

to stay employed. Section eight includes Bentham's statement of service, a remarkable review of his career and ideas.

Samuel Bentham was an innovative genius, with most of his ideas working their way, if not immediately, eventually into the dockyard organization, shipbuilding, and armament. He had the ability to surround himself with people who could fill gaps in his knowledge and skill, and develop and implement his schemes. He did, however, have little patience for those with whom he disagreed, or those he thought did not have the talent for the task. The force with which he projected his innovations created a wave of objections that limited or delayed implementation. Bentham's expertise could win over those with a desire for change but were uncertain what that should look like, and make enemies of those for whom change was a challenge. Mary Sophia, his wife, is addressed in Morriss's introduction and appears in the documents as promoter of her husband, a sounding board for his ideas, and defender of his reputation.

This volume is for researchers exploring the dockyard structure of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the reforms of the period. Those interested in Samuel Bentham's legacy will find this a requisite read. It is also a study in the resistance to innovation, a timeless issue. Roger Morriss's collection and introduction to these Samuel Bentham documents is a significant contribution to the Navy Records Society's ongoing effort to make archival material more accessible and spur research into naval history.

Thomas Malcomson
Toronto, Ontario

Morton, Suzanne. *Contested Catch: Lobster, Localism, and Canada's Atlantic Coast*

University of Toronto Press, 2025

276 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, index

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Suzanne Morton's *Contested Catch* aspires to create a greater awareness of industrial capitalism in the Atlantic region that is more than the passive result of external forces leading to underdevelopment. The history of the lobster fishery highlights local factors, the considerations they forced on the state, and the state's response. This is more than an environmental history, unless one considers that the environment also includes social, political, and economic forces. Given that this is the first general history of the lobster fishery in

Canada, the surprise in the volume is not how little has been previously written about the subject, but how much. For example, between 1874 and 1927 no less than 15 commissions, inquiries, or special reports were published by the Government of Canada that focussed, in whole or in part, on the lobster fishery. In addition, the fishery occupies a substantial part of the annual reports of the Department of Marine and Fisheries and later the Department of Fisheries. Morton has reviewed and analysed this material but has also ferreted out an impressive selection of volumes and articles in which the lobster industry is examined in considerable detail. These range from book-length studies of regulation to local regional histories situating the fishery under a community development and social history lens. However, the existence of other literature does nothing to diminish the value of this volume as *Contested Catch* is both a triumph and a treat.

The volume also contains an impressive quantity of new research and Morton has, wherever possible, sought to find the voices of those most directly engaged in the fishery. This is not an easy task for, as she observes, even when dealing with transcripts of testimony before royal commissions and inquiries, the evidence adduced is often in pursuit of arguments framed by politicians, scientists, economists, industry bodies, and other “experts” who more often than not failed to understand or accept the role of fishermen in interpreting the environment in which they operated. It was rare that the “natural intelligence of fishermen” was sought. Some relief to the one-dimensional perspective was provided by the local fisheries inspectors and officers who had direct access to the fishermen and many of their annual reports, especially in the pre-1900 period, convey the concerns with a passionate voice. This attempt to find the voice of the often-silent workers in the industry could be used as a model for other marine industry studies. While acknowledging the finger-pointing which has become almost mandatory in assessing blame for the tragedy of the commons, *Contested Catch* avoids unwarranted assumptions about the roles of the players and instead seeks to understand the relationships existing among them.

The initial chapters provide useful information about the who, how, and why of the beginning of the industry and its importance in the economic and social development of Atlantic Canada. The industry began with a jolt in the late 1870s and there was a major upheaval with the shift from canning to the shipping of live lobsters which gained momentum beginning in the 1930s. There are fascinating insights into the roles played by individuals such as local fisheries officers like John Hunter Duvar in Prince Edward Island, William Venning in New Brunswick, and A.C. Bertram in Cape Breton who, although being political appointees, displayed an approach which respected the social,

as well as the economic, realities of the fishery. This part of the volume also documents the wrong-headed responses to the lobster question such as the serial unsuccessful attempts to transplant the Atlantic lobster fishery to the Pacific. The value added to the historical account is the discussion of what Morton terms “lobster politics,” the interplay of government regulation and social policy, local custom and values, party politics, the changing environmental factors affecting the industry, and a myriad of other considerations impacting the negotiated relationship of the state, its citizens, and the communities in which this all takes place.

Morton is a specialist in twentieth-century Canadian history, with a particular interest in gender, social values, and religion. Her previous work has dealt with the intersection of values and society with individuals, the state, and place, and this focus is part of what elevates her analysis of the lobster fishery above a simple recounting of the chronology of the industry. The results of her research are to some extent buried in the reference to “Localism” in the volume’s title but are obvious in the chapter titles, especially those headed “The Politics of Lobster and Catching Votes” and “Lobster Regulations and Social Policy.” With the arrival of the post-war period, conservation was as much about the social fishery and the survival of fishermen and communities as it was about sustainability of the resource. In the late 1960s lobster became the first major fishery in Canada to operate under a limited entry regime with licenses tied to boat ownership and a strict limitation placed on corporate ownership.

Lobster was, and continues to be, one of the most valuable fisheries in Canada, exceeding the economic contribution of Atlantic groundfish or Pacific salmon. Although the formal statement of coverage for the volume is the period 1870–1970, Morton uses an epilogue chapter to carry the story through to the present and this is a real bonus for the volume. She shows how the century of lobster fishing history is a prologue for the issues facing the fishery today, including the role played by treaty rights, the full impact of which is still unrecognized. This is truly a volume which recognizes that the present cannot be fully understood without comprehension of the past.

One of the few weaknesses of the volume is that it lacks a bibliography and one must search among the endnotes to appreciate the magnitude of the research undertaken to produce it. The index is also disappointing, consisting almost entirely of the names of individuals and only two subject mentions: “supply side management” and “transportation infrastructure.” Maps accompanying the text are useful but a chart purporting to show the historical levels of lobster catches is unreadable. In these respects, Morton’s excellent work has not been particularly well-served by the publisher of the volume.

Nonetheless, this volume represents an outstanding contribution to Canada's maritime story. The approach to how the fishery can be viewed extends far beyond the lobster industry and can serve as a template to demonstrate how historians can, and should, look at the full range of themes of history in relation to resource exploitation. Meeting high academic standards, the book will also be a pleasurable read for a more general public. The volume is highly recommended.

H.T. Holman

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

**Moss, Tara and Rebecca Love. *Nantucket: The Ultimate Playground*
Schiffer, 2023**

272 pp., colour photographs

ISBN 9780764364761 (hardcover) US\$50.00

Nantucket. The whalers' base, sea lover's playground, photographers' delight. *Nantucket: The Ultimate Playground* is an explosion of colour photography depicting its beaches, streets, houses, yachts, sailboats, kayaks, paddleboards, flora and produce, food, land and seascapes, lighthouses, festivals and children.

Photographs, the substance of this coffee table book, are supplemented by text at the commencement of each chapter. Brief entries describe the one to four pictures found on most two-page faces. The photos are categorized by each of the five chapters: Treasured Sights; Tastes to Savor; Timeless Activity; Toys, Playgrounds & Toy Stores; and Traditions & Celebrations. At 23.5 cm square, this is a book for display and to be picked up and enjoyed at will.

Who will be expected to find pleasure in this tome? Visitors to Nantucket will find reminiscences of favorite spots and new ones to explore. Some will be reminded of similar scenes in their happy places. Others may find inspiration for their wanderlust. There are enchanting views that are delights for the eyes, whatever your accustomed environs. You can imagine yourself on the boardwalks while hearing the waves crashing on the sandy beaches in front of you. You can almost feel the spray over the gunnels of your sailboat or the bumps under your bicycle tires. The flowering trees, the harvested corn, pumpkins, tomatoes, cranberries and strawberries tell the tale of the island's growing season. Your mouth will water at the sight of donuts, ice cream cones, mason jars of iced tea and baked treats. Then there are those moments, once captured and never forgotten: the beachball among the sea oats, and the girl kicking it across the sand; the dog in the SUV in front of the lighthouse; the dogwalker; golf bag at the ready and crab in hand. The children are part of