A KENNEBEC BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is really just the tip of the iceberg. If anything, it is too long - but it’s put together to give you a feel for the wealth of information easily available if you are serious about finding out more about the Kennebec region, its towns and its history. I’m sure there is something here for you!

There are three sections to this bibliography. Section I lists texts generally about the Kennebec or those that have sections about the river or the area. Section II offers titles about native peoples of the Kennebec Valley and other parts of the state. These will serve to expand your understanding of the culture of the first Mainers. Section III contains books related to the river’s towns. It is organized geographically town by town, starting at the mouth of the river and working upstream as far as Waterville, the head of navigation. I hope you’ll find it all a useful format for your explorations. Many of these books can be found in local libraries.

Titles marked with an asterisk (*) are available for the 2015 spring class. Feel free to suggest additional titles which you feel would be useful for other readers. I will add them to the list.

I. ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE KENNEBEC RIVER AND THE REGION

*Bakeless, John, America as Seen by its First Explorers: The Eyes of Discovery (1950). The second chapter is a fascinating description of how native peoples moved across the continent and developed cultures east of the Mississippi. Citing scores of European journals, diaries and letters as well as authentic Indian narratives, the author shows what it was like for those who experienced earliest years on the continent.

Calvert, Mary R.,
- *Dawn over the Kennebec (1983) – A general history of the river up to 1775.
- The Kennebec Wilderness Awakens (1986) – Sequel to the above, focusing mostly on what happened along the river from Bingham northward.


*Coffin, Robert P. Tristram, Kennebec: Cradle of Americans, 1937. Coffin had a love affair with the river and warmly shares his affection for its past as a living element of the present.

*Emerson, Everett, Letters from Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1638 (1976). Several of the initial letters in this collection describe what early settlers should bring with them as they begin to settle the new land. The first settlers of the Kennebec region needed the same supplies.
*Kershaw, Gordon, *The Kennebec Proprietors: Gentlemen of Large Property and Judicious Men, 1749-1775* (1975). Men like James Bowdoin, Sylvester Gardiner and their partners dominated the Massachusetts social, economic and political arenas of their day and developed one of the most powerful speculative land companies in northern New England. Many local land deeds in the Kennebec region trace back to them.

*Quinn, David B. and Quinn, Alison M., *The English New England Voyages: 1602-1608*, (1983). The Quinns thoroughly document “how early Englishmen explored New England and how its inhabitants learned something of the English.” The text of many letters, journals and other documents from England relative to the Kennebec’s Popham colony are presented as well as the two versions of descriptions of the Popham colony’s activities. This is the key volume for understanding that event.

*Taylor, Alan, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier* (1990). After the Revolution, many inland Maine settlers squatted on territory deeded to land speculators, leading to violent and widespread contests. Many militant settlers organized secret companies of armed and disguised men to battle surveyors and those who supported the proprietors whose power and wealth were antithetical to a growing populist attitude in the new America. A number of upriver Kennebec communities were affected.

*The Lower Kennebec: A Geological Miscellaney*. This is a collection of information about the surface geology of our region.

**II. THE REGION’S NATIVE PEOPLES**

It is important that students gain insight into the culture of those who lived here before and during the time of European settlement.

*Borque, Bruce, 
- *The Swordfish Hunters, The History and Ecology of an Ancient American Sea People* (2012). Describes Maine’s Red Paint People and traces the author’s growth in understanding them through archaeological research, explaining how archaeological data can contribute to an understanding of modern issues and problems of the marine ecosystem.

- *Twelve Thousand Years: American Indians in Maine. (2001)* Based on thorough archaeology, this book also tells the history of Maine’s native people.

*Calvert, Mary R., Black Robe on the Kennebec (1991). – Story of the Abenaki through a Jesuit’s eyes. Sebastian Rales was a missionary at Norridgewock for thirty years. He was a major player in the military, social and legal struggle of native people of the Kennebec against the English who wanted settle inland Maine. Calvert’s readable, and tightly researched book tells the whole story of the river in an informal and breezy way that will engage any reader. Chapters 6-12 present the story from the Indian and French point of view, not often shared in the Anglophilic presentations normally offered in this area.

*Cronon, William, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England (1983). Natives and Europeans were co-participants in changing the ecology of New England. “A cogent, sophisticated and balanced study of Indian-white contact. This is an important and very readable book.

*Dietz, Lew, The Allagash (1968). This book is not about the Kennebec region. Some of the early chapters have very good descriptions of native peoples who inhabited interior Maine.

*Ekstrom, Fannie Hardy, Indian Place Names of the Penobscot Valley and the Maine Coast (1974). Indian place names abound in our area: Sagadahoc, Androscoggin, Sasanoa, Seguin, innegance for a start. Hardy explains the native meaning and European spelling and use of these names and describes the workings of the grammar of native language.

*Hardy, Kerry, Notes on a Lost Flute: A Field Guide to the Wabanaki (2009). A good introduction to who lived here and how they lived before Europeans arrived. The author’s distinctive and enjoyable illustrations indicate details and character of their food and language.


*Mann, Charles C., 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus (2005). This book presents an image of the Americas not as a sparsely-inhabited wilderness but one of great populations gathered in cities larger than any contemporary European city. Though it deals only lightly with aboriginal New England societies and focuses mostly on southern and subequatorial civilizations, this book is valuable because it will change your understanding of the Western Hemisphere before Europeans arrived.

*Nicolar, Joseph, The Life and Traditions of the Red Man (1893). This is a most unusual book, written more than a century ago by a Penobscot Indian (a Catholic, and representative to the Maine legislature) to pass on the cultural heritage of his people to subsequent generations. A first-person testimony, sharing of native spiritual beliefs and practices. An important introduction by Annette Kolodny offers a brief, but thorough analysis of the history of this native Maine group who continue their tribal character today. She shows how the author melds traditional native spirituality with Christian concepts. The basic elements of all early Maine native peoples are very similar. Highly recommended, especially the Introduction.


Speck *Penobscot Man: The Life History of Forest Tribe in Maine,* ( ). Like Nicolar’s volume (above) this book deals with people from the Penobscot group of natives, but there is so much similar between them and those from the Kennebec, that this account offers a valuable insight.

*Warren, Bud, *The Doctrine of Discovery: A Collection of Papal Bulls, Charters and Responses to the Domination of Indigenous Peoples* (not published – a work in progress). Papal Bulls of the 15th century gave Christian explorers the right to claim lands they “discovered” and to lay claim to those lands for their Christian monarchs. Any land that was not inhabited by a Christian was available to be “discovered”, claimed and exploited. “Pagans” in those lands who converted might be spared; if not, they could be enslaved or killed. Today a number of religious entities and even the UN are disavowing this doctrine which has marginalized indigenous people around the world. This work is in the form of a 3-ring binder with translated texts of original documents and 21st century actions to legalize the disavowal.

*Wilson, Deborah B., *Indiantown Island Archaological Report* (1998). Near the mouth of the Sheepscot River and easily accessible to the Kennebec, this island was frequently used by upriver aboriginal peoples in summer and winter. This report describes not only the archaeologized remains from their use of the island, but also describes the nature of the coast’s many shell middens and how they offer insight into the people who lived here before and after European arrival.

Woodward, Colin, *Unsettled:Triumph and Tragedy in Indian Country* (2014). This well-researched newspaper article is a fascinating and in-depth 29-chapter description of the past 50 years of the history of the Passamaquoddy people with details of how the Maine Indian Land Clams settlement was initiated, managed, and how it has affected members of the tribe. Fascinating reading. Its chapters are available through the following URL, and it is also available for purchase as an Ebook. http://www.pressherald.com/unsettled/
III. TOWNS OF THE LOWER KENNEBEC

Titles in this section are organized town by town, from the mouth of the Kennebec northward. Not all towns are represented, but there’s enough here to give a sense of life along the river through the years.

PHIPPSBURG –

*Bradford, John, *The 1607 Popham Colony’s Pinnace VIRGINIA: An In-Context Design on MAINE’S FIRST SHIP* (2009). A thorough description of 17th-century shipbuilding techniques with specific application to the design of the reconstruction of the Popham Colony’s vessel now being built on the shores of the Kennebec.

Brain, Jeffrey P., *Fort St. George: Archaeological Investigation of the 1607-1608 Popham Colony* (2007). History of the Popham settlement and a full description of the 1994-2007 archaeological exploration of this site, the first English New England settlement that was contemporaneous with Jamestown. Your facilitator was involved for a decade with this effort.


*Perkins, James C. & Stevens, Jane, *One Man’s World: Popham Beach, Maine, 1974*. Jane Stevens inherited the glass plates left by her uncle James Perkins who for years piloted a Kennebec steamboat between Bath and Popham, and enjoyed his hobby of photography. His images from the 1880’s to the early 1900’s and his niece’s text give life to the vibrant community at the mouth of the river. This is a hard-to-find book.


*Thayer, Rev. Henry O., The Sagadahoc Colony: Comprising the Relation of a Voyage into New England* (1892). The text of the only journal of a participant in the settlement effort forms the heart of this volume.

ARROWSIC –

*Etnier, Elizabeth, On Gilbert Head* (1937). In 1934 the author and her artist husband bought Arrowsic’s Long Island just across the river from Fort Popham for only $2200 and worked to restore the early house, perched prominently at is south end, overlooking the river.

BATH – Readers will note that this section of the bibliography is (unapologetically) more voluminous than those of other Kennebec towns. Simply stated, more titles seem to be available about Bath and Bath-related subjects. And it’s my home town!
Baker, William Avery, *A Maritime History of Bath, Maine and the Kennebec River Region* (1974). This two-volume work is an engaging and readable history of the region and has become the basic reference for anything related to things maritime along the lower Kennebec. It includes a listing of every vessel recorded that was built from Phippsburg to Gardiner as well as Brunswick and Harpswell.


*Bunting, W.H., *Live Yankees: The Sewalls and Their Ships* (2009). The Sewalls of Bath built and operated ships from 1823 until 1916 and saved every scrap of business paper that crossed their path: charter parties, construction invoices, letters to and from captains and business associates. This massive collection is now stored in almost 700 archives boxes at Maine Maritime Museum. Bunting uses this material to bring to life the process of ship-owning and operations as well as the life and times of those who went to sea in sail.

*Eskew, Garnett Laidlaw, *Cradle of Ships* (1958). The beginnings of Bath Iron Works are described, and the history of the company is told up to the mid-1950’s.

Owen, Henry Wilson, *The Edward Clarence Plummer History of Bath, Maine* (1936). This has been *THE* history of Bath for almost 80 years. Now out of print, but available on a CD and on Google.

Reed, Parker McCobb, *History of Bath and, Sagadahoc Count Maine, 1604* (1894). Reed’s as the first major history of Bath. A characteristic 19th century local history, heavy on biographical detail. It is available as an Ebook for free download.

Sanders, Michael S., *THE YARD: Building a Destroyer at Bath Iron Works* (2001). Known simply as “The Yard” by locals, BIW has been the region’s mainstay industry for over a hundred years. Sanders explores what it’s like to work there, introduces the reader to a number of its workers as they produce a vessel and captures what it means to those who do. One review says: “Michael S. Sanders describes the birth of a ship with the love of a parent, relating how the naval destroyer USS Donald Cook was "assembled over four years piece by piece, steel plate by steel plate, from the first half-moon slices of keel to topmost radar mast, almost by hand." (Having worked at BIW for over a decade, I was pleased at the accuracy insight and sensitivity of the presentation.)

*Snow, Ralph Linwood, *Bath Iron Works: The First Hundred Years* (1997). Written to commemorate the centennial of the company. Yours truly was asked to be a reader of the MSS. The writing was financed by John G. Morse III of Bath, and every employee of the company was given one. It’s a thorough, historically researched piece.


WOOLWICH –

BRUNSWICK & TOPSHAM –

Wheeler, George Augustus * Wheeler, Henry Warren, *History of Brunswick, Topsham & Harpswell Maine, Including the ancient Territory Known as Pejepscot (1878).* A voluminous and detailed late 19th century history of these towns, this volume is freely available online.

MERRYMEETING BAY AREA TO AUGUSTA

*Burroughs, Franklin, *Confluence: Merrymeeting Bay, 2006.* This gentle book gives you an opportunity to feel the magic of the Bay without getting your feet wet or being bothered by mosquitoes. Franklin Burroughs’ lyrical prose and perceptive insights combine with Heather Perry’s beautiful photographs to bring you close to spirit of this more than special place where five rivers meet. This is not a book to read fast, but to savor.

*Everson, Jennie G., Tidewater Ice of the Kennebec River (1990).* A bountifully-illustrated and engaging description of one of Kennebec’s major industries. In winter time along the shore between Bowdoinham and Augusta once stood forty seven large warehouses, hundreds of men standing on the river’s frozen surface, cut and guided blocks up waiting ramps to feed the product into the massive storage areas. When spring came, vessels of all kinds gathered at the wharves, and the ice slid back down the ramps, to fill their waiting holds, and they left the Kennebec to cool the ice boxes of America. Only remnants of this activity remain today.

BOWDOINHAM –

*Dunlap, Albert A., Life on the Abagadasset: Memories of Boyhood on a Bowdoinham Farm (2012).* This is a very personal reminiscence of a simple rural life, led close to nature. Farming, fishing, trapping, raising chickens and appreciating family life in the Merrymeeting Bay area.

DRESDEN –

*Allen, Charles Edwin, History of Dresden, Maine, (1931).* Early chapters of this book have good detail of initial settlements and the relations with native peoples.

RICHMOND –

*Fleming, John Daly, Richmond on the Kennebec (1966).* A short history of this fascinating shipbuilding, farming, manufacturing and upriver mill town.

*Jaster, Robert S., Russian Voices on the Kennebec: The Story of Maine’s Unlikely Colony (1999).* In the 1950’s many Russian Orthodox immigrants settled in Richmond. Some were White Russians who had fought the Bolsheveks; others were Ukrainians, Bellorussians and others who had escaped Stalinist purges. Richmond became the largest rural Russian – speaking community in the US.

PITTSTON –

GARDINER –

Coolidge, Olivia E., *Colonial Entrepreneur: Dr. Sylvester Gardiner and the Settlement of Maine’s Kennebec Valley,* (1999). Gardiner was the most active and influential of the proprietors of the
Kennebec Purchase Company, described by a contemporary as “the mainspring and mouthpiece” of this important group of land speculators. His impact on the region was significant.

FARMINGDALE –

CHELSEA –

HALLOWELL –

*Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher, A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785-1812. (1990). A Pulitzer Prize Winner! Ulrich combines sections of the diary of a Hallowell-based midwife/healer with cogent descriptions and research to give a picture of lifestyles and social relationships during the region’s post-Revolutionary period.

* A VIDEO – The American Experience, Martha Ballard: A Midwife’s Tale ( ). This 90 minute video of the PBS program is highly effective. We will use selected portions of this program in our fifth session.

AUGUSTA –

Nash, Charles Elverton, History of Augusta – First Settlements and Early Days as a Town (1904).

North, James W., The Settlement of Augusta From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time (1870).

SIDNEY –

VASSALBORO -

WINNSLOW –

Totora, Daniel J., Fort Halifax: Winslow’s Historic Outpost (2014). Built in 1754, this was the most northern of the series of Kennebec forts, a true deep frontier situation. A blockhouse portion of the fort lasted until the 1960’s when a freshet took its final timbers downriver. It has been reconstructed.

WATERVILLE -


A VIDEO – From Stump to Ship: A 1930 Logging Film.  This 23 minute b&w film offers insight into the important logging activity which was so important to the history of the Kennebec. Though scenes are not of the Kennebec, they are typical of what happened on that river.