

# SETTLING THE MAINE WILDERNESS



## Moses Greenleaf, Maine's First Mapmaker

---

### LESSON 6 *Proprietors, Squatters, & Surveyors*

#### SUBJECT

Land acquisition and ownership in Maine as contrasted by the opposing views of proprietors, squatters, and surveyors.

#### STUDENTS WILL

- Understand different attitudes and actions of Maine's early settlers regarding land ownership
- Explain how the different attitudes of early settlers affected Maine statehood

VOCABULARY proprietor, squatter, surveyor, sectionalism

#### PREPARATION

1. Read "Background" below, Chapter 11 of *Settling the Maine Wilderness*, "Politics and Societies, pages 55-60," and part of Chapter 17, "Inventory: 170 Years Later, section "Land Use and Ownership," pages 100-101.
2. Make copies of the "Student Worksheet" for each student, and three copies of the "Graphic Organizer for Group Summary" and "Cooperative Learning Activity" worksheet, one for each group. Copy pages 106-111 from *Finding Katahdin* by Amy Hassinger (University of Maine Press, 2001) as a handout for each student to read.

## Background

### Proprietors vs. Squatters

“Proprietor” was the name used for those people who purchased and had legal ownership of large tracts of land. Because Massachusetts was populated before Maine was, and Boston became a center of commerce, many of the wealthier Bostonians were able to buy large areas of land in the District of Maine (part of Massachusetts until 1820). These proprietors had deeds to the land, but did not usually live on the land. The wealthy proprietors often exploited their legal right to the land by selling it at high prices and hiring surveyors to delineate and claim the land they legally owned. After the American Revolution, some people believed that the land formerly owned by loyalists or the British Government should be public land. These “squatters” claimed the land in Maine by living on it, building homes, and creating farms for their families. This problem became pervasive in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century when surveyors were sometimes physically threatened by the squatters, who believed they had the right to the land they had worked hard to improve. The idea of wealthy people from Massachusetts owning land in Maine where they did not live or involve themselves in the communities was a problem for some Mainers early on. This sentiment may be the root of the modern expression by Mainers that those “from away” do not belong and should not have equal say in the affairs of the town. Mainers often have a strong sense that living here is the most important claim to the area and that those who have lived here for generations, should be the ones who have the most influence in decision-making.

### For Further Reading:

1. Richard Judd, et al., *Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present*, (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1995), 170-178, 247-249.
2. James Leamon, *Revolution Downeast*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).
3. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, From her Diary 1785-1812*, (New York: Vintage Press, 1990) (For primary source information about attacks on surveyors from squatters in the area.)

## BODY OF LESSON

Class Period 1. Present the information outlined in the background reading and in the readings from *Settling the Maine Wilderness*, emphasizing the differing perspectives of land ownership held by proprietors, squatters, and Moses Greenleaf. Explain how these people felt about Maine statehood. Discuss why the squatters generally lived inland and how the areas of lower population allowed squatting. Students will read the information from *Finding Katahdin* (provided as handouts) and then record what they learned about the three perspectives on the student worksheet. Explain to the class that

they and then be divided into three groups, each of which will represent the viewpoint of a proprietor, a squatter, or Moses Greenleaf. Within their group they will discuss the ideas that each recorded on their worksheet and compile a summary of the important attitudes on the graphic organizer, which reflects their efforts as a group. They will then discuss and record more detailed ideas about the perspective their group represents and chose one person or several members within the group who will participate in an “Improvised Interactive Play.” The teacher will meet with each group to check for accuracy of information before the play. (**Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis**)

Class Period 2. The representatives from each group will engage in a play/dialogue that will be videotaped by the teacher. The video will then be viewed by the class, which can be followed by a summarizing class discussion. (**Application, Analysis**)

#### ASSESSMENT (optional)

The video can be shown and paused after each of the actor’s dialogue. The students can then write their own responses to the dialogue they just viewed from the perspective of the other two actors (e.g. if the proprietor speaks, the student will write a possible response of Moses Greenleaf and a squatter.) The final assessment will include the student’s responses and an essay that summarizes what they learned, with grading based on the depth of each student’s understanding of the differing viewpoints.

#### EXTENSIONS

1. Discuss how modern day attitudes about people “from away” are rooted in the unique history of the settlement in Maine, which began as a part of Massachusetts. Explore how present-day resentment about wealthy Massachusetts vacationers, purchasers of land, or even new residents of Maine towns, may be remnants of Maine’s early history. (**Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis**)

2. Discuss or have the students research factors that led to the separation of: the United States from England, Maine from Massachusetts, and/or a town in Maine that was once part of another town, such as the original six towns of Ancient North Yarmouth, ME. (For further information see Rowe, Ancient North Yarmouth and Yarmouth.) (**Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis**)

## Student Worksheet

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century Profiles and Viewpoints of Land Ownership in Maine

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

***Directions:***

Using the information learned in class and in your reading, list the important attitudes represented by the proprietors, squatters, and Moses Greenleaf.

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century Profiles and Viewpoints of Land Ownership in Maine

## Graphic Organizer for Group Summary

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

<p><b><u>Proprietors</u></b></p> <p>- wealthy</p>	<p><b><u>Squatters</u></b></p> <p>- generally lived inland, away from commercial port areas</p>	<p><b><u>Moses Greenleaf</u></b></p> <p>- believed that people should live on the land they own with the purpose of settling a town</p>
---	---	---

## Cooperative Learning Activity

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century Viewpoints and Profiles on Land Ownership in Maine

Group viewpoint: \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

***Directions:***

After completing a group summary of the important attitudes of the proprietors, squatters, and Moses Greenleaf, develop a plan to present the information about your group's assigned viewpoint in the form of an "Improvised Interactive Play." Use the space below for notes and ideas that you want to present to the class.

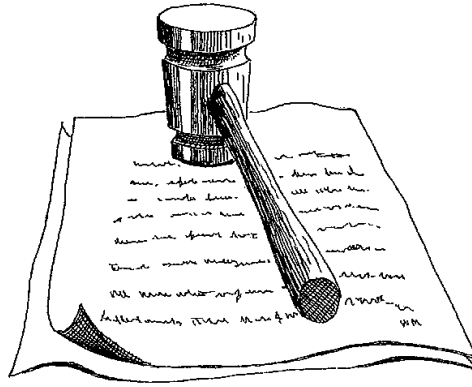
## Teacher Answer Key

### SETTLING THE MAINE WILDERNESS

<u>Proprietors</u>	<u>Squatters</u>	<u>Moses Greenleaf</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- wealthy</li><li>- from Boston</li><li>- did not live on the land</li><li>- interest is financial gain</li><li>- little interest in the people or town where their land was located</li><li>- opposed statehood</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- generally lived inland, away from commercial port areas</li><li>- were farmers</li><li>- believed land should be cheap or free to those who could work it</li><li>- rejected “legal” ownership of land by non-residents</li><li>- right to the land is “earned” not “purchased”</li><li>- religious dissenters</li><li>- supported statehood, but not generally politically aware or active within established governments</li><li>- sometimes resorted to violence as “White Indians”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- believed that people should live on the land they own with the purpose of settling a town</li><li>-believed that inhabitants of a town would make personal and long-term investments in its future growth</li><li>- opposed large land ownership by people who did not live on the land</li><li>- believed in the ideology of the “yeoman,” a self-sufficient person, not subject to the will of others</li><li>- believed that the aristocracy should lead the people</li><li>- supported law and order</li><li>- likely supported gradual statehood, likely initially opposed (strong Federalist)</li></ul>

# Chapter Eleven

## POLITICS AND SOCIETIES



*Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom;  
and a great empire and little minds go ill together.*

EDMUND BURKE, *SECOND SPEECH ON CONCILIATION WITH AMERICA* (1775)

The title page of Moses Greenleaf's *Statistical View of the District of Maine* bears the phrase *Salus Publica Mea Merces*, the public welfare, my reward. It is fortunate that Moses felt this way, for there was little monetary reimbursement for his greatest efforts. There was no stipend whatsoever for his many other smaller services, such as his work for better education, for temperance, and for wiser methods of agriculture. Even his selling of subscriptions to the *Christian Mirror* brought little remuneration beyond the satisfaction of placing good reading in the homes of Williamsburg and Brownville. But then, no one expects to earn his bread and butter from such services, which is the reason they are done by relatively few people.

Many times he must have wondered if his services to the *Salus Publica* bore any lasting fruit. But if ever he was determined to sit back and let the public welfare go to blazes, he never was able to follow such a resolution. There were always those grand causes such as public education.

While Greenleaf led his neighbors in an effort to provide schools for the young people of Williamsburg, he also joined with those working to raise the

educational standards across the countryside. On January 4-5, 1831, the Association for Promoting Popular Education met in Bangor. The weather was at its midwinter worst but, despite this, a "respectable number" made their way through the drifts to the association's first convention. Oliver Crosby (see chapter 8) was elected president, supported by no less than three vice presidents: William D. Williamson, the historian and lawyer; Ephraim Goodal, a gentleman from Orrington; and Moses Greenleaf.

The assembly heard a number of lectures. The principal speaker on the first morning brought a familiar message. According to him there was a great waste of time and money in the current methods of education. This waste ranged from green wood and smoky flues to the false economy practiced by those who hired cheap schoolmasters. In the afternoon A. M. Quimby, one of Bangor's prominent teachers, spoke on the "Monitorial system, a method of peer instruction which he claimed was the only way one master could handle a school with one hundred scholars." Before adjournment, the conference defined its major and continuing purpose: to diffuse "such information as shall have favorable bearing . . . [on]



school houses, books, systems of instruction, and the qualification of teachers.” Moses was chairman of the committee on schoolbooks and of the committee on the expenses of education.

The first secondary school on the Piscataquis opened in 1822. The following year this school became Foxcroft Academy, the first academy chartered under the new state legislature. In the fall of 1832 Moses became a trustee of the new academy. His chief interest was in public education, but it was obvious that there was a limit to the scope of instruction that could be offered by smaller towns until the state should see fit to give aid.<sup>1</sup> At the time he became a trustee, Foxcroft Academy was considering the addition of a mechanic shop. It was a start.

Just as foundational was Moses’ interest in better methods of agriculture. Here was another potential area for increased productivity, which awaited but the proper tillage. Greenleaf had read British economist Thomas Malthus and was convinced that the growing of more and better food was the duty of both the tillers and the experimenters. As a member of the Massachusetts Agricultural Society, he read each issue of their journal with his usual care, correcting typographical errors and making notes of comparison here and there upon the margins. Thus the latest, chemical investigations on soils, fertilizers, and mulches came to Greenleaf Hill, the last word on newer types of apples and pears, and the current advice on growing fatter hogs. It was this sharing of facts and theories that Moses found so hopeful and exciting—reports from Europe, from the forward-looking farmers around Boston, and even from East Andover, Maine, where Greenleaf’s in-law Ebenezer Poor had discovered that a native nettle could be harvested as a substitute for flax.

The society also ran an annual fair at Brighton, Massachusetts, where it offered prizes for the best produce, livestock, and farm machinery. Maine farming needed such an incentive. In 1821 Moses, along with a number of others, signed a petition seeking the incorporation of a Penobscot Agricultural Society. Those concerned held their first meeting at the Bangor courthouse on the third of January 1821. The dues, one dollar per year, were hardly enough to establish the

prizes that the society planned to offer, so members from the various communities were chosen to canvass for funds. These men were also to act as agents for the society, judging the local produce and disseminating agricultural information.

The society’s first cattle show and farmers’ fair was held that fall. Ephraim Goodal of Orrington displayed seventeen varieties of apples and seven kinds of choice pears; eight dollars was awarded to the best pair of oxen, twenty dollars to the best stud horse, and seven dollars for the greatest quantity of compost manure. No one collected the twenty-five-dollar prize for a cheap and certain method of controlling the wood lice found on fruit trees, but with such a prize available it was certain apple trees would be subjected to numerous concoctions during the next year. This fair was a forerunner of those state and county gatherings that still come in a swirl of dust, banners, and excitement.

There were those who claimed that whiskey and hard cider had built the frontier and made the bleak life bearable. Moses knew this was a myth. As the Farmer’s Almanac of 1817 warned:

Cider is a very good beverage if used with discretion, but to swill it down as some do, will keep one’s brain in a continual fog. Old Capt. Red-eyes takes his mug every morning . . . and toddy blossoms, it is said, are making their appearance on his nose and cheeks. Alas Captain look out! or I fear you will ere long find yourself sans eyes, sans nose, . . . sans reputation, sans everything.

On July 4, 1829, Greenleaf presided over a gathering at the Bangor courthouse and the formation of a county temperance society. Prominent figures had gathered: the Honorable R. K. Cushing of Bangor; Edward Kent, later governor of Maine; and many others. They met again on July 9 and elected Judge Perham president. By the time of Moses’ death, the movement had gained strength. New voices had taken up the cause—men such as John Appleton, who was one of Maine’s finest attorneys general, along with those who like Moses Greenleaf spoke their minds fearlessly and well.

Moses belonged to several other societies. He was one of the first members of the Maine Historical Society, an organization that over the years has stimulated scholarly study of Maine's heritage. He also belonged to the American Colonization Society, or more fully the American Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Moses kept the society's journal, *The African Repository*, bound in leather on his bookshelves and died owing the society \$11.83.

When Greenleaf moved to Williamsburg, he had no intention of creating a totally new society. His plan was to select those aspects of society that seemed most worthwhile, and to nurture them in a fresh environment. Underlying his efforts was his grasp of a necessary interdependence and an inter-responsibility of humans building with other humans. What Moses wanted for his Williamsburg, he envisioned for the whole of Maine. As the district went, so went Williamsburg, perhaps not entirely or all at once, but eventually and substantially. It was inevitable that Moses would become involved in politics.

As the new century began, Maine's political battle lines formed upon the issue of separation from Massachusetts. This was not a new issue by the time Moses took an interest. He was eight when the first separation meeting was held in Portland. Five conventions had been held, and the first movement for separation had collapsed with another taking its place before Captain Moses Greenleaf moved his family north to New Gloucester. Coming from an arch-Federalist household, there can be little doubt that Greenleaf received an early anti-separationist influence. What remains to be explored is whether Moses' concerns rose above prejudice and party adherence.

Edgar Crosby Smith, Greenleaf's first biographer, assumed that Moses supported the separation movement. This assumption was repeated by Samuel Boardman, who wrote the introduction to Smith's biography. Boardman stated: "Mr. Greenleaf was the real state-maker of Maine" and stressed that Moses' writing and maps did "more than any other man to make known . . . the value and importance of Maine."

Smith and Boardman were indisputably correct in their estimation of Moses' role in bringing attention to Maine. However, evidence is lacking that he approved of the separation movement in 1819 or aided in the final success of that cause. After all available data are considered, we are left with Greenleaf's noncommittal statement of fact found in his journal entry for March 15, 1820:

Captain Hazly of Bangor called—brought intelligence that Maine is admitted into the union & therefore this day commences the existence of the District as a new state.<sup>3</sup>

When the citizens of Williamsburg voted on the issue of Maine's separation from Massachusetts in 1819, there were thirteen nays and two votes in favor. Of course we do not know who cast the two affirmative ballots, but it is unlikely that it was the Greenleaf brothers. If Moses had been in favor of separation, he certainly would have been more successful in winning his neighbors' support for the cause of statehood, especially in light of the fact that the neighboring towns overwhelmingly voted in favor of separation.<sup>4</sup> It is likely Moses assumed that in due time Maine would leave the commonwealth, as did many moderates. He no doubt agreed with such fine sentiments as those expressed in James Sullivan's *History of the District of Maine*:

This extensive country [Maine] is so large and populous and in its situation so peculiar, that it cannot remain long a part of the commonwealth of Massachusetts . . . we rejoice in the anticipation of that elevated prosperity, and high degree of importance, to which the District must, from its peculiar advantages, be finally raised.<sup>5</sup>

But the evidence indicates that at the time the final vote was taken, Greenleaf felt that the issues had become polemical, surcharged with emotion, and darkened by a rough-and-ready element he distrusted. It is probable that he would have subscribed to a statement made by John Adams:

But I can tell you how it will be when there arises in Maine a bold, daring, ardent genius with talents

---

capable of inspiring the people with his own enthusiasm and ambition; he will tear off Maine from old Massachusetts and leave her in a state below mediocrity in the Union.<sup>6</sup>

Edgar Crosby Smith cited, as proof of Moses' approval of the separation movement, a letter written by Moses to his brother-in-law Eleazer Alley Jenks. The date was 1807, and Moses was in Boston attending a session of the General Court; he planned to be present at a caucus held by the ardent separatists. He reported his impressions:

Massachusetts will be restored to correct principles, for the "Squatters" are about to manage their affairs in their own way. A caucus was held yesterday morning on the subject of separation, and adjourned to this evening at 6 o'clock. The Demo's are decided in favor and many of the Federalists—who knows amid the revolutions that are impending what may await us—Gov. King! Chief Justice Widgery!!! how do they look together?

Back from a later meeting, Greenleaf added this postscript:

10 o'clock, P.M. The Grand Caucus was held this evening in the Senate chamber, Old W [Widgery] in the chair! A resolve passed that the members then present exert their influence in the Legislature to produce an order directing the several towns in Maine to give in their vote, . . . for or against separation. . . . The cause of the debate did not allow much argument against the measure. Mr. Bradbury attempted to oppose it, but was borne down by "Mr. Chairman;" the principal speakers in its favor were King, Greenwood, Kinsley, Foxcroft and some others. 55 in favor, 10 against.<sup>7</sup>

What is the implication of the exclamation points for both these quotes? William King had recently left the Federalist Party to climb upward in the power structure of the Democratic Republicans. If, despite this, King rated one exclamation point of admiration,

it is extremely doubtful that, in Greenleaf's generous estimation, Widgery would have earned three exclamation points!

William Widgery was either much liked or greatly disliked. His friends thought him a man of tremendous energy who had pulled himself up from poverty to a position of property and prestige. To others he appeared crude and self-seeking. Leverett Saltonstall, a Federalist from Salem who met Widgery on a stage ride, thought him an uncouth bore and a disgrace to the commonwealth.

Tired out, Moses ended his postscript with a hurried reference to Aaron Burr's insurrection—"So we go," Moses closed, "good night." His letter to Jenks had the usual enthusiasm when he wrote of those projects relating to the lands north of the Piscataquis, but the rest of his letter revealed the tone of a man watching disturbing events. He mentioned an attempt to change the penal code and talk of impeaching the judges of Massachusetts' higher court. It is hard to escape the conclusion that he placed the separation movement in the same category with these indications that the old, responsible order was breaking down.

In such apprehensions Greenleaf was not alone. There were many who feared that the separation movement would fall into the hand of radicals—in fact, that it already had done so. Moreover, conservatives pointed to the armed insurrection that had occurred in western Massachusetts. It was not the time or the season for separation, a partition that would be a Brutus stab to the old commonwealth and a step for Maine toward anarchy. At the very least, Greenleaf was keenly aware of the issues that compounded the problems of separation. In retrospect we can see how involved the issues truly were and why many felt they were witnessing the making of a baleful legacy for Maine.

His experience with the seemingly endless litigation and charges that came before his parlor table served to acquaint him with reality. He was very familiar with a troublesome portion of Maine's population. In contrast with that dependable element that William Willis<sup>8</sup> had characterized as being of "steady habits and good principles," there was a restless group of misfits and

malcontents—the worst of whom had little sense of law or order.<sup>9</sup> Because such people existed in quantity, there were those who claimed that Maine could never muster a sufficient number of qualified persons to form and run a government. Moses certainly knew better than that, but what he did see was the need for much more education and economic stability. He had striven and he would continue to strive against the opinion that the district of Maine was an outpost of squalor and a place for despair, a barbaric fringe engulfed by a terrifying woods where, as one young Bostonian wrote, the people “lived in wigwams and ate pine knots.”<sup>10</sup> But at the same time, Greenleaf understood that the separatists were playing a dangerous game when they assured voters that “a government is a very simple, easy thing,”<sup>11</sup> or when they catered to those who cared little for civil order. (See appendix 4, opening paragraph, and Joseph Whipple’s observation in appendix 8, paragraph 5.)

A study of Greenleaf’s two books on Maine shows that he believed Maine did not need a revolution, but rather an infusion arising from a carefully considered plan for development based upon the facts. Instead of the consolidation of the public interests that one could expect from eventual statehood, the present drive for separation might increase sectionalism, encourage petty interest, and, perhaps worst of all, result in a greater monopoly over resources.

It would be especially interesting to know how Greenleaf and William King viewed each other. Apparently Greenleaf did not make King’s personal acquaintance until late in 1819, when he met him at a gathering of the Maine Agricultural Society held in Brunswick. In a letter written soon after this meeting, Greenleaf sought King’s opinion concerning a proposal “to encourage the immigration of foreigners” and asked if King would furnish him with information respecting lands for sale and settlement on the Kennebec River, along with the names of persons in that part of the state to whom immigrants might be referred. Moses wrote that he was persuaded of King’s dedication to pursue “any proper measure tending to increase the population or add to the advantages of the State.” His closing seems sincere: “with much respect, your obedient servant, Moses Greenleaf.”<sup>12</sup>

But King and Greenleaf had quite different capabilities and personalities. Both men had a special attachment to Maine—that place to which they devoted so much energy—but King was a politician in the contemporary sense. He remains a complex figure. He was a cunning manipulator, yet the man who had Jefferson contribute Article Six of Maine’s constitution, which deals with education. He was the populist hero of the squatter and the struggling poor, yet he was also appropriately dubbed the “Sultan of Bath.”

In contrast, Moses Greenleaf’s excursions into politics were dismal. Despite all his services to the people and his fear that landownership and development would become a matter of partisan government and insider privilege, Moses would himself suffer from the public image of a landed proprietor and aristocrat. If so, he was doubly damned, for he was impoverished. In a sense, Greenleaf was a genuine aristocrat—a member of what Jefferson called the “natural aristocracy,” which entailed a position of responsibility resulting from the consequence of assumed and consummated duty—but this seems to have been a distinction lost on many voters.

Five years after Maine gained her sovereignty, Greenleaf wrote the following to Benjamin Dodd:

During the high excitement of political parties, the subject of the management of the public lands, and the selling of them to large proprietors afford a very convenient argument in the hands of one party to array the multitude of Maine against all non-resident proprietors. When the question of separation was renewed and pressed with great force, and it has been so long maintained that the large majority of people of Maine and its government are wrought into the belief, which is supported by their pride, their prejudice, as well as (they suppose) by the judgment, that it is morally as well as politically wrong to sell land in any quantity larger than for the immediate improvement of one man and that it is morally and politically right to frame and execute the laws so as to compel every person who is so unfortunate as to own a township to sell it at any rate and at the lowest prices whether he can afford it or not.

---

And the sin of owning, or being agent for a township of land is (with many) one not to be forgotten. This manifests itself in our elections, our laws and our trials by jury. I say this in general, though there are instances in which it does not apply.<sup>13</sup>

Greenleaf was speaking from firsthand knowledge. Though he was a candidate for state representative several times, he was roundly defeated at the polls. At the local level, he was equally unsuccessful in winning an election to public office. As we shall see, this was due, in part, to party politics, but there were deeper reasons for Greenleaf's unpopularity among those in positions of growing influence.

Among the many aspects that worried Moses was the specter of an increasing anti-intellectualism that was creating a further separation of those equipped to bring a rational and scientific approach to the development of Maine from those having political sway. One need not look far for evidence. Typical was the advertisement that appeared in the *Bangor Register* calling for a candidate who had a "tolerable share of modest good sense and a good common school education. But none having a diploma of law, physics or divinity need apply." Here was a closing off of communication and resources. To make matters worse, such a reverse elitism exacerbated growing sectionalism and party politics.

With the demise of the Federalist Party, one would suppose that Moses would have become an active National Republican. Unlike his brother Eben, who did become a committeeman at the 1831 National Republican convention held at Bangor, Moses remained a determined Federalist.<sup>14</sup> Even if he had become a National Republican candidate, it would not have improved his chances of election. To make sure that the vote from such sparsely populated towns as Williamsburg could be controlled, the Democrats initiated a new apportionment in the voting districts. This was a purely partisan move, as every National Republican knew and even Democrats smilingly admitted.

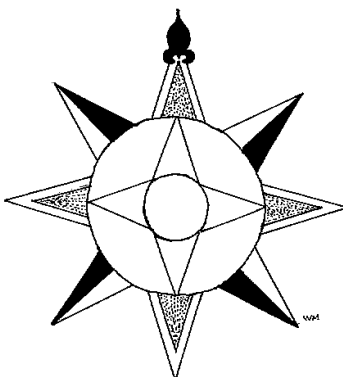
Moses called this redistricting "the Penobscot dovetailed Gerrymander"; he went on to note that it was "begotten in darkness at Bangor in the year 1831 by the Bangor Inquisition. . . . Monstrum, horrendum, inferne ingens."<sup>15</sup> Moses wrote five articles, four of which outlined violations to the constitution committed by the Democrats in their plan for apportionment and which detailed the inequities fostered upon the voters in Penobscot County. Citizens had been deprived of representation. Unorganized townships, which by the constitution had no right to representation—but could be counted upon to return a vote in favor of the Democrats—had been given the franchise, and National Republican towns such as Williamsburg had been grouped not only inconveniently, but also in such a fashion as to make it impossible for them to ever elect a candidate of their own party. The fifth article demanded that the designers of the redistricting plead either ignorance or malice toward the citizens they were sworn to represent.<sup>16</sup>

I come before you boldly and fearlessly, in the cause of what I believe to be our violated and insulted rights. I have no personal resentment to gratify, nor private ends to obtain by prosecution of this subject. I am not a candidate for your suffrages, and probably never shall be—have no interest in this or any other political question but the great interest of our common country—for the sake of that interest—for the sake of the equal rights and liberties bequeathed to us by our fathers, it is what I appeal to you. Will you be indifferent to this appeal?<sup>17</sup>

There were no more articles. Greenleaf's health was poor; his own financial problems and the troubles of Williamsburg were serious, and he evidently concluded that what strength and time he had should be applied to a third book on Maine. One is left to conjecture what he would have said in that book, or what he would say now, if he were to comment on how—outside of medicine—the great changes since his day have amounted to so little difference in the human condition.

# Chapter Seventeen

## INVENTORY: 170 YEARS LATER



*Or must Fate act the same gray farce again,  
And wait, till one, amid Time's wrecks and scars,  
Speaks to a ruin here, "What poet-race  
Shot such cyclopean arches at the stars?"*

G. K. CHESTERSON, "KING'S CROSS STATION" (MID-1890s)

**M**aine, to be or not to be, was Moses Greenleaf's concern and the source of the pervasive urgency one finds in his writings. It was a time of decisions—decisions that had to be made before Maine's window of opportunity vanished. The state would either flourish through the well-informed opinion of her own citizens and their wise development of her potential, or she would languish in the hands of outside interests and in the bedevilment of nearsightedness and sectionalism.

Greenleaf made no claims to be prophet. He was a man of the Enlightenment and held its confidence in science. For him, our futures lay in today's facts utilized by the ingenuity, rationality, and capacity for compassion implanted within each of us. By and large, he was concerned with fundamental issues. Thus, while he would be astonished by the technological developments of the past 170-plus years, he would be equally familiar with the basic concerns with which we wrestle.

In 1972 Richard Barringer began his *A Maine Manifest* with a statement that might well have

come from Greenleaf's *Survey of Maine*: "Maine is at the crossroads." To amplify his assertion, Barringer quoted from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" Alice asked the Cheshire cat. "That," responded the cat, "depends a good deal on where you want to go." This is the point for us as it was for Greenleaf, and it is in the framework of desired lifestyles and destinations that we must judge what Moses Greenleaf had to say.

The big issues have not changed. Thirty years after Barringer scrutinized the Maine situation and 180 years after *The Survey of Maine* was published, Governor Angus King in his 2002 "State of the State Address" expounded in present terms what is essentially the Greenleaf message:

I honestly believe that we are at an historic tipping point and that we have it within our power to build one of the strongest economies in the country—given our natural and human resources—but doing so will require that [we] think long and hard. . . . It is not north vs. south, labor vs. management, rural vs. urban.

---

It's Team Maine vs. the world, and we can and will win. But finally, winning won't be worth the price if we don't hold on to the qualities that bind us to this special place and to each other.

Preserving community and civility, the importance of how we grow, and the crucial role of education all find a prominent place in Governor King's address as they did in Greenleaf's works.

So this is the vision of Maine's future—widespread opportunity and prosperity, vibrant, livable communities—real communities, . . . and healthy people. It is a vision that is within our grasp, but grasp it we must, for it will not fall into our hands.<sup>2</sup>

Barringer, King, Greenleaf, and all those who are interested in community and civil society know that we human beings rely on vision, commitment, and belief. They also realize that these essentials must be encouraged and sustained through physical, economic, demographic, and political realities. In rounding out this celebration of Greenleaf's work and his dedication to the prosperity of Maine's people, we will review Greenleaf's major concerns and suggest the reasons for their persistent relevancy.

### Population

As has been noted, Moses Greenleaf supposed that increasing pressures for land or for work, in both the eastern states and the surrounding Canadian provinces, would produce a steady immigration into Maine. He fully expected that the state's 1970 population (approximately 933,000) would be reached before 1870, and, possibly, should the proper inducement be offered, before 1850. He was especially concerned with the rapidity of increase. Only rapid growth would encourage state government and landholders to make investments that would ensure economic and cultural growth. Too slow settlement might well leave Maine without a place in the future.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously Greenleaf's extrapolations on population increases proved far too optimistic. Data from the years following 1850 show a persistent emigration from the state. This trend, coupled with the loss of many of the state's promising youth to the lure of

greater prosperity, has long resulted in a pernicious loss of human resources.<sup>4</sup> Thus Greenleaf's insistence upon the importance of a wise and timely development of the physical and cultural opportunities in Maine as a basis for maintaining a growing, healthy community was very much on target.

Greenleaf was not interested in just numbers; his aim was always quality and the well-being of community. What is the optimum population density for maximizing cultural offerings, physical productivity, and the lessening of necessary governmental expense?<sup>5</sup> If settlement in Maine was to be worthwhile, immigrants who would be of benefit must be attracted through investments in the means for transportation, educational opportunity, and the stimulation of productive occupations. Very similar admonishment can be found in Governor King's 2002 "State of the State Address."

### Land Use and Ownership

Land was and is one of Maine's chief resources. Landownership, development, and usage play through Maine's history in the story of private fortunes, public resources, and now in the cause of a "green future."

The land issue is complex. It appears to have been convoluted from the first settlement. Greenleaf certainly found himself in the midst of controversy and sometimes in an awkward position. He was the agent for a nonresident proprietor and, as such, a representative of out-of-state influence. He realized the troubles that such investors faced—the pirating of timber and squatting, for instance. But Moses also had put his roots into the land and had become part of the new state. He saw that outside ownership was an invitation to exploitation of the land and an occasion for selfish and shortsighted commercial development rather than "communitizing."

In Greenleaf's day everything north of his hill in Williamsburg was forest. He hoped to see it settled. Today, with the exception of the farming land in Aroostook, that vast acreage is primarily cut-over land.<sup>6</sup>

There is a great irony in this business of Maine lands. In Greenleaf's day the state was anxious to liquidate its unsold holdings. Now we find the state involved in a program of land acquisition and

concerned with making the most out of the scattered public lots that are the remnants of a grand endowment.<sup>7</sup> In all this, Greenleaf's position deserves careful review. He labored to demonstrate the value of the public lands that remained, adding his voice to those of other public-spirited figures such as Governor Enoch Lincoln. But in the end the legislature yielded to the pressure to keep taxes low—and in too many cases permitted, if not assisted, the profiteering of lumber interests. In 1820 there were between eight and nine million acres left unsold, and in reaction to the panic of the year before, the legislature voted to sell the lots at public auction. Land speculations kept pace with the growing demands for timberlands and often exceeded any such need. Landed families and lumber barons emerged, only to be followed by the mammoth pulp and paper industries, which coalesced the private holdings. Edgar Ring's Forest Commissioner's Report for 1908 told part of the tale. Quoting frequently from Greenleaf, he brought this account up to the last public auction by the state. Philip Coolidge's *History of the Maine Woods* provided a fuller understanding of land use and ownership during the years between Greenleaf and ourselves. Perhaps one can summarize by simply saying that the placing of such a large proportion of Maine in the hands of relatively few people who were primarily interested in profit has had, as Moses Greenleaf feared, a major and often negative effect on the economy of the state.<sup>8</sup>

Whether it was morally wrong for so few to own so much (an issue raised by many during the first years of statehood), or whether, according to Greenleaf's thesis, equity of opportunity and full economic benefit could only be realized through settlement, may now seem academic. But the issue of land, its use, and its ownership, remains. The living space of the people of Maine now has enticing value in an era when forest, clean water, and a livable environment have become sought-after commodities. To us, as it was for Greenleaf, the land is our chief resource, and its proper use our major concern.

### **Transportation**

Transportation links Maine to the prosperity of the nation. This was as clear to Governor King

when he gave his "State of the State Address" in 2002 as it was to Greenleaf. But Moses Greenleaf saw transportation as more than a vital commercial link to the outside world. Transportation was a means of communication within the state as well. The copy of Crabb's *Synonyms* that Moses used derives communication from *communifico*, which, Crabb said, signifies "to make common property with another." Communication meant for Greenleaf an enablement through cultural interchange. It is a deterrent against geographical privilege and sectionalism. Despite Maine's many rivers and large lakes, transportation has never been easy here. It is a big country, hilly—even mountainous—with its fair share of swamps and frost heaves.<sup>9</sup> The present and growing expense of maintaining roads, coupled with the rising costs of fossil fuels, bedevils Maine transportation as seriously as stumps and mud holes did in Moses' day. In his last years, he became convinced that railroads were the answer. Perhaps, again, we will find Greenleaf's judgment sound.

### **Industry and Commerce**

Greenleaf's *Survey of the State of Maine* devotes fourteen pages, including tables, to "Manufactures." As one turns Greenleaf's pages one wonders why he didn't elaborate upon those shining examples of Maine's industry. Why didn't he focus on the fledgling textile mill at Saco, the growing sawmills on the Penobscot, and the long-standing practice of shipbuilding at dozens of sheltered harbors along the coast? To many he may seem blind to the promise of industrialization and the promise of "bigger is better."

A closer investigation shows that he was not only well aware of the increasing role of technology and industry, but also constantly endeavoring to save his own township through participation in manufacturing. Moses knew that the more populous the settlement, the more necessary manufacturing would become. One sentence serves to show Greenleaf's position on industry in his state: "Maine has already made a progress, in general nearly sufficient for its wants, and perhaps in most cases quite so." Moses was purposefully focusing his attention on what he considered the priority—settlement and the development of community soundly based upon agricultural utilization of the land.<sup>10</sup>



which made the thirteen colonies into thirteen states of a loosely united nation. Massachusetts lawmakers had also been busy. In 1780, they wrote and approved a new constitution for the State of Massachusetts. This document set forth the basic laws of the state and rights of its citizens, including those of the District of Maine.

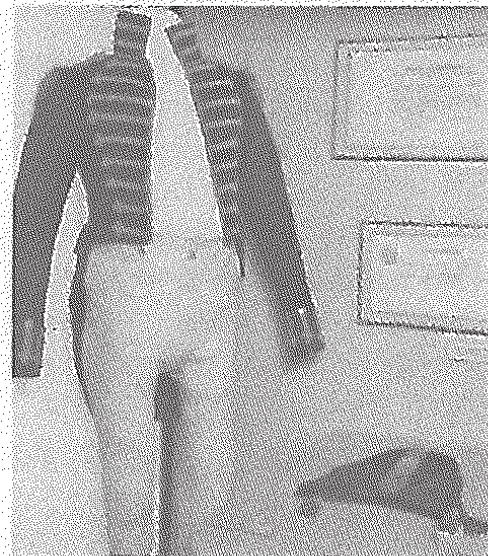
Mainers had little to do with drafting this constitution. Only sixteen of Maine's fifty-two towns voted on whether or not to accept the constitution in 1780. Why? One reason may have been that they were distracted by the British, who were still camped in Castine. Most of the rest of the country had stopped fighting by 1781, but raids continued in Maine. Not until 1784 did the British force leave Castine, a year after peace had officially been concluded. Even then, they left almost of their own accord. Massachusetts never ordered them to go.

#### A COLONY WITHIN A COLONY

After the Revolution, Maine's population jumped, tripling in just sixteen years. In 1784, 56,000 people lived in Maine; by 1800, the figure was 150,000. Towns like Portland, Kittery, York, and Wells tended to have more connections with Boston than did inland towns. Because they were on the coast, these towns were highly commercial, centers of a great deal of economic activity. Ships sailed in and out of their ports, bringing goods from the south and the east. The economy of these coastal towns was largely supported by trade with Boston and Massachusetts. Maine's interior towns, on the other hand, like Farmington, Paris, or Hallowell, were more isolated from Massachusetts. On the whole, they were also poorer than the coastal towns and less dependent on trade with Boston.

Many of these interior towns were plagued with violence over a familiar issue: land ownership. Much of Maine's territory had been claimed by wealthy proprietors, or land owners, many of whom were from Massachusetts. These proprietors sold land at high prices to those who could afford to buy it. This infuriated many settlers. Some, known as squatters, believed that all the land formerly owned by loyalists or by the British government should be public land, open to any citizen. Some people simply claimed unoccupied land for their own. Some even resorted to violence, attacking agents of the proprietors that came to inspect their lands (see Chapter Five).

The District of Maine was growing quickly, but it remained under the wing of Massachusetts. Massachusetts men ran its state government and owned much of its land. Historian James Leamon thinks of post-Revolutionary Maine as "a colony within a colony." Mainers at the time must have felt this way too. Would Maine remain a colony of Massachusetts, just as America had been a colony of England? Or would it break free of Massachusetts to form an independent state? (Figure 4.12)



Figures 4.13 and 4.14. Typical clothing of the Revolutionary period.

#### A FIRST ATTEMPT AT SEPARATION

Two years after the close of the Revolution, in 1785, a group of men from Maine's wealthy coastal areas began to meet regularly to discuss Maine's separation from Massachusetts. These men were mostly wealthy lawyers, judges, merchants, or gentlemen farmers who were dissatisfied with the *status quo*, or the way things were at the time. They tried to get their message out to the people of Maine by writing newspaper editorials explaining their point of view. Finally, in 1792, the Massachusetts legislature agreed to let the citizens of Maine vote on the topic of separation. The results were not encouraging.

The following conversation is fictional. But the characters represent the varying opinions of Mainers on the issue of separation in 1792.

#### CAST OF CHARACTERS

WILLIAM JACOBS, *a Portland judge.*  
 JAMES TOWNSEND, *a Portland merchant.*  
 JEREMIAH STERN, *a Paris farmer.*

#### SETTING

*The Paris General Store, May 1792. Early evening. The workday is over and men are gathered in the store for a sip of rum or coffee and some conversation. William and James are seated at a table in the center of the store. They both wear brushed wool jackets, ascots, polished shoes with bright buckles. Jeremiah sits alone at another. He wears a homespun flax shirt, wool pants, and boots, muddy from the field.*

JAMES: (*leaning toward Jeremiah*) Excuse me, friend. My name is James Townsend. This gentleman with me is William Jacobs. We hail from Portland.

JEREMIAH: Glad to meet you. I'm Jeremiah Stern. (*They all shake hands.*)

JAMES: Mr. Jacobs and I have been engaged in a discussion about the upcoming vote on the issue of separation—the separation of Maine from Massachusetts, that is. We happen to disagree on the topic, and can't come to any resolution on the issue. We'd be grateful for an outside opinion.

JEREMIAH: Go ahead, I'm willing.

WILLIAM: Well, Mr. Stern, I am involved in promoting the separation of the District of Maine from the Massachusetts government. My arguments are these: Maine has her own population of close to 100,000 people. Her resources differ from those of Massachusetts: her forests are greater and her coastline more extensive. Her commerce is dominated by her timber and shipping businesses. In short, Maine is a different place than Massachusetts, with different needs. She must have her own government, one run by her own people, to address those needs.

JAMES: Given, Mr. Stern, that Mr. Jacobs and his friends have complaints against their government. We all do. But what I don't understand is why these separationists insist on jumping ship. Why not see what can be done about their grievances first? As far as I'm concerned, separation is a rejection of the fair and just constitution of Massachusetts.

WILLIAM: But, Mr. Townsend, you miss the point. The District of Maine is not governed justly. She is barely represented in the General Court. Boston is simply too far away for representatives from our smaller towns to get there. Even if one of our small settlements had enough funds to send a representative, Massachusetts wouldn't allow it!

JEREMIAH: He's got a point there. Far as I know, we here in Paris have never sent a representative to Massachusetts. Not sure why, really.

WILLIAM: Paris probably doesn't have enough taxpayers. Massachusetts law calls for a minimum of one hundred fifty taxpayers in a town for it to qualify to send a representative. That leaves scores of settlements in the District that are unrepresented in our state legislature. And when each town is not well-represented in the legislature, do you know what we have?

JAMES: Oh, here we go again. .

WILLIAM We have the tyranny of England all over again. We just fought a war to win our freedom from an unjust government, a government that did not represent us. But yet here we are, governed by a second Parliament within our own borders!

JAMES: Mr. Jacobs, you are exaggerating. The General Court is hardly Parliament. You cannot blame Boston for lazy representatives from small towns. If a town considers the state legislature important enough, it will save the money to send a representative. As for towns that can't send representatives, well, introduce a bill to change the law. That's a simpler solution. Resorting to separation is a rash move. Mr. Stern, you see our dilemma. What are your thoughts on the topic?

JEREMIAH. Well, to be honest, I hadn't ever heard about this idea of separating from Massachusetts till I met you folks. But now that you're talking about it, sounds like a fairly good idea to me, I suppose.

JAMES: Hadn't heard about it? It's the talk of the town in Portland.

JEREMIAH: Well, not up here, it isn't. We just tend to mind our own business up here. We've got enough to do getting food on the table, if you know what I mean. I don't have time to read the newspapers.

WILLIAM: Are you aware of the vote on the topic coming up next week? You'll be asked to cast your ballot for or against Maine's separation.

JEREMIAH: Far as I know I'm not allowed to cast my ballot. You see, if I go by what Massachusetts says, I don't technically own my land, even though I farm it and live on it—some rich fellow down in Boston does. And, far as I know, Massachusetts doesn't like you to vote if you don't own property.

WILLIAM: Oh, I see. That's right. I hadn't thought about that.

JEREMIAH But, like I said, I'm starting to like your idea, Mr. . . . uh . . .

WILLIAM Jacobs.

JEREMIAH. Jacobs. I mean, I've always thought it was unfair that I had to pay the same amount of tax on my property as a Massachusetts man. Take my sheep, for example. Everyone knows that sheep are more expensive to keep up here than they are down in Massachusetts—all that feed they need to survive the long winters doesn't come cheap.

WILLIAM (*thumping the table*) Exactly, Mr. Stern. If we had our own government, those kinds of discrepancies would be heard and addressed. And you'd be able to vote!

JAMES Yes, but Mr. Stern, Mr. Jacobs, let's be reasonable. Do you truly think we have the right men for the job of governor and governor's council in this District? Most of our men are not ambitious government men in the same way those Massachusetts folk are.

WILLIAM Speak for yourself, sir. I happen to believe we have plenty of talent within the District.

JAMES (*aside, to Jeremiah*) He's thinking of himself, no doubt.

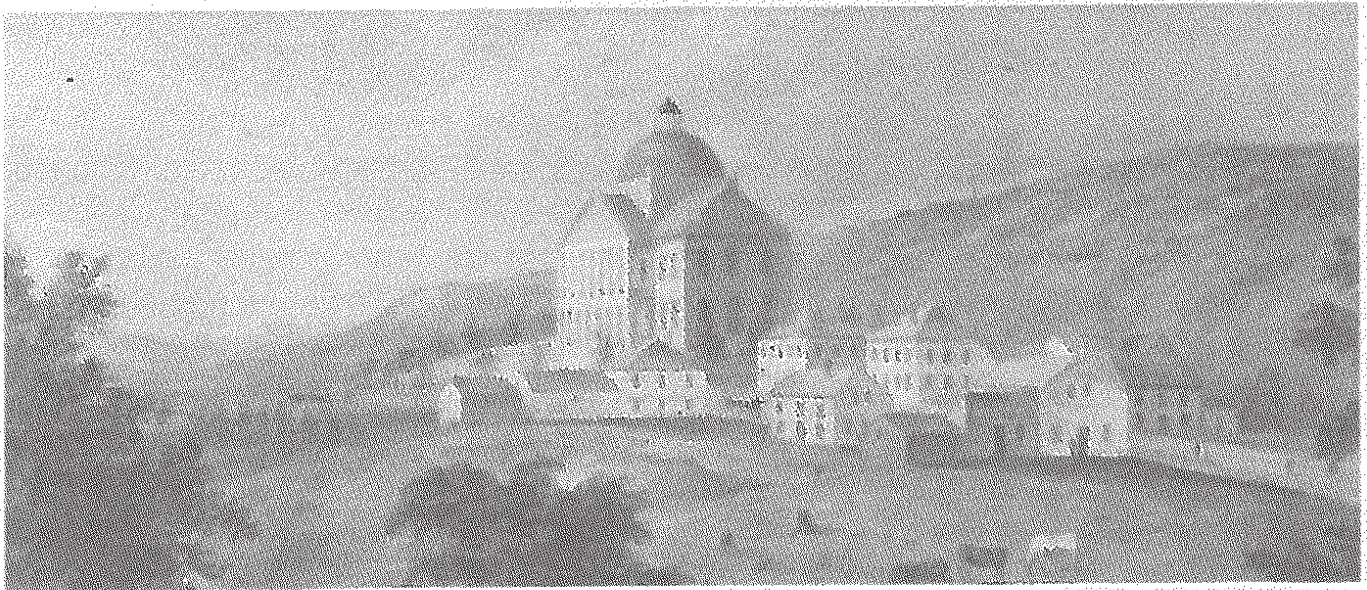


Figure 4.15.  
Old State House,  
Augusta.

WILLIAM Besides, Mr. Townsend, I suspect your opinion is influenced by your own self-interest. Are you not swayed by the Coasting Law that the federal government passed just three years ago?

JEREMIAH Which law is that?

JAMES (*grumpily*) That's the law that says I've got to go through customs, get my boat inspected and pay a fee every time I pass through water that's part of another state territory

WILLIAM Yes. As long as Maine is a part of Massachusetts, Mr. Townsend and the rest of our shippers have a distinct advantage. As Massachusetts is adjacent to New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, Mr. Townsend can sail freely all the way from Portland to Pennsylvania without paying the fee.

JAMES *(somewhat sarcastically)* That's right, and my opinion is not swayed, Mr. Jacobs, by the Coasting Law. It simply reinforces what I already believe: separation from Massachusetts would be rash and unwise.

JEREMIAH *(rises to go, as William and James glare at each other)* Well, I don't see as how I can help you gentlemen. Seems like you'll just have to work it out on your own. Good evening to you both.

The next week, William Jacobs and James Townsend both cast their ballots at Portland City Hall, for and against separation respectively. Jeremiah Stern went about his work on the farm and soon forgot about their conversation. When the votes from the May 1792 election were tallied, only 4,600 people voted out of the 10,000 who were eligible. Even that minority of voters voted



against separation. 2,524 people voted no, while 2,074 voted yes. The Massachusetts General Court ignored the returns.

The first attempt at separation was a failure. Most of the Mainers who lived along the coast were aware of the issue. But the Revolution had recently ended, and people were anxious to maintain the peace. It had been difficult enough to get every state to ratify, or formally approve, the Constitution of the United States just three years earlier, in 1789. Many people, like James Townsend, did not want to rock the boat any further. Others who lived in the more isolated sections of Maine, like Jeremiah Stern, were more concerned with supporting their families and paying their debts. They were hardly aware of the news in the rest of the country, or even within Maine. Many of these people were not even eligible to vote under the Massachusetts Constitution because they did not own enough property. Those who were eligible simply didn't care enough about separation to cast their ballots. The issue was put to rest for several years.

Figure 4.16.  
The State House in  
Augusta as it  
appears today.