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## Book Reviews

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*he is currently completing an in-depth study of the American Revolution in Maine, from which this essay is excerpted.*

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Pamphlets for the People: A Review Essay on the Publications of Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

The Maine legislature created the Maine Historic Preservation Commission in 1971 to administer the National Register program in Maine. The commission surveys historic, architectural, and archaeological resources, nominates the most significant ones to the National Register of Historic Places, and administers a federal grants-in-aid program for the restoration of important buildings and the excavation of potential archaeological sites. Despite a limited budget, the director and his small staff have made great strides in identifying historic and architecturally significant buildings by working closely with local preservation and historical organizations. Lately, the commission has placed more emphasis on identifying and excavating Maine's rich archaeological sites.

Public education has always been an important aspect of the commission's work, for an educated citizenry is vital to the success of the organization's efforts. The director and his staff spend a great deal of time traveling throughout the state and speaking to interested groups. In 1976 the commission added significantly to its public education program with its first publication, a twenty-three-page, illustrated pamphlet entitled *200 Years of Maine Housing: A Guide for the House Watcher*, by commission staff-historian Frank A. Beard. This was the first of a half-dozen pamphlets, which, as a series, provide a brief but accurate and up-to-date illustrated survey of Maine's man-made structures, from the colonial to the modern period. Most include glossaries of terms and lists of references for further reading, and they are available to the public at no cost.

The first of the pamphlets in terms of chronological coverage is *Maine's First Buildings: The Architecture of Settlement, 1604-1700*. Since almost all of these structures were destroyed during the Indian wars of the late seventeenth century, author Robert L. Bradley, also of the commission's staff, emphasizes the difficulty of determining the type of dwellings built by the earliest Maine settlers. Current knowledge has been pieced together from contemporary accounts, drawings, archaeological excavations, and from examination of the few buildings constructed in the early eighteenth century that still survive.

Written accounts indicate that the earliest settlers utilized a wide variety of improvised shelters such as tents, huts, and sod-roofed pit houses, two of which have been excavated at Spirit Pond in Pittsburg. The first permanent dwellings were humble, one-story, frame-construction, gable-roofed structures with wooden-end or central chimneys. Walls were covered with clapboards or

sometimes with wattle and daub; roofs were thatched. Constructed of fieldstone, foundations often included cellars for frost-free food storage. As the century progressed, brick replaced wood for chimney construction, and shingles replaced the thatched roofs. While garrison houses and trading posts were substantial structures, the average dwelling was a very modest and humble edifice.

Seventeenth-century forts were much more ambitious than the dwellings, Bradley points out in *The Forts of Maine, 1607-1945: An Archaeological and Historical Survey*, which, at forty pages, is the most substantial of the commission's pamphlets. Fort George, built in 1607 at the Popham Colony, was a very impressive undertaking, at least as pictured in the surviving plan. Pemaquid's Fort William Henry was New England's first stone fortress. When constructed in 1693, the fort was described by Governor William Phipps as being "strong enough to resist all the Indians of America." Though impressive looking, the £20,000 structure was poorly constructed and fell to the French and Indians in 1696. It was reconstructed on a more modest scale in 1729 and was renamed Fort Frederick.

Maine's resettlement began in the early eighteenth century and brought a more practical approach to defense. Small, inexpensive, easily constructed, lightly manned log stockades with blockhouses provided protection against the French and Indians. Since the need for and lifespan of these simple structures was brief, few survive. One blockhouse of Fort Halifax in Winslow, built in 1754, is the oldest extant building of its type in the country, while the officers quarters/trading post of Augusta's Fort Western, constructed the same year, also survives. The most impressive of the eighteenth-century forts is Fort Pownall. Built in 1759 to prevent the French and Indians from coming down the Penobscot River, its

complex blockhouse was destroyed during the American Revolution, but its remarkable star-shaped earthworks remain.

A number of earth forts were built during the War for Independence, but Fort George, the only substantial work, was constructed by the British in 1779 when they occupied Castine. It successfully held out against the American effort to capture it. Ironically, the British returned in 1814 and reconstructed the fort. After independence, the United States began a systematic program of harbor defenses. In 1807 ten forts were built along the coast from Kittery to Machias, the best preserved of which is Fort Edgecomb with its earthworks and magnificent octagonal blockhouse. Strained relations with Britain resulted in the construction of the last blockhouses in Maine. Fort Kent, built in 1839 to defend the disputed northern border, and Fort McClary, constructed in 1844 to defend Kittery, still survive.

Fort Knox, also begun in 1844 to defend the Penobscot River, constituted part of new generation of huge, multi-storied granite structures, which were designed to mount hundreds of guns. Fort Knox is one of the finest examples of its type in the United States. All of these massive works survive, but some, like Forts Gorges, Scammel, and Preble in Portland Harbor and Fort Popham in Phippsburg, were under construction during the Civil War and were never completed. Huge concrete gun batteries replaced the granite forts in Portland and Phippsburg in the 1890s, and Portland Harbor saw a final generation of defenses during World War II, before nuclear-armed missiles made all forts obsolete.

*200 Years of Maine Housing: A Guide for the House Watcher*, by Frank A. Beard, picks up the story of domestic architecture where Bradley's *Maine's First Buildings* leaves off. Beard points out that no Maine house built before

1690 survives and only ten or twelve can be dated before 1725. Most of these are the ubiquitous Cape Cods, those nearly square, gabled-roofed structures of one or one-and-a-half stories, with the front door on the eave side. The first were very tiny, only one room deep, but they became larger and more substantial by the mid-eighteenth century. Next, two- and two-and-one-half storied houses appeared as settlements grew more prosperous. Along the coast, successful merchants, following English fashion, began building grand structures in the Georgian style, which is characterized by square, formal, two-storied buildings with steeply pitched hip or gambrel roofs.

After the American Revolution, the Federal style appeared. Although similar to the Georgian style, it featured rectangular shapes, lower roof lines, and lighter and more delicate designs. Federal-style architecture had greater influence on humble houses than did its immediate predecessor. Even more important, widespread, and long lasting was the emergence of Greek Revival architecture, which was popular from the 1820s through the 1860s. Grand houses were built in imitation of Greek temples with their columns and triangular pediments. Temple shapes and decorations were applied to all types of houses, and new homes were built with their doors on the gable end, which faced the street in imitation of the temple style.

Other architectural forms became popular and faded concurrently with the Greek Revival style. In the 1830s Gothic Revival architecture idealized the English cottage. The Italianate style of the 1850s used Italian rural residences as models, while the Mansard style emphasized a French roof design. The excesses of the Victorian era culminated in the complex Queen Anne style of the 1870s, with its hodge-podge of shapes and decorations. A

reaction to this brought a return to basics and simplicity, as evidenced in the Shingle style of the 1880s. By 1900 architectural design had come full circle with the arrival of the Colonial Revival style, a return to the designs of the late eighteenth century.

*Norlands: The Architecture of the Washburn Estate*, by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., executive director of the commission, offers examples of several building styles as they appear on the Washburn estate in Livermore. A late Federal-style church, built in 1828, was remodeled in early Gothic Revival style in 1872. The Washburn mansion, destroyed by fire in 1867, was rebuilt in the Italianate style. Finally, a community and family library, built in 1883, is considered by Shettleworth to be "one of Maine's finest examples of High Victorian Gothic Style."

Views of Georgian-, Federal-, and Greek Revival-style buildings abound in *Mr. Goodhue Remembers Portland: Scenes from the Mid-19th Century*, edited by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., and William David Barry, of the Maine Historical Society. Charles Quincy Goodhue, an amateur artist, devoted his retirement years to recreating views of Portland as it appeared before the Great Fire of 1866. Goodhue's drawings include bridges, churches, commercial and public buildings, schools, taverns, the waterfront, and Casco Bay. In addition to individual buildings, many of his highly detailed works are of street scenes and landscapes. Each drawing is accompanied by a one-page description, many with quotations from Nathan Gould, a Portland journalist and historian, and a contemporary of Goodhue.

The commission has published other brief pamphlets, such as *Archaeology in Maine* (1978) and *The Maine State House: A Brief History and Guide* (1981). It has also produced some very substantial works like *The Flight of the Grand Eagle: Charles G. Bryant, Maine Architect and*

*Adventurer* (1977), by James H. Mundy and Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr.; *Discovering Maine's Archaeological Heritage* (1979), edited by David Sanger of the University of Maine at Orono; and *Indian Antiquities of the Kennebec Valley*, by Charles C. Willoughby, a magnificent reproduction of a handwritten, illustrated manuscript. It is, however, the pamphlets that will prove most valuable; they are brief, written in an easily comprehensible style, and well illustrated. The only gaps in the series are the prehistoric period and the twentieth century. A survey of Maine Indians and their dwellings and one covering modern architecture would be very useful. Once these gaps are filled, it might also make sense to reprint the entire series as a single volume so that all of these valuable works would be conveniently available between two covers.

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*Arthur Spear, 1879-1959*. By Arthur Spear, Jr. (Warren, Me.: Warren Historical Society, 1981. Pp. 70. Cloth. \$11.95)

*Arthur Spear* is interesting for its own sake and as a good example of the short biographical works that have been appearing with some frequency in recent years on forgotten late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists. Such works offer insights into persons and careers and usually include catalogues of works. In writing and reading books of this sort, one enters a murky realm of cultural history, a twilight zone of shifting, uncertain knowledge.

Since the 1960s historians have made significant inroads into understanding and defining nineteenth-century American art. This has led to a renewed appreciation of



the works of artists ranging from Thomas Cole to Winslow Homer and to an extraordinary increase in their value. In Maine, writer-researchers have been vigorous in reviving our knowledge of such early artists as Jonathan Fisher, Rufus Porter, Charles Codman, Jeremiah P. Hardy, Scott Leighton, Franklin Stanwood, Winslow Homer, and others. Enthusiastic study has also focused on the state's so-called masters, those modern pioneers who include John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Rockwell Kent, N. C. Wyeth, and William and Marguerite Zorach.

Unfortunately, a whole group of men and women who worked roughly between 1890 and World War II have been ignored and forgotten. As a group they were academically trained and nationally successful; their works were largely representational. They did not adopt the abstract, non-representational approaches that became the dominant lines of critical concern. Because they fit no theory, they now seem to linger embarrassingly like orphans at the door of a feast. Yet, their works continue to exist and can no longer be dismissed out of hand.

The new biographies provide us with the opportunity to give these artists an honest look. While such studies are frequently overlooked by reviewers, they tend to be filled with information that is essential to a proper understanding of the era. Thus, this well-written, well-documented biography and catalogue of Arthur P. Spear, Sr., is a welcome addition.

The son of General Ellis Spear of Knox County, Arthur Prince Spear (1879-1959) was born in Washington, D. C., but maintained strong Maine ties and a studio at Friendship. After training at Columbia College, the Students' Art League, and in Europe, he began work at Fenway Studios in Boston. He soon achieved national recognition and exhibited at such prestigious institutions as the National Academy of Design, the Corcoran Gallery

of Art, the Wadsworth Athenaeum, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Along with Dwight C. Sturgis, Cadwallader Washburn, Walter Griffin, and, I believe, William Gilchrist, Jr., Spear won a medal at the Panama Pacific Exhibition of 1915. Unfortunately, this exhibition seems to have guaranteed obscurity. Due to changing tastes following the depression, figurative, academic painters were written off by the critics as unworthy of consideration. By the mid-1940s even the most prestigious reputations were gone.

With the resurgence of interest in the work of Walter Griffin during the 1960s, paintings that once had been downplayed for decades began to attract greater attention and higher prices. With dealers and collectors sparking the interest, scholars were carried into the slip-stream. As more retrospective exhibitions are organized, the fog of this twilight zone should begin to lift. The new biographies substantially aid this process.

A look at the forty illustrations in *Arthur Spear* reveals what the observer is up against. Nubile, naked women and children cavort in sacred woods, at the bottom of the sea, or amid the stars. Such fantasy places, reminiscent of illustrator Maxfield Parrish, make up the bulk of the works shown. Yet, they are balanced in part by earlier garden, street, and café scenes that fall into the realm of what is called American Impressionism. Addressing this in the book's introduction, Robert Douglas Hunter writes:

About thirty years have passed . . . and the artists of this period are being re-discovered as "American Impressionists." Still Arthur Spear remains in a unique position. His art cannot be so easily classified. It seems to me that he belongs to a rare group of painters who have been in the minority of any generation in the history of American art. They are motivated by a world of poetic imagination expressed in myth, allegory and fantasy.

Hunter hits at the heart of the problem. "American Impressionism" is a nebulous, actually fictitious, label

which serves to cover a number of artists who may not have had any relationship to one another. They certainly had little to do with French impressionists. Forcing Spear and his contemporaries into this convenient file serves no one well and the author knows it.

Arthur Spear, Jr., the author, does not try to make his father more than he was. Moreover, he knows how to write and how to organize his thoughts. The result is a sane, unpretentious, informative, and charming book. The artist's career is unfolded in the first section, with insights into his student years, exhibitions, friendships, and family. Particularly useful is a 1922 *Boston Herald* interview with the painter. As "the only record of his ideas on painting and art," it provides a good deal of firsthand understanding.

The second section of the biography is an essay entitled "Reminiscences." Here we are rewarded with a real feel for the personality of the man at Friendship, Maine, and in Boston. From clues about Spear's relationship with writers and other painters, we learn more about this period of American art. A good deal of new information of local interest emerges. This reviewer was particularly interested in the schooner *The Electric Light*, which was chartered by the Students' Art League in the summer of 1900 and used to explore the down-east coast.

A book that could have been accurate but dull is enlivened by style and wit. My favorite story comes at the end when the author recounts a trip to Maine with his father:

Once, when we were crossing the Saco River on the way to Friendship, I asked why the water was so brown and was told, with complete seriousness, that it was because Kate Douglas Wiggin left directions in her will to have her ashes put in the river.

This book deserves a place on the bookshelf of every student of American art. Without doubt, I will make good use of its reference potential in coming years.

William David Barry

*Army Engineers in New England: The Military and Civil Works of the Corps of Engineers in New England, 1775-1975.* By Aubrey Parkman. (Waltham, Mass.: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1978. Pp. xii, 319. Cloth. \$7.50.)

The United States Army Corps of Engineers enjoys an extensive New England heritage. Its birth can be traced to the aftermath of the battles of Lexington and Concord of 1775, when the Massachusetts Provincial Congress appointed Richard Gridley, a veteran officer of the French wars, to be chief engineer of the provincial army encamped around Boston. Two months later, when the Continental Congress absorbed the various provincial armies into the Continental Army, Gridley continued as chief engineer and served at the siege of Boston.

The early accomplishments of the corps were also heavily influenced by native New Englanders. Two of the three chief engineers during the Revolution were from Massachusetts, while the third was a Frenchman. After the War for Independence, the corps was disbanded, not to be revived until 1795. When the corps was recreated, a French veteran of the American Revolution became chief engineer, but he was succeeded, in turn, by three New Englanders who held the post until 1818. The most accomplished chief engineer of the first half of the nineteenth century was Colonel Joseph G. Totten, another New Englander, who served from 1838 until 1864. Interestingly, the first five commandants of the United

States Military Academy, founded in 1802, also hailed from New England, including Major Sylvanus Thayer, the “Father” of the academy.

Parkman’s *Army Engineers in New England* is one of about fifteen official histories, of differing length and quality, to be written about the corps’ various districts. Parkman’s is one of the few outstanding works in the series. The few scattered inaccuracies in the first few pages do not diminish the superior quality of the whole. The author effectively relates the story of the corps’ military and civil missions and accomplishments in New England to the overall context of national developments. He keeps the two missions separate throughout, thus maintaining a highly readable, well-researched, and chronologically understandable history. He presents a balanced, basic overview, without getting bogged down in details or statistics, and the study is liberally accompanied by appropriate photographs. One small criticism is offered: the six pages of appendices listing the New England district engineers could have been replaced by a more meaningful summary compilation of the various military and civil projects accomplished in New England. For example, a list of the fortifications, by era, name, and location, would have been useful.

Maine is well represented in this study. Of the sixteen harbors in the United States protected by the so-called First System of fortifications, begun in 1794, Portland’s Fort Sumner was the northernmost. While twenty of the thirty-four Second System forts (1808) in the United States were located in New England, ten were constructed in nine harbors or rivers from Kittery Point to Eastport. Substantial construction or reconstruction was accomplished during the Third System of forts (primarily from the 1830s through the 1860s) for Kittery Point, Portland Harbor, and the Kennebec and Penobscot rivers.

Maine was also the scene of post-Civil War planning and modifications of existing fortifications, until new concepts forced abandonment of the massive granite forts of the Third System. The Endicott period (1886-1906) ushered in the Coast Artillery concept of defense that relied on emplacing and protecting newly developed rifle (artillery) and mortar batteries of various sizes instead of on the old concept of walled fortresses containing close-range armaments. The Endicott system was exemplified in Portland Harbor, where four major forts and one subpost ringed the water approaches to the harbor. Another Endicott-period post, Fort Baldwin, protected the entrance to the Kennebec River, while Fort Foster at Kittery Point constituted part of the defenses of Portsmouth Harbor. Lesser defenses were built or reconstructed at other locations. Small fire-control stations were built at selected sites along the coast several miles north and south of the various batteries in order to facilitate the computation of target locations. Additional construction of batteries occurred in Maine during World War II, primarily in an attempt to upgrade the defenses of Portland. During the Cold War, the corps designed and constructed three airbases in northern Maine, of which Loring Air Force Base at Limestone was the largest single project undertaken by the corps' New England division. In the early 1960s, Bomarc and Snark missile facilities were constructed on the two remaining airbases.

The corps' civil mission in Maine has included the construction of breakwaters or jetties at several harbors or river entrances from Kennebunk to Belfast. Harbor or river dredging has been a continuing function of the corps, with Portland Harbor being of primary importance. Another major civil function involves flood control and hydroelectric power generation. In the 1930s, plans were formulated for the Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project,

but the project was never brought to fruition. In the 1960s, attention shifted to the Dickey-Lincoln Project, but, as yet, these plans have not been acted upon.

Aubrey Parkman's *Army Engineers in New England* belongs in any respectable Maine history library, as well as in any United States military history collection. This outstanding regional history is supplemented by two related studies dealing with the corps' now-defunct mission of design and construction of fortifications: *Seacoast Fortifications of the United States: An Introductory History* (Washington, D.C., 1970), by E. Raymond Lewis, and Willard B. Robinson's *American Fortifications: Architectural Form and Function* (Urbana, Ill., 1977).

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