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The Bicentennial in Maine

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THE BICENTENNIAL IN MAINE

Get out your red white and blue party mints, the Bicentennial year is upon us! Already there is ample cause for indigestion — and the avalanch of commercially inspired trivia has only just begun. Nevertheless, through all of the static, genuinely interested citizens will be able to find a surprising number of worthwhile events and substantial publications honoring the nation's two-hundredth birthday.

Caught in a caustic cross fire of public and journalistic denunciation, the original National American Revolution Bicentennial Commission got off to a bad start. After reorganizing as the National American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, national leadership has been much less visible and the emphasis has shifted dramatically to state leadership in carrying out programs for the Bicentennial year. In this effort, the federal government, through the NARBA provides matching funds for each state to encourage and assist bicentennial programs by communities and non-profit organizations. This shift has resulted in placing primary responsibility for celebrating America's Bicentennial at the grass roots level, which, in the opinion of many, is exactly where it should be.

The Maine State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission realized this from the start when it began its series of monthly meetings in the summer of 1972. There are over 150 historical societies in this state, led by the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums, and many patriotic fraternal organizations. All of them could be depended upon to be working on something for the bicentennial. Also, there are the private educational institutions and public agencies, who could be counted upon to plan special bicentennial programs. Therefore, the Maine State Bicentennial Commission, under the leadership of their Chairman, Dr. Ronald F. Banks, immediately addressed themselves to the task of evaluating the many grant project requests to apportion federal grant money equitably throughout the State of Maine. And what a complex task this proved to be.

At the present time \$350,000 in federal grant money has been committed in matching grants to non-profit organizations and communities throughout the state. The Maine Commissioners were able to honor approximately fifty percent of the requests received — an impressive achievement indeed. These Commissioners, eighteen busy men and women from all walks of life, have never strived for intense publicity. Aided by a small and extremely talented staff, headed by Mrs. Donna Thibodeau Mundy, the Commissioners have quietly gone about their very difficult business. The quality of their combined judgment and the wisdom of their decisions will become apparent as the Bicentennial year unfolds in Maine.

It is not possible, nor is it appropriate to try to calendar all Bicentennial events and publications in Maine. However, we do wish to single out those programs in which the Maine Historical Society is involved, and some of the programs which hold promise of having the greatest statewide significance.

Bicentennial Events

June 27, 1976: Mr. John Warner, Administrator of the National American Revolution Bicentennial Administration will be at Castine to present NARBA's Certificate of Endorsement of the Penobscot Expedition of 1779.

July 4, 1976: Members of the Maine Historical Society, the Maine State Bicentennial Commission, and the Portland Bicentennial Committee have been invited to a reception (2:00-5:00 p.m.) at the Society's Library for the official opening of the "Signers of the Declaration of Independence" documents exhibit. The exhibit will run for thirteen weeks beginning on July fourth.

July-August, 1976: What promises to be an especially interesting and important exhibit will be installed at the Maine State Museum, entitled: "76 Maine Artists: An Invitational Exhibition." Jointly sponsored and funded by the Maine State Bicentennial Commission and the Maine State Commission on the Arts and the Humanities, the show will feature the works of 76 prominent Maine artists.

October 21, 22, 23, 1976: Dr. Bernard Bailyn of Harvard University will be the principal speaker at a series of Maine Academic Historians symposiums. The public is cordially invited to all of these events. The symposiums are funded by the Maine State Bicentennial Commission and are sponsored by the Maine Academic Historians (representing the Colleges of Maine) and the Maine Historical Society. Dr. James S. Leamon, Associate Professor of History at Bates College, is Chairman of the MAH Committee for the series and will preside at all three meetings with panels of his colleagues drawn from each of the locations: Portland, Augusta, and Orono. All meetings will convene at 7:30 p.m. at auditoriums to be announced.

Professor Bernard Bailyn was on the top of everyone's

list for principal speaker in 1976, and the Maine Academic Historians group was delighted that he was able to accept their invitation. One of the foremost authorities on the American Revolution, Dr. Bailyn has been Winthrop Professor of History at Harvard since 1966. He received both the Bancroft Award and Pulitzer Prize in 1968 for his book, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Last year, he again won the Pulitzer for his biography, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*. In addition, Professor Bailyn has written: *New England Merchants in the 17th Century* (1955), edited the volume, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution* (Vol. I, 1965), *Education in the Forming of American Society* (1960), and *Origins of American Politics* (1968).

On October 21st at Portland Dr. Bailyn will speak on: "1776: A Year of Challenge — A World Transformed"; October 22nd at Augusta: "How Could Britain Lose?"; October 23rd at Orono: "The Impact of the Revolution on American Political Culture."

Bicentennial Publications

That Bicentennial publications are sprouting like mushrooms (including the instant "reprint" variety) will come as no surprise. Those treating the entire State of Maine, as opposed to a single locality however, are not that numerous.

Perhaps the most ambitious Bicentennial publications program in the field of local history is being conducted by the American Association for State and Local History. Through grants provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, AASLH is publishing a fifty-one volume series of Bicentennial Histories covering every state plus the District of Columbia. The title for the series is: *The States and the Union*.

Dr. Charles E. Clark, Professor of History, University of New Hampshire, was commissioned by AASLH to write the Maine volume. Dr. Clark has written *The Eastern Frontier: The Settlement Of Northern New England, 1610-1763* (Alfred Knopf, 1970) and was compiler of *Maine During the Colonial Period* in Maine Historical Society's Bibliographical Guide series (1974).

The title of the volume for AASLH will be: *Maine: A Bicentennial History*. Professor Clark's book will not be a narrative history (an almost impossible task, since it will carry the story down to the present day) rather, it is described as: "an interpretive essay characterizing the peoples of Maine historically, and showing the relationship of their state's history, their particular experiences, their applications of democracy, and their values, to those of the nation as a whole." Publication date has not been announced.

Of more limited scope chronologically, but with state-wide focus, the Maine State Bicentennial Commission has chosen Dr. James S. Leamon of Bates College to write the history of *Maine during the Revolution*. Professor Leamon is an outstanding colonialist who has contributed significantly to the study of Maine's local history both in his writings and by encouraging students to explore local subjects as bases for serious research. His *Maine during the Revolution* will be a scholarly study, filling a large gap, which has become painfully apparent during this Bicentennial year. Publication date has not been announced.

Funds provided by the Maine State Bicentennial Commission have made Maine Historical Society's primary publication effort for the Bicentennial possible: an historical Atlas for the State of Maine. Funds, however, are only a part of what has made this immodest venture

possible. Under the Chairmanship of Dr. John W. Hakola (Professor of History at the University of Maine, Orono) an Executive Committee was put together representing talent from all over the state. Starting in 1974, this Committee worked and argued through long sessions, hammering out what was to be a pioneering venture. Many on the Executive Committee took part in the research necessary for each map, and at this point, the committee was enlarged by other experts in the state. An exceptionally fine cartographer, Richard D. Kelly, Jr. of Augusta was found for the historical section of the atlas; and Dr. Eldred Rolfe, Chairman of the Geography Department at University of Maine, Farmington, created and supervised the entire section "Maine in 1976" using students at Farmington. Gerald Morris, director of MHS is editor of the project. The final result of this effort will be available for all to see and judge on November 1, 1976, the publication date.

Yet another publication funded by the Maine State Bicentennial Commission is *Adventures in Maine History*, an ambitious project of the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums. This publication is off the press in ample time for the summer visitors season. (Ordering information will be found in the advertising section of this *Quarterly*) The title on the cover *Adventures in Maine History* is a little misleading, but it does not take long to discover that the book provides up-to-date information regarding historical societies, museums, historic houses to be seen in the State of Maine. Perfect for the Bicentennial year. And now that it is a published fact, we hope that the Maine League will be able to up-date it from time to time in the future.

In the next issue of the *Quarterly* a special "readers" bibliography will be published on "Maine during the

Revolution." This bibliography is designed especially for the use of interested readers (as opposed to the researcher) and is being compiled and annotated by Edwin A. Churchill of the Maine State Museum and James S. Leamon.

THE SOCIETY

Beginning with this issue of the *Quarterly* a new policy is being inaugurated for book reviews and announcements of new books on Maine history. Each issue of the *Quarterly* will henceforth feature one book review, or one collective review of several books on a similar subject. Dr. Joel W. Eastman, Associate Professor of History at the University of Maine, Portland-Gorham, has kindly accepted the invitation of the Publications Committee to serve as Book Review Editor. In order to at least acquaint readers of the *Quarterly* with the current production of Maine books, current titles will be listed along with the regular listing of periodical and newspaper articles. The title for that section of the *Quarterly* will be changed to, simply, "Writings in Maine History." We hope in this way to be more comprehensive than we have in the past in our view of Maine historical literature.

The Publications Committee and the editor of the *Quarterly* would like to alert contributors and potential contributors of the great need for good articles on prominent Maine personalities. Brief biographies focusing on Maine's men and women in all walks of life are always of interest and, if well researched, are of enduring worth. There is no quicker way for the reader to gain insight into a period in history than to view it from the perspective of a single historic individual. A host of prominent Maine men and women from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries have yet to find sympathetic, talented biog-

raphers. We urge writers and students to explore the obvious opportunities in this aspect of historical research.

The *Wadsworth-Longfellow House* will open its seventy-sixth season this summer with a beautifully refurbished entrance hallway. A fine reproduction of the original wallpaper is being manufactured in Boston. This will be complimented by a new carpet for the stairway and lower hall. Mrs. Julieanne B. Irving (on the Maine Historical Society staff) has been appointed to assist Mrs. William J. Murphy (House Committee Chairman) in the management of the House. Mrs. Irving will supervise day-to-day operations and be responsible for the effectiveness of the staff. The Wadsworth-Longfellow House will open its doors to the public on June 1, 1976.

*THE MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
TAKES PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING
ITS SEVENTH ANNUAL PRIZE ESSAY
CONTEST IN MAINE HISTORY*

Purpose To encourage the study of Maine History and to promote the publication of essays based on serious research efforts in the field.

Criteria Originality, accuracy, and scholarship that shows an obvious use of source materials.

Eligibility Open to members and non-members of the Society. Ineligible are members of the Staff and Standing Committee of the Society.

Manuscripts No more than 5000 words in length (Enter exact word count on page one) typewritten, double-spaced. Not previously published. Please submit manuscripts to: Director, Maine Historical Society, 485 Congress Street, Portland, Maine, 04111.

DEADLINE: May 15, 1976

Award One hundred dollars and publication in the Quarterly. Winner will be announced at the Annual Meeting of the Society on June 12, 1976.

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