

8-1-1970

Book Reviews

Elizabeth Ring
Maine Historical Society

Roger B. Ray
Maine Historical Society

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



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

Recommended Citation

Ring, Elizabeth, and Roger B. Ray. "Book Reviews." *Maine History* 10, 1 (1970): 27-30.
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol10/iss1/7>

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.

WRITINGS IN MAINE HISTORY
Books

Storms, Roger C. *History of Parkman; Mainstream Democracy in Parkman, Maine, 1794-1969*. Freeport, Maine, The Dingley Press, 1969.

Meet the town of Parkman, twelve miles west of Dover-Foxcroft and three miles south of Guilford, bounded by the undistinguished towns of Sangerville, Wellington, Cambridge, Kingsbury Plantation, and Abbott Village, all thinly populated municipalities in Maine's second largest county. This is Piscataquis, one of those currently coveted areas rich in wildlife and sparse in people. No problem here in environmental control:

Sparsely populated Parkman (currently 530) has been around for a long time. One hundred and seventy-five years ago it was sold by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to land speculator Andrew Craigie, whose western land schemes terminated in the courts, although the Craigie House in Cambridge lived on to become the home of Henry W. Longfellow.

As for Craigie's grant in Maine, failing to settle the necessary forty families within the prescribed time limit, in 1804 Township No. 5 in the 6th range was bought by Samuel Parkman of Boston for 24 cents an acre. A better business man than Craigie, Parkman had the grant surveyed and lotted and in no time at all had induced settlers to move in from southern Maine towns at a dollar an acre. Samuel Pingree was his agent, a name no doubt connected with the more renowned David Pingree associated later with the Penobscot boom and extensive land holdings in the state.

Names hold a curious fascination for people and for historians. Samuel Parkman, for whom the town was named, was none other than the grandfather of historian Francis Parkman, and, alas, also the father of a second son, Dr. George Parkman, whose mutilated body was found in the sink of a Harvard Medical School laboratory hacked to pieces by a faculty rival in one of the most bizarre murders of the mid-nineteenth century. This unlovely episode removed him from collecting mortgages in Parkman. Before the century had passed the town had its own gory murder, too grizzly to recount here.

In the first one hundred years of its existence, Parkman fell into the usual pattern of a small Maine town, having perhaps more luster than some. Subsistence agriculture was its way of life and on through the Civil war the town

flourished. By 1850 population had increased to 1243. Socially, farming fostered the Grange and those hard won gratuities offered at the county fair. Temperance societies and musters both developed and diverted the social and moral sensibilities of the people. Patriotic celebrations and political conventions added zest to an otherwise quiet existence. One gathers that in Parkman it would take more than a firecracker to arouse the voters. Churchwise, an influx of Methodists and Baptists produced an evangelical religion which affected politics as well as religion. Federalists and Whigs were in disrepute. The political complexion of the town was decidedly Democratic and remained so long after the Civil War had established the Grand Old Party as the agent of the righteous. Far from the scene of battle and highly individualistic in their notions as to the right of the government to draft, the town produced far more than its quota of Copperheads.

Sources used by the author are excellent. Town records are the warp and woof of local history even if here they are somewhat responsible for the prosaic account of the institutions of government: the care of paupers, the building of a town pond and a townhouse, the laying out of roads, the giving of bounties, and the running of the town line.

By mid-century, Parkman with its 15 school districts and its 42 highway districts had brought town government to the door of every voter. All this is routinely found in the town records. Human interest is to be found in family letters and diaries and these in Parkman were apparently in short suit. Newspapers published from time to time in larger Piscataquis towns offered useful embellishment.

Organized chronologically, the history subdivides roughly into the usual categories of town life: economic, social, and political. The author attempts to get his story off the ground by his use of the word "mainstream", making his own interpretation of when the town and its institutions were in the mainstream and when they were not. To a close reader this is interesting. As for leaders in the town, he belabors the point. Year after year in any small Maine town the same few men run the town, and Parkman was no exception. One realizes the paucity of leadership when in one instance the author describes a potential leader as having served with distinction in the Civil War, "having emerged as a second lieutenant." Frequently in his conclusions the author scores the apathy of the townsmen. He tries hard to make the town come to life first, and this for a local historian is still harder to do.

In the last section of the book author Storms offers some

interesting ideas in his analysis of Parkman's declining population. Perhaps the most valid reason lay in its geographical location situated as it was on the divide between the Penobscot and the Kennebec river systems. Even in the age of improved communication it is on the fringe of things. Reliable streams passed it by, as did the railroads at the turn of the century. In the eastern part of the county Dover-Foxcroft became its rival.

As has often been the case in similar studies, the *History of Parkman* grew out of a master's thesis done at the University of Maine in Orono and was subsequently enlarged upon by the author. Currently teaching United States History at Lee Academy, the author in a recent article in *The History Teacher* (Notre Dame University) has passed on to social studies teachers on the high school level some valuable suggestions in the use of local records in the teaching of history.

Elizabeth Ring
Maine Historical Society

Bourne, Edward E. (1797-1873) *History of the town of Kennebunk from its first settlement to the year 1785.*
(Transcription of a manuscript dated 1831) Kennebunk, The Brick Store Museum, 1970.

Maine history enthusiasts and those who relish Americana at its best will find this little volume irresistible. Published in honor of Kennebunk's sesquicentennial, the staff at the Brick Store Museum have succeeded in designing a book which complements the charm of the original manuscript with admirable appropriateness.

We quote from the Foreword: "This unusual volume is published by The Brick Store Museum as a further contribution to the wealth of Americana. Written 139 years ago by Edward E. Bourne, it tells the early history of the area up to 1785. Pleasant and easy to read, it not only gives a close-hand account of the first inhabitants, the Indians, and the early settlers, but also presents an indirect but revealing portrait of the author and his own times.

"Since this is a first printing of an old hand-written, leather-bound book, the format has been kept as close to the original as possible. The archaic spellings and sometimes strange word usages have been faithfully duplicated....

"The illustrations by Mr. Edward Mayo of Kennebunkport have been added solely to elucidate the text. The drawings

are based on a thorough study of the text by Mr. Mayo and, with the assistance of Mrs. Donald Kimball, Curator, on all available source material in The Brick Store Museum....

"It is our hope that the reader, be he professional historian or amateur beguiling his time, will extract from this volume some of the pleasure which we at The Brick Store Museum have enjoyed in bringing it to you."

The book is available from The Brick Store Museum, Kennebunk, for \$2.75 plus 14¢ State tax. Include 25¢ handling charge on mail orders.

Drewett, Bertha K. and Spear, Arthur, eds. *From Warren to the Sea, 1827-1852*. Published for the Warren Historical Society by the Whitlock Press, Middletown, New York, 1970.

As Mr. Albion has written in the Foreword: "The Maine Historical Society welcomes this third volume of unique source material which rounds out more than forty years of experiences of Thomaston - Warren people, at sea and ashore, between the 1820's and the 1860's."

This book contains a number of letters from 1827 to 1841 written by the Counce Family to each other and a few letters from business associates to John Counce, Duncan McCallum's day book, 1841-1844, a journal kept by John Counce 1763-1764 with a few entries to 1791, a list of vessels built in Warren by J. H. Counce and Duncan McCallum and a few related papers. The book is a source book. From reading it we learn about the life and livelihood of a family, life at sea, quite a bit about life in this town and as a bonus, shipping on the Sacramento River in the gold rush days.

Mr. Spear has done Maine history a service by making this source material available. Maine libraries need this book as they need his two earlier publications: *The Journals of Hezekiah Prince, Jr. 1822-1828* and *Letters to Christopher Prince, 1855-1865*.

Roger B. Ray
Maine Historical Society