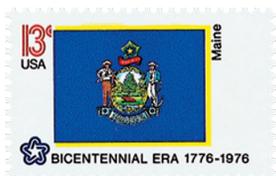


## This Day in History... March 15, 1820

# Maine Admitted to the Union

On March 15, 1820, Maine became the 23rd state in the United States. The decision ended nearly two centuries of rule by Massachusetts and recognized the growing population and independence of the northern district.

Long before Europeans arrived, the land that is now Maine was home to Native peoples who lived along its forests, rivers, and rugged coastline. Most belonged to tribes of the Abenaki and Etchemin peoples, part of the larger Algonquian language family. These communities relied on fishing, hunting, and farming. Rivers such as the Kennebec and Penobscot provided transportation routes and food. The tribes also traded with other Native groups throughout the Northeast. However, they often faced attacks from their long-time rivals, the Iroquois confederacy farther to the west.



*The Maine flag pictures the coat of arms, which includes a moose, pine tree, farmer, seaman, and the North Star.*

Sir John Popham, sent the explorer George Weymouth to survey the coast. His favorable report encouraged them to organize a colony.

In 1607 English settlers founded the Popham Colony near the mouth of the Kennebec River. The settlement struggled through a harsh winter. When Popham died and supplies ran short, the colonists abandoned the colony and returned to England in 1608. Despite its failure, the colonists built the Virginia, the first ocean-going ship constructed by English settlers in North America.

English settlement slowly expanded afterward. In 1622 the Council for New England granted Gorges and John Mason a large territory covering parts of present-day Maine and New Hampshire. One of the earliest permanent English settlements appeared near today's Saco, Maine in 1623.

In 1629 the partners divided their holdings. Mason took land farther south, while Gorges retained control of Maine. Gorges established a colonial government in 1636. In 1642 he chartered Georgeana, now the town of York, Maine, which became the first incorporated English city in what is now the United States.



*Stamp pictures a moose, the state animal, and a Portland lighthouse.*



*Statehood stamp picturing The Lighthouse at Two Lights, Maine, by Edward Hopper.*

Some historians believe that Leif Erikson and other Norse explorers may have reached the coast of Maine around the year 1000 while traveling from Greenland to North America. Clear historical records begin later. In 1498 the Italian explorer John Cabot, sailing for England, explored parts of the North American coast that may have included Maine.

During the 1500s and early 1600s, French explorers began visiting the region. Among them were Giovanni da Verrazzano in 1524 and Samuel de Champlain in 1604. Champlain carefully mapped the coast and named Mount Desert Island, the largest island along Maine's coast.

At the same time, English investors hoped to establish permanent settlements. Two wealthy promoters, Sir Ferdinando Gorges and



*Pictures the Maine state bird (chickadee) and flower (white pine cone and tassel).*

The region soon came under the influence of neighboring Massachusetts. In 1658 Maine was absorbed into the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Members of the Gorges family later challenged the arrangement, but Massachusetts eventually secured permanent control by purchasing their claim in 1677.

During the eighteenth century, Maine became a frontier in the struggle between Britain and France for control of North America. Fighting often occurred in northern New England during the French and Indian War. One notable event was the 1745 capture of the French

## This Day in History... March 15, 1820 continued

fortress at Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island. The attack was led by William Pepperrell, a merchant and military leader from Maine. The conflict ended in 1763 with the Treaty of Paris (1763), which transferred most French territory in North America to Britain.

Tensions between the American colonies and Britain soon followed. Residents of Maine protested British taxation policies before the American Revolutionary War began. In 1774 patriots in York destroyed a shipment of taxed tea in an event known as the York Tea Party.

The war brought hardship to many communities along the Maine coast. In October 1775 British warships attacked and burned the town of Falmouth, Maine, which is now the city of Portland. That same year, one of the earliest naval battles of the war took place near Machias, Maine. American colonists captured a British vessel in the Battle of Machias, often described as the first naval victory of the Revolution.



*The Maine state motto is "Dirigo," which is Latin for "I lead."*

Over time, however, residents grew dissatisfied with rule from Massachusetts. The state capital in Boston was far away, and Maine citizens complained that their roads, defense, and local concerns were often neglected. Support for independence increased after the War of 1812, when British forces occupied parts of eastern Maine.

In 1819 voters approved separation from Massachusetts. Congress admitted Maine as the 23rd state on March 15, 1820, as part of the Missouri Compromise, which balanced the admission of Maine as a free state with Missouri entering the Union as a slave state.

Maine's borders were not fully settled at first. A dispute with British Canada over the northern boundary led to the Aroostook War in 1839. Despite the name, no major battles occurred. US General Winfield Scott helped calm tensions. The border was finally established by the Webster–Ashburton Treaty in 1842.



*1934 National Parks Stamp featuring Acadia in Maine*

During the nineteenth century Maine's economy centered on lumber, shipbuilding, fishing, and trade. Its forests produced vast quantities of timber, while shipyards along the coast built vessels that sailed around the world.

In the twentieth century, paper mills, manufacturing, and tourism became important parts of the state's economy. Visitors were drawn to Maine's rocky coastline, lakes, and mountains. Today, industries such as forest products, fishing, agriculture, and tourism remain central to the state.

Maine is also known for its natural beauty and national parks. One of its most famous destinations is Acadia National Park, established in 1916 and located along the Atlantic coast. The park attracts millions of visitors each year who come to see its mountains, forests, and ocean views.



*Greetings from Maine issued for a rate increase later in 2002.*

Later in 1775, Benedict Arnold led an expedition through the Maine wilderness in an attempt to capture Quebec City from the British. The difficult march weakened his army, and the attack ultimately failed. In 1779 the British occupied Castine, Maine. An American attempt to drive them out, known as the Penobscot Expedition, ended in defeat.

After the Revolution ended in 1783, settlement in Maine increased rapidly. Many soldiers from Massachusetts received land grants in the region as payment for their service. Farmers and lumbermen moved north to take advantage of the abundant forests and farmland.



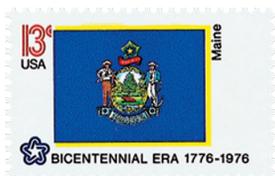
*Issued for the 200th anniversary of Maine statehood and pictures the painting Sea at Ogunquit (1914) by Edward Hopper.*

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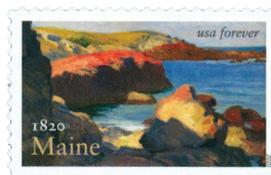
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