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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You. By David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty. (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1982. Pp. xii, 300. Cloth. \$15.95.)

In the 1970s the study of local history moved from isolated case studies to the examination of American life on the local level. This transition has taken a long time. Even with the professionalization of history in the 1880s, local history has been largely left to the antiquarians. It was not until the 1930s that Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., urged his colleagues to turn to cities and towns for a fuller understanding of the nation's history. One of the developments of this era was the founding of the American Association for State and Local History in 1940, but it was not until the 1960s that urban history became a recognized academic field for historical inquiry, perhaps in part due to the focus then on the "breakdown" of American cities. Concurrent with this development was the publication of some excellent case studies of New England communities by such scholars as Charles S. Grant, Sumner Chilton Powell, and Darrett B. Rutman. These studies relied heavily on local historical materials for formulating their conclusions. The 1960s were also the era of "urban renewal," which demolished large chunks of

our “nearby past” in many communities throughout the nation, but also brought passage by Congress of the landmark National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

All of these developments, combined with the focus of the national bicentennial in the 1970s, made it possible for historians to move into family and community history with zeal and without fear of professional ostracism. Not surprisingly, New England Puritan history was the first area to gain important attention. In 1970, Phillip J. Greven, Kenneth A. Lockridge, and John Demos published major scholarly works on Massachusetts towns. They, in turn, had been influenced by some of the pioneering work on the Puritan family by Edmund Morgan and Bernard Bailyn. Such scholars as Robert Doherty, Richard P. Horwitz, and John Brodner soon expanded this emphasis on family history into examinations of the responses made to modernity by communities in the Midwest and East.

The national bicentennial resulted in 4,387 officially sanctioned publications, many of which employed a scholar's approach to local historical evidence in assessing change within a given community. At the same time the nation was experiencing the glow of bicentennial fever, Alex Haley's *Roots* appeared, which, along with its subsequent television exploitation, fueled an even greater fascination with family history and genealogy.

In the 1980s just a casual look at some of the research indicators of the historical profession, such as *Dissertation Abstracts International*, the *Journal of American History*, and the *American Historical Review*, yields unmistakable evidence that scholarly interest in local studies has markedly increased. Even more convincing is the number of scholarly journals dealing with family and community history that began to grow and thrive in this period. Yet with all this, American history has still to feel the influence

that the Leicester school of local history has exerted on British historiography. *Nearby History* may change this. Written concisely and efficiently organized, the book is an indispensable guide for anyone beginning to research and write history employing community resources. More generalized than some of its predecessors in this genre, including *Old Glory* and the works of David Weitzman, it includes more useful bibliographical suggestions for further reading on both substance and technique. It also contains a good index and very practical appendices.

David E. Kyvig, a professor of history at the University of Akron, and Myron A. Marty, an assistant director of the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, bring a refreshing perspective to the task of making the particular pertinent to the sweep of history. The authors assert that some academic historians, as opposed to public historians who are employed by historical agencies, have often missed opportunities to substantiate, refute, or “fine tune” historical perceptions of national or international events because of their prejudice against genealogists and “mere local historians.” Conversely, they argue, certain amateur genealogists and “history buffs” have so often been consumed with minutiae that they have not noticed the historical forest around them. A prolonged exposure to this book should convince any still skeptical academic historian that much can be learned from local sources, especially with the assistance of the computer, which can analyze and qualify the data. The aspiring historian will find here that the real use of history is to make comparisons and analyses.

Kyvig and Marty, whose previous work, *Your Family History: A Handbook for Research and Writing*, has become required reading for both professional and amateur genealogists, have provided a broad perspective in which to research and write local history. Hundreds of historical trails are pointed out so that few, if any, clues to the past

can be overlooked. During this process, the authors assert that the historian must also assume different roles, including those of geographer, archaeologist, museologist and curator, to name but a few. The advantages and shortcomings of all sources, including obvious ones such as printed histories, manuscripts and maps, as well as the more elusive oral testimonies, visual documents, and building surveys, are discussed intelligently and comprehensively. No matter what sources are consulted, the authors advise that each be evaluated independently. Where there is conflict or discrepancy, the conscientious historian must use his best judgment, upon which will depend the long-term evaluation of his work.

Containing many useful illustration and examples, *Nearby History* may well become the model for others to follow in the continuing challenge of linking the particular with the universal.

Stanley Russell Howe
Bethel Historical Society

The Forerunners: The Tragic Story of 156 Down-East Americans Led to Jaffa in 1866 by Charismatic G. J. Adams to Plant the Seeds of Modern Israel. By Reed M. Holmes. (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1981. Pp. 280. Paper. \$13.00.)

The Forerunners is the compelling and tragic story of George J. Adams and 156 of his followers, who left Maine in 1866 to establish a colony in Palestine. These idealistic pioneers helped pave the way for the modern state of Israel.

George J. Adams is not only the central figure in this narrative, but also the moving force behind the entire colonization project. Born in New Jersey in 1813, George J. Adams belonged to the famous presidential Adams family.

As a young man, he combined careers of both actor and minister. Along the way he also developed a thirst for alcohol. In New York in 1840 he came in contact with Mormonism and was quickly converted and baptized.

Joining the main body of Mormons at Nauvoo, Illinois, George gave up his alcohol and became fascinated with the twin doctrines of the imminent return of Christ and the establishment of the Jews in Palestine. So it was that Adams accompanied Mormon apostle Orson Hyde on his mission to Israel (Palestine). Once in England, however, Adams was assigned as a missionary in the British Isles. Although remaining physically in England, Adams' spirit went with Hyde to dedicate Palestine for the return of the Jews.

Upon returning to America, Adams earned a reputation as a defender of the faith. A persistent theme of his preaching was the gathering of the Jews to Palestine, an idea which fired his imagination and thrilled his audiences.

Following the assassination of Joseph Smith, Adams chose to follow James J. Strang rather than Brigham Young. After Strang's murder in 1856, G. J. Adams moved to Massachusetts, where he founded his own Church of the Messiah. Ultimately his success in making converts in Maine led him to settle at Indian River. Sermons in Addison, Indian River and Jonesport, as well as articles in his *Sword of Truth* stressed the redemption of Israel. In 1865, George made his first trip to Palestine in order to lay plans for his colony.

Finally, on August 11, 1866, George J. Adams and 156 followers boarded the *Nellie Chapin* bound for Jaffa. With them they took household supplies, clothing, prefabricated housing, materials for fences, paint, glass, and food. They dropped anchor at Jaffa on September 22, 1866, forty-two days out of Jonesport, Maine.

The American vice-consul at Jaffa, Mr. Herman Loewenthal, arranged for the pilgrims to make a temporary camp just outside the city. In that camp their troubles began. Unaware, they had camped on the very site of a recent cholera epidemic, and many became ill.

Even as they purchased land and began assembling their prefabricated houses, troubles continued to plague them. They quarreled over the size of the building lots, they complained about Adams's resurgent drinking habits, and relation between Loewenthal and the colony deteriorated. Families who had been drawn together by faith soon drifted apart and regarded each other as strangers.

Faced with such pressures, Adams turned with alarming frequency to alcohol. His drunkenness was also accompanied by violent arguments with his wife and children. By June of 1867 the pioneer band began to sell their homes to the highest bidder. In August Adams was arrested on charges by his own followers – charges ranging from fraud to habitual drunkenness. Although he avoided imprisonment, George Adams now tearfully watched many of his colonists leave Palestine for Maine. Fighting for his reputation, Adams valiantly, but unsuccessfully, sought to recruit colonist near Jaffa. Finally, in 1867, realizing that his dream of a successful colony had failed, Adams and his family returned to the United States, settling in Philadelphia, where he died May 11, 1880.

Although his colony had failed, George J. Adams had planted seeds which did bear fruit. Some of his colonists

stayed on in Palestine. But, more important, his colony gave hope to Jews who had wanted to settle in Palestine. Out of the ashes of his colony in Jaffa has risen the modern city of Tel Aviv – symbol of dynamic Israel.

The story of Adams and his colony is a fascinating study of human nature. In Adams one sees the embodiment of good and evil, success and failure, in a word the internal struggle that people with religious conviction know and understand.

Reed Holmes had succeeded in writing a fascinating story. On the one hand, he is a superb storyteller in the best down-east tradition. On the other hand, his Mormon roots (he served as presiding patriarch in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) provide him with an understanding of Mormon doctrine and of the faith and idealism of George J. Adams.

Unfortunately, the book lacks documentation. Not one footnote graces its pages. As a professional historian, I found myself frantically searching and wondering where his material came from. An index would also greatly strengthen the book and make it more useful.

The book is available in paperback and the cover design is attractive and appealing. The book is well constructed and durable. It is also enhanced with a number of excellent photographs.

The Forerunners is certainly worth reading. Residents of Maine, people interested in Israel, and Mormons, both LDS and RLDS, would all find the book interesting and meaningful.

Donald Q. Cannon
Brigham Young University

Islands of Maine: Where America Really Began. By Bill Caldwell. (Portland, Me.: Guy Gannett Publishing Co., 1981. Pp. 241, [11]. Cloth. \$12.95.)

The object is the audience. That, perhaps, is the idea that must be kept foremost when reviewing certain varieties of books, especially when they are not books the reviewer feels should have been written. Bill Caldwell's *Islands of Maine* is one of those books – a light, breezy cruise along the coast of Maine, with the state's beautiful islands serving as moorings to which the narrative is anchored. Mixing history, tradition and myth, Caldwell includes lighthouses, Indians, fishermen, and a number of other related topics as well as selected islands, and presents an impressive accumulation of information in the process.

For example, in reading about Great Chebeague Island, one is told that Indian Chief Madockawando was the top man on the island in the 1600s and that, as late as 1870, some Indians still summered there. Readers learn of early owners Mr. Merry, a merchant of Boston, and Walter Gendall of Yarmouth; about the great mast pines brought out by Colonel Westbrook; of quarry operator and shipper Ambrose Hamilton; and of the great wreck of the stone sloop *Addie Snow* and the passenger ship *Portland*. Caldwell continues with vignettes on local doctor L. L. Hale, and wealthy Philadelphian Ellis Ames Ballard, who, in the early 1900s, built a great summerhouse on Indian Point, which cost \$40,000 and was called "Kholmandur." The reader further learns that Ballard expended great effort and money in turning a sapling oak into a giant tree – and so on.

Similar essays have been developed for a substantial number of Maine islands, some lighthouses, a few quarries, as well as for explorers, fishermen, and lobsterers. The result is light reading, quite engaging for

the Maine visitor who sits on the deck of a coasting vessel or the back porch of a seaward-facing cape, and obviously many other people, because the book clearly sells well. And that is not something to be shrugged off lightly. Still, the ability to write well, to tell a good story, and to reach an enviably large audience does not overcome the overwhelming problem of this work as history. And that, too, is important, for this book has pretensions as history.

There are a few sections, which, despite minor errors, are fairly up-to-date and generally accurate. Unfortunately, there are others where the opposite is true. Over and over, one reads about all the early fishermen who frequented the Maine coast in the 1500s. In point of fact, several documented studies, including Raymond McFarland's *A History of New England Fisheries* (1911), Harold Innis's *The Cod Fisheries* (1940), and my own "The Founding of Maine, 1600-1640," which appeared in this journal in the summer issue of 1978, have pretty much discarded that thesis into the historical trashbin. The evidence conclusively shows that there were no fishermen working these waters until after 1600. One wishes that Caldwell had checked further.

Later, Caldwell comments on Richard Vines's 1616/17 winter stay on the Maine coast, and continues by saying that the explorer sent back enthusiastic reports and even promoted the area when he returned to England, resulting in the rapid settlement of the region. Simply put, there is no evidence even as to the whereabouts of Vines from 1617 to 1625, much less as to what he was doing. Furthermore, Vines's sponsor, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, makes no reference to any such report, stating only that the explorer's efforts would encourage him to attempt further ventures. However, in *Islands of Maine* such an inconvenient dearth of documentation was not allowed to hinder the story. These inaccuracies simply highlight one

of the major weaknesses of the book: the all-too-frequent use of second-rate sources and the willingness to mix indiscriminately fact, tradition, and conjecture. The result is a body of statements, at times contradictory, wholly useless for the serious historian.

A second major problem is the lack of a story line beyond the folksy “ain’t Maine people sumth’n!” The reader might wish to know how islanders have coped with the necessity of bringing in most supplies from the mainland, how isolation has affected social patterns and altered life-styles, or how transportation to and from the islands has changed over time. Such information will not be found. Instead, one discovers great and curious material on each island, set of islands, or other related topics, with little concern about major gaps in chronology and subject matter. For example, the story on Great Diamond Island skips from early settlers in the 1760s to the development of a resort complex in the 1880s. The reader is left to wonder what may have gone on in between. On the other hand, one seems to retrace specific points again and again. Several times the end of manned lighthouses is lamented; likewise, the escalating cost of islands is retold every few pages; and each island’s most colorful character is paraded by. In short, the volume is antiquarian and repetitive. It almost does not matter where you start reading, it all sounds about the same.

So where does this leave us? Simply put, Caldwell’s *Islands of Maine* cannot be trusted as history. On the other hand, if you are on the deck of your sailboat, sitting on the back porch of your summer cottage, or have a bit of time to kill . .

Edwin A. Churchill
Maine State Museum

Foundations of Northeast Archaeology: Edited by Dean R. Snow. (New York: Academic Press, 1981. Pp. 266. Cloth. \$32.50.)

This volume is mistitled. It would be more appropriately called something like "On the Cutting Edge of Science: Some Archaeologists' Recent Research Ideas in Northeast Archaeology." Like its companion volumes in Academic Press's Studies in Archaeology series, it is a book for the specialist and not for the general public.

Foundations is a compilation of seven papers delivered to a conference in Albany, New York, in early 1980. The quality of the papers varies from abysmal to inspiring. Unfortunately, the editor's contribution is one of the more obscure. Perhaps it is only the dearth of printed material on Northeast archaeology that induced Academic Press to publish this volume.

The lead article by Bruce Trigger, "Prehistoric Political and Social Organization: An Iroquoian Case Study," is, however, extremely valuable. It is the only article in the book that could be of use to the non-archaeologist, and, in fact, it should be read by historians in the Northeast. In a critical review, the kind that are written only once a decade, Trigger destroys many myths that have come to be associated with Iroquoian prehistory. He tells us what we do not know, very persuasively. Any historian who has dealt with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and assumes that what he was hearing about the Indians from archaeologists and anthropologists was fact, must make an effort to obtain a copy of this chapter. For example, Trigger states, "There has also been growing awareness in recent years that the earliest ethnohistorical data do not describe Iroquoian cultures prior to when they began to be modified by European influences. Archaeological data suggests that European goods reached the Huron almost a

century before the first recorded historic accounts in 1615. Some authors speculate that the fur trade led to a breakdown in traditional matrilineal-matrilocal institutions by the first half of the seventeenth century.”

“Paleoenvironmental Reconstruction in the Northeast” by Dena Dincauze is a useful review of the kinds of geological, zoological, and botanical techniques and data that archaeologists have recently used or found useful in this region. Throughout the chapter runs the theme of anthropology, asking questions that bring “us closer to the fundamental humanity of ancient peoples, to their worries, their failures, and their successes in the business of survival.” The principal motive, of course, being to learn from such past successes and failures so that we can at least avoid the latter.

“Approaches to Cultural Adaptation in the Northeast” by Dean Snow is the most confusing chapter in the book. Snow discusses topics dealing with cultural adaptation to the physical environment. He begins with a theoretical discussion of environmental carrying capacity, rates of change, and some demographic figures presented in a superficially readable style. There are, however, internal contradictions. For example, there is a confusing discussion concerning how much humans are like other animals in their response to general ecological principles, or unlike them in that information acquisition and management are critical: “there is no reason to stipulate an intellectual or ideological component” (p. 114) in human ecology versus “information is critical in the maintenance or transformation of adaptive states” (p. 126). Snow’s discussion of Maine’s circa 1,000 A.D. settlement pattern (pp. 130-32) is now out-of-date. In summary, we quote Snow’s opening line, “Adaptation is another one of those topics in archaeological inquiry in which we seem to know just enough to make ourselves dangerous.”

William A. Starna's "Old Data and New Models" is a clean and sober review of advantages and disadvantages of "modeling," models being hypotheses or sets of hypotheses that simplify complex observations and offer a predictive framework. Starna's paper should be required reading for graduate students, not for the interested public.

Two chapters by Douglas H. Ubelake and Debora L. Schindler deal with the information that can be extracted from analysis of human skeletal material. Both are useful to specialists, not to the public.

Francis P. McManamon's chapter reports on "cultural resource management" archaeology from Cape Cod National Seashore. He deals with the frequencies of archaeological sites on the landscape, or with the questions, "How do we know that there is *not* a site there?" Again, his work is very useful to a few people.

Arthur E. Spiess
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Commission

A Short History of American Locomotive Builders in the Steam Era. By John H. White. (Washington, D.C.: Bass, Inc., 1982. Pp. 112. Paper. \$11.95.)

In 1830, less than a year after the first steam railway locomotive was shipped to the United States from Great Britain, an American locomotive had been built by a New York firm. By 1840 twelve manufacturers were producing locomotives for *both* the domestic and export market. The key to this growth was the fact that most well-equipped machine shops were capable of manufacturing locomotives, and just as every city wanted its own railroad,

civic pride also preferred locally produced locomotives. Eventually approximately 150 firms entered the industry, including companies in Manchester, New Hampshire, and Portland, Maine.

Building locomotives was not as romantic an enterprise as it might appear on the surface. Orders were highly cyclical, responding to the health of the economy. In good times, when traffic volume was up, railroads ordered new locomotives and were willing to pay premiums for quick delivery. However, when the economy turned down and traffic dropped, orders were immediately cancelled, leaving manufacturers high and dry. Even in good times, competition for orders was intense. Railroad personnel were wined and dined, given fancy photographs and catalogs, and offered easy credit.

Given these circumstances, many firms failed, and success was due to new ideas or just luck, and tended to be short lived. Walter Aiken of Franklin, New Hampshire, for example, built just four locomotives in 1869-70 – the vertical boiler engines are still in use on the Mount Washington Cog Railway. The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company of Manchester, New Hampshire, a huge development and textile manufacturing conglomerate, diversified into locomotive manufacturing briefly during the railroad boom of the 1850s and produced 234 engines, including a large number for the Grand Trunk Railway. The Manchester Locomotive Works also began in the 1850s, but it continued to build engines until 1913 when it was bought out by one of the biggest firms in the industry and was shut down after building 1,793 locomotives.

The Portland Company's locomotive production began earlier, but was not as extensive or as long-lived as that of the Manchester company. Chartered by Maine railroad promoter John A. Poor and other leading Maine citizens in 1846, the plant opened the next year and produced its

first locomotive, *Augusta*, in 1848. By 1860, the Portland Company had built 100 locomotives to serve Maine's growing rail network. After a period of hard times in the early 1860s, the firm built 10 to 20 locomotives per year from 1864 to 1894. By 1890 the growth in the size of locomotives required a huge capital investment in manufacturing plant and equipment, and the new owners of the Portland Company decided to specialize in more profitable products – marine engines, boilers, fog horns, and wood chip digesters. The firm continued to repair locomotives until 1923, and it built one last engine for a narrow gauge line in 1906, to bring the total produced to 628.

Author John White denies that his small volume is definitive, but rather offers it as a preliminary work, a summary of his research to date. However, it does include brief histories of every major locomotive manufacturer, in addition to a valuable overview of the history of the industry as a whole. White's book should be in every public library and in the collection of anyone interested in railroad history.

Joel W. Eastman
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