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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEW

Province and Court Records of Maine, Volume 6. The Court Records of York County, Maine, Province of Massachusetts Bay, January 1718/19 – October, 1727. Edited by Neal W. Allen, Jr., with an Introduction by Robert E. Moody. Portland, Maine Historical Society, 1975. xxii, 294 pp. \$30.00

Unlike the previous volumes, volume six of *Province and Court Records* contains only the records of the Court of General Sessions of the Peace, which exercised original and appellate jurisdiction in minor criminal matters; records for the time period relating to the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, which dealt with civil cases, remain to be published. Neal W. Allen, Jr. has scrupulously maintained the high editorial standards of his previous volumes in the transcription and documentation of cases, and he has continued the policy of taking note of the disposition of cases appealed to a higher court — reproducing, in whole or in part, selected appeals of particular relevance.

The introduction to volume six, written by Robert E. Moody, is particularly helpful in providing a context in which to place several of the people brought to court, the tight rein of conformity in a theocratic government, and the continuity of the concept of the function of the court with the ruling group at the time. Professor Moody has also called our attention to groups of cases providing insight into the social history of colonial Maine. By his grouping and commentary, he has made it apparent that this and the preceding volumes are of primary value to the social historian. For example, the multiplicity of indictments for fornication included those married by ministers of denominations outside the “established”

Puritan church in addition to couples living together under "Common Law" convenience.

The Court of General Sessions also served as county government, since the latter had not yet developed, with the sheriff serving as its agent, and it punished towns for neglecting roads, bridges, ferries and failing to pay local ministers. An interesting by-product of the editor's work is data on the building of a new jail in York by order of the Court. This information (of minor importance to the overall effort) will be of considerable use to local and architectural historians who have heatedly debated the date of the construction of the building over the years.

The areas upon which these court records only touch can only tantalize those who would know more about the chaos of land claims as resettlement came about following the Treaty of Utrecht, the living conditions of the new immigrants, or white slavery. But these intriguing subjects are not properly matters to be developed in this volume or the series. A glossary of terms would have been a great aid to readers faced with "Court of Assize," "General Gaol Delivery," "presentment," etc., and a map would have been of particular value to locate new boundaries as settlement expanded.

The volume is appropriately dedicated to the late Walter G. Davis, whose perseverance since the first volume of the series in 1928 and whose insistence upon proper standards, kept this project alive. Credit is also given to Joseph G. Deering and to the York County Tercentenary Commission for financial assistance in publishing this volume. It is appropriate that their names are here honored in this important addition to the publishing history of the *Province and Court Records of Maine*.

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