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Book Reviews

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Islands in Time: A Natural and Human History of the Islands of Maine. By Philip W. Conkling. (Camden, Me.: Down East Books, 1981. Pp. xviii, 222. Cloth. \$16.95.)

Islands in Time is an informative look at Maine's coastal islands, as seen through the eyes of an experienced observer. Philip W. Conkling is a trained naturalist, who is not content with merely recording what he sees. He ventures to understand the complex natural processes and human actions that have shaped the islands and our perceptions of them. His curiosity ranges from hurricanes to mackerel, "cobblestone" beaches to spruce trees, and hawks to people. This rich diversity is what makes *Islands in Time* so appealing and so distinctive. The book's subtitle, *A Natural and Human History of the Islands of Maine*, appropriately reflects the author's wide-ranging interests.

Unlike guidebooks and island histories of narrower geographic focus, *Islands in Time* deals with the Maine archipelago in its entirety. The islands are viewed as a comprehensive unit in the Gulf of Maine ecosystem. Yet, specific anecdotes about individual islands and people illustrate common themes. These stories keep the text interesting, and the inquiring reader is bound to find a few gems of information about islands located in his favorite bay. In the section on the physical and cultural settings of the islands, Conkling reminds the reader that there are seventeen "favorite" bays from Kittery to Calais.

Conkling's topics — island ecology, landforms, vegetation, birds and mammals, and fisheries of the Gulf of Maine — are not new, but his approach raises new questions. His description of the forests of the islands is perhaps the best anywhere. In fact, Conkling's experience as a professional forester shines through the entire chapter on island vegetation, making it one of his best.

The author's extensive research is evident in the presentation of obscure scientific and historical information. A population study of rodents on the Merchants Row Islands and an analysis of Christopher Levett's accounts of seventeenth-century forest growth are but two examples of the more unusual topics treated. Readers interested in delving into such subjects need only to consult the annotated listing of 132 books and articles provided at the end of the book.

Conkling's humor and easy-going conversational style, combined with seventy-six contemporary and historical photographs, and numerous illustrations and maps, makes for enjoyable reading. Anyone interested in the coastal islands of Maine should read *Islands in Time*, keeping in mind the author's admonition that "getting to know Maine islands takes a lot of time — a lifetime — and you cannot be in a hurry."

Bruce Jacobson
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A Seafaring Legacy: The Photographs, Diaries, and Memorabilia of a Maine Sea Captain and His Wife, 1859-1908. By Julianna FreeHand. (New York: Random House, 1981. Pp. 210. Cloth. \$18.50.)

For many historians, there is a recurring dream. Somewhere, tucked away in an old trunk or on a back shelf, is a collection of hitherto unknown papers, the editing of which will provide a pleasurable challenge and the publication of which (when the choice between anxious publishers' offers has been made) will illuminate some previously dark corner of history. Such was almost the scenario for Julianna FreeHand's *A Seafaring Legacy*. What she discovered in a Yarmouth home were a short journal, numerous diaries, a group of old photographs and glass negatives, and collection of letters, all contributing to a picture of the lives of a nineteenth-century sea captain and his wife. She has woven

these together with family memories and outside research into a fascinating whole.

The lives of this small-town couple, even if they did travel far away from their Maine home, were quite unremarkable. Neither did anything truly unusual. He captained a few vessels and sailed on others. She accompanied him on a few short voyages and on two to Asia. There were no mutinies, no shipwrecks, no encounters along the way with great historic figures. Sumner and Alice Drinkwater lived lives of obscurity, but it is this obscurity — or normality — that makes their story of interest. For a while, we glimpse the thoughts of real people in a changing world.

Indeed, change becomes a theme of the book, as the captain, who first shipped out at the age of sixteen, found less and less call for his knowledge of sailing vessels and had to leave the sea when he was fifty. His letters and diaries record some of the problems of the wanning days of sail — of getting good crews, of finding cargoes to carry, and of complying with increasing government regulation as well.

There are also lesser signs of change: among the period's crazes in which Sumner and Alice took part was bicycling. He began by renting one to get around in a foreign port, and on later voyages they took their own. (A true Yankee, the captain knew he could get his investment back by selling the bicycles before returning home.) However, Alice had one for exercise and visiting around in Yarmouth, too, and she was obviously not alone in this, as the town voted for a new bicycle road that year.

The book has its problems, not the least of which is an unevenness in the text. Maine people may find local practices overdefined and not quite accurate (an ell is more than a "covered corridor to the woodshed"), while historians will look in vain to learn the sources of "facts" that may simply be family tradition. That a few of the photographs are unlabeled may not matter, but the newspaper "story" about Cleveland and Harrison should certainly be explained, though its information may be no more garbled than the account of the

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1884 election, on the same page, which saddles poor James G. Blaine with both the Mulligan letters and an illegitimate child!

Overall, however, *A Seafaring Legacy* proves worthwhile and gives an interesting view of a small segment of society. Although it omits much (there is little comment on industrial growth, even though Yarmouth itself had flourishing mills at the time), this may be due as much to the selectivity exercised by the Drinkwaters, who saved only some of their letters, as to the fact that they lived in a more rural part of town. A good deal can be learned about housing patterns (rental apartments in old farmhouses was not a twentieth-century development) and of family and neighbor relationships in a Maine coastal town, as well as of life on a trading vessel. It is well worth reading – or owning.

Joyce K. Bibber
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Coming of Age on Damariscove Island, Maine. By Carl R. Griffin III and Alaric Faulkner and including the reminiscences of Alberta Poole Rowe. (*Northeast Folklore*, Vol. 21.) (Orono, Me.: Northeast Folklore Society, 1981. Pp. 116. Paper. \$6.00, non-members. \$5.00, members.)

Damariscove Island, outside of Boothbay Harbor, is one of the most beautiful and historic of Maine islands. As a historian and avid explorer of the coast, I have long been intrigued by the place and its dilapidated, Wyethesque buildings.

Coming of Age is largely about the Poole family, whose members made the last hardscrabble attempt to make Damariscove a year-round, working proposition. The story is told by Alberta Poole Rowe, who lived on the island from 1910 until 1922. Her recollections are crystal clear and fit very closely to the historic record, though she was only a child at the time. Here, in breadth and detail, we get a rare view of the last days of island existence. It is a view that can, with caution, be extended along the coast. Indeed, though the islands were the

first places in Maine to be settled by Europeans, civilization passed quickly to the mainland. Until Maine became "Vacationland," the offshore settlements were generally isolated, out of touch, and impoverished. In the era of the Pooles, other, poorer island settlements were being dismantled by the state.

Nearly every aspect of life on Damariscove during Alberta's youth is explored. Nothing, including social affairs, educational opportunity, farming, fishing, and religious life, is stunted. We learn about attempts to develop dairying to serve the tourists and about the failure of sheep raising during the last three years the Pooles' stayed on the island. Alberta's remarkable eye for detail will surely assist future historians and writers. For example, she notes:

None of the small boats ever had any paint on them. Neither were most of the houses painted. Paint would never have lasted one year. The salt water and salt air would take the paint right off and make the labor worthless. The big boats were painted, most always white, to preserve them. Papa's was white and Johnson's was painted black.

Detailed information such as this is either difficult or impossible to obtain elsewhere.

Coming of Age is the result of two independent research projects. Carl Griffin, now an attorney in his hometown of Boothbay, began interviewing Alberta Poole Rowe in 1975 as an undergraduate history project at Bowdoin College. In 1979, University of Maine archaeologist Alaric Faulkner began fieldwork on Damariscove aimed at establishing how the island had changed since Sir Ferdinando Gorges had first planted a fishing station there in 1622. In the course of researching the island's history, Faulkner discovered Griffin's work and the two projects converged.

The content of the publication is largely provided by Alberta through Griffin. Faulkner offers a good, brief summary history of Damariscove beginning with the year-round fishing station of 1622. The whole is complemented by the generous number of interesting photographs and maps. On balance,

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the authors and the Northeast Folklore Society have rendered a valuable service in gathering and organizing the material. If the study is flawed, it results from the feeling one gets of reading a work-in-progress. While the information is excellent, the presentation is a little skeletal in places. At one point Griffin writes:

The essence of three Damariscove communities emerged with clarity and vitality; the year-round farming and fishing residents, the seasonal fishermen, and the Coast Guard crew. Significant contradictions in their portrayal occurred in only a few instances. At odds were such matters as the effectiveness of the Coast Guard, the health of the residents, and the past history of the house of Alberta's Uncle Will. These and other discrepancies remain uncorrected in the book and are left for the reader to resolve.

This attitude seems a bit lazy, especially where it concerns the Coast Guard station. Obviously, nothing in history is definitive and some things must go unanswered. However, it would appear that no effort was made to find the station's records, which must certainly exist. Perhaps this is a trivial thing, sparked by the prejudice of my training as a historian. Still, it bothers me.

Filled with interesting and important information, *Coming of Age* joins a number of other works that are gradually fleshing out the human history of our island perimeter.

William David Barry

The Identity of the St. Francis Indians. By Gordon M. Day. (National Museum of Man Mercury Series. Canadian Ethnology Service. Paper, No. 71.) (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1981. Pp. iv, 157. Paper. Price available through the National Museums.)

Since the eighteenth century, historians, ethnologists, and anthropologists have proposed conflicting theories about the

origins of the St. Francis Indians. Now, after nearly twenty-five years of intensive research, Gordon M. Day has produced a study that should end the confusion and controversy.

The St. Francis Indians live in a settlement known as Odanak, which is located four miles below the mouth of the St. Francis River, which flows northward into Lake Peter, a part of the St. Lawrence waterway. One of the most influential theories regarding their origins was given currency in 1832 by William D. Williamson, one of Maine's most noted nineteenth-century historians. In his *History of the State of Maine*, Williamson stated that the first settlers at Odanak were the Anasgunticooks of the Androscoggin River in Maine. In fact, however, Day points out that available evidence indicates that the Sokwaki (Sokoki) Indians, originally from the area of Northfield, Massachusetts, first settled Odanak about 1670. From then until about 1798, Odanak experienced frequent in- and out-migrations of Pigwackets, Norridgewocks, Missisquois, Penacooks, Cowassucks, and numerous other tribes fleeing the pressures of war and other unsettling events.

The fact that Odanak served as a refugee village gives special urgency to the search for the origins of the St. Francis Indians. Many of the tribes that had once sought refuge there no longer exist. Consequently, the current inhabitants constitute a unique source of cultural and linguistic information for the study of those extinct tribes. The work, however, must be done before the remaining St. Francis Indians are absorbed into the mainstream.

Day has carefully studied family dialects and other available sources of information on the St. Francis Indians. He has meticulously traced the migratory movements in and out of Odanak over the past two centuries and has concluded that "the twentieth century language and culture of the St. Francis Indians derive from the related Sokwaki, Cowassuck, and Penacook tribes of the upper Connecticut Valleys in New Hampshire and Vermont." He believes that other persisting traits may be attributable to the tribes of the middle Connec-

ticut Valley in Massachusetts and to Maine's Abenaki tribes.

The author does not claim to have written the last word on this subject. He frankly admits that other conclusions are possible and that much difficult work remains to be done in sorting out and properly attributing the linguistic and cultural heritage of the present-day St. Francis Indians. Nonetheless, this study marks an important milestone in our quest for accurate knowledge of the "mysterious" people who live at Odanak.

Roger B. Ray

Soldiers, Sailors, and Patriots of the Revolutionary War: Maine.

Compiled by Carleton E. Fisher and Sue G. Fisher. (Louisville, Ky.: National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 1982. Pp. xv, 917. Cloth. \$30.00.)

Containing more than 26,000 entries, *Soldiers, Sailors, and Patriots* is a boon to genealogists and to those seeking admission to lineage societies such as the Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution. Here, under one cover, General and Mrs. Carleton E. Fisher have compiled the most complete index available of Revolutionary War veterans who served from Maine or who later moved to Maine, and of those patriots who rendered some other form of public service during the conflict.

General Fisher, a retired major general in the United States Army and a native of Clinton, Maine, is well known among genealogists and has numerous publications to his credit. He has held responsible positions with the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, the National Genealogical Society, and the Board for the Certification of Genealogists.

In compiling this work, the Fishers have painstakingly sifted through vast quantities of data: militia rolls; pension records; court records; town records; private journals, diaries, and memoirs; obituary records; cemetery records; town histories; and a host of other relevant sources. The

resulting entries are alphabetically arranged by name of veteran or patriot and are keyed to the twenty-five pages of references cited by the compilers. For each veteran and patriot, the Fishers have provided, when possible, the place and year of birth, place of residence, place and year of death, and wife's first name. For veterans, the military unit is identified and the rank of non-commissioned and commissioned officers is stated.

Since Maine was part of Massachusetts until 1820, most Maine veterans are listed in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* (17 vols.; Boston, 1896-1908). That massive compilation contains more detailed descriptions of military service than the Fishers attempt to provide, but it does not include information on the patriots or the birth, death, and marital data that is so helpful in differentiating veterans having the same name. The Fishers also give a more complete picture of Maine's contribution to the war by identifying those Mainers who enlisted and served in New Hampshire units, a rather common occurrence among inhabitants of border towns such as Kittery.

Soldiers, Sailors, and Patriots is intended to be used in conjunction with other standard references and not as a replacement for them. As with all works so ambitious in scope, the user should be on guard for possible errors. The Fishers have conscientiously attempted to note the deficiencies of their sources, but some have undoubtedly escaped detection.

This book represents an enormous undertaking. It fills an important need and will not soon be superceded. Genealogists and historians alike are indebted to the Fishers for having brought it to successful completion.

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