

**REPORT OF AN EXPLORATION
AND SURVEY OF THE TERRITORY
ON THE AROOSTOOK RIVER,
DURING THE SPRING AND
AUTUMN OF 1838**

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Report of an Exploration and Survey of the Territory on the Aroostook River, During the Spring and autumn of 1838 by E. Holmes

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E. HOLMES

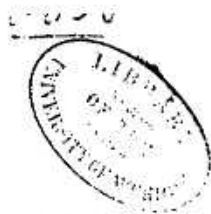
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SPRING AND AUTUMN
OF
1838.

By *E. S. Kil*
E. S. HOLMES.

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1839.



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STATE OF MAINE.

IN BOARD OF INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS, }
April 23, 1838. }

ORDERED, That the Land Agent is hereby authorized and empowered to cause an exploration and survey of the Aroostook River and its tributary waters the ensuing year, by some suitable person with a particular reference to the settlement of that country and for a water communication between the Penobscot and Aroostook and Fish Rivers.

LAND OFFICE, }
May 1st, 1838. }

To EZEKIEL HOLMES, Esq. of Winthrop.

Sir:—Pursuant to the above order of the Board of Internal Improvements, you are authorized and requested to select suitable assistants, and proceed as soon as practicable in the above mentioned exploration and survey, which you will finish in such a manner as in your opinion may best promote the interest of the State. You will make a reconnaissance of the Sebois River and ascertain the practicability of a water communication between this river and La Pompique, also between the Little Machias and Fish Rivers, and at such other points on the Aroostook between the St. John and Penobscot Rivers, as you may deem advisable. You will examine the geology and mineralogy of the country, and present in your Report a topographical account of the same—describing the streams, mill sites, mountains, ponds, bogs, &c.; the growth, quality and extent of different soils, and in what direction it will be advisable to open roads and the facilities for making the same. You will notice the climate, in what it differs from the settled parts of the State—the adaptation of that region for particular products—the facilities for boating, and the transportation of lumber, and all such other particulars as you may deem valuable. You are requested to return specimens of minerals and soils to this office with localities designated, and interesting specimens of natural history, such as fossils, bones, horns, shells, plants, seeds, &c., when the same can be done without much inconvenience.

ELIJAH L. HAMLIN, Land Agent.

To the House of Representatives:

In compliance with the request of the House of Representatives of this date, I herewith lay before it, "the Report of Doct. Holmes, upon an Agricultural Survey of the Aroostook, for the year 1838."

JOHN FAIRFIELD.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, }
March 21, 1839. }

REPORT.

PART I.

To the Board of Internal Improvements for the State of Maine.

It was thought advisable, the better to fulfil the intentions of the Board of Internal Improvements as expressed in the foregoing orders, to take two different views of the country. One when it was under the influence of the abundance of water in the spring of the year, and the other when under the influence of the frosts and partial drought of autumn. In an agricultural point of view, one could much better judge of the nature and capacity of the soil, and the general capabilities of the country, by examining its features during these two seasons, than by a single view of it in midsummer, when every thing is green and flourishing.

Accordingly, on the receipt of your orders, I repaired to Bangor and made arrangements for the expedition.

In the spring, I was accompanied by Messrs. J. Chace and J. Simmons, as batteau men, and Joe Tomer to manage the birch. Capt. R. Smithwick volunteered to accompany us gratuitously, being

desirous of examining the natural history of that region.

In the autumn, I was accompanied by J. Simons and Prince Thomas, as boat-men, and J. Babcock in the birch. Mr. S. A. Jewett, of Pittston, also went with us as assistant.

On my arrival at Bangor, I found the Surveyor General fitting out a company to the same section of the country, for the purpose of lotting out Townships No. 10 and 12, 5th Range on the Aroostook river, and we concluded to put our forces together, and proceed in company under the direction of Capt. Parrot.

Our boats and supplies left Old Town on the 21st of May, and we took stage to Mattawamkeag Point, in order to meet them there and proceed up the Penobscot, it being our design to go up the Sebois, a branch of the Penobscot, carry across the portage into La Pompique, and thence down the Aroostook to the place of destination, viz: No. 10, there make a general depot for our supplies, and each party divide off to perform their respective duties.

Desultory observations on improving the navigation of the Penobscot River.—Reconnoissance of the La Pompique, and portage thence to the Sebois.—Reconnoissance of the Little Machias River, and the portage thence to the Eagle Lakes.

In order to render the Penobscot river safe and easy for boating, two things are necessary;—either to canal from Bangor to the Lakes above, or to

create slack water navigation by means of a series of dams and locks. The latter is much more feasible and economical. The existing obstacles which present themselves to the present navigation of this river, are, the "rips," which are occasioned principally by loose boulders of rocks—and the "falls," occasioned by the occurrence of ledges crossing its bed and intercepting its waters. As a general thing, there is an abundance of water throughout the year for the ordinary purposes of boating in light batteaus, but not always enough to run large quantities of logs and heavy lumber.

The first most important tributary to this noble river, is the **Piscataquis**, which enters it at right angles on the western side, thirty-six miles above the city of **Bangor**. The dam and lock at the mouth of this stream, erected by the enterprise of **Mr. Miller**, if I mistake not, demonstrate the utility of such improvements; and the practicability of them as adapted to these waters, is fairly tested by the ease and safety with which boats and rafts descend or ascend the falls at this place, once so difficult to navigate. Between **Bangor** and **Mattawamkeag Point**, no particular examination was made.

The **Mattawamkeag** enters the **Penobscot** on the east side, sixty miles above **Bangor**.

The point formed by the junction of these rivers was not long ago the site of a large Indian village. It is an elevated alluvial plain, and commands three views of the two rivers,—viz: up and down the