

BOOK REVIEWS

The Wilderness from Chamberlain Farm: A Story of Hope for the American Wild. By Dean B. Bennett. Forward by Stewart L. Udall. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2001. Pp. xxiii + 440. Illustrations, maps, appendices and bibliography. Cloth. \$ 30.)

Dean B. Bennett's *The Wilderness from Chamberlain Farm: A Story of Hope for the American Wild* is a thoroughly researched history of the Allagash region of Maine, focusing on changing perceptions of the region. These perceptions are integrally connected to changing land-use patterns. The region's center of habitation, Chamberlain Farm, located on Chamberlain Lake, provides the locus of discussion for the region. Through a chronological examination of the farm and its changing historical "lives," Bennett documents a pattern of concern for Maine's northern wilderness and inland waterways.

The work is divided into four parts, each exploring a particular land management ethos representative of a period in the region's history. The first division, "Kinship with Nature," describes Paleoindian and Indian land use up to the eighteenth century and the appearance of Euroamericans. "Control of Nature," a second division, involves the burgeoning lumber industry in the nineteenth century and its attendant emphasis on maximizing control over the region's resources. A third section, "Harmony with Nature," describes the origins of recreational hunting, camping, and fishing as a phase of the region's land-use history. Finally, "Oneness with Nature" attests to the hard-fought battle to designate the region a "restricted zone" in the 1960s, whereby it would be allowed to return to a wilderness state.

Bennett employs a narrative approach in describing the history of Chamberlain Farm and the surrounding lakes, rivers, and forests. Originally known as Apmoojenegamook, or "the lake that is crossed" (p. 16), Chamberlain and the surrounding floodplain nourished Native Americans, then Euroamerican loggers, and finally travelers and campers. The narrative of this long habitation includes ample historical detail ranging from the Paleoindian era to the last years of the twentieth century.

Alongside the documentary evidence of changing land use, Bennett presents the artifactual record: Paleoindian tools, logging dams, barns, and derelict lake steamers.

Throughout the work, Bennett focuses on the Chamberlain Farm and its importance as a focal point of human activity in this wilderness region. The farm served many purposes, from a center for lumber company operations to a hunting camp, and finally to a refuge for those seeking solitude in a protected wilderness region. As a narrative tool, Bennett includes an ample selection of autobiographical writings, recorded by those who impacted the farm and its surroundings and were, in turn, impacted by the farm. These quotes highlight the changing cultural perception of the land and waterways during the long period under study.

Bennett brings to light a number of engaging north woods figures, some historically prominent and others known only locally. Reflections provided by E.S. Coe, Chamberlain Farm's name-giver and manager of the region's logging industry, are joined by those of Governor Percival P. Baxter, Henry David Thoreau, and Edmund S. Muskie, as well as lesser known individuals such as naturalist Manly Hardy and his daughter, naturalist and writer Fannie Hardy. These diverse interpretations create an encompassing history, told from the perspective of the entrepreneur as well as the conservationist. By including interpretations by E. S. Coe and Henry David Thoreau, Bennett creates an interesting dichotomy that lends itself to a varied picture of land use changes and management patterns over the last two centuries.

Bennett concludes his study by assessing the current state of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, created at the height of the national environmental movement in the mid-1960s. This discussion includes the political maneuvers that were necessary to preserve the area as a wildlife and wilderness refuge. Here, the autobiographical selections assist by situating Maine's accomplishment within the national wilderness movement. Included are older conservationists like Percival P. Baxter and Herbert Cochrane, and more recent voices from the 1960s wilderness debate, such as Robert W. Patterson, Sr., Stuart Udall, and Edmund Muskie. This final section provides compelling reading for those interested in the politics of environmentalism.

As the book's subtitle implies, this is an optimistic account, although this outlook is applied even-handedly throughout the book. This approach is especially clear in the discussion of various interests vying for control over Allagash resources in the years leading up to the hard-won

legislation of 1966, which established this region as a state-managed “restricted zone” (p. 313). Although optimistic about this wilderness achievement, Bennett makes clear the need for continued vigilance to maintain wilderness tracts such as this throughout America.

Given the lessons of Chamberlain Farm, Bennett appears cautiously hopeful for the future of wilderness sanctuaries all across America. He writes of “a quiet change under way in our society’s perspective on the rest of nature” (p. xv). It is fitting that the appendices to the book include national polls and surveys providing evidence for his hopeful outlook. The results of these surveys may not be indicative of attitudes in every region of the United States, but they do compliment the book’s predominant themes. The Allagash Waterway is an environmental achievement that continues to resonate into the twenty-first century.

The closing message, affirming the need for continued vigilance and stewardship, is well taken. The foreword by Stewart Udall, who as Secretary of Interior was instrumental in the 1966 legislation, echoes this sentiment. In *The Wilderness From Chamberlain Farm*, Bennett has created a detailed, scholarly work accessible to the casual reader. His message of hope for Chamberlain Farm translates into a message of hope for American wilderness generally, even in a world of ever-changing ideas about nature and land use.

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The French Baron of Pentagouet: Baron St. Castin and the Struggle for Empire in Early New England. By Ailine S. Taylor (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1998. Pp. xvii + 142. Maps, endnotes, indices, illustrations. Cloth. \$24.95.)

I must admit that when I first picked up *The French Baron of Pentagouet*, I expected to read a “Great Man” biography. In many ways, the Baron St. Castin’s life and character has the potential for an epic swash-buckling narrative. However, I was pleasantly surprised by Taylor’s successful attempt to place the life of the baron into the complicated context of late-seventeenth-century northeastern America. To support her biographical narrative, Taylor provides background information that is well documented, clearly explained, and further developed in the endnotes. Often endnotes can become a distraction, but in this case they

provide useful nuggets of information. Taylor's research also includes French and Canadian archival sources, which help to bring into focus French and Abenaki interests and the various conflicts and disputes in which St. Castin was inevitably involved. Moreover, Taylor provides English translations of important French documents and quotations.

She begins the narrative itself by describing the capture of the small French fort located at Pentagouet, near the mouth of the Penobscot River, by Dutch privateers. During this skirmish the privateers also seriously wounded and captured the governor of Acadia, Jacques de Chambly. Chambly's ensign, twenty-two-year-old Jean Vincent d'Abbadie de St. Castin, was charged with conveying the ransom note to Quebec, the capital of New France. Roughly one hundred and forty pages later, Taylor completes her story by describing St. Castin's death during his efforts to reclaim his inherited estate at Pau (France) from his disgruntled brother-in-law in 1707. While providing a sympathetic account of St. Castin's life and actions, Taylor weaves and layers the histories of three convergent peoples, two continents, and numerous wars, border disputes, treaty negotiations, personal alliances, and enmities into an historical narrative that reveals as much about late-seventeenth-century Maine as it does about the Baron St. Castin.

Taylor uses the admittedly scant documentary evidence concerning the personal life of the baron to frame her historical narrative. For example, St. Castin was born into the French aristocracy. As a result, he had access to the inner circles of the French monarchy and to the governing elite of France's North American colonies. He also had access to the resources and capital he needed to make things happen. By temperament St. Castin appears adventurous, self-motivated, and innovative. He spent most of his life living amongst the Penobscot Indians near Panouske as a merchant, trader, ally, spokesperson, and Indian advocate/agent. He married Pidianski, the daughter of the important Penobscot sachem Madockawando, thus acquiring a measure of respect and influence amongst the Abenaki peoples. Taylor asserts that St. Castin's bonds with the Penobscot community influenced many of his actions, as much as did his unwavering allegiance to France and Acadia.

Although Taylor uses St. Castin's life to frame a biographical narrative, she also goes much deeper into the political, cultural, or social contexts of the events in his life. Without this context, St. Castin would appear self-serving, conniving, or duplicitous—as would nearly every other European official, merchant, soldier, or settler in the area. For example, throughout his tenure at Pentagouet, St. Castin organized and

participated in Abenaki/French raids against English settlements from the Kennebec River south to Boston. During the same period, however, he carried on significant trade with Boston merchants, in violation of official French policy. On the surface, St. Castin appears to be playing both sides for personal gain, and no doubt he prospered in those ventures. But he had pragmatic, if not cogent reasons for his actions. From the mid-1600s to 1763, the Abenaki peoples supported French interests against English encroachment. This, more often than not, meant a preoccupation with warfare rather than domestic economies. If the French wanted the Abenaki to keep the English out of Acadia, the French would need to help the Abenaki feed, cloth, and support their families. Supplies were not always forthcoming from France. Often French interests and resources lay elsewhere, and Acadians, and particularly the Abenaki, had to fend for themselves. Moreover, the French fur market at some point could absorb no more Abenaki furs. From this perspective, St. Castin's actions become a little more clear. Pentagouet functioned within a borderlands environment, where local exigencies were weighed against imperial policies. St. Castin's pragmatism conveys a picture of chaotic relations, shifting alliances, and seemingly contradictory actions. In this light, he seems reasonable, almost prudent.

Taylor takes great care to develop the necessary political, cultural, or social context for St. Castin's actions. As a result, the baron sometimes stands on the periphery of the author's narrative universe, despite his apparent influence on numerous important events. She also uses St. Castin as a vehicle through which the reader can experience the impact of European (primarily French) conflicts and colonial policies on the Acadia/Massachusetts Bay colonial borderlands. French policies tested the colonial Acadia and Abenaki commitment to the French national cause, often at the expense of local needs. European rhetoric manipulated colonial development and Abenaki foreign policy, while at the same time European commitment to the colonies appeared fickle and self-serving. Within this environment, St. Castin operated, and sometimes thrived at Pentagouet.

Taylor's biography of the Baron St. Castin is worth reading for two reasons. First, it examines the life and times of one of the Northeast's most colorful and controversial colonial personalities. According to Taylor, St. Castin has been for the most part misunderstood or ignored. Rarely has he been examined. Second, Taylor's narrative provides a readable account of the late-seventeenth-century borderlands region. She describes an era in which three peoples—Abenaki, French, and Eng-

lish—attempted to assert cultural, economic, and political influence in a hotly disputed area. This story accurately reflects the chaotic, contentious and often violent environment from which the state of Maine eventually emerged.

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Bold Vision: The Development of the Parks of Portland, Maine. Edited by Theo H. B. M. Holtwijk and Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. (West Kennebunk, Maine: Phoenix Publishing, 1999. Pp. 225. Cloth \$50.)

During my thirty years of studying, writing, and reviewing Maine history, *Bold Vision: The Development of the Parks of Portland, Maine*, published by Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc., is the most remarkable book to have crossed my desk. It provides a detailed history of the city's park system; it reads nicely in spite of its multiple authors; it presents a design, a selection of photographs, and a text composition of rare beauty; and it offers a careful presentation of the past that helps focus our thoughts on the future of Portland's green spaces.

The title, *Bold Vision*, salutes such forward looking people as members of the Deering family, who provided the land at prices that could not be refused; city civil engineer William Goodwin, who defined the Eastern and Western Promenades and brought Deering Oaks and other spaces into a coherent plan; and especially six-term mayor and park visionary James Phinney Baxter, who hired the Olmsted Brothers firm to produce a system that survives, largely intact, today. The title epithet should also encompass the vision of Theo Holtwijk, who conceived, guided, and co-edited the project, and Earle Shettleworth, Jr., the noted historian and preservationist who co-edited the volume and brought his extensive knowledge of Portland's built environment to bear. Landmarks, Inc., the organization that saw fit to publish the study, should also be acknowledged, as should the civic-minded businesses led by UNUM, which generously assisted in funding strategies.

The Portland Parks system developed over the course of 150 years. With its advances and setbacks, it is the largest and most sophisticated

city complex of its kind in Maine. It is also one of the most beautiful urban complexes in the nation. University of Southern Maine archivist Susie R. Bock recently pointed out that the guidebook, *The Boston Common or Rural Walks in Cities* (1838) described Portland's open spaces as a "striking indication of the spirit of improvement peculiar to these times."

Bold Vision opens with an essay entitled "The American Park Movement" by Arleyn A. Levee, a nationally known landscape-architecture historian. Accurate and to-the-point, the chapter charts the development of garden cemeteries, parks, and playgrounds and their twentieth-century decline and rebirth. It also presents the philosophies of Frederick Law Olmsted, who influenced the plans implemented by Goodwin and Baxter. University of Southern Maine Professor Joel W. Eastman follows with a map-rich essay on the physical development of the Portland Peninsula and its environs.

The book's second section deals with park development. Kirk F. Mohney of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission neatly details the creation of the Eastern and Western promenades, his essay augmented by plans and photographs. Peter F. Morelli, founding member of Friends of Evergreen Cemetery, describes that remarkable suburban resting place, while Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, provides a cogent overview of Lincoln, the city's first downtown park, begun as a firebreak after the Great Fire of 1866. Historian and former legislator Herbert C. Adams does a masterful job of describing Deering Oaks, first as a battlefield in 1689, then as part of a family estate, and finally as the heart of Portland's park system. Landscape preservationist G. Ames tells the story of Baxter Boulevard.

The third part of the book deals with the "Transformation of the Parks." Historian Deborah Tracy Krichels, Director of the Portland Arts and Cultural Alliance, offers a rich study of Mayor Baxter, his ideals, and his civic battles to establish the parks. Of particular interest was the charge of elitism leveled at Baxter by artist and socialist politician Charles L. Fox and others. Professor Eastman returns with a chapter on sports and recreation. Dana A. Souza, Director of Parks and Recreation, gives an overview of how the system has been managed, and activist Anne B. Pringle discusses "Public-Private Stewardship and Planning." This lays the foundation for Theo Holtwijk's closing chapter on Portland's parks in the twenty-first century, which builds on the earlier essays and discusses the problems and potential of today's parks.

Overall, the book draws together an enormous amount of information previously available only in scattered form. For those interested in the development of the city's industry, leisure, politics, cultural affairs, and social history, *Bold Vision* is a gold mine, and for those planning the revitalization of these treasured spaces it is without price.

WILLIAM DAVID BARRY
Maine Historical Society

Charles Nolcini: The Life and Music of an Italian American in the Age of Jackson. By Vincent A. Lapomorda. (Worcester, Massachusetts: Vincent A. Lapomorda, 1997. Paper \$15.)

Father Vincent A. Lapomorda, a member of the History Department at the College of the Holy Cross and author of a number of books relating to religious, ethnic and social life, has produced a small but extraordinary volume on the life and career of a pioneering musician in our region. Charles Nolcini (1802-1844) is a figure known to anyone studying Portland or the region's music from the 1820s through the 1840s. Nolcini is well known as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's music teacher, but his life and career have heretofore been preserved only in fragmented form in a variety of sources.

Lapomorda's exhaustive digging in local, regional, and national sources introduces a remarkable individual who brought European ideas to our shores and made himself part of the cultural fabric of coastal Maine and Massachusetts. Consulting passenger lists and the subject's 1842 naturalization papers, Lapomorda discovered that Peter Charles Nolcini was born in Moscow on October 15, 1802, and arrived in Boston on February 20, 1820. A number of Italian artists and musicians lived in Russia; Lapomorda speculates, in the absence of hard evidence, that Nolcini came from one such family. By 1821, Nolcini was advertising piano and voice lessons in the Boston newspapers. The author discusses the growth of the Italian-American community in that city and the state of American music before launching the man and his career.

The book is divided into two parts. The first section is an overview of Nolcini's life in four chapters: The Italian, The American, The Musician, and The Person. The second part deals with his musical compositions (anthems, marches, waltzes, and others), which are represented by

copies of the surviving sheet music. During his brief but bright career, the young musician set up in Portland, where he taught and served as organist for the fledgling Beethoven Society and the Second Parish Church. In 1820 he wed Mary Ann Murray, daughter of “the impetuous” Major Daniel Murray, a British officer of the Revolutionary War who settled in Maine. Lapomarda ties together a variety of details from newspaper advertisements, documents, and other sources. Thus he pieces together a complex, often financially precarious career that saw Nolcini as a composer and organist in Boston, Newburyport, and Bangor. This carefully documented and well-researched short biography is an important contribution to our growing understanding of the humanist tradition in Maine and New England.

WILLIAM DAVID BARRY
Maine Historical Society

A Most Remarkable Mix: Sketches of Notable Freeporters. Part One. By John D. Davis. (Freeport, Maine: Freeport Historical Society, 2000. Pp. 259. Paper. \$19.95.)

John D. Davis, a native of Freeport, a Bowdoin College graduate, and a former professor of biology at his alma mater, has written seventeen sketches of “notable personages” who lived in, or at least spent time in Freeport and were known for their accomplishments beyond the confines of the town itself. This is a sequel to Davis’s 1997 book, *What D’You Do When a Train Goes By? And Other Stories of Growing Up in Freeport, Maine*, also published by the Freeport Historical Society.

When the author discussed this earlier work with various individuals, they suggested others whom they felt should have been included in the book. The designation “Part One” for this work implies that eventually there may be another volume of Freeport biographical sketches, written in Davis’ casual but effective style. Among the notables discussed are two sea captains, two successful businessmen, one doctor, a chemist, two writers, an arctic explorer, a major league baseball pitcher, a Civil War hero (who later became a well-known architect), the founder of the Waltham Watch Company, and four poets.

Readers with deep roots in Freeport soil, such as this reviewer, are sure to find this book of interest. *Freeporters* is not scholarly or aca-

demic; rather it is an entertaining and informative read. The Freeport Historical Society should be congratulated for making this book available to those wishing to learn more about this well-known Maine town.

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