

Maine History

Introduction

Maine has changed drastically over the past few hundred years. We're going to look at some maps of Maine that show how our state became the way it is today.



This map was made almost 20 years before Maine was a state.

Interaction: Why do you think the mapmaker would include a picture of a ship on his map of Maine? (Shipping was a large part of Maine's economy. In other words, even those who weren't directly involved in building ships typically relied on shipping to make a living. Farmers had to ship their crops to market, merchants had to import goods from elsewhere, manufacturers of bricks and leather needed needed to get their products to Boston or New York.)

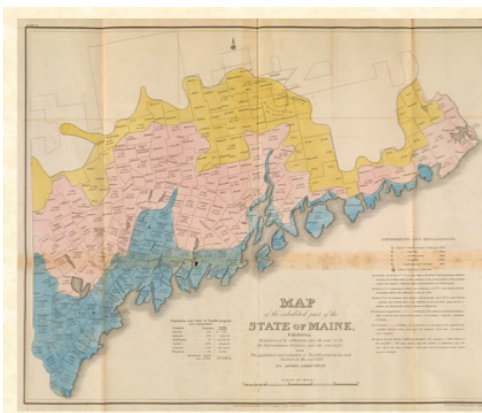
Interaction: Why do you think the mapmaker would include a picture of pine trees on his map of Maine? (White Pines were some of the best trees to make ship masts out of. It was the lumbering industry that helped to lure European settlers to Maine early on).



This map was made in 1820, the year that Maine became a state.

Interaction: I'd like everyone to try picturing a map of Maine today. Can anyone come up with some that is different about Maine today than in 1820? (County shapes, northern border)

In fact, the northern border of Maine wasn't settled for another 23 years. When this map was made, the U.S. citizens living in Maine were mostly in the southern coastal areas. Northern parts of Maine were inhabited by more French Canadians and Native Americans.



This map was made 8 years after Maine became a state. It's showing what parts of Maine were settled first.

Interaction: Can anyone guess which color represents the earliest settled part of Maine? (blue)

Interaction: Why would that be the most desirable land to early settlers? (transportation—there was no highway system awaiting European settlers; shipping was a major industry for Mainers; at the time, many mills were water powered)



This map was made almost twenty years *after* Maine became a state.

By this time, both the United States and Canada, then controlled by Great Britain, had formally claimed borders to their land. Unfortunately, their claims overlapped by a lot. It began to look like war was inevitable, and both sides built military fortifications in northern Maine. In an attempt to avert a war, the King of the Netherlands proposed a compromise border, but both the United States and Great Britain rejected it. 3 years after this map was published, in the Treaty of Washington, the U.S. and Britain came to an agreement. Interestingly, if the U.S. had accepted the king of Netherlands' proposal, they would have ended up with more land.



This map was probably printed in the late 1800s.

The Boston and Maine Railroad made it very easy to get to and from Maine. During the 1800s, it was very unpleasant to live in a city during the summer, so a lot of wealthy Bostonians and New Yorkers spent the season in rural Maine. Not only was Maine less hot than Boston and New York in the summer, it was safer. Until antibiotics were discovered, deadly epidemics overtook large cities which were far more overcrowded than today.

Interaction: How do you think Maine's summer residents affected our state's history? (created a large tourist economy, increased land values and prices)



By the time this map was made during the 1930s, Maine had been established as a tourist destination.

Interaction: You're not going to find roads on this map of Maine. You won't even find many cities—Gorham, for example, is missing. What do you think Maine's "Recreation Map" DOES show? (trails, mountains, lakes, rivers)

Interaction: So what activities did tourists come to Maine for? (mostly outdoor activities: hunting, fishing, hiking, canoeing, skiing, etc).

Interaction: Can anyone give me an example of how Maine being a tourist destination has affected you or your family?

Activity Transition

I have a booklet about Maine history for everybody to take home, but first we have to finish them. After everyone gets a book, we'll open to the first page and start by reviewing some of the important words we need to know.