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Thomas Morgan Griffiths Correspondence

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GRIFFITHS, Thomas Morgan

AN HISTORIAN'S life work is never quite completed. Perhaps no one knows this better than Monmouth's Thomas M. Griffiths, a former state historian who is getting a boot out of retirement by (you guessed it) writing history.

His latest work, "Major General Henry Knox and The Last Heirs to Montpelier" (Monmouth Press, Monmouth, Maine), should delight students of Washington's first war secretary.

The book is fresh off the press and getting a good reception. One significant appraisal comes from Thomaston's John Ruggles Egerton, president of the Knox Memorial Association, who calls Griffiths' work "an outstanding contribution" to the growing literature on General Knox.

"To my knowledge," says Egerton, "this is the first book that focuses on the Knox family. Up until now we've known very little about Mrs. Knox and other members of the family.

Griffiths spent more than 20 years researching and writing the book. An enormous amount of research, we understand, went into digging out bit pieces of information about Knox's early career as a Boston book seller.

The effort and time devoted to the Boston book store research — which Knox called "a new London Book Store" — was apparently well spent. Griffiths' account of this phase of Knox's illustrious career is fascinating reading.

But aside from the excellence of the book store chapter, the book, in its entirety, succeeds in presenting new light on the ancestry and descendants of Major General Henry Knox.

Though scholarly research, Griffiths presents a carefully documented background to the General and the early influences which molded him into one of Washington's most trusted and able aides during the crises of the Revolution, then he turns his attention to Knox's heirs and the rapid decline of the family fortunes in Maine.



COMING AS HE DID from an obscure family of a Boston sea captain, Knox can be described as a self-made man in rising to a position of great prominence in the formation of this nation. His overland trek to Ticonderoga and his return with a train of cannon for Washington at Cambridge, which drove the British from Boston, ranks among the great military feats of all time.

Knox was next to Washington as General of Artillery, and was named by the first President to the key post of Secretary of War in the first U.S. cabinet.

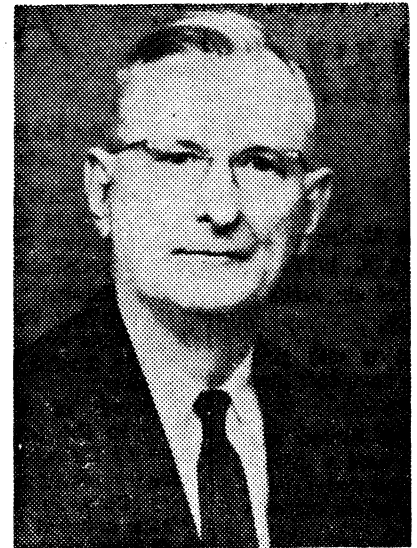
He resigned that post in 1794 to return to Maine and Montpelier to supervise his private interests — long neglected during his years of public service.

Knox is recognized as a pioneer in the development of Maine's resources and his progressive management of his holdings in the massive Waldo Patent, terminated by his untimely death in 1806, left no heir capable of continuing the vast program he had begun.

Within two generations Knox's holdings were dissolved and ultimately the family mansion — Montpelier — was destroyed through the shortsightedness of man and the State.

Only in this century has a revival of interest in General Knox caused his home to be rebuilt in replica at Thomaston and, through the efforts of the Knox Memorial Association, permitting the famed Revolutionary War hero to assume his rightful place in American history.

Griffiths, who was a professor of his-



THOMAS M. GRIFFITHS
Knox Historian

tory at Colby College for 18 years, has spent the greater part of his adult life researching the Knox history. He first was aroused by the Knox career in the early '20's while doing graduate work at Harvard. He felt then — and still does today — that Knox had undeservedly been left out of the many well documented and elaborately chronicled founders of the American Republic.

Griffiths today probably ranks as one of this country's foremost authorities on the General.

ASIDE FROM his writing and teaching, Griffiths was an ordained minister for more than 50 years, retiring only recently after 27 years as minister of the South China Community Church. He served as state historian for more than 12 years, from the late '40s to the early '60s.

He is also author of "Maine Sources in the House of Seven Gables," a study of the Knox family's connection with the famed Hawthorne novel.

And, realizing that there is always more history to be written, he is currently at work researching a new book on the Knox influence on the development of Maine's resources. The book is tentatively titled, "Land, Lumber and Lime."

Monmouth Press, it's interesting to note, was launched as a new publishing venture with release of Griffith's latest book. Arthur M. Griffiths, the author's son who is credited on the title page with editing of the book, is one of the partners in the new firm.

First available copies of Griffith's work were in a paperback edition. A hard-cover edition is due off the press in two or three weeks.