



The historic Wadsworth-Longfellow House, built by Pelig Wadsworth in 1785-1786 and acquired by the MHS in 1901, marked the Society's entre into historic preservation, while its ongoing publications are its major outreach to the scholarly community in Maine and beyond. MHS Collections.

MAJOR PUBLICATIONS OF THE MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY: A BRIEF ACCOUNT

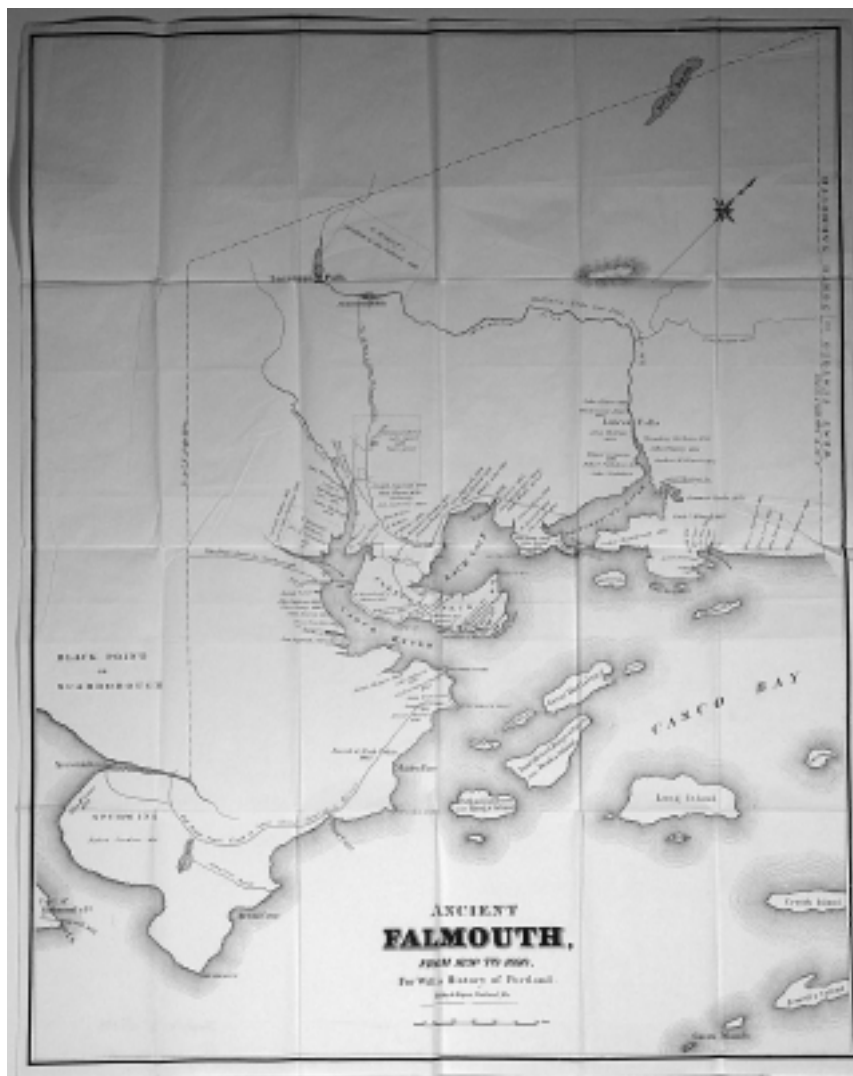
BY HARLAND H. EASTMAN

Walter Muir Whitehill, in his study Independent Historical Societies (Boston Athenæum, 1962), praised the Maine Historical Society as the most “productive of publications” of all New England historical societies during the nineteenth century. The Society produced twenty six volumes of Collections between 1831 and 1900, eleven volumes of York Deeds between 1887 and 1896, and another twenty volumes of Collections between 1901 and 1916 — an impressive output by any standard. These many volumes, with their wealth of narrative and documentary history, are a rich resource for scholars and laymen alike.

Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Series One

THE VOLUMES of this series, published over a period of sixty years, contain historical studies on many subjects and include two major town histories: *History of Portland, Part I*, by William Willis, which appeared in Volume 1 (1831); and *History of Scarborough*, by William S. Southgate, which takes up much of Volume 3 (1853). Volume 2 (1847) contains reprints of two important but rare seventeenth-century publications: “A Briefe Narration,” by Sir Ferdinando Gorges; and “A Voyage to New England,” by Christopher Levett. These were originally published in London in 1658 and 1628 respectively. Other noteworthy studies in these early volumes are the “Journal of the Rev. Paul Coffin” in Volume 4 (1856), papers relating to ancient Pemaquid in Volume 5 (1857), articles on Scots-Irish immigration in Volume 6 (1859), a brief study of slavery in Maine by Joseph Williamson in Volume 7 (1876), an article entitled “North-Eastern Boundary Dispute” by Israel Washburn, Jr. in Volume 8 (1881), and biographies of Sir William Phips and Governor Edward Godfrey in Volume 9 (1887).

Volume 10 (1891) contains an index to the first nine volumes. As a



“Ancient Falmouth,” a foldout map included in the 1831 edition of the *Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Series I*, is among the innumerable fascinating and illuminating historic documents the Society has published over the years. MHS Collections.

cautionary note, it should be mentioned that all page references to Volume 1 are to the second edition of 1865, for which larger type was used. Whereas the basic text in the 1831 edition was printed on 416 pages, the same text covers 532 pages in the 1865 edition. Volume 2 was also reprinted, but not until 1902. The text is identical in both editions, so the index is valid for either. No other volumes of collections were ever reprinted by the Historical Society.

The 1831 edition of Volume 1 contains a 22" x 26" foldout map: "Ancient Falmouth, from 1630 to 1690." This map, which formed a part of the *History of Portland, Part I*, was not included in the 1865 reprint. Copies of the 1831 edition were issued in two bindings: in black cloth with the title stamped in gold on the spine, and in linen with the title printed on a paper label on the spine. Linen bound, paper label copies appear to be unique to this volume. The *History of Portland, Part II*, issued in 1833, was published by the author independent of the Society.

A New Venture: *The Documentary History of Maine*

In the 1860s the Society embarked on the *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, with funds appropriated by the state for copying documents in British archives and elsewhere concerning Maine's early history. Dr. Leonard Woods, former president of Bowdoin College and in Europe at the time, carried out research and made contacts that resulted in the first two volumes. Volume 1 (1869) contains J. G. Kohl's "History of the Discovery of Maine," a work of value for its inclusion of twenty-two maps reproduced from originals drawn between 1400 and 1606. Volume 2 (1877) printed for the first time Richard Hakluyt's "A Discourse Concerning Western Planting." Written in 1584, this manuscript is an important contribution to our knowledge of early voyages to the New World.

The volumes of the documentary series were published under the general heading *Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Second Series*, to differentiate them, I suppose, from the volumes already being published. Calling them the second series, however, was a curious choice on the part of the Society, for there never was a first series of documentary volumes. Furthermore, in 1890 the Society embarked on another series of collections which it called *Collections and Proceedings of the Maine Historical Society, Second Series*. This has caused endless confusion over the years and was remarked on disparagingly by James Phinney Baxter in his preface to Volume 11 of the documentary history.

Dr. Leonard Woods, former president of Bowdoin College, collected documents and materials for volumes 1 and 2 of the *Documentary History of the State of Maine* — the *Second Series* of its *Collections*. Volume 1 included twenty-two maps reproduced from originals and dating from 1400 to 1606. MHS Collections.



James Phinney Baxter and the *Trelawny Papers*

Baxter, long time member of the Society and its president from 1889 until his death in 1921, was responsible for most of the documentary volumes commencing with Volume 3, *The Trelawny Papers*, which Baxter annotated and edited. That volume was published in 1884, the year before his departure for Europe, where he spent a year searching for manuscript material. His discoveries there, in Massachusetts, and elsewhere resulted in nineteen more volumes of documentary history.

The Trelawny Papers are the richest documentary source available on the operation of a fishing and trading colony in Maine in the 1630s and 1640s. The colony was managed by John Winter for his father-in-law, Robert Trelawny, and Trelawny's partner, Moses Goodyear, and was located on Richmond's Island off Cape Elizabeth. The papers were discovered by Society member John Wingate Thornton in 1872 at the Trelawny family seat in Devon, England. Thornton persuaded the owner to give them to the Society and was preparing them for publication at the time of his death. Portland merchant John Marshall Brown took up the task after Thornton's death but because of business pressures, passed the papers on to Baxter, who succeeded in publishing them. During his year in Europe, Baxter visited Ham, the ancestral home of the Trelawnys, to see for himself where the papers had been preserved for more than two hundred years.



James Phinney Baxter, president of the Maine Historical Society between 1889 and 1921, devoted considerable time to acquiring documents for the Society's *Collections*; thirty-four of forty-six volumes were published during his tenure. MHS photo.

The Baxter Manuscripts

The nineteen volumes of documentary history that James Phinney Baxter produced are known as *The Baxter Manuscripts*. They consist of deeds, depositions, letters, grants, reports, petitions, resolutions, and other original papers. Those not related to Indians were published, more or less in chronological order, in Volumes 4 to 6 and in Volumes 9 to 22. They range from 1629 to 1791. The documents in Volumes 23 and 24 concern the Indians of Maine, their dealings with European settlers, Indian complaints against the settlers, and complaints of settlers against the Indians. This material ranges from 1639 to 1777 and includes extensive coverage of the Pejepscot Company, whose land claims caused many disputes between Indians and settlers. Baxter had hoped to carry the documentary volumes down to 1820, the year of Maine's statehood, but no more were published after Volume 24. He was 85 when the last four volumes were printed. Volumes 4, 5, and 6 of the *Baxter Manuscripts* were published in 1889, 1897 and 1900 respectively. Volumes 9 and 10 were published in 1907; Volumes 11 and 12 in 1908; Volume 13 in 1909; Volumes 14, 15, and 16 in 1910; Volume 17 in 1913; Volumes 18, 19, and 20 in 1914; and the last four in 1916.

The Farnham Papers

Not mentioned above are documentary Volumes 7 and 8 (1901-1902). Those volumes contain the Farnham Papers, so called because the documents therein were compiled by Mary Frances Farnham, a faculty member at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. They concern the state's territorial development and changes in government from 1603 to 1871. Arranged in chronological sequence, the earliest documents are in Volume 7, and the later manuscripts in Volume 8.

Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Series Two and Series Three

The Society in 1890 commenced publishing another series of collections called the *Collections and Proceedings of the Maine Historical Society, Second Series*. The ten volumes that make up the series were not issued as bound volumes but in quarterly parts, the last being the fourth quarter issue of 1899. Subscribers were invited to return their issues at the end of each year to be bound by the Society for a modest charge. Since bound volumes of this series are quite scarce, it would appear that relatively few subscribers sent their issues for binding. A *Third Series* was launched in 1904, the first volume of which was also published in quarterly parts. The second and last volume did not appear until 1908. They were issued as bound volumes.

The volumes of the *Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Series Two* and *Series Three*, twelve in all, follow the pattern of *Series One*, with studies and reports on a great variety of Maine related subjects. A few of the subjects touched upon are the voyages of Captains Bartholomew Gosnold and George Waymouth; the destruction of Falmouth in 1775; John Cabot's voyages; Father Rale; the Eastern Boundary dispute; the Cumberland and Oxford Canal; Revolutionary War regiments; the War of 1812; and Captain Martin Pring and Sir Humphrey Gilbert. The volumes of the *Second Series* differ in one respect from the *Third Series* by including records of Society meetings (proceedings). These records are brief and take up only a few pages in each volume. The two volumes of the *Third Series* do not contain such records since the Society had begun publishing them separately in 1902.

James Phinney Baxter is largely responsible for Walter Muir Whitehill singling out the Maine Historical Society as producing the most "productive of publications" of all New England Historical Societies. Thirty-four of the Society's forty-six volumes of collections were pub-

lished while Baxter was president, and twenty-two of them were edited by him.

York Deeds

In 1883 Maine Historical Society members Edward H. Elwell, William Goold, and James Phinney Baxter were appointed a committee to seek funds from the Maine Legislature for the publication of the early deeds of York County. Their appeal was successful, and the first volume of *York Deeds* came off the press in 1887. By 1896 the Society had published eleven volumes, covering the period 1642 to 1726. State support did not cover the entire cost of publication; subscribers, obtained by the Society, underwrote the balance. After Volume 11, the Historical Society turned the series over to the Maine Genealogical Society, which produced Volumes 12 through 16 covering the period 1726 to 1735. These were published between 1903 and 1908 and were printed by E. C. Bowler of Bethel. At that point the Maine Genealogical Society decided not to continue with the series. It might have ended there had Mr. Bowler not appealed to the state to fund additional volumes. The state agreed, and Mr. Bowler continued his work with the printing of Volumes 17 and 18, covering the period 1734 to 1737. These were published in 1909 and 1910. The series ended with Volume 18.

The deeds of York County are the most complete archive of New England property titles in existence. Some New England counties have deeds that are older, but because of losses there are serious gaps in their collections. York County's early records survived intact. They might have been lost when the courthouse burned in 1933, but the deeds and other early records were safely housed in fireproof wings built in 1854. The geographic area covered by York Deeds, of course, was not limited to the York County we know today; before 1760 the county encompassed all of settled Maine. So too do the property titles recorded in the eighteen volumes of *York Deeds*.

Vital Records

Early in the twentieth century, the Maine Historical Society, with state financial support, undertook the publication of the vital records of Maine towns. This series was launched in 1909 with Farmingdale, and sixteen more communities were covered over the next six decades: Clin-

ton, Otisfield, Phippsburg, Pittston, Randolph, West Gardiner, and Winslow in single volumes; Augusta, Belfast, Old Bristol and Nobleboro, Gardiner, and Topsham each in two volumes; Bowdoin, Georgetown, and Lebanon each in three volumes; and Hallowell in six volumes – thirty-three volumes in all.

Maine Province and Court Records

The Maine Historical Society, again with financial support from the Maine Legislature, embarked late in the 1920s on still another important documentary series: the *Province and Court Records of Maine*. Volume 1 was published in 1928, and five more followed in 1931, 1947, 1958, 1964, and 1975. Charles Thornton Libby edited the first two, Robert E. Moody the third, and Neal W. Allen, Jr., the last three. The documents contained in them range from 1636 to 1727.

In 1991 the Society reprinted Volume 1. With the bibliophile in mind, the Society was careful to have the binding match the original so it would blend with the rest of the set. Neal Allen in his preface to the new edition said the *Province and Court Records* “constitute a mirror of the social order, of local government, of economic conditions.” All aspects of life in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are covered. Subjects range from marriage, women, wages, hours of labor and guardianship to divorce, insolvency, evictions, liquor licenses, and foreclosure. A glance at one of the indexes shows the variety of crimes of which our ancestors were capable: murder, rape, piracy, treason, incest, bigamy, adultery, slander, perjury, drunkenness, and selling liquor to Indians. Punishments included banishment, branding, the cage, cucking stool, fines, hanging, imprisonment, and whipping. These volumes are anything but dull. Through them one can see the men and women who settled the New World with all their warts and blemishes, but also with their humanness shining through.