

1973

Introduction

Maine Historical Society

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INTRODUCTION

After a hiatus of a half century, a revival of interest, research, and publication in Maine history has occurred within the State's academic community. Led by the graduate history faculty of the University of Maine at Orono and aided by the Maine Historical Society, this resurgence has produced some highly significant research and writing on Maine.

This growth of attention to Maine's past has brought many calls in recent years for the establishment of an association of Maine historians that would hold regular meetings and publish a journal devoted to Maine history. Professor Arthur M. Johnson and the History Department at UMO took the initiative in 1970 by sponsoring a symposium on current historical research on Maine on the occasion of the State's sesquicentennial anniversary. There was hope that the conference would lead to a permanent organization but, although its proceedings were published, no further meetings occurred.

Then in early 1972, John W. Hakola of UMO, James S. Leamon of Bates College, Joel W. Eastman of the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham, and Gerald E. Morris of the Maine Historical Society met to discuss the possibility of organizing a permanent association of Maine's historians. They determined to call a meeting of interested scholars to be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Maine Historical Society at Bowdoin College in June, 1972. The gathering in Brunswick selected Leamon, Hakola, and Eastman as a Steering Committee to develop a program and make arrangements for a meeting in the fall at the Maine State Museum in Augusta.

The Steering Committee tentatively adopted a name for the organization — The Maine Academic Historians — as a

means of identifying the group and distinguishing it from the Maine Historical Society. Although the two organizations plan to work in close co-operation, the newer one is more narrowly academic in its interest. Its membership feels the need to meet regularly to discuss professional issues relating to the teaching and writing of Maine history.

Mr. Edwin Churchill, of the Maine State Museum, made the appropriate arrangements for the meeting at Augusta, and the Maine Historical Society *Newsletter* carried notice of the event. In addition, the Steering Committee sent invitations to historians throughout the state interested in Maine history. As an added function, the Committee determined to conduct a survey of research in progress in Maine history in conjunction with the session.

Over thirty historians arrived for this first meeting of the Maine Academic Historians on October 7, 1972 – despite stormy weather and a conflicting session of historians at Dartmouth College – and they greeted the first paper and commentary with enthusiastic discussion. At the afternoon session, the gathering re-appointed the current Steering Committee to plan another meeting for the fall of 1973 and directed the Committee to make every effort to publish the first paper – with the hope of establishing a precedent for all papers delivered at the annual sessions.

A native of Minot, Maine, Margaret J. Buker is a candidate for a Master of Art's degree in American History at the University of Virginia where she holds a Woodrow Wilson Scholarship. Miss Buker did her undergraduate work at Bates College from which she graduated in 1970, Magna Cum Laude and with High Honors in History. Miss Buker's address is based on a larger study which she is preparing for her Master's degree.