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Book Reviews

Kimberly Sebold
University of Maine Presque Isle

Jean F. Hankins

Elizabeth A. DeWolfe
University of New England, cadpwm@gmail.com

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BOOK REVIEWS

1790 Census of Maine: Annotated Edition, Maine Genealogical Society, Special Publication No. 20 (Camden: Picton Press, 1995. [Pp. 124]. [\$21.00])

1790 Census of Maine: Annotated Edition is a wonderful primary source that provides an introduction to Maine in 1790 and to the first census of the United States for both genealogists and historians. The book's introduction gives a thorough explanation of how the census was taken and of some of the problems a researcher might encounter when using this census material. The *Census* also includes a copy of the legislation that established the U.S. census in 1790. This legislation directs the enumerators to include the following information for each household: names of heads of households, the number of free white males over the age of 16, the number of free white males under the age of 16, the number of free white females, the number of all other persons, and the number of slaves. The federal census of 1790 presents a number of problems for researchers. First, returns for many states, including Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Virginia, were destroyed by the British during the War of 1812. In the surviving returns, enumerators often created their own forms resulting in a lack of uniformity among the data collected. Further, the census required only the names of heads of households; exact ages and names of wives and children are not provided. Last, the census data itself has to be interpreted carefully because citizens in the 1790s often withheld information because they feared giving the government valuable tax intelligence.

The census information begins with a summary of the population of each state as well as the population of each Maine county and town in 1790. This is a superb resource for comparing Maine's population to that of other states and to the United States population as a whole. Additionally, the material can be used to compare the population of Maine counties and create a demographic snapshot of Maine at the end of the eighteenth century. Patterns can be discerned between long-settled areas and frontier communities. Washington County's population of just under 3,000 in 1790, for instance, illustrates its late development compared to York County's population of almost 30,000 owing to its settlement nearly a century prior to the time of the census.

The census information for Maine is divided by counties, beginning

with Cumberland County. Further divisions of the counties include information listed by plantations and towns in alphabetical order. Perhaps the greatest drawback of the 1790 census as a research tool is that data is limited to heads of households; this allows researchers to find the majority of adult white males but not their wives and children. Moreover, by categorizing the number of people living in the household by such ambiguous categories as “free white males over the age of 16” or “free white females,” researchers cannot ascertain whether people living within a particular household were family members. Fortunately for genealogists and historians working with the Maine census, the Maine Genealogical Society began a project almost twenty years ago to remedy this situation. *Maine Families in 1790: The Series* provides a range of additional information about people listed in the 1790 census returns. Entries include a brief biography of some heads of households, names of wives, names of children, and birth, death, and marriage dates. All of the information presented in this seven-volume series has been edited by members of the Maine Genealogical Society and includes citations to original sources. *1790 Census of Maine: Annotated Edition* provides bold-face pointers beside the names of people included in the *Maine Families in 1790: The Series*. The *1790 Census of Maine* also includes an index for volumes 1-4 of *Maine Families in 1790: The Series*. As companion volumes, these books present a treasure of information for genealogists and serve as an important reference for historians of Maine in the late eighteenth century. With all of the information that has been compiled in the census and in *Maine Families*, historians can analyze a wide array of demographic patterns including migration, births, deaths, and marriage patterns as well as military service. More important, this information can be compared with the detailed data from later population and agricultural and industrial censuses to understand economic development and occupational patterns. When combining all of this information with probate records, deeds, and other legal documents, historians can recreate the lives of people who did not leave behind written records but contributed to the settlement of Maine. The Maine Genealogical Society has given researchers a valuable resource by publishing the *1790 Census of Maine: Annotated Edition* and *Maine Families in 1790: The Series*. These publications should be on the shelves of anyone interested in Maine History.

KIMBERLY SEBOLD

University of Maine at Presque Isle

The Seeds and the Soil: The Planting of the Freewill Baptist Church in Hollis, Buxton and Gorham, Maine, 1780-1820. By Phyllis P. Medeiros (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997. Pp. xiv + 81. Appendices, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$21.50).

One of the historian's most difficult but most intriguing tasks is to explain why individuals switch their allegiances, whether political, philosophical, or religious. In *The Seeds and the Soil: The Planting of the Freewill Baptist Church in Hollis, Buxton and Gorham, Maine, 1780-1820*, Phyllis Medeiros takes on such a challenge to analyze the origins of three Freewill Baptist congregations in the Saco River Valley of southern Maine in the early national period. The result is a solid, scholarly contribution to the religious history of Maine.

The Seeds and the Soil is a slim but handsomely printed book as satisfactory to handle as it is to read. The paper is of unusually good quality, the endnotes are uncrowded, and one does not have to squint to read the index. Medeiros has divided her book into three chapters. The first explains the development of the Freewill Baptists as a bridge between the Great Awakening of the colonial period and the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century. The sect originated with the itinerant preaching of one Benjamin Randal of New Durham, New Hampshire, shortly after the American Revolution. Randal, though lacking in religious education, had been profoundly influenced by New Light evangelist George Whitefield. However, he rejected predestination and preached Christ's universal atonement for sin. The Freewill Baptists practiced open communion and required moderation in daily life. The sect spread rapidly from 1780 to 1820 in northern New England; by 1820 there were 87 Freewill Baptist churches in Maine.

Medeiros's second chapter is a fascinating study of the content and style of Freewill Baptist sermons and hymns. Particularly good is the author's contrast of Puritan and Freewill singing styles and hymn content. She states that the Freewill congregational hymnody defines the essence of the evangelical movement: "In opposition to the traditional religious culture of the region, the Freewill Baptists and other evangelicals reshaped the egalitarianism and individualism of the American Revolution and the frontier experiences into new religious expressions that satisfied their need for autonomy" (p. 28).

The third chapter gives a detailed history of the Freewill churches in three Maine towns, with sketches of their first members. Here Medeiros has painstakingly researched the primary sources of the three towns to

show their different social, economic, and religious situations. Little Falls Plantation (now Hollis) was characterized by an unusual degree of religious tension and some hostility to religion, both before and after the formation of the Freewill Baptist Church. The Freewills made quick gains in this environment. In neighboring Buxton, however, a Congregational ministry was established well before Randal first began to preach there. Consequently, the Baptists experienced slower growth. Gorham, first settled in 1736, had a long-standing political division between the "well affected" party, who supported the proprietors and the orthodox Congregational minister, and "the disaffected," who opposed the proprietors, sought incorporation of the town, and wanted to get rid of the minister. Not surprisingly, Gorham's Freewill Baptists were drawn heavily from the latter group. Medeiros writes that the real issue in Gorham was not just a disagreement over "religious preferences, but a class struggle for political and cultural control," in which religious practices became the arena for expression of the town's conflicting self-concepts.

Medeiros has researched her topic thoroughly and organized her material well. Although the book is narrowly focused, she has drawn on the local histories of three Maine communities to provide insight into the motivations of frontier people in northern New England as they extended the democratization processes of the Great Awakening and the American Revolution. Like all good books, this one provokes a few lingering questions. Medeiros gives us a sense of the conflict between the established Congregationalists and the new Freewill Baptists but tells us little about the relationships between the Calvinistic Baptists and the Freewill Baptists, on the one hand, or between the Freewill Baptists and the Methodists, whose development in northern New England parallels that of the Freewills. Also, Medeiros ends her story in 1820, leaving us in the dark about the future of the Freewill Baptists in New England. A fuller discussion of the Freewill preachers would also have been welcome. The reader is left to wonder, for example, whether the Freewill ministers received any salary and, if so, how these funds were raised. These questions aside, I heartily recommend *The Seeds and the Soil*. An afternoon or evening spent with this book will reward both those interested in religious history and those wanting to learn more about the early history of the Saco River Valley.

JEAN F. HANKINS
Otisfield, Maine

Women of the Dawn. By Bunny McBride. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Pp. xvi + 152. Cloth. \$22.00).

In *Women of the Dawn*, Bunny McBride imagines the interconnections between four Wabanaki women spread across four centuries. Seeking to introduce these remarkable women to a wider audience, McBride writes her book in the voice of the most recent of her four subjects, Molly Dellis. Dellis, better known as the Native American performer Molly Spotted Elk, undertook research into the life of the seventeenth-century Molly Mathilde, and McBride crafts her book as Dellis investigating and telling the story of Molly Mathilde, as well as three additional subjects: Molly Ockett, Molly Molasses, and finally herself, Molly Dellis. Sections entitled “Portages” bridge adjoining chapters and in each “portage” the reader hears Molly Dellis at critical moments in her life, reflecting on the experiences of her forbears as she seeks answers to questions in her own life. The effect of this work of “creative nonfiction,” as McBride calls her writing, is one of intergenerational connection as McBride weaves together the lives of four different women, living in four different times.

The reconstructed scenes and the device of Dellis’s authorship give the book a highly readable, audience-engaging tone. Yet, this is no work of pure imagination. The book is based on historical and ethnographic research, as well as contemporary oral history, identified in the detailed “Methodology and References” section found at the conclusion of the work. As McBride explains, the first draft of her manuscript, heavily couched with scholarly hedges such as “it seems possible that” and “it may have been,” left the lives of these women flat. McBride uses her knowledge of Native American customs and the impact of colonization to “reconstruct” what “may have been” and presents those suppositions in Dellis’s voice. In doing so, McBride argues, we gain the story of colonization from the “rare vantage point of women” (xi) and learn of the vital role native women played in the “cultural survival of tribes” (xii).

We see her point in the first chapter describing the life of Molly Mathilde (ca. 1665-1717). The daughter of a prominent chief, Molly Mathilde was married off to a French nobleman and military officer to provide her tribe some insurance in the form of a connection to the French military powers in the midst of the continual French and English battles for possession of Acadia. While her prominent father’s death was noted in the historical record, neither her mother’s nor her own were recorded, a symbol of the invisibility of native women’s lives.

Whereas Molly Mathilde's marriage was arranged to provide a degree of safety for the Native Americans, Molly Ockett (ca. 1740-1816) was kept hostage in Boston to protect white settlers. She was one of three young girls held captive to prevent a Native American uprising against the British. Eventually reunited with her family, Molly Ockett's later life reflected her early years of cultural displacement. Her lifestyle of seasonal relocations kept her connected only loosely to the growing white population. As a sought-after healer, Ockett gained a limited entrance into the white world, yet as a Native American woman, she was painfully aware of being kept just outside that community.

Molly Molasses (ca. 1775-1867) also lived a life of great hardship in a period when Penobscot unity began to weaken from pressures both within and outside the community. Molly Molasses ends up a bitter, lonely woman, "the woman people talked about" (94), an object of curiosity and conversation. Similarly, Molly Dellis (1903-1977), whose life was chronicled in McBride's earlier and well-received work *Molly Spotted Elk*, is also an object of conversation as she performs Native American dances in the United States and abroad. With Dellis's story, *Women of the Dawn* comes full circle, the last subject investigating the life of the first and finding parallels in their lives: widowhood, the loss of a husband overseas, the attempt to find a place in a changing world.

McBride's reconstructions, pieced together reasonably from the scant credible evidence, encourage the reader to make connections between their own lives and those of *Women of the Dawn*. McBride's text invites readers to ask such questions as how would a Native American woman introduced to Christianity mourn the loss of a son? What do women across generations share? What does the present retain of the past? These are questions worth asking about historical research and McBride suggests intriguing answers in her thought-provoking, moving depiction of four remarkable women's lives.

ELIZABETH A. DE WOLFE
University of New England