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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Maine, Charles II and Massachusetts: Governmental Relationships in Early Northern New England. By John G. Reid. (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1977. Pp. x, 278. Hardcover. \$21.00).

The first volume of the Maine Historical Society Research Series, *Maine, Charles II, and Massachusetts* is an excellent beginning of what hopefully will be a long run of historical works concerning the state. In this study, Reid examines the entangled politics of early Maine, as the heirs of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, the province of Massachusetts Bay, and the royal government vied for control during the middle half of the seventeenth century. Unlike so many works on early Maine, this one views the region from an imperial perspective, relating occurrences in Maine with events, ambitions, and goals of Massachusetts and the crown. For once, Maine is seen a part of the whole.

From this perspective, Maine's importance derived from its role as a foil in English-Bay Colony relations. Massachusetts had absorbed its northeastern neighbor in the 1650s during the Cromwellian period, and when Charles II ascended to the throne, Gorges's heirs and several other Maine royalists petitioned the young king, asking assistance in recovering their lost lands. Initially reluctant to move too harshly against Massachusetts, the crown gradually tired of the colony's evasions and, in 1664, sent a royal commission to the New World which, among other duties, was to examine the Maine problem. After investigating the situation, the commission put Maine directly under royal authority. The arrangement lasted until 1668 at which date Massachusetts reannexed the northeastern settlements. By this time, the crown was moving with increasing determination to curb Massachusetts's independent political stance and to bring

the recalcitrant colony firmly into the imperial system. Although intrinsically Maine was of peripheral importance, it was an excellent tactical tool for the king who accused the Bay Colony of illegally wresting the region from Gorges. In 1677, Massachusetts was able to purchase the province from the proprietor's heirs, thus emasculating this whole argument. The quarrel between the crown and Massachusetts continued but Maine was not again a major issue. Increasingly, the region slid under Bay Colony control with less and less opposition within the eastern province or from England.

In reconstructing this complex story, Reid divides the main combatants into (1) "the inhabitants of Maine [who] generally sought security and stability," (2) Massachusetts, which wanted Maine for economic, strategic, and several lesser reasons, and (3) the crown wishing "to have its authority respected." Add to these the desires of proprietors, patentees, and royal agents, as well as the complications of an Indian war, and one begins to see the awesome nature of keeping the story straight. However, this is generally well done with the main threads sorted out and vital connections made. Furthermore, the various parts are carefully woven into a pattern that illuminates the principle theses and highlights the chief protagonists. There is little reason to feel that this story will need retelling for a long time to come.

Because the work is top flight, it can bear some criticisms, and there are a few points where specific arguments are not wholly convincing. Early in the study, the argument is advanced that one important reason for the Bay Colony's easy takeover was more favorable landholding patterns in Massachusetts than in Maine. In the Bay, the early settlers received their land from towns or individuals with no obligations, in other words, as freehold property. In Maine, land was acquired from great proprietors who demanded quitrents and other

conditions and not infrequently fashioned their transactions as long-term leases rather than outright deeds. Furthermore, the proprietors fortified their economic ascendancy by monopolizing the major political offices in the province. Observing the more favorable Massachusetts model, Maine's settlers soon grew dissatisfied with the proprietorial system; thus, when the Bay Colony absorbed Maine, it found substantial support among the common people, many of whom wished change in both land tenure and political control. Reid demonstrates this thesis with the devastating property and political losses suffered by Edward Godfrey of York. Stripped of land and office, he ended his days in London, a prisoner for debt.

However, rather than being typical, Godfrey's fate was unique. In point of fact, there was no land revolution when Massachusetts took over Maine. Kittery had already converted to a Massachusetts pattern of town lands and town grants, and Wells had a system very similar to the Bay model. To the east, Scarborough shifted from proprietorial to town lands by the early 1660s, and Falmouth and North Yarmouth had gradually converted by the late 1660s and early 1670s. In no instance was there any major upheaval in the change. In Falmouth, there were some conflicts after the takeover, but the battle was between local proprietors, not proprietors and townspeople. Finally, it should be noted that Godfrey was Gorges's chief representative in Maine. His fate seems much more simply explained as a calculated effort to ruin a preeminent opponent. Perhaps a desire to be rid of proprietorial obligations had something to do with the lack of opposition to Massachusetts's takeover; however, there are other obvious reasons for this acquiescence. First, by the 1650s, many of Maine's settlers were emigrants from the Bay Colony and were strong partisans of their previous home; second, there were numerous economic

and social ties between the regions; third, political and religious concepts were very similar in both areas (contrary to tradition, most early Mainers were Congregationalists); and fourth, Massachusetts promised a more stable government (although it should be noted that much of the instability had been initiated by the Bay Colony).

Reid also suggests as evidence for the revolution the disappearance of the great proprietors from power as the century progressed. Most finally left the scene simply because of death, not political ostracism. Furthermore, the new generation often had direct family, economic, and social ties with their predecessors. There was no great shift in power.

If the economic adjustments wrought by the Bay Colony takeover are overdrawn, the degree of local partisanship during the numerous squabbles is badly underestimated. The thesis frequently presented is that generally Maine inhabitants were less interested in who won than in achieving peace and security, and would therefore usually go along with whoever could best provide for those desires. This doesn't stand up. Falmouth held steadfast against the royal commission long after the takeover was a *fait accompli*. Likewise, Saco and Scarborough resisted the Bay Colony in the 1650s and 1660s even when Massachusetts had obtained the loyalty of every other community in the region. Local leaders often rallied their followers to one side or the other and political rewards and judicial punishments clearly reflected deeply felt and stubbornly held loyalties. True, people wanted peace and security, but on their own terms.

Lastly, Reid succumbs to a tendency that plagues one who has worked his way through a complex body of material. He includes substantially more detail regarding specific political hassels, maneuvers, and opinions than is

needed. A fair amount of material could have been condensed with little loss to the main theme.

Still, these problems are not all that serious. While they may suggest more complexity and perhaps a change of emphasis in some supportive arguments, they neither affect the main thrust of the book nor challenge the solid research that went into its development. *Maine, Charles II and Massachusetts* is probably the best scholarly study on seventeenth-century Maine since Robert Moody's 1934 dissertation, "The Founding of Maine." It is a book of both substance and insight and is a significant contribution in the history of the state.

Edwin A. Churchill

The New England Indians. By C. Keith Wilbur. (Chester, Conn.: The Globe Pequot Press. 1978. Pp. 103. Paper. \$8.95).

It would have been better if the author had entitled his book *The Indians of South Central New England* since his focus, beginning with the Paleo Indians of 10,500 years ago to about 1675 A.D., is on that area only. He fails to acknowledge that Indian life in northern New England was different. The best part of the work is the detailed pictorial presentation of the development and use of tools. This section is, indeed, well organized, and if the author had had more guidance in relating the development of tools to the demand created for them by changes in the cultural composition of people, the work would be even more useful.

But this book should not be dismissed because of its faults. It is quite a different kind of pictorial presentation than archaeologists have prepared previously. The artifacts illustrated are explained as to their use and allocated to the periods in which they developed. The first period, the Paleo of 10,500 years ago, is probably the time of the appearance of Indian people in the area. The Paleo Indians had arrived in the western United States about 3,000 years before and, of course, were not the first to cross the Bering Strait into North America. In Maine and the Atlantic Maritime provinces, some of the Glooscap stories allude to the predecessors of the Paleos, and the Nova Scotia Museum, from bones recovered in the province, has recreated a simulation of one of the first beasts hunted. In this work the author has not alluded to the predecessors of Paleos in south central New England, an important omission since the reader is left to wonder whether the Paleos had any contact with the earlier people, whether the earlier people had come and vanished before the arrival of the Paleos, or whether the Paleos should be considered as the first people to have lived in south central New England.

The second part of the book deals with the Early Archaic period of 7,000 to 5,000 years ago, and third with the Late Archaic period of 500 years ago to 300 A.D. In the latter period, the author quite properly explains at length the great influence exerted by the immigration of the Adena Indians of Ohio into New England. These new people introduced ceramics which displaced stone pots. At this time agriculture increased in central and southern New England where the climate and terrain favored a more sedentary life. The Indians of northern New England, however, remained dependent on hunting and gathering because of the harsher environment. Along the coast of New Hampshire and eastward, shell fishing increased as coastal water levels rose.

In southern New England, village life developed at permanent locations because of the development of agriculture, whereas Indian life in northern New England was more transient because of the natives' dependence on hunting in the winter and fishing in the spring.

Social and governmental structure in the south and central areas developed far beyond that in the north because of the more sedentary life. This is a fact the author fails to note. He also leads us to believe that the chief of a tribe inherited his office by descent. While this could have been true in the Late Archaic period, he should have supplied us with evidence for such a declaration.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of this work is its treatment of religion and religious practices. Writing of the Late Archaic period, the author begins with a flood story and the destruction of most animals. He then tells of a chief god who remade the earth and fashioned a man and woman of stone which he later smashed because of his dissatisfaction with the result. The chief god then created, from a living tree, a man and a woman having immortal souls, to whom he gave instructions on how to live. The chief god offered to those who obeyed his instructions the reward of an afterlife and warned that dissidents would be doomed to restless wandering throughout eternity. Unfortunately, the author has selected an abridged and later version of the Algonquin account of the creation of modern man and woman, but then goes on to tell us, "On earth, guidance, hope, comfort and fortitude came from the spirits of the birds, beasts and fish. A bit of God was in them from their early refuge from the Southwest. Each Algonquin chose one such personal god or manito as his guardian." The guardian spirit idea is, obviously, a corruption acquired from Indian contact with Europeans. It is misleading to have the beliefs of the Algonquins related to this abridged and corrupted story.

The author's description of a shaman is equally misleading. In fact, a shaman was considered by the tribe as being the one person who had the most direct contact with the spirit world. He endeavored to ascertain the plans, whims, machinations, and anger of malevolent spirits. In the case of sick persons, he sought to ascertain why the malevolent spirits had taken umbrage. The shaman was the spiritual leader of his tribe, and through his insights and contacts with the spirit world, he tried to guide his people.

The eastern Algonquins and the northeastern Woodland people understood that God had created the world and the earliest manlike beings. When God became dissatisfied with the chaos of intolerable heat, cold, drought, and animals too ferocious for man to cope with, he caused a God-hero to be born of woman. But the God-hero was born a twin. The brother was Evil, and Evil never dies. The God-hero was empowered to moderate the climate and teach a new race of humans how to live. When the God-hero had completed his mission he left earth for a faraway place. Those who had adhered to his teaching would, at death, go to live with him in peace. After the departure of the God-hero, man was left to cope with Evil and his machinations as best he could. The shaman, lacking the powers of the God-hero but with close contacts with the spirit world, endeavored to guide his people and relieve the sick. Unlike the God-hero, he did not have the power to thwart Evil or his minions, but he did what he could to assuage spirits and guide his people.

In his presentation of the Indian beliefs and practices, the author appears to have had little interest in learning why the Indians developed certain beliefs. This has been a common error since the first European contact with native people. Europeans did not come to learn what the Indians believed. They simply observed the superstitious practices without trying to discover why they developed. In New

England and the Atlantic Maritime provinces, the Algonquins developed myths from their beliefs about the creation, the arrangement of the universe, and the relationship of man with the natural and supernatural worlds. It was the fear of their inadequacy to cope with Evil after the departure of their God-hero that led to the development of superstitious practices designed to avoid or assuage the minions of Evil. The Indians affirmed their belief in the departed God-hero in their rituals, their art, their ceremonial dress, and even in the ornamentation of their crafts. Indian thinking was founded on a demand for order. As Claude Levi-Strauss has pointed out, it is through the properties common to all thought that we can begin to understand the forms of thought that seem strange to us. Our Indians used the knowledge at hand and their experience to assist them in understanding their world. Their witchcraft revealed, as Levi-Strauss has found with other early people, a theory of causation. They developed a theory of determinism that revealed to them the antecedent causes of an event.

If we are to understand the history of the Indians of New England, we must endeavor to learn their beliefs. We should, at least, read the first chapter of Claude Levi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), Mircea Eliade's *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1963), and, also, E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *Social Anthropology and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillian Company, 1964).

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