

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE.

1862.

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1862.

FORTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 17.

REPORT

OF

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The Joint Standing Committee on Education, to which was referred the Memorial and Petition of John A. Poor, Edward Ballard, and Leonard Woods, a Committee of the Maine Historical Society, setting forth the character and importance in a historical point of view of certain papers and documents in the English archives, relating to the early history of Maine, and asking for their publication at the expense of the State, have had the same under consideration, and report that the statements made in the memorial are justly entitled to the attention of the Legislature. That the papers, the publication of which is sought for, must contain matter of the highest historical value to the State, and therefore, that as soon as practicable, measures should be taken and means provided "to obtain full copies of them for the State Library and other public institutions, where they may be made generally accessible to the student of our history."

The sum required to procure the transcribing and publishing of the matter contained in these papers, though not very large, quite exceeds any means at the disposal of the Historical Society, and at the present time would probably be regarded as a burden which the State ought not to be called upon to assume. Deterred by this consideration from recommending an appropriation as prayed for in

the petition, the Committee, nevertheless, in the hope of bringing the subject more prominently to the attention of the Legislature, advise that the memorial and petition be printed, and as to further action at this time, that the whole matter be referred to the next Legislature.

All which is respectfully submitted.

N. WOODS, *per order*.

MEMORIAL.

*To the Hon. the Senate and House of Representatives
of the State of Maine in Legislature assembled :*

At the annual meeting of the Maine Historical Society, held at the Society's Rooms, Brunswick, August 8th, 1861, the following resolutions were adopted :

" *Resolved*, That the thanks of the Society are due and are hereby tendered to Hon. George Folsom of New York, for his valuable contribution to the history of his native State, by the publishing of 'a catalogue of original documents in the English Archives, relating to the early history of the State of Maine.'

" *Resolved*, That the publication in full of the various papers and documents in the English Archives relating to Maine, (including the charter and records of the Virginia Company, under the original charter of April 10, 1606, if the same can be obtained,) is essential to a true and full knowledge of the history of our State ; that a Committee of three be appointed to inquire into these matters, with authority to invite the cooperation of Hon. F. H. Morse, U. S. Consul at London, a citizen of this State, and of such other parties as they may deem expedient to accomplish this result."

" *Voted*, That John A. Poor, Edward Ballard, and Leonard Woods, constitute said Committee."

In the discharge of the somewhat difficult task committed to them, the undersigned, Committee appointed as aforesaid, have regarded it as their first and most agreeable duty, to lay the matter fully before your honorable body, with such suggestions and explanations as naturally arise on the first presentation of the subject to their view.

While it is made the duty of the Historical Society of Maine, by its charter, to collect and publish such facts, documents and papers, as relate to the early history of the State—and no person is allowed by its by-laws to continue a member, unless he attends its meetings or contributes to its collections in some manner by books, papers or

curiosities, within every two years—yet no member is allowed compensation, except for actual expenditures of money, on duty specially rendered, so that, for the contributions and collections that make up the six volumes of its collections already published, the Society is indebted to the liberality and public spirit of individuals. Labor, and the rich result of historical research, that would have yielded ample pecuniary returns, if directed to other pursuits, have been freely contributed to the Society, adding largely to the stock of historic knowledge, by many of the able minds of our State. But to collect all the materials necessary to a full and perfect history of Maine, requires an outlay quite beyond the present ability of this Society, or the individual means of its members.

The territory now included within the limits of the State of Maine is the richest in material for history, of any State in the Union, or any section of the continent. Visited by all the early navigators, from the time of Sebastian Cabot's first voyage in 1497, to the period of the first permanent settlement of North America by the Europeans, claimed successively by the Spaniards, the French, the Dutch and the English, and then delineated respectively on their maps of the country, it finally became the chief cause of strife between the great European powers, France and England. Both claimed exclusive title, and granted the entire territory to their respective subjects; and for nearly one hundred years after its occupation, the French and English held divided and conflicting possession. Hence, the materials of its history must be sought in the public archives of Holland, of France and England—the claim of Spain having yielded to that of the other powers, before any actual occupation on their part, of its territory.

Other States of the Union, whose materials for history lie in the same direction, have spent large sums to bring to light and preserve the authentic records of the early colonization and settlement of their country; and the student of our history finds it necessary to resort to the documentary history of New York, and the collections made by the State of Massachusetts, to get any thing like a satisfactory knowledge of the history of Maine. The histories of New York, of Massachusetts, and of Maine, run into each other; but neither New York or Massachusetts has collected what relates exclusively to our State. The *Relations of the Jesuits*, recently

published in three large 8 vo. volumes, under the patronage of the Parliament of Canada, from the manuscripts generously furnished by the present Emperor of France, have added largely to our knowledge of the early history of Maine, but they fail to give us from the French State Paper Office, the materials for its political and military history while under the rule of France—from its first occupation by De Monts, in 1604, to the peace of Ryswick, in 1697.

The disinterested and most generous labors of the Hon. Mr. Folsom, in procuring and publishing a catalogue of original documents in the English archives in relation to Maine, has stimulated a strong desire to obtain full copies of them for the State Library and other public institutions, where they may be made generally accessible to the student of our history. But the expense of transcribing them from the antiquity of the style in which they are written, and the incidental cost attendant on such labor, renders it more difficult than at first supposed.

These papers will enable us to learn, for the first time, the true history of those claims set up by the Massachusetts Company to the soil and to the jurisdiction over the territory of Maine, and vindicate as we believe, the reputation of those renowned men, Gorges and Popham, who, uniting with the Earl of Southampton, the illustrious friend of Shakspeare, in a petition to the sovereign, obtained the great charter of 1606 from King James, and laid the foundation of England's Empire and the final triumph of the English race in the new world.

It would be a source of satisfaction if it was within the scope of our instructions, to ask the Legislature to take measures to procure from the French Archives also, documents relating to our early history, knowing as we now do, that the unpublished papers at this time accessible, would enable us to lay before the public, the sagacious efforts of Louis XIV, during the administrations of Mazarin and Colbert, to affix the whole continent of North America, forever, as an appendage to the crown of France.

But the Committee have not thought it becoming in them to more than invite the attention of the Legislature to this subject, in the belief that the growing independence of the State, and the vast political, military and commercial importance of Maine to the Union, are fully realized by the members of your honorable body.

Historical knowledge has ever been regarded among civilized nations as the most valuable of intellectual attainments, as it connects the experience of the present generation with that of all former times, and sheds light upon the pathway of individuals and of nations. That innate fondness of all men to know something of what has taken place, before they were called to share the responsibilities of civil society, and to ascertain the nature and extent of civil obligation as understood among men, is the principal feature that distinguishes civilized, from savage life, and raises individuals and nations in the scale of humanity. No people have more abundant cause of pride in their history or their institutions, than those of Maine; for *here*, earlier than on any other portion of the continent, the refined intellects of the old world found civil and religious liberty, and toleration of opinion; and our citizens have ever maintained a hereditary respect for law and order, and for the rights of persons and property.

Maine has *four* distinctly marked periods in its history. The *first* commencing with the earliest discovery and occupation of the Continent—continuing through the period of its Provincial Government, till it was seized upon by the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, in 1652. The *second* embraces the period from the conquest in 1652, till the abrogation of the Massachusetts Charter under William and Mary. The *third* commences with the arrival of Sir William Phipps as Governor, a native of Maine, with the Royal Charter of William and Mary in 1691, uniting the Colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts, and the Provinces of Maine and of Sagadahock under one Provincial Government, and continuing through the Revolutionary period, down to the final separation of Maine from Massachusetts proper, in 1820. The *fourth* embraces the Annals of the State, from the organization of its government in 1820, to the present time.

The information sought in the papers in question, relates to the first two of these periods, but little known in the popular history of the country, but full of evidence of that strong sense of right, and that familiarity with the common law of England, that has made our early judicial proceedings so remarkable for accuracy of pleading and precision of record. That such a people should have yielded to superior numbers, is only to be explained, by the evidence afforded

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of the neglect of the Home government in the troublous times of the Stuarts and the Commonwealth.

Believing therefore that the cause of historic truth, as well as a becoming State pride, demand the early publication of the Papers in question, the undersigned in behalf of the interests they represent, respectfully but most earnestly request the Legislature to make such an appropriation as they in their wisdom shall decide adequate, to accomplish the important ends in view.

And as in duty bound, in behalf of the Maine Historical Society, your petitioners will ever pray.

JOHN A. POOR, *for the Committee.*

JANUARY, 1862.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, Feb. 24, 1862.

Mr. WOODS of Kennebec, from the Committee on Education, having reported on the Memorial of John A. Poor and others, on motion of that Senator, the Report and Memorial were tabled, and ordered to be printed for the use of the Legislature.

JAMES M. LINCOLN, *Secretary*.