Regional Struggle - National Story

Maine's Path to Statehood

Maine State Museum

COVER AND PAGE 2
Detail of Map by Joseph Treat Showing Old Town, Indian Island, the Penobscot River and Nearby Streams
Journal of Plans and Survey by Joseph Treat
1820
Courtesy of the Maine State Archives

COVER
Dirigo Banner
By Edward W. Parkhurst
Gardiner, Maine
1872-79
Oil on linen, 34" x 35"
Maine State Museum, 89.88.1

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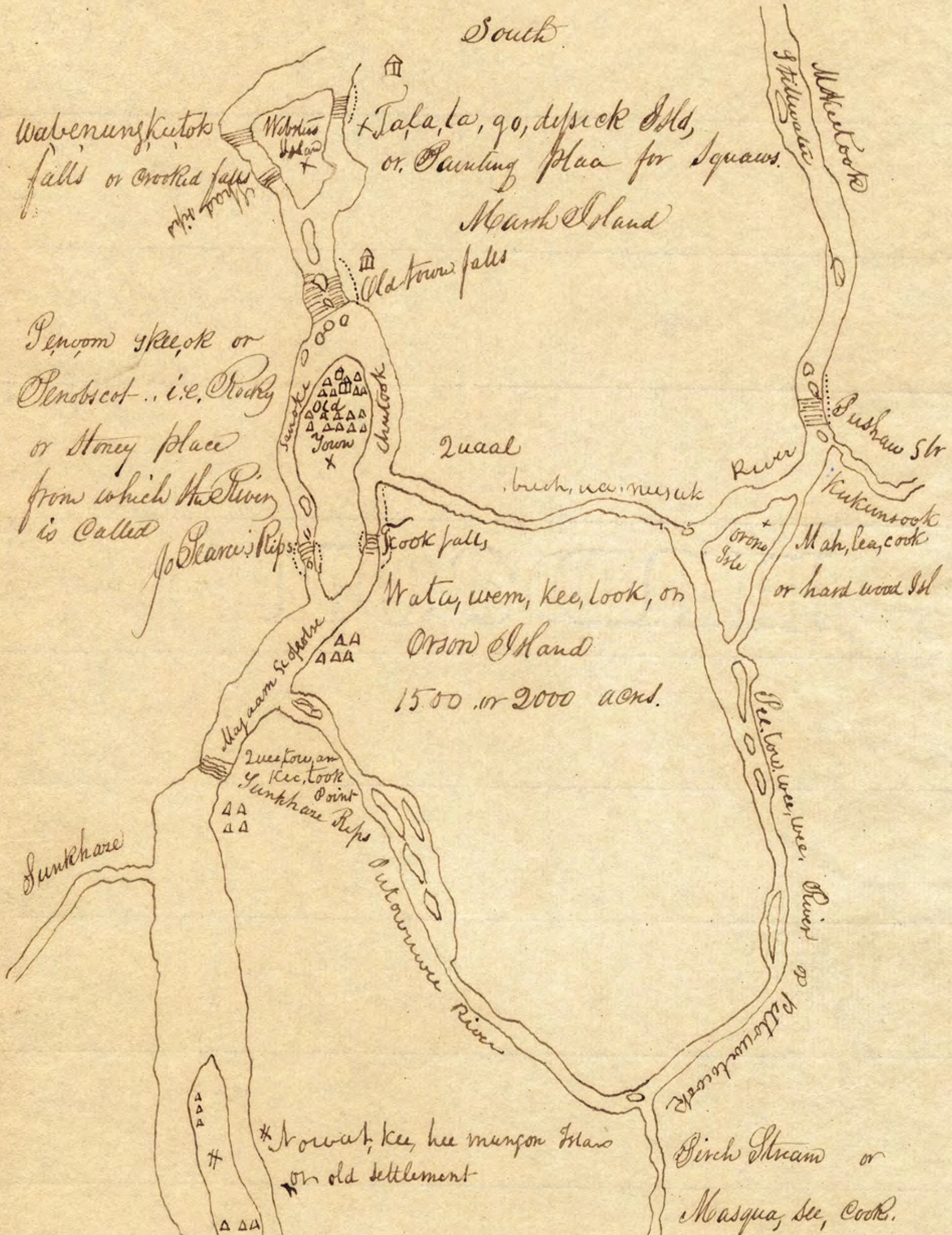
Maine State Museum
Exhibition Handbook Series – Number 5
April 2020


South
Wabenungkeetok
falls or Crooked falls
Tafa,la,qo,dessick Isld,
or Painting place for Squaws.
Marsh Island
Old town falls
Penoom skee,ok or
Penobscot .. i.e. Rocky
or Stoney place
from which the River
is Called
Old
Town
Quaal
Cook falls
Wata,wem,kee,look, or
Orson Island
1500 or 2000 acres.
Stillwater
Pushaw Str
Kukumsook
Mah,lea,cook
or hard wood Isl
Orono
Isle
River
Point
Sunkhaze Rips
Sunkhaze
Birch Stream or
Masqua, see, Cook.
or old settlement

Regional Struggle – National Story: Maine's Path to Statehood

ESSAY BY ANGELA GOEBEL-BAIN, EXHIBITION CURATOR

Maine became an independent state in 1820 after more than 200 years of struggle over control of the valuable lands and waters of America's northeastern frontier.

Regional Struggle: Who Controls this Land?

In the 1500s, Wabanaki peoples first encountered Europeans who soon laid claim to Wabanaki homelands. Over the next centuries, Maine's political identity transformed from exclusively Wabanaki territory to English colony to a district within the state of Massachusetts.

After the American Revolution, people in the District of Maine debated and voted six times before finally approving independent statehood.

National Story: Statehood at What Cost?

The petition for Maine statehood finally had to be approved by Congress. There, Maine's prolonged bid for independence from Massachusetts nearly collapsed as it became embroiled in the escalating national dispute over slavery. The resulting Missouri Compromise forced Massachusetts representatives from the District of Maine to decide if they would vote for Maine's statehood, even though these votes would expand slavery to new states west of the Mississippi River.

First Peoples

Life for the Wabanaki changed drastically after they began trading with and living alongside European migrants.

Wabanaki people responded to newcomers coming to their land. Wabanaki people and their ancestors lived on this land for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. Beginning in the 1500s, Wabanaki people traded with the Europeans who began to visit Maine's rocky shore to fish. These newcomers soon staked claims and settled on Wabanaki land in the name of France or England.

The Wabanaki and the French shared an interest in restricting English control of Maine. The Wabanaki often allied with French colonists to limit English settlement. After nearly a century of intermittent wars that were finally won by England, the 1763 Treaty of Paris ended most French claims in North America. Without French support, Wabanaki armed resistance diminished, enabling more English colonists to flood north into Massachusetts's "District of Maine."

Kineo Rhyolite Projectile Point
North Haven, Maine
5,000-7,000 B.P.
Maine State Museum ME29.9.974

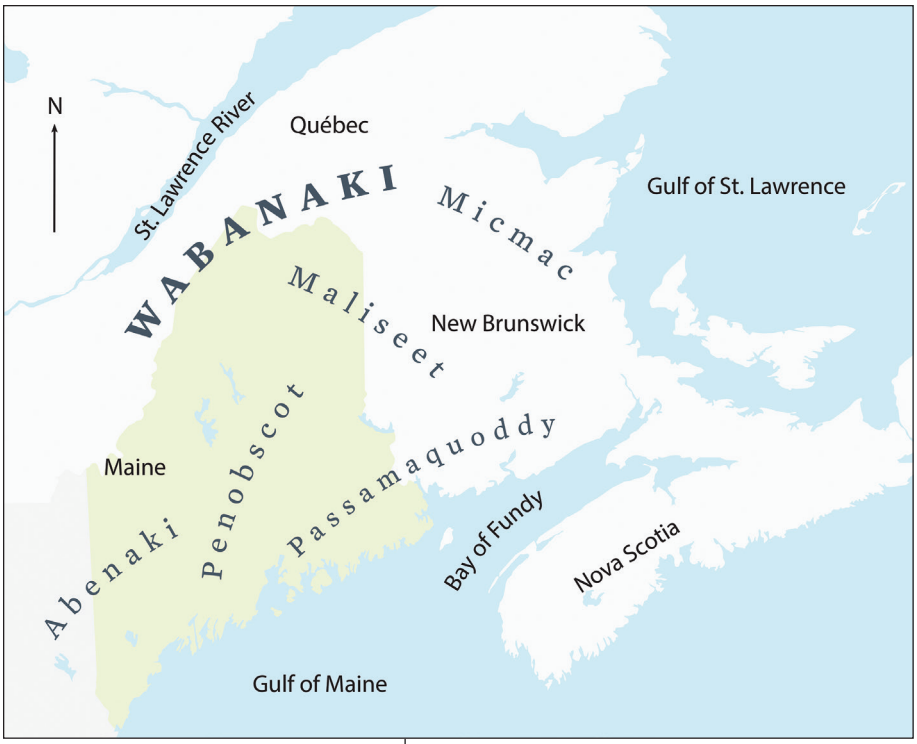
Around 6,000 years ago, a Native craftsman created this projectile point from rhyolite. Found on Mt. Kineo on the eastern shore of Moosehead Lake, rhyolite is a very hard stone with glass-like properties, making it ideal for points used in hunting.

Traditional Wabanaki Life

The story of Native people began long before Europeans arrived.

For thousands of years, ancestors of Maine's present-day Native Americans have made their lives here in their homelands. Known today as Abenaki, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot, these tribes are collectively called the Wabanaki.

The Wabanaki have deep culture and traditions that also changed over time. Generally, Native people practiced seasonal mobility across their respective homelands to access the richest resources in peak seasons. In southern and western Maine, Native people grew corn along with other crops near their villages and traveled their waterways



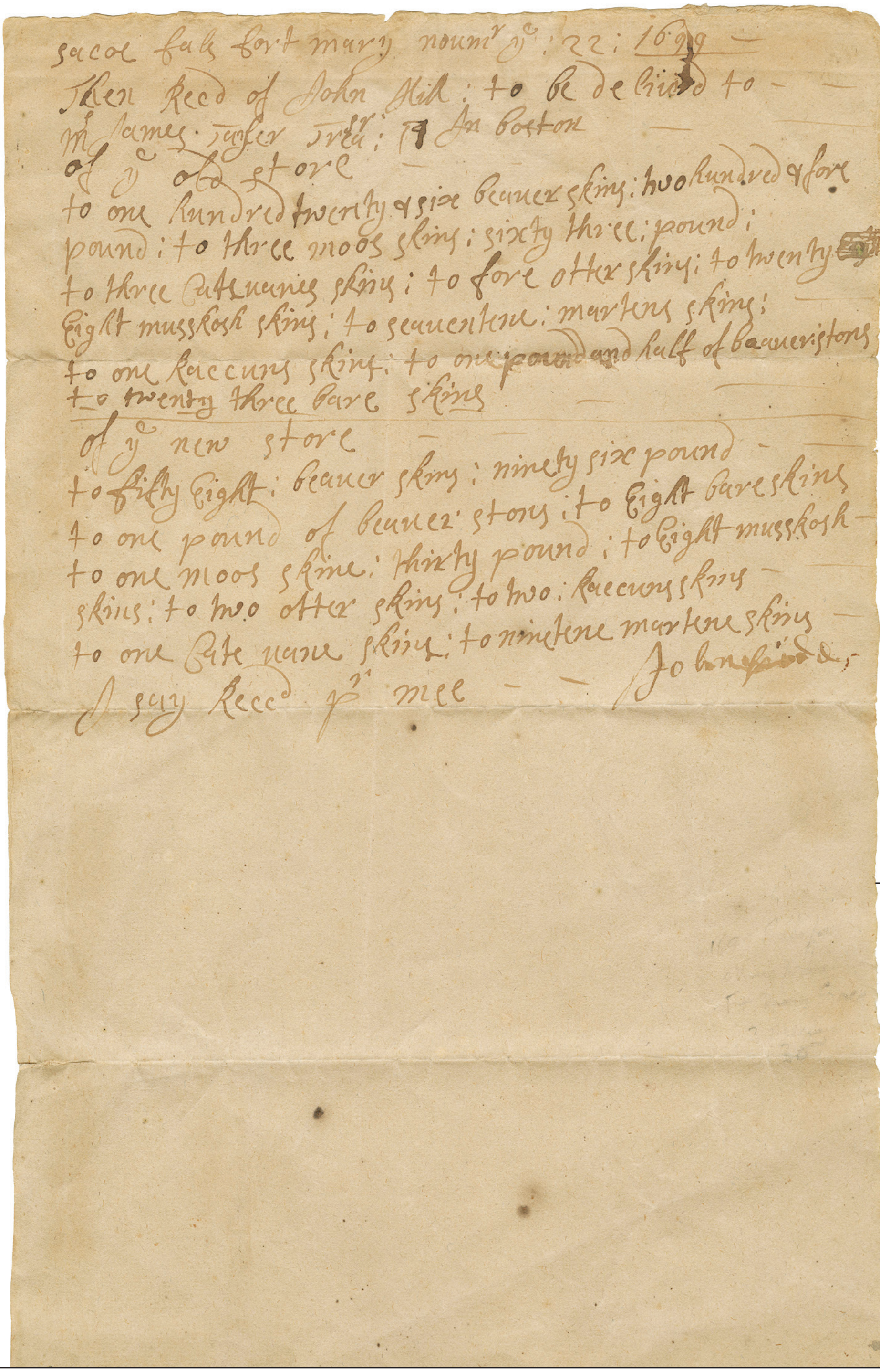
Wabanaki Homeland Map
Depicting Northern New England, ca. 1650

Wabanaki, translated "People of the Dawn," is the collective name of Native peoples of northern New England. The Wabanaki are Algonquian-speaking peoples and include the Abenaki, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot. In this period, English officials called the Wabanaki of present-day Maine and the Maritimes "Eastern Indians."

In the 1600s and 1700s many Abenaki people joined other neighboring Wabanaki tribes because disease and warfare dispersed their communities.

to meet kin, trade, and harvest fish. Many often settled near the ocean in the summer and moved into the protective forest to hunt moose and caribou during the winter months. These cultural activities strengthened their kinship networks and linked the Wabanaki peoples to their lands and resources.

European diseases arrived in the Northeast before the settlers. Nearly a century before they claimed lands in the region, European traders brought new diseases to North America that spread widely through the Wabanaki communities along their trade routes. An especially devastating epidemic swept throughout the Northeast in 1617 killing, according to some estimates, between 75% and 90% of all Native peoples. This loss of life disrupted all aspects of Wabanaki life for generations.

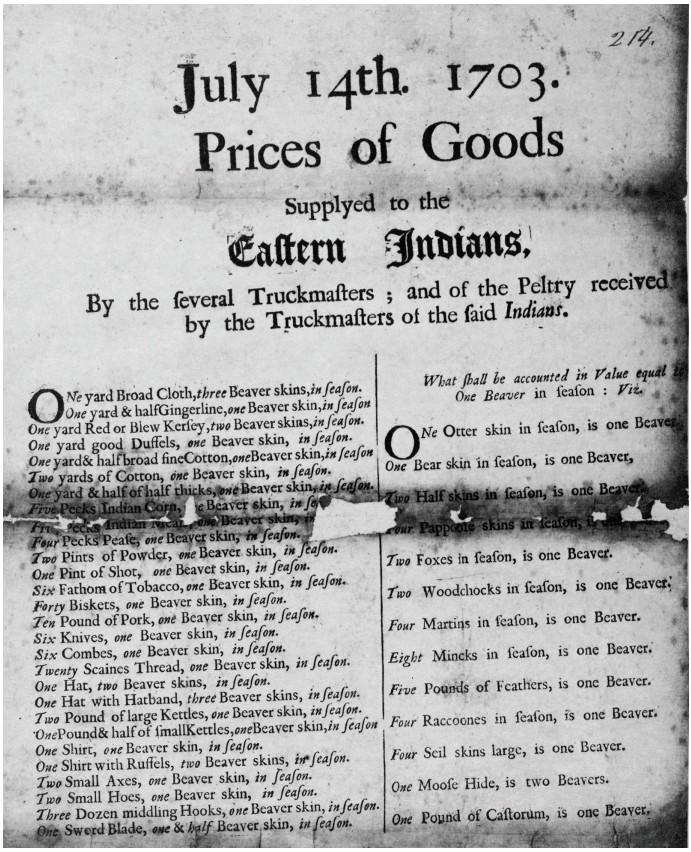

sacoe falls fort mary novmr ye: 22: 1699
Then Recd of John Hill: to be deliuered to
Mr James Tayler Trer: [illegible] In boston
of ye old store
to one hundred twenty & six beaver skins: two hundred & fore
pound: to three moos skins: sixty three: pound:
to three Catteuanes skins: to fore otter skins: to twenty
Eight musskosh skins: to seauenteene: martens skins:
to one Raccuns skins: to one pound and half of beaueristons
to twenty three bare skins
of ye new store
to fifty Eight: beaver skins: ninety six pound
to one pound of beaver stons: to Eight bare skins
to one moos skine: thirty pound: to Eight musskosh
skins: to two otter skins: to two: Raccuns skins
to one Cate uane skins: to ninetene martene skins
I say Recd pr mee — John [illegible]

Broadside (poster)
Boston, Massachusetts
1703
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

This broadside shows how beaver furs were used as currency. Massachusetts set prices for licensed traders to pay "Eastern Indians" (Wabanaki) for animal skins.

The list in the first column states how many beaver could be exchanged for goods. The end of each line reads "in season," meaning traders desired beaver taken in the winter when their fur was the thickest.

Beaver skin was the common denomination. The second column shows how many skins from other animals equaled one beaver. One bear equaled one beaver; one moose hide could be traded for two beaver.



214.

July 14th. 1703.
Prices of Goods
Supplyed to the
Eastern Indians,
By the feveral Truckmafters ; and of the Peltry received by the Truckmafters of the faid *Indians*.

ONe yard Broad Cloth, *three* Beaver skins, *in feafon.*
One yard & half Gingerline, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon*
One yard Red or Blew Kerfey, *two* Beaver skins, *in feafon.*
One yard good Duffels, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
One yard& half broad fine Cotton, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon*
Two yards of Cotton, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
One yard & half of half thicks, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Five Pecks Indian Corn, [illegible] Beaver skin, *in fe*
Five Pecks Indian Meal, *one* Beaver skin, *in*
Four Pecks Peafe, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Two Pints of Powder, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
One Pint of Shot, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Six Fathom of Tobacco, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Forty Biskets, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Ten Pound of Pork, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Six Knives, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Six Combes, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Twenty Scaines Thread, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
One Hat, *two* Beaver skins, *in feafon.*
One Hat with Hatband, *three* Beaver skins, *in feafon.*
Two Pound of large Kettles, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
One Pound& half of fmall Kettles, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon*
One Shirt, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
One Shirt with Ruffels, *two* Beaver skins, *in feafon.*
Two Small Axes, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Two Small Hoes, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
Three Dozen middling Hooks, *one* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*
One Sword Blade, *one & half* Beaver skin, *in feafon.*

What fhall be accounted in Value equal to One Beaver in feafon : *Viz.*

ONe Otter skin in feafon, is one Beaver.
One Bear skin in feafon, is one Beaver,
Two Half skins in feafon, is one Beaver.
Four Pappoofe skins in feafon, [illegible]
Two Foxes in feafon, is one Beaver.
Two Woodchocks in feafon, is one Beaver.
Four Martins in feafon, is one Beaver.
Eight Mincks in feafon, is one Beaver.
Five Pounds of Feathers, is one Beaver.
Four Raccoones in feafon, is one Beaver.
Four Seil skins large, is one Beaver.
One Mooſe Hide, is two Beavers.
One Pound of Caſtorum, is one Beaver.

Fur Trade Document
John Hill, trader
Fort Mary, Saco, Maine
1699
Maine State Museum, 2016.38.1

In the early years, the English and Wabanaki peoples were suspicious of one another, but developed a balanced trade relationship which helped maintain peace.

This document reveals the variety and numbers of animal skins hunted by Wabanaki in Maine for trade with the English in 1699. Wabanaki hunters traded furs to French and English traders at competing trading posts for commercially-produced, European "trade goods."

As commercial hunting depleted populations of fur-bearing animal, the English grew more interested in acquiring Wabanaki land in order to establish towns and farms.

Transcription of Fur Trade Document
Saco Falls Fort Mary November 22, 1699
Then received of John Hill to be delivered to
Mr. James Taylor Treasurer In Boston
of the old store
to one hundred twenty & six beaver skins: two hundred and four pound : to three moose skins : sixty three pound :
to three Cat_____ (possibly referring to catamount or wildcat) skins : to four otter skins : to twenty
Eight musskosh skins : to seventeen : martens skins :
to one Raccoons skins : to one pound and half of beaver stones
to twenty three bare skins
of the new store
to fifty eight : beaver skins : ninety six pound
to one pound of beaver stones : to eight bare skins
to one moos skin : thirty pound : to Eight musskosh (muskrat) skins : to two otter skins: to two Raccoons skins
to one Cat___(possibly referring to catamount or wildcat) skins : to nineteen marten skins
I say Reced by mee – John Hill

Axe
1400-1600
Kennebec County, Maine
Maine State Museum, ME69.2.1

Trade Axe
ca. 1700
Maine State Museum, Gift of the National Museum of Natural History, 89.80.12

Some trade goods, like these axes, represented technological advances, replacing stone tools with ones made of iron. Tools that performed the same work often replaced traditional Wabanaki tools but did not change the way people lived.

When traditional tools were replaced, skills required to make them sometimes became lost. When Native men focused their attention on hunting for furs to acquire commercial products, their communities became increasingly dependent on European trade goods.

Caulking Iron Reworked as Hide Scraper
Lubec, Maine
Late 1500s
Maine State Museum, Gift of the National Museum of Natural History, 89.80.14

Sometimes Wabanaki people adapted European goods to fulfill new purposes.

This tool, excavated by archaeologists, was adapted by Wabanaki people 400 years ago to scrape pelts to process them into tradeable furs. It was originally a caulking iron, used to seal joints between planks in ships' hulls.

Penobscot Powder Horn
Maine State Museum, 83.37.1

In some instances, the fur trade introduced new technologies to Wabanaki peoples that transformed their way of life. Muskets, and all that was required to fire and maintain them, are prime examples of this change.

European firearms, along with gun powder and shot, rapidly replaced traditional tools for hunting. Wabanaki became dependent on guns for hunting in the commercial fur trade and to feed their families. This powder horn is richly carved with Penobscot designs, and once held gunpowder used to fire muskets.

Wabanaki Trade and Transitions

The Wabanaki and European traders developed alliances based on shared economic interests.

Europeans competed to develop strong trade relationships with the Wabanaki. By the late 1500s, the Wabanaki had an expansive trade network with Europeans that sent furs across the Atlantic. In the early years of contact, mutually beneficial trade sustained a halting peace and cemented alliances between Native peoples and European traders. Once both France and England claimed vast lands and established competing colonies, their settlers worked to draw the Wabanaki into their own trade and alliance networks.

The English and French had different approaches to colonization. By 1700, the English had settled thousands of families in growing farm communities requiring increasing amounts of land. In contrast, the French focused on trade which did not require a large colonial population that needed land to farm. Successful trade relied on strong relationships with Wabanaki peoples. French Jesuit priests "converted" many Wabanaki to a Catholicism that respected aspects of indigenous traditional culture. By sharing a faith, the French and Wabanaki built trust and grew closer as allies and trading partners.

Initially, a mutually beneficial trade centered on furs. Europeans most prized beaver fur. The Wabanaki especially valued woven cloth, copper pots, and firearms which became vital for hunting. The Wabanaki adapted trade goods to fit their cultural uses, but also became dependent on European-produced products. By the early 1700s, the beaver population had plummeted leading to a trade imbalance and an increasingly strained relationship with the English.

Beaver
Castor canadensis

Toward the end of the 1500s the beaver hat became a status symbol for Europe's wealthy. For the next two hundred years, beaver fur was the most valuable and sought-after fur, especially for a variety of waterproof hats and other clothing.

Pelts taken in the winter from beavers in northern climates provided the best fur. By the late 1500s, the European beaver population had been over-hunted, forcing traders to turn their attention to North America.

The first permanent English settlement in New England, founded by the Pilgrims at Plymouth, began trading furs in 1625 with the Wabanaki on the Kennebec River. The Pilgrims shipped furs to England to pay for needed supplies and to pay their creditors.

War-Disease-Displacement

Wabanaki peoples strategically protected their way of life in the midst of international conflicts in their homelands.

The English need for land pushed Native people of New England to war. In 1675, the English demand for more Wabanaki lands drove the Wabanaki to join in Metacom's War, a multi-tribal military effort to drive the English out of New England. For nearly the next hundred years, the Wabanaki allied with the French to limit English settlement in Maine. After the 1763 Treaty of Paris ended the Seven Years War (known by the English as the French and Indian War), the French largely withdrew from North America. Wabanaki peoples lost their primary trade partners and military allies, fundamentally diminishing their ability to challenge English colonization of their homelands.

Wabanaki people responded in various ways as French presence declined and the English expanded their land claims and colonization in Wabanaki homelands in what later became Maine. Weakened by widespread deaths from wars and disease, the Wabanaki faced repeated waves of English settlements penetrating deeper into their lands. Many Wabanaki remained in small communities spread across their homeland. They relied on a deep understanding of their lands and waters to survive in the face of relentless English expansion. Some Wabanaki peoples took refuge at mission villages in Quebec, beyond English reach; others took refuge with Wabanaki people living further north and west.

Flintlock Musket
Paris, France
ca. 1725
Maine State Museum, 2003.35.1

Penobscot Powder Horn
ca. 1750
Maine State Museum, 79.43.1

Each Wabanaki tribe responded differently to the colonial wars fought between 1675 and 1763. Some groups tried to remain neutral; others allied with the French. At times, individuals worked with the English.

When Metacom's War (King Philip's War) began in 1675, most Wabanaki groups tried to remain neutral. The English demanded that the Wabanaki give up their guns or be declared enemies. This forced Wabanaki leaders to choose between war or letting their families starve without the weapons to hunt. When the English killed or kidnapped Wabanaki people to sell into slavery, Wabanaki groups in southern and western Maine chose war.

Beginning in 1689, war between France and England spilled over to their North American colonies and involved their Native allies. The English were not easily forgiven for past behavior, and the French continued to provide muskets and supplies, such as the musket and powder horn seen here.

A Revolution on the Ground

Ordinary farmers challenged the claims of politically-connected land speculators, called proprietors, who owned millions of acres in the District of Maine.

To colonize the District of Maine, the English King granted unsurveyed Wabanaki land to politically-connected men who became known as proprietors. These land speculators asserted English control over the land by forming companies to sell land to settlers and export valuable timber.

After the Revolution, many settlers in the District of Maine challenged the rights of proprietors who were often absentee landowners and remained loyal to England. Some farmers believed that by abandoning the patriot cause, the new state of Massachusetts, of which Maine was a part, should seize these loyalists' lands and open them to settlement.

Many of these new settlers were Revolutionary War veterans inspired by the war's quest for freedom. Many ordinary settlers thought of themselves as Liberty Men, whose creation of new farms from wilderness through their own labor fulfilled the ideals of the American Revolution. Just as the nation had become independent through the American Revolution, so, too, farm families could be independent via their possession of land formerly claimed by proprietors.

The Massachusetts 1780 constitution, however, provided that all pre-war land grants were binding. Loyalist proprietors could keep their land, squelching the dreams of poor farmers to purchase inexpensive state-owned property.

Surveyor's Compass
1790-1810
Maine State Museum, Gift of Wallace H. Andrews, 82.21.1

English government representatives allocated unsurveyed land to proprietors. For the next two hundred years, surveyors trekked across Maine with compasses, such as this example, to measure land for settlement.

Proprietors' land claims faced serious legal and political challenges. Property lines were constantly disputed in the courts, undermining settlers' rights. Many of Maine's ordinary farmers were veterans of the American Revolution and expected the government to provide legal support for their land claims. In the uncertain post-Revolutionary War political and legal climate, many settlers began clearing trees and establishing farms whether they owned the land or not. From their point of view, land was open to settlement and had little value until it was improved by their hard work.

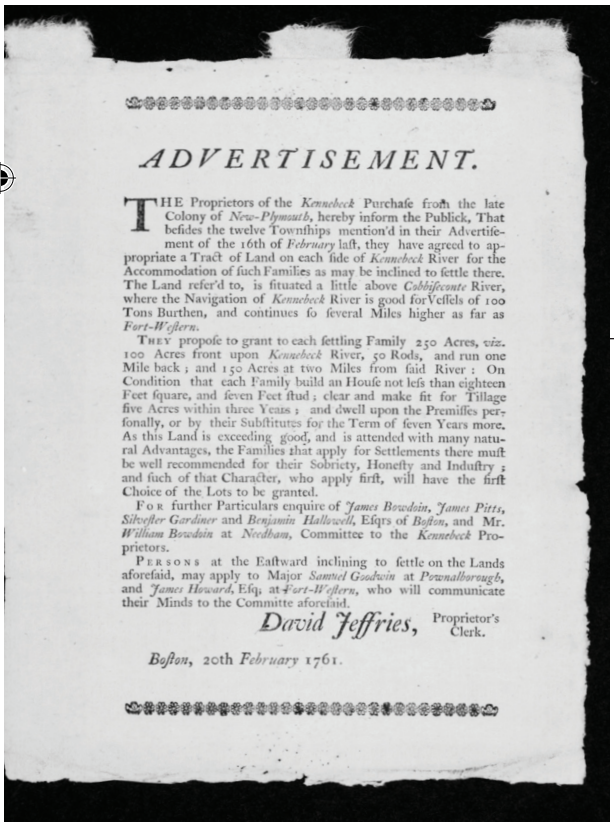
This compass was said to have been used to survey townships in the western Maine towns of Harrison, Otisfield, and Gray. The proprietor of these lands was Harrison Gray Otis, a Boston Federalist politician who inherited land through his great-great uncle, John Gorham II (1651-1715). Gorham was originally granted the land as a reward for fighting the Wabanaki in 1690.

Proprietors and Power

The King of England granted millions of acres to proprietors with the expectation that these landowners would lure English colonists to settle the land.

Land grants came with responsibility. By the 1750s, most of the English settlements in the District of Maine were part of four land grants. The English crown allocated millions of acres to "companies" of politically-connected, wealthy men called "proprietors." In the proprietary system, the King gave exclusive control of Wabanaki land to a loyal subject to oversee the property. The English government required the new landowners to recruit settlers, survey the land, and set up towns that included a meeting house (church) with a hired minister.

At first, climate and wars limited English settlement. The English population grew very slowly in the District of Maine prior to the American Revolution. The harsh climate and nearly a hundred years of intermittent warfare made it a difficult place to live. Proprietors struggled to entice settlers to establish farms and towns in the District of Maine. After the close of the French and Indian Wars in 1763, the newfound peace, along with a shortage of fertile farmland in southern New England, drew English colonists north.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Proprietors of the *Kennebeck* Purchafe from the late Colony of *New-Plymouth*, hereby inform the Publick, That befides the twelve Townfhips mention'd in their Advertifement of the 16th of *February* laft, they have agreed to appropriate a Tract of Land on each fide of *Kennebeck* River for the Accommodation of fuch Families as may be inclined to fettle there. The Land refer'd to, is fituated a little above *Cobbifeconte* River, where the Navigation of *Kennebeck* River is good for Veffels of 100 Tons Burthen, and continues fo feveral Miles higher as far as *Fort-Weftern*.

THEY propofe to grant to each fettling Family 250 Acres, *viz.* 100 Acres front upon *Kennebeck* River, 50 Rods, and run one Mile back; and 150 Acres at two Miles from faid River: On Condition that each Family build an Houfe not lefs than eighteen Feet fquare, and feven Feet ftud; clear and make fit for Tillage five Acres within three Years; and dwell upon the Premiffes perfonally, or by their Subftitutes for the Term of feven Years more. As this Land is exceeding good, and is attended with many natural Advantages, the Families that apply for Settlements there muft be well recommended for their Sobricty, Honefty and Induftry; and fuch of that Character, who apply firft, will have the firft Choice of the Lots to be granted.

FOR further Particulars enquire of *James Bowdoin*, *James Pitts*, *Silvefter Gardiner* and *Benjamin Hallowell*, Efqrs of *Boſton*, and Mr. *William Bowdoin* at *Needham*, Committee to the *Kennebeck* Proprietors.

PERSONS at the Eaftward inclining to fettle on the Lands aforefaid, may apply to Major *Samuel Goodwin* at *Pownalborough*, and *James Howard*, Efq. at *Fort-Weftern*, who will communicate their Minds to the Committe aforefaid.

David Jeffries, Proprietor's Clerk.

Boſton, 20th *February* 1761.

Broadside of the Kennebeck Purchase
David Jeffries, clerk
Boston, Massachusetts
1761
Maine State Museum, 97.17.1

The Kennebeck Proprietors commissioned this broadside (or poster) to encourage settlement between Fort Western in present-day Augusta and the Kennebec's confluence with the Cobbosseecontee Stream in present-day Gardiner.

Settlers who exhibited "Sobriety, Honesty and Industry" could apply to live on the land. They would be granted 250 acres if they farmed five acres, built a house, and lived there seven years. This section of the river had fewer disputes over land claims than areas settled earlier and closer to the coast.

The Kennebeck Proprietors included leading men of Boston, including James Bowdoin (future governor of Massachusetts), Dr. Silvester Gardiner, and Benjamin Hallowell.

Disputed Boundaries

Even when they purchased their lands, some Maine farmers were still evicted by remote landowners.

Proprietor land claims overlapped. The English crown granted proprietors millions of acres of Wabanaki land, called Royal Patents. The land was granted in England without Wabanaki permission. The boundaries of patents often overlapped because the land was not officially surveyed. Adding to the confusion, once an individual proprietor died, his claims were split among his descendants. Later generations speculated in the land by buying large tracts and selling them to other wealthy proprietors, or dividing their property and selling smaller portions to settlers.

Most proprietors were absentee land speculators whose goal was to transform their land titles into wealth by selling lots to settlers. However, the proprietors' claims to huge amounts of land faced serious legal and political challenges. The property lines were constantly disputed in the courts.

Wabanaki land deeds complicated matters. Some Wabanaki individuals and groups "sold" land to English colonists through the 1700s. The two cultures had vastly different legal understandings of owning land. The English believed their purchase meant that they owned the land outright. In the early years, the Wabanaki understood a land sale to be giving permission to individuals to live on their land, while the Wabanaki retained the right to do the same. As Wabanaki people became more familiar with English property law, they operated within its terms to protect their ownership of their homeland.

Settlers could not be sure their land purchases were secure. When farmers purchased deeds to their land from a proprietor, the proprietor would often only provide a quit-claim document. This meant that this particular proprietor would never come back to demand more money from the farmer, but the proprietor could not guarantee a different landowner would not also claim the land and demand payment. Proprietors sent surveyors in to determine their claims and used law enforcement to force settlers off the land.

Many expected the state or federal government to provide legal support to ordinary settlers, many of whom were veterans. In the uncertain post-war political and legal climate, many settlers began clearing trees and establishing farms on land that from their point of view was open to settlement and had no value until it was transformed by their hard work.

Farmers calling themselves "Liberty Men" fought back. Settlers in Maine's backcountry began organizing to thwart the proprietors' surveyors. Many families had spent decades clearing land to plant, making their property exponentially more valuable. They did not want proprietors to take it back.

General Henry Knox (1750-1806)
by Charles Henry Granger
1862
Maine State Museum, 72.19.21

General Henry Knox was George Washington's Major General and his first Secretary of War (1785-1794).

***Le Nécessaire* Travel Case**
Made by Eugène Hébert et Compie.
Paris, France
ca. 1785
Courtesy of the General Henry Knox Museum

General Henry Knox and his wife Lucy traveled frequently. They commuted between their permanent home in Boston and Philadelphia, where General Knox served as the United States Secretary of War. After he retired in 1795, Montpelier in Thomaston, Maine, became his summer home. He wintered in Boston.

This French Nécessaire communicates luxury and social status. The case includes a porcelain tea set, along with liquor and perfume bottles, and a silver grooming kit. With this set, Knox could enjoy the necessary items that ensured his comfort in travel.

General Henry Knox

General Henry Knox (1750-1806) was an American Revolutionary war hero and a powerful proprietor in Maine. His celebrated war service and a fortunate marriage made him one of America's wealthy elites, a position that he was determined to protect.

His young life was difficult. When he was nine years old, he went to work at a Boston bookbinding shop to help support his mother and brother. In 1774, Knox married Lucy Flucker (1756-1824), a wealthy granddaughter of Samuel Waldo (1695-1759), whose heirs controlled the Waldo Patent, a tract of over half-a-million acres over half-a-million acres in mid-coast Maine.

After the war, Knox turned his attention to his vast Maine lands. His wife's family were Loyalists who lost much of their land when they escaped to England during the war. Knox wanted to get the Waldo patent back. Unfortunately for him, many settlers, including Revolutionary War veterans, had moved onto the land and established farms.

In public, Knox played the role of a benevolent father nurturing the people who purchased title to his land. In private he schemed with a business partner to hire thugs to evict those he considered squatters. He used the legal system against farmers who petitioned him for leniency or compromise in making financial arrangements for land purchases.

As one of America's powerful elite, General Knox advocated for the existing social order. He believed it was the natural right of the wealthy to govern the common folk. As a Federalist, he wanted a strong central government that could put down the growing unrest of farmers demanding justice.

Montpelier, Henry Knox Home
Thomaston, Maine
ca. 1856
Courtesy of the General Henry Knox Museum

Joseph Plumb Martin

Joseph Plumb Martin (1760 -1850) joined the Continental Army as a foot soldier at age seventeen in hopes of a better, independent future. The Continental Congress promised soldiers 100 acres of land if they served to the end of the war, which Martin did. That promise was broken. In his memoir recounting his seven-year service in the American Revolution he lamented:

"[Soldiers] were promised a hundred acres of land, each, which was to be in their own or adjoining states. When the country had drained the last drop of service it could screw out of the poor soldiers, they were turned adrift like old worn-out horses... Congress did indeed, appropriate lands ...in Ohio ... or a future state... no fellows were ever appointed to see that the poor fellows ever got possession of their lands; no one took the least care about it , except a pack of speculators, who were driving about the country like so many evil spirits, endeavoring to pluck the last feather from the soldiers...I hope I shall one day find land enough to lay my bones in..."

After the war, Martin left his home state of Connecticut to become one of the more than 40,000 people "to walk to Maine" between 1783 and 1790 in search of affordable land.

Martin arrived in Maine in 1784. He settled on a hundred-acre tract, built a log cabin, and cleared fields near present-day Stockton Springs. The following year, his former commander, General Henry Knox, acquired the Waldo Patent which included the land on which Martin lived and farmed. Settlers already living on the land protested to the Massachusetts General Court. Knox threatened eviction if the settlers did not pay for title to the land, which had an elevated value because of the settlers' improvements.

In 1794, Knox gave Martin six years to raise $170 to purchase title to his farm. Because he had been wounded in the Revolutionary War and his wife and son were too sick to help, Martin could not pay that amount. Martin wrote to Knox asking for an extension to "save a poor family from distress." By 1820, Martin had lost his farm and home.

Joseph Plumb Martin (1760-1850) and wife, Lucy Clewley Martin (1776-1857) Courtesy of the Stockton Springs Historical Society

"[W]e can be considered in no light very different from a Colony to Massachusetts" Falmouth Gazette March 16, 1786

Straw Hat
Belonged to Jonathan Russ (1761-1820)
New Sharon, Maine
ca. 1810
Maine State Museum, Gift of David Crockett, 80.155.2

Jonathan Russ (1761-1820) was one of the first settlers in Farmington Falls, Maine. Like many men eking out a life on the Maine frontier, Jonathan Russ had several jobs. In addition to running a saw and gristmill, Russ made potash which is important for bleaching cloth and making glass and soap.

Denim Frock Coat
Worn by Judah Drisko
(1772-1849)
Addison, Maine
ca. 1830
Maine State Museum, Gift of John Bucknam Drisko, 82.78.30

This overcoat is a rare surviving example of an ordinary farmer's clothing from the early 1800s. It was worn by Judah Drisko who lived in Addison, east of Ellsworth in Washington County, Maine.

The Long Road to Separation

After the American Revolution, people in the District of Maine made multiple attempts to separate from Massachusetts.

Two distinct movements fueled the quest to make Maine a separate state. The first emerged soon after the American Revolution when Maine's gentry in Falmouth (modern-day Portland) initiated an effort to separate from Massachusetts. These political and business leaders, largely located in the bustling coastal towns, hoped to preserve the existing power structure, except with themselves at the top rather than the Massachusetts elites.

Maine's political leaders opted to retain their power. These first voices for separation faded when the leaders realized that independence for Maine could mean that inland farmers would demand a more balanced political and economic system. The big landowners and merchants backed off, not wanting to spark revolution at home.

Ballot Box
1796-1818
Maine State Museum, 2009.77.1

This is the oldest known ballot box used in Maine. The most important votes cast in this box decided whether Northport voters wanted Maine to become an independent state.

Between 1792 and 1819, the Maine electorate voted six times on the question of separation from Massachusetts. At times, the separationists struggled to inspire rural voters to participate. In some instances, voter turnout was so low that the Massachusetts General Court deemed the election results invalid. After Massachusetts failed to defend Maine in the War of 1812, more Maine voters resolved to break from Massachusetts.

According to an attached hand-written note, "[t]his is the first ballot box used in the town of Northport, County of Hancock, District of Maine. Daniel Lawrence, Town Clerk..." The term "District of Maine" indicates this ballot box pre-dates Maine statehood.

The people of Maine renewed their efforts to seek independence after Massachusetts abandoned the District of Maine in the War of 1812. At that time, Massachusetts provided little military or financial support during the British occupation of eastern Maine, a humiliation neither forgotten or forgiven. These resentments played a part in the area's national politics during and after the war.

After 1800, power struggles over national political parties drove a wedge further between Maine and Massachusetts. Political parties began to emerge in the United States during President George Washington's second term in the 1790s. Many of the founding fathers who crafted the U. S. Constitution became known as Federalists because they believed in a strong central government. Throughout the thirteen states, Federalists pushed to ratify the Constitution. Federalists were often wealthy local political leaders whose conservative ideals stressed the need for social order through hierarchy. As the party of Washington and John Adams, Federalists dominated Massachusetts proper up through 1820.

While Federalists controlled Massachusetts, most of the landless settlers coming to Maine after the American Revolution subscribed to Democratic-Republican party ideals. Democratic-Republicans felt that the greatest threat to the new republic came from an overly strong central government that was too distant from ordinary people. Led by Thomas Jefferson, this group made direct appeals to farmers and urban artisans. This popular outreach to ordinary voters flourished in the independent-minded political culture of the new United States, and it enjoyed lasting success at the national level after 1800.

Why Separate?

Voters had economic, political, and religious reasons for favoring separation from Massachusetts.

As in the American Revolution, the right to self-governance was the central reason for separation. Separationists also held practical concerns: Boston, the capital of Massachusetts, was too far from the heart of Maine for the people to fully participate in state politics. Separationists also noted that many towns could not afford to send representatives to the General Court (Massachusetts' legislative body) in Boston. As a result, Maine was grossly underrepresented in the state legislature.

Another argument centered on economics and politics. Proponents of separation argued that taxes would be more equitable and lower if Maine became a state, since, without Massachusetts, state government would be smaller, less expensive and more responsive to local concerns. Further, if Maine were its own state, it would have stronger representation in the United States Congress.

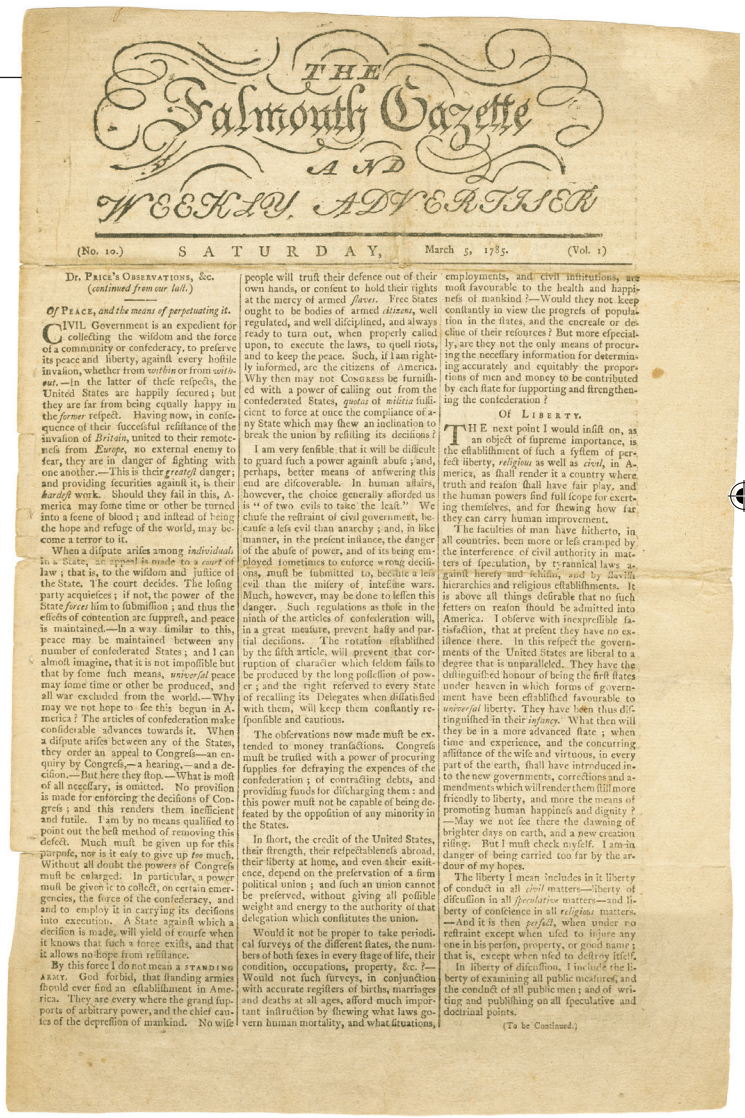
Saddle Bags
Owned by Rev. Aaron Young (1783-1875)
Pittston, Maine
ca. 1800
Maine State Museum, Gift of The Gardiner Library Association 77.18.22

Itinerant Methodist minister Aaron Young carried these saddlebags as he traveled through Maine's back country to preach in religious services held in people's homes.

The Congregational Church was the state-sponsored religious establishment of Massachusetts. State taxes supported its church buildings and ministers. Clergy from all other religious denominations had to travel from town to town over difficult roads to preach in private homes until a religious community raised enough private money to fund its own church building and minister.

Aaron Young's father and three brothers were also Methodist ministers. His younger brother, Eli Young, was active in the separation movement and represented East Pittston in Maine's 1819 statehood convention.

Religious freedom was a key issue. Many people in Maine sought religious freedom. The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights established a separation of church and state on a federal level, but let each state decide its own religious laws. Massachusetts state taxes supported an established church denomination, the Congregational church. Maine had many Baptists, Methodists, and other religious groups that each resented their tax money going to a different church.



THE
Falmouth Gazette
AND
WEEKLY ADVERTISER

(No. 10.) SATURDAY, March 5, 1785. (Vol. 1)

Dr. PRICE's OBSERVATIONS, &c.
(continued from our laſt.)

Of PEACE, *and the means of perpetuating it.*

CIVIL Government is an expedient for collecting the wiſdom and the force of a community or confederacy, to preſerve its peace and liberty, againſt every hoſtile invaſion, whether from *within* or from *without*.—In the latter of theſe reſpects, the United States are happily ſecured; but they are far from being equally happy in the *former* reſpect. Having now, in conſequence of their ſucceſsful reſiſtance of the invaſion of *Britain*, united to their remoteneſs from *Europe*, no external enemy to fear, they are in danger of fighting with one another.—This is their *greateſt* danger, and providing ſecurities againſt it, is their *hardeſt* work. Should they fail in this, America may ſome time or other be turned into a ſcene of blood; and inſtead of being the hope and refuge of the world, may become a terror to it.

When a diſpute ariſes among *individuals* in a State, an appeal is made to a *court of law*; that is, to the wiſdom and juſtice of the State. The court decides. The loſing party acquieſces; if not, the power of the State *forces* him to ſubmiſſion; and thus the effects of contention are ſuppreſt, and peace is maintained.—In a way ſimilar to this, peace may be maintained between any number of confederated States; and I can almoſt imagine, that it is not impoſſible but that by ſome ſuch means, *univerſal* peace may ſome time or other be produced, and all war excluded from the world.—Why may we not hope to ſee this begun in America? The articles of confederation make conſiderable advances towards it. When a diſpute ariſes between any of the States, they order an appeal to Congreſs—an enquiry by Congreſs,—a hearing,—and a deciſion.—But here they ſtop.—What is moſt of all neceſſary, is omitted. No proviſion is made for enforcing the deciſions of Congreſs; and this renders them inefficient and futile. I am by no means qualified to point out the beſt method of removing this defect. Much muſt be given up for this purpoſe, nor is it eaſy to give up *too* much. Without all doubt the powers of Congreſs muſt be enlarged. In particular, a power muſt be given it to collect, on certain emergencies, the force of the confederacy, and to employ it in carrying its deciſions into execution. A State againſt which a deciſion is made, will yield of courſe when it knows that ſuch a force exiſts, and that it allows no hope from reſiſtance.

By this force I do not mean a STANDING ARMY. God forbid, that ſtanding armies ſhould ever find an eſtabliſhment in America. They are every where the grand ſupports of arbitrary power, and the chief cauſes of the depreſſion of mankind. No wiſe people will truſt their defence out of their own hands, or conſent to hold their rights at the mercy of armed *ſlaves*. Free States ought to be bodies of armed *citizens*, well regulated, and well diſciplined, and always ready to turn out, when properly called upon, to execute the laws, to quell riots, and to keep the peace. Such, if I am rightly informed, are the citizens of America. Why then may not CONGRESS be furniſhed with a power of calling out from the confederated States, *quotas* of *militia* ſufficient to force at once the compliance of any State which may ſhew an inclination to break the union by refuſing its deciſions?

I am very ſenſible that it will be difficult to guard ſuch a power againſt abuſe; and, perhaps, better means of anſwering this end are diſcoverable. In human affairs, however, the choice generally afforded us is "of two evils to take the leaſt." We chuſe the reſtraint of civil government, becauſe a leſs evil than anarchy; and, in like manner, in the preſent inſtance, the danger of the abuſe of power, and of its being employed ſometimes to enforce wrong deciſions, muſt be ſubmitted to, becauſe a leſs evil than the miſery of inteſtine wars. Much, however, may be done to leſſen this danger. Such regulations as thoſe in the ninth of the articles of confederation will, in a great meaſure, prevent haſty and partial deciſions. The rotation eſtabliſhed by the fifth article, will prevent that corruption of character which ſeldom fails to be produced by the long poſſeſſion of power; and the right reſerved to every State of recalling its Delegates when diſſatisfied with them, will keep them conſtantly reſponſible and cautious.

The obſervations now made muſt be extended to money tranſactions. Congreſs muſt be truſted with a power of procuring ſupplies for defraying the expences of the confederation; of diſcharging debts, and providing funds for diſcharging them: and this power muſt not be capable of being defeated by the oppoſition of any minority in the States.

In ſhort, the credit of the United States, their ſtrength, their reſpectableneſs abroad, their liberty at home, and even their exiſtence, depend on the preſervation of a firm political union; and ſuch an union cannot be preſerved, without giving all poſſible weight and energy to the authority of that delegation which conſtitutes the union.

Would it not be proper to take periodical ſurveys of the different ſtates, the numbers of both ſexes in every ſtage of life, their condition, occupations, property, &c.?—Would not ſuch ſurveys, in conjunction with accurate regiſters of births, marriages and deaths at all ages, afford much important inſtruction by ſhewing what laws govern human mortality, and what ſituations, employments, and civil inſtitutions, are moſt favourable to the health and happineſs of mankind?—Would they not keep conſtantly in view the progreſs of population in the ſtates, and the encreaſe or deciine of their reſources? But more eſpecially, are they not the only means of procuring the neceſſary information for determining accurately and equitably the proportions of men and money to be contributed by each ſtate for ſupporting and ſtrengthening the confederation?

OF LIBERTY.

THE next point I would inſiſt on, as an object of ſupreme importance, is the eſtabliſhment of ſuch a ſyſtem of perfect liberty, *religious* as well as *civil*, in America, as ſhall render it a country where truth and reaſon ſhall have fair play, and the human powers find full ſcope for exerting themſelves, and for ſhewing how far they can carry human improvement.

The faculties of man have hitherto, in all countries, been more or leſs cramped by the interference of civil authority in matters of ſpeculation, by tyrannical laws againſt hereſy and ſchiſm, and by daring hierarchies and religious eſtabliſhments. It is above all things deſirable that no ſuch fetters on reaſon ſhould be admitted into America. I obſerve with inexpreſſible ſatisfaction, that at preſent they have no exiſtence there. In this reſpect the governments of the United States are liberal to a degree that is unparalleled. They have the diſtinguiſhed honour of being the firſt ſtates under heaven in which forms of government have been eſtabliſhed favourable to *univerſal* liberty. They have been thus diſtinguiſhed in their *infancy*. What then will they be in a more advanced ſtate; when time and experience, and the concurring aſſiſtance of the wiſe and virtuous, in every part of the earth, ſhall have introduced into the new governments, corrections and amendments which will render them ſtill more friendly to liberty, and more the means of promoting human happineſs and dignity?—May we not ſee there the dawning of brighter days on earth, and a new creation riſing. But I muſt check myſelf. I am in danger of being carried too far by the ardour of my hopes.

The liberty I mean includes in it liberty of conduct in all *civil* matters—liberty of diſcuſſion in all *ſpeculative* matters—and liberty of conſcience in all *religious* matters.—And it is then *perfect*, when under no reſtraint except when uſed to injure any one in his perſon, property, or good name; that is, except when uſed to deſtroy itſelf.

In liberty of diſcuſſion, I include the liberty of examining all public meaſures, and the conduct of all public men; and of writing and publiſhing on all ſpeculative and doctrinal points.

(To be Continued.)

Falmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser
Published by Benjamin Titcomb Jr. (1761-1848) and Thomas B. Wait (1762-1830)
Portland, Maine
March 5, 1785
Maine State Museum, Gift of Howard Reiche, Jr., 2019.2.1

Benjamin Titcomb Jr. and Thomas B. Wait published the *Falmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, Maine's first newspaper. The paper was originally issued to promote the separation of Maine from Massachusetts.

Although the newspaper does not mention separation until a few months later, this issue began by establishing an argument for Maine's independence. The article in the right-hand column, "Of Liberty," argues for "a system of perfect liberty, religious as well as civil." A central concern among separatists was that Massachusetts state taxes supported Congregational church buildings, ministers, and schools such as Bowdoin. As long as the state was tied to the Congregational church, other increasingly popular Christian Protestant denominations, including the Quakers, Baptists, and Methodists, could not thrive.

Benjamin Titcomb Jr. later became a Baptist pastor and was an original trustee at a Baptist seminary called Waterville College (later renamed Colby College).

Why Not Separate?

Opponents feared that separation from Massachusetts would threaten Maine's economic and physical stability and that taxes would rise.

Some of the early advocates for Maine's independence changed their position by 1800. Those who switched sides were often well-connected, wealthy members of the Federalist political party from coastal towns who realized that, by advocating independence, they were actually on the same side as poor farmers who had very different political passions.

Opponents' personal finances played a role. Their businesses were often deeply tied to the lumber and shipping businesses and linked to larger ports such as Boston. Because of the Coasting Law, ships had to pay customs duties in all American ports unless their journeys began in an adjoining state. If Maine separated from Massachusetts, local ship owners would have to pay customs as soon as they sailed south of New Hampshire. While Maine was part of Massachusetts, Maine ships could sail as far as New York without stopping to pay duties. The commercial benefit to remaining part of Massachusetts was a powerful argument for many influential merchants, those working in shipping, and large landowners selling lumber.

Opponents were concerned with taxes and military support. They pointed out that Maine had already paid taxes to help build public buildings in Boston. The state coffers would go in debt to erect governmental buildings in Maine. They also questioned how Massachusetts would distribute state-owned land in Maine. Finally, opponents argued that Massachusetts protected the District of Maine from any threats by English-controlled lands in modern-day Canada.

Anti-separation Broadside
Portland, Maine
1819
Maine State Museum, 76.8.1

Six days after Federalist supporters of Bowdoin College circulated this anti-separation broadside, voters in the District of Maine overwhelmingly decided to break from Massachusetts.

In its early years, Bowdoin College's funding came from taxes paid by Massachusetts's citizens, because it was a Congregational institution. As a result, the college more readily admitted Congregational students and limited opportunities for students from other religious backgrounds. Bowdoin supporters did not want to lose state funding with separation. The Federalist newspaper, the Portland Gazette, printed and sent this broadside against the separation cause.

Among the names listed on the bottom are prominent merchants and lawyers representing absentee landowners living in the coastal towns of Portland and Freeport, and up the Kennebec River in Gardiner.

SEPARATION.

AT a Meeting held at *Freeport*, from the Counties of Cumberland, Lincoln and Kennebec, the Hon. JACOB ABBOT, being chosen *Chairman*, and WILLIAM C. WILDE, Esq. *Secretary*,—It was voted that a Committee be raised to consider and make a Report on the best mode of bringing the question of Separation fairly before the people, and to publish the same: and the undersigned committee, appointed for that purpose, beg leave respectfully to address

The People of Maine.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THE question is *will you be Separated on the conditions proposed in the law respecting Separation?* In relation to this question a duty has been confided to us, to state to our fellow-citizens the substantial reasons, why the measure, on the conditions now offered, would operate materially to the injury of the people of Maine. It is now too late to dwell long on the subject. We will therefore state those prominent objections TO THE LAW RESPECTING SEPARATION, which we are induced to believe will, at first view, appear well founded to every man's common sense, who is free from prejudice on the subject.

AND first, our want of state funds must be supplied by *heavy taxes on the people* to establish the government and bring it into operation.

2. IT is manifestly against the interest of Maine that commissioners should from *time to time*, for the term of ten years, divide the public lands, according to their own judgment, into halves, as the law provides, in such manner and such parcels as they may think proper; for the parcelling of the land into lots, gives Massachusetts every advantage over Maine, in respect to the profits to be derived from their respective shares. Maine has a necessity to people her vacant lands, and bring them under cultivation, that her taxable property may be increased. Massachusetts has no such necessity, and may husband *her* lands at *our* expense; and it is not to be expected that she will fail to do it. The six commissioners are to be engaged with their surveyors, chainmen, &c. & to continue their services at the public expense, half of which is to be borne by Maine, *for the term of ten years*; not to make their services profitable to *Maine*, but directly the contrary; their whole services being manifestly profitable to *Massachusetts only*, who alone has an interest in having the lands divided into parcels. But this is not all; the exemption of the lands, to be set off to Massachusetts from being taxed, leaves it forever in the power of Massachusetts to raise a revenue out of those lands without parting with the title to them. The effect of this provision is, that while all holding lands under *Maine*, or by other titles, *are to be taxed for them*, all tenants under *Massachusetts* are to hold their lands *free from taxation*, so long as the title remains in Massachusetts.

BUT the most common way of granting land by Massachusetts always has been to give obligations for deeds, to be executed when the land is paid for, and that course is most likely to be pursued in future, because it is customary, and must be a great income to Massachusetts if managed with policy, by taking the interest of the price agreed to be paid, and giving long credit and extending the credit from time to time, exacting only the interest, on the purchase money agreed to be paid. Thus rendering that interest, in substance, a tax on land by Massachusetts, which Maine has no power to tax, but is bound to protect in her courts of justice, by those parts of the constitution which the separation law ingrafts into it.

UNDER such divisions of the land, and such conditions annexed, we cannot perceive, by any principle of justice, that Massachusetts is entitled to *one half* in exchange for the *other*. For it is manifest that our increasing population, contiguous to the lands of Massachusetts, must be a continual source of increase to their value, without any expensive exertions by Massachusetts. The *half* will be rendered more valuable, by our peopleing the country, than the *whole* would be without it. Therefore Massachusetts is a gainer by exchanging, in this manner, *one half* the lands in Maine for the *other*. And hence it follows that all the valuable real estate in Massachusetts is surrendered by the law *for nothing*.

3. WE cannot perceive any just reason for our fulfilling the stipulations of Massachusetts with the Indians, for the *nominal* compensation of $30,000, in wild land, to be appraised by the commissioners; for Massachusetts, is in the first place, by the law, to be paid our proportion of the indian obligations, including even annuities, out of the state funds reserved as a pledge, if they are sufficient; and if not *we are to pay our proportion of the deficiency*. (See sec. 1, articles 4 and 5.) We are then to procure a release from the Indians of all their claims against Massachusetts. Having thus paid Massachusetts our proportion of their obligations to the Indians, we are to pay these same Indians the whole that Massachusetts agreed to pay them, for the insignificant sum of $30,000, in appraised land.

Now besides all this, Massachusetts is to have half, in quantity and quality, of those very lands, which were ceded by the Indians, which are well known to be of a superior quality and highly valuable. Why then instead of this nominal compensation, did not Massachusetts release to Maine the lands ceded to her the last year by the Penobscot Indians, as an indemnity to Maine for paying Massachusetts our proportion of the Indian obligations, and then wholly freeing her from the claims of those Indians, and fulfilling them in her stead?

4. THE right reserved by Massachusetts to *cancel* all proprietors bonds for the performance of settling duties, or to enforce or *give them up* at pleasure, ought not to be yielded by Maine; because it is submitting the property of the people of Maine to the determination of the legislature of Massachusetts. Neither, as we believe, ought all the other state funds to have been left to the sole controul and management of Massachusetts, till commissioners act on the subject: because Maine has no security or pledge whatever for the faithful application and employment of these funds, to render them productive to Maine, and has no means of indemnity for any loss which may happen from accident or mismanagement. While on the other hand, Massachusetts not only retains the public funds as a pledge for indemnity, but in substance provides that the laws of Massachusetts, now in force respecting her lands, shall remain unaltered, and be administered to Massachusetts by the courts of Maine and the United States, *as they now exist*. Thus imposing the existing laws of Massachusetts, now in force respecting her lands, as a part of our constitution, and placing those laws beyond the power of the legislature of Maine to control.

6. DELAY on this subject is the soundest policy for Maine, and haste is what the interest of Massachusetts demands. This she has seen and profited by it. Our population is gaining rapidly on hers—this increaces *our* claims and diminishes *hers*; and it was doubtless the eagerness, which she supposed to exist in Maine on this subject, that encouraged her to propose and adhere to high claims. This was politic.—But would it be wise or even excusable in us to close with the terms. Our senators and representatives have announced that the present terms are better than the terms of 1816. If this be true it proves the benefit of delay—if not, it is clear the terms ought to be rejected. *Why was not the whole of the land in Maine insisted upon as a condition of separation?* If not now granted, would it long be refused? In a few years the population of Maine will exceed that of Massachusetts. And this rapid increase shews the prosperity of Maine under the present Government.

6. Many of the paupers of different towns in Massachussetts now live in Maine, and these towns are liable to pay for their support. But the act has made no provision for their support or removal after separation. They are therefore a burthen released from Massachusetts and left on Maine. It further seems worthy of remark that the current of emigration sets from Massachusetts to Maine, from a dense population, which admits comparatively of little increase. All the poor emigrants from Massachusetts to Maine, will be our paupers; there is reason to believe that they will be a considerable burthen, from which we have no relief provided in the act. Is it not reasonable to suppose that this would be a far greater burthen of state paupers than we have ever supported, respecting which so many erroneous calculations have been circulated?

We would further respectfully suggest that, we conceive the law requires too much haste for the great body of the people to have an opportunity to reflect upon it, and judge for themselves how far it deserves to be approved or disapproved. It is *their* interest that is at stake. Why therefore was time not given to all of them to read the law deliberately and attentively and judge of its merits, instead of compelling them to act in a few weeks on so important a subject, as it were by impulse? They seem to be called upon not to think, not fully to know the law, but to decide upon it without having an opportunity to know it, in all parts of Maine, and weigh its important consequences.

Yet in looking attentively into it, what is there to induce them to adopt it? We acknowledge we can perceive nothing. Nor can we but suggest a doubt of its being voted for by any, who are not more particularly interested in the subject than the people at large are; unless by such as have not had an opportunity fully to examine and consider it. Against the provisions of this law therefore, having only a common interest in the subject with our fellow citizens in general, we feel it to be an imperative duty to protest, and to appeal to the people to assert their rights and to refuse the sacrifices demanded at their hands.

From the brief views here suggested, important questions result.

Can the lands be divided as proposed, and all the valuable public real estate in Massachusetts be given up, without great sacrifices of the best interests of Maine?

Can all the other property be pledged and controled as proposed, and Maine not be a sufferer by it?

Can Maine incorporate the land laws of Massachusetts in regard to her interests, into the constitution of Maine, and not drink of the cup of degradation, at her first breath as a state?

In fine, can Maine accept such conditions and retain the smallest pretence to the name and character of a n independent state?

The subject, FELLOW CITIZENS, is worthy your reflection. If you reject the conditions by your votes on the 26th of July, your rights and claims will remain in full force; if not, they will be gone forever, beyond recovery.

ROBERT H. GARDINER,
JACOB ABBOT,
AMMI R. MITCHELL,
JOHN A. HYDE,
JOSIAH PEIRCE,
DUDLEY TODD,
EDWARD RUSSELL,
STEPHEN LONGFELLOW, Jr.
JOSIAH W. MITCHELL,
WILLIAM O. VAUGHAN,
BENJAMIN ORR,
WILLIAM R. STOCKBRIDGE,
JOSEPH M'KEEN,
WILLIAM BARROWS,
JOHN W. MELLEN,
BENJAMIN DUNNING,

What Tipped the Balance?

Massachusetts refused to defend against the English occupation of Downeast Maine in the War of 1812.

Shipping drove New England's economy. The New England shipping industry thrived during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars that began in 1792. As a neutral power, American ships could supply France and Great Britain as well as their colonies while the great superpowers of the era fought one another. However, when the British violated America's neutrality by seizing U. S. ships, President Jefferson and Congress responded in 1807 by imposing an embargo that prohibited American ships from supplying foreign powers. This policy was extremely unpopular in Massachusetts and the District of Maine where shipping was vital to the economy. In 1812, President Madison declared war on Great Britain.

Coasting Law Map
Reproduced from Stephen J. Hornsby and Richard W. Judd
Historical Atlas of Maine
2015
Courtesy of University of Maine Press

The Coasting Law of 1789 was a major point in anti-separation arguments. If Maine were to separate, it would no longer be included in Massachusetts's borders with New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Maine ship owners would thus have to pay customs at every port in those states, reducing profits.

In 1818, William King traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby for a change in the Coasting Law of 1789. He succeeded in 1819 when the U. S. Congress made the entire East Coast one customs district. This new federal law removed a major obstacle to the independence movement for business owners and residents in many coastal communities.

The War of 1812 was extremely unpopular in New England. Great Britain took advantage of Maine's unprotected position and invaded eastern Maine, occupying key ports such as Eastport and Castine. By taking eastern Maine, England controlled the Saint John River valley, a vital communication and transportation route linking Quebec to New Brunswick.

Massachusetts left Maine to defend itself. The United States government was busy fighting in other regions and the Federalists controlling Boston refused to send military support to their District of Maine. Boston bankers also declined to loan money to Maine for self-defense. A sense of abandonment by Massachusetts became a powerful rallying cry for those wanting separation and independence for Maine.

Chapeau de Bras (Officer's Hat)
Worn by Captain Silas Dunbar (1781-1853)
1812-1814
Maine State Museum. Gift of Silas S. Reynolds, 72.50.1

Captain Silas Dunbar came from Bridgewater, Massachusetts. He served for one month during the War of 1812 defending Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Governor Caleb Strong opposed the war and refused to allow the Massachusetts militia to leave the state. Governor Strong called up soldiers from around Massachusetts and the District of Maine to protect the state's port cities. Local men protected their nearest ports, but Maine had far fewer soldiers than Massachusetts and more shoreline to defend. Many in Maine were very disappointed when no other Massachusetts troops were sent to expel the British who occupied the whole of eastern Maine in the late summer of 1814.

Flintlock Musket
1808-1815
Maine State Museum, Gift of C. Merrill Leister, 81.7.14

This musket was the type used in the War of 1812. In April 1808, Congress issued contracts to nineteen private gun makers to create muskets to arm state militias.

Between 1808 and 1810 contractors produced 85,200 flintlock muskets for $10.75 each, with bayonets. The muskets were to conform to either a Springfield or Harpers Ferry pattern. Four of the contractors made 21,500 Springfield muskets in Massachusetts.

Why Did Massachusetts Let Maine Go?

By 1800, Maine's population was growing at a faster rate than that of Massachusetts and aligning with an opposing political party.

The District of Maine's population exploded, growing by over 200% in the thirty years after the American Revolution. Between 1790 and 1820, Maine grew from 96,540 to 298,335 people. The majority of the newcomers were farm families fleeing land-strapped southern New England. The farmers were deeply disappointed to find millions of acres in Maine claimed by wealthy, land-speculating proprietors in Boston and beyond.

The settlers flooding Maine brought new political ideas. While the earliest separation advocates of the 1780s had primarily been prosperous Federalist businessmen from Falmouth (Portland), newcomers settling further inland were largely Democratic-Republicans. Federalists in Maine backed away from separation when they realized they would become the minority party in an independent state. At the same time, some Massachusetts Federalists looked forward to a more secure Federalist majority in Massachusetts if Maine (with its growing Democratic-Republican majority) were allowed to separate.

Maine settlers with distinct political leanings began to overwhelm Massachusetts. Democratic-Republican voters in the District of Maine were essential to the unprecedented election of Democratic-Republicans as governors of Massachusetts in 1807, 1808, 1810, and 1811. As a result, many Federalists in Massachusetts warmed to the idea of letting Maine become a new state in order to preserve the Federalist political power in Massachusetts.

Once Maine voters elected to become an independent state, Massachusetts gave Maine a March 4, 1820 deadline to become a state or revert to district status again. That meant that Maine voters would need to pass another referendum to petition for statehood. The process at the national level appeared to be going smoothly until the U. S. Congress began arguing over Missouri's entry into the Union and the expansion of slavery into new American states. In the last days of 1819, Maine politicians were shocked to find that Maine's ability to become a state hinged on Congress's acceptance of a new slave state. Negotiations in Congress pushed dangerously close to Maine's March 4 deadline.

What Did the Missouri Compromise Have to Do with Maine?

The Missouri Compromise gave Maine a clear path to statehood, but also meant the expansion of slavery in the United States.

Maine entered the United States as a result of the Missouri Compromise. This compromise was the first national-level agreement to keep the United States from breaking apart under the weight of slavery. The U. S. Congress admitted Maine and Missouri together to maintain an equal number of slave and free states: Maine would enter as a free state, not allowing slavery, while Missouri would enter the Union simultaneously as a slave state, allowing slavery.

Slavery spread to new American territories after the War of 1812, raising the possibility of introducing new slave states. After the war, the United States government forced Native Americans off fourteen million acres of the Old Southwest (Alabama, Mississippi) and opened the settlement of those lands to whites. Thousands of slave-holding cotton farmers moved in to the deep south and west of the Mississippi River to take advantage of longer growing seasons and the boom in cotton prices realized after the wars from 1792 – 1815 ended in Europe and North America.

Technology further drove cotton prices higher and higher and increased the demand for slave labor. The growing use of the cotton gin, invented in 1793 to remove seeds from cotton, made cotton plantations increasingly profitable. Improved methods of textile production, with new spinning machines and the early use of power looms, meant cotton would be increasingly profitable in the future. Low-cost cotton fabric production depended entirely on the continued expansion of slavery in the United States.

Maine had been working to become a state for nearly 40 years, while Missouri had only invested three years to achieve statehood. Missouri was a United States territory within the Louisiana Purchase that allowed slave-holding. Many Northerners did not want slavery to expand into new territories let alone to new American states. At the time, there were equal numbers of Northern free states and Southern slave states, ensuring fairly equal representation in the U. S. Senate. Neither side wanted to let the other gain an advantage in national politics. Many Northerners also objected to the expansion of slavery on moral grounds.

New York Representative James Tallmadge proposed a compromise. He suggested an amendment that accepted Missouri as a slave state under the condition that no new slaves could be brought into the state, and those born in slavery would be set free at age 25. In this gradual emancipation no one currently owning slaves would lose their present "investment."

Southern politicians adamantly refused. Plantation owners in older tobacco-growing states like Maryland and Virginia were making money selling young slaves to new territories on the advancing cotton-growing frontier. They did not want to threaten that income. Pro-slavery arguments focused on the constitutional rights of new states and slavery proponents called themselves "anti-restrictionists." That is, they did not want new states to be hindered by rules other states did not have to follow. The Tallmadge amendment designed to block the expansion of slavery in Missouri passed the United States House of Representatives but failed to pass in the Senate, triggering a national crisis. At the end of 1819, the issue languished as the 15th Congress went home and Washington D.C. prepared to welcome the 16th Congress.

The resulting political turmoil on a federal level almost disqualified Maine's bid for statehood. Through all of this, congressmen from the District of Maine expressed satisfaction that the Maine statehood act was moving forward. Given the crisis in Missouri, however, on December 30, 1819 the Speaker of the House Henry Clay proposed that Maine could only become a state if Missouri could as well. This gave Congress just over two months to resolve the issue before Maine would lose its mandate from Massachusetts that statehood must be achieved by March 4, 1820. After six distinct separation votes dating back to 1792, it now seemed the crisis over slavery would force Maine to remain a district of Massachusetts even longer.

The compromise enabled both Maine and Missouri to enter the Union, a vote for the Missouri Compromise was a vote for the expansion of slavery. A vote against it was a vote against Maine's statehood. Five of the seven Massachusetts representatives for the District of Maine voted against the Missouri Compromise in an effort to limit slavery. Nevertheless, it narrowly passed in the House of Representatives, and Maine became a state.

Wrist Shackles, Leg Shackles
United States
1840
Courtesy of the National Park Service, Gettysburg

Shackles like these were used to bind people's arms and legs.

Maine had a colonial slave market as early as 1650. Slaves arrived on ships docking at York, Maine. The1754 census shows there were approximately 154 enslaved men and women, with roughly a two-to-one ratio of males to females, in the District of Maine. Massachusetts outlawed slavery in 1783.

Maine citizens began to speak out against slavery by the early 1800s. During the Missouri Compromise debate, some places, such as in South Berwick, held town meetings and sent petitions to their representatives in Congress begging them not to allow slavery to expand into new states.

Five of seven United States Representatives from the District of Maine—Martin Kinsley, Joshua Cushman, Ezekiel Whitman, Enoch Lincoln, and James Parker—voted against statehood in an effort to prohibit slavery's spread into new territories.

Slavery and Maine

Much of the nation's economy relied on slave-raised products such as cotton, sugar, and molasses.

Slavery was legal in every American colony, including Massachusetts's District of Maine. In 1783, Massachusetts was the first state to outlaw slavery, but the regional economy still depended on shipping, which involved slaves and slave products.

Slave labor fueled the national economy. Every American consumed slave-raised products such as cotton, sugar, and molasses. The people of Maine were no exception. In fact, Maine led the northern states in the production of cotton fabric in 1810. Cotton was the primary slave-grown crop cultivated in expanding plantations throughout the south. Maine traders purchased cotton to be processed into fabric by home weavers throughout Maine and resold elsewhere.

Nearly all Atlantic commerce played a role in the slave trade. Maine shipbuilders and shipmasters contributed to the "triangle trade" that carried products and enslaved people between the Americas, along with the West Indies (Caribbean Islands, including individual islands such as Cuba, Jamaica, and Haiti), Europe, and Africa. Exporters in America shipped raw materials to Europe where they picked up trade goods. These trade goods were taken to Africa and sold in exchange for slaves to be brought back to the Americas.

Maine products supplied plantations and linked Maine to the triangle trade. Maine seaports prospered as ships laden with timber and salted fish departed to supply West Indies sugar plantations, linking Maine to the triangle trade. Ships sailing from the islands brought sugar and molasses back to New England, and cotton from the American south. Molasses was used to make rum, some of which was traded in Africa for slaves.

***Boston Evening Post* Fugitive Slave Advertisement (reproduction)**
By William Bucknam (1709-1776) of Falmouth (Portland)
Boston, Massachusetts
September 18, 1749

Wearing silk, like owning slaves, was a sign of prestige.

John Bucknam was raised in a slave-owning household in Falmouth (Portland). When he was three years old, his father William's slave, Cuffe, ran away. William advertised in three Boston newspapers to offer a cash prize for anyone who caught and returned his property. Cuffe may have successfully escaped because the first runaway notice appeared in 1749 and the last in 1755.

John Bucknam wore this silk waistcoat (vest) in 1773 when he married Mary Wilson in Columbia Falls, Maine. He and Mary had nine children and owned two or three enslaved people. The Bucknams were forced to free their slaves when Massachusetts outlawed slavery in 1783.

RAN away from Master, *William Bucknam*, of *Falmouth* in Casco Bay, in the Month of July last, a Negro Man named Cuffe, aged about 40 Years, a pretty tall spare Fellow, who had on a blue Broad Cloth Coat, a black Jacket and striped Breeches and Trowsers, gray Stockings, and thick Shoes, a Worsted Cap and a Fe't Hat, He has Scares on each Cheek, and I hear he has with him a forged Pass, which he got with the Help of some evil minded Person, which protects him from being taken up. Whoever shall take up said Fellow, and convey him to his said Master in *Falmouth*, or to *Capt. Benjamin Blany* in *Malden*, shall have *Twenty Pounds*, Old Tenor, Reward, and all necessary Charged paid by me, *William Bucknam*.

N.B. He has been something used to the Sea, and will endeavour to get off; therefore all *Masters of Vessels* and other Persons are hereby cautioned against harbouring, concealing or carrying him off, as they will avoid the Penalty of the Law. Sept. 3, 1749.

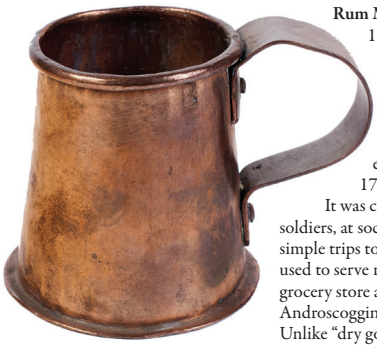
Wedding Waistcoat (Vest)
Worn by John Bucknam (1746-1792)
Columbia Falls, Maine
1773
Maine State Museum, Gift of John Bucknam Drisko, 79.95.1

Flip Glass
Bohemia (present-day Czech Republic)
1780-1820
Maine State Museum, 96.80.3

Rum was one of the most popular drinks in America in the 1700s and early 1800s. It was distilled from molasses, a by-product of processing slave-grown cane sugar into refined sugar. Sugar plantations were almost exclusively in the West Indies on Caribbean islands such as Cuba, Jamaica, and Barbados.

While the highest quality rum may have been distilled in the West Indies, the cheapest rum was made in New England, including Portland. Maine merchants imported vast quantities of molasses for the rum distilleries that dotted Maine's coastline. In 1826, Portland had seven distilleries and sold excess rum to Boston for shipment abroad. Rum was often traded for slaves on the African coast.

This glass served flip, a mixture of rum, strong beer, sugar, and spice. A red-hot iron was plunged into the glass, such as this example, to make the drink frothy. It is especially large because a flip glass was passed around a room for each person to take a drink.



Rum Measure
1815-1820
Maine State Museum, Gift of Penelope Paine, 78.93.5

Rum was a part of everyday life in the 1700s and early 1800s. It was consumed by workers, soldiers, at social events, and during simple trips to town. This cup was used to serve rum in Anslem Cary's grocery store at Greene Corner, Androscoggin County, Maine. Unlike "dry goods" stores, grocery stores regularly served hard liquor by the cup.

Sugar Bowl
Staffordshire, England
ca. 1820
Maine State Museum, Gift of James H. Phelan, 70.18.9

Sugar Tongs
Made by Enoch Moulton
Portland, Maine
1805-1820
Maine State Museum, Gift of Charles Burden, 80.111.65

Sugar exploded in popularity as slave labor made it an inexpensive commodity in the early 1700s. By 1800, sugar growth and production in the West Indies accounted for more than 80% of the trade in slaves and nearly half of all seagoing shipping. The West Indies produced no agricultural products, fuel, or other household goods, and so relied entirely on the American colonies and Europe for these supplies.

Enslaved workers grew and cut sugar cane under brutal conditions. Each plantation had a sugar mill. Slaves worked the mills that crushed the sugar cane and boiled the cane to extract the sugar, leaving molasses as a by-product. Maine timber fueled the fires that boiled the sugar.

John Rice Robinson Tavern Sign
Mount Vernon, Maine
1804
Maine State Museum, Gift of Margaret R. Webber and Lois Webber Williams, 69.91.1

Taverns throughout New England sold rum, which unlike hard cider and beer, could not be made at home. John Rice Robinson would have acquired rum for his tavern from the seafaring ships docked in Hallowell, Maine on the Kennebec River. Rural merchants and innkeepers lined up their wagons at the wharves ready to load rum and other products imported from the West Indies to be sold in inland towns.

After his 1794 marriage, Robinson moved with his family from New Hampshire to Mount Vernon, Maine where he opened an inn and tavern.

Felling Axe
1700-1800
Maine State Museum, 00.74.1

West Indies plantation owners purchased great quantities of Maine trees, felled by axes similar to this example, to fuel the boilers that distilled sugar cane into refined sugar and molasses. Enslaved people worked around the clock in hot and dangerous conditions to keep the fires burning. By 1700, most trees in the West Indies had been cleared to make way for sugar fields.

In 1808, Congress outlawed the international importation of slaves. Although American ships could no longer legally carry enslaved people, Maine ship owners grew wealthy as they continued to provide ships and sell firewood to the West Indies.

Lower Portion of Ship's Fore Mast
From ship owned by Moses Brown and Andrew Cabot
Beverly, Massachusetts
1778-1779
(H) 67 1/4" (W) 17" (D) 17"
Maine State Museum, HR176/1/261/1

Lumbermen scoured Maine's woods for tall, straight trees to cut for ship's masts. This section of a mast, made from a massive pine, was recovered from a 1779 shipwreck in Penobscot Bay.

Ship building was an early industry in Maine. Small shipyards lined coastal and river towns where timber driven downriver was plentiful and labor was cheap.

By participating in trade on the Atlantic Ocean, Maine-made ships served the slave economy. The slave ship was the means by which nearly 12.5 million enslaved Africans were transported from Africa to the Americas between 1500 and 1866. If ships did not carry enslaved people, they brought slave-produced products back to the District of Maine. These ships also delivered supplies from Maine that supported plantations in the American South and West Indies.

Maine merchants sometimes owned slave ships. For example, Thomas Robinson of Portland owned The Eagle, a slave-carrying ship. Records from 1791 show his son-in-law and agent John Hodges brought slaves from Africa to sell to plantation owners in Haiti. With the proceeds, Hodges purchased foodstuffs to be sold in Portland.

Scrimshaw Whalebone Busk
Portland, Maine
1807-1820
(H) 14 9/16" (W) 1 3/4"
Maine State Museum, 2018.46.1

After the American Revolution, Portland's shipbuilding and transport businesses boomed. Ship captains sailed large vessels directly to the West Indies loaded with wood and provisions for the plantations. Trade, especially with Cuba, was a vital part of the town's growing post-Revolution economy.

A busk served as a vertical support in a woman's stays (corset) to support her figure. The etching on this busk depicts Portland and features the Portland Observatory – the towering structure with signal flags at the top.

John Moody constructed the Portland Observatory on Munjoy Hill in 1807. The observatory housed a powerful telescope, able to spot ships from 30 miles away. Ship owners paid a subscription to Moody to keep watch from the observatory. When Moody located a ship, he flew the owner's signal flag to alert the owner's crew to be prepared to unload the goods at the Portland wharf.

Statehood at What Cost?

Although they had been supporters of statehood, five of the seven U.S. Representatives from the District of Maine voted against Maine's bid for independence.

When the choice came between statehood and accepting slavery, many Mainers preferred to limit slavery. Although Maine's economy was deeply connected to the international trade that fueled the expansion of slavery, many people had a deep distaste for slavery and opposed its existence, let alone its expansion. Delegates to Maine's state constitutional convention agreed that free men of African descent could vote in the new state, even though this was a time when many other states were revising their constitutions to ban black voters. When Maine's statehood became tied to slavery's expansion, it posed a grave dilemma for the seven U. S. Representatives from the District of Maine. In the end, only two of the seven voted in favor of Maine's statehood. The other five could not bear to vote in favor of expanding slavery in America, even if it meant losing the opportunity to become an independent state.

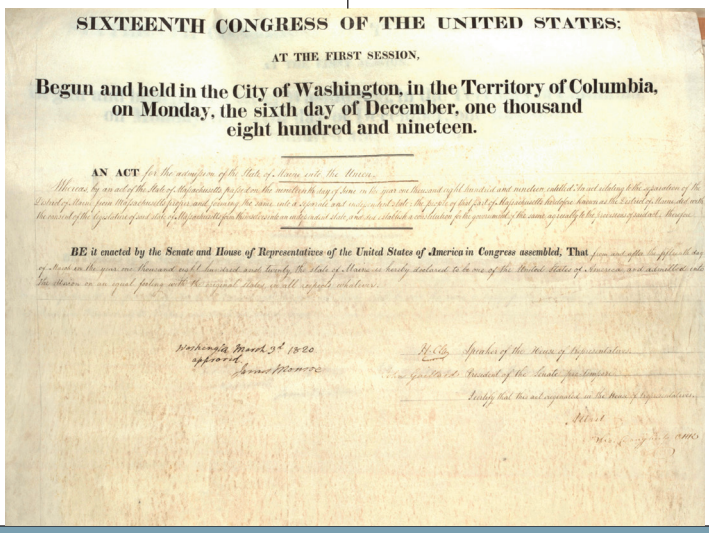
The crisis over slavery in 1819 and 1820 captured national attention. Americans closely watched the narrow vote to allow the joint entrance of Maine and Missouri as new states. The legislation passed the House of Representatives by a vote of just 90 to 87. Congressmen cast votes almost entirely on regional lines; just 14 Congressmen from northern states joined the razor-thin pro-slavery victory. If all of Maine's Congressmen had voted against the Compromise, the outcome would have been reversed. The two Representatives who voted in favor of statehood came home to defend themselves from vicious attacks in the media.

Statehood Achieved

Maine's political leaders were prepared to take the reins in governing the new state.

On March 15, 1820, Maine entered the Union as the 23rd state. Delegates to the Maine state constitutional convention had met in October 1819 and used the Massachusetts constitution of 1780 as their model, yet they modified it on several important matters. Maine's constitution prohibited state support for any religious group, which stood in contrast to the tax-supported Congregational Church in Massachusetts. It allowed men of European and African descent the right to vote regardless of their ability to own property. Yet, it denied voting rights to "untaxed Indians" living on reservation lands, as well as to all women.

The State of Maine took over land distribution, which included negotiating with Wabanaki peoples. In the transfer of governmental authority from Massachusetts, Maine assumed all treaty obligations that Massachusetts had made with the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot peoples. Some public lands were also transferred to Maine, though Massachusetts retained thousands of acres in Maine. Maine placed its public lands and Wabanaki people under legal guardianship with government officials designated to manage tribal affairs.



SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

AT THE FIRST SESSION,

Begun and held in the City of Washington, in the Territory of Columbia, on Monday, the sixth day of December, one thousand eight hundred and nineteen.

AN ACT for the admission of the State of Maine into the Union.

BE it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That from and after the [illegible] day of March in the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty, the State of Maine is hereby declared to be one of the United States of America, and admitted into the Union on an equal footing with the original States, in all respects whatever.

Washington, March 3d 1820.
approved
James Monroe

An Act for the Admission of the State of Maine into the Union
United States Congress
Washington, D.C.
March 6, 1820.
Courtesy of the National Archives

This document represents the end of the long and difficult effort to assume Maine statehood. Advocates for Maine's statehood overcame many obstacles. It took nearly forty years to convince Maine voters to unite for independence. Separationists had to then secure the Massachusetts General Court's formal approval to leave the state. The people of Maine thought they had moved through the difficult part, only to find statehood embroiled in the national slavery debate.

When the Massachusetts General Court passed the Separation Act, it gave the District of Maine until March 4, 1820 to be approved as an independent state by Congress. If Maine was unsuccessful by that date, it would revert to a district status and Maine's citizens would have to vote again on the separation question. Eleven days before the Separation Act was set to expire, William King convinced the Massachusetts General Court to extend this deadline.

Known as the "Maine Statehood Act," this law formally accepted Maine into the United States. It is signed by President James Madison, Speaker of the House Henry Clay, and President of the Senate John Gaillard.

Maine State House in Augusta
By Charles Codman (1800-1842)
Augusta, Maine
1834
Maine State Museum, 72.19.56

Portland artist Charles Codman (1800-1842) painted Maine's new state house two years after it was erected. The structure, built out of locally-quarried granite, was finished in1832, a year after Augusta became the state capital.

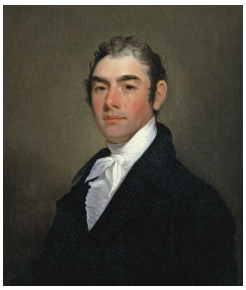
Portland served as Maine's first capital, but in 1827 the legislature voted to move the capital to Augusta. Legislators anticipated that that in coming years Augusta would be closer to the center of Maine's population.

Charles Bulfinch, Boston's famous architect, designed the Maine State House. Bulfinch had also designed the Massachusetts state house and recently finished work on the United States Capitol building.

The house shown to the right of the capitol building was owned by Captain James Hall at State and Capitol Streets. It was later purchased by the Blaine family and since 1920 has been the home to Maine's governors.

William King (1768-1852)
By Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828)
Boston, Massachusetts
1806
Maine State Museum, 72.19.93

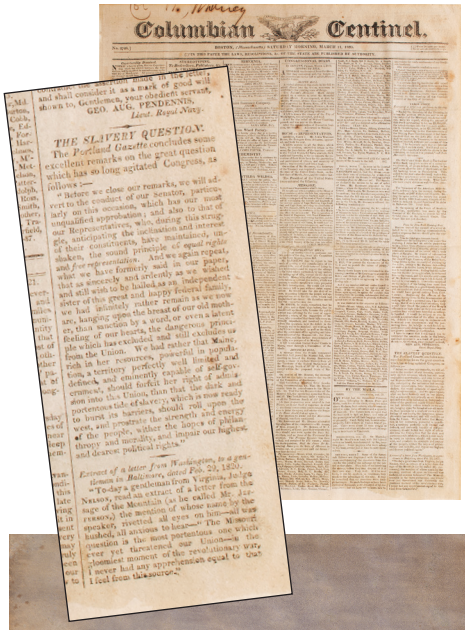
Ann Nesbeth (Frazier) King (1782-1857)
By Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828)
Boston, Massachusetts
1806
Maine State Museum, 72.19.94



William King was Maine's first governor and the most powerful man in Maine during the years leading up to statehood. These portraits of King and his wife, Ann, were painted by Gilbert Stuart, one of America's most well-known artists of the time.

As president of Maine's constitutional convention, he was automatically declared acting governor when Maine achieved statehood. He was formally elected by a landslide in April of 1820.

King remained governor for a little more than a year. He became enmeshed in party politics, unable to please either Maine's Federalists or Democratic-Republicans. He resigned in June 1821 to take a post in Washington D.C. When he returned, he had lost political influence in Maine. He was soundly defeated in an election for governor in 1835 and died in 1852, leaving his wife nearly penniless.


Columbian Centinel.

THE SLAVERY QUESTION.

Columbian Centinel
Boston, Massachusetts
March 11, 1820
Maine State Museum, 2018.59.1

This issue of Boston's *Columbian Centinel* reported that President James Monroe had approved the bill [shown to the left] enacting Maine's independent statehood on March 15, 1820. It further describes the Maine Bill and the Missouri Bill that together created the Missouri Compromise that allowed slavery to expand into a state west of the Mississippi River.

In the lower right column, the *Centinel* reprinted an article from the *Portland Gazette* reflecting the editor's position on the Missouri Compromise:

"We had rather that Maine, rich in her resources, powerful in population…and eminently capable of self-government, should forfeit her right of admission into this Union, than that the dark and portentous tide of slavery, which is now ready to burst its barriers, should roll upon the west."

Congress Street
Portland, Maine
1822-1825
Maine State Museum and the Maine Historical Society, 98.30.1

The white building on the right was Maine's first state house, located at the intersection of Congress and Myrtle Streets in Portland. This is one of only two existing images showing that structure.

This state house was built the year Maine became a state in 1820. The second floor housed the senate and the governor's office along with the headquarters of his cabinet members. The first floor contained governmental offices.

In 1827, Maine's Legislature voted to make Augusta the new state capital. Portland continued to host state government in this building until the new state capitol was completed in 1832. The first state house burned in the Great Fire of 1866.

Maine's Militia

The United States did not establish a standing army after the Revolution, preferring a well-regulated and disciplined militia of citizens that trained and could be called to serve as needed. To secure the nation's defense, in 1791 Congress enacted a law requiring every state to form a militia by enlisting all male residents between the ages of eighteen and forty-five.

Forming a new state militia was especially important to the people of Maine. English aggression during the War of 1812 was a recent memory, and over 600 miles of Maine bordered English-controlled colonies. The United States and Great Britain had not agreed about the location of Maine's northeastern border at the time Maine became an independent state. This made it especially important for Maine to organize a militia that could be called out at a moment's notice.

Kennebeck Guards Militia Banner
Painted by Charles Codman (1800-1842)
Portland, Maine
ca. 1833
Maine State Museum, 79.120.1

In 1833, the Kennebeck Guards changed its name from the Gardiner Light Infantry Company. The Guards continued to operate within the First Regiment of Infantry Second Brigade, First Division of the Maine Militia.

Portland artist Charles Codman (1800–1842) painted this silk banner to honor the triumphal visit of General Lafayette to the United States in 1824–25. Codman decorated it for the Kennebeck Guards to carry in parades.

General Lafayette, who greatly aided the American Revolution and was treated by George Washington almost as a son, is shown standing near Boston's Bunker Hill monument, which was built between 1825 and 1843. Lafayette symbolically laid the cornerstone to the monument when he visited Boston in 1825. His extended journey through the United States in 1825 marked the 50th anniversary of the American Revolution. In the course of his American tour, Lafayette visited several Maine towns.

Maine State Militia Flag
Attributed to John Penniman (1782-1841)
Boston, Massachusetts
1822
Maine State Museum, 2009.23.1

This is the canton of an 1822 flag from the Second Regiment of Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 1st Division out of Parsonsfield, York County, Maine. The canton would have been stitched to the center or upper left corner of a solid-colored cloth to form the flag.

Maine leaders probably commissioned noted Boston painter John Penniman to design Maine's first militia flag. The artist included core Maine symbols: the white pine, a moose, and the state motto "DIRIGO," Latin for "I lead." Penniman etched a copper plate with the central motif that was reproduced on all the militia flags. The red band of text at the bottom was changed to reflect which militia unit carried the flag.

Militia Cap
ca. 1825
Maine State Museum,
79.73.1

This militia hat or "shako" features one of the earliest representations of the Maine state seal. The Maine Legislature appointed a committee that designed and presented the state seal in less than a week. The committee chair's step-daughter, Bertha Smouse is credited with drawing the first seal, based on Hallowell's Benjamin Vaughan's design. The Legislature formally accepted the seal design on June 9, 1820, less than three months after Maine became the 23rd state.

The white pine is a "mast pine" that symbolizes the central place that Maine's forest holds in the state's economy. The reclining "moose-deer" represents the unsettled lands of Maine, as well as the spirit of independence and liberty. The two men, a mariner resting on an "anchor of hope" and a farmer holding a scythe, represent primary occupations of the land and sea in 1820. The star is the North Star because Maine was the most northern state at the time. DIRIGO is Latin for "I Lead."

First Maine Militia Uniform
Probably worn by James C. Spaulding (1802-1886)
1820-1840
Maine State Museum, Gift of Barrett Spaulding, 69.51.1

James C. Spaulding of Buckfield turned nineteen when Maine's first militia was organized in March 1821. The Spaulding family preserved and passed down this uniform through several generations.

Maine's militiamen were to muster up to four days a year to train and parade. The 1821 Act to Organize ... the Militia of the State of Maine prescribes that each soldier "shall be uniformly clothed in regimentals, to be furnished at their own expense; the color and fashion to be determined by the Brigadier commanding" the unit.

At some point, the family replaced the damaged lower right skirt of the uniform coat.

The Wabanaki and the New State

Once Maine became a state, its new government assumed responsibility for treaty agreements that Massachusetts had made with the Wabanaki.

Maine took over Massachusetts's treaty obligations. The Massachusetts government entered into treaty relationships in 1794 with the Passamaquoddy and in 1796 and 1818 with the Penobscot. These treaties restricted the tribes to ever-smaller reservations but also protected Wabanaki hunting and fishing rights. Through a series of laws after 1820, Maine tried to force the Wabanaki to live and remain within a very limited area as new settlers from southern New England moved into Maine.

Massachusetts had made illegal treaties, which were in violation of the Federal Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790. This law made it illegal for individuals or states to make independent land sales or treaties with Native American Indians without the approval of Congress. Through state-appointed Indian agents, Maine then sold Wabanaki lands to settlers on the Native people's behalf and controlled the proceeds. The new state of Maine took on the responsibility of fielding protests about the legality of land sales and the treaties that Massachusetts had failed to submit to Congress.

Upon achieving statehood, the new Maine government began dealing directly with the Wabanaki. Penobscot and Passamaquoddy leaders submitted petitions to protest violations of their treaty rights. Conflicts surfaced early over fishing rights, for example, and vague reservation boundaries.

Silver Cuff
Made by Zebulon Smith
Bangor, Maine
ca. 1820
Maine State Museum, 80.88.1

Officials for the State of Maine may have given this cuff to a Penobscot dignitary in one of the ceremonies that marked the beginning of the State's responsibilities toward the tribe.

Gift exchanges were important in diplomatic relations. Native people relied on gift-giving to build and communicate the importance of relationships. Gifts represented respect and trust.

Officials were eager to have the Wabanaki tribes recognize the new state. Maine officials wanted the Wabanaki to end formal relationships with Massachusetts. Penobscot and Passamaquoddy leaders insisted this new relationship would include previously agreed-upon treaty rights.

Continued Wabanaki Resistance

To the present day, the Wabanaki have worked to preserve their traditions and their connections to their homeland.

The Wabanaki addressed their grievances through official governmental channels. In the years leading up to and after 1820, Wabanaki people submitted repeated petitions to the Massachusetts government even after Maine became its own state in 1820. They sought to keep settlers off their lands and to stop individuals from cutting Wabanaki-owned timber for profit. They petitioned the government to limit dam construction on the rivers that reduced the Wabanaki's ability to fish, a right that was protected by treaty.

After 1820, the Wabanaki Tribal Nations continued their cultural practices on the land, refusing to acknowledge treaty boundaries. Though the Wabanaki lost control of most of their homeland, they resisted when Maine governmental authorities tried to restrict them to their reservation lands. They continued to move throughout their homelands as they had always done. As more settlers established farmsteads, they began using property laws to eject Wabanaki people from the disputed land. Regardless, the Wabanaki people of Maine have maintained their cultural traditions to the present.

Defining Maine

The new state of Maine came into the Union without a clear boundary to separate it from the British-controlled colony of New Brunswick.

Uncertainties about the location of Maine's northeast border caused clashes over control of the area's valuable forests. Maine and New Brunswick lumbermen competed to set up timber harvesting operations along the disputed territory's major rivers.

Defending Maine's claim to the area was a high priority for Maine's new government. Maine Gov. William King hired Bangor native Joseph Treat to travel deep into the territory and report on who and what he found, including New Brunswick lumbermen trespassing on state land.

Treat wisely hired Penobscot lieutenant governor John Neptune as the expedition's guide. Neptune had paddled the area's waterways for decades and would be an invaluable liaison with other Native people who knew the rivers, lakes, and lands well. Treat, Neptune, and a third man, Jacob Holyoke, started in late September 1820. Fifty-six days and 500 miles later, the three men concluded their difficult journey.

Treat created a journal and maps during the long, challenging expedition. These documents provided an invaluable, detailed record of the landscape of Maine in 1820. Treat also documented Native and non-Native settlements and described the effects of Maine's uncertain border on those living and working in the region. The border would remain undefined for another 22 years.

Portrait of Joseph Treat (1775-1853)
Bangor, Maine
Photograph of a ca. 1830 painting
Courtesy of Jeannette Washburn and the Bangor Public Library

Joseph Treat was born in Bangor to a prominent fur trader. He became a surveyor, politician, and land proprietor. Gov. William King hired Treat, who brought his cousin Jacob Holyoke along, to travel and document the interior of northern Maine.

Traversing the landscape would have been impossible without Wabanaki skills and knowledge. Joseph Treat engaged Penobscot leader John Neptune to guide the expedition and make a birchbark canoe for the trip. Birchbark canoes were ideally suited for the shallow streams and swift rivers that flowed through Maine's interior.

The Wabanaki knew every natural feature of their homeland. Treat relied heavily on John Neptune's cultural knowledge and ability to move through Wabanaki territory. Neptune relayed the names of rivers and lakes and described the lands' natural resources.

Portrait of Lt. Gov. John Neptune (1767-1865)
By Obadiah Dickinson (1812-1850)
1836
Maine State Museum, 79.40.283

John Neptune was the lieutenant governor and second chief of the Penobscot tribe. He provided vital information that safely guided the Treat expedition through the Penobscot and Maliseet homelands.

As a young man, Neptune joined other Wabanaki to fight alongside the Americans in the Revolutionary War. Given their military service, the Wabanaki expected to have a role in treaty negotiations after the war in order to secure rights to their land. It became apparent, however, that they were not to be consulted while increased numbers of settlers continued to encroach on their land.

In response, the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy began submitting to the Massachusetts government in Boston petitions to limit white settlement and restrict trespassing. After 1816, when John Neptune assumed his leadership position, he became a key negotiator with state officials. On multiple occasions, after Maine became a state, Neptune served as a nonvoting representative in the state legislature at Augusta.

Surveyor's Chain
Used by Moses Greenleaf (1777-1834)
Williamsburg, Maine
ca. 1815
Maine State Museum. Gift of the Estate of Mildred Jenks Dudley, 76.53.1

This chain is a surveyor's chain that was used by Maine's most famous map maker, Moses Greenleaf, to measure distances when he made notes to create his maps.

Greenleaf was an early booster for the District of Maine and a strong advocate for Maine's independent statehood. One of his earliest maps can be seen in the center of the gallery.

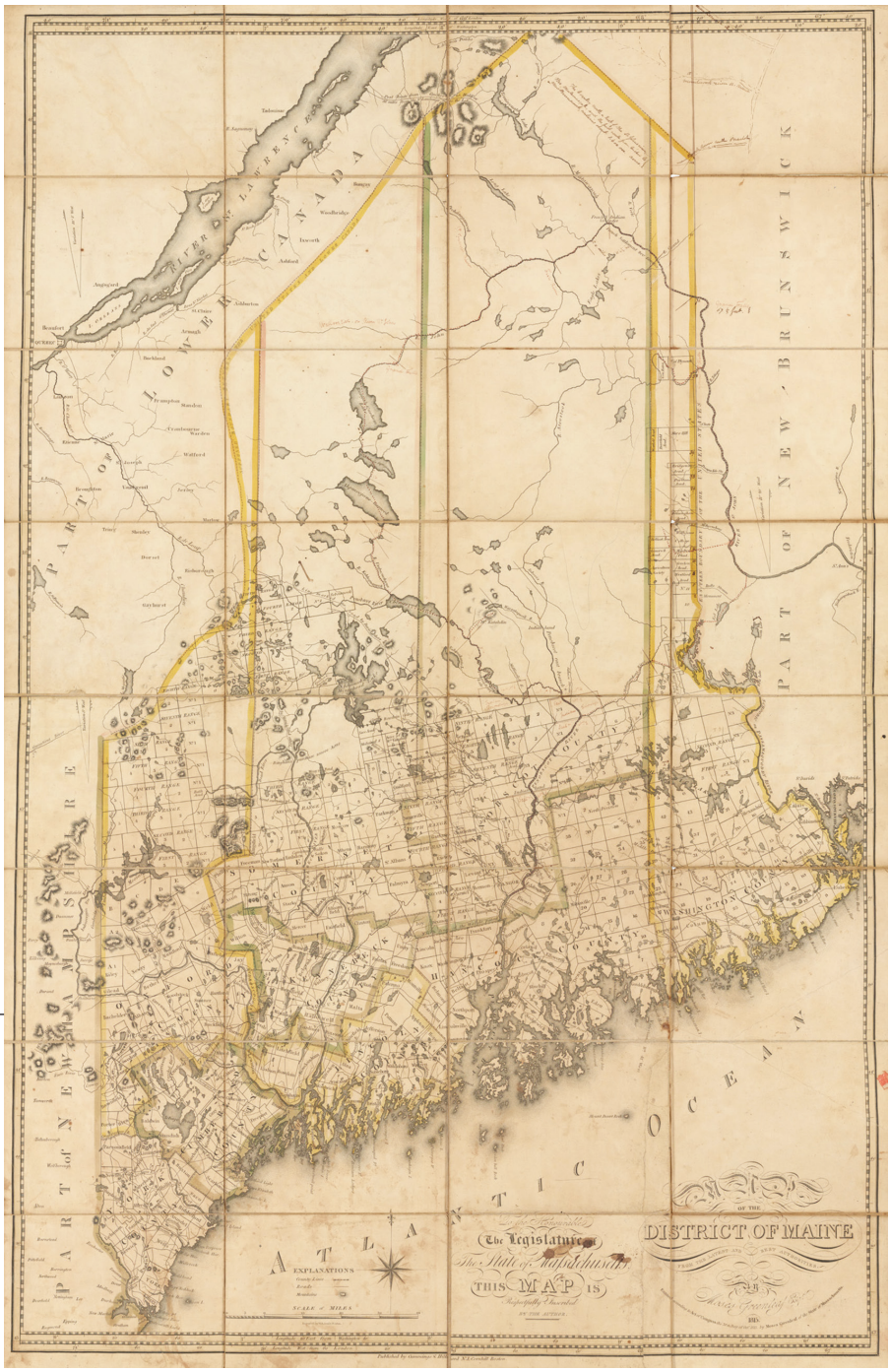
Most survey chains have 100 links and measure 66 feet overall. Eighty chains equal a mile, and 10 square chains equal an acre. This is a half chain and reaches only 33 feet.

Map of the District of Maine from the Latest and Best Authorities
Moses Greenleaf (1777-1834)
1815
Courtesy of M. Carlson Williams

This map, designed to be folded into a book, was created by well-known mapmaker Moses Greenleaf. It was likely owned by Joseph Treat and shows his handwriting identifying elevations, rivers, falls, and Indian townships. With a red-dotted line, Treat also marked the route from Bangor north and east that he traveled with John Neptune and Jacob Holyoke to learn more about northern Maine in the late fall of 1820.

This map was the most accurate Maine map of its time. Still, many features were not marked correctly, such as Moosehead Lake and its islands, the West Branch of the Penobscot River, Chesuncook Lake, and the chain of lakes feeding the Allagash River.

The lack of an accurate printed map of the Maine interior highlights the critical importance of John Neptune's role in guiding the expedition that Gov. William King ordered Treat to undertake. Without Neptune's knowledge and that of other Native people along the way, the journey's difficulties would have been far greater.



Regional Struggle – National Story: Maine's Path to Statehood
was made possible through generous financial support by:
- The People of Maine through support of the Maine State Museum by the executive and legislative branches of Maine state government
- Elsie and William Viles Foundation
- Friends of the Maine State Museum
- Maine Bicentennial Commission
- Maine Cultural Affairs Council

In addition to the Maine State Museum's collection, the exhibition and publication include objects, photographs, and documents from the following individuals and institutions:
Maulian Dana, Penobscot Nation Ambassador; General Henry Knox Museum; Library of Congress; Maine Historical Society; Maine State Archives; Maine State Library; Maine Statehood and Bicentennial Conference, University of Maine; Massachusetts Historical Society; National Gallery of Canada; National Park Service, Gettysburg; University of Maine Press; M. Carlson Williams

Consultants and advisors throughout the exhibition's development included:
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Cover design: Brewster Buttfield

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