

READING GROUP GUIDE

Nine Mile Bridge
Three Years in the Maine Woods
Written by Helen Hamlin
Softcover, 282 pages, Nonfiction, Outdoors
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Helen Hamlin describes what was perhaps the last log drive on the Allagash River. What brought about the end of the drives? How were the logs transported to the mills after the drives and what was the effect of this on the North Woods?

What have been some of the major changes in the North Woods since the time Helen Hamlin wrote about it in the early 1940s?

Besides roads, what else has contributed to the ease in which people can visit the North Woods today?

How has a warden's life changed since Helen Hamlin's life as a warden's wife?

Besides the abandonment of the log drives, what other changes have occurred in the life of a logger and in the logging industry since the middle of the twentieth century?

Why does the Allagash Wilderness Waterway attract so many visitors?

What is there about the North Woods that attracts so much interest in land protection and preservation?

Recent studies have confirmed the presence of a breeding lynx population near Umsaskis and Long Lakes in the Allagash region. Why is this of so much public interest?

Visitors to the North Woods have long written about loons. What makes them so interesting and has motivated people to protect them? What threats do they face in the North Woods?

Helen Hamlin experienced a vast, lonely wilderness with little human habitation. How important is it to have the opportunity for that experience today? Should our state and nation continue to preserve wilderness areas?

READING LIST

Bennett, Dean. *Allagash: Maine's Wild and Scenic River*. Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 1994.

Describes through color photographs, pen-and-ink illustrations, and words the natural history of the Allagash River and its headwater lakes and streams. Includes a description of fall colors around Churchill Lake by Helen Hamlin.

Bennett, Dean B. *The Wilderness from Chamberlain Farm: A Story of Hope for the American Wild*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press/Shearwater Books, 2001.

A history of the Allagash region from the time of indigenous peoples to the present, with a special focus on changing attitudes toward the wildlands that led to the preservation of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. Provides an historic context in which Helen Hamlin's experience in this northern country may be viewed.

Dietz, Lew. *The Allagash*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968.

A fascinating history of the Allagash River region that provides insightful background for Helen Hamlin's account of her stay in the region.

Douglas, William O. *My Wilderness East to Katahdin*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1961. See chapter on Justice Douglas's Allagash trip taken in 1960 during the initial interest by the U.S. government in protecting the Allagash area.

Hubbard, Lucius L. *Woods and Lakes of Maine*. Boston, Mass.: Ticknor and Company, 1883. Reprint, Somersworth, N.H.: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1971.

Describes a sporting trip through the Allagash region more than a half century before Helen Hamlin's account. Foreword in the 1971 edition by Senator Edmund S. Muskie.

Jackson, Annette. *My Life in the Maine Woods*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1954, reprinted by Islandport Press, 2007.

Describes life on Umsaskis Lake as a warden's wife in the 1930s, several years before Helen Hamlin lived on the lake.

Judd, Richard W. *Aroostook: A Century of Logging in Northern Maine*. Orono, Maine: University of Maine Press, 1989.

Provides a comprehensive look at logging in the North Woods, including the Allagash region.

Kidney, Dorothy Boone. *A Home in the Wilderness*. New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1976.

Describes living at Lock Dam between Chamberlain and Eagle Lakes in the Allagash headwaters as the wife of a dam tender.

Kidney, Dorothy Boone. *Away from it All*. New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1969.

More interesting anecdotes of life in the Allagash region, beginning less than two decades after Helen Hamlin stayed at Churchill Depot some fifteen miles to the north.