

## Maine History

---

Volume 43

Number 3 *Mind, Body, and Spirit: Maine's  
Therapeutic Landscapes*

Article 8

---

1-1-2008

## Book Reviews

Stanley R. Howe

Ed Cass

William Barry David

Joyce K. Bibber

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Howe, Stanley R., Ed Cass, William B. David, and Joyce K. Bibber. "Book Reviews." *Maine History* 43, 3 (2008): 227-235.  
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol43/iss3/8>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact [um.library.technical.services@maine.edu](mailto:um.library.technical.services@maine.edu).

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

---

*A Good and Wise Measure: The Search for the American-Canadian Boundary, 1783-1842.* By Francis M. Carroll. (Buffalo, New York: University of Toronto Press, 2001. Pp. xxi. 462. Cloth \$70. Paper \$29.95.)

Much has been written on the boundary dispute between Canada and the United States following the Treaty of Paris of 1783. The northeast portion of that boundary, which affected Maine so centrally, was part of this struggle that was eventually settled by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842. Up until the publication of this book, Howard Jones's *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty: A Study in Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1843* (1977) was considered the defining work on the subject, but Francis Carroll provides new information and an enlarged perspective that sheds new light on this topic.

Specifically, Carroll focuses on the labors of the land surveyors who were so essential in documenting the case for each side. He also examines the search for distinguishing features as indications of the boundary, which were not always clearly identifiable. Furthermore, Carroll follows the relationship between surveyors and those examining their progress through cartographic and testimonial evidence. Rich in detail, the book provides the most comprehensive bibliography available on the boundary settlement, which will be of interest to those concerned with primary sources and recent scholarship.

For Maine readers, there is much to contemplate, since the northeast boundary was such an integral part of the Webster-Ashburton negotiations. From the Treaty of 1783, which was supposed to establish Maine's eastern and northern boundary, to the various attempts at determining the boundary following the War of 1812, then on to the arbitration of the King of the Netherlands, and finally to the threat of the bloodless "Pork and Beans War," which precipitated a renewed effort to end chances of hostilities between the British and Americans, this controversy has attracted the attention of a number of historians, writers, and scholars. These include, but are not limited to: J. Chris Arndt, J. R. Baldwin, Samuel F. Bemis, Henry S. Burrage, Albert B. Corey, George J. Gill, Wilbur D. Jones, Richard Judd, Thomas Le Duc, David Lowenthal, William L. Lucy, Geraldine Tidd Scott, Edgar Crosby Smith, John F.

Sprague, C. P. Stacy, R. D. and J. I. Tallman, Israel Washburn, and Donald A. Wise. Undoubtedly, the leading defender of Maine's position was William Pitt Preble (1783-1857), a Portland attorney, former Maine Supreme Court Justice, and later U. S. Minister to the Netherlands. Carroll observes that his role was not always productive toward a resolution of the boundary question. To underscore this point, Carroll quotes Historian Robert V. Remini, who characterized Preble as "an incompetent, vain, abrasive hot head, and a self-righteous prig" (page 156)—hardly the ideal qualifications for delicate diplomatic negotiations. In contrast to Preble, F. O. J. Smith (1806-1876), former Maine legislator and U. S. Congressman, played a leading part in turning opinion in the Pine Tree State toward compromise with newspaper columns he signed as "Agricola." His efforts, approved by Secretary of State Daniel Webster, were rewarded with dollars from the President's secret fund.

In the final analysis, the question of the northeast boundary came down to the desire on both sides to avoid further conflict. The British were primarily interested in preserving enough territory for a military road to connect the Maritimes with Quebec. To do so, they were willing to make concessions elsewhere, particularly by yielding approximately 6,500 square miles of territory between Lake of the Woods and Lake Superior. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, was quoted as saying that it would not be prudent to go to war over a few miles of "miserable pine swamp." In the meantime, Secretary of State Webster had to pacify Maine and Massachusetts (the latter state still retained large tracts in its former territory), whose leaders were resolved to retain every acre of the American claim. In addition to monetary inducements from the federal treasury (\$150,000 to each state), Webster used an unusual ploy to placate these two states by presenting a red-line map presumably marked by Benjamin Franklin at the treaty negotiations that ended the American Revolution. This map allegedly supported the British claim, which he used to convince the representatives of Maine and Massachusetts that they should accept the compromise before the British discovered it and demanded the entire 12,000 square mile region. The irony was that after the 1842 Treaty was ratified, Americans learned that the British possessed an authentic map that supported the American claim.

Lucidly written with impeccable scholarship, Carroll's book should be the most authoritative study on this topic for years to come.

STANLEY R. HOWE  
Bethel Historical Society

*Mayflower Hill: A History of Colby College.* By Earl H. Smith. (Lebanon, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2006. Pp. 448. 60 illus. Cloth \$34.95.)

This book joins Marriner's *History of Colby College* (1963) and the first effort at a history of the institution, Whittemore's *Colby College 1820-1925* (1927) in preserving the memory of the central Maine college. As with all institutional histories, be they about Ford Motor Company or the Army Corps of Engineers, the danger of becoming wholly self-congratulatory is real. The author has nicely avoided this pitfall. We could inquire: are the three volumes together sufficient to record events, and answer "yes," for with this recent one a fine trilogy is complete. It will be many years before another account is required.

While this new narration of the events surrounding the evolution of what was once a Baptist institution into a modern college stands on its own, those who wish to know more of the colorful "life" of the College should go back to the earlier volumes for a full account. Smith successfully demonstrates Colby College's ability to prepare educated people for roles in a democratic society. Thus *Mayflower Hill* is more than a well-done narrative of its founding (ca. 1813), the post-Civil War "rescue" by Gardner Colby's donation, and the course of the college from then to now. It is more, too, than a supplement to archival records and personal memories for, portraying as it does a college as a "City on a Hill," it explains how one school justifies its existence.

Besides placing the College within its era, this thoughtful book examines the "downs" as well as the "ups" and probes the problems as well as the achievements of the institution. Filling its stated purpose to concentrate on the most recent half-century of Colby's adventures, this volume chronicles the traumas of late twentieth century life—the war, the student strikes, and the struggles with updating the curriculum.

Smith concludes his book by reference to the "Reflections" generated by the mirror-like surface of renovated Johnson Pond. He asks "Where to?" Well might we ask that of a college that had as its first female graduate Mary Caffrey Low (1874) and among its more recent ones, Doris Kearns (Goodwin; 1964), and numbers of Pulitzer Prize winners, plus countless men and women who graduated and dedicated themselves to public service. Yes! "Where to?"

The answer is that the College will continue to innovate, retain a 9:1 student-faculty ratio, and use its facilities and faculty to produce leaders for the future. This work, written in a lively style, will please not only

graduates but those of us who live in the heart of Maine, where Colby College is considered one of the region's greatest assets.

ED CASS  
Wellington, Maine

*Sea Struck*. By W.H. Bunting. (Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, published in association with Martha's Vinyard Historical Society & New Bedford Whaling Museum, 2004. Pp. 366. 113 illustrations. Hardcover. \$30.00.)

W.H. Bunting's *Sea Struck* is rich in maritime detail, majestic in geographic sweep, lavish in its consignment of high-quality port and high-sea photographs, and handsomely designed. The book's clear prose, focus, and sure intent combine with carefully integrated quotations from letters, journals, and ships' logs to draw the willing reader into the adventurous, often bruising, last days of Yankee square-rigged commercial sailing. This is a difficult trick to bring off with grace, but Bunting has a seemingly bottomless hold of practical and arcane knowledge, and has the ability to make things fresh and alive for academics, sailors, and general readers alike.

At its center, *Sea Struck* is a weave of journals kept by three well-educated, well-to-do young men from New Bedford, Massachusetts: Frank Besse (1866-1924), Carleton Allen (1880-1980), and Rodman "Tod" Swift (1880-1959); all sailed at different times, on different vessels. However, each came from saltwater clans and, for each, their voyage was in the nature of a personal shake-down cruise—a working global grand tour—before settling into a serious profession.

The reader should keep in mind that few, if any common seamen of the era wrote about the dangerous, often debilitating work that today's readers find so romantic. Most mariners had neither the time, education, nor inducement to write their autobiographies. To his lasting credit Bunting puts the journals and comments of his young sailors into firm social context. He is able to get beneath the official log reports and give the reader a feel for the life and attitudes below decks and in the rigging. There is also a real sense of the maritime hierarchy. Getting a good crew and handling them in unforeseen situations was the responsibility of the

Master (Captain) and the Mates. Some were soft and unsuccessful; others firm, flexible, and successful; and still others, especially in this era of international crews, were, at the author puts it; “to varying degrees, psychopaths.” Bunting examines these floating cross-sections of America with a clear set of eyes.

At its fullest, *Sea Struck* is the study of New England merchant life between 1880 and 1905, though earlier chapters discuss families, their shipping companies, and the rise of New Bedford as a major port. However, Maine is well represented as a continuing provider of ships and stores. Tod Swift’s four-mast, a bark named *Astral*, was launched at Bath in 1900. She was the “first sailing ship to fly the American flag [in the] mighty fleet of vessels owned by the Standard Oil Company.” Likewise, Frank Besse’s vessel, the *William J. Rotch* was Bath-built in 1880-1881. Captain Walter Mallett, the master of Carleton Allen’s two vessels, was a Topsham man.

After an introduction and a chapter on family backgrounds, Bunting follows with a chapter titled, “Young Tod the Sailor; We View Young Tod Growing Up in His Home Waters.” Both charming and instructive, the narrative shows how a boy of privilege came to love sailing and graduated from a five-foot punt to a cat-ketch to a sloop. Graduating from Harvard was a bit less forthcoming and he made plans to sail with his uncle, Captain Francis Stone, on the ship *Francis*. Alas, the latter burned. Still he persisted.

Of the three young sea-struck lads, Frank Besse sailed first aboard the *William J. Rotch* out of New York in 1881. Cleared for Yokohama with 58,500 cases of oil, the *Rotch* provided Frank with plenty of hard work and extreme weather to describe in his journal. Bunting annotates and enlivens what would have been an interesting and useful account by putting things into larger context. The young sailor described daily life and labor on board, and of particular interest is the cargo of 575 Chinese passengers (described as “coolies”) transported from Hong Kong to British Columbia. Besse was appointed a “kind of overseer,” and his record is insightful. Later he traveled overland to San Francisco, rejoined the *Rotch*, voyaged to Dublin and ended his adventure. He became a prominent banker.

Carleton Allen boarded the *Guy C. Goss* as a passenger at Puget Sound bound for New York in 1898. He kept a journal and became a great friend of Captain Mallett. In 1902 the latter invited Allen back for Christmas aboard the steel bark *Hawaiian Isles*. The vessel sailed from New York to Australia to Honolulu and home with Allen as Third, then

Second Mate. This time he carried a new camera. Like Besse, Allen became a banker who fondly recalled his sea-going youth.

Finally, Tod Swift, through the intercession of his Uncle Frank Stone, was able to get a berth as an ordinary seaman aboard the *Astral* en route from Philadelphia to Japan. There follows an account of daily life as the vessel sailed down the Atlantic into the Indian Ocean on to Kobe and then to San Francisco, where Tod Swift decided to leave.

Bunting concludes the main text with Swift's mature years as an engineer (some of it maritime for the Submarine Signal Corp of Boston), a pleasure boater, and venerable retired gentleman on the Martha's Vineyard waterfront. Swift is clearly Bunting's favorite, though all would be in good company. Consider such insights as Frank Besse's entry of March 14, 1882: "One of the passengers was found dead this morning between decks. He had been sea sick ever since we left Hong Kong but we thought it nothing serious. The doctor said he died of exhaustion, or a kind of starvation, as he could keep nothing down. We sewed him up in his blanket and tied a bag of sand to his feet and placed on a plank and launched him overboard. The Chinamen did not want him buried, but put in a box and carried to Victoria but that would have been impractical. They did not make near as much fuss as I expected."

Cultural clashes could be closer to home. Consider Carleton Allen's description of one of various crewmen on March 7, 1894: "John Graves, who lives in the midship house, is a Topsham man and 'Down Easter' of the aggravated type. He is full of expressions typical to Maine's rural regions... 'Gee Whiz!', 'Lickety Larrup', 'Swiggle', 'gosh dinged', 'gosh hang it', and plain 'gosh.'" More typical days included the likes of Tod Swift's October 20th entry of the same year: "We have had lime juice for several days now. One cup per day per man at dinner time. The food is all right but the cook is very bad. Everyone growls about it but what can you do. Came up to blow in the P.M. and all during the night at intervals we were taking in sail. Blew away two jibs and one upper topsail. By morning we were under lower topsails and courses."

In an era that has witnessed a variety of excellent maritime volumes, *Sea Struck* is a stand-out. Only time will tell, but I believe it has the makings of a classic; its meticulous research and careful constructions should make it a standard, and I believe its style will remain fresh as well. This is a major achievement and good fun.

WILLIAM DAVID BARRY  
Portland

*Imperial Maine and Hawai'i: Interpretive Essays in the History of Nineteenth-Century American Expansion.* By Paul T. Burlin. (Lanham, Md.: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006. Pp. 271. Cloth. \$85.)

Almost any account of the Hawaiian Revolution of 1893 will note that the U.S. consul in Honolulu who ordered troops ashore from a U.S. vessel in the harbor and who then offered near-immediate recognition to the new government was John Stevens of Maine, while Sanford Dole, one of the leaders of those overthrowing the queen, was the son of missionaries who had come from Maine. Further investigation would show that Stevens had been recommended for his position by his friend and former colleague, Secretary of State James G. Blaine, previously a Senator from Maine.

Paul Burlin has researched the backgrounds and interests of these and a select handful of other Maine sometime-residents whose work took them to Hawaii and who played varying roles in Americanizing the islands. Peter Brinsmade, his brother-in-law William Ladd, and a Bostonian named William Hooper went to Honolulu to establish a trading firm. Himself a minister with ties to the missionaries already there, Brinsmade hoped less to save souls than to free ordinary Hawaiians from the demands of a feudal native elite. To this end his company set up a sugar plantation in Kauai, a plantation that showed sugar to be a viable crop, but did not succeed in making its workers into capitalists. When the firm failed, the plantation passed into the hands of less idealistic owners who imported labor.

Daniel and Emily Bond (from Hallowell), along with Elias Bond (from Skowhegan) and his wife Ellen, were among the ninth shipload of missionaries sent to the islands. More than eighty families and a few single men and women, mostly from Connecticut or upstate New York, made that voyage over a twenty-four-year period. Dole and his wives (Emily died when Sanford was born, and Daniel married her friend Charlotte) spent fourteen years establishing the school for mission children at Punahou. He later preached on Kauai and had a school for foreign students there. Bond, sent to the Big Island to work, would sever his ties with the mission board and support his family and church through sugar plantations.

Luther Severance helped found the *Kennebec Journal* in 1825, but sold it twenty-five years later when he became U.S. commissioner to Hawaii. His three years of service included a period when a French representative threatened to use force to gain concessions from the Hawai-



ian king. The king in turn proposed turning his kingdom into a U.S. protectorate if that happened. Severance vainly encouraged Washington to take advantage of this.

Elisha Hunt Allen went to Hawaii as consul in 1850, but left that position after three years, and became finance minister, later chief justice, in the Hawaiian government. In those positions, he politicked in favor of reciprocity treaties with the U.S., although apparently as interested in helping Hawaiian sugar growers (he owned shares of plantations) as in spreading U.S. influence.

Harold Marsh Sewall, son of Arthur Sewall, the Bath shipbuilder and railroad developer who was candidate for vice president on William Bryan's losing ticket in 1900, became U.S. minister to the new Hawaiian Republic in 1897. While consul in Samoa a decade before, he had sounded alarms about German designs on those islands. In Hawaii, he urged annexation in order to counter Japanese expansion there. Hoping to become territorial governor, he encouraged his father to invest in the islands but left after it became clear that the new president, Theodore Roosevelt, did not favor him.

Despite the equal billing in the title, this volume is much more a history of Hawaii than of Maine, even while illuminating the roles of a few Maine-associated people in the islands, with careful attention to their writings in order to understand their views. (In the process of locating data, Burlin also has provided old photographs of most of his subjects. It is a shame that the publisher presents them so poorly.)

Of course, one can question just how much some of these were "Maine people." While Stevens, the elder Doles, the Bonds, and Sewall were born and raised in the state, the others had varying attachments. Brinsmade seems to have been in Maine for only about eight years in all, during four of which he was a Bowdoin College student and thus presumably in and out. Allen had grown up in Massachusetts and lived in Vermont. Although he was approximately two decades in Maine, even serving in the legislature, he had relocated to Boston before requesting assignment to Hawaii. He lived there about three decades. Luther Severance (born in Massachusetts, raised in New York) and James G. Blaine (born and raised in Pennsylvania) both spent years as editors of the *Kennebec Journal* and both opted to return to the Pine Tree State after service elsewhere. None of the missionaries returned, and Sanford Dole was born and always lived in Hawaii, except for the years spent getting an education in Massachusetts. He did visit relatives in Maine during that time. The men "from away" had Maine-born wives, but *their* views are seldom recorded.

Perhaps more to the point in terms of its title is the author's use of "imperial." As none of the individuals was sent to the islands by the state or by even by groups within the state, "imperial Maine" seems inappropriate, especially because, as the author notes, other state political leaders often disagreed with what these men did and said. Moreover, the introduction and conclusion make it evident that the author is one of those who rob the word "imperialism" of any real meaning by defining as "imperialist" anyone who attempts to change another by passing along his ideas or beliefs, for whatever purpose. Teachers, even parents, would fall under this rubric. Burlin actually displays considerable understanding of the teachers and preachers in his select group, but strains to fit them into the "imperial" scheme.

JOYCE K. BIBBER  
Professor Emerita  
University of Southern Maine