

WRITINGS IN MAINE HISTORY

Books

Pullen, John J. *Patriotism in America; A Study of Changing Devotions, 1770-1970*. New York, American Heritage Press, 1971.

John Pullen's book deals with a subject that in recent months has troubled many people. It is written by a man whose contribution to history thus far has dealt with Maine and one period of her history, the Civil War. In this, his most recent work, he deals with what would seem to be an abstract subject, what is patriotism in these changing times? It is because of author Pullen's background of Maine that it is reviewed here.

The idea of the book originated in an article Pullen wrote for the *Colby Alumnus* (Summer-Fall 1969) entitled, "Patriotism Then and Now". It was inspired by a bunch of letters written by two Civil War volunteers and presented to the College in 1969 and by the letters of another Colby graduate written from Viet Nam in 1968, privately printed by the parents of the dead soldier. From these came the author's reflective insights as to the nature of patriotism.

If the subject is abstract the treatment is concrete, for the purpose of the author is to examine patriotism in the changing patterns of history from the Revolutionary War to the present time. Dissension is nothing new. It has characterized every war in which this country has ever engaged with the possible exception of World War II. Particularly marked was it in the War of 1812, or "Mr. Madison's War", as it was derisively called and vehemently opposed by the Federalists, and in the Mexican War, 1846-1848, which might truly be called "Mr. Polk's War," since it gave us the first clear example of how a Presidential directive might bring about a situation making war with another country inevitable. Ordering General Taylor into territory in dispute with Mexico after the annexation of Texas, was to invite attack by the Mexicans. Thus were we "wilfully" fired upon, declared both the President and Congress. In this case the war effort was all but sabotaged by the Whigs. If "Mr Lincoln", a few years later could not take the blame for the Civil War, he certainly could be given the credit for its successful conclusion in spite of the disaffection which many loyal Americans displayed in the violence of the draft riots and the obstructive tactics employed by the Copperheads in the North opposed to the war. In discussing these incidents the author starts with the premise that any President does what he

thinks is best for the country within the framework of the times.

One could go on giving countless examples of how those in power have attempted to solve the nation's problems in the democratic way. Never to have incurred dissension is impossible. For the author, presenting these facts was the easy thing to do. The hard path was to draw conclusions and to shed light on the nature of patriotism today - in terms of past crises. In this he doesn't come off so well. Yet the material is provocative and the reader will be challenged to thought. What constitutes disloyalty? What is the fine line between loyalty and dissension? These are age old questions and they have come into focus many times in our history, too often with ugly political overtones. Changing times bring changing interpretations. As the author points out, the rebels of 1775 were considered patriots; the loyalists in support of the *status quo* nonpatriots. Yet today patriotism is equated with those who support the government as opposed to those who would bring about drastic change.

In attempting to draw his conclusions the author has used numerous polls taken to test public opinion over the last few years. However, most recent is a Roper poll taken since this book was published in which only 23 percent of those tapped thought things were going in the right direction. Does such a finding hurt or help the administration of government? Is it patriotic to criticize? It can hardly be said that this study is the last word on the subject. The reader must draw on his own conclusions, but here is food for thought.

Elizabeth Ring

Isaacson, Dorris A., editor. *Maine, A Guide 'Down East'*. Second edition. *American Guide Series*. Rockland, Maine, Courier-Gazette, Inc., 1970.

Bearse, Ray, editor. *Maine, A Guide to the Vacation State*. Second edition revised. *The New American Guide Series*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969.

Here we have a curious publishing situation; two books published within the space of a year, each claiming to be the second edition of the Federal Writers' Project *Maine, A Guide 'Down East'*, a volume in the old *American Guide Series* published in 1937 by Houghton Mifflin of Boston. To compound the confusion, the Courier-Gazette volume was brought about by the editor of the original 1937 edition, Dorris Isaacson, while the Bearse

book was brought out by the original publisher, Houghton Mifflin. Both versions retain some portions of the original 1937 text. It is enough to send the most skillful cataloger into early retirement.

Even a hurried examination, however, reveals that the Isaacson book has followed the 1937 format with far more precision than the Bearse version which abandons the "conducted tour" organization altogether in favor of an alphabetical arrangement by town.

Less obvious to all but the most avid "front matter" reader is the difference in sponsorship of the two publications which is really quite fundamental. The Bearse volume is a straightforward commercial venture whereas the Isaacson is a subsidized, hence somewhat *semi-official* State publication "prepared by the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums and sponsored by the 104th Maine Legislature and the State Sesquicentennial Commission."

In any event, after thirty years of long hard use, the old, indispensable W.P.A. *Maine Guide* is again available -- in one form or another. *Laudamus Deo*.

Rutherford, Philip R. *Dictionary of Maine Place-Names*. Freeport, Bond Wheelwright Co., 1970.

An attractively presented, vexing book. We have had it in the Society Library for six months and have yet to discover a use for it, from a reference standpoint. (Other libraries report the same difficulty.)

Rutherford has presented "twenty-thousand" entries, arranged in alphabetical order by County. He then fails to make any further attempt to refine location. Some Counties in Maine are rather large. A map of each County, utilizing some sort of grid system, no matter how gross, would have given the author an economical notation scheme for location citations to accompany each name entry. Some such system was *essential*. No maps are included at all.

As it now stands, the book provides a number of entertaining pages for casual readers, but it also abounds with such needless banalities as "TURTLE POND. [named] For turtles."