

10-1-1980

Book Reviews

Robert M. York
University of Southern Maine

Anne Bridges
University of Maine Orono

Horton W. Emerson
University of Southern Maine

Joel Eastman
University of Southern Maine

Lessie B. Louder

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

York, Robert M., Anne Bridges, Horton W. Emerson, Joel Eastman, and Lessie B. Louder. "Book Reviews." *Maine History* 20, 2 (1980): 122-138. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol20/iss2/4>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

The First Century: A History of the University of Maine, 1865-1965. By David C. Smith. (Orono, Maine: University of Maine Press at Orono, 1979. Pp. 295. Hardcover. \$15.00).

David C. Smith's *The First Century: A History of the University of Maine, 1865-1965* is "must" reading for all alumni and friends of the state university and for all others who seek to learn of the origins, growth and maturation of the Orono-based institution. Professor Smith presents the reader with a comprehensive examination of the total university experience in the days when everyone knew where the university was located – Orono. He reviews the trials and tribulations; assailments from outside, especially Bowdoin and the legislature; frictions within between administrators and faculty, faculty and faculty; and both administrators and faculty with students. He takes a close look at curriculum expansions and revisions; examines student life throughout the century; extra-curricular activities; and the expanding role of research and publications. In fact he touches on all aspects of the burgeoning activities and responsibilities on campus and state-wide of the university. It is presented in an interesting and readable manner which, while it does not approach the excitement of a "Who Done It?", nevertheless, has plenty of drama, humor and even some pathos. Each chapter has introductory and summary paragraphs which encapsulate the gist of the chapter. The footnotes are readily accessible at the end of each chapter and amply testify to the diversity and richness of the resources utilized by the author. The narrative is greatly enhanced by the artistic skills of Arlene Thompson who selected and arranged the many and marvelous illustrations which are adroitly interwoven with the text.

From the moment of the passage of the Morrill Act there was controversy in Maine. Of course Maine should accept the legacy but what should be done with it? Should it be granted to Bowdoin or Waterville (both wanted the funds) or should a new and separate institution be created? It was a long and bitter battle which raged within and without the legislature. Ezekiel Holmes, distinguished editor of the *Maine Farmer*, through his paper and before the legislature, literally gave his life in behalf of a new institution and deserves to be hailed as the true “father” of the university. Then the difficult job of locating the school arose. Hannibal Hamlin served as first chairman of the board of trustees long enough to decide that it should not be Topsham, Fairfield or Orrington. Rather it should be Orono where two farms on the Orono-Old Town line had been donated and for which additional funds had been raised in the Bangor-Orono-Old Town area. The original board, constituted on county lines, was too large and cumbersome and was replaced by a seven-member board headed by ex-Governor Abner Coburn whose wisdom was invaluable and whose pocketbook would be decisive. Coburn Hall is properly named for him. Those early years were ones of frustration and hardships. Legislative appropriations were niggardly. There were many who felt that the State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts should be self-supporting as were the liberal arts colleges – Bowdoin, Bates and Colby. Bowdoin was consistently antagonistic (just why is not too clear for it was much better off financially than either Bates or Colby) and under President Hyde waged continuing warfare against university budgets in Augusta and also against the curriculum. When the college became a university in the 1890s and the Arts and Sciences College became a functioning unit, Bowdoin spokesmen began a ten-year campaign culminating in a gigantic confrontation in Portland City Hall in 1906. President Fellows defended

the university ably and enlisted the support of the alumni to save liberal arts at Orono. Hyde of Bowdoin and White of Colby both supported excluding Orono from the B.A. degree. The fight moved on to Augusta. After initial set-backs and with the battle being waged hotly in the state's newspapers as well as in the legislature and the halls of learning, the university emerged triumphant on March 26. By that date the University of Maine had become a *cause celebre* in American higher education. The university didn't get the mill tax it had hoped for but it got considerable financial support and the B.A. degree was saved. From this vantage point it is hard to realize the acrimony that was generated, but, as a student at Bates College from 1933 to 1937, I well remember the arrogance of Bowdoin students vis-a-vis Bates students, but both joined hands in asserting "our superiority" to those who were unfortunate enough to attend "that cow college" in Orono! The mill tax did not finally arrive until Boardman's presidency in the late 1920s and only after another heated battle between President Clarence Little and another Bowdoin man, Governor Percival Baxter. Baxter, an antivivisectionist whose great love in life was his dogs, couldn't accept Little's research which included the use of animals. Nor could he accept Little's impassioned pleas for more money so the university might become what it ought to become. At one point Baxter indicated that the university *confused size with quality* and he consistently recommended less money than the university wanted or needed. It was the unfortunate lot of several university presidents that financial problems stemming from underfunding contributed significantly to their resignations. No president was immune. It was a perpetual cross for Arthur Hauck who came during the depression, endured the perplexities of World War II, and then at the end of the war faced the avalanche of students and attendant needs of housing, classrooms, faculty, etc. Only

Lloyd Elliott escaped relatively unscathed. He had the happy experience in the mid-1960s of having his budget requests fully funded. He even got a building not asked for nor particularly wanted. That building today houses the Center for Research and Advance Study and Law School of the Portland campus of the University of Southern Maine. The occasion for this largesse was Republican Governor John Reed and the first Democratic legislature since 1911.

Dr. Smith gives the reader a chronological look at all of the administrators and their times beginning with the first president, the Reverend Charles F. Allen, a Methodist minister, who ultimately found preaching more satisfying than being a college president. Second was a faculty member, Merritt Fernald, 1879-1893, whose resignation was requested because, while he had guided the university tolerably well, he flunked the course in futurism. He returned to teaching mathematics and lived to see his history of the university published in the second decade of the twentieth century. His successor was Abram W. Harris from Washington, D.C. where he had been Director of the Office of Experiment Stations. He is credited with creating a real university, not merely in name (it did become the University of Maine) but in deed as well. His successor, historian George Fellows from the mid-West, won major battles in the legislature only to be undone by a strike on campus. He went quickly from the “toast” of the campus in 1907 to its “talk” in 1909 at the time of the only student strike in the history of the university. The occasion, fully aired by Smith, was the violation of university rules governing student conduct. The alumni sided with the students and Fellows left for the West as a history professor once again. Robert J. Aley from Indiana followed in the presidency and served from 1910 till after World War One. The war presented many serious problems for the university – the Student Army Training

Corps, Dean Walz and the Law School at Bangor, and financial difficulties among them. Clarence Little's administration was one of hope, long-range planning and controversy. Little only served from 1922 to 1925 but, as Smith says, he made a "major impact." The mill tax came under the new president Harold Boardman, an alumni and dean of technology, and finally placed the university on a "regular" financial footing. It was unfortunate that it was followed so swiftly by the depression and subsequent retrenchment. When Arthur Hauck was inaugurated in 1934, he entered upon the longest presidency in the history of the university. It spanned the depths of the depression, World War II, and the hectic growth of the late '40s and the 1950s. Dr. Hauck was one of the finest gentlemen this reviewer has ever known. He was friendly and informal and always popular with the students and, until near the close of his administration, generally so with the faculty. Dave Smith calls the Hauck years "Character years" and says "the University was a better place for his tenure." My own judgment is a more positive one. Had Dr. Hauck stepped down after twenty years rather than twenty-four much of the dissatisfaction and criticism of the last years would never have occurred. It was time for a change. Lloyd Elliott was that change and the whirlwind years arrived – buildings galore, new and expanded programs, rapid enrollment growth and corresponding faculty appointments, a new law school at Portland, etc. It was a fresh and very strong breeze that blew from 1958 to 1965. Smith is right – "to a great extent the university in its second century would be a memorial to Lloyd Elliott." Smith's final chapter highlights the years since the Centennial when Edwin Young, Winthrop Libby, and Howard Neville held the reins.

While Smith concentrates on the various administrations, he delves into the curriculum, the faculty, co-education, student life, research and publications, the

experiment station, the outreach programs of the university – in fact I can think of no area that escapes his notice. If one wishes to know more of the work at the experiment station on campus or the experiments with potatoes at Presque Isle, poultry at Highmoor or blueberries at Jonesboro or marine research at Lamoine or Walpole, it's all there. Or if you seek to follow the changing pattern of the role of women on campus he's covered it. Student life is traced fully from the days of required work, curriculum changes, reaction to military courses, resentment against compulsory chapel and disturbances therein, fraternities, sororities, honor societies, "cozy corners," "impromptu privies," food protests, drinking, smoking, razors, inter-class rivalries, athletics, cheating, panty raids, publications, cultural societies, student senate, dormitory councils, women's rules – everything from Rising Night before the Bowdoin football game to Arthur Hauck's Maine Day.

Dr. Smith also singles out from the thousands who have served on the faculty a relative handful of those who stood out – many because of their research and publications. The reviewer has no quarrel with Hart, Aubert, Balentine, Rogers, Patch, Colvin, Faye Wilson and the others of earlier days, nor does he question E. F. Dow, Edgar McKay, Alice Stewart, Paul Cloke, Cecil Reynolds, Matthew McNeary, and the others of more recent vintage. Having lived through the years 1946 to 1962 as a fairly active faculty member with broad acquaintance of faculty and administrations, I think the list is far too short and suffers from serious omissions. Among these are James Gannett, registrar; Edith Wilson, dean of women, John Stewart, dean of men; Ed Jackman, John Crawford, David Fink, James MacCampbell (now librarian for nearly two decades) and especially, Mark Shibles, education. Also Clarence Bennett, physics, Henry Kirsben and Austin Peck, economics; John Romanyshyn, social welfare;

Weston Evans and Ashley Campbell, engineering; John Hawkins, English; Howard Waring, horticulture; and Frank Witter and Harold Chute, animal pathology. Smith says his list is idiosyncratic and I concede his right. I just think his is too exclusive and probably mine is, too.

Also I wish he might have saluted outstanding teaching a bit more strongly. Probably my prejudices are showing but I think he could easily have cited among others, the history and government department for its superb teaching in the halcyon days of Billias, Bayard, Stewart, Trafford, Parker, Grady, Nolde, Bass, Mawhinny, Schoenberger, Clark, and Dow.

Taken all together I find little to criticize and a great deal to praise. He has treated the university's history wisely, well utilizing rich and varied sources. It's a far cry from the early days of financial malnutrition and pernicious anemia to the present. No longer does the university travel in the shadow of the private liberal arts colleges of Maine, but alongside and even above them because, in addition to its fine College of Arts and Sciences, the university has professional programs in engineering, forestry, agriculture, and pulp and paper which are nationally and even internationally acclaimed.

Dave Smith has done himself proud in this history and in so doing has honored the university wherein he labors.

Robert M. York
University of Southern Maine

“Suthin” (it’s the opposite of nothin’): An Oral History of Grover Morrison’s Woods Operation at Little Musquah Lake, 1945-1947. By Stephen Ballew, Joan Brooks, Dona Brotz and Edward Ives. (Orono, Maine: Northeast Folklore Society, 1978. Pp. 117. Paper. \$4.00).

“I’m a Man that Works”: *The Biography of Don Mitchell of Merrill, Maine.* By Roger E. Mitchell. (Orono, Maine: Northeast Folklore Society, 1978. Pp. 130. Paper. \$4.00).

“*Suthin*” and “*I’m a Man that Works*” are both publications of the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History at the University of Maine at Orono. These archives, under the direction of E. L. “Sandy” Ives, provide a repository for the oral and pictorial heritage of the people of Maine and the Atlantic Provinces of Canada. Its files contain stories, songs, photographs and life histories as verbalized by the people of the Northeast. Not only do the archives provide a place to file this material but the staff, which, except for the director, is composed entirely of students and volunteers, makes information and training available to the public. One of the most extensive projects of the archives has been the compilation of materials on the life of the lumbermen. “*Suthin*” and “*I’m a Man that Works*” are both a part of the information collected on the experiences of people who worked in the Maine woods.

The oral recording of the experiences of the “common” folk is valuable for two reasons. First, it is essential for our understanding of the world that we are exposed to the life experiences and cultural manifestations, such as stories and songs, of a wide variety of people. Secondly, if we would like the histories of our century written accurately, historians need information on how people lived their lives. Governments, industries, politicians, and the wealthy will leave reams of documents as testimony to their activities. But material on the lives of “common”

people will be lost forever if not preserved by organizations such as the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History.

“*Suthin*” began as no more than a poem written about a lumbering operation which occurred in the Maine woods during World War II. From this poem, the authors have reconstructed the whole operation, from the original survey of the cutting area to the operation of the saw-mill. The reconstruction was accomplished through oral interviews with the crew members and actual visits to the area which was cut. The mudsills still exist for the original camp buildings so a complete map of the camp was drawn and included in the book.

This particular woods operation is very interesting in that it occurred on the eve of mechanization. Horses were still the primary mode of transportation, but the men used automobiles to visit with their families on weekends. Bucksaws were still the standard cutting instruments, but powersaws had made their appearance. In a few years the horses and the bucksaws would mostly be things of the past and so also would lumbering as described in “*Suthin*”.

“*Suthin*” describes the various jobs performed by the people in the camp. Each person, from the teamsters to the scalers (the men who measure the day’s cut for each chopper), had a defined role. Perhaps the most interesting job belonged to the cook, who, even during a time of rationing, was expected to provide hearty and tasteful meals for the men. In this particular woods operation, the job of cooking was done by a husband-and-wife team. Women occasionally worked as cooks in lumbering camps but usually the job was held by men. The cooks, along with clerks and bosses, were as essential to lumbering as the cutters themselves. All the various people, detailed in “*Suthin*,” formed an integrated whole, completely dependent on the parts for smooth operation.

"I'm a Man that Works" is the biography of Don Mitchell (born 1898) of Merrill, Maine. Throughout his life, Don worked at a variety of jobs – lumbering, farming, dairying. His was the chronicle of many men in this time period, who had not one single career but several occupations. Jobs often changed with the seasons – lumbering was a winter activity whereas farming occupied the summer. Opportunities for employment also changed with the general economic fluctuations of the country. If potatoes were bringing very low profits, one might decide to switch, as Don did, to dairying. This all occurred within the framework of a small town where one's skills and opportunities were well defined.

Typical of many rural Mainers, Don had a very strong work ethic. He worked hard at each job and treated all his acquaintances fairly. In this small town a person's word was as good as a written contract. There was compassion for the honest poor but nothing but contempt for the shiftless. Often, earning a living was difficult, and there was no room for people who were not prepared to pull their own weight. Don Mitchell's life typified this ethic and the traditional values of rural Maine.

"Suthin" and *"I'm a Man that Works"* capture forever a world that is rapidly being lost in this age of mechanization and rapid communication. With the advent of television and extensive air travel, the unique nature of Maine life is changing. These two books and the others of the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History will help to preserve the experiences and culture of Maine and the Maritimes.

Anne Bridges
Maine Climate Research Group
University of Maine, Orono

Remarks of My Life per me Hezekiah Prince, 1786-1792.

Edited by Sally Hill and Arthur Spear. (Thomaston, Maine: Thomaston Historical Society, 1979. Pp. xi, 114. Hardcover. \$10.50).

It turns out that this Hezekiah Prince was the father of Hezekiah Prince, Jr., whose journal of the 1820s – also edited by Arthur Spear, a Prince descendant – was published by the Maine Historical Society in 1965, and it comes as a surprise to this reviewer that the elder Prince was far more important historically than was his son. He was also a much less prolific diarist, and this slim volume reproduces all of his surviving manuscript material as well as two short items written later by relatives from diary material no longer extant.

Prince was a fifteen-year-old joiner's apprentice when he first came to the Penobscot Bay region in 1786 from his native Kingston, Massachusetts, and was still in his early twenties when he settled permanently on the banks of the Georges River. He became a businessman as well as a builder, a community leader who held a succession of political appointments, an elected member of both the Massachusetts General Court and the Maine State Senate, a prominent amateur mathematician, a Baptist layman who was one of the founders of Colby College, and a partner and manager of a cotton mill built during the War of 1812. He resided in St. George until 1814 when he moved to Thomaston where he died in 1840. This book, however, deals almost entirely with the years 1786 to 1815 and mentions scarcely, if at all, the activities just listed.

Among the highlights of the book would be a trip to Philadelphia in 1793-94 where he met Washington and Knox and was obliged to decline an offer from William Bingham to act as his agent in surveying and settling his Maine lands (according to his son, George Prince). Also interesting was the religious experience which converted

him from a deist to a Baptist. Mainly the book presents a picture of daily life in early nineteenth-century Maine as lived by a member of the establishment with the planting, the haying, the harvesting, killing the hogs, birthing the babies, and an incredible amount of traveling. There are old Maine expressions like "eastard" and "backward" weather meaning a late spring and many quaint spellings, with my favorite being the "paul bairers" at a funeral. Much of this material is in a sixty-page appendix of brief, daily notes entitled "Commonplace Book 1808 to 1815," though it is not clear to me why the editors chose to make half of the book an appendix rather than text. One's appetite is only whetted, however, and it is a shame that such a substantial man left such a thin record of his accomplishments.

There is a brief introduction by Roger B. Ray, a map, portraits of Prince and his wife, and photographs of several houses that he built. The several appendices include an index of persons, a list of ships, and a list of appointments received. The book was attractively put together by Courier-Gazette of Rockland.

Within the past five years the Thomaston Historical Society has had published under its aegis a fine pictorial album, the readable *Thomaston Scrapbook*, and now this volume which is aimed to some extent at a more scholarly audience. The society and the editors are to be commended for this modest but welcome addition to Maine historiography, and one hopes that other societies will emulate the example. By all means, put out the markers and preserve the houses, but, at the same time, be sure that the written source materials are collected and made available.

Horton W. Emerson, Jr.
University of Southern Maine

Two Feet Between the Rails. Vol. 1: The Early Years. By Robert C. Jones. (Silverton, Colorado: Sundance Publications, Ltd., 1979. Pp. 416. Hardcover. \$35.00).

The citizens of the town of Phillips in Franklin County, Maine, had wanted a railroad since the late 1840s, and after the extension of the Maine Central into nearby Farmington, interest in the construction of an extension north resulted in the chartering of the Sandy River Valley Railroad in 1871. The estimated cost of such a line cooled the ardor of most, but proponents turned to a narrow gauge design as a way to cut costs. In 1878 they learned of a new two-foot-gauge railroad running between Billerica and Bedford, Massachusetts, and they went to visit it and its manager, George E. Mansfield, the major proponent of the two foot gauge in America.

When Mansfield was brought to Maine to visit the proposed route and advance the narrow gauge concept, the enthusiasm generated resulted in the organization of the Sandy River Railroad and the hiring of Mansfield to promote, build and operate it (made possible by the failure of the Massachusetts road). Stock was sold, the towns of Phillips and Strong voted loans, and residents donated right of way and their own labor to get the eighteen-mile road completed by a November 20, 1879 deadline set by the town of Phillips.

The Sandy River Railroad was the genesis of what became the largest two-foot-gauge railroad system in the Western Hemisphere, eventually operating on 120 miles of track. The successful construction of the Sandy River spurred other towns in the county to work to extend branch lines to their communities. When two groups in Kingsfield proposed alternate routes from Strong in 1883, the shorter, fourteen-mile Franklin and Megantic Railroad won the crucial support of the town and completed construction in December 1884.

A large lumber firm which held the entire township of Reddington proposed the next extension, the Phillips and Rangeley Railroad in 1889, and quickly sold the stock in it and in the Reddington Lumber Company. A pledge from the Maine Central Railroad to purchase one thousand dollars of stock for each mile built resulted in the completion of the twenty-eight mile line in June 1891, and in a temporary takeover by the Maine Central. Both the Maine Central and the Sandy River offered subsidies to the Kingfield and Dead River, a fifteen-mile branch of the Franklin and Megantic, to extend the system into the rich timberlands of northeast Franklin County.

The most ambitious undertaking, however, was strongly opposed by the Maine Central. In 1897, the Franklin, Somerset and Kennebec Railroad was organized to build a line connecting the Sandy River at Farmington with the Wiscasset and Quebec at Weeks Mills in order to create a line from the sea to the mountains, but the connection was blocked by the Maine Central in 1900. Two more logging branches, the six-mile Madrid Railroad Company and the ten-mile Eustis branch of the Phillips and Rangeley, however, were completed in 1902 and 1924, respectively.

Since the Sandy River Railroad generated respectable earnings and dividends almost from the beginning of operations, the Maine Central Railroad offered to purchase it and convert it to standard gauge in 1883. The other Franklin County roads, however, were marginal and regularly ran in the red. The Franklin and Megantic and its subsidiary Kingfield and Dead River line defaulted on their bonds in 1897 and were foreclosed and reorganized; and the death of a major stockholder put the Phillips and Rangeley into receivership in 1905. All the lines were merged in 1908 to form the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad, the history of which will comprise the second volume of *Two Feet Between the Rails*.

This book is a labor of love on the part of rail fan Robert C. Jones, and the resultant text reflects the good and bad aspects of works of this type. Jones spent years exploring the area, taking and collecting photographs, interviewing former employees of the railroads, and going through local newspapers. He seems to have collected every photograph ever taken of the railroads, and most are magnificent, although they do not always correlate with the text; his own color photographs, while showing the beauty of the area, add little to the book. Jones says he intends his book to be “definitive,” and thus he includes every detail he located in the newspapers – weather, accidents, injuries, fires, burglaries and amusing anecdotes. While well written, the text is merely a chronological summary of newspaper accounts of everything that happened in relationship to the railroad, with no real effort to explain what was happening, particularly in regard to the complex corporate and financial matters. Furthermore, Mr. Jones does not seem to have relied on other railroad histories, and he includes few maps, no footnotes, and no formal bibliography.

Two Feet Between the Rails is a physically impressive book. The photographs alone are worth the price, and it certainly is the most thorough history of the Franklin County railroads to date. I look forward to his second volume on the merged railroads in their heyday, and I would encourage Mr. Jones to include an interpretive conclusion, a formal bibliography, and, if not footnotes, a thorough bibliographic essay.

Joel W. Eastman
University of Southern Maine

The History of Mercer, Maine, 1782-1974. By Harold Owens Smith. (N.p.: By the author, 1977. Pp. 271. Hardcover. \$15.00).

Recent publication of several town histories, and the formation of numerous regional historical societies, bear witness to the growing interest in the local history of Maine during the past decade. Efforts of communities to preserve memories of their past, through this and other books, reveal an appreciation of the continuing vitality and influence of the past both locally and statewide.

The Somerset County town of Mercer is not large, and it has not been associated with dramatic events or movements in ways that other towns have been. On the other hand, its history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been typical of many of the small inland towns of Maine, and special interest therefore attaches to the publication of this history. By-passed by major highways, proposed canals, and direct rail lines, Mercer was for a long time a self-contained and self-sufficient community. Agriculture was always important and its industries have been few: as farming diminished in importance, its population declined from a high of about 1,400 in 1840 to a bare 300 in 1970. Nevertheless, what the author has tried to do, basing his work on original as well as on available printed sources, is to give a topical economic and institutional account of the development of the town from its first settlement and later incorporation down to the 1970s. Thus he deals with land grants to the first settlers, town government and school administration, farming and other economic endeavors, transportation facilities, and involvement in military affairs. Interspersed are a great many genealogical references and information relating to landholdings and land titles.

If a general criticism were to be made of the book, it would be the inclusion of so many tables and statistics, the

relevance of which is not always clear. In fact, the author admits that his work “is largely a compilation of data.” This over-emphasis on lists, names, and dates is of less interest to the general historian than it would be to local residents who, presumably, are concerned with such matters as who held particular town offices and served in the three major wars. Most useful is an eight-page bibliography of primary and other sources, which follows the nineteen appendices.

In the autumn of 1979, this reviewer had the privilege of visiting Mercer and of meeting several members of the author’s family. To be able to see and to recognize at close range a place which one already knows about — in this instance from Mr. Smith’s carefully researched book — can bring a community to life in a way that a mere visit cannot. This gives an added dimension to the importance of writing local history.

Lessie B. Louder
Hancock, Maine