



The Interrupted Forest: A History of Maine's Wildlands

Neil Rolde

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More than half of Maine has never been settled and lies in what is called the Unorganized Territories, millions of acres of quasi-wilderness. Add to this the thousands of farms that have grown back to woods since the Civil War, and you have the most forested state, percentage wise, in the United States. But the "uninterrupted forest" that Henry David Thoreau first saw in the 1840s was never exactly uninterrupted, for loggers had cut it severely even before the Concord iconoclast's trip, settlers had gnawed into it, and the Indians, much earlier, had left their mark.

This is the story of these lands, wild then and, in many places, wild still, and the humans who used them and shaped them and fought over them. It is a story that starts in the present with the current controversies over land sales, clear-cutting and spraying, proposals for a gigantic National Park, the future of the pulp and paper and lumber industries, and no less than a secession movement in Northern Maine, and then seeks to answer the question: "How did this extraordinary region come into being?"

We go deep into geologic time to understand the land and the trees that grow on it, and then come the stories of people and events that have shaped it further: Native Americans, French, English, Puritans, settlers, loggers, speculators, great proprietors, surveyors, soldiers, squatters, industrialists, game poachers, conservationists, philosophers, artists, writers, sportsmen (and women), nature lovers, property rightists, preservationists, hermits, mystics, and picturesque characters of every stripe that have created and still create their own legends. Here is the background to see the Maine Woods—its wildlands—in perspective.

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