

4-1-1980

Book Reviews

Charles E. Clark
University of New Hampshire

James S. Leaman
Bates College

Richard P. Mallett
Maine Historical Society

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Clark, Charles E., James S. Leaman, and Richard P. Mallett. "Book Reviews." *Maine History* 19, 4 (1980): 251-259. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol19/iss4/5>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

Massachusetts: A Bicentennial History. By Richard D. Brown. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978. Pp. 246. Hardcover. \$9.95).

The best way for an author to deal with the stringent guidelines of the States and the Nation Series was to pick a theme and pretty much stick with it. Otherwise, it's hard to see how a two-hundred page interpretive essay, or "summing up," as the editors called it, "of what seemed significant about his or her state's history" – to be produced within a year after signing the contract – could come off very well.

For his volume on Massachusetts, Richard D. Brown chose the changing tensions between various political and social values: piety and plenty, virtue and liberty, homogeneity and pluralism, majority and minority, individual and community. Whether the theme was a deliberate choice or a discovery along the way, Brown's focus was an appropriate one. Certainly, if Massachusetts has contributed any special lessons of value to the nation, it is precisely the lessons of adjustment and accommodation that emerge from its long transition from a hierarchical, homogeneous, orthodox Puritan commonwealth to the multi-ethnic industrial state of today. Moreover, most of these accommodations have been of the sort demanding the creative application of politics. And again, if there are any special fields in which Massachusetts has made contributions that are especially conspicuous, they are the fields of education on the one hand and politics on the other.

Professor Brown, now at the University of Connecticut, has written previously on Revolutionary and early

industrial Massachusetts. For examples of his theme, one might look at his handling of each of these periods.

On the eve of the Revolutionary crisis, writes Brown, “Yankee culture and British culture – the one ascetic and oriented toward fulfilling the aspirations of common farmers and tradesmen, the other, frankly elitist and cosmopolitan, aimed at refinement, excellence, and order – were rivals for the future dominion of Massachusetts.” The two streams of social development came into direct conflict with the new British commercial legislation of the 1760s. By the 1780s, Yankee resistance had carried the day and the people of the commonwealth had become “self-conscious republicans who . . . were eager to establish a republic of virtue as a successor to the Puritans’ city on a hill.”

With the various leveling and democratizing influences of the 1790s and early 1800s, the Federalist ideal of public virtue capitulated to the majoritarian ideal of liberty, but then as immigration and urbanization accompanied the rise of industry in the first half of the nineteenth century, still other accommodations became necessary. One was the democratization of opportunity through the broadening of education. This came by way of the improvement of public schools under the influence of Horace Mann, the establishment of various colleges to break the monopoly of Harvard, the public library movement, and the proliferation of the popular periodical press. Another was the recognition of true religious and ethnic pluralism, which enforced a fresh and broadened consideration of “the old problem of reconciling individual and corporate goals.”

Thus the theme sustains and validates the narrative, which within the limits of the series format Professor Brown is able to furnish with enough political, economic, and social detail to give his reader a sufficiently rich notion

of the long and complex history of the commonwealth for a basic understanding and a thirst for more. One of the book's strongest assets is its series of biographical sketches that are worked into most chapters by way of illustrating the more important generalizations. Thus Thomas Hutchinson and John Adams are described in illuminatingly juxtaposed sketches, as are William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Philips, Henry Cabot Lodge and Benjamin F. Butler, and Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis D. Brandeis.

The Kennedys get a small section of their own; it is by now a familiar story, of course, but this chronicle of the rise over four generations from poverty and discrimination to wealth, position, and power receives swift, vivid, and sympathetic treatment. At the same time, it nails down Brown's final observation about the state of Massachusetts pluralism today: That although ethnic pluralism survives, ethnicity no longer has the political and social meaning it once had. "Gaining access to the inner sanctum of Yankee society was a vital aspiration for Joseph and Rose Kennedy," Brown comments, "but by the 1970s these old longings had become anachronistic." Although ethnic politics were not exactly dead by 1970, in his view, by this time "wealth, education, personality, and, most of all, performance counted more than ethnicity." Brown's observation is probably truer even at this stage for the relatively few Massachusetts politicians of national importance than for Massachusetts politics on more prosaic levels, but one can hardly argue with his assessment of the general trend.

Brown's *Massachusetts* is by no means perfect. I thought his chapter organization occasionally led him into some awkward problems of arrangement and classification. Moreover, even acknowledging the need for rigorous selectivity in this series, I found it surprising that in the

chapter on nineteenth-century reform entitled "Missions to the Nation," there was no specific mention of what I had always thought of as the granddaddy of all modern missionary efforts, the Massachusetts-founded American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions.

On the whole, however, this is a fine contribution to the series and a thoughtful discussion of the meaning of Massachusetts history.

Charles E. Clark
University of New Hampshire

Discovering Maine's Archaeological Heritage. Edited by David Sanger. (Augusta, Maine: Maine Historic Preservation Commission, 1979. Pp. 156. Paper. Free. 50¢ postage).

The stated purpose of this book is "to make available to the public, in an up-to-date fashion, some information on the archaeology of Maine." In a limited way the book achieves its limited objective; but it is a curious publication. In the first place, the title presumes too much; more correctly the book ought to be titled, *Discovering Maine's Prehistoric Archaeological Heritage*. Out of the ten chapters, only one deals with *historical* archaeology, a brief survey of historic sites and site management by Robert Bradley, a member of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. The remaining chapters are largely previously published articles and site reports by David Sanger of the Department of Anthropology, University of Maine at Orono. Robert MacKay co-authors one report with

Sanger, and Bruce Bourque of the Maine State Museum contributes one of his own. Thus, with the exception of Bradley, the authors are all prehistoric archaeologists dealing exclusively with prehistoric topics. Indeed, there is cause to wonder why the Bradley chapter was ever included since it made no impression whatever on editor Sanger who, in the book's conclusion, confines himself only to the "prehistoric record" and largely repeats many of Bradley's observations concerning the training of archaeologists and the management of sites.

In addition to its limited scope, the book lacks an intellectual unity – a problem inherent in its stated purpose merely to convey information. The result is a veritable smorgasbord of archaeological data with no unifying theme except chronology. Instead of emphasizing an overall thematic approach to Maine's prehistory, Sanger has chosen to republish several occasional papers, each an entity in itself, covering the period from 11,000 years ago to the archaeological present. After a brief introduction, designated as "Chapter 1," there follows a series of chapters by Sanger dealing with paleo-environments of Maine and the Maritimes, with the scarcity of sites between 10,000-5,000 years before the present, and with the *Hirundo* site in the town of Alton. Bruce Bourque then contributes a preliminary report of his work at the Turner farm on North Haven. The Sanger papers resume with essays on the Red Paint People, then an archaeological report on the area that would be affected by the proposed Dickey-Lincoln dam project on the Saint John River, followed by a chapter on the Ceramic Period, bringing the survey up to the historic period in Maine, about 1600 A.D. After Bradley's essay on historical archaeology in the state, Sanger completes the publication with a concluding chapter.

The presence of a conclusion implies an effort to bring the foregoing essays and reports into some sort of unified perspective. But what can be done in five and one half pages, most of which are devoted to problems of resource management? Obviously not very much. The conclusion is, in effect, a non-conclusion, and the disparate chapters stand on their own merit with only chronology as an integrating element.

Yet for all its limitations in organization and scope, *Discovering Maine's Archaeological Heritage* does make a contribution. Sanger and his fellow authors are all professional archaeologists, and their various reports and essays reveal their more recent efforts to identify, interpret and preserve some of our most vital non-renewable records of the past. Their reports reflect their attention to detail and their reluctance to generalize on scanty evidence. When they do permit themselves such a luxury, the results can be fascinating indeed. A case in point is Sanger's interpretative essay, "Who Were the Red Paints?" His hypothesis is that this distinctive burial custom does not identify a unique people, but rather a specialized burial cult which stretched from the Great Lakes eastward and from the Kennebec into Newfoundland for a thousand years, ending about 3,600 years ago. Writes Sanger, "'Who Were the Red Paints?', I have tried to show how our research has lead to the conclusion that *there never were any such people*. What we as archaeologists have been guilty of doing is excavating the physical remains of a specialized burial cult and treating that evidence as if it pertained to their entire culture. No wonder they have remained so mysterious!"

A cult instead of a culture – an intriguing insight, all the more since this issue underlies implicitly or explicitly virtually every one of the individual essays. What defines a culture and how do cultures change? Editor Sanger

touches on these themes in a tantalizing fashion in his introduction and returns to them briefly in his conclusion. Several chapters address the issues head on: does cultural change imply population replacement? Are environmental changes responsible for cultural alterations? And what is the role of ideas — as in the spread of a burial cult? Are there recognized means by which archaeologists define one culture from another, a cult from a culture? More vigorous editing might have knit up the disparate chapters with these unifying themes of cultural identification and change. The potential is there, but it is not realized. One mitigating factor, however, is that for those who wish to pursue the subject on their own, the references for each chapter and the bibliography at the end of the book provide a wealth of information.

James S. Leamon
Bates College

History of Hebron Academy. By Harold E. Hall. (Hebron, Maine: Trustees of the Academy, 1979. Pp. 308. Hardcover. \$9.95).

In 1804 the citizens of Hebron were exhilarated by the news that they had been granted a charter for an academy, “for the purpose of promoting piety and virtue, and for the education of youth.” Three years later, Hebron Academy was given half the township of what is now Monson. But such acres were difficult to sell and were not likely to be converted quickly into badly needed money. It

was indeed fortunate that Hebron Academy was always to have devoted, generous, and stout-hearted trustees. (For example, they are the publishers of this book). Many Maine academies would have been unable to survive unsalable land, destructive fires, uncollected debts, depressions, unfulfilled pledges of financial support, and periodic apathy and mismanagement. Moreover, a considerable number of Maine academies, if they survived all the perils enumerated above, would give way in the latter part of the nineteenth century to the public-supported high schools. How Hebron retained its identity, vigor, and effectiveness through the years is an important and fascinating part of Mr. Hall's story.

A small institution in the first years of its existence, Hebron refused to give up even though it had at least its full share of discouragements and setbacks. Its powers of recuperation sometimes seemed miraculous. Fires were particularly damaging to the geographically isolated academy. Stephen Emery, and other distinguished alumni, were delighted that Hebron was so far removed from urban sin, but it was also removed, for a destructively long time, from a satisfactory water supply. In Hebron's case, as we learn from Mr. Hall's book, "the fidelity and prudence of the board of trustees" kept the institution alive. Before the Civil War, headmasters came and went in rapid succession; continuity and the will-to-live were supplied by loyal trustees.

It was interesting to note that even though Hebron was a private school, many of its devoted sons and daughters distinguished themselves in public education. Perhaps this was partly because Hebron officials were always mindful of what they considered to be their obligations to the community and the general area. After attending and teaching in Hebron, George C. Purington and his wife, Sarah, devoted twenty-six years to public education at

Farmington Normal School. Freelan O. Stanley, one of the major benefactors of Hebron, started his adult life as a public school teacher and then taught at Farmington Normal before fragile health convinced him that he should seek physical vigor in Estes Park, Colorado. Since he was for several years the oldest living alumnus of the Farmington Normal School, he obviously found it. Mark H. Dunnell was one of the heroes in Maine's struggle for improved public schools, and he was also one of Hebron's most illustrious and loyal sons. As superintendent of common schools, he pushed hard for improved training for prospective teachers, and he edited and published the first educational journal in the state, *The Maine Teacher*. From 1852 to 1855, he served as preceptor at Hebron and was there during a period many consider a golden age, partly because of the high quality of the students, many of whom later attained national prominence. After the Civil War, Dunnell became a congressman from Minnesota, but he retained an ardent interest in Hebron Academy and all its activities throughout his life.

Mr. Hall has collected an astonishing amount of Hebroniana. Every gift to the institution seems to have been noted, and every alteration to buildings or landscape, no matter how minute, has been described. The book may suffer from this possibly excessive thoroughness. William E. Sargent, Ralph L. Hunt, and especially Claude L. Allen appear to have been an exceedingly able trio of headmasters. It probably would have helped us to understand better why Hebron flourished for so long if we had learned more about them. But one can appreciate the service Mr. Hall has performed by his diligence in amassing and preserving all the facts one encounters in his *History of Hebron Academy*.

Richard P. Mallett
Maine Historical Society