

WRITINGS IN MAINE HISTORY
Books

Merk, Frederick with the collaboration of Lois Bannister Merk.
Fruits of Propaganda in the Tyler Administration. Cambridge,
Harvard University Press, 1971.

This brief monograph represents a useful addition to the limited number of professional, scholarly studies now available to serious students of Maine history. In format the book is divided into two major essays, "Propaganda for Stabilizing the Northern Boundary" and "Daniel Webster and the Search for Peace, 1841-1842," each accompanied by relevant documentation. The study is designed to illustrate the employment of domestic propaganda by the administration of John Tyler for the furtherance of foreign policy objectives. The format of the study is disappointing in that the author is forced to rely upon the use of a thirty-three page introduction in a rather unsuccessful attempt to give the study a semblance of unity. As only the first essay intimately touches upon Maine history, we shall confine the comments of this review to that topic.

"Propaganda for Stabilizing the Northern Boundary" (pp. 39-92) presents as clear and succinct a synopsis of the boundary controversy as is now available. The Northeast Boundary was a troublesome legacy inherited from the Treaty of Paris of 1783 which provided for the independence of the United States. Unfortunately the delineation of the boundary between the Maine frontier and the Province of New Brunswick was defined in an ambiguous manner necessitating repeated, unsuccessful negotiations with Great Britain. With the re-development of strong party feelings in Maine during the Jacksonian period, the boundary became inextricably involved in local politics making any settlement providing Maine with less than full control over the disputed territory a severe liability for the party concurring in such an agreement.

The essential first task before any settlement could be fixed upon was to remove the issue from partisan politics. The key was first seen by Francis Ormond Jonathan Smith (1806-1876), a former Maine Congressman, banking and timber speculator, newspaper editor, and associate of Samuel F.B. Morse in the commercial organization of the telegraph. Smith was fully aware of the political delicacy of the matter, having been an early advocate of a compromise solution. As early as 1832 he had pseudonymously written a series of articles appearing in his paper, *The [Augusta] Age*, urging such a course.

Smith convinced Webster that a solution to the boundary question could be achieved if the suggestion for compromise appeared to issue from politically non-partisan sources and was based upon broad popular support throughout the state. To that end he enlisted the aid of Dr. Asa Cummings (1791-1856), editor of the prestigious and widely circulated religious journal, the [Portland] *Christian Mirror*, who was to publish pseudonymous articles by Smith urging compromise. By prior arrangement these were reprinted in other newspapers of both political persuasions to achieve the non-partisan appearance desired.

Merk is in error on a minor point when he states (p. 60) that this scheme was expedited by Smith's part ownership of the politically influential [Portland] *Eastern Argus*. In fact, sources in the Smith papers strongly indicate that he had sold all his interests in that paper to Henry W. Greene prior to the Congressional canvass of 1836 in which he was a candidate for reelection from the Cumberland District. Smith's influence over the *Argus* was achieved through his brother-in-law, the Reverend Eliphalet Case, who had purchased the *Argus* subsequent to Greene's removal from Portland.

Smith acted as Webster's agent in Maine laying the essential groundwork necessary to adjust the political temper of Maine for acceptance of the compromise solution which was ultimately embodied in the Webster-Asburton Treaty. In later years Smith considered his propagandizing role in this affair as his greatest contribution to state and nation. It is that role which Dr. Merk must be credited with having fully documented and brought to light through very extensive use of the papers of F.O.J. Smith and Governor John Fairfield which are among the many valuable collections housed at Maine Historical Society.

Thomas L. Gaffney
Maine Historical Society

Chase, Virginia. *One Crow, Two Crow*. New York, The Vanguard Press, 1972.

One Crow, Two Crow, a Maine novel which takes place in the blueberry fields somewhere in the environs of down-east Steuben, is written by a member of our society and worthy of a brief note for those who turn to Maine novels for relaxation. Recommended "unabashedly" in an excellent review in *Down East* (October 1971), we couldn't agree more. A tragedy interspersed with more than occasional wit, the author has given us closely drawn Maine characters, taunt, ingrown,

spare in their speech, and as lacking in cultural opportunities as they were in the material blessings of the burned over blueberry barrens which was their locale. It is the story of a marriage contrived by a young woman who was herself thwarted by her inability to go to college, to the most sensitive and laconic of the town boys who, until the last chapter, remains an enigma. The development of these two characters with their dissimilar ambitions, and a handful of in-laws over a twenty year period which includes the Great Depression, provides the fascination which makes it impossible to put the book down before it is finished.

Spare in its wording and perfectly structured, in our opinion it is the best Maine novel that has appeared in recent years. In keeping with the book's tightly drawn narrative is the title taken from that prophetic Maine ditty, "One crow sorrow, Two crow joy, Three crow better, Four crow boy."

The author is an experienced writer. This is her sixth book. She is the younger sister of Edward E. Chase whose tragic death in an airplane accident many years ago deprived the Society of a promising member, and of Mary Ellen Chase. In private life she is Mrs. Wallace Perkins and lives in West Hartford, Connecticut with her husband who is a retired engineer.

Elizabeth Ring
Maine Historical Society

Everson, Jennie G. *Tidewater Ice of the Kennebec River.*

[*Maine Heritage Series, Number One*] Freeport, Maine: Published for the Maine State Museum by the Bond Wheelwright Co., 1970.

Grindle, Roger L. *Quarry and Kiln: The Story of Maine's Lime Industry.* Rockland, Maine: The Courier-Gazette, Inc., 1971.

Even though both of these books will receive full reviews on these pages in future issues of the *Newsletter*, we feel compelled to point them out now because of their *exceptional* value to the history of Maine and the study of technology. Here at last are book-length presentations of two key Maine industries, rich in detail, lavish with illustrations, and what's more, published in Maine.