

## CHAPTER II LAKES OF THE ALLAGASH REGION

The ALLAGASH REGION LAKES, southwest of the Fish River Chain, are located primarily in Aroostook and Piscataquis Counties.

LONG LAKE, located in T11 R13 and uppermost of the Allagash Region lakes, was famous for Depot Farm, a supply center for Allagash loggers when flour sold for 10c per pound (1882) and potatoes for 25c a peck. The center was for some time under the management of "a man named Johnson and his Amazonian wife" according to Maine historian Lucius Hubbard.<sup>4</sup>

Among the early sportsmen who stayed at the famous Allagash Camp on Long Lake was a rivalry to kill the "King of the Allagash," a gigantic bull moose which was usually victorious because of an antler spread of 70 inches and an antler blade as broad as a shovel.

On one occasion Judson Bilhorn, son of a renowned railroad magnate, was a guest at the Camp. Judson was no hunter. He did not even like to kill. His biggest pleasure was to go into the woods and there proceed to sing or yodel. One mild October night, in the full of the hunter's moon, he was restless in camp. Dressing, he took a canoe, paddled to a desirable place, beached the boat, and sang to the wilderness in complete satisfaction.

Suddenly he realized that there was a response to his musical notes: a hoarse, gruff "boom." Believing that he might have been mistaken, he continued his lyrics, but did stoop to pick up his gun. Then he saw the King. Bilhorn froze. Slightly thawing, he raised his gun and fired. The King continued to approach. Bilhorn scrambled up a scrub cedar. Coincidentally, the King lifted the cedar with Bilhorn in its top. The moose tossed the tree in such a way that it landed upon a high ledge. Then, unable to get his foe, the moose stomped and tore the ground, enraged.

All at once he raised his huge head. He had heard the call of another bull, close at hand. They met. They clashed. Bilhorn found himself cheering the King to victory, but the younger bull won. The King was dead. The new royalty barely noticed the presence of the hunter, and haughtily sauntered away. Bilhorn was saddened. He severed the slain beast's head and returned to camp, an acclaimed hero. Thus goes the tale according to George Cleveland in *Maine in Verse and Song*.

Another tale of triumph, this one by Lew Dietz, is that of Cassius Austin, game warden in the area. Warned of his unpopularity with a town gang, he shrugged off negative advice and put his heart into his job.

During his first year as warden, he tracked a band of poachers holed up in camp at the foot of Long Lake. "Cash" informed the four that he would take them to jail "come morning." He confiscated their snowshoes and their guns, and spent 12 hours of sleeplessness keeping guard over the quarry. Heavy-eyed, he escorted them in the morning to a phone, where he was told to release them with instructions to appear in court on a given day.

As might have been expected, none showed up in court, so Cash had to go after them again. Arriving at their hideout, Cash broke down the door they refused to open; entered; deftly dodged a hammer aimed at his head by receiving the blow on his arm; and with one arm useless, shot an uncooperative poacher through the foot. The men had to serve sentence for poaching, but no charge for assault was made by Cash who considered that they had shown only normal behavior under the circumstances.

UMSASKIS LAKE has opposing points of land which run out to meet each other as if, in a Malecite translation, "tied together like sausages." In 1969 the International Paper Company gave to the State of Maine one of its lots on the east shore of Umsaskis Lake, a peninsula in the very heart of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. During the first year, over 1,300 campers and canoeists used this campsite.

The Allagash Waterway, encompassing about 200,000 acres, includes Telos, Chamberlain, Eagle, and Churchill Lakes and the Allagash River north of the new dam at Churchill. It is the only state waterway facility in the nation to be included in the National Wild Rivers System. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas wrote this about the Wilderness in 1970: "There are no hundred miles

in America quite their equal. They will, I pray, be preserved for all time as a roadless, primitive waterway."

Many years ago a Maine analogy for endurance was "until it is bone dry in the Allagash." In 1969, the unlikelihood of such a catastrophe was further strengthened by the rebuilding of a dam at CHURCHILL LAKE to replace one that had controlled the flowage for industrial purposes on the Allagash River for over a century. The old dam had disintegrated in 1957, and by 1968 a 42-mile stretch of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway did not have sufficient water to float a canoe. Industrialism on the lake had meanwhile turned to recreationalism.

Churchill Lake was first known as the Allagaskwigamook, Abenaki for "at the bark cabin lake." It was later named for the Nathaniel Churchill family. Its position is nearly dead center of what in 1920 was described as the largest tract of pine timber in the State or possibly in the world. In former days it was the upper limit of Moosehead country and the terminal of the sporting world in Maine. Whitecaps are common to the lake, and waves have reached a height of 15 feet. In some places, the three-mile lake is a mere two miles wide.

The first settler on Lake Churchill was named Chase, a name perpetuated in Chase's Carry, below the dam, at the foot of the lake.

Lumber was moved from Churchill through Eagle and Chamberlain into Telos; then down various ponds and streams that fed into the West Branch of the Penobscot River, and thence to Bangor. The new dam impounds waters of Churchill and Eagle Lakes, and assures adequate canoeing water in periods of droughts.

The community known as Churchill Dam, named for the dam built in 1925 by the Great Northern Paper Company in cooperation with the Madawaska Company, was the inspiration of Helen Hamlin when she wrote *Nine Mile Bridge*, in which she mentions the Churchill Lake boarding house and the fact that she was the first woman schoolteacher at the lake community.

SPIDER LAKE, known also as Allagaskwigamooksis and as Macannamac, "father, or source, of the waters," or "swampy forests," has also been termed "the Geneva of Maine," so closely does it resemble that Swiss lake.

A 15-foot-high ledge of rocks on the southern shore, one point of which extends into the lake from a perpendicular pile of corrugated stone topped by spruce, is covered by water except in the dry season.

At the base, deep subterranean cavities, made by the action of the waters and worn to a delicate smoothness, lure many adventurers. The interiors are damp and gloomy, have slimy walls, give forth a mournful echo of slapping water, and are totally weird. In the labyrinth of caves, anyone easily becomes lost. The waters are dark and apparently deep.

Several mountains are near the lake, to the north and the northeast. Ten mountain peaks have been reflected simultaneously in Spider Lake, which often lowers to only 18 feet deep during summer months, resulting in poor fishing conditions. High up on the lake is Bishop's Cove, a favorite location for deer hunting.

Spider Lake lies in Benedict Arnold territory, and he was reportedly the first to explore it, in 1775, while on an expedition into Canada for General Schuyler. With Arnold was a young man destined to later become the nation's Vice-President, Aaron Burr. One of their old bayonets, half eaten by rust, was located in possession of the secretary of the Megantic Fish and Game Club in 1888.

McMinn Island, in Spider Lake, is named for a recluse from the Confederate Army, Major William McMinn, who once had a cabin on the island's shore.

ALLAGASH LAKE has peculiar caves not far from the shoreline. Bats inhabit the gloomy recesses, several hundred feet under a mountain. The lake is headwaters of Maine's first wilderness waterway.

Traffic on this water is restricted to canoes only. No outboard motors are permitted, mufflers are mandatory on chain saws used in the general area, tree cutting is restricted, and no airplane landings are allowed. Observance of these restrictions allows close study on togue and brook trout fisheries.

The name "Allagash" means "place of the hunting camp," or "birch cabin camp," or "camp on lake shore," depending upon the writer. A second name is Wallagash, Abenaki for "bark cabin" or "birch bark shelter."

At one time caribou were plentiful in the area. According to Joe Polis, who, with Joe Attean, was a guide made famous by Thoreau in his *The Maine Woods*, the decrease is attributed to the fact that the creatures "no likum stump. When he sees that, he scared." Joe was doubtlessly referring to the abundance of dri-ki along the shoreline.



Sawmills showing B.&A. Railroad Station, Eagle Lake Mills, Maine.



Moose, attentive to the arias of Judson Bilhorn.



*Memorial to Arnold's Quebec Expedition at Cold Spring, Eustis, Maine.*



*B. and A. Station, Millinocket, Me.*

*B.&A. Station, Millinocket, Maine.*

A proposal in 1969 to close the Allagash to fishing and to utilize it for the propagation of its toge had not been accepted at the time of this writing (1972).

Just south of Lake Allagash is SHALLOW LAKE, which has a mud bottom, bountiful hackmatack along its shores, and conspicuous gas bubbles.

EAGLE LAKE, in Piscataquis County, together with Churchill, a total stretch of 18 miles, forms the central link of the Allagash Region Lakes. Its numerous bays and islands have been used through the centuries by trapper, hunter, camper, and fisherman. In the 1890's, sportsmen were already so plentiful in the area that hunters' bullets were a menace.

Half hidden in the tangled underbrush beside Eagle Lake is a loose-jointed shed, housing two rusting, full-sized locomotives, all that remains of one of Maine's most unusual railroads. In 1926, a Canadian timber operator, "King" Lacroix, failing to come to terms with the Bangor and Aroostook R.R., daringly built his own line to carry logs from Eagle Lake to the Penobscot watershed and thence to mills at Millinocket. All rails and rolling stock, including the heavy locomotives, were hauled over a lumber road from Lac Frontiere by means of a device that revolutionized work in the Maine woods early in the 1900's, the A. O. Lombard Log Hauler, affectionately called the "Mary Ann." It was the first successful caterpillar tread vehicle and the forerunner of U.S. Army war tanks. In 1972, there were three of these haulers left in Maine, two at museums in Ashland and Patten and one in the Thomas Point Beach Americana Museum in East Brunswick.

The Lombard, sometimes pulling a train of 20 loaded sleds of pulpwood, had come to the region when the tramway was still in use. That ingenious structure, like a traveling sidewalk, carried wood across a 3,000-foot interval between Eagle and Chamberlain Lakes. It had a series of two-wheeled dollies bolted every ten feet to the circulating 8,000-foot cable, all powered by a steam engine. The tramway could move 500,000 feet of pulpwood per day.

The Lacroix railroad operated for only four years, terminating its runs in 1930. By that time there was no wood left to be cut in the area, and the locomotives were driven into the shed where they now rest, a "Ghost Train."

Eagle Lake is 13 miles long and one to three miles wide. It is supposedly the farthest northern point that Thoreau ever reached in



Maine. The cone-shape peak of Soper Mountain guards its northern extremity, in which direction a seven-mile-long arm reaches forth. Although the white-headed eagle is chiefly credited with having donated its name to the lake, there is another historical legend that the original name of the lake was Pongokwahemook, "place of the woodpecker." Moose are plentiful along its shores and provide the basis for many tall tales.

The washout of the enormous dam at the outlet of Churchill Lake in 1956 resulted in the water levels of both Churchill and Eagle Lakes being lowered considerably. Only the use of trucks kept intact the pulpwood drive down the Allagash. In earlier times the loss of these waterways would have been catastrophic to the lumbering industry in the Allagash Region.

A legendary character of the Eagle Lake environment was "Dirty Donald," an unsavory individual who lived and hunted in the region. On one trip in his later years, becoming weak and feeble on the trail, he was left behind by a sturdy companion and given a two-day supply of rations. Three weeks later he was found dead, lying on the floor of a little log cabin. Near him were pieces of wood with the bark gnawed off.

Guide Chief Red Eagle once told an amusing story about a particular hunting party in the region. According to him, one member had brought along a trunk weighing well over 100 pounds. Not until the journey's end were the contents revealed. To the amazement, amusement, and disgust of all, there in the wildest part of Maine, along with other articles were one full dress suit, one pair of patent leather pumps, and one tall silk hat.

Two famous steamers at Eagle Lake were the *W. H. Marsh* and the *George A. Dugan*. Both were designed and built by O. A. Harkness, known as "The Admiral." He was a prime designer and builder of logging assistance boats and a master at keeping machinery going. Because the *Dugan* (1902) was one of his first, it was held highest in his affections. It took him just four months to complete the 71-foot-long boat with a beam of 20 feet, two single engines, and 150 horsepower. She lasted for ten years, a lengthy service period for such a craft.

To assist the *Dugan*, in 1903 he built the *Marsh*. She towed boom to the Tramway and endured a rather ignominious end. She was partly frozen into the lake one autumn, and to protect her engine the stern was cut off just behind the paddle box. The forward part,



*Chief Henry Red Eagle, Algonquin Tribe.*



*The O. A. Harkness towing boom of pulpwood on Pemadumcook Lake.*

*Courtesy of Great Northern Paper Company*

containing the engine, was dragged up onto the shore. Came spring. Came thaw. And away floated the stern of the *Marsh*.

Harkness also developed the "boom-jumper," a power workboat for use on headwater lakes. It was useful when the waters became clogged with pulpwood and one had to get inside the boom. A skilled driver would head the jumper directly at the barrier, with throttle wide open. The boat would rise in the bow and slide over the boom in one big leap. Cobb Brothers of Brewer, Maine, are credited with the development of a more complicated and quite possibly more efficient boat of this type, in 1916; but the original idea stemmed from Harkness' boom-jumper.

CHEMQUASABAMTICOOK LAKE, now called ROSS, in Piscataquis County, means in Abenaki "stream of a large lake," or "where there is a large lake together with a river."

CHAMBERLAIN LAKE may have been named for an unfortunate man once lost on its shores or possibly for a local family. Its Indian names, Apmoojenegamook and Baamcheenungamook, mean "lake that is crossed." Various other Indian names have been assigned to the lake, including Pomogine Cammoe, a name often used; but all indicate a sense of "lake crosswise" of a much traveled route.

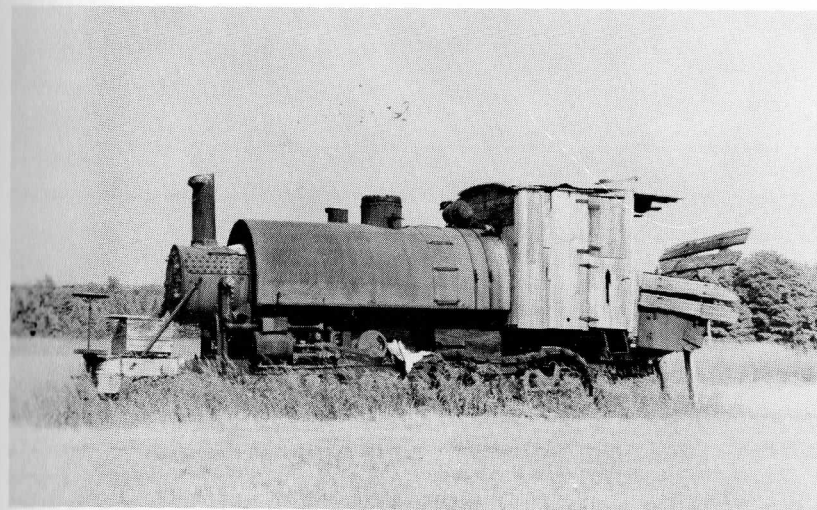
Chamberlain, three miles wide, 15 miles long, standing 1,134 feet above sea level, has a white pebbly beach and is the only body of water in the established Allagash Wilderness Waterway where a boat other than a canoe may be used. In 1905, Chamberlain was designated as the second largest lake in Maine. It is exceedingly deep, has several islands, and is generally considered as rarely being calm. A few years ago it had a run of smelts, mostly during the day, 50 miles from where they had been stocked in Ross Lake flowage. This fact proved the theory that smelts do not always spawn in the same tributary in which they are born.

The shores of Chamberlain Lake are considered unattractive, yet many pleasing campsites exist beside the lake. By 1930, the area had become the center of Maine's logging industry and even in the 1960's several paper companies still operated in the vicinity. Although not highly settled, neither is the location a total wilderness.

Rock formations resembling coral and a supply of serpentine, from which asbestos is made, are found in Chamberlain. The natural condition of serpentine is a shiny green surface which is rough and



*North East Carry, Maine, transporting canoes to the West Branch of the Penobscot.*

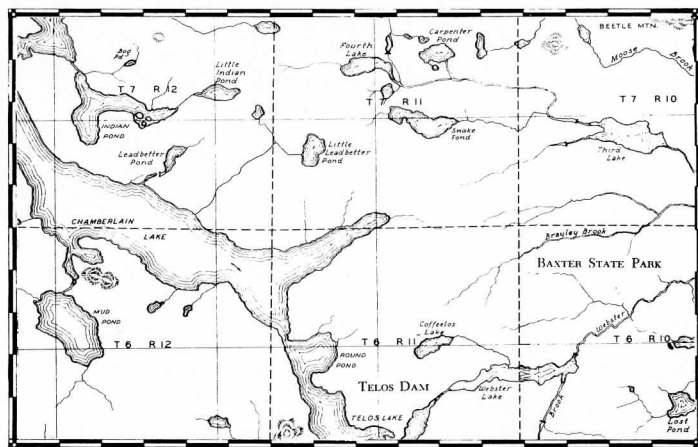


*The old steam Lombard Log Hauler in a field near Presque Isle was used in the early 1900's at Fish Pond.*

appears to be in layers, tinged with a black mica-like substance. Sometimes a reddish, iron-like section appears to infiltrate it.

Chamberlain Lake is a fisherman's haven in winter for togue, cusk, and perch, even though the last ten miles have to be traveled by snowmobile. The Nugent Camps are a popular resort for these tourists.

TELOS LAKE played an eventful part in Maine history. David Pingree of Bridgton, Maine, by a quirk of fate became the owner of some undeveloped Maine timberland. He hired Eben Coe to investigate the land, and was advised to acquire even more of the pine growth in the Allagash Region. Eventually, Pingree was faced by



*Locale involved in the Telos War.*

the same problem of other northern woodsmen, that all Allagash waters flow north into the St. John Watershed, so all timber had to be sent into Canadian mills and ports.

A few previous operators had met a prohibitive cost of booming logs down Eagle and Chamberlain Lakes in summer and hauling them out in winter to East Branch Penobscot waters "where American logs belonged." Indeed, Indian legends had hinted that in far-off times the waters had actually flowed south, as a few geographical gorges and valleys gave evidence.

Therefore, Coe decided that with little effort a change of course might be effected. A dam was built at the foot of Telos Lake, the true head of Chamberlain; and another at the outlet of Chamberlain. But a similar idea had already been formulated among the Kennebec River lumbermen who had visions of a canal via West Branch and Moosehead. Both groups were eager for the splendid virgin pine. On behalf of the Kennebec lumberman, Messrs. Boyd and Moulton petitioned the Legislature for an act to incorporate, and the Board of Internal Improvements agreed to its feasibility.

Then the Penobscot (Bangor) and the Kennebec groups began to compete in earnest. For some unknown reason, the fine Kennebec plan was turned down by the Legislature. Soon, however, two Bangor lumbermen, Strickland and Roberts, took matters into their own hands, bought land in T 6 R 11, and started dams at Chamberlain and Telos, and cuts at Telos and Webster. The Chamberlain dam was twice a failure, so Pingree offered to build a third dam, which turned out to be a success.

Roberts, whose canal was worthless without Pingree's dam at Chamberlain, approached Pingree, whose dam was worthless without Roberts' canal. They discussed tolls and fees, disagreed, and Roberts sold out to a Mr. Dwinel. This act split the Bangor factions even farther apart. The new buyer insisted on a high toll of ultimately 50c per 1,000 feet of lumber and accused Pingree of contemplating illegal driving by force to avoid the high toll. Pingree, naturally, denied any such intent. Dwinel then stationed armed men to protect his property and the loggers had no choice but to pay, which after all was cheaper than the costs involved in the Canadian route. Apparently Dwinel had won, but not for long.

Pingree and his followers took the issue to the State Legislature. Finally, a compromise was handed down. Dwinel might incorporate and set toll at 20c per 1,000 feet. If he refused this decision, Pingree might organize and incorporate the Telos Lake and Webster Pond Sluicing Company with free canal service. Dwinel gave in. The Telos War, the "Battle of the Ditch," was over.<sup>5</sup>

Four-mile-long Telos Lake has been called Pataquongamis, Abenaki for "little round lake." It also has a Greek connotation

of "far, the end." Some guides have said that the name really means Tea-los, "without tea," to correspond with nearby Lake Coffee-los. According to a State vote of 1966, it represents one extremity of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway Park, a stretch of 85 miles to the confluence of the Allagash River and West Twin Brook. The lake is half a mile wide and 914 feet above sea level. Its northern shore is rocky; its southern one, sandy.

Telos Cut, the canal constructed during the Telos War, is a little under one mile in length and four rods in width. It originally was named "Shepherd Boody's Cut," for the man who executed it. When the gates were raised, in the spring of 1842, the water went surging down the hillside, tearing everything in its path and filling Webster Lake with mud and debris for 25 rods offshore. It was more of a wild mountain torrent than a canal such as those already constructed at Stillwater and Piscataquis. Maine historian Louis Hatch claims to have written the only true story of the Telos Cut.

That same spring, Samuel Braley took down a drive of 2,500,000 pine, but no charter existed until 1847 when a toll of 25c per 1,000 feet was established for all users of the cut.

A 1969 proposal to close Telos Lake to fishing and to utilize it for the propagation of its togue, was still in abeyance at the beginning of 1972.

In 1971 a plea to end Kennebec log drives was initiated on the grounds that they were detrimental to boating, to fishing, and to the welfare of the lake. Such pleas were in conjunction with the surging prominence of ecology and pollution awareness within the State, and the 1971 State Legislature was instrumental in securing a promise from the Scott Paper Company to terminate its log drives on the Kennebec River by 1976, a promise kept, in fact, in 1972.

Other lakes in this Allagash Region are FIFTH MUSQUA-COOK, Abenaki for "muskrat place" or "birch bark place," which since 1927 has become filled with vegetation and is now almost totally bushes and bog spruce; PRIESTLY, considered one of the prettiest lakes in the area and named for an owner of a woods depot; CLEAR, shallow and fertile for cranberries; CLIFF, with its colorful ledges; HAYMOCK, which has an Indian name of

Nahmajimeskicongomoc, Abenaki for "fishing place at deadwater lake," and also Pongokwahemook, "woodpecker place"; HERON, which in 1968 was newly dammed to provide recreational canoeing; HAY, which Hubbard, in 1882, termed "a brook"; and MATTAGAMON, east of Baxter State Park, a lake beloved by Thoreau. It is now base for the new High Adventure program inaugurated in the spring of 1971 by The Boy Scouts of America, and the 4,000,000 acres are called the Maine-Mattagamon Wilderness Base. Facilities include mail service, a first aid station, and ten bedrooms. The tenting area has garbage disposal units and fire rings.<sup>6</sup>