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ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN MINIATURE:
THE PRINCE OF WALES IN PORTLAND, MAINE, 1860

WILLIAM J. BAKER

MEMORANDA AND DOCUMENTS

ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN MINIATURE: THE PRINCE OF WALES IN PORTLAND, MAINE, 1860

WILLIAM J. BAKER

IN early October, 1860, the tenor of life in Maine was little different from other autumns. Despite a minor typhoid epidemic in Lewiston and an early cold spell which destroyed the cranberry crop, caused apples to freeze on the trees in Machias, and produced an eight-inch snowfall in Aroostook County, life went on as usual. Liquor was being seized under the clauses of the Maine Law; the Wide Awakes were mobilizing for an excursion to a massive demonstration in Boston on October 16; and the Grand Division of the Sons of Temperance were busily planning their annual convention, scheduled for October 30 in Bangor. Five ships nearing completion were on the stocks in Bath and another five in Calais. The rogue who stole the tongue from the churchbell in Skowhegan merely gave the locals a fresh topic for gossip as Mainicans braced themselves for winter.¹

On the morning of October 16, however, natives within a fifty-mile radius of Portland were startled to hear rumbles that at first sounded like thunder. Soon it became obvious that the noise was the sound of cannon fire. Only the regular readers of Portland newspapers had no reason to fear that the Maine coast was under attack from a hostile fleet; for several days the citizens of Portland had been awaiting the arrival of a British Royal Squadron. From Portland the Prince of Wales—Albert Edward (1841-1910), the future King Edward VII—would depart for home following a lengthy tour of Canada and the United States.² Now as the *Hero*, with its 90 guns, the *Ariadne*, 26 guns, and the *Flying Fish*, 6 guns, entered the harbor, the *Hero* fired a 21-gun salute. After the fleet anchored,

¹ *The Eastern Argus* (Portland), Oct. 6-23, 1860.

² For details of the entire tour, see Sir John Gardner Dillman Englehart, *Journal of the Progress of H. R. H. The Prince of Wales through British North America: and his Visit to the United States, 10th July to 15th November, 1860*. Privately printed in England, n. d. (1861?).

the cannons at Fort Preble returned the salute, and the *Hero* responded. Thus began a noisy and festive occasion.³

The historic nature of the event was not lost on Maine natives. Several newspapers noted that exactly eighty-five years earlier—on October 16, 1775—a British fleet entered Portland harbor and destroyed the town. Now Great Britain and the United States were intent on establishing friendly relations, an attitude underscored by the pomp and ceremony of October 16-20. Several days before the Prince of Wales arrived in Portland, *The Eastern Argus* predicted that this event would “cultivate those amicable relations which a common origin, a common language and common interests teach it to be our duty, as we have no doubt it will be as much the pleasure of our people to do.”⁴

Amicable relations were certainly in need of cultivation. Although “Anglo-American relations proper had never seemed so auspicious” as in 1860,⁵ a backlog of bitterness existed. Ever since the Revolutionary War, British disdain had been met with American distrust. The imperial interests of the mother country inevitably clashed with the designs of a fledgling nation attempting to claim her “natural” boundaries and define her sphere of influence, while being racked with the necessity of determining her own essential being as a body politic. Commercial rivalry and American debt repudiations in the 1820’s and 1830’s had strained diplomatic relations further exacerbated by border disputes in Maine, Texas, and Oregon. In the abortive Aroostook War of 1839—just over two decades before the Prince of Wales appeared in Portland—Maine soldiers marched north to battle the redcoats, singing:

Britannia shall not rule the Maine,
Nor shall she rule the water;
They’s sung that song full long enough,
Much longer than they oughter.⁶

Although actual fighting did not ensue, the citizenry of Portland

³ *The Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Oct. 19, 25, 1860; *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 17, 1860.

⁴ *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Oct. 15, 1860; *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 8, 17, 1860.

⁵ H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (London, 1954), 451.

⁶ T. A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York, 1950), 214.

were especially belligerent in their readiness to settle the Aroostook border controversy with shot and shell.⁷

By 1860, however, there was little place for such chauvinism. The United States was faced with the prospect of an armed civil strife for the Union itself. Britain, thwarted in North America, had just tasted the bitter fruit of indecisive victory in the Crimean War (1854-1856), a fiasco which revealed the incompetence of her political and military leadership. Neither nation stood to gain by the harboring of hostilities. Thus the editor of *The Times* of London explained that the Prince of Wales was visiting the United States in order to bridge "the bloody chasm which for near a century has gaped" between England and the United States, as he was to be the agent for assuaging the American "triumph of success" as well as the British "sneers of disappointed dominion."⁸ After a slow, two-month progression from Cape Breton to Toronto, the royal party entered the United States on September 20. The itinerary—Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Washington, Richmond, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston—was punctuated with numerous levees, balls, and visits with prominent Americans, including President Buchanan. Throughout the trip the Prince of Wales apparently gave himself freely to interested Americans, dancing with the ladies, taking a few insults from some red-necks in Richmond, and expressing delight with the various shrines of American democracy. Although only eighteen years of age, he had been well-tutored in diplomacy. Local newspapers praised his charm.

While Portland had the Prince for the least amount of time of any major American city on his itinerary, Portlanders themselves were unsparing in their hospitality. Agog at the royal fleet in harbor, they feted the officers and arranged for visitors from all over New England to bid the royal party farewell. Two weeks before the arrival of the fleet, civic leaders began planning for the occasion. At the center of the activities was to be a grand ball in the City Hall, with the British officers as the guests of honor. Flowers, evergreen, and colorful autumn leaves were placed all around the hall. British and American flags were draped over the windows; portraits of Queen Victoria and President Buchanan adorned the

⁷ David Lowenthal, "The Maine Press and the Aroostook War," *The Canadian Historical Review*, xxxii (1951), 332.

⁸ Quoted in Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 443.

walls; and on a large center window was printed a crown and shield, with a lion on one side and an eagle on the other set beneath a painted pair of clasped hands with the inscribed mottoes, "Dieu et mon droit" and "E pluribus unum." On the opposite wall was a painting of the arms of Maine.⁹

At 8 P.M. on Wednesday evening, October 17, carriages began arriving at City Hall. Spectators thronged the entrance as about 700 people made their way into the hall. Shortly after 9 P.M. the Portland Orchestra arrived, along with six violin players imported from Boston; and at 9:45, when the officers of the fleet entered, the orchestra struck up "God Save the Queen," followed by "Hail Columbia." The officers, in the words of *The Eastern Argus*, "soon found themselves at home, among the fair daughters of Maine," as they danced to tune after tune.¹⁰ Food was served from midnight until 3 A.M.; and according to a reporter from *The New-York Times*, the Maine Law was circumvented in the city of Neal Dow himself, as champagne "flowed like water, and was patronized freely."¹¹ The elite of Portland were having their fling.

Two groups of people were certainly not at the ball. None of the Portland poor were to be seen, since tickets cost \$10. Nor were the common sailors from the royal squadron allowed to attend. During their entire five days in Portland harbor, they were never even granted leave to come ashore for fear that they would desert the rigors of ship life. In fact, within those five days, eight men jumped overboard, swam to shore, and were never heard from again. All the while the officers were busy enjoying Portland's social life. In addition to the ball on Wednesday night, several officers attended a play, "The Invisible Prince," on Thursday night, and a musical evening of Scottish singing and dancing on Friday.¹²

On Thursday morning, October 18, the royal squadron was made complete with the arrival of the man-of-war, the *Nile*, 91 guns, and the *Styx*, 6 guns—once again with the appropriate salutes to and from Fort Preble. All day Thursday and Friday harbor

⁹ *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 5, 18, 1860.

¹⁰ *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Oct. 19, 1860; *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 18, 1860.

¹¹ *The New-York Times*, Oct. 20, 1860.

¹² *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Oct. 24, 1860; *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 19, 1860.

steamers did a brisk business, transporting thousands of sightseers to the ships. "Everything in the shape of a boat, that would float," according to one report, "was freighted with human beings visiting the British Squadron." Although the *Hero*, the Prince of Wales's official vessel, was closed to visitors, it received a visit from the Mayor of Portland, a former United States senator from Augusta, a judge from Bangor, the United States Consul at Halifax, and the governor of the state, Lot M. Morrill.¹³

By Friday evening, with the Prince's arrival from Boston anticipated on the following day, Portland was packed with visitors. From Montreal and Quebec, the Grand Trunk Railroad issued excursion tickets at \$5.50 per person. Special trains left Montreal on Friday evening to return on Saturday night. On Saturday morning, October 20, extra trains ran from Bangor, stopping at every station along the route; and according to *The Eastern Argus*, "vehicles of all descriptions were pouring in from the adjoining towns." After estimating that no less than 5,000 people from outside Portland would be on hand for the Prince of Wales's arrival, the Portland police force swore in fifty extra men.¹⁴

Yankee businessmen did not let the commercial opportunity slip through their grasp. Hotels and restaurants did a thriving business. A small firm, Robinson and Johnson, advertised their abundant supply of American and English flags "of various sizes and appropriate mottos." Two large steamers, the *Lewiston* and the *Forest City*, sold tickets for a voyage to accompany the royal squadron out of the harbor. "TWO PRINCES IN OUR CITY," one ingenious Portlander advertised. "The Prince of Wales and the Prince of Pedlars, with his excellent strops at 25 cents each. 'Who'll have another?'"¹⁵

Meanwhile a three-car train bearing the Prince of Wales and his entourage left Boston shortly after ten o'clock in the morning, and passed through large crowds gathered at the stations in Lynn, Salem, Ipswich, Newburyport, Portsmouth, and Kennebunk. The

¹³ *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 19, 20, 1860; *The Portland Advertiser*, Oct. 20, 1860.

¹⁴ *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Oct. 12, 13, 17, 1860; *The Portland Transcript*, Oct. 27, 1860. The numerical impact of 5,000 visitors can best be seen in comparison with the population of Portland, 26,342 according to a census in 1860: William Willis, *The History of Portland from 1632-1864* (Portland, 1865), 770.

¹⁵ *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 20, 1860.

officials of the Eastern Railway had fitted out a special car for the Prince, with walls covered in rich red and gold silk; and with plush carpets, huge mirrors, and exquisite silver. Traveling in the other two cars were the governors of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the President of Harvard, the Mayor of Boston, Senator Charles Sumner, and officials of the railway and their cronies.¹⁶ Between Portsmouth and Portland the Prince asked the entire group to dine with him. During lunch he turned to the Governor of Massachusetts: "Will you take a little wine, or is the Maine Law in force here?" he asked. "I'm out of my own jurisdiction," the Governor replied, "and I'll take the consequences."¹⁷

At half past one the train pulled into the station at Portland, where the Prince was welcomed formally by the Mayor. Several reporters noted with disappointment that the physical appearance of the heir apparent was unimpressive. His smooth face, dark hair, and medium height were in no way extraordinary; nor were his blue frock coat, light gray trousers, cravat, and hat "in the pattern of 1854." "In short," noted *The Portland Transcript*, "we have seen many finer looking young men than this royal heir."¹⁸ No doubt many of the onlookers would have agreed with a New York reporter, who suggested that "Dressed like a Prince" was a phrase which would never again be used in America to signify "anything very significant or *recherché*."¹⁹ Rather than awed by royalty's ostentatiousness, some Portlanders were disappointed that the Prince appeared to be so much like one of them.

From the train the party boarded carriages to make a zig-zag tour through the city on the way to the wharf. Military bands played gaily; the Portland Rifle Corps marched on either side of the carriage in which the Prince and the Mayor rode. Mounted police tried to keep back the crowd which lined the streets and filled the sidewalks. "What a throng! Such a jam." *The Portland Transcript* reported, "such a scramble over sidewalk obstructions, under horses' heads and carriage bodies, such cutting around and

¹⁶ *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 22, 1860.

¹⁷ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (New York), Nov. 3, 1860. See Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII. A Biography*, 2 vols. (New York, 1925), I, 105; Lee erroneously sets this scene on the deck of the *Hero* just before the Prince's departure.

¹⁸ *Portland Transcript*, Oct. 27, 1860.

¹⁹ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, Nov. 3, 1860.

crowding about, were never seen before."²⁰ But despite the commotion, the crowd was quiet. Even a drunken Irishman who kept calling for "Three cheer-rs for the Prince!" could elicit no response.²¹

Shortly before 4 P.M. the carriages arrived at the docks. The Prince of Wales shook hands and offered his gratitude to the reception committee, then turned to the boat, with its twelve oarsmen, which would take him to the *Hero*. When the Royal Standard was hoisted, a salute was fired from each of the five ships in the harbor. Upon reaching the *Hero* the Prince was greeted with a resounding cheer from the sailors who lined the decks of the ships; then another 21-gun salute was fired, casting a haze of gun-smoke across the harbor.²² All the while, according to one witness who noted his impressions in his diary, "every accessible point favorable for a view of the grand scene was occupied, and the harbor crowded with steamers and boats filled with eager spectators."²³ At 4:30 anchors were weighed, and shortly before dark the fleet sailed past the lighthouse, headed for Britain. On the outer edge of the harbor, a retired sea captain lowered the flag in his front yard and gave a musket salute to each vessel as it passed. Each ship dipped its colors in return, a fittingly quaint finish to a day given to a bombastic display of guns, boats, and flags.²⁴

Some Mainers were not altogether satisfied. Originally the secretary of the royal entourage had announced that the Prince would spend seven or eight hours in Portland, possibly even a night. His hasty exit rankled local feelings, prompting *The Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* to note the "rather cavalier treatment towards Portland, on the part of his Royal Highness—considering that flourishing city is the natural seaport of His Royal Highness's future Canadian Provinces." A new play which had opened only a

²⁰ *Portland Transcript*, Oct. 27, 1860.

²¹ *The New York Daily Tribune*, Oct. 22, 1860. Although Irishmen represented 10 percent of the population in Portland in 1860 (Willis, *History of Portland*, 774), this is the only available reference to Irishmen's response to the Prince of Wales in Portland. Given the American Irishman's understandable hatred of the English, the explanation for the silence may reside in the Anglo-Saxon predilections of Portland newspaper editors.

²² *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 22, 1860.

²³ MS. Diary of William Willis, Oct. 15, 1860 (Microfilm in Fogler Library, University of Maine at Orono, Film 679, fol. 203).

²⁴ *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Oct. 24, 1860.

week earlier in Portland, "The Invisible Prince," suggested a sequel: "Look Quick or You Lose Him!"²⁵

Unaware of the criticism, the Prince's official diarist put pen to paper as the *Hero* was leaving Portland Harbor. He too was struck with the "strange coincidence" that only eighty-five years ago a British squadron had destroyed Portland, the same town that was "now taking enthusiastic leave of the Prince." Most of all, he was impressed with the "strong feeling of kinship" between Great Britain and the United States which the occasion had revealed.²⁶ Nor was he alone in his optimism. The Duke of Newcastle, the Prince's chaperone throughout the tour, reasoned that the royal party left Portland with America "a faster friend to our country than they have been since their separation."²⁷ "Let what will be in store for America," *The London Post* added, "as long as she cherishes such hearty feelings towards this country as she has expressed by her attention to our popular young Prince, she may count to a very large extent upon the love and sympathy of the English people."²⁸

Similar sentiment was dominant in Maine. Although there was a great deal of provincial pride and self-congratulation—expressed most effusively by the editor of *The Bath Times*, who declared that "the magnificent display of water craft in the most beautiful harbor of the most beautiful city on the Atlantic coast" marked "an occasion which has never had its parallel in our history; which may never be paralleled hereafter"²⁹—most editors were anxious to underscore the larger significance of the occasion. *The Kennebec Journal's* summary was characteristic: the exuberant farewell to the Prince and his party indicated the "idea and fact of concord" between two great nations who henceforward would be unified in their mission to extend freedom, culture, prosperity, and religious principles in the world.³⁰

Unfortunately those optimistic prophecies concerning Anglo-American relations were not to be fulfilled in the immediate fu-

²⁵ *Bangor Daily Whig* . . . , Oct. 20, 22, 1860.

²⁶ Englehart, *Journal of the Progress of H. R. H. The Prince of Wales*, 99, 101.

²⁷ John Martineau, *The Life of Henry Pelham Fifth Duke of Newcastle 1811-1864* (London, 1908), 300.

²⁸ Quoted in *Eastern Argus*, Nov. 6, 1860.

²⁹ Quoted in *Eastern Argus*, Oct. 29, 1860.

³⁰ *The Kennebec Journal* (Augusta), Oct. 26, 1860.

ture. Within a year of the Prince's goodwill tour, the United States was embroiled in civil war which divided opinion in Britain as well as in America. Although Queen Victoria herself declared that her interest in the well-being of the American people could not "but be increased by the kind and cordial reception given by them to the Prince of Wales during his recent visit,"³¹ the British government's position of neutrality, and *The Times'* support of the Confederacy aroused hostile suspicion in the Union states. Barely over a year after the Prince of Wales left Portland, the Unionists boarded a British steamer, the *Trent*, and forcibly removed two Confederate agents. Lord Palmerston, England's Prime Minister, responded by rushing troops into Canada in readiness for war.³²

In the light of the festivities of the previous autumn, it was ironic indeed that the city fathers of Portland felt themselves so vulnerable to attack. Fearing that in the event of war the British navy would first attempt to occupy Portland, the Mayor directed the setting up of heavy artillery at Fort Preble—for serious battle, not gentlemanly salutes.³³ Those recent expressions of mutual good will embodied in the Prince of Wales's visit seemed far removed from the diplomatic realities of national self-interests. While no one would dispute H. C. Allen's truism that friendly international relations cannot be sustained solely on "the powerful but sometimes fickle bond of emotion,"³⁴ one would be remiss to conclude that emotion—the spontaneous intention of friendliness—is not a part of the fabric of amicable relations between nations. Able diplomacy born of the willingness to compromise healed the breach created by the *Trent* case, as it did in the even more serious *Alabama* affair shortly thereafter.³⁵ Such compromise itself was in the spirit of Queen Victoria's words to President Buchanan, written on the eve of the Prince of Wales's departure

³¹ Quoted in Beckles Willson, *America's Ambassadors to England 1785-1928* (London, 1928), 308.

³² See Kenneth Bourne, "British Preparations for War with the North, 1861-1862," *English Historical Review*, LXXVI, 600-632 (1961).

³³ Robin W. Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years* (Baltimore, 1960), 88-89; Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America 1815-1908* (Berkeley, 1967), 235-236.

³⁴ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 17-18.

³⁵ See E. D. Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (London, 1925), and Maureen M. Robson, "The Alabama Claims and the Anglo-American Reconciliation, 1865-71," *Canadian Historical Review*, XLII, 1-22 (1961).

in 1860, expressing "anxiety to maintain the best possible relations between England and the United States, 'two nations of kindred origin and character.'"³⁶ Obviously the sense of a common future was of even greater importance for Anglo-American relations than was the fact of a common heritage. In a firm intuitive grasp of the realities of that long-range future lay the significance of Portland's extravagant farewell—brief, provincial, and gaudy as it was—to the future King of England.

THE NEW ENGLAND NOTEBOOKS OF JOHN WHEELWRIGHT*

ALVIN H. ROSENFELD

EVER since Samuel Sewall and Cotton Mather, New Englanders have been recording in notebooks, diaries, and journals their daily impressions of the life of their region as well as the private complexities of their inner lives, and in so doing have enhanced the annals of both American history and literature. The tradition of nonfictional prose of the nineteenth century is intimately related to the notebooks and journals of such writers as Hawthorne, Emerson, and Thoreau, and this tradition continues into the twentieth century with the equally important notebooks and travel books of Henry Adams and Henry James. Through these collections of personal confession, memoir, topical observation, aphorism, anecdote, and vignette, we have gained rich insights into the life and mind of New England. If there is—or was—such a peculiarly regional phenomenon as a New England consciousness, then the tradition of personal account-keeping in the diaries and journals must be considered a valuable part of its expression.

A heretofore unknown but interesting addition to this body of literature are the New England notebooks of John Wheelwright, a Boston poet of the 1920's and 1930's and one of the most original figures of his day. Austin Warren, his friend and earliest biogra-

³⁶ Sidney Lee, *Queen Victoria* (New York, 1903), 305.

* John Wheelwright's notebooks are printed here with the permission of the Curator of the Harris Collection of the John Hay Library of Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.