John Neal Biography

John Neal

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Biography

John Neal (25 August 1793-20 June 1876), editor and novelist, left his home in Falmouth, Maine, to become a dry goods merchant in Baltimore. When his business failed in 1815, he read law and was admitted to the bar in 1819. Neal briefly edited the Baltimore *Telegraph* and the *Portico*, and drew on American themes in a series of novels such as *Rachel Dyer: A North American Story* (Portland, Maine: Shirley & Hyde, 1828), a tale of witchcraft in early Salem. In 1823 he went to England, where he contributed a number of reviews of American writers to *Blackwood's Magazine* (later collected as *American Writers*, ed. F. L. Pattee [Durham: Duke University Press, 1937]) and served as Jeremy Bentham's secretary. He returned to America in 1827 and the next year married and settled in Portland, Maine. Neal remained in Portland for the rest of his life, turning out more novels, and editing at various times the *Yankee* , the *New England Galaxy*, and the comic *Brother Jonathan*. A supporter of causes and people, Neal advocated woman's rights and the abolition of capital punishment, and promoted the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, Hawthorne, and Longfellow during the important early stages of their careers.