

WRITINGS IN MAINE HISTORY

Books

IVES, EDWARD D. *A Manual for Field Workers*. Orono, Northeast Folklore Society, 1973. \$3.00

[This edition of Ives' *Manual* is exhausted already; but it will be republished as a regular volume of *Northeast Folklore* in August of this year.]

Several readings of *A Manual For Field Workers* recalled to mind a publication by The American Association for State and Local History of papers presented at its Annual Meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina, October, 1963 and reports at a session of the Western History Association convention the same month in Salt Lake City, Utah.¹ Nationally renowned journalist-historian, Jonathan Daniels, in his keynote address of the Annual Meeting illustrated the crux of the matter concerning the interpretation of the American scene. He stressed that the traditional three R's have been ponderously supplanted by the new two R's — Research and Recreation. That audience of a decade ago is still extant and comfortably fills the never-cooling chairs of one loquacious session after another on the subject of shrines and visitation.

Mr. Daniels in 1963 inadvertently expressed the most succinct evaluation of *A Manual For Field Workers* by Dr. Edward D. Ives.

Certainly none should welcome this new interest more than such men as yourselves. Polish the antiques. Plant the grass around the forts where the Indians sought - and often got - the scalps. Tend the graves of the statesmen. Mark the streets and roads to the houses where grace and greatness dwelt.

But all this is façade. Behind it the task is still the industrious, often the drudging collection of the little details of local history which are the only components of the history of mankind.

Collectors and evaluators of such details are the only important people still in the keeping and the keeping straight - of our heritage. And only such men can hope to understand at last what history is.²

In my estimation that is an articulate and total analysis of what is represented by the *Manual*. Dr. Ives, in a refreshing prose style for everyman, gives the reader a thorough and detailed worksheet for the neophyte in oral history. Although he clearly states that the *Manual* is directed to the procedures of the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History at the University of Maine, Orono, (of which he is director) the philosophy and field processes have been proven universally sound for this particular discipline.

Personally, I was attracted to the simple explanations of the step-by-step techniques of every method employed in an oral interview from initial contact with the informant to the final transcription of the original tape. Herein lies the value of the *Manual* for anyone and everyone. The message applies to the Southwest as well as the Northeast. A student contemplating an exercise in oral history, if he or she has a modicum of sense, should acquire a copy of *A Manual For Field Workers*. I have not seen a better workbook with the capability of separating the flitting academic butterfly from the seriously inspired student of folklife studies.

I was delighted to note that Dr. Ives is not afraid to use the interchangeable concepts of archives, libraries and museums. In an expansive context they represent the collection, the interpretation and the preservation of a society. And societies are people and people are a local story. Hopefully, men and women like Dr. Edward D. Ives will never allow us to forget that historical fact!

¹Silvestro, Clement M. *Life is a Local Story: A Collection of Talks Concerning Local History, Historic Sites, and History Museums*, Nashville, The American Association for State and Local History, 1964.

²Ibid, p. 7.

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HUNT, H. DRAPER. *The Blaine House: Home of Maine's Governors*. Somersworth, New Hampshire Publishing Co., Portland, Maine Historical Society, 1974. \$5.95, paper. \$10.00, cloth.

For nearly one hundred years the governors of Maine had commuted to the state's Capital at Augusta. The state was without an official residence for its chief executive until 1919. The tragic death of Walker Blaine Beale, a son of James G. Blaine's daughter Harriett, in the famous drive on St. Mihiel during World War I, inspired the Blaine family to deed the Blaine family mansion to the state as a "memorial-executive mansion." Acquired by James G. Blaine in 1862, the mansion was ideally situated for its new purpose. It lay conveniently across Capitol Street, near the State House.

Until the appearance of Dr. Hunt's study little attention has been paid to the mansion and its occupants even though thousands of guests and tourists have passed through its historic rooms from 1920 until the present. Mrs. Kenneth M. Curtis, the wife of Maine's present governor, was filled with curiosity about the history of the mansion and sought to fill the information void by commissioning Dr. H. Draper Hunt of the

history faculty of the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham to write the story of Blaine House and its occupants. Having already written a full-length biography of Hannibal Hamlin, one of Blaine's close political associates, Hunt was a logical and able choice.

Hunt devotes the first portion of the book to an extended biographical essay of James G. Blaine which skillfully includes intimate details of family life in the mansion and useful information on the house itself. The emphasis upon Blaine is not entirely inappropriate. James G. Blaine was undoubtedly one of the nation's most prominent political figures of the 19th century, and must certainly be ranked among the giants of Maine's political history. Loved and admired by a host of friends and political associates, Blaine was a man of personal warmth and magnetism. At the same time, however, his involvement in the great Credit Mobilier scandal which hung as a shadow over the Grant administration, inspired a tenacious suspicion about his rectitude. Undoubtedly, this contributed to his narrow defeat for the Presidency in 1884 when he lost to Grover Cleveland in a viciously contested election. This aspect of Blaine's troubled career is handled judiciously by the author who also manages to give deep insights into Blaine as a family man, the inspiration given by a devoted wife, and the esteem in which Blaine was regarded by the citizens of Augusta.

The second part of the book is devoted to a discussion of life at the Blaine House during the occupancy of the sixteen gubernatorial families. While the experiences of each family are separately presented, parallel threads are developed which help weave the book together. Over the years twenty-eight children have lived in the Blaine House as part of the state's first

families. The youngsters have brought life and vitality to the house with their picnics, parties, and curious explorations of attics and cellars. The birth of Melinda Muskie and the wedding of Marjorie Brann were the occasions of joy, while the untimely death of Robert Barrows in an automobile accident while a student at Williams College, and the more recent death of little Susan Curtis have touched the Blaine House with tragedy.

The burden of running the Blaine House has fallen to the state's First Ladies who have graciously accepted their responsibility. Some have enjoyed it more than others. Fortunately, Governor Sumner Sewall's housekeeper, Maude Longley, whom he brought with him from Bath, kept an intimate diary which would have qualified her to write an "Upstairs in the Blaine House." The unending whirlwind of teas, receptions, state dinners and luncheons caused Maude to think that the only difference between the Blaine House and the insane asylum across the river was that the latter had bars on its windows.

Renovations in the Blaine House have been spasmodic. Unlike the White House, the decor has not changed with each new occupant. The ability of the State's First Ladies to refurbish and redecorate the mansion has sometimes depended upon whether the Governor was elected on an austerity program. Appropriations for the proper upkeep of the mansion were not always readily forthcoming, although the Blaine Mansion is now well provided for. Some families found it necessary to employ their own furniture in addition to bearing the crushing burden of entertaining on a comparatively meager gubernatorial salary.

Sources for the essay on James G. Blaine posed no great problem. The section is well documented. However, for the governors that followed, sources were scarce and, as a consequence, the length of the sketches is uneven. Interviews with families were heavily relied upon. Criticism will no doubt be directed at Dr. Hunt's book because state issues and politics are given scant attention — but this was not the purpose of the study. Yet even here, in the setting of the Blaine House, one could not write about Percival Baxter without speaking of his interests in the conservation of water power and the state's resources, or of Ralph Brewster without detailing his interest in tourism and his attempts to publicize the state, or of Louis Brann without mentioning his frequent forays to Washington during the depression to claim Maine's share of federal relief funds.

The book is adequately illustrated and quite handsomely designed. Its publication will be of great interest to those who seek the Blaine House as a tourist attraction. Factually, the book provides a convenient reference for conventional information on the last sixteen governors of the state. Anecdotal in character, it will be a pleasure for Maine people to read, and should help dispell a few myths. Blaine was never governor of Maine, and never again should the presiding First Lady be addressed by the casual visitor as "Mrs. Blaine!"

ELIZABETH RING
Maine Historical Society

RING, ELIZABETH, compiler. *Maine Bibliographies: A Bibliographical Guide*. Portland, Maine Historical Society, 1973. \$3.00

CLARK, CHARLES E., compiler. *Maine During the Colonial Period: A Bibliographical Guide*. Portland, Maine Historical Society, 1974. \$3.00

These two guides are worthy additions to the series of Maine bibliographies planned by the Maine Historical Society, an enterprise which should give continued impetus to production of an increasing number of sound historical studies in the history of Maine. Both compilers are authorities in their fields: Elizabeth Ring's previous *List of Manuscripts* is a landmark in Maine bibliography and the writing of *The Eastern Frontier* (1970) gave Charles E. Clark an intimate acquaintance with the essential works in Maine's colonial history. Their bibliographies share a number of characteristics. They are classified, selective, and for most of the important items, annotated. Miss Ring has prefaced her work with an essay "Reflections on the Trend of Historical Investigation in Maine" which is so informative that I wish she would write a longer article on either the history of the Maine Historical Society or the writing of Maine history. Her long service to both has prepared her to write definitive accounts of these subjects. Professor Clark, on the other hand, has prefaced each section with a brief statement which is essentially a guide imaginatively suggesting a bibliographical route which one interested in Maine history might take from the general into the specific phases of the subject. These descriptive essays, breezy and stimulating, might well be read independently with only a casual reference to the works given in the more extensive lists.

Miss Ring's bibliography is especially significant in that it calls attention to many book lists which only partly — but importantly — deal with Maine. Unless one has an unusually broad acquaintance with reference books, these can be very easily overlooked. The most significant addition of this type of work is the revised *Harvard Guide to American History* which has just come from the press.

Professor Clark has neatly defended himself from the critic who like myself wants to know why certain items were omitted by saying that his list is "very personal perhaps even eccentric." Eccentric it is not, and if it is personal, what better person could we have for a guide? However, the fact that the first draft brought "expressions of outrage" from his well qualified friends, emboldens me to make a few suggestions of authors and titles which I think might have been included. Where is the name of Col. Charles E. Banks (one of whose drawings adorns the cover of this guide)? I found his long essay on the "Usurpation of Maine by Massachusetts" (among the manuscripts of the Maine Historical Society) immensely stimulating, even if strongly anti-Massachusetts. And I could mention some other contributions of this loyal son of Maine. Where is the name of William Otis Sawtelle, whose contributions Miss Ring mentions in her guide? Might not a list of Maine periodicals (*Sprague's Journal of Maine History*, the *Bangor Historical Magazine*, etc.) be useful in a work of this sort? I was disappointed in the brevity of the list of town histories. There are not so many that deal with colonial Maine that room could not have been found for another dozen. I think at once of Banks' *York*, Stackpole's *Kittery*, North's *Augusta*, Johnston's *Bristol and Bremen*, Southgate's *Scarborough*

(which deserves to be reprinted from Maine Historical Society's *Collections*, 1st. series, vol. III), and above all, Jennings' *Monhegan*. Maine without Monhegan is impossible to imagine. I do not blame Professor Clark for not wanting to make an extensive list and I appreciate the value of O'Brien's list in the *News Letter*, but we need more guidance in this field. Local history is a thorny area; perhaps a selective, *annotated* list would be a worthwhile project for a later title in this series.

In the documentary section, I was surprised not to find the essential British materials: the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial*, the *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial*, the *Journals of the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations*, Stock's *Proceedings and Debates of English Parliaments relating to North America*, and the *Records of the New England Council*. The *Documentary History of Maine* might be described in more detail. Volumes XXIII and XXIV do not deal "exclusively with the Indians." In fact volume XXIV contains the "Pejepscot Papers". Readers might be helped by the knowledge that the so-called "Baxter Manuscripts" of the *Documentary History* are chiefly copies of documents in the Massachusetts Archives, with a few added from British and French documents also in the Archives.

I have tried to imagine how valuable I would have found this bibliography fifty years ago (and I am appalled to realize Professor Clark's list would not have been so much shorter as one would think considering the lapse of time.) One thing would have made this list more useful — information about the years covered by the separate volumes of series. Working in a closed stack library, I would wish to ask the messenger service for as few volumes as possible. The *complete* set of *York Deeds*, for example, would be brought to me with some

reluctance. Even in the case of the shorter *Province and Court Records*, the dates covered by single volumes would be helpful. I note that Professor Clark has given dates for the separate volumes of Gipson's *British Empire*.

For the colonial wars sections, I would suggest the inclusion of Penhallow's *Indian Wars and Benjamin Church's Eastern Expeditions* both of which are available in 19th century editions. I think that Herbert L. Osgood's *American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (3 vols.) and *American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century* (4 vols.) are too important to be omitted. Finally, I personally much prefer the Ford edition of Bradford's *Plymouth* and the Savage edition of Winthrop's *New England* to the later editions, excellent though these are for reading. The wide-ranging notes of the earlier editors often supply data not found in the the later editions.

Let us hope that the demand for these useful bibliographies will be so great that new editions will be called for.

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