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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Chansonetta: The Life and Photographs of Chansonetta Stanley Emmons, 1859-1937 By Marius B. Peladeau. (Waldoboro, Maine: Maine Antiques Digest, 1977. Pp. 96. Paper. \$8.95).

Raymond Then and Now. By Ernest H. Knight. (Raymond, Maine: The Raymond Woman's Club, 1977. Pp. 188. Paper. \$8.00)

Frederick Thompson and Marquis Fayette King are names not likely to kindle recognition in the minds of most readers. The fact that both were Maine photographers, and not painters, has placed them in an historical limbo. Yet both men were respected members of the community and both recorded their eras. As such their careers need to be researched and their work needs to be located and cataloged. Though King photographed the aftermath of the Great Portland Fire of 1866, today he is probably better known as the author of *First Parish Church in Falmouth* (1898). If the reader has time, he or she might look at a copy of *Harper's Monthly Magazine* (September 1909). Illustrating Holman Day's article about the coastal folk of Maine are a number of Frederick Thompson's photographs. Here the photographer has documented the twilight of an era; the images are worth at least a thousand words.

Maine and her people have been the focus of cameras since the apparatus first came into practical use. In 1823, the engraver Abel Bowen planned a view of Portland using a camera obscura. Josephine Cobb, an authority on early photography, has noted that James William Glass, Jr. used a camera lucida during the northeast boundary survey during the 1840s; the results of this survey are now on deposit in the National Archives. One of the oldest true cameras was recently discovered in the York Institute

at Saco, Maine. Maine Historical Society is a veritable Comstock Load of early photographs that begs to be mined.

As the twentieth century gained momentum, a number of Maine photographers, including Bernice Abbott, Kosti Ruohomaa, and Eliot Porter, achieved recognition as artists. But those who preceded them, professional and amateur, remain anonymous. This has little to do with documentation and more to do with lack of interest. Recently, enthusiasm for photographs as art and documentation has been growing. The Wm. Underwood Co. recently circulated an exhibition and short catalogue relating to photographs of William Lyman Underwood (1864-1929). Though not a major artist, Underwood produced a number of strong images of the Maine landscape and of Passamaquoddy guides, including Joe Mell. This effort, organized by Bill Bagnal, points out that the history of photography and the photography of history remains in Maine largely unexplored territory.

Chansonetta, a pioneering probe into this dark area, is of importance to the historian and the art lover as well. In terms of content and design, it is an unusually beautiful book which boasts an introduction by Bernice Abbott and a solid text by Marius B. Peladeau, director of the William A. Farnsworth Museum at Rockland. *Chansonetta*, at the time of this review, has achieved acclaim beyond the borders of Maine. Because it transcends the coffee table niche in that it adds greatly to our collective knowledge, it is indeed worthy of all praise.

Born at Kingfield, Maine, in 1858, "Netta" was the only daughter of Solomon and Apphia Stanley. Among her six brothers, Francis E. and Freelan O. Stanley were to achieve fortune and prominence through the development of the Stanley Steamer automobile and the patent photographic dry-plate. Her brothers' interest in

photographic hardware played no little role in Chansonetta's interest in taking pictures. She attended normal school at Farmington and in the mid-1880s studied with leading genre painters J. G. Brown and J. G. Enneking. Sentimental scenes of urchins or old people made painters like Brown, Charles Caleb Ward, and Thomas Waterman Wood immensely popular in the nineteenth century. If they were too often shallow, their interest in rural scenes, black people, and close-to-earth living was shared by such luminaries as Maine's Eastman Johnson and Winslow Homer. In terms of subject and compositional style, Emmons drew from this tradition.

At the age of forty, Chansonetta lost her husband and returned to Kingfield with her daughter Dorothy (later a painter). Though accepting some help from her wealthy brothers, Emmons determined to follow a career in photography. Her decision was to prove artistically rewarding, if financially meagre. From 1898 until her death in 1937, she sought to capture the twilight of nineteenth-century rural America. In terms of other photographers, Emmons was something of a loner. As Ms. Abbott points out: "Here was consistency – the sensitive, restless eye. No artifice but an eye uncontaminated with fads, trends or cults. She was on her own." I suspect that further evidence will show that painters, with whom she mingled throughout the years, played a larger role than is currently thought.

Less than 1,000 examples of Emmons work are presently catalogued, but this is enough to open a personal window on a remarkable time. A painter can move a tree, expand a room, or tatter a shirt sleeve. A photographer has far less license. Emmons photographed in South Carolina, Colorado, and Wisconsin; but the bulk of her work was done in rural New England. Of special interest are the images of the Kingfield-New Portland region of Maine. First there are the faces and hands of the natives;

the survivors of the last century are possessed of that hard, lean look seldom seen in our day. The young men and women, dressed in more fashionable and less practical clothing than their forebearers, reflect changing times and attitudes. If, as Mr. Peladeau notes, the figures are carefully posed (and often dressed in Sunday clothes while laboring), the settings are unchanged. The interior of a working barn, a pigpen, a gristmill, a workshed, a smithy, or a snug front room (parlor) are true to the smallest detail. For the cultural historian or, indeed, the model builder, the photographs offer a unique insight into how rural people arranged furniture (and what styles they owned), what they hung on their walls and placed on shelves. Of course, the remarkable thing is that all these details are unified in an artistic whole.

The integrity of Emmons's work and the professionalism of those involved in producing the book are key to success. In being asked to review Ernest H. Knight's *Raymond Then and Now*, (Raymond, Maine) at the same time, the reviewer is faced with the pitfall of comparison. It is as if one were asked to access James Joyce's *Ulysses* together with Spike Milligan's *Puckoon*. One is left with the profound conclusion that both works are similar because they are set in Ireland. So too, *Chansonetta* and *Raymond* share the subject of Maine photography.

The cover of Mr. Knight's book is bland and the title is rather ambiguous beyond the town line. Minor complaints, no doubt, but this need not have occurred. If one is going to produce a book, why not make it attractive and salable? Even with a fixed budget, a line drawing on the cover would provide an inexpensive and attractive stimulus. Wouldn't *The Town of Raymond Then and Now* have been a more substantiative title? The too brief introduction might have provided at least a thumbnail sketch of the town's history from its founding in 1804.

These cursory and negative observations provide false keys. Though obviously aimed at a local audience, *Raymond Then and Now* is both an interesting and instructive work. Amateur photographs (more correctly snapshots) provide a strong backbone for Mr. Knight's knowledgeable observations. This pocket exhibition gallery matches old photographs of the town with the contemporary views of the same spots. While some early views are high-quality images, others (the only known views) are out of focus. If not agreeable to art collectors, they provide rich pickings for researchers. For the architectural and cultural historian the views of the Wilson Spring Hotel (a rival of Poland Springs) are most rewarding. Candid shots of townspeople (including Mr. Knight) and volunteers during the fire of August 1914 depict change in the making. Oxen yoked to a haywagon stand in a summer field at the turn of the century; today flags mark it as a golf course. Beneath a marble flap on a tombstone was the tintype of Mary E. Leach; in the forties this unique image was stolen (now recorded only in an early snapshot). Graceful elms and narrow lanes have been replaced by saplings and wide roads. Route 121 was deemed important enough to displace the splendid grandstand at Little Rigby Fairgrounds.

In all the reader-viewer is given a personal and rewarding tour of the town of Raymond by one of its own citizens. This is a rare work that shows both change and endurance in the Maine geography – a quality community scrapbook. For this Mr. Knight should be commended. The only error that I detect was in not aiming high enough. With a little more attention to externals the book would reach a wider readership. The juxtaposition of new and old images is a splendid approach to local history which helps us to explore who we were and where we are. It could help us indicate the trends of our future.

Both books under consideration here follow different approaches but add to our knowledge of Maine on film. If we have a long way to travel, we are pointed in the proper direction.

William David Barry

The Jesuit Heritage in New England. By Vincent A. Lapomarda. (Worcester, Mass.: The Jesuits of Holy Cross, Inc., 1977. Pp. x, 321. Paper. \$5.00)

The author, an associate professor of history at the College of the Holy Cross, chose to write this volume without footnotes "so that the reader can enjoy it without being distracted" (p. vii). It is not a work which will appeal to the general reader, and the scholar searching for information will find this lack of references an irritation rather than a relief. The bibliographical essay which is to make up for the footnotes, while excellent in many ways, is so general and diverse that it is of little help in tracing down the sources used. It is, in reality, a bibliographical essay on Catholicism in New England, not just the Jesuits. This duality is characteristic of the whole volume; what the Catholic Church in general and the Jesuits in particular accomplished becomes intertwined and is difficult to distinguish.

The volume is a collection of facts important and trivial; no synthesis is made of them. In many ways a better title for the volume would have been "Jesuit Contacts in New England," for this is what the author relates without emphasis on the heritage. He has separate chapters on Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, eastern Massachusetts, central Massachusetts, western Massachusetts, southeastern Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Con-

necticut; there is no overall survey or summary. This necessarily leads to much repetition. The chapters start out with the wars of the colonists with the Indians who came from the French Jesuit missions. He notes, in passing, the remark of one Jesuit priest that “he had instructed them [Indians] to beware of killing the children before they were baptised” (p. 133). Was there any relationship – heritage, if you will – of this Jesuit-Indian cooperation to the early anti-Catholic, notably anti-Jesuit, phobia that was prevalent in all New England? This is not discussed or evaluated. The gradual extension of toleration to Catholics is brought out and the founding of many Catholic parishes by both Jesuits and others is chronicled. The dates of the establishment of the various New England dioceses are given and their respective bishops noted, some of them more friendly to the Jesuits than others. All of this and much other material, notably on the early missions and the later Franco-American immigration, is useful information and it is well to have it gathered in one convenient volume. The book, however, is cluttered with irrelevant details such as Brother Laurence J. Monahan’s acing of the second hole in tournament play on the attractive Jesuit golf course at Lake Sunapee (p. 47); that Father David H. Gill was the first Jesuit priest to finish in the Boston Marathon (p. 106); or that Father John P. Haran caught a tuna weighing 660 pounds, measuring 96 inches in length, 74 inches in girth, with a tail spread of 34 inches (p. 162). The author also has a penchant for mentioning honorary degrees awarded by Jesuit institutions and for tracing the ancestry and relations of individuals. Yet, he never explains how all this nondescript information – and the book abounds in it – constitutes significant Jesuit heritage.

There are a number of appendices of varying value which give the names of Jesuit provincials in New England, pastors of Jesuit churches, presidents of Jesuit

schools, bishops who attended Jesuit schools, public servants who attended Jesuit schools (a curious listing), Jesuit natives of New England (both living and deceased), Jesuit military chaplains from New England, and Jesuit historic sites and places of interest, some of which are far fetched. There is an index only of names with page numbers; no informational data or classification of entries is provided.

Ernest C. Helmreich
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The Landing: A Remembrance of Her People and Shipyards. By Thomas W. Murphy, Jr. (Kennebunk, Maine: Thomas Murphy, Publisher, 1977. Pp. 55. Paper. \$3.95).

The author indicates in his subtitle and introduction his desire to produce a “remembrance” of the era 1766-1867 when some dozen shipyards crowded the one mile plus of shoreline of the Kennebunk River known as “The Landing.” He has accomplished this in an attractively illustrated book written in a most readable style.

Readers from eastern Maine will become better acquainted with Reverend Daniel Little, the first minister at the Landing, and the missionary preacher who married many ancestors of the early families of Penobscot Bay and ever further to the east. Rev. Little’s place in the story of the Landing is cleverly woven into the history of the section of Wells that became Kennebunk.

Thomas Murphy divides his account of shipbuilding at the Landing into two periods, 1766-1830 and 1830-1867. He includes a map for each period showing the location of the shipyards and continues with brief biographies of the owners, including data on some of the vessels built by

each. The author skillfully injects into these descriptions of the people of the Landing engaging anecdotes which reveal much about the individual personalities. The reader meets the thoughtful Tobias Lord who allowed the teamsters bringing their lumber from up-river to sleep in his kitchen without charge whereas the more thrifty Theodore Lyman charged the teamsters for sleeping in the shed behind his house. This same Theodore Lyman also charged Captain William Sturgis freight on cannon when he returned from a voyage during which he used this armament to protect the Lyman-owned vessel from pirates.

This reviewer chuckled over the yarn about Joseph Swett, the teamster, who became irritated at the wealthy shipyard owners when they “treated him as a backwoods farmer.” Joseph built a thirty-ton schooner on his farm and had it hauled by fifty oxen to the Landing some twenty miles away. Also of interest to the marine historian is the mention of the ship *Avon*, built at the Landing in 1860 and captured by the Confederate privateer *Florida* in 1864. The *Avon* is not included in the list of Maine-built vessels captured by Confederate privateers found in Rowe’s *Maritime History of Maine*.

The foresight of the shipyard owners, when larger vessels came into demand and the depth of water at this section of the river was not sufficient to allow them to get to Kennebunkport after launching, would do credit to our coastal towns today. Twenty shipbuilders and owners cooperated to build a lock forty-two feet wide that made possible shipbuilding at the Landing for another nineteen years. By 1867 even this lock would not carry the large barks and ships in demand for the Cape Horn trade and shipbuilding at the Landing vanished.

The Landing, while not a history of this community, draws a revealing picture of the way of life for an era that

will not repeat itself. All readers will hope that Thomas Murphy, Jr. will continue his interest in the maritime history of the hamlet where he lives and at a later date will produce an in-depth book listing the vessels built, their owners, and their captains.

William H. Pendleton
Penobscot Marine Museum

A History of the Town of Hancock, 1828-1979. Prepared by the Sesquicentennial Committee of the Town of Hancock. (Ellsworth, Maine: Downeast Graphics, 1979. Pp. xiv, 288. Paper. \$12.00).

The unusually complete coverage of recent history sets this volume apart from most town histories, even commemorative ones. Readers are informed in the introduction, written by Dr. George Haskins, of the Sesquicentennial Committee's distinctive aim:

It is not the purpose of this Volume merely to praise famous men and women, but to remember all who are or have been members of the Hancock community, regardless of age, occupation or affiliation. This Volume, therefore, is by no means concerned only with the past, as history, but also with the community of today.

The inclusion of such subjects as modern houses and current elementary school classes in the pictorial record reflects this philosophy.

In format, this volume follows the trend of modern town histories. The subject matter is topically arranged; chronological development is not general, but takes place within each topical and geographical subsection. Following an introductory chapter on the centennial celebration of 1928, the contents are divided into two major sections: a topographical survey of the town's various neighborhoods and landmarks, and chapters covering town government,

businesses, and other institutions. Generous space is devoted to shipping and shipbuilding, for which the present-day commuters' suburb of Ellsworth was known in the nineteenth century. Also included is a detailed account of the transformation of some coastal parts of town in the late nineteenth century by the rise of the resort business and the coming to town of prominent vacationers such as the historian Frederick Jackson Turner. A touch of the bizarre is found in the story of "Austin's Castle," a dream house built about 1880 by a wealthy New York jeweler and inhabited for nearly a half-century by his two unmarried daughters who kept regular around-the-clock watches on their property.

Designed and printed by Downeast Graphics of Ellsworth, this volume is 8½ by 11 inches in size, with very wide margins to allow several photographs to be fitted around the text on each page. This relatively uncommon format allowed the Committee to insert hundreds of illustrations without lengthening the book.

The completeness of the textual and pictorial record of the townspeople and their activities in recent and present times adds a dimension seldom found in town histories. For this reason alone it is worth reading even by those unacquainted with Hancock or its history. A town map would have made it easier for such readers to follow the narratives of the neighborhoods. Biographical sketches and family histories would have been welcome bonuses; however, the book is adequate without them.

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