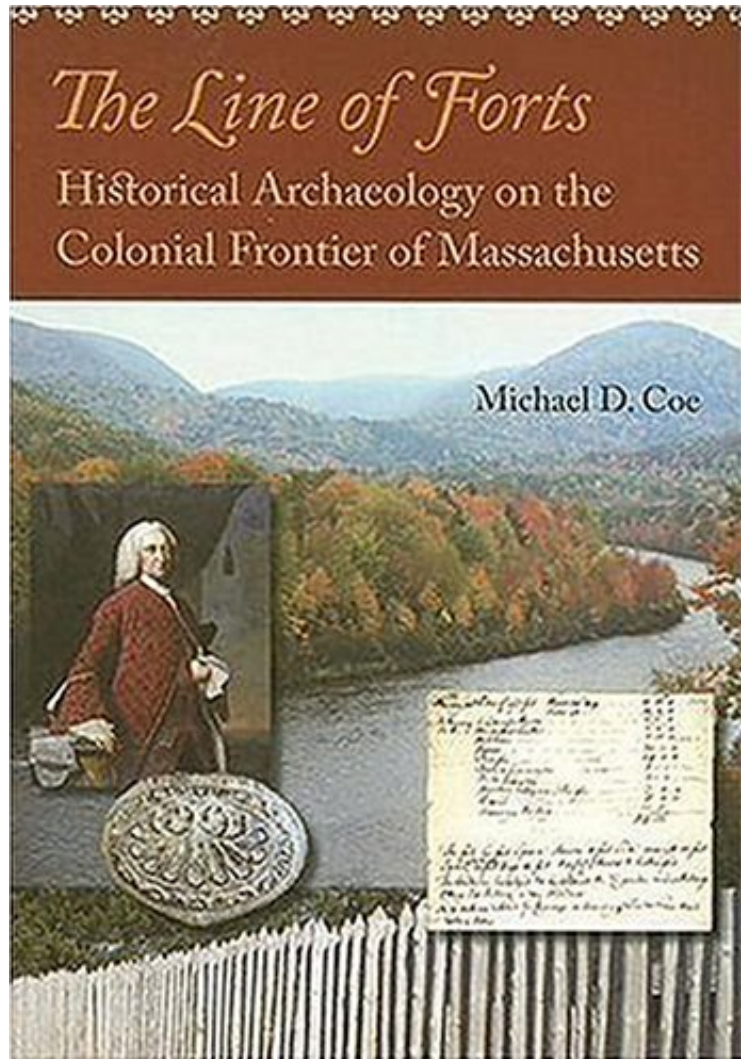


The Line of Forts: Historical Archaeology on the Colonial Frontier of Massachusetts

Michael Coe

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Michael Coe : The Line of Forts: Historical Archaeology on the Colonial Frontier of Massachusetts before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Line of Forts: Historical Archaeology on the Colonial Frontier of Massachusetts:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. More on the Massachusetts Frontier By Todd This author brings out more great information on Colonial New England; although written for the Historian and Archeologist. If your a student of New England history there is much here for the amateur too. The Line of Forts in Northern Massachusetts were built

by people struggling to maintain their lands and way of life, this book reveals the drama of those daily ordeals. I have been reading about these histories for years and never knew how many forts there actually were, there being as many as ten +. The line stretched from the Connecticut River West just into New York, running along the now Vermont border. Garrison houses were mixed in and added to the defensive line also. The two main Forts studied here being Fort Shirley and Fort Pelham. These two forts only have a life span of around ten years (1744-1754), a short existence in the overall struggle during the French and Indian War timeframe. Through the discovery of objects and documents hidden away Coe gives us a glimpse of the soldiers' life on the Frontier. An outstanding addition to the library of research on Colonial New England. Highly worth the price. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Very nice book. By Eugene Frechette Very nicely written and arranged. As a layman reading this book was a fun look into Colonial History of Massachusetts. The book shows you the sites they dig, how they dig, what they find and then they go into depth about the findings they conclude based on items unearthed. 1 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Line of Forts By Seahorse This book is exactly what it claims to be. I have skimmed it a bit and will save it for when my curiosity is totally piqued. I wanted to find out more about Colrain where my grandmother grew up in the late 1800s and this is more factual than what I enjoy. But the author didn't claim that it was anything other than what it is.

During the mid-eighteenth century, colonists constructed a line of forts along the northwest boundary of Massachusetts as a defense against the French and their Indian allies. Many of these "forts" were simply reinforced houses. Of the three major forts in the line, one, Fort Massachusetts, is now buried beneath a parking lot in North Adams. Of the two remaining forts, Fort Shirley in the town of Heath was excavated by Michael D. Coe of Yale University; the other, Fort Pelham in Rowe, was excavated by Daniel Ingersoll of the University of Massachusetts. To the casual observer, the sites might not seem significant--but as Coe argues, two circumstances make these forts more important to the study of eighteenth-century life in the American colonies than their modest size would indicate. First, their period of occupation was extremely short: they were built in 1744, abandoned in 1754, and never used again. Thus, they give a unique snapshot of the material culture of the time. Second, the Line of Forts is abundantly documented. The Williams family of western Massachusetts (chief among the "River Gods," the group of elite families who people Coe's story) controlled most of the colony from the Connecticut River valley west to the New York line. The Williamses were the forts' leading officers and ran their commissaries. This powerful family left voluminous documents that provide a unique window into daily life on the Massachusetts frontier and help interpret what was found in the remains of the forts. From Williams family archives and artifacts from Fort Shirley and Fort Pelham, Coe weaves a rich drama. His tale comprises the final standoff between New England's English settlers and Native Americans, the ideological conflict between Calvinistic Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, the occasional frictions between colonial militia and the British regular army, and the larger struggle between England and France for North America.

"Not only does Coe present in detail the excavations and artifacts of Shirley and Pelham, but he uses the extensive historic documents available in discussing the construction, garrisoning, and daily life at these military installations. He also places the line of forts within the context of the French and Indian War. The appendixes include the analysis of the faunal collection from Pelham, the paleobotanical remains from both forts, biographical sketches of 66 soldiers stationed at the forts, and the journal of John Hawks, one of the soldiers. This well-illustrated book is a must for those interested in border defense during the French and Indian War. Summing Up: Essential." Choice Two and one-half centuries pass, and the archaeologist's trowel uncovers in the debris of those colonial outposts, offering glimpses of what life was like on the frontier: musket balls, broken utensils, fragments of pottery; fish hooks and bits of animal bones. This is the fascination of archaeology. So much has been lost, but so much has been preserved." Milford (NH) Cabinet "Michael Coe has done a superb job blending primary sources with his archaeological findings. It is amazing how one summer's dig some 32 years ago became the catalyst for so much historical research and interpretation, culminating in this attractive volume." Historical Archaeology "A must for those interested in border defense during the French and Indian War." CHOICE Coe is a marvelous writer, and his scholarship is impeccable; here he brings forth the results of work done nearly 20 years ago in a publication that is most welcome because of renewed interest in English-Indian relationships on the Massachusetts frontier. This work is a truly original contribution to archaeological and historical scholarship on colonial New England during the tempestuous years of uneasy compromises, distrust, and warfare between colonists and Native Americans. It is a book that all historical archaeologists working in New England will want; historians will also find it invaluable. (Mary C. Beaudry, Professor of Archaeology Anthropology, Boston University) Michael Coe's engaging account of the line of forts established in the 1740s to protect Massachusetts' northwestern frontier demonstrates the real potential of historical archaeology. He has mined the earth and the archives to bring to life the daily existence of militia officers and men, their wives and families, in the New England wilderness. (Donald R. Friary, Director Emeritus, Historic Deerfield, Inc.) About the Author MICHAEL D. COE is Charles J. MacCurdy Professor of Anthropology, Emeritus, at Yale University. He was for many years Chairman of the Council on Archaeological Studies at Yale. Renowned in the field of Mayan anthropology and archaeology, Coe has written over a dozen books on Mesoamerican archaeology and culture. His most recent book is

Angkor and the Khymer Civilization (2005).