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*Maine Crusades and Crusaders, 1830-1850*

Soon after John Winthrop disembarked from the *Arbella* in 1630, he expressed the desire to see the Massachusetts Bay Colony build a city upon a hill that would promote the greater glory of God, and serve as a model for all mankind. Emphasizing as it would the sovereignty of God and a pious approach to community problems, this transplanted religious group was envisioned as developing an unprecedented sobriety of manners and purity of morals. Some two hundred years later, it was obvious that Winthrop's hopes had been somewhat excessive, but some descendants of the early Massachusetts settlers showed the same burning desire to know the will of God as had the early colonists. The main difference was that in the nineteenth century the moral and religious zeal of the Puritans frequently took the form of social reform and utopianism. These zealous reformers examined every segment of their society to see if it met with their approval, and many embraced and championed moral standards even stricter than those espoused by their ancestors.

In the State of Maine, the impressive increase in population during the first forty years of the nineteenth century forced attention to problems typically faced by fast-growing areas. The slow-paced, easy-going ways of colonial days were over. Agencies for advancing Christian piety and morals proliferated and many of them dealt with problems of dubious gravity such as Sabbath breaking, profanity, the menace of the theater, card playing, dancing, and horse racing. Many orthodox Congregationalists and other evangelical sects felt beleaguered by the rise of religious liberalism. While they

attempted to win people to the Christian faith through evangelical methods, they also demanded new social and economic measures to fulfill the promise of a perfect society. They opposed sports and other habits not considered useful, and furnished the majority of state leaders who promoted such causes as more humane care for the insane; abolition of slavery, capital punishment, and imprisonment for debt; better elementary education; prohibition; and the peace movement.

In 1830, Maine, like the western states, was filling up with settlers from the older states. As a frontier area, certain reforms were more readily acceptable in Maine than in places where well established institutions controlled the levers of power. But even on the frontier, attempts to change the ways of decades often met substantial resistance, even with calculated violence. Although the reformers needed physical and moral toughness, some might not have risked life and limb without being convinced that in battling for their cause, they had buckled on the invulnerable armor of the Lord. Moreover, some were carried along by the certainty that their programs were predicted by Scripture, especially in the Book of Revelation. Hence, reforms tending to fulfill biblical prophecies proved irresistible. Success, however temporary, seemed to justify this faith in Scripture.

One reform movement plainly a product of its time was the formation of the peace organizations which were designed to abolish the evils of war. Since the Napoleonic wars had convulsed Europe with their slaughter and destruction for over twenty years, it is not surprising that by 1815 reformers throughout the western world had begun to protest such wholesale killing. In 1817, two years after the Congress of Vienna, Maine had a peace society. Its officials found it difficult to reconcile realpolitik with the pacific nature of the Gospels, but they did their best in an introductory statement to their constitution:

We disclaim all right to interfere with the religious or political creeds of our fellow citizens; nor is it our object to censure or embarrass those measures of our government which may be considered necessary, when just demands of reparations or security can neither be safely waived nor peacefully adjusted – nor is it our design to dictate when these exigencies exist, or in the least degree to deviate from those precepts of Christianity which inculcate submission to civil rulers; but our only object is to exhibit, in a clear and distinct manner, the pacific nature of the gospel, and to diffuse a spirit of love and harmony and an enlightened philanthropy and benevolence throughout the world.<sup>1</sup>

In this manner, they assured the public that they intended to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's, and unto God the things that were God's.

The quality of those in the first Maine Peace Society was high. They were not unsuccessful cranks merely looking for a cause to make up for personal failures. To the contrary, all were leaders in their respective communities. The head of the organization, until his death in 1819, was the hard-working and saintly Jesse Appleton, the president of Bowdoin College. Portland contributed three leading citizens: Dr. Edward Payson, pastor of the Second Parish Church; the Hon. Samuel Freeman who was incredibly active in nearly all of Portland's civil organizations; and Simon Greenleaf, who later became a distinguished professor of law at Harvard. The most voluminous writer for the movement was Thomas C. Upham, a graduate of Dartmouth and the Andover Theological Seminary which may have provided more reformers than any other institution. In 1824, Upham became professor of mental and moral philosophy at Bowdoin, and before his retirement he had some twenty books to his credit. The American Peace Society widely circulated his essay on a Congress of Nations and his *Manual of Peace*. Such men lent the organization their personal prestige. The historian of the American Peace Society has stated that the movement might not have attracted William Ladd, its most effective worker, had

Maine not contributed these high quality pioneers.<sup>2</sup>

William Ladd of Minot, Maine, founded the American Peace Society, and devoted much of his time and most of his money to it. Born in Exeter, New Hampshire, in 1778, Ladd graduated with distinction from Harvard at the age of twenty. Having captained a large ship sailing out of Portsmouth in his twenties, he was known as Captain Ladd throughout most of his adult life. Florid and robust in appearance, he looked the part. He was also a man of good humor, a trait not usually found among reformers. After his career at sea, Ladd conducted a free-labor experiment in Florida which he hoped would eventually lead to the abolition of slavery; but before fully determining the futility of that project, he became a resident of Minot, Maine, where he had inherited a farm from his father. He is said to have been converted to the peace movement while standing at the deathbed of Bowdoin's Jesse Appleton.<sup>3</sup> In 1823, he began publishing a series of articles on peace which appeared in Portland's Congregational paper, the *Christian Mirror*, over the name of "Philanthropos." At that time, relatively few Maine clergymen were deeply committed to the cause. In 1825, Ladd made the peace movement controversial by attacking what he considered the vainglory represented in the vast outlay of money for the construction of the Bunker Hill monument.

In Maine, Ladd had to contend with both the militarists and with at least one liberal religious leader and writer. His deep commitment to Revelation as traditionally interpreted in New England meant that he accepted the doctrine of eternal torment in hell for the unrepentant sinner. William A. Drew, the editor of the *Gospel Banner*, a Universalist publication located in Gardiner, Maine, questioned how anyone could consistently advocate unconditional peace while believing in eternal war between the forces of Satan and the government of the

Almighty.<sup>4</sup> There is no evidence, however, that Ladd ever felt obliged to explain this alleged inconsistency.

By the time he organized the American Peace Society, Ladd had formulated a plan to forestall war. This included a Court of Nations and a Congress of Ambassadors. The former would consist of distinguished jurists who would arbitrate such cases as were brought before them with the consent of the contending parties. Many have compared Ladd's Court of Nations with The Hague Tribunal of 1899. The Congress of Ambassadors was designed to settle principles of international law by compact and agreement; it would also propose and promote plans for the preservation of peace.<sup>5</sup>

In the spring of 1841, William Ladd undertook an arduous trip through the Middle Atlantic states to win support for his Congress of Nations. But, as happened years later to Woodrow Wilson, another apostle of peace, the campaign proved too much for his limited strength. Indomitable to the end, he gave several speeches sitting down. Despite a severely ulcerated leg which caused great physical pain, he went on with his trip. He would allow nothing to prevent him from encouraging the cause of peace until death finally stilled his voice long before the scheduled nine month journey was completed.

Because he had used his own money to finance his many crusades, Ladd became known as "the St. Francis of the peace movement, giving up goods as well as life to an ideal."<sup>6</sup> In combating indifference and hostility to the movement, his likable personality had stood him in good stead. Realizing the importance of winning over the clergy to his cause, he distributed his tracts in theological schools and insured that a peace society was formed at Andover Theological Seminary, the very center of reform. Near the end of his life, Ladd encouragingly found that pulpits were open to him that had at one time been closed. While the Civil War made a temporary shambles of the peace

movement, Ladd's more ardent followers passed their faith on to future generations.

The peace crusade certainly required moral courage, but not nearly as much as that needed in the 1830s to advocate antislavery before audiences that were almost always hostile in both North and South. And many of those who opposed the abolitionists were out for blood. Throughout the North in the 1830s, boos and catcalls frequently interrupted antislavery meetings, and these were sometimes followed by violence. Maine's best known martyr to the antislavery cause in this decade was Elijah Lovejoy, a graduate of Waterville College (now Colby), who was killed in Alton, Illinois. Only a few years before, William Lloyd Garrison, a frequent speaker on Maine platforms, had been dragged through the streets of Boston with a rope around his neck.

One of Maine's most ardent and fearless opponents of slavery was Rev. David Thurston. Born in 1779 in Rowley, Massachusetts, he moved with his family to Sedgwick when he was seventeen. There, the Rev. Daniel Merrill, a future founder of Colby College, prepared him for Dartmouth from which he graduated in 1804. After graduation, the Massachusetts Missionary Society sent him to Maine to convert the frontier heathen. After delivering several sermons in the Congregational Church at Winthrop in 1806, he received a call from the church sometime thereafter. In answering the summons, Thurston struck a typically militant note which he continued to sound for the rest of his life. His courage, as can be seen in the following, was derived, at least partially, from his certainty of being on the Lord's side:

Finally, my Brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God. Pray always with all prayer & supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance & supplication for all saints and especially for me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mysteries of the Gospel.<sup>7</sup>

No one could justly accuse David Thurston of failing to open his mouth boldly. Spare of build, he was "above medium height, quick and active in motion, benign of countenance and great dignity of bearing. He was orderly, systematic and punctilious in habit and work." He had many opportunities to show that he combined a ministerial appearance with the courage of a Christian believer. Warnings and petitions never caused him to cancel his scheduled antislavery speeches. Like so many evangelical preachers of his time, he was an expert horseman, and it is recorded that in 1812, he rode 1,464 miles, preached 147 sermons, made 80 pastoral calls and 52 friendly visits, besides attending meetings of societies, associations, councils, trustees meetings, and the like. In 1859, he was chosen president of the American Missionary Society, and for fifty years was a trustee of the Maine Missionary Society. Nearly all the reformers of the antebellum period strongly supported the whole gamut of reform, and Thurston was no exception. His work for the American Peace Society was recognized in 1850 when he was sent as a delegate to the Peace Conference at Frankfort, Germany.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1830s many meetings in Maine started by deploring slavery but ended by denouncing any effort to interfere with "the vested rights of southerners." In 1835, the Penobscot County Conference of the Congregational Church favored keeping the Sabbath holy, deplored war, extolled the temperance movement, urged the use of unfermented wine in communion, attacked the tobacco habit, and praised home and foreign missions. But no word was recorded about slavery. On the other hand, in the Maine Congregational Conference David Thurston presented a motion that was not too radical for adoption, yet his average colleague would have probably preferred to leave it unconsidered. The conference, urged on by Thurston, approved this mild resolution: "Resolved, That

slavery is a great moral question, deeply affecting the vital interests of morality and religion throughout the land, and as such all Christian churches and ministers of the gospel have something to do with it and in our opinion ought to labor with untiring zeal for its legal, peaceful, and speedy termination . . . .”<sup>9</sup>

Acting constantly as a moral gadfly, Thurston kept the slavery issue before the people with the faith and expectation that eventually all Christians would see the light. One of his associates in the early antislavery movement in Maine was Samuel Fessenden whose father, William, had graduated from Harvard in 1768 and moved to Fryeburg in 1775 where he became the first settled minister in that town. He served the Congregationalists there for over thirty years and was one of the founders of Fryeburg Academy, and a representative to the Massachusetts General Court. Appointed judge of probate in 1805, he died before assuming office.

Samuel was one of his nine children. Like many others of limited means, Samuel taught in the district schools to help pay his way through Dartmouth. He studied law under Judge Dana in Fryeburg and was admitted to the bar in 1809. Opening an office in New Gloucester his success as a lawyer was early assured. In 1822 he moved to Portland where he lived for the remainder of his life.

Reformers have never been known for their ability to see the merits of the other side, and Samuel Fessenden was no exception. He attained an early reputation for his passionate defense of antislavery, and for his vitriolic attacks on his political foes. For example, in 1811 he delivered an oration before the New Gloucester Federalists in which he said:

Is this the birthday of our National Independence? Is this the glorious anniversary of our individual privileges and corporate freedom? Is it a day sacred in the annals of heavenborn liberty? A day

in which three million of human beings dared assert their rights, burst the vile thralldom of a proud, powerful and zealous stepmother, and on the altar of immutable justice swear to live free or nobly perish in the last blaze of their violated charters?

Jefferson I shall leave, and though a deluded people may now idolize the enemy of his country, this slave of Bonaparte will have posterity do him justice. His name will be coupled with all other traitors, and hereafter a Jefferson and a Judas will be synonymous, and in the minds of all good men be considered as but another name for the blackest treachery.<sup>10</sup>

General Fessenden lived during a time of intense political partisanship, and this passage shows that few men were more partisan than he. His association with the Federalists, the party of wealth and social status, arose from his ardent convictions and not from any desire to climb the social ladder. Some who applauded his conservative political views denounced his stand against slavery, but social approval or disapproval had little effect on the general. Of superb moral and physical courage, he despised the personal threats arising from his frank expression of abolitionist views. Once when failing to get permission from his Federalist friends to hire a hall for an antislavery speech, he accepted the invitation of the local Quakers to use their meetinghouse. His home was always open to blacks and he even invited some of them to sit in his pew in church. Having travelled extensively with blacks while speaking in favor of their liberation and acceptance as social equals, Fessenden was offered a toast by one of his black friends which was intended to represent the ultimate in appreciation: "Here's to General Fessenden, God bless him, he has got a white face but a black heart."<sup>11</sup>

Frederick Douglass was the most eloquent black with whom General Fessenden travelled. While critical of white behavior in many respects, Douglass had nothing but unqualified praise for Fessenden, as is shown in the following paragraph:

I was at a public anti-slavery meeting in Portland. I began my speech and my words stirred up some opposition from fellows of the baser sort, who undertook to break up the meeting. When the turmoil was at its height, General Fessenden arose, and with impressive dignity rebuked the turbulence, vindicated the right of free speech, and secured order and decorum. He was one of the large brothers of the human race; and I must not omit to say here as my recollection of this good man, that in the early days of slavery, when I was yet newly from the house of bondage, when prejudice against color was rampant, and even took the form of malice, when the mad dog cry of amalgamation affrighted the souls of many, he was brave enough to make me welcome at his own fireside.<sup>12</sup>

The early days of the abolitionist movement may have discouraged some, but men such as Fessenden and Thurston did not need victories to sustain their enthusiasm. The abolitionist cause in Maine, as reflected by those who cast their ballots for the candidates of the antislavery Liberty party, had only 194 supporters in 1840, but by 1842 the number had increased to 1,662. One Maine town had one abolitionist participating in the 1840 election, and he prepared his vote on a paper so large that it caused facetious comments. Undaunted, this abolitionist prophetically reported: "It is big enough to hatch." General Fessenden lived to see many such ballots hatch, and one of the chief architects of Union victory during the Civil War was William Pitt Fessenden, one of his eight sons.

Another major figure in the antislavery movement in Maine was Professor William Smyth of Bowdoin College who divided his efforts equally between educational and social reforms.<sup>13</sup> The early death of his father had caused him to become a teacher, earning subsistence wages for the support of himself and his brother and sister. For two years he assisted the remarkable Reuben Nason of Gorham Academy, and in 1820 he entered Bowdoin as a junior. After graduating at the head of his class, he then went to Andover Theological Seminary, mentioned

previously as an institutional breeder of reforms. After one year there he returned to Bowdoin as an instructor of Greek and mathematics. His mathematical innovations combined with his simple and clear methods of presentation brought him fame. In 1824 he introduced the blackboard to Maine, and completed a series of widely used textbooks in algebra, geometry, differential calculus, and trigonometry, with its applications to surveying and navigation. His deep interest in public education is responsible for Brunswick having had graded schools long before most of the state had given up its district schools. He played a key role in building the Brunswick Congregational Church and Bowdoin's Memorial Hall honoring the college's Civil War veterans. A window in the church he helped to build says: "In memory of Professor William Smyth, strong and gentle, a leader in learning, philanthropy, and religion."

In the late 1830s Smyth's house became a station on the underground railroad which transported slaves through the Maine woods to Canada. Unlike many reformers he seemed to be free of rancor and abrasiveness, and neither insulted his opponents nor ascribed malicious motives to those with whom he disagreed. The Congregational historian Calvin M. Clark, emphasizing the Christian side of his character, stated: "Among the Abolitionists of Maine, there was none more sure of his principles, more calm and cogent of his exposition and application of those principles, more courteous in his language, or in manner more considerate of an opposing disputant."<sup>14</sup> Smyth maintained his poise and graciousness even when confronted by a strong movement to remove him from the college for having served as a temporary secretary of the Antislavery Society of Maine.

In contrast to Smyth's wide range of reform interests, Austin Willey concentrated on only one – the immediate

emancipation of the slaves. A graduate of the Bangor Theological Seminary and a part-time minister, Willey was a polemicist and propagandist for black freedom. From 1838 to 1848, he wrote and spoke extensively in Maine in favor of his cause. When the Free Soil party in Maine established a newspaper, the *Portland Inquirer*, the editor noted: "Never did a man identify himself more completely with that cause [antislavery] than Mr. Willey has done in this state for the last ten years. Ability he had and it all went in one direction."<sup>15</sup> Michigan had only one newspaper supporting the Free Soil party and it was natural that it would hire someone with Willey's experience and enthusiasm as editor. But he returned to Maine in a few years and continued to lend his strength and ability to the cause of black freedom. In 1886, Willey published *The History of the Antislavery Cause in State and Nation*.<sup>16</sup>

Other reformers believed that the consumption of alcohol was an enslaving habit also in need of correction. While perhaps unrealistic and wrong-headed, the prohibition movement was prompted by a serious problem which was recognized by both foreign travellers and domestic reformers. For example, workers received, as part of their wage, a gill of liquor for an 11:00 A.M. breather, and then they consumed another potation of equal potency at 4:00 P.M. Since a gill was a quarter of a pint, both the efficiency and sobriety of the average worker was obviously impaired and many a carpenter's nail must have been driven at a slant. With this kind of liquid wage it was not surprising that large numbers of people were habitually intoxicated. Furthermore, civic events, personal tragedies, and triumphs alike, were all occasions for heavy drinking.<sup>17</sup> Funerals and church ordinations alike were considered appropriate times for libations. Lyman Beecher, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, was appalled that church ordinations

in Connecticut were attended by the aroma of the grog shop. Such ecclesiastical indulgence was not new, but went back to the founding of the New England colonies.

For much of the colonial period it was believed that alcoholic drinks, when not imbibed to excess, were health-giving. Few persons contradicted the popular belief that liquor was good for almost everything and everyone. Dr. Benjamin Rush<sup>18</sup> of Philadelphia first publicly challenged this popular delusion. In a treatise entitled *Directions for Preserving the Health of Soldiers*, he warned the troops about the excessive use of hard liquor. Soon after, in 1784, he published a pamphlet, *An Inquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body and Mind*, in which he concluded that even the moderate use of distilled spirits was detrimental. Rush advised his readers to imitate the Germans and drink beer which he thought led to long life and happiness. Cider and wine, when taken moderately, produced strength and cheerfulness, while punch and drams opened the way to debtor's prison or the gallows. The Rush pamphlets went through many editions and were bought and distributed by local temperance societies.

Gradually the exaggerated medicinal claims for liquor gave way to no less exaggerated statements about its harmful qualities. When the temperance movement began in Maine there was little demand for total abstinence. The early temperance enthusiasts hoped to reduce alcoholic consumption by combining moral suasion with the encouragement of milder drinks. But as the years went by the anticipated increase in sobriety was so modest that many voices were heard demanding stricter legal measures to control the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. From the late 1820s onward, Maine laws progressively approached the strict prohibition legislation of 1846 and 1851.

In the beginning, the Maine temperance champions were anxious to link such reform with other problems that seemed to some to demand as much attention as excessive drinking. During the Jefferson and Madison administrations, the New England ministers, especially if they were Calvinist and Federalist, deplored the so-called French influence. They were convinced that ideas emanating from France were mainly responsible for what was perceived as an alarming increase in atheism and licentiousness. To combat such evils societies were formed for the purpose of suppressing vice and immorality in whatever hideous form they appeared.

Those in Portland who came under the spell of Dr. Edward Payson of the Second Parish Church have traced the origin of prohibition in Maine to the influence of his 69 Society. John Neal, a keen observer of the Portland scene, wrote of Dr. Payson: "He lived to effect one of the most extraordinary changes ever known among a community as well educated as this. He acquired a sort of dictatorship in morals – and he made his breath law – and held the power that he acquired from that day till the day of his death – a period of more than twenty years."<sup>19</sup> The years referred to were from 1807 to 1827.

While members of Payson's society, said to number sixty-nine, concerned themselves with all vice and immorality, they were particularly feared by grogshop operators. In order to restore the virtues of colonial days, as perceived by the reformers, the blue laws regulating Sunday conduct were revived. Tythingmen stopped all Sunday travel; no one was allowed on the street unless going to or from church. Occasionally, however, the cemetery would do as a legitimate object. Barbershops and all drinking hangouts were closed. The number 69 was chalked or daubed throughout Portland as a reminder that sin had seen its best days. Supporters of a less rigid

morality did not always supinely submit to such reform. They had their own societies, and they marched in the streets to protest the revival of Mosaic Law. Reports of town meetings in Cape Elizabeth and Portland in the 1830s indicate that Sabbath breakers were put to rout, but as the years went by such victories proved temporary.

Other Maine towns had organizations similar to Dr. Payson's. In 1822 the Moral Society was formed in the Shore Village section of Thomaston for the general purpose of suppressing vice and immorality, especially among the young people, and "to prevent violation of the Sabbath, the use of profanity, and every kind of indecency and rudeness toward strangers."<sup>20</sup> According to the Thomaston historian, Cyrus Eaton, it was the first society ever established in Maine to uphold the principle of total abstinence.

Organizations dedicated to total abstinence were the exception in the 1820s and not the rule. Fifteen years elapsed before many other towns had societies espousing legal prohibition rather than temperance. Neal Dow admitted that as late as 1835 "the idea of prohibition was not then familiar to me ... and I had not become especially devoted to it."<sup>21</sup> Despite the slowness in drawing the lines between regulation and prohibition, licensing laws were tightened throughout the 1820s. In 1821 a law was passed attempting to restrict the sale of liquor to respectable and responsible citizens. In 1829 a local option law was enacted amending that of 1821 so that "no license granted shall authorize the sale of wine, spirituous or mixed liquors to be drunk in store or shop of retailer." By 1830 it could be said that the free and easy approach to the sale and consumption of liquor in Maine was over.

The year 1837 was important in the history of Maine prohibition. It was then that the Temperance Society held its annual meeting in Augusta with ex-Governor King

presiding. When it was proposed to amend the temperance pledge by making total abstinence a prerequisite for membership, Governor King and others insisted that there was biblical sanction for the use of wine and that it was dangerous to promote any cause too zealously. Such moderation was anathema to an increasing number of reformers who reserved their greatest vituperation for those who advanced too slowly. This difference of opinion caused a split resulting in the formation of the Maine Temperance Union which demanded a pledge of total abstinence from its members. From that time on it was almost impossible to take a moderate stand on drinking without the reformers shouting, "Another rummy!"

In 1841 a different kind of temperance group appeared when half a dozen reformed and rehabilitated drunkards in Baltimore organized the Washington Temperance Society which injected an emotionalism in the movement previously lacking. Even in Maine, where the prohibitionists were doing well, the Washingtonians greatly accelerated the tempo of the movement. Going from town to town they tried to outdo one another in reciting gruesome and revolting details of their unregenerate days and nights spent with the bottle. Other temperance advocates, taking their cue from the Baltimore converts, issued lurid and sensational propaganda, such as T. S. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*. Sometimes, however, the desire to portray the "Demon Rum" in its more hideous forms backfired. In 1842, for example, each issue of Farmington's *Franklin Register* carried an announcement of the time and location of the Washington Society's meetings while giving attention to any revolting event relating to intemperance. On January 22, the paper reported the death of Colonel Bangs of Phillips who was thought to have died on the twentieth after having cut his throat while in a fit of

delirium tremens. Later information revealed that the *Register* had been premature in writing the colonel off as a victim of strong drink. Without apology, the paper reported on January 29: "We understand that Col. Bangs, reported in our last issue as having committed suicide is now convalescent."

The Washington Society became adept in attaining a mass appeal. Featuring large open-air meetings throughout the state, people came from miles around. Music, processions, banners, sober but enthusiastic singing, and picnics laced with games lent excitement to the drive for sobriety and attracted, at least temporarily, many who found such emotionalism a relief from an otherwise drab existence. One of the favorite songs of the Maine meetings included this quatrain:

King Alcohol is quaking,  
His throne is crumbling fast,  
And all his petty princes  
With terror stand aghast!

And then there was a poem ridiculing those constantly seeking excuses for drinking:

One drinks because he's very hot,  
As we are often told;  
Another can't refuse a pot  
Because he's very cold.  
  
A third will drink because he's wet,  
Its benefits to try;  
A fourth must sure a tankard get  
Because he's very dry.  
  
Another must a bargain make,  
And have a glass to strike it;  
While one and all the liquor take,  
Because in fact they like it.<sup>22</sup>

During the drive for prohibition, the carnival spirit, with its songs, processions, banners, and poetry, was not usually dominant. Nearly all Maine clubs and societies, even those

not supposedly concerned with sobriety, found their members abandoning lifetime friendships because of differences of opinion over how best to dry up the State of Maine. Towns and even families sometimes bitterly divided over the subject. In Portland two well-known cousins, Neal Dow and John Neal were examples of this. Neal Dow's zeal led him to write an article, "History of a Neighborhood, a True Tale," which purported to describe the terrible results of the intemperance observed in households along an otherwise splendid avenue. John Neal asserted that Dow had inaccurately and maliciously described the Neal family and their neighbors. The resulting exchange of insults between these two eminent Portlanders became so embittered that reconciliation proved impossible.<sup>23</sup>

Although all New England states tightened their drinking laws, Maine outpaced its neighbors. Yet, in 1838 it seemed likely that Massachusetts would lead the nation when it passed the "Fifteen Gallon Law" forbidding any liquor sales of less than fifteen gallons except on a medical prescription. The state reversed this step toward prohibition in the 1840s as she became more urbanized, and admitted more and more immigrants. Maine, on the other hand, progressively approached the unprecedented laws of 1846 and 1851. The latter enactment, signed by Governor John Hubbard, outlawed "Demon Rum" by providing for the prosecution of any Maine citizen who manufactured or sold intoxicating beverages. By 1857 thirteen other states had followed suit, making it seem likely that national prohibition was the wave of the future. While Neal Dow's success appeared permanent to some, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. displayed prescience before a New York City audience when he stated: "The law of Maine will hardly take effect while the law of fermentation stands unrepealed on the pages of heaven's statute book."<sup>24</sup>

Some urban audiences regarded the stories that told of escape from the gambling evil as thrilling as the confessions of those who had risen from the gutter to join the Washington Society. Reformed gamblers could frequently regain some of their lost money if they could effectively dramatize their moral regeneration. But gambling was rarely a rural sin since the pervasive poverty of the countryside did not provide many farmers with the wherewithal to indulge in games of chance. Only the more prosperous urban areas were able to provide audiences anxious to hear oratory exposing the wickedness and disasters resulting from the betting habit.

Before the 1830s Maine farmers may not have engaged in many games of chance, but nearly all willingly spent part of their hard-earned money on the time-honored lotteries. This device, luring participants by promises of high rewards, had been sanctioned throughout the colonial period by church and state. Community and state leaders, appreciating the difficulties of raising money before either an adequate banking or tax structure, eagerly promoted lotteries in order to use the profits for new bridges, higher education, or dozens of other commendable enterprises.

Over the course of time abuses naturally crept into the operation of lotteries, and their proliferation made proper supervision difficult, if not impossible. Farmers, who before the 1830s had participated without a qualm now re-evaluated them as a result of the influence of such religious publications in Maine as *Zion's Advocate* (Baptist) and the *Christian Mirror* (Congregationalist). The latter compared lotteries with piracy and robbery, insisting that "if the lottery system were better known people would flee from them as from venomous snakes or ravenous beast of prey."<sup>25</sup> While private operators of lotteries came under suspicion in the late 1820s, the Maine legislature finally concluded that even in state-run lotteries the chances of

fraud were high. Finally, in 1833, Governor Smith concluded that the lottery for the benefit of steam navigation should be terminated, thus ending lotteries in Maine for over a hundred years.

Maine's most original antebellum reformer was probably John Neal. Born into the Quaker religion which had nurtured many reformers, he became a shopkeeper, clerk, teacher of penmanship and drawing, lawyer, physical education promoter, auctioneer, novelist, editor, merchant and lecturer. An advocate of a formidable list of reforms he was known for his peculiarities of manner, style, and thought, and was consistently fearless in expressing his views. He took many of his fellow Portlanders to task for being hypocritical in their attitude toward slavery. Some, he asserted, who were against slavery, were guilty of disenfranchising free blacks who could neither hold office nor run for any position of consequence. Forced to attend inferior and segregated schools, Portland's blacks were not permitted to worship in churches reserved for whites. Neal also condemned imprisonment for debt, championed physical education in schools and colleges, and scattered many other ideas in breathless haste in newspapers, magazines, and books.

In the antebellum decades some people expressed dismay at the lack of physical activity of undergraduates, but little was done until after the Civil War. Long before that Neal so firmly believed that the nation's health was seriously imperiled by inactivity, he decided to act. In the late 1820s he wangled an invitation to give instruction in boxing, bowling, and other sports at Bowdoin. Since bowling alleys had already become popular in some Maine towns, it was easy to generate interest in building an alley on the Brunswick campus. The visiting committee at Bowdoin went on record in 1828 as favoring some kind of gymnastics but rejected a proposal to erect a shed where

students could exercise. Because money was so scarce, it was reserved for more intellectual pursuits and projects. In 1829 the Bowdoin trustees voted for a series of lectures on diet, regimen, and exercise, all to be given by the professor of anatomy. For reasons unknown, the overseers vetoed the plan.<sup>26</sup> Physical fitness is but one example of Neal having been in the vanguard of a reform that for many years had few followers.

Of the many reforms espoused, Neal reserved his greatest enthusiasm for women's rights. Events in his own family may have accounted for this partiality which seemed to many an obsession. When John and his twin sister were one month old their father died, forcing their mother to work in order to support her new family. Neal must have been appalled when he discovered the difference in wages paid the sexes. In nearly all his major speeches he criticized unequal pay for equal work, especially in the teaching profession by which his mother earned her living. He recognized the universal injustice in the treatment of women. While pointing out that heathen and Oriental practices were revolting, he always asked: "Has Christianity done any better?" In reading his autobiography it is difficult to tell what he hated more: man's injustice to women or the questionable practices of his cousin, the "mischiefmaking, meddlesome Neal Dow."<sup>27</sup>

In addition to home-grown reformers such as John Neal, a considerable number came to Maine from other states. One of the most successful in the health movement was Sylvester Graham who started his career in 1830 as general agent for the Pennsylvania Temperance Society. Unlike some of his colleagues, Graham was not interested exclusively in the drinking problem. He became a student of physiology, diet, and regimen. After being mobbed by a crowd of Boston bakers, he discovered that his lectures

inveighing against the use of white bread were almost as explosive as Garrison's diatribes against slavery. While others concerned themselves with drink, women's rights, and the peace movement, Graham dedicated himself to improving the nation's health. Noted primarily for graham crackers and vegetarianism, he also recommended hard mattresses, whole wheat bread, open bedroom windows, cold showers, looser and lighter clothing, daily exercise, fresh fruits, rough cereals, pure drinking water, and cheerfulness at meals. Graham has the credentials to be called the American pioneer in preventive medicine.

The banquet menus of 150 years ago prove that it was not uncommon for fifteen or twenty different kinds of meat and fish to be served at a single sitting. Such over-indulgence sent Graham into the same sort of moral frenzy that gripped Neal Dow when observing the evils of drink. Although many doctors ridiculed his ideas several top-flight physicians supported him. One of these was Reuben Mussey, a well known doctor and lecturer at the Bowdoin and Dartmouth medical schools, who encouraged Graham to visit Maine to conduct classes in correct health habits. Although unsuccessful in Gardiner where his "gratuitous abuse of citizens in his first lecture prevented his acquiring a class,"<sup>28</sup> he did much better in Brunswick and Portland where the citizenry enrolled in large numbers. His strictures on meat were so convincing that the butchers of Brunswick thought they were headed toward certain bankruptcy.<sup>29</sup>

While not always effective as a reformer, Graham and his ideas on diet and health now receive a degree of recognition given few of the evanescent reforms of the 1830s and 1840s. Any bite into a graham cracker is a testimonial to the validity and durability of one of his ideas.

In the pre-Pasteur period, the alarmingly high death rate sparked many peculiar reforms. Frustration with existing medical methods led to such things as homeopathy, Thomsonianism, mesmerism, faith healing, and hydropathy. Originating in Germany, the belief that water was a cure-all, was accepted by many who called themselves hydropaths. Water was used in wet sheets and bandages, vapour baths, salt and fresh water, and foot and other baths. Even newspaper editors who did not put all their faith in the water cure exhorted their readers to bath at least three times a week. Especially forceful were they about bathing when cholera threatened.

The leading hydropath in antebellum Maine was Dr. Josiah Prescott who lent the water-cure movement prestige and respectability. After graduating from Dartmouth Medical School, he became a highly regarded doctor, a presidential elector, a member of the state senate, and a founder of the Augusta Hospital for the Insane. At one time he lived in Winthrop where he became the director of a hydropathic establishment where drugs were banned, and the internal and external use of water was supplemented by diet, exercise, and electricity. E. Porter Eastman ran a hydropathic spa in Gorham, and still another operated in Waterford. All made money for a time, and lent a certain respectability to the movement.<sup>30</sup>

Evidence indicates that bathing was not a highly contagious habit or practice. As a come-on, nearly all bathing house proprietors offered free baths to small children attended by their parents. Since adults were usually charged 25¢ for one session, or \$3.00 for the entire season, cleanliness was certainly not prohibitively expensive in the days before the abundance of private tubs. But despite low prices and long operating hours of the bath houses, newspaper editors felt compelled to urge more people to take advantage of the existing public

facilities. A writer for the *Portland Tribune* advised his readers “to ward off mental depression, hypochondriacism, vapors, ennui, etc.” by patronizing the public baths.

In the early 1830s death prevented the appearance in Portland of Dr. Spurzheim, a founder of phrenology. Since \$500.00 had already been subscribed for his course on phrenology, some of his disciples took up the burden of examining heads, the means by which the practitioners of this pseudo-science guessed the occupations and characters of their clients. Phrenologists, like those in other professions had their own jargon with an emphasis on big words, one of which was philoprogenitiveness, the love of children.

Orson Squire Fowler was the most popular and flamboyant of those who lectured on phrenology in Maine. In 1837, three years after graduating from Amherst, he and his brother published *Phrenology Proved, Illustrated and Applied*; later they began publishing the *Phrenological Almanac*. Meanwhile, however, Orson became an authority on other parts of the body and produced an extraordinary number of works with titles that were neither short nor catchy. One, for example, was entitled, *Parentage, Applied to the Improvement of Offspring, Including Important Directions and Suggestions to Lovers and the Married Concerning the Strongest Ties and the Most Momentous Relations of Life*. To this he wrote a sequel: *Amativeness: or Evils and Remedies of Excessive and Perverted Sexuality, Including Warning and Advice to the Married and Single*. With such subject matter it is little wonder that these books went through forty editions. One of Fowler’s biographers has written that his “emphasis upon hereditary and physiological factors in matrimony may be taken as a wild and crude form of eugenics.”<sup>31</sup>

Also an amateur architect, Fowler set forth some unorthodox ideas in *A Home for All; or, the Gravel Wall, and*

*Octagon Mode of Building*, in which he insisted that octagonal houses were superior to all others. This appeared in 1849, and during the 1850s nine or ten such houses were built in Maine, some of which are still standing.

The influence of the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Christian ethics combined to make the 1830s and 1840s a period of growing humanitarianism. In 1832 agitation started for a marine hospital and for a hospital for the insane. Although the marine hospital was not built until 1859, the latter institution opened its doors in 1841, headed by Dr. Isaac Ray. A graduate of the Bowdoin Medical School, Ray supplemented his income by lecturing on natural history, animal magnetism and medical jurisprudence. He later expanded his lectures on medical jurisprudence into a book which had enough lasting merit to be reprinted by the Harvard University Press in 1960.

The Maine legislature not only appropriated money for such humanitarian projects as an insane hospital but agonized throughout this period over the debtor laws. It had become evident to many that the law regulating imprisonment for debt needed to be changed. During the 1830s the legislature finally abolished imprisonment for those who owed \$5.00 or less. While this hardly justified the hours of rhetoric expended on the subject, it still represented a step forward. The same could be said of the struggle to abolish capital punishment. The legislature spent hours poring over biblical texts trying to determine whether capital punishment should be abandoned. No conclusive decisions were reached; both sides found biblical support for their side of the argument. The legislatures of 1835 and 1836 appointed special committees to consider the question of capital punishment. Both committees favored abolishing it, but aside from making it more difficult to inflict the death penalty, capital

punishment remained on the books until 1875. The debate did prove, however, that man's past inhumanity to man was of growing concern to the citizens of Maine.<sup>32</sup>

Not everyone favored reform. Some resented the zeal of the reformers while others doubted that the reforms could last more than a few years. "The criticism and attack on institutions, which we have witnessed, has made one thing plain", Ralph Waldo Emerson noted, "that society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things about him: he has become tediously good in some particular but negligent or narrow in the rest; and hypocrisy and vanity are often the disgusting result."<sup>33</sup> One of Maine's more erudite and articulate critics of reform was Leonard Woods, Jr., the president of Bowdoin College from 1839 to 1866. Attacking the belief of many reformers that the end justified the means, Woods wrote that "under the cover of this, the most horrid enormities of crime have been, and may again be perpetrated." He thought that the reformers' methods tended to antagonize rather than to persuade, and that they reflected "a vindictive attitude with respect to evildoers, or those who do not come up to their standard of right." He believed them lacking in a comprehensive scheme for human betterment because "they are always driving, with all their force at some object in comparison with which, whatever may be its real value, they deem everything else insignificant."<sup>34</sup> The unchristian approach of the reformers, many of whom were personal acquaintances and fellow Congregationalists, appalled him.

This zealous, single-minded approach to the problems of society blinded the reformers to the fact that the world could not be remade in a lifetime. Well might they have learned from Reinhold Niebuhr who wrote: "Nothing that is worth doing can be accomplished in a lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope."

— NOTES —

<sup>1</sup> John Witham Penny, "Captain William Ladd, the Apostle of Peace," *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, Series II, 10 (1899): 113-38.

<sup>2</sup> Merle Eugene Curti, *The American Peace Crusade, 1815-1860*, (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1929), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Merle E. Curti, "William Ladd," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, 10: 527-28.

<sup>4</sup> (Augusta) *Gospel Banner*, February 11, 1837.

<sup>5</sup> Curti, *Peace Crusade*, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> Calvin Montague Clark, *History of the Congregational Churches in Maine*, vol. 2; *History of the Individual Churches, 1600-1826* (Portland, Maine: Congregational Christian Conference of Maine, 1935), p. 398.

<sup>7</sup> Everett S. Stackpole, *History of Winthrop, Maine, with Genealogical Notes* (Auburn, Maine: Published by a Vote of the Town, 1925), p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 632.

<sup>9</sup> (Portland) *Christian Mirror*, August 13, 1835.

<sup>10</sup> Nathan Webb, "Gen. Samuel Fessenden," unpublished biographical sketch in the Nathan Webb Papers, Maine Historical Society.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Francis Fessenden, *Life and Public Services of William Pitt Fessenden, United States Senator from Maine, 1854-1864; Secretary of the Treasury, 1864-1865; United States Senator from Maine, 1865-1869*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907), 2: 37.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth C. M. Sills, "William Smyth," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, 17: 370-73.

<sup>14</sup> Clark, *Congregational Churches*, 2:398.

<sup>15</sup> The *Inquirer* was supported by the Free Soil party for only a few issues. The paper was short-lived.

<sup>16</sup> Austin Willey, *The History of the Antislavery Cause in State and Nation* (Portland, Maine: Brown Thurston and Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, 1886).

<sup>17</sup> In the 1830s the story got around that Chief Justice John Marshall decided that the Supreme Court should have some bourbon and branch water at some time during the day, provided the sun was shining. Eventually, at least as the story would have it, Marshall suggested a drink after a hard session of the court even though it was raining. He thought the sun must be shining somewhere.

<sup>18</sup> A signer of the Declaration of Independence and friend of nearly all the Founding Fathers, Dr. Rush made the Pennsylvania Medical

School the most prestigious in the country. Partly because of his reputation, one of his medical errors was widely accepted for years. He insisted that all diseases resulted from vascular tension that could be relieved and corrected by blood letting and purging. On the positive side, Dr. Rush was a pioneer in detecting a connection between mental diseases and bodily health.

<sup>19</sup> (Portland) *Yankee*, February 27, 1828. This paper was edited by John Neal.

<sup>20</sup> Cyrus Eaton, *History of Thomaston, Rockland, and South Thomaston, Maine, from Their Exploration, A.D. 1605; with Family Genealogies*, 2 vols. (Hallowell, Maine: Masters, Smith & Co., Printers, 1865) 1:322-23.

<sup>21</sup> Neal Dow, *The Reminiscences of Neal Dow. Recollections of Eighty Years* (Portland, Maine: The Evening Express Publishing Company, 1898), p. 267.

<sup>22</sup> George Stuyvesant Jackson, *Early Songs of Uncle Sam* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1933), p. 222.

<sup>23</sup> John Neal, *Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life: An Autobiography* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1869), pp. 363-86.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *Voices of America: The Nation's Story in Slogans, Sayings, & Song* (New York: Free Press, 1976), p. 88.

<sup>25</sup> (Portland) *Christian Mirror*, October 4, 1832.

<sup>26</sup> Louis C. Hatch, *The History of Bowdoin College* (Portland, Maine: Loring, Short & Harmon, 1927), p. 343.

<sup>27</sup> Neal, *Wandering Recollections*, p. 386.

<sup>28</sup> (Portland) *Christian Intelligencer*, July 25, 1834.

<sup>29</sup> George Augustus Wheeler and Henry Warren Wheeler, *The History of Brunswick, Topsham, and Harpswell, Maine, Including the Ancient Territory Known as Pejepscot* (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, Printers, 1878), pp. 225-26.

<sup>30</sup> For articles on hydropathic establishments see the *Portland Transcript*, May 20, 1848; May 6, 1849; and June 26, 1852; see also the *Norway Advertiser*, March 24, 1848.

<sup>31</sup> Margaret Wadsworth Genzmer, "Sylvester Graham," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, 7:479-80.

<sup>32</sup> Nearly all Maine newspapers of the period commented upon the death penalty, mostly favoring its abolition. Capital punishment was abolished in 1875, but was revived in the 1880s because of two grisly murders. The death penalty was finally abolished in 1888.

<sup>33</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Modern Library, 1950), pp. 449-71.

<sup>34</sup> *Literary and Theological Review*, pp. 22, 709. Leonard Woods was editor of the *Review* from 1834 until 1837.

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ADDENDA:

Ray, Roger B., comp. *The Indians of Maine and the Atlantic Provinces: A Bibliographical Guide*. Portland, Maine Historical Society, 1977. [87] pages.

Miller, Virginia P. "Aboriginal Micmac Population: A Review of the Evidence." Halifax, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University, 1977. 24 pp. typescript. [Accepted for publication by *Ethnohistory*]

The aboriginal population of the Micmacs of eastern Canada has long been estimated at 3,500. Citing the evidence, Dr. Miller shows that before 1500 A.D., the Micmacs probably numbered around 35,000. The great decline in population between 1500 A.D. and 1600 A.D. was due to a radical change in Micmac lifestyle, and consumption of European food following contact with European traders. This view tends to substantiate the oral tradition of Maine Indians concerning the occurrence of a plague along the Maine coast prior to that of 1620. In view of Dr. Miller's findings, this early plague may also have been due to a change in lifestyle and dependence upon European food.

Miller, Virginia P. "Silas T. Rand, Nineteenth Century Anthropologist among the Micmacs." Halifax, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University, 1977. 20 pp. typescript. [To be included in a volume of collected papers on the history of anthropology in Canada to be published by the University of British Columbia, M. M. Ames, editor]

A most sympathetic biographical sketch of a truly Canadian proto-anthropologist whose observations and publications are a rich resource for the study of the Micmacs during Rand's lifetime.

Peterson, Anne K. "The Hannaford Cove Site: An Historical and Environmental Study." New York: New York University, 1977. 37 pp. typescript. illus. [Copy available at the Maine Historical Society]

This study, containing maps, illustrations, drawings, and tabulations of artifacts found at the Hannaford Cove excavation in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, concludes that humans may have occupied the site as early as 500 to 1000 BP.

Prince, John Dyneley. "Some Passamaquoddy Documents," *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* 11 (October 1898): 369-77.

This article contains a section, "Wabanaki History Previous to the Establishment of Wampum Laws," which, like much early oral history, provides no dates. Its value lies in the ascription of the wars between the Passamaquoddies and the Micmacs, and of those between the Penobscots and the Malisettes, to hereditary disputes about hunting grounds. According to Passamaquoddy oral history, peace was attained by these tribes after the Mohawks, "discouraged by their repeated failures [to subdue these four tribes], decided to make a treaty of peace among all the nations; apportioning the disputed hunting grounds: to the Penobscots, the Penobscot river and its tributaries; to the Maliseets [*sic*], the St. John's river and its tributaries; to the Passamaquoddies, the St. Croix river and its territory; and to the Micmacs their own streams." The balance of the account is a muddled recollection of the formation of the Wabanaki Confederation. Using the principles of the old Iroquois League, the Mohawks were successful in effecting a treaty with the four tribes which provided for the settlement of their boundary disputes. The Wabanaki Confederacy,

consisting of the Penobscots, Passamaquoddies, Malisettes, and Micmacs, dates from the middle of the eighteenth century. The Confederacy began to disintegrate around 1862.

Prince, John Dyneley. "Notes on Passamaquoddy Literature," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 13 (January 1901): 381-386.

Louis Mitchell, formerly the Passamaquoddy representative to the Maine legislature, gathered the notes for this paper, in both English and Indian, from the Passamaquoddy Indians who summered at Bar Harbor, Maine. Although the article primarily concerns recreations of the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot Indians, it also includes a Passamaquoddy witch song, "The Song of the Drum." The song says that the sound of "my" drum calls the animals from the mountains, the great storms hearken, the great whirlwind ceases its raging to listen, the spirit-of-the-night-air comes and listens and the spirit-under-the-water comes to surface and listens. It is an excellent song because it illustrates how these people tried to communicate with the spirit worlds. But Prince mistitles the song. It is not a witch song. Witches were a bad lot and might claim to have the power to communicate with the spirit world, but witches would not have fooled the spirits of the natural world, and the people knew it. Only a shaman trusted by his people would have made such a claim and would have sung this song only as an introduction to his ritual of petition to the spirit world to gain help for his people. The drum, in the hands of an authorized person, was used in other religions as one means of communicating with the spirit world. We are fortunate in having a Maine drum song.

Roger B. Ray