

BOOK REVIEWS

Leamon, James S. *Historic Lewiston: A Textile City in Transition*. Lewiston Historical Commission, 1976. 60 pages. \$2.00 softbound.

Energy was as much a determining factor in human events in the 19th century as it is today. This fact is clearly seen in *Historic Lewiston: A Textile City in Transition*, a brief illustrated monograph focusing on the major threads of the Lewiston story. The second in a series with the general title *Historic Lewiston*, this handsome work was planned and published by the Lewiston Historical Commission, of which the author, Professor James S. Leamon of Bates College, was a member. Production assistance was provided by the students or graphic arts at the Central Maine Vocational Technical Institute of Auburn.

In *A Textile City in Transition* Leamon organizes Lewiston's history around five phases of development. The first (1770-1819) was dominated by the Pejepscot Proprietors, the land developers, and the settlers. Notable among these was Paul Hildreth, the first settler, and Amos Davis, farmer, tanner, and surveyor, who laid out the town for the proprietors. In the second period (1819-1845) we find the Littles, Samuel Pickard, and other local men of vision organizing to build canals, dams, mill sites, and to sell power. Lacking technical expertise and capital to carry out their "Grand Design" they turned for assistance to a group of Boston capitalists headed by Benjamin E. Bates who readily saw the possibilities.

The third period (1845-1928) was marked by the construction of the great mills which still dominate the Lewiston landscape. The Lewiston Water Power Company and its successors, the Franklin Companies, owned most of the land on which Lewiston was built, the mill sites along

the river, and the waterpower rights. The Lewiston Water Power Company was the major employer, landholder, landlord, and taxpayer. The investors, wanting their town to succeed, interested themselves in all facets of Lewiston's life. They provided orderly boarding houses for their work force; they persuaded the Baptist Seminary (now Bates College) to locate in Lewiston; they helped organize a bank and a library; they provided free building lots for the Protestant churches. The unified corporate structure made money. Indeed, during the Civil War the Androscoggin mill paid for itself in a mere fourteen month period! This was Lewiston's "Golden Age" — a period of progress and prosperity attained at the price of becoming a company town dominated by a single economic organization.

The fourth period (1928-1945) was one of consolidation and expansion of the energy sources which powered the mills and serviced the homes of the workers. By the 1920's the prospects of the Lewiston mills were dim. Outdated equipment and unaggressive management could not effectively compete with the more efficient southern mills which had the advantages of cheap labor and transportation, combined with new plant and equipment. That the Lewiston mills did not totally cease operation was due to the enlightened self-interest of the Central Maine Power Company, headed by Walter S. Wyman. To have allowed the mills to close would have deprived the power company of a major electrical consumer, while throwing some 3,000 residential customers out of work. To insure the continued consumption of its electrical output, the Central Maine Power Company bought the mills and ran them at a loss throughout most of the 1930's. This decision provided jobs for the citizens of Lewiston, and made a positive contribution to the consolidated balance sheet of the New England Public Service Company, the holding company of both the mills and the power company.

Single interest domination of Lewiston ended with the implementation of the provisions of the Public Utilities Holding Company Act of 1935 which forced the separation of mill and power interests. Lewiston lost its economic directors and its financial umbrella, although mill management of 1945-1955 continued to reflect its previous link with the power interests.

In 1955 a new owner took over the mills, largely to liquidate them. Today, of the mills once controlled by the power group, only Bates Mill is operative, but it is owned by its workers. The other great mill structures, the Androscoggin, the Hill, the Continental, the bleachery, are filled with small manufacturing and commercial activities. Lewiston is no longer a company town. It has become a city of diversified industries, many of which are housed in the stately old mill buildings where more people are employed today than in the heyday of textile manufacturing.

Though primarily "a view from the top," *A Mill Town in Transition* touches somewhat on the life of the workers. For example, reference is made to anti-Irish feelings expressed by the burning of the Catholic chapel in 1855. A more extended treatment of the lives and physical setting of a later segment of the work force can be found in the beautifully illustrated monograph, *Historic Lewiston: Franco-American Origins* (1974).

As a case study of a company town *Historic Lewiston: A Textile City in Transition* succeeds very well. Written essentially from primary sources, it focuses on the dominant industrial forces in the evolution of Lewiston's economic life. Even the political and social aspects treated are seen through the prism of the unified corporate structures dominating the city for a century. To other historians are left the tasks of detailing the political history of this mill town, and filling in the interstices between the

major economic forces and their derivative institutions. Clear in focus and selective in detail, this is an excellent example of local economic history.

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Haskell, John D., editor. *Massachusetts: A Bibliography of its History*. (Volume one of *Bibliographies of New England History* by The Committee for a New England Bibliography) Boston, G.K. Hall, 1976. 614 pages. \$30.50

Flower, Eric S., compiler. *Bibliography of Maine, 1960-1975*. Orono, Maine, The Maine Library Association, 1976. 109 pages. \$5.00. (Order from: Eric Flower, Special Collections, Fogler Library, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04473)

It will come as a surprise to all but the most thoughtful researcher that the construction of a bibliography is a creative act. One usually regards bibliographers as diligent drudges who have nothing better to do to occupy their time. In fact, many bibliographies fall so far short of their intended purpose that they might properly be called 'lists' rather than bibliographies.

In a fine bibliography, the alchemy which systematizes human knowledge and provides access to the many aspects of that knowledge, is the result of a highly disciplined art. Exactly the same thing may be said about a kindred occupation, the construction of an excellent library catalog.

What on earth happens to the ordinary researcher when confronted with a library catalog or a subject bibliography? Of a sudden, he seems to lose all command of the native intelligence with which he was born. A catalog or bibliography simply cannot be used with the same thoughtless abandon as a telephone book. Good catalogs and good bibliographies are among the most sophisticated retrieval 'machines' invented by man — and let not the lack of transistors or electronic paraphernalia fool you. By matching skill with skill, imagination with imagination, even the most obdurate, but well conceived, catalog or bibliography will yield a flood of unexpected information which will totally elude the hasty or careless user.

There are at least four elements essential to a good bibliography or catalog which intelligent users may reasonably expect: (1) absolute accuracy; (2) complete descriptive information; (3) organization of materials according to some logical system which can be perceived readily by the user; and (4) a variety of retrieval alternatives — the more the better.

Two bibliographies of unusual breadth and interest to students of Maine history were produced last year; one, under the sponsorship of The Committee for a New England Bibliography, edited by Dr. John D. Haskell, the other sponsored by the Maine Library Association, compiled by Eric S. Flower, Special Collections Librarian at the Fogler Library, University of Maine.

Massachusetts: A Bibliography of its History is the first in a series projected by the Committee for New England Bibliography which, ultimately, will include volumes for all of the New England states. Happily for us, Maine will be the next volume published, but since Maine was part of Massachusetts until 1820, the present work will prove indispensable for anyone working on Maine.

Every bibliographer is faced immediately with the problem of organization for which there is never a completely satisfactory solution. If he chooses to arrange his material by subject, the same author's work must be repeated countless times under different subject headings. Editor Haskell selected a compromise which has the distinct advantage of achieving a method of retrieval which is not redundant with any of the other systems set up in his index. The basic arrangement is by geographical location, treating first those works which deal with Massachusetts as a whole (1,896 items) then by counties (884 items) and then by cities and towns (10,740 items). For the local historian, this provides a bonanza, having all of the books and periodical articles ever written about his community in a single list. This feature cannot help but whet one's appetite for the Maine volume yet to come.

The scope of the *Massachusetts* volume is awesome. It includes all books and periodical articles written about the political, economic, social, and intellectual history of the commonwealth from the period of settlement to the present. From the standpoint of imprints, the materials range from the mid-eighteenth century to 1972. There is an important restriction here, which the editor imposed to keep the bibliography within reasonable bounds. Only those works which were "consciously written as history, or contain a dimension of time" were included. This eliminates an immense corpus of state government documents, house organs, technical treatises and the like which may have Massachusetts or its institutions as a subject, but which do not treat their subjects *historically*. Also, in order to use this bibliography properly, it is important to remember that individual biographies are not included; collective biographies are.

An extensive index (220 columns) presents all authors in the body of the work, institutions, name changes for towns, and a highly intelligent subject index. Rather than

develop yet another unique set of local subject headings, Haskell has wisely adapted the Library of Congress subject list so that in most libraries, one can work easily from the bibliography to the card catalog, or vice versa.

The Committee for a New England Bibliography under the Chairmanship of John Borden Armstrong have been working on this series, financially and intellectually since 1969. Volume one is well worth the long period of anticipation.

The Bibliography of Maine, 1960-1975, edited by Eric S. Flower, resulted from plans made by the Bicentennial Committee of the Maine Library Association. It was funded modestly by the Maine State Bicentennial Commission. Although the chronological scope is but fifteen years, the coverage of materials is much broader than that of the *Massachusetts* volume, reflecting the scope of Bangor Public Library's *Bibliography of the State of Maine* (Boston, G.K. Hall, 1962). Flower's bibliography is, in fact, a supplement to the Bangor bibliography, up-dating the material to 1975.

Here, in one listing of approximately 3,500 to 4,000 items, are found publications in three broad categories: (1) books written about Maine and Maine people published in Maine or elsewhere; (2) books written by Maine authors on any subject, medicine, literature, etc; and (3) books published in Maine on all subjects. A word of caution about the type of materials to expect in this bibliography. Only monographs (full-scale books) are included; excluded are pamphlets, government documents, and periodical literature.

Flower's work suffers from the lack of an index, which restricts its retrieval possibilities to authors only. However, the list is not all that extensive, so that the experienced reader can usually extract what is of interest to him in about an hour or so. My greatest difficulty with the volume

is its failure to provide adequate physical descriptions of the items listed. For example, one finds the listing, "Maine (Colony). *Province and Court Records of Maine*. Portland, Me.: Portland, Maine Historical Society, 1928-1975." Now you may perhaps know, and I know, that this translates into six separate volumes, the latest of which was published in 1975. However, if one were not privy to this information, this essential fact would not be discovered until a library was consulted. Even for single volume works, the number of pages would influence, sometimes decisively, whether or not I might go to the trouble of locating the book.

Despite these restrictions, the *Bibliography of Maine, 1969-1975*, provides a much needed updating of the author section of the Bangor Public Library's *Bibliography* and the Maine Library Association and its editor are to be commended for making it available.

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Churchill, Edwin A., and James S. Leamon, compilers. *Maine in the Revolution: A Reader's Guide*. Portland, Me.: Maine Historical Society, 1976. [46 pages] \$2.00.

Churchill, Edwin A., compiler. *Maine Communities and the War for Independence: A Guide for the Study of Local Maine History as Related to the American Revolution*. Augusta, Me.: Maine State Museum, 1976. 110 pages, \$2.95.

With the passing of the Bicentennial year, the bunt has come down, the trill of fife and rattle of drum echoing away, and the muskets have been returned

places of honor above fireplaces. The celebration was fun while it lasted, but it brought a problem for the historical profession in this state. Thoughtful students of Maine history watched the wave of popular curiosity about Maine in the Revolution crash upon a rocky shore of fragmented, inaccessible and unreliable historical accounts. The general public, finding no readable and accurate sources of information readily available, could have given up in disgust.

Happily, two historians of Maine provided a short-term remedy for the situation confronting Bicentennial readers. Edwin A. Churchill and James S. Leamon provided significant assistance to the interested public with their *Maine in the Revolution: A Reader's Guide*. Churchill, furthermore, has provided a major step toward a more general solution of the problem with his *Maine Communities and the War for Independence*.

One of the difficulties in presenting the history of Maine to its citizens has been the lack of a modern comprehensive history of the state. For most periods of Maine history, readers must develop their own syntheses from many sources. The Revolutionary period is no exception. Such a process is difficult and time consuming, especially to persons with little background in history. Churchill and Leamon have simplified the problem with their *Guide*, helping to untangle the Gordian knots of Maine historiography.

The compilers specify that the *Guide* is not the definitive bibliography of Revolutionary Maine, which is still in preparation. They excluded "esoteric, rare out-of-print, and manuscript sources" in favor of published materials and dissertations generally available throughout the state. They furthermore provided frequent annotations to give readers considerable guidance in selecting pertinent material for their interests. While the work is not designed

as a research tool, it is comprehensive enough to be of some service in that regard.

Sources of information on the Revolution are not only often inaccessible, they are woefully incomplete. In the second work under consideration here, Edwin A. Churchill not only comes to grips with that problem but hopefully provides a long-term solution. In his *Maine Communities and the War for Independence*, he comes close to providing a systematic plan for basic research on Revolutionary Maine.

Churchill is apparently working with two basic assumptions, which strike this reviewer as valid. The first of these is a belief in local history as one of the essential components of Maine history, and the second is an understanding that many of the people who produce this important work are not trained historians. In *Maine Communities and the War for Independence*, Churchill attempts to encourage the writing of local history by defining the areas for productive research and by providing helpful advice for those who may undertake the task.

The book is an excellent introduction to local history. After discussing the Revolution generally, Churchill breaks the war in Maine into a number of highly pertinent categories, complete with a basic introduction to the questions involved, a summary of the work previously done and suggested sources for further research. Of particular value are comments on the pitfalls facing the unwary researcher under each category. Such a proposed program of research will provide a firm foundation for the local historian when he or she moves beyond the sources suggested in the book.

Churchill also provides excellent advice regarding the documentation of local history. His eloquent plea for footnotes must be heartily echoed by all who undertake a serious study of Maine history. The fact that so much

“history” has been produced without documentation cannot justify such poor work in the future. Footnotes always help and never hurt.

Beyond local history, *Maine Communities and the War for Independence* provides a summary of the work that needs to be done on Revolutionary Maine. Answers to the questions that Churchill poses will add considerable depth to our understanding of the period. In fact, the basic topics listed include a number of potential theses and dissertations, works that badly need to be done.

These works by Churchill and Leamon should render valuable service in the progress of Maine history. One can only hope that they have the impact that they deserve.

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