

Maine History

Volume 27
Number 3 *Penobscot Valley Agriculture*

Article 4

12-1-1987

Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Vickery, James B., and Victor Konrad. "Book Reviews." *Maine History* 27, 3 (1988): 162-165.
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol27/iss3/4>

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BOOK REVIEWS

NORTH FOR UNION: JOHN APPLETON'S JOURNAL OF A TOUR TO NEW ENGLAND MADE BY PRESIDENT POLK IN JUNE & JULY 1847. Edited by Wayne Cutler. (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1986). Pp. 135. \$18.95.

From the administration of George Washington to the present, only fourteen presidents have deemed it worthwhile to visit Maine, a northeastern outpost state stuck like a thumb into the Canadian belt. Washington, visiting Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was offered a glimpse of the Kittery shore. James Monroe came in July 1817 while Maine was still governed by Massachusetts.

In 1847 James K. Polk became the first president to visit Maine after its admission to statehood. At this time Maine had considerably more political clout than today. In addition to its two senators, the state was represented by eight members elected to the House of Representatives, many of whom achieved notable political careers. Likewise, the nation's economy depended heavily upon Maine's fisheries, its lumber, and its maritime trade, including ship building.

Polk usually kept a diary, but on this busy journey he delegated this task to his chief clerk of the Navy Office, John Appleton. Appleton was familiar with the Maine political scene. A Bowdoin College graduate (1834), he had attended Harvard Law School and practiced in Portland. He had edited Portland's *Eastern Argus* until 1838. In 1847 he was serving in the Navy Department, and he would later be elected to the U. S. House of Representatives and close his career as U. S. minister to Russia.

Polk departed Washington on June 22, traveling through Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Hartford, New Haven,

and Boston. It is apparent that the president not only wished to test the political temper of the northern states, but to gain support for his war against Mexico. A deputation from Maine, including Hannibal Hamlin, met the president at South Berwick. On July 2 the entourage arrived at Portland, where Mayor Greely and Governor Dana welcomed Polk with speeches. Appleton recorded in close detail the various speeches and the president's responses, all of which seem trite. The president's party made a tour in open barouches, followed by a parade of militia and firemen resplendent in their colorful uniforms, while hords of people along the streets waved and cheered. Secretary of State James Buchanan, also among the president's party, admired the stature of Portland's eligible ladies.

The next day Polk arrived at Augusta, where Governor Dana again spoke. Responding with his usual lengthy oratory, the president alluded to the nation's "manifest destiny" and to his own expansionist hopes. He touched upon Maine's recent boundary settlement: "The same giant growth is to be seen in all our territory and is destined if we are faithful to our duty as citizens to continue with increased rapidity through the lapse of years." Leaving Augusta by carriage, the president stopped at Robert H. Gardiner's mansion, Oaklands, thence on July 5 stopping briefly at Biddeford and Kennebunk.

While this book may be a minor contribution to American history, the insights of Polk's diary, together with Appleton's reflections, impress the reader with the general prosperity of the East and provide other insights into the social history of the region. Incidentally, one sees that political rhetoric has not changed appreciably in the last 140 years.

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Storehouses of Time: Historic Barns of the Northeast. By Philip C. Ziegler. (Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 1985. Pp. 131. Paper. \$12.95.)

A glance at Philip Ziegler's *Storehouses of Time* suggests another picture book of old buildings pleasing to thumb through, full of illustrations, but lacking serious analysis. A close reading, however, reveals a thoughtful and adequately researched appraisal of old barns in the Northeast. *Storehouses of Time* is one of a growing number of works examining material history with attention to scholarly research but emphasis on nostalgic display. Both the old barn enthusiast and the serious researcher of material culture history will find the book useful and engaging.

There are some shortcomings. Contained in the thin volume are an over-ambitious mix of sections on construction, structural components, barn types, and restoration. Yet most of the book is devoted to a state-by-state compendium of selected barn drawings and vignettes. Expectations of detailed historical barn analysis, raised in "The Builders and Their Tools" and "Construction and Barn Raising," are not satisfied in the cursory treatment of structural elements and the state-based surveys that follow. It appears that the barns illustrated for each state were selected more for their unique visual qualities than as representations of the range of structures found in any state. There is no justification for why barns were chosen. The lack of an organizing framework for historic barn analysis extends to the discussion of each structure selected. Characteristically, the accompanying text varies from the descriptive to the anecdotal and sometimes extends to the conjectural. These directions could have been ameliorated with more attention to the established literature in the field. For example, no study of connected barns is possible without reference to the research of Thomas Hubka (1984) and Wibur Zelinsky (1958), but the author does not acknowledge their work. Factual slips, naive transgressions, and lapses into romantic reverie also reduce the book's value as an accurate guide to historic barns in the Northeast.

For the barn enthusiast, the book's shortcomings are shaded effectively from view by several strengths and consistencies. Muted pencil drawings, reminiscent of Eric Sloane's renderings, are detailed and evocative. They vary somewhat in clarity but most of the drawings are excellent illustrations that convey, in three dimensions, barn setting, attributes, and condition. The visual impact of the barn drawings is extended with occasional magnified excerpts of doorways, silos, cupolas, beam connections, and other features. Drawings are complemented as well by structural cross-sections, ground plans, construction detail, and tool illustrations. Consistent, high quality illustrations, effectively assembled in varying size, perspective, and detail arrangements, convey a strong feeling for the barn legacy in the Northeast. The drawings evoke a sense of heritage and connection with the land, a sense that builds up to the author's final discussion of the urgent need and potential for barn restoration.

In *Storehouses of Time* Philip Ziegler approaches the essence of why historic barns sustain an allure and why Americans today value these remnants of another era. But this is an understanding conveyed largely by his illustrations and not by his text. Throughout the book the author has been content to allow drawings to carry his themes. With greater attention to established research findings and more effective synthesis of his observations with other works, Ziegler could have produced the comprehensive book required on northeastern United States barns. While interested readers await the synthesis, *Storehouses of Time* will serve as an introduction to historic barns of the Northeast.

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