Book Reviews

Anthony Walker

Howard Browne

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BOOK REVIEWS


The late Dr. Gilbert Doane wrote that Peleg Burroughs's journal was of considerable importance to the history and genealogy of northern Aquidneck Island, Tiverton, and Little Compton. The journal covers the years of Burroughs's ministry as a Baptist preacher in Tiverton and his life as a peacemaker among his neighbors, scribe of wills and deeds, farmer, merchant, husband, and father. Anyone with roots in this place will want access to the reference material, if nothing else.

*Defenses of Narragansett Bay in World War II.* Walter K. Schroder, Rhode Island Bicentennial Foundation, Providence, 1980. 130 pp., illustrations, index, maps. Soft cover, spiral-bound; available at $5.95 from local bookstores or the Foundation, 150 Benefit Street, Providence 02903.

If you have ever wondered about the rotting emplacements of concrete and steel that surround Narragansett Bay and its islands, this book will enlighten you.

Mr. Schroder limits himself to World War II, but that period starts at the zenith of the art and science of coastal fortification and in that span the concept is rendered completely useless and soon afterwards is forgotten.

The author gives a short account of the events leading to the War and of the historic coastal defense sites. The building and evolution of the World War II batteries follows, and an explanation of the Army command network is given. He does not limit himself to the role of the Army but traces the development or expansion of the Narragansett Bay Naval complex. The last section brings the war close offshore when he describes the German U Boat warfare and our attempts to counter it.

The book is well researched and written. Its reference information is as complete as the size will allow; exactly right for the
local history buff and anyone with a more than casual interest in his surroundings.

The Rhode Island Campaign of 1778 (Inauspicious Dawn of Alliance) by Paul F. Dearden, published for The Rhode Island Publication Society by The Rhode Island Bicentennial Foundation, Providence 1980. Available at $6.95 from bookstores or publisher at 150 Benefit St., Providence, R.I. 02903. 169 pages including Index. Illustrated with pictures of Generals Sullivan, Greene, Lafayette and Glover, Admirals d’Estaing and Howe, and Colonel Christopher Greene plus a map of the battle of Rhode Island area.

Paul F. Dearden has developed his Master’s thesis into a readable account of the battle of Rhode Island and the events leading up to this major combat action of 29 August 1778, which as Dearden points out has been largely ignored by historians. Although the battle, which proved to be more of a probing action by the British than an all-out assault, had little or no effect on the course of the Revolution, the book will fill in what may well be a gap in the libraries of Revolutionary War collectors. The author leans rather heavily on the American commander, General John Sullivan, holding him up to criticism and ridicule. French Admiral d’Estaing on the other hand, who received from contemporary Rhode Islanders a flood of invective and condemnation, comes off fairly well. Rhode Island’s so-called “black regiment” in reality a mixture of blacks, Indians, and mulattoes under white Continental officers provided a stout defense of an artillery redoubt against the Hessians. Some contemporaries sought to detract from their performance, but the best evidence which Dearden doesn’t use comes from Captain Malsberg of the Hessian Chasseurs who describes their resistance as formidable. All in all a good story well told. Author Dearden should be congratulated for translating his extensive and painstaking research into a concise, moving narrative.

Anthony Walker