

WRITINGS IN MAINE HISTORY
Books

Smith, David C. *A History of Lumbering in Maine: 1861-1960*. University of Maine Studies No. 93, University of Maine Press, 1972. xvi + 469 pages.

"Maine is lumber and lumber is Maine," writes David C. Smith in his *A History of Lumbering in Maine*. If that judgement is correct, then Smith has not only done a superb job in elucidating a state's most important industry over a hundred year period, but has done much the same for the state as a whole into the bargain.

Smith rounds out a story begun in Richard S. Wood's book of the same title which was published in 1935 (and is now back in print), a book which covered the years 1820 to 1861. From the documentation, it is evident that Smith has winnowed an enormous amount of source material. Just as important, he has also demonstrated a capacity for gleaning the essential and projecting it effectively as narrative.

The sixteen chapters of the book can be broken down into five major headings. First there is the story of lumbering from 1860 to 1890, dealt with in the first eight chapters. This is followed, in chapters nine and ten, by coverage of the pulp and paper industry for the same period. The next two chapters are devoted to the entry of the big companies on the Maine logging scene, while chapters thirteen and fourteen deal with the rise of conservation and forestry between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Depression. The book concludes with two chapters on twentieth century lumbering and logging.

Smith's treatment is both broad and detailed. The reader comes away with a comprehensive sense of Maine logging history while having had the pleasure of seeing the story come to life through the employment of telling detail. The second chapter dealing with "Life in the Woods" is especially good, as is chapter six which deals with shipping the product and chapter seven on lumbering and land sales. Chapter eight gives an excellent wrap-up of the lumbering story in general

and its relationship to the history of other industries such as tanning, ship building, and the railroads. There is perhaps no finer example of Smith's concern for tying in the details of life with a broad story than in note 63 of this same chapter, wherein the implications of financial depressions are vividly reflected in a family's combined salary of \$15 a week. Particularly effective is the treatment of Percival Baxter in chapter twelve and the vivid handling of personalities in the conservation and forestry chapters. Of course, it cannot be expected that the vitality of sections such as these can be constantly maintained in a work of this magnitude; but, at the very least, Smith is never less than thoroughly competent in his approach.

Unless he is intimately familiar with the geography of the State of Maine, the reader may find himself somewhat disoriented from time to time. Although an outline map of Maine, indicating the many townships of the State, is provided at the back of the book, an additional map or maps would have been useful where particular watersheds and timbersheds are dealt with. At the very least, more developed verbal descriptions of such sub-areas have been helpful. In chapter nine one might have wished for a more detailed exposition of the origin of the pulp process and of the transition from rag paper making to pulp paper making, and in the final two chapters one misses a concluding overview of the preceding story and senses that the opportunity for treating a number of interesting contemporary subjects was missed. For instance, the chapters dealing with the twentieth century might have been a good place to conclude the story on the formation of Baxter State Park which was begun and summarily completed in chapter twelve. At the same time, one could have wished for a consideration of the question of modern recreational pressure on woodlands with some treatment of its accommodation in company policies.

Although the structure of individual chapters is, for the most part, quite good -- with strong introductions, clear articulation of subject matter along the way, and generally excellent recapitulations at chapter ends -- a clearer arrangement of chapters into

groups (as noted above) would have been useful in order to more clearly define the major phases of Maine logging history. Each chapter is liberally footnoted, and, although one might ordinarily wish to see footnotes at the bottoms of pages, their placement at the end of each chapter in this book is thoroughly justified here. The detailed information in the lengthier notes adds a valuable dimension to each chapter and provides an opportunity for rethinking much of what has gone before in the text proper.

There are several sections containing excellent photographs and the book is liberally sprinkled with statistical tables. The end matter includes useful appendices, a particularly comprehensive bibliography, and an index. In the case of the index we noted at least one omission (a reference to the Paines whose name appears on page 253), but we suspect, as with the rest of the book, there are relatively few such lapses. In the text itself, for example, the only mistake of detail which could be discovered was the identification of a former Secretary of the Navy as one H. C. Whitney, whereas, we believe, William C. Whitney is meant.

Unfortunately, Smith's generally excellent work has not been supported as well as it deserves editorially. The policy in this regard often seems inconsistent or just plain wrong in many details, such as the placement of commas and periods outside quotation marks or inconsistent application of punctuation rules throughout. One needs only to examine the first two pages of the book to get an idea of the degree of failure in this regard.

These minor criticisms notwithstanding Smith deserves the thanks of both Maine residents and students of lumbering and logging history in general for a grand job. His choice of subject matter and the thorough and lively way in which he deals with it sets a goal and standard of quality to which, we hope, other writers will subscribe. Woods histories of other sections of the country are very much needed, particularly at a time when the public at large is trying to reassess its position relative to all renewable resources; an assessment which can hardly be well done without a

sound knowledge of the past. The Adirondack region of northern New York, for one, certainly needs such a history, and this is the case for other important wood producing areas in the United States. It would be too much to expect that David C. Smith could do all of these himself, but hopefully his work will stand as a model and incentive to writers in other parts of the country.

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McKee, Christopher. *Edward Preble: A Naval Biography: 1761-1807*. U. S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland, 1972. 394 pages. \$16.00

This is a welcome biography of one of Maine's and Portland's great maritime figures. While Preble is, of course, best known for his efforts to bring Tripoli to reasonable terms in the Barbary Wars, his maritime career also included Revolutionary War naval operations along the Maine coast, followed by sixteen years in merchant sail. This Maine-oriented part of Preble's life is well described by McKee, as are the details of Preble's Maine ancestry and that of the girl he married, Mary Deering of Portland. It is this early part of the book, of course, that will be of primary interest to those readers seeking fresh detail in local Maine history, and they will not be disappointed.

But the book goes far afield from Maine, as did its subject. There is good description of trading voyages from New England at the end of the eighteenth century. The section on Preble's years at sea in merchantmen shows the versatility required of mercantile captains. Preble shone on all accounts, though to be sure, he was a poor wine taster. He kept bringing back to Boston wine from Spain that when examined, presumably by those more expert than he, was found to be "very inferior", or, on another occasion, "exceeding bad".

While sailing on mercantile missions, Edward Preble evidently missed the excitement of his naval service during the Revolution. Within months of the formation of the new federal Navy, Preble applied for a lieutenant's commission. This was in 1794. Now the McKee biography starts to come into its own.

The author fulfills the promises implied by his Preface. He is convincing in demonstrating what he conceives to be the prime significance of Preble's life: "A man's moral fiber and his actions when confronted with difficulties are more important than his failure, or his success, in overcoming those difficulties." Preble certainly was confronted with difficulties in the Mediterranean. He achieved greater success than either his predecessors or successors, but not the complete success for which he yearned. But his moral fiber and his actions would have to rate high marks from any judge.

In his Preface, McKee attributes Preble's success in the Tripolitan War to his keen, analytical mind; his force of personality; and his luck. The text bears out these interpretations.

The author promises to tell us more than we have been told heretofore in print about Tripoli's strategy in the Barbary Wars and about the rationale behind Jefferson's gunboats. He makes good on both counts by drawing on the dispatches of the French go-between at Tripoli, Bonaventure Beaussier, and on the correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and his Secretary of the Navy, Robert Smith.

McKee writes of Preble's life in exhaustive detail. The reader may at first fear that such detail will be superfluous, perhaps even boring, but he will probably be drawn steadily into the story and be increasingly fascinated by the very detail at which he flinched.

This biography is certainly objective. McKee gives good summaries of Preble's personality and deals fairly with his well-known difficult temper. Preble's "harsh and violent disposition" caused crew troubles

as early as 1793, when he commanded the 240-ton ship *Neptune*, a merchantman. His normal disposition would seem to require no complaint, but he could lose control of himself temporarily with unpleasant results.

Preble was not a healthy man. In 1801, he had to give up command of the *Essex* to William Bainbridge because of ulcers. Troubles with his digestive system plagued him the rest of his life.

There is much in this book for the naval historian. McKee describes the sailing qualities of the *Essex* in detail. He gives a valuable account of coppering the *Constitution's* bottom, based on the journal of her sailing master, Nathaniel Haraden. He presents an excellent discussion of the strategy and tactics of the blockade. He writes a fine chapter on life aboard the *Constitution*. He runs his finger across Preble's professional library in the *Constitution* (and finds mostly British naval publications). He rates Syracuse as a liberty town from the point of view of Preble's officers and tells of relations between the U. S. Navy and the local government of the city.

Of course the famous naval actions involving the *Constitution* and the other vessels in Preble's squadron with the bombardment of Tripoli and the capture of the *Philadelphia*, and her subsequent destruction by Decatur in the *Intrepid* are all thoroughly treated. Good maps by Dorothy de Fontaine help the reader follow the action. One point that comes clear is that the ferocity of certain Americans when they gain or have the advantage in hand-to-hand combat is nothing new.

An interesting side to Preble's ability as a military commander was his ability to halt a planned operation when the original assumptions on which it was based began to lose credence. The decision to call off an operation, even though it may be developing its own inherent momentum, can be more important than the ability to conceive the operation in the first place. Preble was party to a conspiracy with enemies of the Pasha of Tripoli to overthrow him. But when Preble's expected reinforcements failed to arrive and he saw little evidence of specific military preparations by

his fellow conspirators, he was not prevented by pride in an idea he had personally endorsed from seeing the wisdom of calling the whole thing off.

We hear much of "Preble's boys" and of the stirring part these young officers who served under Preble in the Mediterranean played in the War of 1812. McKee shows that at least a small part of the credit for their success should go to Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith, who emphasized to Preble when the latter left for the Mediterranean, the importance for the future of officer training. In any event, Preble's training of his officers and crews was rigorous and effective. McKee gives a good discussion of Preble as a disciplinarian and relates his methods of dealing with his subordinates to those of his contemporary officers. If Smith could give Preble advice in these matters, so could Preble be persuasive to Smith. When the Navy later sought captains for its new bomb ketches and gunboats, Preble dissuaded Smith from bringing into the service experienced merchant captains to take over the new vessels and convinced him to promote deserving junior naval officers into the choice billets.

After Preble's return from the Mediterranean, he was placed in charge of the construction of some of Jefferson's gunboats. The arguments in favor of these craft, with which Preble specifically agreed, were largely based on their mobility for harbor defense. McKee shows plans of these boxy, shallow-draft, short-rigged vessels. One wonders about the mobility of Jefferson's gunboats; surely they could not work to windward except under ideal conditions of wind and sea.

McKee does have his problems with sea language. Mariners will stumble over such phrases as "her flying jib boom pitched away"; "rode the contrary currents skillfully"; or "a lofty sea". Would that writers on marine subjects could either spend their two years before the mast or take Samuel Eliot Morison's short course in correct seagoing expression!

It is interesting to compare this biography against some other writings on Edward Preble. There was Lorenzo Sabine's *Life of Edward Preble*, published in

Volume XII of the Library of American Biography by Charles C. Little and James Brown of Boston in 1847. Preble's naval career has also been discussed in the journal long produced by the publisher of the McKee biography, the *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, most notably in an article by Fletcher Pratt in the December, 1933, issue, and in a commentary on that article by Commander A. Bainbridge Hoff, printed in the March, 1934, issue. The Sabine biography, though not nearly so thorough and objective as McKee's work, is still not so eulogistic as one might expect from a man writing of a national naval hero dead only forty years. In fact McKee might have used to advantage some of Sabine's points on Preble's difficulties with manning and logistics. Fletcher Pratt, in his article, was quite carried away by the idea that Preble won the War of 1812 posthumously by single-handedly making his "Boys" what they were. Commander Hoff came back in proper rebuttal to point out some obvious facts to Pratt.

After reading these other writings about Preble, one wonders if McKee's biography is *too* objective. McKee knows a great deal more about Preble than does anyone else, and he has set down much of his knowledge in an obviously well-balanced account of Preble's life, but one is left wondering how McKee really felt about the man.

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International Marine Publishing Co.

Albion, Robert G. Baker, William A. Labaree, Benjamin W. Brewington, Marion V., *New England and the Sea*. Middletown, Connecticut, The Marine Historical Association, Inc., by Wesleyan University Press, 1972. xiv, 301 pages. \$12.50

Incredible as it may seem, a comprehensive survey of New England's maritime heritage has never been available until now. In order to gain a reasonable picture of the whole maritime enterprise it was nec-

essary to select a chapter here, an article there, in addition to three or four key books. The most illuminating (certainly the most readable) single account has been Albion and Pope's *Sea Lanes in Wartime: The American Experience, 1775-1945*, a book which is far less restrictive than its title would indicate.

Albion, Baker and Labaree have now filled this long-standing need for a maritime overview in a most attractive manner. The fifth volume in Mystic Seaport's excellent American Maritime Library series, *New England and the Sea*, is every bit as handsome as its predecessors, and the designers at Wesleyan University Press are to be congratulated once again. They have successfully avoided even a hint of textbook torpor, which is quite an achievement since the book will assuredly be used as such.

In his customary lively fashion, Benjamin W. Labaree (Ephraim Williams Professor of American History at Williams College) takes the story from bedrock to 1815 in two swiftly moving chapters. It's all there, the Vikings, the Indians, the early explorers, the Revolution and War of 1812 -- and Labaree manages to infuse many a ho-hum story with admirable vitality. Robert G. Albion, dean of American maritime historians (and past President of this Society) takes the maritime story through its "Golden Age;" that is, from 1815 to the close of the Civil War. Albion is such a seasoned explorer in these waters that he is able to illuminate a scene forty years forward and forty years backward at any given point. His narrative flows from such profound knowledge of the subject that one comes away fully convinced that events could not *possibly* have happened in any other way. It is left to William A. Baker (Curator of the Francis Russell Hart Nautical Museum at M. I. T.) to tell the extremely complex story of the sad, steady, decline of American maritime enterprise from 1865 to the present. From a withering number of possibilities, Marion V. Brewington (Director of the Kendall Whaling Museum) selected illustrations for the entire book.

Oddly enough, this is not a book which will greatly interest the maritime historian or those with a firm

knowledge of available maritime histories. The book breaks no new ground, and quite obviously is not intended to do so. It is simply the best introduction to the subject between two covers. And it is refreshing to have such a survey, thoroughly intelligible to the novice, written by the top men in the field. Such chores usually fall to the editorial skills of free-lance whiz kids working solely out of the New York Public Library.

It is perfectly reasonable in a book of this type, written by the experts, that a bibliography should have been omitted. It would have had to run the gamut and would have served no useful purpose. However, since the book is obviously aimed at the uninitiated (and presumably will succeed in sparking their enthusiasm for American maritime history), it is a great pity that an annotated list of twenty or so best books on the subject was not included. Instead, the reader is referred to the new edition of Albion's *Bibliography* (see below) which is a pretty lame way out, one would think. Hopefully, the book will need to go into a second printing one day. It would be a pleasure to see what Albion, Baker, and Labaree would choose as the best twenty books on American maritime history.

Gerald Morris
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Albion, Robert G. *Naval & Maritime History: An Annotated Bibliography. Fourth Edition, Revised and expanded.* Mystic, Connecticut, Munson Institute of American Maritime History, The Marine Historical Association, Inc., 1972. ix, 370 pages. \$15.00 cloth, \$5.95 paper.

For at least one prominent British writer on maritime history, Mystic Seaport in Connecticut was known for only one thing, Albion's *Naval & Maritime* bibliography. He was perfectly astonished to find a flourishing museum and research center upon his arrival as guest lecturer. Albion's work remains the single compre-

hensive bibliography on the subject in English. It is unique among bibliographies in that it is indispensable to novice and professional alike. Albion has demonstrated admirable courage by rating the books he has listed with bold, frank, annotations, sparing the student hours of time wading through second-rate studies. Giving the reader the benefit of his years of study, Albion succeeds in presenting the most lively bibliography in print, and certainly one of the most useful. It was this bibliography which was the inspiration for the pragmatic editorial approach used in Maine Historical Society's Bibliographical Guides series.

After twenty-one years (First Edition, 1951) in mimeographed or typewriter photo-offset form, the present Edition is the first to be set in type. The result is generally more handsome in appearance, and the variety of type sizes greatly clarifies the bibliography's distinctive organization. The work is divided into seven logical sections, reflecting perfectly the various areas of maritime literature: *Reference Works* (23 pages) *Merchantmen and Warships* (38 pages) *Captains and Crews* (16 pages) *Maritime Science, Exploration and Expansion* (24 pages) *Commerce and Shipping* (107 pages) *Navies* (93 pages) and *Special Topics*, including Port Functions, Maritime and International Law, etc. (46 pages). There are good author and subject indexes.

This bibliography is simply riddled with information about Maine maritime topics, and one should not make the mistake of limiting one's search to the section under *Commerce and Shipping*, which is the only place where a specific sub-heading for Maine is given. Albion lists PhD dissertations in addition to monographs so that for anyone contemplating doing some original research in Maine's maritime history, this is the place to start.

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