

SETTLING THE MAINE WILDERNESS



Moses Greenleaf, Maine's First Mapmaker

LESSON 4

Storekeeping in Maine

SUBJECT

Storekeeping in Maine, using the example of Maine's first mapmaker, Moses Greenleaf.

STUDENTS WILL

Recognize storekeeping as an occupation that had advantages and drawbacks in 1800

VOCABULARY *See note regarding vocabulary in "How to Use" section*

interlude, "throw off the yoke," shad, gill, patent, Materia Medica, chaise, exigencies, bounty, militia, "run out the lines," patriarch, old maid, vivacious, "root of evil," doggerelist, approbation, barter, "notes of hand," embargo, baron

PREPARATION

1. Read the "Introduction to Moses Greenleaf" and Chapter 3 of *Settling the Maine Wilderness*, "Throwing off the Yoke," pages 12-15.
2. Copy pages 12-15 and the graphic organizer for each student.

BODY OF LESSON

Activity 1.

Read pages 12-15 together in class, noting and defining vocabulary words and concepts as needed. Have students use the graphic organizer to record the advantages and disadvantages of storekeeping based on Greenleaf's experiences. Alternatively, they can demonstrate their thinking by working in groups to create and perform short skits that point out the plusses and minuses of storekeeping. Students who require modified assignments could create a "Storekeeper Wanted" advertisement, listing only the advantages of the job. **(Knowledge, Comprehension, Application)**

Activity 2. Class discussion

Ask how many students would have liked to work as a storekeeper in the early 1800s on the Maine frontier. Ask several students to explain why they gave the answer they did. **(Application, Synthesis)**

ASSESSMENT

1. Did the groups support their written answers with specific and defensible details from the reading?
2. Was the presentation accurate, complete and interesting?

EXTENSION

Discuss how young people select careers today versus in the 1800s. **(Evaluation)**

Advantages and Disadvantages of Storekeeping

+	-

Teacher Reference Sheet

Advantages and Disadvantages of Storekeeping

Moses Greenleaf's experience as a storekeeper:

1799 Moses, Jr. left home and opened a general store in the village of New Gloucester.

1802 Moses relocated to a store in Poland, which did not have a store, but it did not prosper

1803 Moses opened a store in Kenduskeag, a growing mill town.

1804 Moses opened a store in Bangor, destined to be a center of trade on the Penobscot River.

1805 Moses closed the store. He had receipts of \$5,000, was owed \$6,800, but only had \$50.20 in cash. Most customers had no cash, but bartered goods such as mink skins, barrels of fish, stove wood, and services such as shoe repairs.

Advantages of Storekeeping for Greenleaf:

Moses was "self-employed" and therefore he made all his own business decisions.

He met several people with knowledge of Maine's interior, particularly explorers and surveyors who helped him learn about the land north of the Piscataquis.

His interest in settling the Maine wilderness was sparked by the acquaintances he met keeping store.

He met and married Persis Poor, who instilled a desire for a stable family life and income.

Storekeeping was a job that could be successful in a number of different towns and locations.

Disadvantages of Storekeeping for Greenleaf:

Moses was "self-employed" and therefore he bore sole responsibility for his mistakes and failures (as well as his successes).

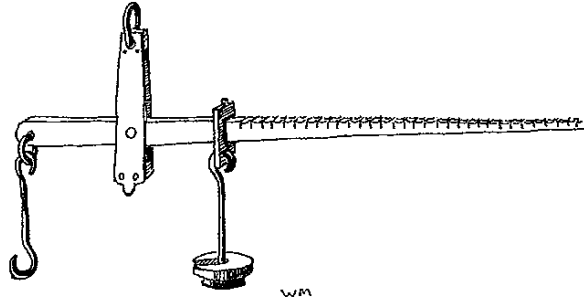
He failed at storekeeping in four different towns, which made it difficult to sustain himself financially.

The business did not allow him to accumulate money because cash was scarce in Maine at that time.

He left the storekeeping business with a large debt.

Chapter Three

THROWING OFF THE YOKE



*Any mind which could put up with dependence
unless as a result of dire necessity,
when an opportunity offers to throw off the yoke,
must be either criminally negligent in the discharge of his duty,
or too imbecile and abject to deserve or be safely trusted a boon.*

MOSES GREENLEAF TO ELEAZER ALLEY JENKS, SEPTEMBER 14, 1806

Moses Greenleaf's seven years of storekeeping were only an interlude before the chance came to "throw off the yoke." It would have been tragic had he kept on behind a counter—not that success would have forever eluded him, but rather that he might have succeeded and therefore only kept store. He would later look back on his merchant years and write, "I believe *all* apparent ill to result in real good."¹

Yet Greenleaf must have nailed up his first sign with every anticipation that his store would go well. There was enough to occupy his mind during the first year. He sold 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. Out back he filled glass vials with patent medicines and concocted the recipes found in his copy of *Materia Medica*.²

What really animated Moses, however, even during those early years, were the stories of fertile lands to the north, where a man might own part of a township and live as an independent gentleman. It was during those years that his interests focused on the lands that lay beyond the Piscataquis River

where the blue mountains rise, their backs to the north winds and their faces to the southern hills. One of the men who told Moses of the townships to the north was Joseph Foxcroft.³ When Foxcroft hitched his two-horse chaise in front of Greenleaf's store, there would be exciting talk around the stove. Foxcroft was just four years older than Moses and a dashing fellow who had already bought his township on the Piscataquis. He had been north to explore his town and talked of intervals where the Canadian blue-joint grass grew shoulder-high and waterpower, waiting to be tapped, thundered over the falls. Moses made his first investment in land when he paid Foxcroft six hundred dollars for two sixty-fourths of Foxcroft's township.

It is impossible to follow Moses' activities closely during the years 1802 and 1803. His interests were not limited to storekeeping. For a term, at least, he taught school in Shepardsfield Plantation (later East Oxford and part of the present Hebron, Maine). This was during his first year away from Peacock Hill, when a little cash was welcome. He acquired a house lot in Gray, but there is no indication that he ever lived there. In 1802 he moved from New Gloucester to Poland,

Maine.⁴ Poland was just being organized as a town, and its citizens were concerned with the exigencies of life. The year that Moses moved to Poland, the town fathers authorized a bounty of sixteen and a half cents for every crow's head brought in, and ordered two palls for covering the human dead. The new town had been dependent upon New Gloucester for its shopping, and there was considerable interest in being self-sufficient—which meant having a store of its own. Interest, however, does not keep a store open, and although Moses managed to buy another four hundred acres on the Piscataquis from his friend Foxcroft, he did not prosper in the new town of Poland. He took no part in the affairs of the town, which was unusual for Moses, despite his brief stay. By late in the summer of 1803, he was ready to move once more.

To move from New Gloucester to Poland was but a matter of crossing the town line; Moses' next move took him ninety-five miles closer to his final destination on Greenleaf Hill in Williamsburg, Maine. His new location was Kenduskeag Plantation (now Levant, Maine) just northwest of Bangor. Kenduskeag was a village of some nineteen houses, a gristmill, and a sawmill. It had the only frame buildings between Bangor and the Kennebec River, boasted the only bridge across Kenduskeag Stream, and was larger than Bangor. An outpost on the edge of Maine's interior, Kenduskeag was a likely location for a store.

When Greenleaf arrived, the settlement was celebrating the fourteenth year since the first opening had been made and the third year since the coming of the capable and energetic Moses Hodsdon. The Hodsdons hailed from Berwick, Maine. They had a military bent; both Moses and his brother, Isaac, were later ranking militia officers. Moses Hodsdon had built the mills and three of the frame dwellings in Kenduskeag, but it was his work as an explorer and surveyor that makes him important to this account.

Hodsdon and Moses Greenleaf were soon closely associated. Hodsdon traded at Greenleaf's store, where his account was more than one thousand dollars—which he paid, in contrast with

many of Greenleaf's debtors. His cash was as welcome as his information on the lands to the north. He had "run out the lines" in both Foxcroft's town and the neighboring township of Sebec. He was Moses' first contact with a real authority on the lands north of the Piscataquis.

There was another man who brought Moses out from behind his counter to talk land and to compare sketches against Osgood Carleton's map of Maine. This was Andrew Strong, a surveyor who lived in Ohio Plantation (now Corinth, Maine). He often brought his compasses to Moses for repair. From Hodsdon and Strong, Moses learned that the prospects north seemed unlimited, that little actual surveying had been done, and that any map of the interior of Maine drawn thus far might best be used to start a fire.

In the fall of 1803 Moses had sold his holdings in Foxcroft's township for \$862, probably to finance his new store in Kenduskeag. His talks with Hodsdon and Strong must have made him regret the necessity of that sale, but on the financial side of things, Moses had much to regret. Yearly the yoke seemed more firmly placed upon his shoulders.

By February of the next year Moses had moved again, this time to Bangor. He bought a lot on the east bank of the Kenduskeag where it joined the Penobscot, a spot later called "city point." Bangor in 1803 was scarcely a village and nothing like the Bangor of twenty or thirty years later, when lumber was king and that city its throne. In the summer of 1801 a visitor by the name of William Crosby tied his horse to a tree and, after being assured that he stood in the center of Bangor, rode away disappointed. When Daniel Webster visited the town three years later, he crossed the Kenduskeag on floating logs. As late as 1835, there were but few sidewalks in Bangor, and those were made of hemlock plank. Mud was a problem. According to an eyewitness, to pass through West Market Square to the Bangor House was a "dangerous undertaking," and walking down French Street, built as it was in a clay bank, was "altogether out of the question" after rain.⁵

There were hardly more than ten houses in the village when Moses came to Bangor. The road to Orono was so poor that it was hard to stay in the saddle, and the roads south and west were not much better. The mail came in saddlebags from Boston twice a week, weather permitting. Spiritually, some thought Bangor as deeply mired as her streets.⁶

Everyone seems to have recognized the strategic position of Bangor, seated as she was at the head of tide and at the foot of the forest. People with foresight saw that the town was destined to be a center of trade. But Moses Greenleaf, striving to be a merchant, came too early and left too soon.

The three years that Moses spent in Bangor were crucial. It was while keeping a store on the point between Kenduskeag Stream and the Penobscot River that the opportunity finally came to throw off the yoke and undertake a vision that had long been materializing in his mind. Moses also met the woman he came to love and marry. Eben Greenleaf joined his brother in the fall of 1803 and, during the winter of 1804, helped him in the store. This first reuniting of the two brothers was an overture to the later gathering of Moses' "household of faith." Years later Moses may have looked back with nostalgia on those Bangor days, for though the place was small there was a group of unusual men gathering in the area, men who would, each in his own way, participate in the growth and development of society along the Penobscot and northward. Among these leaders were Park Holland, the patriarch of Maine explorers and surveyors; the Chamberlains, who were to be soldiers and statesmen; the Carrs and the Crosbys, who were merchants, investors, and holders of public trust; and the Emersons, who built ships. These and a score of other families produced an invigorating neighborhood for Moses.⁷

Luke Wilder was another customer who became first Moses' friend and then a relation by marriage. Captain Wilder was a Revolutionary veteran who had migrated to Bangor from Salisbury, New Hampshire. While in Salisbury he had married

Susannah Poor, one of the six daughters of Deacon Ebenezer Poor. It is probable that sometime during 1804 Susannah's sister Persis (Greenleaf's wife-to-be) visited the Wilders and perhaps went shopping in Moses' store. Unfortunately, little has been recorded concerning Persis. She resembled her mother in good looks and a fair complexion; but one would guess that she was no match for her younger sister, the lovely Phoebe, who had caught the eye of Daniel Webster but married Jacob McGaw, another young lawyer who was to become a leader of the Maine Bar.⁸

Persis was thirty, on the verge of becoming an old maid, when she met Moses. This fact may have mitigated her family's concern over her choice of a husband. Moses was a merchant to be sure, but one who seemed destined for bankruptcy—partly because he was too kindhearted, but mostly because he was forever talking about what might be and forever looking for a chance to make it happen north of the Piscataquis. Everyone agreed that Greenleaf was a good man and likable. He had a frank and easy manner, a good humor, and something more that children sensed, for they always took to him. One could sense a change in atmosphere when he came into a house.⁹ There can be no doubt that Persis Poor loved him—loved him enough to follow him to Williamsburg where trees would be her closest neighbor. It may not have been a choice vivacious Phoebe Poor would have made.

On Sunday, February 11, 1805, Moses and Persis were married at East Andover. The newlyweds returned to Bangor to set up housekeeping. Eleazer Jenks, Moses' brother-in-law, procured some needed articles for them and had them shipped up the Penobscot in the spring: a sideboard, a pair of card tables, a looking glass, a dozen spoons, and a bedstead. All but the last item, Jenks had obtained "at short credit" and hoped that Moses would send as much of the "root of evil as convenient"; if not cash, then a keg of salmon would be acceptable as partial payment.¹⁰

Ready cash was something Moses did not have.

When it came to keeping stores in Bangor, or anyplace else in Maine for that matter, cash was the problem. Twenty years after Moses left Bangor, merchants were still having problems collecting debts. Zadock Davis, a tanner, shoemaker, and skilled doggerelist, wrote the following newspaper item to his debtors: "caution now to mend your ways / And pay me up in thirty days / You'll save the sheriff's lawful ration / And gain my hearty approbation." Where it was hard to collect in 1825, it was often impossible in 1805. Many had no cash and depended on barter for currency. The credit column in Moses' store accounts ran to such items as mink skins (worth about twenty-three cents each), barrels of fish, stove wood, and payments in service through the repair of Moses' shoes. Besides this exchange of time and goods, there was a thriving interchange of "notes of hand," mortgages, and parcels of land.

Through his store accounts, Moses acquired an interest in the mill and dam at the foot of Sebec Lake. There was nothing wrong with Moses' foresight or his business sense; he knew a good deal when he had a chance to see one. In 1804 Samuel Kimball and Mark Trafton had built a dam across the outlet of Sebec Lake and had imported Roger Chase, a genius of wooden gears and waterwheels from the Kennebec Valley, to install the works of a saw and gristmill. From Sebec, timber and boards could be rafted down the

Piscataquis River to Bangor. Power and location would make Sebec Village the center of commerce for a number of generations to come. Had Moses been able to retain his partial control of the mill and dam in Sebec, he would have "cashed in." But such boons were not to be for Moses. Like the merchant who sold all he had on discovering a pearl of great price, Moses sold what he had (the part not lost in paying store debts) for a chance to live on a hilltop in Williamsburg.

When he closed his account books, there was owed to him some sixty-eight hundred dollars. His total receipts during the years in Kenduskeag and Bangor amounted to little over \$5,000, yet he could lay his hands on only \$50.20 in cash. Moses' store accounts do not show the full extent of his dismal situation; when he finally entered upon his great adventure north of the Piscataquis, he owed ten thousand dollars.¹¹ He might have recouped his losses once the period's inflation passed and the embargo had been lifted. He might have become one of Bangor's many wealthy merchants and timber barons, but the opportunity had come to throw off the yoke. That chance came through the person of William Dodd, a merchant of Boston, who in the spring of 1804 had bought Township Number Six in the Eighth Range North of the Waldo Patent (T6 R8 NWP), a town that, appropriately, would be named Williamsburg.

SETTLING THE MAINE WILDERNESS



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.