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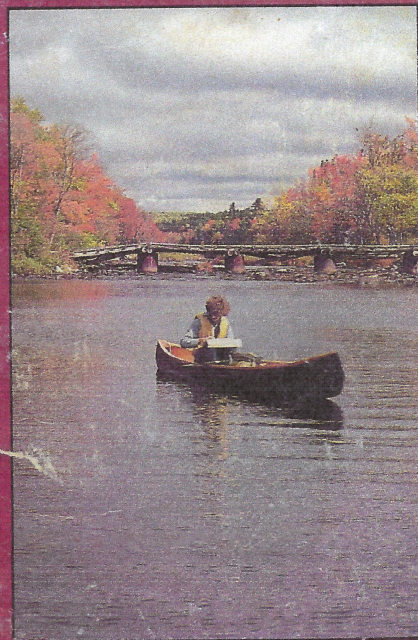
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MAINE GEOGRAPHIC

Canoeing

Volume 1
**Coastal &
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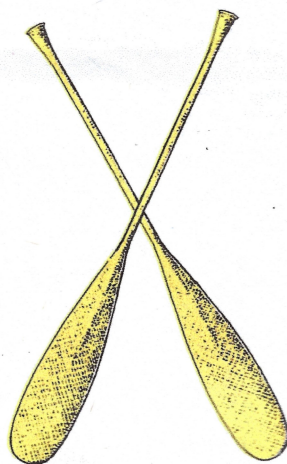


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CANOEING

Volume 1
Coastal &
Eastern Rivers



Text by Zip Kellogg



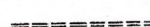





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Introduction

Few things on this planet are as fine as its rivers. They are ever changing yet they seem to remain the same; they are alive and lively. They form a "road" network unknown to many 20th century travelers, yet they have been the primary arteries of migration and commerce for thousands of years. If you are willing to take the time to explore and to question, the rewards are many. Get to know a land's rivers and you will discover that land's true self. The waterways of Maine are its lifeblood. Get to know them and you'll really get to know Maine.

These river vignettes do not pretend to be definitive sketches. They are simply an effort to expose modern day river travelers to the technical difficulties of canoeing or kayaking particular rivers and streams and to provide historic background for each watercourse.

This book will not assure your safe journey down a river. No book will. Only experience, sound judgement, and precautionary safety measures can do that. The intent of this book is to heighten your awareness and knowledge of the rivers you travel.

Keep in mind that conditions on rivers often change unexpectedly. Be prepared to encounter freshly fallen trees across a stream, new dams or breached dams, and water levels that pose vastly different problems than those described in this book.

Every effort has been made to assure the accuracy of these river write-ups. But remember, the waterways are ever changing and you may come across some discrepancies. Part of the fun of paddling is making new discoveries. Don't just wander aimlessly down these rivers. Consider some of the questions they pose, as well as the human history, natural history and geography of the region. This guide is intended to better acquaint you with Maine rivers, to point out significant features and, particularly, to spark your own explorer's curiosity. Take it along on every trip.

Safety Tips

Before you leave for any canoe trip, review your safety checklist:

Water temperature Capsizes do occur, and usually when they are least expected. Hypothermia (loss of body heat resulting in abnormally low body temperature) represents a constant danger. Wetsuits are an excellent choice for springtime canoeing when water temperatures in the 40 to 50 degree range are common. Multiple layers of wool clothing are a reasonable alternative. A life jacket should be worn at all times.

Estimating water volume If a river is flowing over its normal banks, consider it uncanoeable. A river will flow easily through bushes and trees, but these same obstacles do not allow for safe passage by canoe.

Wind If wind is blowing water from the crest of waves, consider boating unsafe.

Equipment Make sure your craft is equipped with safety lines, spare paddles, and emergency rescue and first aid equipment, also extra clothing packed in waterproof containers should accompany each canoeist in the boat. Each canoeist should be mindful of his or her swimming ability and try to maintain a good physical condition.

Support group It's wise to have a support group of at least three craft, particularly when paddling whitewater. Each group should have at least one experienced paddler who knows the river well and who is experienced in rescue and emergency technique.

Dennys River

If you want to sharpen your skill at running whitewater, try the Dennys River. Its gentle, intermittent rapids present you with plenty of opportunities for practice. And frequent pools and deadwaters will give you time to think about your techniques as well as observe the wildlife around you. It's a fine day trip (17 miles) in the heart of Washington County. The car shuttle is fairly direct via Routes 1 and 214.

The trip starts beneath the bridge in downtown Meddybemps. Before you put in, wander upstream to take in a local sight or two, such as Meddybemps Lake. The lake is large and sprinkled with islands. It is surrounded by low terrain and very nearly serves as tributary to the St. Croix River. An impoundment prevents the artificially raised waters of the lake from spilling into Stony Brook and, subsequently, into the St. Croix River. "Meddybemps" is probably derived from the Indian word "medembess'm," meaning "horned pout," or from a similar word, meaning "plenty of alewives." In any case, the lake has been known for its fish for many years.

The dam is regulated primarily for the well known Atlantic Salmon fishery on the lower Dennys River. Below are some steep rapids to the remains of a hydropower plant, whose gutted innards and turbine are clearly exposed. The plant was abandoned in 1971. Shingle, lath, stave and grist mills once operated here.

Push off into the riffles below the bridge. Soon you'll enter a six-mile stretch of meandering flatwater. The chorus of frogs can be deafening here. Wildlife is abundant. Abundant too are cat-o'-nine-tails, water lilies and other aquatic plants.

The incongruous school bus perched high on the right bank marks a change in the character of the river. Just below are the remains of **Gilman Dam**. The site is an interesting one, but it won't interfere with your passage. The Dennysville Lumber Company at one time used this dam to release large quantities of water to make it easier to float its logs to market in Dennysville.

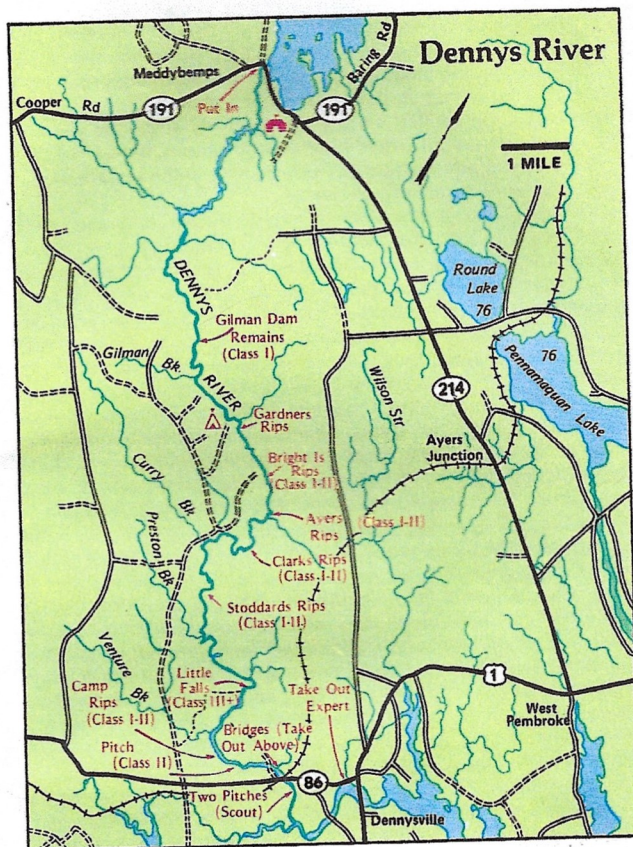
From the dam to Dennysville, the river winds its way through low, hilly terrain typical of Washington County, alternating between rips, riffles and placid water. Except for Little Falls, all rapids are rated Class I or II and average several hundred yards in length. None is particularly difficult. From Gilman Dam, they include: **Gilman Rips**, **Gardner's Rips**, **Bright Island Rips**, **Ayer's Rips**, **Clark's Rips**, **Stoddard's Rips**, **Little Falls** and **Camp Rips**.

An esker, known as the "Whaleback," follows the river along Stoddard's Rips. The steep east bank of the river makes this place particularly prominent and marks the approach to Little Falls. After successfully negotiating the numerous rips above the falls, you're bound to enjoy this Class III water. At most water levels, you'll be able to see a ledge extending into the river from the left bank just before you reach the falls. After you come around a sharp left bend, the falls spread before you like an open fan and then drop abruptly into a big pool. The pool can be a welcome respite if you've had problems with the haystacks.

To this point, the river has coursed relatively wild country. But signs of human activity increase as you approach tidewater.

Not far below Camp Rips is a Class II pitch where the river runs over a ledge, just above the two bridges, undoubtedly the best take out point. Only expert canoeists should venture beyond the two bridges. If you want to paddle further downstream carry left around the bridges along a trail through the woods several yards up from the river's edge.

The first bridge is Maine Central Railroad property and part of the Bangor-Eastport line. The second bridge is part of Route 86. Just below the bridges are two difficult pitches, runnable by skilled canoeists only at low water level. Scout each pitch carefully. The



current here is unrelenting and neither pitch can be lined easily.

Rapids diminish below the pitches, but continue all the way to Cathance Stream. The stream, a major tributary, enters on the right. Nearby are some lovely high sand banks lined with old white pines. In season the banks are also lined with anglers fishing for Atlantic salmon.

Just before the first bridge at Dennysville are the remains of the Lincoln Dam and mills. A sawmill, grist mill and machine shop have operated on this site at various times. Today only a few stones remain. The length of the rapids below the dam depends on the tide. Low tide makes for more whitewater here, but also a long, miserable, muddy walk at the take out point. High tide makes for a brief run and a more tolerable take out.

Dennysville was settled in the 1780s by the Lincolns, Kilbys and Hobarts who hailed from Hingham, Massachusetts. Their descendants still live here today. The Lincoln Sparrow was named after one of the Lincoln family members who accompanied John James Audubon on his trip to Labrador in 1833. Dennysville was once a bustling shipbuilding and trading center and the remains of old wharves are still noticeable today just upstream of the modern Route 1 bridge.