SETTLING THE MAINE WILDERNESS

Moses Greenleaf, Maine's First Mapmaker

LESSON 3 *Making a Living in Williamsburg*

SUBJECT

Exploration of ways that Maine people living in Moses Greenleaf's time supported themselves economically

STUDENTS WILL

Identify economic conditions and options for Moses Greenleaf and early settlers of the Maine frontier

VOCABULARY Natural Resources

PREPARATION

1. Read Chapter 5 of *Settling the Maine Wilderness*, "Greenleaf Hill," pp. 22-28.

2. Read and copy the "Introduction to Moses Greenleaf," the "Moses Greenleaf Primer," and "Making a Living in Williamsburg" for each student.

3. Research town resources and industries, past and present.

BODY OF LESSON

Introduction:

Discuss with students the sources of the products that they use everyday. Where do they buy their food? Does anyone have a garden at home? Where do they purchase their clothes? Do they think these items are made in Maine? How would they get food, clothes and other items if they did not have access to a store?

Tell students that they will be learning about how people provided themselves with the food, clothes and other goods they needed to live in the early 1800s, using the example of Moses Greenleaf and his town of Williamsburg, Maine.

Activity 1.

Have the students read “Making a Living in Williamsburg” and then complete a 5-4-3-2-1 sheet to organize what they learned. Some students may emphasize facts, while others may have more questions. After they complete the assignment, have them share their sheets with 2 or 3 classmates. (**Knowledge, Comprehension, Evaluation**)

Activity 2.

In spite of settling a town, working as a judge, farming, writing, mapmaking and being a community leader, Moses Greenleaf struggled to achieve and maintain the standard of living he was hoping to attain. Ask students to complete the “Yes, but…” activity sheet, including a summary statement reflecting their understanding of the Greenleaf family’s economic reality.

Activity 3.

Discuss the following as a class:

You have read about how difficult it was for people to make a living in Williamsburg. Moses felt that better roads and a new railway would help people in his town. Why do you think he felt this way? **(Evaluation, Synthesis)**

ASSESSMENT

Based on performance on the worksheet and letter. The letter should address the important issues behind the need for roads and railroads, such as their ability to support industrial development

EXTENSION

Have students visit the website http://www.visibleblackhistory.com/19th_century.htm and learn about the former African Americans slaves who worked at the slate quarry in Williamsburg after the Civil War.

Have students explore the natural resources, and the past and present industries in their town.

Making a Living in Williamsburg

(Summarized from *Settling the Maine Wilderness* by Walter Macdougall)

When Moses Greenleaf moved to Williamsburg in the early 1800s, meeting even the most basic needs was a challenge. There were no stores, doctors, schools, or businesses, and the settlers were very much on their own. Economic uncertainty came with the territory. The nearest commercial center, Bangor, was a two-day trip on horseback. Moses and his family, along with the other families that soon moved to Williamsburg, had to find ways to provide for their needs, taking whatever the environment offered, and learning to improvise.

The early inland settlers raised crops and animals to feed themselves. The Greenleafs grew peas, cabbage, cucumbers, potatoes, and turnips. Later, they planted wheat and corn to be ground into flour. Moses was especially interested in fruit trees, and eventually had a large orchard. Mother Nature provided maple sap, honey, berries, fish, and wild game. Farm animals supplied meat, eggs, and dairy products.

Williamsburg's hardwood stands and pine, cedar, and spruce trees provided firewood and lumber for construction. Some essentials had to be brought from Bangor, but settlers were handy at crafting the things they needed. In his journals Moses Greenleaf tells of making buckets, snowshoes, garden rakes, and ax handles. Occasionally, itinerant craftsmen would visit Williamsburg and make shoes or patch kettles. Most settlers made soap, fashioned baskets, and made cloth from the wool of their own sheep.

Moses Greenleaf knew that his neighbors would need resources beyond what farming could provide. The relatively short growing season and the poor soil in Williamsburg made it difficult to grow or raise enough food. Moses was always looking for other ways for people in Williamsburg to support themselves.

In the early 1800s most factories relied on waterpower to operate, and Williamsburg did not have this natural resource available. Nonetheless, Moses believed that industry would be critical to the success of the town, and that the manufacture and sales of products would supplement the incomes of farmers, particularly during the non-growing seasons. He set about to

discover whatever natural resources might be tapped to provide income for the citizens of Williamsburg.

Moses discovered two valuable resources in and around Williamsburg. The first, slate, was a fine-grained gray rock that could be quarried and sold in other towns and cities for roofing material, sinks, and school blackboards. The second, iron ore, was a natural element that could be processed into iron for making a variety of products such as farming tools and household containers. Although these industries never proved as successful as Moses had hoped, at least partly due to the due to the challenges inherent in inland transportation, they did provide many people with a way to make additional income.

Although Moses farmed his land, that occupation alone did not provide the means to make a satisfactory living for his growing family, so he looked for other sources of income. He built a mill on Bear Brook in western Williamsburg when he first settled there, but it was only marginally successful due to inefficiency and poor management. He enjoyed survey work, but it did not provide steady income. In addition to surveying, Moses held several government positions that provided additional income. As Justice of the Peace for Hancock County, Associate Justice of the Court of Common Pleas for Penobscot County, and Justice of the Court of Sessions for Penobscot County, he received cash fees. As a justice, Moses certified deeds, drew up bonds, witnessed documents, and handled minor suits, settlements, and summonses. The legal work Moses did left him with a negative impression of some people in society, which prompted him to focus his energies on those things that interested and inspired him, such as the furthering of his vision of a "household of faith."

5-4-3-2-1 for *Making a Living in Williamsburg*

5 things you learned from your reading

4 services that you think are essential for a town

3 natural resources in the area near Williamsburg

2 questions about what you read

1 image that sticks with you…sketch it

STUDENT WORKSHEET Name: ___________________________

When Land in Williamsburg stopped selling, Moses tried a variety of jobs to sustain himself and his family, many of which were only marginally successful. Read

the things that Moses did below and write a "Yes, but..." sentence for each based on what you learned from your reading. When you have finished, wirte a summarizing paragraph.

Moses produced maple syrup and sugar.
Yes, but

Moses raised crops and fruit.
Yes, but

Moses built a saw and grist mill.
Yes, but

Moses surveyed land.
Yes, but

Moses served as a consultant on wild lands.
Yes, but

Moses became a Justice of the Peace.
Yes, but

Moses raised farm animals.
Yes, but

Moses made and sold maps.
Yes, but

Summary:

TEACHER ANSWER KEY

Moses produced maple syrup and sugar.

Yes, but

This activity was seasonal and produced only a small amount of their food needs.

Moses raised crops and fruit.

Yes, but

Raising crops provided food for the family, but did not provide cash income. On at least one occasion, the food rotted.

Moses built a saw and grist mill.

Yes, but

The mills were inefficient and poorly managed.

Moses surveyed land.

Yes, but

Surveying was moderately lucrative, but it was hard physical labor which took a toll on Moses' heatlh and he had to be away from home a lot.

Moses served as a consultant on wild lands.

Yes, but

Although Moses enjoyed consulting on wild lands, there is no evidence that he earned money doing so.

Moses became a Justice of the Peace (and other Court Justices.)

Yes, but

His income could only partially support his family's needs. Even so, the appointment as Justice of the Peace provided much-needed income and also allowed Moses to associate with many people, so he became a well-known member of the larger community.

Moses raised farm animals.

Yes, but

Raising farm animals provided food for the family, but did not provide cash income.

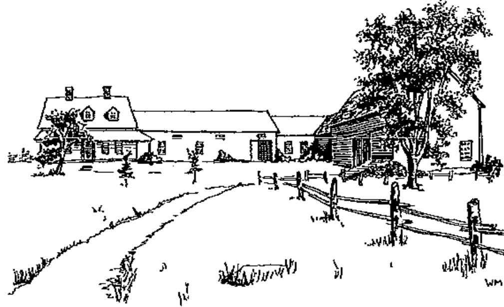
Moses made and sold maps.

Yes, but

His never provided much income in Moses' lifetime. His son took over the sale of his maps after his death.

Chapter Five

Greenleaf Hill



Having an eye on your prospects, we look forward with anxiety and hope
ere long all our family but Simon and Jonathan will,
within the circle of half a mile finish our pilgrimage on earth...
A comfortable log house, the best of brothers, *whose councils and society*
we can always enjoy, retired from the bustle,
noise and turmoil of a vain wicked world ought to make us content and happy

Eben Greenleaf to Mrs. Clarina Jenks, December 13, 1822

In 1803 Eli Towne, the first settler of Dover, Maine, brought his wife to the small cabin he had built on the Piscataquis River. They came by boat to Bangor and then set out afoot carrying their thirteen-month-old child, both parents lugging all they could manage on their backs. They were exhausted by the time they reached a gristmill some twenty miles north of Bangor in the present town of Levant, Maine. Fortunately, they found a boy at the mill who had come down from Charleston with a horse and was about to head home with his grain. Eli hired the horse so that his wife might ride, but the path was so rough they thought it best for Eli to continue carrying the child. Having stayed in Charleston overnight, the Townes journeyed on, still lucky enough to be able to rent the horse. They spent the entire day in traveling the remaining fifteen miles, and as they approached the Piscataquis, it began to snow wet flakes. Dreariness hung like a shroud over the scene Mrs. Towne surveyed from the swayback of her horse, the small cabin sitting alone in a clearing strewn with half-burned logs, wet and black. She turned her head, not wanting her husband to see her tears.

The Townes found themselves in a frontier world of risk. It was a life on the margin when even the loss of a family needle was a calamity. There was the constant work of spinning and preserving of food. There was the seemingly endless swinging of the ax and scythe when the hungry deerfly was one's only company. Most serious were the winters when even the thickest linsey-woolsey could not keep out the cold, and all one's work with an ax seemed to be going up the wide throat of the fireplace. In those white seasons, one watched the depleting stores of dried apple and pumpkin and wondered if the seed ends of potatoes that had been saved for planting would have to be consumed. If the world Persis Greenleaf entered was not quite as bleak, it was stark enough.

Improvements north of the Piscataquis came slowly. Four years after the Townes arrived, the "road" from Bangor to Dover and to Foxcroft's town had not been greatly improved. When a dam was built across the Piscataquis at Dover, the two essentials, rum and iron, had to be brought north on a one-horse traverse. Five years after the Townes had settled, another group of pioneers coming to Foxcroft by oxcart found it necessary to

make their own bridges and to widen the road before they could get through. By 1810 the road had been extended to Sebec. From there a bridle trail led to Williamsburg.

There were other roads to Sebec by the time Moses Greenleaf moved his family to Williamsburg in February 1812. The fact that he moved in winter indicates the conditions of these new routes. The Greenleafs came by Pushaw Pond, through Blakesburgh (now Hudson), then Charleston and on to Sebec. This route would become, and is still labeled, the "Stage Coach Road."

In July 1811 and before their move, Moses Greenleaf wrote in his journal: "to Williamsburg and found Bunker at Drews, borrowed tools at Downings, prepared to work on the house."[1] So there was a house waiting for its new mistress and neighbors within borrowing distance.[2] More important than four walls must have been Moses' confidence. There was the sound of axes upon the hills, and the Mark Pitmans, who hailed from New Hampshire and who had made their clearing on a nearby hill, had brought into the world the township's first child, a girl named Sally, born June 10, 1810.

It is not clear just where the first Greenleaf house in Williamsburg stood. It seems to have been near the center of the township and well placed for welcoming the settlers whom Moses hoped would soon arrive.[3] The house would also have the advantage of being close to the small but growing village of Sebec. There a large lake emptied between the ledges and powered several small mills, which had sawed the boards for Moses' house and would grind his first grain.[4]

Bangor, the nearest commercial center, was a two-day trip on horseback. Occasionally Greenleaf went to the big town on business, or someone might be sent there to purchase something really vital such as salt, but the settlers north of the Piscataquis were very much on their own. They became partners of the seasons and fabricators of essentials. Greenleaf's journal tells of making spouts and buckets for collecting maple sap (a major occupation in the spring), cutting ash "timber" for the manufacture of snowshoes, garden rakes, and ax handles, rigging a grindstone (which took all day), making soap, constructing baskets, and just "cobbling" or patching up what was at hand. Not everything, of course, had to be made by members of the family. Greenleaf's journal occasionally mentioned some craftsman staying at his house to make shoes or to patch kettles.

The first garden was planted early in the spring of 1812—an April act of faith: pease (peas), peppergrass, French turnips, cucumbers, potatoes, and cabbages. That was the beginning. Later, as more acreage was cleared, especially on the southern exposure of a high hill to the east of town, there were fields of corn and wheat.[5] Looking to the future, Moses planted plums and quinces. Fruit trees were to become one of his passions. Through the years he kept on expanding his orchard, adding 114 apple trees in 1816.

In January 1814 the Moses Greenleafs made their last winter move. This time it was to that eastern hilltop already mentioned where the "household of faith" was finally established.[6]

Eben Greenleaf, in the quotation at the head of this chapter, urged his sister to join them in Williamsburg and to live "retired from the bustle . . . and turmoil of a vain, wicked world." Such a world may have been left behind, but a new bustle had been created. Life on Greenleaf Hill, as we shall see, was a dance of risks and rewards—of joys and dark moments. Nothing was sure. Once, when the potato cellar was opened, half the store was found rotten, and there was always the threat of protracted sickness or sudden accident. In his journal for July 31, Greenleaf wrote, "At home. Lydia [his daughter] very sick. Sent for Dr. W[ilkins]."[7] Lydia recovered. She was fortunate, as were all the Greenleaf children in an era when childhood mortality rates were fearsome. But there were also freedom and hope, and evenings when the neighbors came to sing old hymns, debate issues, and cheer the children in a spelling bee. There were deeper joys and reasons to be thankful. On January 24, 1815, Moses wrote and underlined: "Early this morning a son was born to us under

circumstances of great mercy." This was Moses Jr. (actually Moses Greenleaf III), who would carry on his father's endeavor to provide the people of Maine with the best maps possible at that time.

Years later, when the new generation of Greenleafs had traveled far away from that Williamsburg hilltop, and memories of the hard times had faded, the children would recall the pleasant and funny moments—how each brother and sister had a personal apple tree, or how when they went "suckering" those silver-sided fish would slip through neighbor Asa Bumbs' big fingers and splash away in the light of the flaring torch.

Little Moses joined a busy household. Relatives came to visit and acquaintances dropped by often, either going or coming from expeditions into those tracks of wilderness to the north. Greenleaf Hill is now set aside from traffic, but in Moses Greenleaf's day, and as he had wisely anticipated, it was one of the principal routes into the north woods. More and more people who needed information sought Greenleaf's advice. They came from all walks of life and with a wide variety of interests. Moses' journal entry for September 23, 1815, reads: "At night Professor Abbot came." This must have been John Abbot, a professor of ancient languages at Bowdoin College and a man who, according to one of his colleagues, was more interested in Bowdoin's lands and in fruit trees than he was in his academic subject. Abbot and Greenleaf spent the next morning "engaged," talking of mutual interests and concerns.

Greenleaf's journal is filled with everyday responsibilities and events. The underscored announcement that he had finished his first great map of Maine (1815) was followed by the statement that Mr. Crommett had sent over a load of potatoes.[8] One has to look between the lines to see the larger concerns facing this man who had promised to settle a township, who had committed himself to making known Maine's geography, and who was putting so much of himself into both ventures.

When the Greenleafs established themselves on the eastern edge of Williamsburg, they were close to another growing hamlet, Brownville,[9] where, as in the case of Sebec Village, a river flowed with sufficient drop and there, like the cogged wheel in a clock, waterwheels were measuring the flow of time toward prosperity. There was no such source of power in Williamsburg. Small grist and sawmills with large waterwheels needed surprisingly little water. Moses early built a mill on Bear Brook, which flowed through the western part of Williamsburg, but the mill was only marginally successful and a constant source of problems, in both its efficiency and its management. It was settled farms, not industrialization, that Moses had in mind, but as the years went on he must have been keenly aware that Sebec and Brownville were serious competitors for a dwindling supply of settlers. In 1829 Moses traced the tide of immigration inland upon one of his Atlas maps (see appendix 2). Settlement had reached up the river valleys and flowed among the hills, pushed on by the need for land and independence. Before Greenleaf moved to Williamsburg, the first wavelets of this tide had crossed the forty-fifth parallel. They lapped halfheartedly at the base of what Moses called the "Ebeemee Hills," just north of Williamsburg, and just when he began the settling of Dodd's township, the tide began to ebb.

William Dodd and Samuel Parkman, along with seven other proprietors of lands in the district of Maine, petitioned the Massachusetts General Court for an extension of time in which to settle their townships.[10] An extension of four years was granted, which relieved them and Greenleaf of immediate pressure—but there was a price. A penalty of thirty dollars for every family deficient from the original quota was to be paid when the four years expired. Even with this breather, Moses was unable to meet his obligations. He performed a creditable task all the same, one that exhausted his resources and proved that his agreement with Samuel Parkman must be forgotten.

The fact that settlers no longer came was a real concern. Moses had no intention of living a life of

bare subsistence. Just as he needed a larger house, he was too big a person to be cramped into the ell of existence. He wanted a study—a place for his library, his easy chair, his microscope, and his maps. For his Persis there should be cotton sheets, a looking glass, and carpets (see appendix 7). These things the soil of Greenleaf Hill could not produce.

On October 17, 1812, Moses Greenleaf was made a justice of the peace for Hancock County, which then included the lands along and north of the Piscataquis River. The appointment was particularly important for Moses and his family. It meant much-needed income but also an opportunity to fill a vital role in the new settlement across the countryside. He became Judge Greenleaf, the respected (or at least well-known) man on the hill.

A justice of the peace brings to mind marriages and the witnessing of legal papers, but in Moses' day the position's purview was more extensive.[11] He was, in the full implication of his title, the keeper of the peace over a wide and far-flung realm of clearings and settlements. Criminal cases, of excessive nature, called for Circuit Judge Martin who rode horseback from Hampden, but deeds and writs, suits and disputes, summonses and settlements all came to and from the justice on Greenleaf Hill. At least once a week Moses held court at his home.

When Penobscot County was set off from Hancock in 1816, Greenleaf was made an associate justice of the court of common pleas and later, in 1819, when the legal system underwent reorganization, he was appointed a justice of the court of sessions. Certifying deeds netted him 25 cents, drawing up bonds brought in 75 cents apiece, and surveying, which was a fringe benefit as well as a necessity before many land cases could be equitably settled, paid $2.50 per day. As a judge, Moses often had to travel to neighboring towns. He charged seventeen cents per mile to cover the wear and tear on both himself and his horse.

For a time there was a challenge in all this legal business and a fascination in the due process of justice, but that passed. Moses began to wonder: If his cantankerous neighbors were representative of humankind, what hope was there for civil society? On an August day in 1819, Greenleaf noted: "W. Rogers and Howard came to see about settling the scandal about Shepard's wife—hindered me all forenoon." Many other cases also cast doubt over any hope for peaceful and rational cohabitation. After one particularly trying day, he wrote a brief epistle on this subject titled "Hints to Peace Societies." Peace Societies were popular and part of the emerging American tradition of congregating, electing a chairman, and otherwise organizing against iniquities and the inhumanity of men and women. It seemed to Moses that such efforts had much to learn.

He began by quoting Hobbes, "man is a fighting animal"—a dictum Moses suggested was nowhere so roundly demonstrated as in the courts of law. It was not just the inherent combativeness of humans that bothered him; it was the "recklessness of these fighting animals" and their apathy toward the injury and waste they inflicted. Two suits had just been concluded after four days of wrangling. Taking both cases, a sum of thirty dollars had been recovered at a cost to the individuals and the county of six hundred. What justice had been served that could not have been accomplished "by one hour's sober reflection"? Moses concluded that the whole affair had been an exercise in "license and indulgence," a demonstration of man's smallest and meanest traits.[12]

If Greenleaf was covetous of his days and energies, it is understandable; yet only once, to the author's knowledge, did he admit in his journal the wear and tear, when he wrote: "self sick and worn out." Where did he find the time to accomplish all he did during those first years in Williamsburg: his settling of a town, the farming, the work as a judge, the writing, and the mapmaking? One answer is that he had hired men. He spoke of these men by their first names as though they were part of his extended family.

Occasionally he took an afternoon off and went fishing with one of them, and he worked beside them on the road and in the fields. Most often mentioned among these hired men are Peter (perhaps Peter Morrill, who lived nearby) and Levi, who is entrusted with many errands. There is also Moses Smith Jewell, whom Greenleaf tantalizingly noted was formerly Moses Jewell Smith. He came to work a year for $165 to be paid in land and keep. Greenleaf's neighbors joined in to help hoe potatoes, haul wood, or cut corn—all for a slip of paper addressed to the store in Brownville, reading: "Mr. Lake, please let Mr. Willard have ten pounds of nails on my account, M. Greenleaf," or, "Please pay James Gilman two dollars on your store account with Moses Greenleaf."[13] There was also the faithful assistance of his brother Eben, and, increasingly, the labor of their sons, but Greenleaf's life was still a juggling act of time and energy.

Amid all that was going on, Greenleaf found time to experiment, read, measure, and write letters in his minute script. He measured and kept a record of the weather and temperature variations of the water in his well; tried the latest suggestions from the Massachusetts Agricultural Society; took azimuth bearings of mountaintops; and tried to make sense of notes from explorers and surveyors. Perhaps his most unusual experiment was an attempt to make adipocere, a waxy substance produced from decomposing animals. For a number of months he experimented with a cow's carcass he had obtained from a neighbor, finally placing it in a box in a stream. In the end he found a "whitish substance resembling head matter of a whale," but nothing suitable for making soap, which seems to have been his original interest.

Meanwhile the Greenleafs' home grew. The first structure became an ell attached to the "big house." The latter had a center hall running from the front door, with its side windows, to the back door. Two rooms opened on each side of the hall, each with its own fireplace and each, in due time, wainscoted and plastered. It was not pretentious by Portland standards, but it was suitable for a judge and the local squire.

Moses worked on the finish, while both his and Eben's children made wigs of the shavings that curled from the wooden throat of his jointer. With good, soft pine, especially saved for moldings and casings, he could run the full length of a board, trailing one long ribbon of golden wood, then he would turn and say, "Here's some nice long ones for Purry Poor," and little Persis would go running off to show the women her new curls. Such games were fun, but real excitement came when the honey cask split. Moses was lathing the living room, standing on the cask, when it let go. A great commotion followed, in which someone discovered the children licking the honey from Moses' carpet slippers.[14]

From Greenleaf Hill, Bangor was a long way off, and Portland was a weary journey. Yet Moses and his neighbors felt the effect of what transpired in those far-off places, as one feels the effect of the sea miles inland. They read the news, though it might be a few weeks old, and they knew that the settlers no longer came.

On a July day in 1812, a group of men met in James Lyford's barn to see if the new town of Sebec would purchase forty-five guns and sixty pounds of gunpowder. In Dover, Maine, a gathering of leading citizens from along the Piscataquis and northward met to discuss their mutual defense. During and following the Revolution many persons had moved inland to be out of range of British frigates and foraging parties, but now, in the meetings held in Sebec, in Dover, or around the kitchen table on Greenleaf Hill, few expressed feelings of security. It was one thing to talk of military roads to Canada during times of peace, but war brought quite another meaning to living on the route to Quebec. The descendants of many Indians who had once occupied the banks of the Piscataquis now lived in Canada. Presumably they would have no reluctance in returning to their ancestral home, and knowledge of what Indians could do to an outpost settlement was still vivid in the minds of the older citizens.

Greenleaf was involved in the common defense. He mentioned losing a morning in training, and in May 1814 he was passing out powder and ball to the five men in Williamsburg who had ready guns. The situation was getting tense. In August the British sent an expedition of ships and well-seasoned troops up the Penobscot. The result was the rout of the hastily assembled militia at Hampden and an equally rapid capitulation of Bangor. Word reached Williamsburg that the British were advancing up the Penobscot on Monday, August 5, two days after Bangor was occupied. Moses wrote:

> The day was alarmed by account that the British were in Bangor and orders were for all hands to march and oppose them. [I] arranged my affairs and started. Reached Bangor Tuesday morning.[15]

Persis especially must have watched the southern horizon for the smoke that would tell of Bangor's end. There was none, and her sister Phoebe was safe enough. Her husband had taken her to the tavern where she would be out of the reach of pillagers and under the protection of an admiring brace of British officers. McGaw had done a good day's work. He had negotiated a parole of the entire town. Moses returned home on Saturday. He found that Eben had gone to Portland (perhaps to offer his services as a sea captain), leaving his whole family with Persis. These were trying times. Faithful Peter had followed directions and kept working on the barn.

No column of redcoats or band of marauding Indians threatened the peace of Greenleaf Hill, but there did come a threat with which neither Greenleaf nor McGaw could parley. It would be called "eighteen hundred and froze to death" — the year of no summer, 1816.

It had begun a year before with a frost that killed the corn. "Going to be hard to keep the wolf from the door," people said, but they had no idea how hard. The Farmer's Almanac for 1816 gave no warning, although it did say to watch out for a storm during the first week in June. The storm came on the sixth, a normal enough rain until the early hours of the next morning when summer came to an end, hushed and ushered out by huge flakes of snow. On June 8 it snowed again. Birds that should have been singing were so cold that one could hold them in one's hand, while Mount Katahdin was white.

Amasa Loring described the devastation of the crops and hopes that followed. Here and there on some favored southern slope a thin crop was raised: potatoes, light and watery; rye; and the earliest wheat. But in the valley, the frost came each month, blackening each new sprouting hope, while in the perpetual shadows the surface of the ground actually froze. Prices for food rose to unheard-of figures—three dollars per bushel of wheat and two dollars for rye. The Bangor markets had only corn. It was golden and sold with no rounding of the measure. Afflicted families turned to milk and raspberries, which thrived. When there was nothing else, they ate clover and stewed roots.[16]

On the southern slope of their hillside farm, the Greenleafs fared better than many of their distressed neighbors. They shared what they could. Moses recorded the ground covered with snow on May 15 and freezing as late as June 9, but on June 10 it warmed and looked "more like summer."[17] The Greenleafs had planted their grain early, and, undeterred by the cold, cut their seed potatoes in early June. Moses reported that the weather in July was often dull but sometimes very warm. The hay came in and then, late, the all-important seed potatoes and some other crops. The life of the family appears to have gone on much as usual: running out a new road northward, Eben and a crew going off to lay out townships on Moosehead Lake, and Moses writing and gathering samples of limestone on a nearby farm.

But if the Greenleafs were fortunate in 1816, the effect of that year without a summer dashed any lingering hopes of making Williamsburg a success. While many stuck it out, other settlers did not. In the township just to the north of Williamsburg,[18] by

the meandering West Branch of the Pleasant River, two families had just made their clearing when the summer of frosts came. It was rich interval land that they cleared and promising, protectively ringed about by dark, spruce-covered mountains. The spot was far removed from the threat of fevers and the distemper, but not from the famine. Some way these two families survived and stayed, while others in more settled areas of Maine did not. Hopes and determination had been frozen out. People sold what little they could, and left behind what they could not carry. The feeling among those heading west was that Maine could not be trusted.

Those left behind must have dreaded the next winter, but when that winter came, it was as strangely out of season as had been the cold summer. During December there were April days, and in January the Penobscot still ran free of ice. Crops were better in 1817, and in the following summer they bountifully filled every chamber and cellar left empty by the hungry times.

On Greenleaf Hill the orchard behind the house was now a joy. Everyone passing by stopped to see how large the apples had grown. In fall the amber cider flowed, and the cellar smelled of sweet summer stored away. All this bounty was gratefully received, for Moses' family now had six to feed—not counting guests and hired men. Besides Moses and Persis there were two boys and two girls: Ebenezer Parsons, Clara Parsons, Lydia Griswold, and little Moses. Counting Captain Eben's "brood," there were twelve in the household of faith on Greenleaf Hill.

S E T T L I N G T H E M A I N E W I L D E R N E S S

Moses Greenleaf,

His Maps, and His Household of Faith, 1777-1834

Osher Map Library &Smith Center for Cartographic Education

www.usm.maine.edu/maps/home.html

Introduction to Moses Greenleaf
Maine's First Mapmaker

In the years following the American Revolution, which was from 1775-1783, many people moved to the region that is now Maine. In fact, between the years 1790 and 1810, the population of Maine nearly doubled! One of the people who came to Maine during this time was a young boy named Moses Greenleaf, who would grow up to be the first cartographer (mapmaker) of the State of Maine.

Most people in early America were farmers, although some made a living in the growing cities. Shipbuilding, storekeeping, and carriage-making were profitable businesses in the cities. Many of the new settlers of Maine, including the Greenleafs, came from southern New England, particularly Massachusetts and Connecticut. The populations there had been growing rapidly and people were looking for more land for farming and for harvesting natural resources such as timber.

While many people were happy with the growing cities and prospering businesses of southern New England, others longed for a simpler way of life. The District of Maine, which was then part of Massachusetts, had large towns along the coast, but much of the interior was open and available for settlement. Land was inexpensive and plentiful, and Moses

Greenleaf's father was eager to move his family to a more rural environment.

In 1790, the Greenleafs left their home in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and moved to Peacock Hill, in New Gloucester, Maine. Captain Moses Greenleaf, father of the mapmaker, was determined to spend his "evenings by the fire and his days close to the soil." He was worried that wealth was becoming too important to many people in Newburyport, so he gave up his business to become a farmer and a country gentleman.

Moses the mapmaker was thirteen when the family moved to New Gloucester. The oldest of five children, he had spent his early years in Newburyport, a town booming with activity and widening interests. He learned draftsmanship and naval architecture from his father, and was a strong student, particularly in mathematics. He was an avid reader with an excellent memory and excellent penmanship. Although his formal education was not extensive, he had a solid background in the basic skills and a strong interest in everything around him.

Moses grew into an easy-going, likable young man with a quick mind and strong writing and speaking skills. When he turned twenty-one, he opened a store in New Gloucester, selling "razors, files, penknives, beef shad, tobacco by the pound, cider by the barrel, rum by the gill, blank books, gum paper, twine – in short, everything from tea to the pot in which to brew it."

Moses kept store for the next seven years, in several Maine towns. He taught school for awhile, but his greatest interest was in land, especially the land to the north, "where a man might own part of a township and live as an independent gentleman." His consuming interest in the land north of the Piscataquis River, along with the debt that came from his kindheartedness, ended his storekeeping career, and led him to a life promoting the sale of land in Maine.

In 1805 Moses married Persis Poor of Bangor, and shortly thereafter took a job as land agent for William Dodd, owner of a large tract of land in Maine. As land agent, Greenleaf agreed to settle and develop a new town near the Sebec River. The town was named Williamsburg, after William Dodd, and Moses and Persis moved there with their children on December 30 of 1810.

Moses Greenleaf had a vision for the kind of town he wished Williamsburg to become, and he spent the rest of his life working toward that vision. In 1814 he built a new home on Greenleaf Hill, and continued to encourage other members of his family to join him in Williamsburg. He established a town government, built a church and a school, and started

community organizations in an attempt to convince other people to move to the new town. He promoted the use of the area's natural resources, notably slate and iron, to create jobs for the people living in Williamsburg. He built roads and brought railroads to the area, so that people could move themselves and their products around. Eventually, stagecoach and mail service came to Williamsburg, signs of a successful settlement.

Moses became a distinguished member of the Williamsburg community, and he served as a Court Justice for several years. In his effort to encourage settlement in Maine, he worked to gather information about the interior sections of Maine. He took trips to survey and map the unsettled land, and collected geographical information about lakes, rivers, mountains, resources, and climate. Greenleaf then published books and maps describing the land and encouraging people to move there.

In 1815 Moses Greenleaf's first map of the District of Maine was printed. Although other maps of the area existed, Moses' maps were important because they showed geographical features, distances, and other aspects of the Maine landscape that had not been widely known before his maps were published. Moses continually updated his maps and produced the first map of Maine when it became a state in 1820, making him Maine's first cartographer. After publishing two books and several maps, Moses Greenleaf died in 1834. A monument to him was erected in 1947 to acknowledge his contributions to the settlement of Maine.

After Moses died, his son Moses Jr. helped to promote and publish more of Moses' detailed maps and information. Moses' maps helped encourage settlement throughout Maine, but his own town of Williamsburg reverted to a township when its population declined after mass migration to the mid-western states following the Civil War. Even so, Moses Greenleaf's foresight in helping to make people aware of the geography and resources of Maine was so important that he deserves to be remembered as one of principal founders of the State of Maine.