

BOOK REVIEWS

Canals and Inland Waterways of Maine. By Hayden L. V. Anderson. (Portland, Me.: Maine Historical Society, 1982. Pp. ix, 229. Cloth. \$15.95.)

Interest in the American canal era is undergoing a revival after many years of neglect. Maine, both before and after becoming a state, had its canal advocates and builders, all of whom have been well documented by Hayden Anderson in this interesting monograph. This study clearly describes the commercial needs that prompted the various canal proposals, the intrigues surrounding their political and legislative acceptance, the ever-present problems of finance, the methods of construction, the extent of usage, and the eventual demise of enthusiasm for canals, caused by changing economic conditions and the rise of railroad competition.

Anderson's extensive research reflects a lifelong labor of love, and it is unfortunate that he died before seeing it published in the Maine Historical Society's newly created research series. The study details an amazing range of proposals designed to expand the potential of water transportation in Maine by removing navigational hazards and obstacles by various combinations of natural and man-made works. Much of the interest in canals was motivated by personal greed, sometimes artfully, sometimes blantly, masked behind civic need. The building of canals, as was true with other visionary projects, often was accompanied by economic hard times, and there was only grudging support and penurious financial response from the public and private sectors alike.

The one glowing canal success in Maine was the Cumberland & Oxford Canal, which extended from tidewater at Portland through a twenty-mile man-made

canal to Sebago Lake. From there it went through the locked Songo River to Brandy Pond and Long Lake, opening up a vast inland resource. This canal, the object of much of Hayden Anderson's personal exploration in his early years of canal interest, has deservedly been given extensive consideration, amounting to nearly half the book, while many other projects, which were never completed or which proved unsuccessful, have been covered only briefly in order that they not go unrecorded in readily available form. Despite the Cumberland & Oxford's success in opening the countryside surrounding Sebago and Long lakes to economic development, the canal does not receive high marks as a financial success. In fact, other than wage earners who built or operated the canal, few profited from it directly. Stockholders received no dividends, and many property owners, greatly inconvenienced by having their farmlands taken up and divided by the canal, received no payment except in stock that eventually became worthless. Suppliers of construction materials often suffered the same fate. Chartered especially to aid the canal, the Canal Bank gave the project only minimal assistance, and it eventually foreclosed on the mortgage and quickly divested itself of its rights and assets in this unwanted orphan.

There is an esoteric quality about canals, and individuals with only a marginal interest in them may find it difficult to profit by reading this book. But for anyone with a real desire to gain greater knowledge of canals and waterways and the role played by water transportation in developing our state and nation, this study provides a wealth of detailed information. The extensive footnotes and bibliography attest to the dedication of the author in ferreting out facts from obscure sources in order to provide a reference that should long prove invaluable to those interested in canals and Maine history, novice and experienced alike.

Even with the depth of Hayden Anderson's admirable study, there will always be additional information coming to light. In mind is the Northwest River Canal of 1795, which was chartered by Massachusetts for traffic between Peabody Pond, in the town of Sebago, to Sebago Lake, but completed only as a sluiced waterway for logs. This is a salutary condition. It will whet the appetites and interest of other students of the subject. No writing serves all purposes, and Anderson's is intended as history.

As one interested in all facets of the canal story, I now have added curiosity about the physical sites of some of the waterways described, and my desire to explore them will be greatly assisted by the maps contained in this study. Hopefully, Hayden Anderson's interest and good work will be shared by others.

Ernest H. Knight

Tate House: Crown of the Maine Mast Trade. By William David Barry with Frances W. Peabody. (Portland, Me.: National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of Maine, 1982. Pp. xii, 116. Cloth. \$25. Paper. \$12.50.)

This is far more than a guidebook to the Tate House, though the title suggests otherwise. The house, however, built in 1755 in the Stroudwater section of what is now Portland by Captain George Tate, the newly-arrived representative of the monopoly that furnished masts to the Royal Navy Board, forms the supporting structure of Mr. Barry's ingeniously conceived monograph. Thus the book presumably well serves the needs of its publishers, the Colonial Dames, who have owned, conscientiously preserved, exhibited, and interpreted the house since

1932. But at the same time the author's scheme allows him room for an important venture in family and community history, as well as a good case study in the practice of historic preservation in our century.

Barry begins with a compact discussion of the white pine mast trade in the first half of the eighteenth century, and of Falmouth's place in it. In the process, he tries to sort out the exact status and functions in that business of Samuel Waldo and Thomas Westbrook, both of whom have been called the "mast agent" for the area in the period before Tate's arrival. The attempt is of necessity not entirely conclusive because of the poverty of the record, but it is a useful one both because it puts the nature of the business into clearer focus than most previous accounts and because it reminds us of the central importance of Colonel Westbrook in the building of Falmouth, and especially Stroudwater, between his arrival in the 1720s and his death in 1744.

There follows two deft chapters: one on Captain George Tate, the well-connected businessman who arrived from England in 1751 and built the dwelling that is center stage in this book, and one on the house itself and how it evidently was lived in by Tate and his children. Then Barry gives us a fascinating treatment of the subsequent fortunes of the Tate family, including the accidental shooting of the captain's wife in 1770 in a trap set by one of her sons, and including the family divisions caused by the American Revolution. Ironically, the best documented of Captain Tate's five children who lived to adulthood is the one who left Falmouth rather early and spent most of his career in the service of Catherine the Great – rising, in fact, to the rank of admiral in the Russian navy. One of the book's appendices contains a revealing collection of letters from Admiral George Tate II to his brother Robert.

The book concludes with a chapter on the history of the Tate House after it left the hands of the family in 1803. Saved from destruction or irretrievable alteration first by “Squire” Andrew Hawes, who owned the house from 1888 to his death in 1928, and then by the Colonial Dames, the Tate House provides as instructive a case study in the movement for historic preservation as any structure in New England. Even as early as the 1930s, well before the “modern” preservation ethic was articulated by anyone, the steadier members of the society resisted a tempting suggestion to give the never-painted house a coat of white paint and furnish it with the standard Greek Revival (or, in the language of the day, “colonial”) green blinds.

This most admirable little work is not without some small flaws. Barry relies altogether too much, it seems to me, on extended quotations from other secondary works. He fails to realize the full potential of a riotous incident in the woods of New Boston (Gray) in 1771 by stopping well short of discussing its implications both for woodsman proprietor relations and for the American Revolution. There are one or two points at which he becomes repetitious, and I think he stretches a point when he speculates that a cuff link discovered in an archaeological dig may have been discarded to avoid being associated with Loyalists. But these are tiny matters. *Tate House* (despite its perhaps necessary but inadequate title) is exceptionally well done. It is a model of its genre, and more.

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Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750. By Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1982. Pp. xv, 296. Cloth. \$17.50.)

On April 1, 1982, at Philadelphia, Gerda Lerner, Robinson-Edwards Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, became the first female president of the Organization of American Historians. In her presidential address she illustrated the necessity and function of history by pointing out the negative effects on women of the non-recording of their history. "For women," she said, "all history up to the 20th century has truly been pre-history." In her judgment "women have been left out of history not because of the evil intent of male historians, but because we have considered history only in male-centered terms. To rectify this we must, for a time, focus on a women-centered inquiry . . . ask[ing] new questions and consult[ing] formerly neglected sources"

In *Good Wives* Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, assistant professor of history at the University of New Hampshire, has done just that. Using probate, court, and church records; sermons; account books; genealogies; and "the private papers of husbands and sons" (because few women's letters and diaries of the period exist), she has sought to recover "lost detail" and "the concrete realities" of the lives of women in Essex County, Massachusetts, the province of New Hampshire, and York County in the province of Maine.

Her intent and accomplishment will be gratifying to those who have long been impatient with history's static and opaque description of the colonial woman, as exemplified in Anne Bradstreet's 1643 eulogy for her mother: "A Worthy Matron of unspotted life, A loving Mother and obedient wife, A friendly neighbor, pitiful to

poor, To Servants wisely awful, but yet kind,” and, as if all that virtue were not enough, “Religious in all her words and ways.” We believe such women existed, but surely there were others who were as human as we find ourselves. How refreshing it is to follow Professor Ulrich beyond the stereotype to Salem’s Hannah Grafton, who in the 1690s ran a shop that was attached to her home where she sold hardware as well as sewing supplies; to Jane Bond of Gorgeana (York), who in 1650, after a year of sexual harassment from “fat Robert,” finally dared to seek help from her neighbor Mary Tappe; and to Joanna Williams, another Maine woman, who took a club to Nathaniel Keene for trespassing on her husband’s land.

More important than Professor Ulrich’s presentation of individual women is her success in illuminating the lives of women in general, the details of their daily lives as well as the social climate in which they functioned. For most colonial women childbearing was the “axis” of life, but few historians could explain the uses of betony, new-laid eggs, fresh butter, and “groaning beer and cakes” during childbirth. As for colonial society, the secondary position women held is underlined in Professor Ulrich’s explanation of the significance of church membership, which was not automatic but had to be earned. It was one of the few public distinctions available to women, whereas men could receive recognition by serving in a wide range of public offices from fence-viewer to magistrate.

Good Wives is not a feminist polemic, although feminists will find much in it to support their thinking. Professor Ulrich casts new light on many aspects of colonial New England, including the racism of the Indian wars; the brutality of village life; marriage, which even then encompassed the possibility of divorce; and the lives of men. (Through a discussion of the “weaning journey” undertaken by nursing mothers when it was time to wean a

child, we see how at least one 18th century father became what today would be called a “househusband.”)

Attention to the footnotes and bibliographic essay of *Good Wives* makes the reader aware that it is by necessity an analytical study. Professor Ulrich deals in facts carefully gleaned from primary source material, but the degree to which they must be interpreted is large because so much was left out of the record. Some might have trouble with her conclusions. I did not. Because of her own roles as a working wife and mother, as well as a scholar, she understands the importance of the “pivotal but unrecorded moments” in a homemaker’s daily life. Writing women’s history is a new discipline, and as Ulrich herself points out, there is room for disagreement.

Although scholarly, this is not just a book for scholars. It will appeal to a wider audience because its scholarship is matched by craft. It is beautifully written and organized. Its three sections bear as headings the names of biblical women: Bathsheba, homemaker and provider; Eve, the sexual partner and mother; Jael, the defender of her hearth and faith. Under each of these the roles of colonial woman, including those of “deputy husband,” virago, and Indian captive, are discussed, in every instance Ulrich has asked new questions and produced fresh answers.

This is an important “woman-centered” inquiry into New England’s heroic age and a fine contribution to our common history.

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New England Reflections, 1882-1907: Photographs by the Howes Brothers. Edited by Alan B. Newman. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981. Pp. viii, 296. Cloth. \$25.00)

Although this beautiful volume does not directly concern the state of Maine, it contributed much to our growing knowledge of the region and the development of turn-of-the-century photography. It also boasts a forward by Pulitzer Prize winning author Richard Wilbur, an introduction by Gerald McFarland of the University of Massachusetts, and additional, insightful essays by Alan Newman. The work rises far above that of a "picture book"; it is an ideal companion to Marius B. Peladeau's recent study of Maine photographer Chasonetta Stanley Emmons (1858-1937).

With the development of dry-plate negatives (in which Maine's Stanley brothers played a decisive part) in the 1880s came a traveling road show of fledgling "art photographers." Among these were Walter, Alvah, and George Howes of Ashfield, Massachusetts, who documented western New England between 1882 and 1907. During that time practically every town of size had a photographer. Indeed, the art was part and parcel of the democratization of art. Likenesses could be had cheaply, a fact clearly reflected by the varied socioeconomic backgrounds of the Howes' clients. Indeed, by comparing their images and those of Emmons, one is struck by great differences. Chasonetta was a trained artist, and the observer notices how she modeled her subjects, making conscious choices in subject, composition, and costume. The Howes brothers often showed a rougher, though no less compelling, approach. Rather than focusing on themes, the Howes were moved by financial considerations. Nearly all types of New Englanders are represented. Found here are well-to-do and impoverished families, hog butchers, lumbermen, dog trainers, tobacco

farmers, storekeepers, and school children. The whole, rich panorama, including a surprising number of black people, is revealed on film.

Perhaps the most singular thing about the Howes' photographs is their sheer number. Most noted photographers of the era are perhaps known only through a few images that found their way into print. The rest of their work was generally discarded or misplaced after their demise. There are, for example, only about twelve hundred known Emmons prints. By contrast, in the 1960s, twenty-one thousand Howes negatives were discovered in an attic and presented to the Ashfield Historical Society Museum. Under the direction of Mr. Newman, the whole gift, the largest of its kind in New England, was catalogued, and two hundred images were selected for this book.

New England Reflections is perfect model for other societies. As a book, everything is done properly. It is professional, well written, and attractively presented. More importantly, the book conveys the significance of photography as both documentation and art. Until recently many historical societies have given little notice to photographs. Even if they recognized the documentary importance of an image, they were apt to know nothing about preserving it. Such attitudes are slowly changing, and perhaps the success of this book and the professionalism it reflects on the Ashfield Historical Society Museum will speed the process.

William David Barry
Maine Historical Society

From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research. By Barbara Allen and W. Lynwood Montell. (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1981. Pp. 170. Cloth. \$12.50.)

Over the past ten or fifteen years, there has been growing academic acceptance of oral history methodology, as well as an ever-increasing interest on the part of professional and amateur historians alike in collecting oral history. Historians are beginning to learn what folklorists have known all along—that oral history is the most exciting, interesting, and personally engaging way to reconstruct the past. Many colleges and universities now have permanently established oral history programs, and a number of local libraries and historical societies are conducting special oral history projects of their own.

While the establishment and growth of such projects is encouraging and commendable, the publications that result often are not. Unhappy with the inaccuracies and inconsistencies that frequently mar the published results of oral history projects, especially those sponsored by local historical institutions or individuals, coauthors Barbara Allen and Lynwood Montell have prepared this guidebook to assist local historians in evaluating and interpreting orally communicated history.

From Memory to History is a welcome addition to the several excellent manuals that heretofore have concentrated almost exclusively on the proper methods of collecting and processing tape-recorded interviews; i.e., Willa Baum, *Oral History for the Local Historical Society* and *Transcribing and Editing Oral History*; Edward D. Ives, *The Tape-Recorded Interview*; and Gary Shumway and William Hartley, *An Oral History Primer*. Certainly the time has come for collectors of oral history to move beyond the mechanics of finding informants and transcribing tapes to a greater consideration of how these oral materials, once

gathered, can best be used and their historical accuracy determined. Although it has shortcomings, *From Memory to History* is an important first step in helping oral historians determine the accuracy and relevance of the oral sources they collect.

The manual can be divided into four parts: (1) descriptions of various forms and uses of oral history; (2) tests of historical validity and consistency that can be applied to oral testimony; (3) suggestions for incorporating oral information into a written manuscript; and (4) appendices, offering examples of how oral and written sources can complement one another in historical reconstruction.

The first three chapters discuss the value of orally communicated history in documenting the past, topics likely to lend themselves to oral recollection, and the importance of understanding how and in what settings oral history is communicated. Particularly helpful is Allen and Montell's discussion of the characteristics which set orally communicated history apart from formal, written history: lack of standard chronology since the ordering principle is emotional associations with people and events, not time; clustering of interrelated and sometimes contradictory oral accounts of a local event or personality; use of visual imagery, which can compress whole events into emotionally powerful symbols; the telescoping of historical time; and the displacement of original participants in historical events.

Chapters 4 and 5 are by far the most solid chapters in the manual. Arguing that oral sources can and should be subjected to the same tests of validity as written documents, Allen and Montell outline in some detail the tests that can be applied to oral testimony: "internal tests, which evaluate the material in terms of its own self-consistency, and external tests, which compare and

contrast oral information with written accounts and physical evidence.” As experienced folklorists, they offer particularly sound advice on identifying folkloristic elements in oral accounts (i.e., recurrent motifs and themes), recognizing personal and group bias as well as community values, attitudes, and beliefs in non-factual accounts (i.e., legends, songs, and proverbs.) In terms of evaluating oral sources, however, the authors do not give sufficient consideration to the effect the interviewer has on the information given (or withheld) or on the final “created” document.

I question whether the final chapter, “Producing a Manuscript from Oral Sources,” is needed in a manual devoted to the evaluation of oral testimony, although the chapter does include useful advice on how to utilize verbatim texts and present conflicting or corroborating views. Appendix A, which runs for forty-two pages, offers an excellent step-by-step example of how oral and written sources can be used together to reconstruct a historical event as well as to test the trustworthiness of what is “remembered” about it.

My major criticism of the book is that it is written for too wide an audience. The authors state in Chapter 1 that the manual is intended for both “the university-trained historian who studies local history and the local nonspecialist.” Many academic historians, however, will find the book too simplistic and obvious in its presentation, although all oral historians, local or otherwise, would benefit from the authors’ discussion of folkloristic methodology, perhaps more than they are willing to admit. On the other hand, the manual will be useful to students, beginning fieldworkers, and nonspecialists as an introduction to the uses of oral history in local historical reconstruction and the test of validity that can be applied to oral sources.

Whether there is sufficient in-depth discussion to assure the high-quality oral history publications that the authors hope for is another question. Allen and Montell might have come closer to achieving their end if they had addressed more fully the importance of understanding the human element involved not only in selecting topics and subjects, but also in analyzing and presenting field data. At minimum, they should have included in their bibliography and urged oral historians to read *People Studying People: The Human Element in Fieldwork* by Robert Georges and Michael Jones because an understanding of the part played by the human interaction of fieldworker and informant is as necessary to successful publications as it is to the fieldwork itself.

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