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New England Today
TRAVEL**MAINE**

The Patten Lumbermen's Museum | Patten, Maine

Located in northern Maine, The Patten Lumbermen's Museum richly explores a unique way of life for generations of Mainers.

Ian Aldrich · September 4, 2016 ·



★★★★★

5.00 avg. rating (86% score) - 1 vote

While on assignment recently for *Yankee* in northern Maine, I visited The Patten Lumbermen's Museum in Patten, Maine. This town of just a thousand people is not a place you stumble across. Up and up you go, past Portland and Augusta, past Bangor and even Millinocket until you reach a place unlike any other in New England.

In the shadow of Mt. Katahdin, this is the Maine of wilderness and lakes. It's where Henry David Thoreau traveled and wrote about; and where last month Burt's Bees founder, Roxanne Quimby, donated 87,500 acres to the federal government to be made into the country's newest national monument, Katahdin Woods & Waters. It's also where generations of Maine lumbermen made their living.

Maine's logging industry stretches back to 1600s, when early visitors felled the pine giants that dominated the forests. From these woods came the building blocks for a new nation: wood for homes and ships. In the late 19th century, Maine's paper industry took root and generations of men worked the forests to keep the big mills going. Each winter, teams of men set up camps to live and work. Through the bitter Maine winters they cut the trees, and then drove the logs down river once spring hit.

The story of this work, of the culture it spawned, and the evolutions it experienced and sometimes, weathered, is all fascinatingly captured at **The Lumbermen's Museum**, an institution founded in 1963 by Lore Rogers, the son of a lumberman, and Caleb Scribner, an artist and game warden. Photographs, videos, a treasure trove of old tools and a campus of buildings richly inform visitors of what life was like for generations of Mainers. Only 2,000 people stream through the museum's doors each year, but we suspect that over time, this place, which sits near the northern entry point to Maine's new national monument, will attract more visitors.

Here's a closer look at what you can expect to find should you visit.



The 1820 Camp replicates the simple living quarters Maine loggers called home during their winters in the woods in the early 19th century.



These buildings constructed without nails built with only an axe and froe. The bunk area was a common ground section covered with heavy straw for bedding.

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Inside the 1820 Camp and its "kitchen" area.
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By the early 20th century living conditions at the camps had improved substantially. Many of the housing quarters featured a separate bunk area with actual beds and a kitchen section, complete with a wood cookstove.

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Talking during meals at the logging camps was forbidden by the cooks. It wasted time, they reasoned, and camp cooks wanted their men to cycle through the meals as quickly as possible so they could clean up and move on to making the next round of food.

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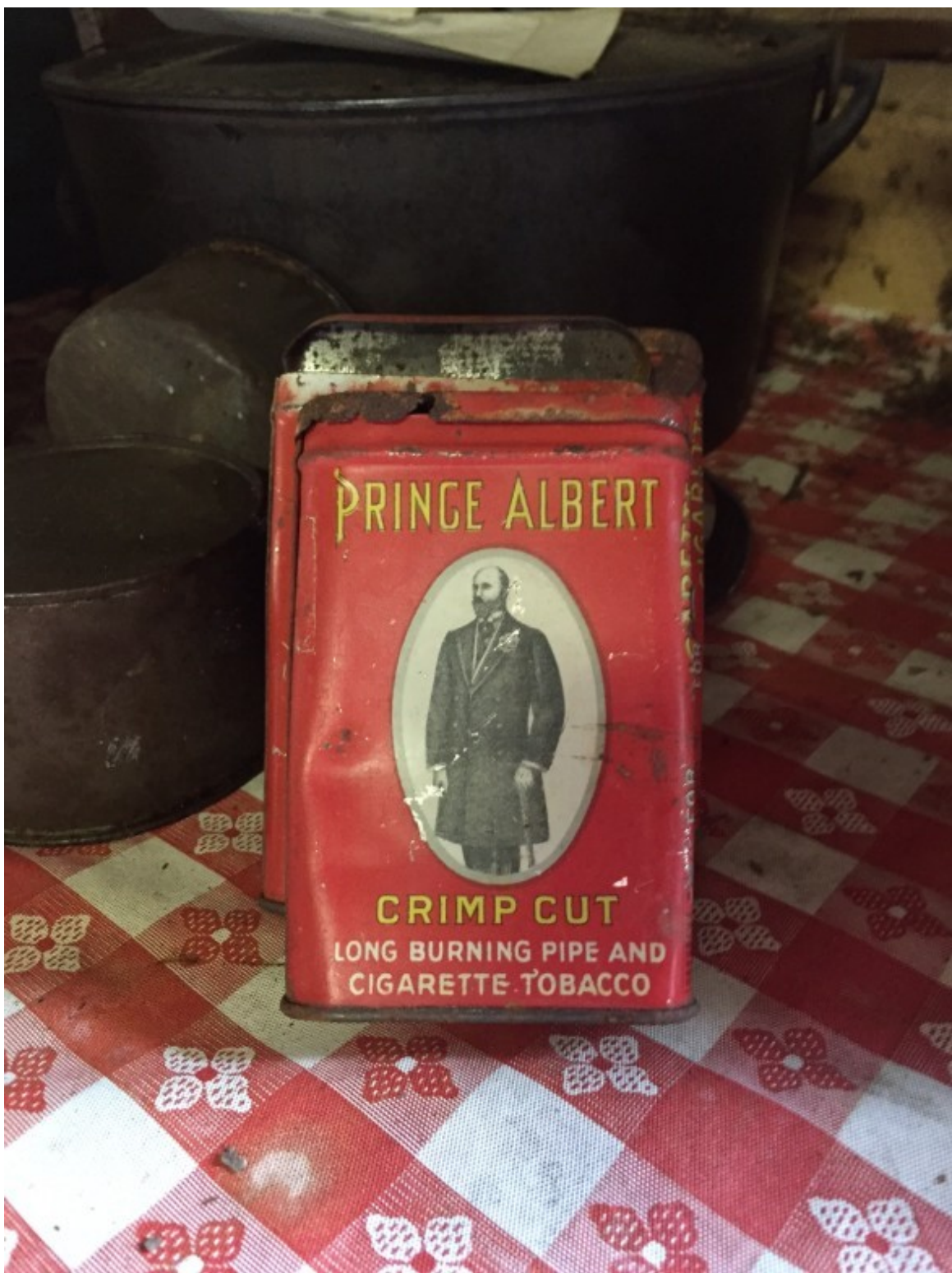
To keep warm when they weren't working, men often wore heavy bear skin coats like this one, which often weighed around 30 to 40 pounds.



Log driving was a dangerous line of work and to see old film clips of the crews navigating the logs and water is to watch something akin to a dance. Agility and coordination could be the difference between life and death. For some measure of safety we wore boots like these, which sported heavy spikes on the tread.



Cantdogs were essential tools for turning and handling logs in sawmills.
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This tin is like many of the tobacco tins lumbermen carried with them during the work day.

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In the evening hours, after supper, lumbermen filled their time playing games, writing letters, and creating folk art, like these spruce gum boxes. The boxes often featured intricate designs and poetry, with a sliding top to prevent the gathered spruce gum from falling out.

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The mechanization of the lumber industry eventually introduced chainsaws into the woods. Big machines, like this two man saw, could easily weigh more than fifty pounds.

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The Lombard Loghauler, which was invented in the early 1900s, represented a significant innovation for the logging industry. Invented by Alvin C. Lombard of Waterville, Maine, this piece of equipment, which ran on wood, freed loggers from relying on horses to haul sleds of logs out of the forests. Record books show that during one two-month stretch in 1907 a Lombard moved more than 3 million log feet, a work load that previously would have required 62 horses.

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Exploring the museum was a fascinating experience. Have you ever visited The Patten Lumbermen's Museum?

The Patten Lumbermen's Museum. 61 Shin Pond Rd., Patten. 207-528-2650; lumbermensmuseum.org



Comments

John October 19, 2019

Some one told me there is a picture of my husband who was there with Harry crooker , Brunswick. Maine re *Lombard_. John Trufant was the lowbed driver. Can you confirm that
Reply

Hollis March 3, 2019

My father, Ray Tozier's picture of him and his team of horses hauling a load of logs were featured at the museum.

Reply

Jim June 1, 2017

Been to the Museum five times. Beautiful museum in a beautiful region. Be sure to check out the Railroad Museum in nearby Oakfield.

Reply
