typeface make Smith's book what the museum must have intended it to be: a true work of art.

Dyer's history, ranging from 1767 to 1963, traverses a much broader period: Camden's initial settlement to the close of her wooden vessel era. The work's geographic focus, on the other hand, is narrow, restricted to Dyer's beloved Camden Harbor, where many firms made vessels and vessel parts. In itself, the book is a collection of reprinted newspaper articles, generally well selected photographs, several ship lists, and a sparse narrative. Dyer is not a professional historian and her book contains neither footnotes, bibliography, nor appendices. However, the text demonstrates Dyer's familiarity with the sources on Camden's history, and the information is appropriately chosen. The book contains, as an example, an account of the *Annie L. Henderson*, a vessel dear to this reviewer's heart.

Several of Dyer's ship lists will be of value to historians. One in particular exemplifies some of the inadequacies of previous scholarship. Dyer has reprinted Lincoln Colcord's "Camden/Rockport Vessels, 1792-1890." "Link's List," which appeared initially in George S. Wasson's *Sailing Days on the Penobscot*, contains omissions — some of them the result of Colcord's arbitrariness. He failed, for example, to include

many of Holly Bean's vessels and did not mention Holly himself. Nor does he mention Holly's son, Robert, who built four-masted schooners at Camden as late as the World War II era. Dyer gives the Beans something Colcord didn't: well deserved credit.

Dyer's work naturally suggests tasks that still lay before historians. One of her ship lists, for example, details the thirty wooden vessels built for World War II in Camden, reminding us that a history of such World War II efforts needs to be written — as do histories of Portland's Liberty and Victory ships and the Bath Iron Works destroyers. Another list enumerates the wooden yachts built in Camden from 1945 to 1963. Again, a history — or several histories — of Maine's pleasure-craft building could be written, and such work would be rich indeed, if written with the same love of topic that Dyer exhibits.

Different in many respects, these two volumes share important commonalities. First, they exemplify one of the reasons that history, and especially maritime history, is written: to unabashedly explore the corporate past of one's community. Such a conceit can be at times parochial and antiquarian. Neither book can be characterized as such, however; the authors bring to their works broad palettes mixed with love, talent, knowledge, and ability. The second commonality of their books is that the histories they recount are important. Philadelphia's commercial pioneering and Camden's craftsmanship are classic forms of American enterprise. Both tales are worth the sharing, and both works leave the reader with the consuming and delightful desire to know more.

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Above the Gravel Bar: The Indian Canoe Routes of Maine. By David S. Cook. (Milo, Me.: Milo Printing Company, 1985, Pp. xv + 111. Paper. \$7.50.)

When David Cook cites recent archaeological work indicating "an Indian presence of at least 7000 years, thirty-five times longer than the two centuries white people have lived along the banks of the Penobscot," he establishes an interesting framework for consideration: over the course of these many thousands of years northeastern Indians developed a sophisticated and utilitarian network of waterborne travel and trade routes. Nowadays, asphalt, concrete, steel rails, and air and space travel provide our transportation links, but only a few generations ago the rivers were the region's most commonly used roads.

Cook is to be commended for his persistence and determination in getting this work into print. What little information presently exists on this topic is scattered or unpublished. In spite of several shortcomings, this book is a welcome addition to the slowly growing body of literature on Maine's waterways and their many historic uses.

Above the Gravel Bar (an English translation of *Passadumkeag*) elaborates on a number of topics: the land and waters of Maine; the uses of canoes; the links between canoeing, nineteenth- and twentieth-century camping, and *Castor canadensis* (beaver); and finally, in some detail, on the routes themselves. Regrettably, the lack of a table of contents makes this less than apparent.

In discussing the land and waters, the author points out a number of the natural features that allowed for the development of such a system of "roads." The proximity of the headwaters of the Penobscot, Kennebec, Androscoggin, St. John, Caudiere, and Connecticut rivers is a marvelous case in point. The variety of directions these rivers flow and the options for travel they afforded Indians are, even today, mind-boggling. Whereas today a traveler going from the coast of Maine to Quebec would watch carefully for highway route numbers, a traveler of yesteryear would pay close attention to the clues given

in Indian place-names. Words like Piscataquis (branch stream), Sebec (large, open waters), or Presumpscot (rough places river) were frequently descriptive or alluded to characteristics that a traveler would find useful, if not necessary, for safe passage. Cook most ably raises these important points. For his handling of the canoes themselves, Cook draws from several classics, including Edwin T. Adney and Howard I. Chapelle's *The Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America* (1964) and Frank Speck's *Penobscot Man* (1940). This he rounds out very nicely with his own experiences with the late Myron Smart, an artisan and Maine guide of the "old school."

More than half the book is devoted to the routes themselves — those of western Maine, the Mid-Coast, the Penobscot Basin, and other natural regions. The writer combines his own extensive knowledge of the waterways and their history with that of an unpublished piece written by Fannie Hardy Eckstorm. The result makes for some interesting and informative reading, particularly since so many modern-day travelers have little understanding of Maine waterways in their historical context. "Canoeing today is a sport, but for thousands of years it was a practical necessity," Cook tells us. Indeed, "when they built the first birch bark canoe, they had the equivalent of the wheel."

Although a welcome and carefully researched work, *Above the Gravel Bar* could have been even better had a professional editor worked with it. The aforementioned table of contents, the modest number of typos, the incomplete and unclear footnotes are cases in point. Although the map in the back pocket illustrates the significant number of waterways in the state, the concept of these rivers as interconnected links to much larger trade and migration routes is not conveyed.

This reader also felt that a brief discussion of how Maine fit into the national or even international picture would have been helpful. Two books that come to mind in this vein are: *To the Ends of the Earth: The Great Travel and Trade Routes of Human History*, by Irene M. Franck, et al. (1984); and *The Canoe: A History of the Craft from Panama to the Arctic*, by Kenneth G. Roberts, et al. (1983).

In light of the current interest in Maine's waterways, David Cook has provided us with a valuable fresh perspective — a perspective that helps us better understand and appreciate the very significant role Maine's waterways have played in the state's history.

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Using Local History in the Classroom. By Fay D. Metcalf and Matthew T. Downey. (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1982. Pp. x + 284. Cloth. \$17.50.)

Fay D. Metcalf and Matthew T. Downey present their book, *Using Local History in the Classroom*, as "an attempt to provide both secondary school and college history teachers with a how-to-do-it manual on the use of local history in the classroom." Yet before we leave the first chapter, there is strong doubt as to the value of this guidebook for many secondary school teachers and most college professors of history.

Metcalf and Downey rationalize the use of local history in part on grounds that it "provides training in critical thinking, and ... is an avenue into larger areas of historical experience." But they also point out that "if local history is to be used primarily to help students develop research and critical thinking skills, it must be used in a course that can function as a seminar much of the time." Certainly, as high school teachers themselves, the authors must realize the limitations such a condition places upon secondary school adoption of their methodology. Indeed, by their own admission, "making room for a research project in a more traditional course in which

other content has to be covered would probably lead to a more narrowly focused treatment of local history and research projects of less value for skills development.”

It appears then, that neither critical thinking nor research skills are likely to be realized from the inclusion of local history techniques in the traditional curriculum.

But why? Metcalf and Downey offer several reasons: lack of adequately trained teachers on the secondary level (they correctly argue that an emphasis upon content at the expense of research techniques typifies teacher training programs); curriculum designed by traditionalists and devoid of primary source exploitation; and professional historians suspicious of parochial or filiopietistic amateurism.

Nevertheless, Metcalf and Downey are restrained in their critique of the teaching establishment. They might well have pursued the issue of who actually creates the curriculum that controls methodology. Is it legislated by state and local educational officials? Is it dictated by standardized test content? Is it set by the publishing firms that provide practically all of the printed matter available to secondary schools? Is it related to the amount of time available to teach? Is it tied to student ability to handle higher cognitive functions?

Chapter one, “Why Local History?” could have been entitled just as accurately “Why *not* Local History?” In fairness to the authors, their aim was not polemic, and their tone was professionally polite. Yet without a significant readership on the secondary level (save those fortunate enough to offer elective specialties to a tiny portion of the school population), the focus of the book logically turns to the college teacher. And herein lies its fundamental weakness: a methodology designed for *both* secondary and college professionals. On one hand, the book fails to offer effective alternatives to the traditional secondary school curriculum, characterized by its textbook dominated narrative approach to broadly defined, legally required content. On the other hand, its methodology comes uncomfortably close to insulting the typical college history professor. Certainly the fundamentals of research and writing are not

requisite reading for most Ph.D.'s. It is not necessary to instruct them in these rudimentary practices, but rather to convince them to teach these basic skills to their college students (the true benefactors of this book).

For the student of history education, there are a number of excellent chapters relating to the possible use of local history resources and techniques. The use of material culture as local history sources, for example, is presented with considerable facility, drawing upon the professional experiences of Gerald Danzer and David Goldfield and including numerous well-chosen illustrations (especially good are the architectural sketches of Warren Kirbo).

Throughout the book, Metcalf and Downey move gracefully from factual examples to interpretive analysis. They constantly pose questions that will stimulate further inquiry in their readers. When describing three war monuments in a New Hampshire park, for instance, they note the size and composition of each monument and ask, "How wealthy was the town at different periods? What proportion of the townspeople participated in each of the wars?" This leads us, perhaps, to wonder if the town's attitude toward each conflict might also be suggested by certain salient characteristics of the monuments.

The authors' grasp of quantitative analysis, however, is disappointing. Their description of needle-sort cards, for example, might have been more appropriately updated with references to computerized systems. Preprogrammed commercial filing systems, already standard software in most secondary schools and colleges, are more easily and accurately managed by students attempting to employ data collection techniques.

Metcalf and Downey display a distinctly urban orientation in both their chapter devoted to family history and their chapter, "Teaching Social History with Local History Sources." And though the authors clearly indicate their intention to "make larger historical developments more concrete" through the use of local history, a feeling for the broader context is sometimes wanting. Perhaps a greater appreciation for the impact of rural America upon the nation's history might have

been achieved with a more balanced view. To this end, a popular set of readings, *Generations: Your Family in Modern American History* (1978), by Jim Watts and Allen Davis, should be added to the otherwise complete bibliography included in *Using Local History in the Classroom*.

Of particular interest to this reviewer was the authors' treatment of oral history — clearly a significant tool of the local historian. Metcalf and Downey rely heavily upon the works of Willa Baum (*Oral History for the Local Historical Society*, and *Transcribing and Editing Oral History*), but they completely avoid the nettlesome issue of accuracy and form of transcription, problems closely related to data collection and use in other applications of local history.

Using Local History in the Classroom was not intended to be all things to all people, however. As a how-to-do-it manual for the novice in the field of local history, it provides a commendable beginning.

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REVIEWS IN BRIEF

Often books cross the editor's desk that for reasons of space cannot be treated in detailed reviews in the *Quarterly*. Although localized in scope or peripheral to the main interests of our readership, each of these books, in its own way, helps to fill a gap in Maine history scholarship. Listed below are several such publications of select regional or topical interest.

Three new publications bring Maine history to life through historic photographs. Harland H. Eastman, ed., *Sanford and Springvale, Maine, in the Days of Fred Philpot: A Photographic History* (1985; by the author, P. O. Box 276, Springvale, Me. 04083), presents a fascinating and remarkably detailed visual record of these two York County communities from the 1880s through the early 1900s. The images, taken by commercial photographer Fred Charles Philpot, are now part of the collection of the Sanford Historical Committee. They depict a broad range of rural architectural styles, among other things, and put the reader in touch with everyday life in Sanford and Springvale in the days of horse and buggy, country store, and trolley and steam engine. Cotton mills, shoe factories, and county fairs — the symbols of both rural and urban Maine — count among the themes that offer a representative visual impression of Maine town history.

Frank E. Claes, *Waldo County: The Way It Was* (1985; Down East Books, Box 679, Camden, Me. 04843) is a pictorial look at this Penobscot Bay county (and parts of present-day Knox County). Interspersing substantial text taken from George J. Varney's 1881 *Gazetteer of the State of Maine* with approximately 150 historic photos, Claes presents a brief overview of Knox County and vignette histories of each community. Of particular interest are the many reproductions of historic maps, indicating important establishments and providing a geographical context for the photographs on the pages that follow. The photos cover a wide range of topics; those of Camden in particular invite interesting comparisons with present-day landscapes.

Finally, Howard Bryant of Memorabilia (10 Evergreen Square, Somerville, Mass. 02143) has produced a calendar entitled "Vintage Maine" which includes several fine large-format historical photographs from the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, the Library of Congress, and the Peabody Museum.

A work of interest to Bangor area readers is James B. Vickery, *Made in Bangor: Economic Emergence and Adaptation, 1834-1911* (1984; Bangor Historical Society, 159 Union Street, Bangor, Me. 04401). A catalog to the Bangor Historical Society's "Made in Bangor" exhibit, this 24-page booklet overviews Queen City industry from the booming lumber era of the 1830s, to the decade of decline in the 1870s, and finally to the rise of a more diversified economy in the years before the destructive 1911 fire.

Those interested in Maine agriculture and the role of the university in its development should note the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station's *One Hundredth Annual Report, 1984-1985* (1985; 105 Winslow Hall, University of Maine at Orono). Illustrated with historical photos of Experiment Station work, the publication contains a brief historical essay by David C. Smith, a chronology, a history and description of the station's component projects and farms, and an extensive bibliography of works published under its auspices.

Two new publications approach forest history from perspectives that, although not specific to Maine, provide a broader context for appreciating the state's oldest and most important industry. William G. Robbins, *American Forestry: A History of National, State, & Private Cooperation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), offers a sweeping analysis of forestry cooperation at different private and governmental levels. Maine played a minor role in federal forestry legislation and activities, but did figure in the history of the small forest owners, in private forestry efforts, and in the development of cooperative state-federal programs to reduce forest destruction due to fire and disease. The creation of the pathbreaking Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Compact, for instance,

came after the disastrous 1947 fires in Maine. Maine readers will be rewarded with a better understanding of the world in which Maine forestry developed.

Daniel Hoffman, *Paul Bunyan: Last of the Frontier Demigods*, reprinted in a paperback edition with a new introduction by the author (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), provides a readable yet scholarly analysis of the folk hero reputedly born in (among many other places) Bangor, Maine. This edition contains a photo of Bangor's own 35-foot tribute to America's premier lumberjack, a Paul Bunyan ditty titled "How We Logged Katahdin Stream," a discussion of lumbering in the area north of Bangor, and a brief analysis of Yankee folk humor. Folklore examples gathered from a number of regional sources show links between the work, aspirations, and fears of the lumbermen and the creation of one of America's best-loved larger-than-life heroes.

Readers with a casual interest in historic architecture may find John J.-G Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945* (revised edition, 1981; American Association for State and Local History, 708 Berry Road, Nashville, Tenn. 37204), a helpful source for appreciating old and not-so-old homes. The handbook, "intended primarily for the tourist or traveler to serve as a photographic guide to architectural styles and terms," presents 214 photographs designed to illustrate the salient features of America's major architectural styles. The photos are complemented by brief histories of the styles they represent and are keyed to explanatory statements about each style's details, elements, and forms. The handbook is arranged for ready reference use and should enable the user to make quick visual associations. It also includes a detailed glossary of terms.