

1943

## Letter from Robert E Moody, 1943

Robert E. Moody  
*Boston University*

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

December 27, 1943

Dear Mrs. Eckstorm:

I have no good excuse for not having acknowledged before your fascinating speculations regarding benzoin. Reasons for my neglect are many, extreme busyness with the Army Training Program, illness in my family, etc. But I do feel deeply apologetic for not having thanked you earlier for your generous sharing of a good deal of "food for thought". Have you seen C. K. Bolton's Terra Nova: the Northwest coast of America before 1602? I seem to have missed seeing it somehow but I remember hearing Mr. Bolton read a chapter from his manuscript back nearly ten years ago. It was a section called "The Fisheries of Bacalaos". Awfully dull to hear, too! But your mention of the close connection of the Basques & Portuguese with our coast in early times brought it back to my mind and I began to wonder whether Mr. Bolton had made a real contribution to our early history.

Your explanation of the shellheaps interested me more than a little. I had never known before that the Indians dried the oysters for preservation for food. But isn't it possible that a large number of Indians - that is a number within the realm of actual historical possibility - might over a period of several centuries or possibly a thousand years, have

filed up the shells in the manner you describe  
without having dealt in dried oysters with  
the whito man at all? I can conceive of  
Nonemegan as an Indian center of some  
importance at Penaquid but I am skeptical  
of a Portuguese, Spanish or Basque town  
there which could possibly have escaped  
being in some written record no matter  
how secret. The pavements are puzzling of  
course but how could Dunbar in all of  
his voluminous letters have failed to  
mention them - unless indeed they were even  
then buried. But they seem to me to follow  
in design remarkably the cellars and  
streets which the Irishmen built, if  
Thomas Wells' detailed map, of which I  
have a photostat from the Public Record  
Office, is to be trusted. And is the design  
of the fort too far from that of some of the  
Irish towers still in existence in Ireland?

Your spring thesis seems to me to  
be a mighty keen guess. I would never  
have thought of it but I'd gamble that  
you're right.

One thing I am sure of: that the coast of  
Maine was the scene from the earliest  
times of some most exciting history.  
Your idea is a most challenging one with  
a remarkable array of widely scattered  
facts pointing to a single probability. Stranger  
things have been proven true. For the privilege  
of sharing your knowledge and speculations, I  
am grateful.

Yours most sincerely,  
Robert E. Moody