

BOOK REVIEWS

The Letters of Thomas Gorges, Deputy Governor of the Province of Maine, 1640-1643. Edited by Robert E. Moody. (Portland, Maine: Maine Historical Society, 1978. Pp. xxii, 148. Hardcover. \$20.00).

The Province of Maine was the last attempt of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, captain of Plymouth Fort and a veteran of Elizabeth's wars, to promote the colonization of New England under the English crown by use of the proprietary principle. His first attempt (not counting his involvement in the dispatch of the unfortunate Sagadahoc colony in 1607) had been the Council for New England, a governing-landowning corporation of twenty aristocrats and gentry set up by royal charter in 1620. Within three years the enthusiasm of the Council's members had flagged so much that Gorges had to divide New England up into twenty parts and share it out by lot. King James I drew lots for the absent members. Shortly afterwards Gorges's son, Robert, failed in an attempt to set up a permanent colony on Massachusetts Bay and to assert his control over unruly interlopers. His lack of success contrasted markedly with the somewhat better fortunes of the Pilgrims who had established themselves nearby. In 1628 a number of patents of land in the Massachusetts Bay area, obtained "surreptitiously" from the Council for New England, were greatly expanded in a royal charter granted to the Massachusetts Bay Company which ignored Gorges's prior claims.

The Puritans' successes in peopling Massachusetts Bay and assuming extensive power of self-government apparently revived Sir Ferdinando's interest in New England. From 1629 he was involved in a fur-trading project to be planted in the interior near "the Lake of the Iroquois" (Lake Champlain?) and then, when Archbishop

Laud began action against the Massachusetts Bay Company to dissolve its charter, Sir Ferdinando once again divided all New England among proprietors, this time eight in number. In 1637 Gorges received a royal commission as general governor of New England, and in 1639 he obtained a royal charter for the proprietary government of the area between Sagadahoc and Piscataqua, which had fallen to him in the lottery. This area was his Province of Maine. Gorges's supposed intention was to use his proprietary colony in Maine as support for an assertion of royal authority throughout New England. Naturally, the Massachusetts Puritans were his enemies.

In 1635 Sir Ferdinando sent a nephew, William Gorges, as his deputy to recover what he could of property left by Robert ten years earlier and to establish a foothold in the area assigned to him in the lottery, then called New Somersetshire. William took craftsmen, cattle, sawmills, and other necessities and was aided by former supporters of Sir Ferdinando who had stayed in the country. He set up a court at Saco. Little is known of his efforts. He returned to England in 1637, the year when Sir Ferdinando's commission as general governor was issued.

In 1639, Gorges, apparently unable to collect resources to lead a major expedition, sent another member of a more distant branch of the family, Thomas Gorges, as his deputy-governor of the Province of Maine, to take possession of what was left of his property. Thomas was to lay the foundations for governing Maine. But Sir Ferdinando was so short of capital that his deputy had to travel to his province by way of Boston because the old man had no ship in which to send him directly to Maine.

Thomas Gorges, twenty-two years of age, had just graduated as a lawyer from the Inns of Court. As he was by religious persuasion a moderate Puritan, he made good contacts with Governor John Winthrop, and other men

of the Bay. He quickly set up courts. Here his legal knowledge came in handy and he provided it freely. Thomas began to tackle conflict in land-claims, to deal with crime, and to protect and assert the proprietor's interests.

A little more has been known of Thomas's deputy governorship than is known of William's, partly because the *Trelawny Papers*, the archives of a merchant who traded to New England, and a useful supplement to Sir Ferdinando's own *Brief Narration*. This present volume publishes the contents of some of Thomas's recently discovered copy books in which he drafted his letters. As the letters deal more broadly with affairs and not merely with the contacts of one firm, they offer very valuable additions to our information of those early pioneer times.

Unfortunately, the letters were drafted on blank pages in copybooks that already contained other material. Furthermore, Thomas wrote in a miniscule cramped hand, and there are many alterations and erasures. The parts of letters scattered throughout the copybooks were difficult to piece together, some pages may be missing, and many letters are mere fragments. For many years the books had lain neglected, exposed to water and rats. Hence, the task of the editor was unusually difficult. He is frankly unable to claim that he has put all the letters in order or attached all portions correctly together. Furthermore, many are so scrappy (and Thomas's style so clumsy and obscure) that the collection is quite unsatisfactory as a volume of readings. However, the editor's skill and patience and his great knowledge (he is the leading living authority on the early settlement along the Maine coast) show strongly throughout.

What emerges confirms and elaborates what was earlier known about Thomas Gorges. Able to live on good terms with the people of the Bay colony, he was well aware of their expansionism that threatened his uncle's property

rights. He was conscientious and worked hard to set up both government and viable settlements. He was very loyal to Sir Ferdinando; and he was on affectionate or friendly terms with many other members of the Gorges family, some of whom were soon to be opposed to him in arms as Royalists. Thomas was particularly anxious to advise Sir Ferdinando on trade so that the establishment of a staple product could make the settlements pay back what had been plunged into them over the years.

But after a brief preliminary period of optimism on arrival when he first saw the beauty and the potential profits of the new land, Thomas rapidly became discouraged. This, and the growing military crisis in England, caused him to leave the colony in 1643. He fought as a colonel in the parliamentary armies, that is to say on the opposite side from Sir Ferdinando.

Perhaps the most interesting and valuable contribution the book makes is in what it tells about aspects of the daily life of these pioneer settlements. Thus we learn of a sawmill with a broken shaft, and a tide-operated gristmill that could produce very little flour, and of housekeeping problems.

This volume is most handsomely printed and bound, a beautiful piece for the library shelf, not for the bedside table. Its external appearance and makeup is a nice tribute to the care, effort, and quality of the editor.

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Maine Resources: Printed and Non-Printed. Compiled by Walter J. Taranko and Dorothy A. Gregory. (Augusta, Maine: Maine State Library, 1977. Pp. 264. Paper. [Free to teachers]).

Maine Resources: Print and Non-Print quickly dispells the notion that government publications must be inscrutably disorganized and laden with jargon. In their role as consultants to the Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services, Walter Taranko and Dorothy Gregory have produced a lucid and useful list of materials which relate to the study of Maine. Their guide surpasses the usual order of bibliographies by including the first unified compilation of such non-print Maine items as films, slides, cassettes, and videotapes. Intended primarily for use by classroom teachers, the book is conveniently small (6''×9''), making it an excellent desktop reference tool.

While the stated purpose of the book is to provide a comprehensive and practical list of the currently available resources about Maine, the terms "comprehensive" and "current" may cause problems for some users. It should be remembered that the goal of the book was not to develop a specialized handbook for researchers, but rather to assist primary and secondary teachers who might wish to augment their present approach to Maine studies. Whereas the historian expects to find the best sources, the classroom teacher might succeed with any good source; and while the historian might argue that finding the only copy of a document constitutes an available source, the classroom teacher frankly wants only those materials which are reasonably close to his fingertips. Accordingly, the book does not include many excellent sources which are now hard to obtain, nor any of the newest materials which might have appeared in the last two years. (To remedy this latter problem, Taranko is preparing a supplement which should soon be available.) Because of space limitations, other important deletions include local

histories, human resources, research documents, and Maine authors. Since availability of the resources is one of the major concerns of the guide, Taranko and Gregory have included careful instructions on the use of the Regional Library System and information about the purchase or rental of non-library items. Particularly useful is the Directory of Publishers and Distributors which is included in the back of the book.

The heart of the book describes the various materials, grouping them according to ten alphabetized categories which range from "Audiovisual Materials" to "Periodicals." In actuality, three-fourths of all the listings come under one of the following headings: "Audiovisual Materials," "Economic, Social and Political History," "Fiction," or "Natural History and the Environment." Each section is attractively set off by a full page photograph and enhanced by the use of titles, subtitles, and smaller illustrations. Except for the fact that coasting schooners are repeatedly mislabeled as clipper ships, the photographs do an effective job of breaking up the monotony of the lists of information. Each entry, in turn, provides the title of the resource, the author or producer, the format (e.g., films or slides), a brief description of its content, and an indication of where the resource may be obtained.

While this format does try to place the most useful Maine resources at one's fingertips, using it can be very frustrating. Since the index is strictly arranged according to authors and titles, one has to be either very knowledgeable or very lucky to use it effectively. It is conceivable that the average teacher trying to put together a unit on a subject such as Maine architecture will either be forced to get precise titles from some other source or else be compelled to skim over a hundred or more pages of resource descriptions to find what he wants. Since the creation of a subject index would present a variety of

confusing difficulties, Taranko and Gregory appear to have opted for another solution. Early in the book they suggest that it might be used effectively in conjunction with Eric Flower's *Bibliography of Maine, 1960-1975*. Curriculum guides such as those being produced by Dean Bennett's Maine Studies Project would provide another excellent source of titles and authors.

All in all, while the book does not exactly constitute a "Yellow Pages" for Maine studies, *Maine Resources: Print and Non-Print* is practical, attractive, and very needed. Updated or not, it should serve for many years to motivate non-specialists to explore new areas of Maine life.

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Barrels and Daring. By Patrick C. Dowling. (South Port, North Carolina: Timothy and Co., 1977. Pp. 144. Illus. Paper. \$2.50).

In *Barrels and Daring*, Mr. Dowling surveys the history of the cooperage firm of J. H. Hamlen and Son, Inc., 1846-1977. The Hamlen concern was headquartered in Portland, Maine, and also had extensive operations in and near Little Rock, Arkansas. Its products, especially shooks, were marketed in the West Indies, Latin America and Africa, as well as domestically. At one time the Hamlens retained a fleet of vessels to carry their goods to these and other markets.

The author is sympathetic to the efforts of James Hopkinson Hamlen and his successors to seek alternative markets and to diversify production in reaction to a variety

of problems faced by the firm over time: tariff duties; use of bags as sugar containers; fires that destroyed the home offices and facilities in Arkansas; lack or cost of raw materials; unavailability of metal hoops during World War II; and whiskey distillers manufacturing their own barrels. Even the trend away from hardwood flooring deprived the firm's Arkansas lumber mill of potential sales. More recently the company turned to the production of furniture frame stock, pallets, crates and boxes, and railroad ties.

Some attention is paid to the political careers of James Clarence Hamlen, who succeeded J. H. Hamlen as head of the firm. J. C. Hamlen served as Fuel Administrator of Maine during World War I and was active in the Cumberland Shipbuilding Co. With his death in 1936 Joseph R. Hamlen and James Clarence Hamlen, Jr. took over the family's interests in the concern. J. H. Hamlen II was president of the company when the decision was reluctantly made to close the cooperage division in 1974.

While some readers may be distracted by the lengthy quotations from personal recollections, reproduction of correspondence in its entirety, abrupt shifts in topics and chronology, and a few unfortunate typographical errors, appropriate illustrations are included, and a useful glossary of cooperage terms is appended. Hopefully, other writers will be encouraged to do thorough studies of other Maine-based, family-owned firms in the future.

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The Landing: A Remembrance of Her People and Shipyards. By Thomas W. Murphy, Jr. (Kennebunk, Maine: Thomas Murphy, 1977. Pp. 55. Paper. \$3.95).

The author of *The Landing* deserves great credit for his collection of valuable information in this attractive book of 55 pages. It is generously illustrated with copies of fine portraits and paintings, sketches, photographs, and maps of The Landing, a small, winding river in Kennebunk, where hundreds of ships were built during the 100 years between 1766 and 1867. We wish we knew how many. This interesting booklet might well be the start of a larger project, it is so full of intriguing facts. Who would ever expect to find a story of the great naturalist John James Audubon in a book about Kennebunk, Maine — or to discover that the supply of lumber with which to build ships was becoming scarce as early as the 1840's.

The careful research done by the author is accompanied by many stories of adventures, both tragic and successful, connected with the ships and their captains and crews, all of which makes for good reading. Far from being just a list of certain vessels built in various shipyards, it provides the excitement of the world-wide travels and great adventures of these many ships built by Maine men on their small tidal river in Kennebunk.

There is a fine list of references, a good bibliography, and list of other sources, but it seems as if the book would be more useful if there were an index.

The Landing should be of great interest to people of the area and of real value to those interested in the ship-building days of the State of Maine.

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