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News of the Society

Maine Historical Society

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MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume nine, Number three

February, 1970

Published quarterly at 485 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04111

NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

Sesquicentennial Observance: The Sesquicentennial is upon us with special badges, banners, bottles, and books in the offing.

As Maine Historical Society's contribution to the one hundred fiftieth celebration, a threefold observance has been planned.

Maine Becomes a State, by Dr. Ronald F. Banks, Assistant to the President, University of Maine, Orono, will be published for the Society by Wesleyan University Press in the Fall of this year. We are particularly pleased to be able to sponsor a title so appropriate to the Sesquicentennial, and so significant in its contribution to Maine history. Resulting from Dr. Banks' research for his Ph.D. dissertation, the book offers the first comprehensive treatment of the subject and explores primary manuscript sources neglected by earlier authors. Chronologically, the study covers the period 1785 to 1820, or the first organized movement for separation through the achievement of statehood. In addition to the text, a healthy portion of the book is devoted to pertinent documents for the entire period, so that the study will be useful as a source book for those who wish to pursue the subject further.

In sponsoring *Maine Becomes a State*, the Maine Historical Society has committed itself to a sizeable sum which is not part of the publications budget for this year. Since the book was so pertinent and timely, the Standing Committee, upon the strong recommendation of the Publications Committee, felt that it should not pass up a rather extraordinary opportunity for making a contribution to the Sesquicentennial which would be of lasting value.

Therefore, the Standing Committee is appealing to the membership of the Maine Historical Society for contributions to help defray the cost of sponsorship. Any contribution,

large or small will be gratefully received by the Treasurer of the Society, and will be, in a very real sense, your personal contribution to the Sesquicentennial. If each member of the Society were to contribute four dollars, the book would be well on its way toward total payment.

Sponsors should make their checks payable to the Society and should be sent to: Publications Committee Chairman
Maine Historical Society
485 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04111

In addition to Dr. Banks' book, the Society is sponsoring as part of the Sesquicentennial, its first Prize Essay Contest which has been announced previously. This, we feel, by giving encouragement to the study of Maine history by providing a prize and a publication outlet, will help in our efforts to make Maine history available, long after the Sesquicentennial is forgotten.

A special exhibit entitled, "Steps to Statehood," covering the period 1785 to 1820 is being planned for the Society building. Accompanied by an illustrated brochure, the exhibit will open on May fifteenth, to coincide with the opening of the Wadsworth-Longfellow House.

Nominating Committee: In accordance with Article four, Section one of the 1969 Bylaws, President Robert G. Albion has appointed the following persons to serve on the Nominating Committee for election of Standing Committee at the 1970 Annual Meeting: Mr. Daniel T. Drummond, Jr., Attorney at Law, Miss E. Marie Estes, Genealogist, Miss Edith L. Hary, Law Librarian, Mr. Samuel S. Silsby, Jr., Archivist, and Dr. Alice R. Stewart, Professor of History.

Members are reminded that they are invited to make suggestions to the Nominating Committee concerning their preferences for members on the Standing Committee. The only qualification is that a candidate be a member of the Society in good standing. All suggestions should be made as early as possible and no later than May thirteenth to: The Nominating Committee, Maine Historical Society, 485 Congress Street, Portland, Maine.

Furthermore, candidates for membership on the Standing Committee may be achieved by a petition of twenty or more members of the Society, filed with the Secretary of the Society no later than May thirteenth.

Miss E. Marie Estes: After serving the Maine Historical Society loyally and cheerfully for sixty-six years, Miss E.

Marie Estes, resigned her position as Reference Librarian on February 1, 1970. Beginning as a Hostess at the Wadsworth-Longfellow House in 1904, Miss Estes has held several positions with the Society since that time. As Chairman of the Membership Committee, she became known to most members, not as an invaluable part of the Society, but almost as Maine Historical Society itself.

"Your retirement is an event which we have long dreaded; it leaves a most serious gap in our staff. The quantity, and even more, the quality of your long years of service have made you well nigh indispensable, and no one can adequately fill your place," wrote President Albion on the occasion of Miss Estes' retirement. "Once again I want to tell you, personally as well as officially, how very much we shall miss you -- we can only be thankful that you have been willing to be with us so long, and in so valuable a fashion."

NEW MEMBERS

From MAINE Augusta: Anthony Douin *Bangor:* Mrs. Bradford Wellman and Gary W. Woolson *Belfast:* Charles D. Crouchley, Jr. *Biddeford:* Paul D. Garriepy *Cape Elizabeth:* Mrs. R. A. MacDonald *Cumberland Center:* Mrs. Gad E. Chase *Falmouth:* Mrs. Josephine H. Mirza and Mrs. Duncan P. Whittaker *Hallowell:* Mr. William L. Vaughan *Kennebunkport:* Mrs. William B. Nickerson *Lee:* Fred R. Dingley *Oakland:* Mrs. Carroll R. Stineford *Portland:* Mrs. Philip Chapman, David Davidson, Mrs. Barbara B. King, Mrs. Robert E. Lindquist, Mrs. Karl R. Philbrick, Mrs. William C. Smith, George L. Smyth and Roland G. Ware, Jr. *Scarborough:* Mrs. Roland B. Batchelder *South Portland:* Richard Arnold, Mrs. Percy E. Frost and Karl K. Soule *Thomaston:* Mrs. Andrew Wyeth *Westbrook:* Mrs. Robert C. Melcher

Other States CONNECTICUT Willimantic: Jean A. McArthur
FLORIDA DeLand: Mrs. Richard C. Heaney *Sarasota:* George L. Black
IDAHO Tetonia: Miss Martha F. Bradley
MASSACHUSETTS Carlisle: Miss Clara E. Morse
MICHIGAN Detroit: Mark R. Storms
MISSOURI Flat River: Mrs. Ernest E. Johnson
NEW YORK Marcellus: Mrs. Hazel Hammond
WASHINGTON Seattle: Mrs. Grace Lewsthof

CORPORATE MEMBERS Ellsworth: The Ellsworth American
Portland: John J. Nissen Baking Company, Maine National Bank, Megquier & Jones Corp. and Merrill Transport Company
South Portland: Bancroft & Martin, Inc.

PRIZE ESSAY CONTEST

The Maine Historical Society takes pleasure in announcing its first annual Prize Essay Contest in Maine History.

PURPOSE To encourage the study of Maine History and to promote the publication of serious research efforts in the field.

CRITERIA Originality, accuracy, and scholarship which shows an obvious use of source materials.

ELIGIBILITY Open to members or non-members of the Society. Amateurs having a strong interest in Maine history as well as professional historians and students in higher education are invited to enter. Ineligible are members of the Staff and Standing Committee of the Society.

MANUSCRIPTS Approximately 2,500 words in length, typewritten, double-spaced. Please submit manuscripts to: Director, Maine Historical Society, 485 Congress Street, Portland, Maine 04111.

DEADLINE: May 1, 1970.

AWARDS Announcement of the awards will be made at the Annual Meeting of the Society in June, 1970. *First Prize:* \$100 and publication in the Newsletter. *Two Honorable Mention Awards* will consist of one year's complimentary membership in the Society.

THE NORSEMEN AND THE INDIANS OF MAINE

In 1869 this Society devoted volume one of the Second Series Documentary History of its published collections to J. G. Kohl's History of the Discovery of the East Coast of North America particularly the coast of Maine from the Northmen in 990 to the charter of Gilbert in 1578 and added M. D'Avezac's letter on the voyages of the Cabots. It was a monumental effort. The volume reproduced twenty-three maps, 1400 to 1569. The author was convinced that the Norsemen were the first Europeans to discover and explore the "coast and countries of the north-east of America," that "the coast of Maine was seen and traversed by the Northmen on several occasions," and that "From some traces of the Scandinavian language found among the aborigines of Maine, it would appear that the Northmen must have trafficked, and perhaps dwelt, among their tribes."

In 1870, B. F. DeCosta published a criticism of Kohl's book. DeCosta, in detail, opposed most of Kohl's conclusions including the Norsemen coming to Maine or having contact with Maine Indians.

In 1891, when the Society published volume two of the Second Series of its published collections it included Joseph Williamson's paper, Traces of the Northmen. The author wrote: "Upon a careful review of all the evidence in the case, I think that the conclusion must be reached that the coast of Maine was at least temporarily occupied by the Northmen."

No wonder that students of the history of Maine Indians ask us if they should begin by reading the records of the Norse adventures in North America. The inquiries increased after the New York Times article of August 10, 1969 on the Norse ruins in Newfoundland and on the 1963 expedition which uncovered them.

After consulting Mr. Vilhjalmur Bjarnar, Curator, The Fiske Icelandic Collection, Cornell University, I believe that it can be said that there is no evidence that the Norsemen visited Maine or had any traffic with Maine Indians.

A reading of the new books suggested by Mr. Bjarnar is fascinating but these books provide no further evidence on Norse contacts with Maine Indians. The books, however, should be of primary interest to those who would like to know more about the Norse explorations in North America. They are: Jones, Gwyn, *The Norse Atlantic Saga*, being the Norse voyages of discovery to Iceland, Greenland, America. London, New York, 1964. Mowat, Farley, *Westviking, The Ancient Norse in Greenland and North America*. Boston, 1965. Magnusson, Magnus, and

Palsson, Hermann, trs. *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America*. New York, 1966.

Roger B. Ray

NEWS OF OTHER SOCIETIES

The Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums has announced its Spring Program entitled "A Nineteenth Century Weekend" to be held at the Shawmut Inn, Kennebunkport on May eighth and ninth. Program for the weekend follows:

Friday, May 8, 1970

- 5:00 - Registration
- 6:00 - Reception
- 7:00 - Banquet
- 8:30 - The Social and Economic Climate in Nineteenth Century Maine - *William B. Jordan, Jr.*

Saturday, May 9, 1970

- 9:30 - Architecture of the Greek Revival and Victorian Periods, 1830-1890 - *Abbott Lowell Cummings*
- 11:00 - Nineteenth Century Interior Design - Woodwork, paints, floors and windows - *Edgar D. Mayhew*
- 12:30 - Lunch
- 2:00 - Empire and Victorian Furniture - *Joseph Butler*
- 3:30 - Panel - Some Maine examples of Nineteenth Century Buildings and Furnishings: *Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Mrs. James R. Clark, Dean Fales*
- 5:30 - Adjournment

Charge for the twenty-four hour weekend is \$26.00 per person, including banquet, breakfast, luncheon, reception, lodging (double occupancy - singles available at \$6.00 extra per person) and attendance at all lectures.

Reservations should be forwarded to Mrs. Barbara Kimball, 117 Main Street, Kennebunk, Maine.

University of Maine, Orono, will hold a *Sesquicentennial Colloquium* on Monday, March 30th. The proceedings are open to the public. The Schedule for the Colloquium follows:

- 9:30 Registration and Coffee
- 10:30 "Planning Sesquicentennial Activities for Summer 1970" Panel Discussion, Chairman: Robert Volz, President Pejepscot Historical Society
- 1:30 "Resources for Maine History" Chairman: Gerald Morris, Maine Historical Society; Participants: Clifford Shipton, American Antiquarian Society; Francis M. O'Brien, Portland
- 3:30 "Recent Research in Maine History: A Report from UMO Graduate Students" Chairman: Associate Professor John Hakola, Dept. of History, University of Maine, Orono
- "Merchants and Commerce in Falmouth, 1740-1775" Edwin A. Churchill
- "The Origins of the Whig Party in Maine" Thomas Meehan
- "Maine Shipping and Shipbuilding During the Civil War Era" John Chapin
- "The Political and Economic Career of F.O.J. Smith" Thomas Gaffney
- "Irish Immigrants in Bangor, 1835-1860" James Mundy
- 5:00 Reception for Participants and Guests
- 8:00 "Toward a Theory of Maine History" Chairman: Professor Arthur Johnson, Dept. of History, University of Maine, Orono
- "Maine's Resources and the Nation" Assistant Professor Ronald Banks, Dept. of History, University of Maine, Orono
- "Maine's Resources and the State" Assistant Professor David Smith, Dept. of History, University of Maine, Orono
- Comment: Dr. Robert York, State Historian; Dr. Edward Schriver, Lecturer in History and Archivist, University of Maine, Orono

For additional information and registration, please write to Professor Arthur M. Johnson, 208 East Annex, University of Maine, Orono 04473.