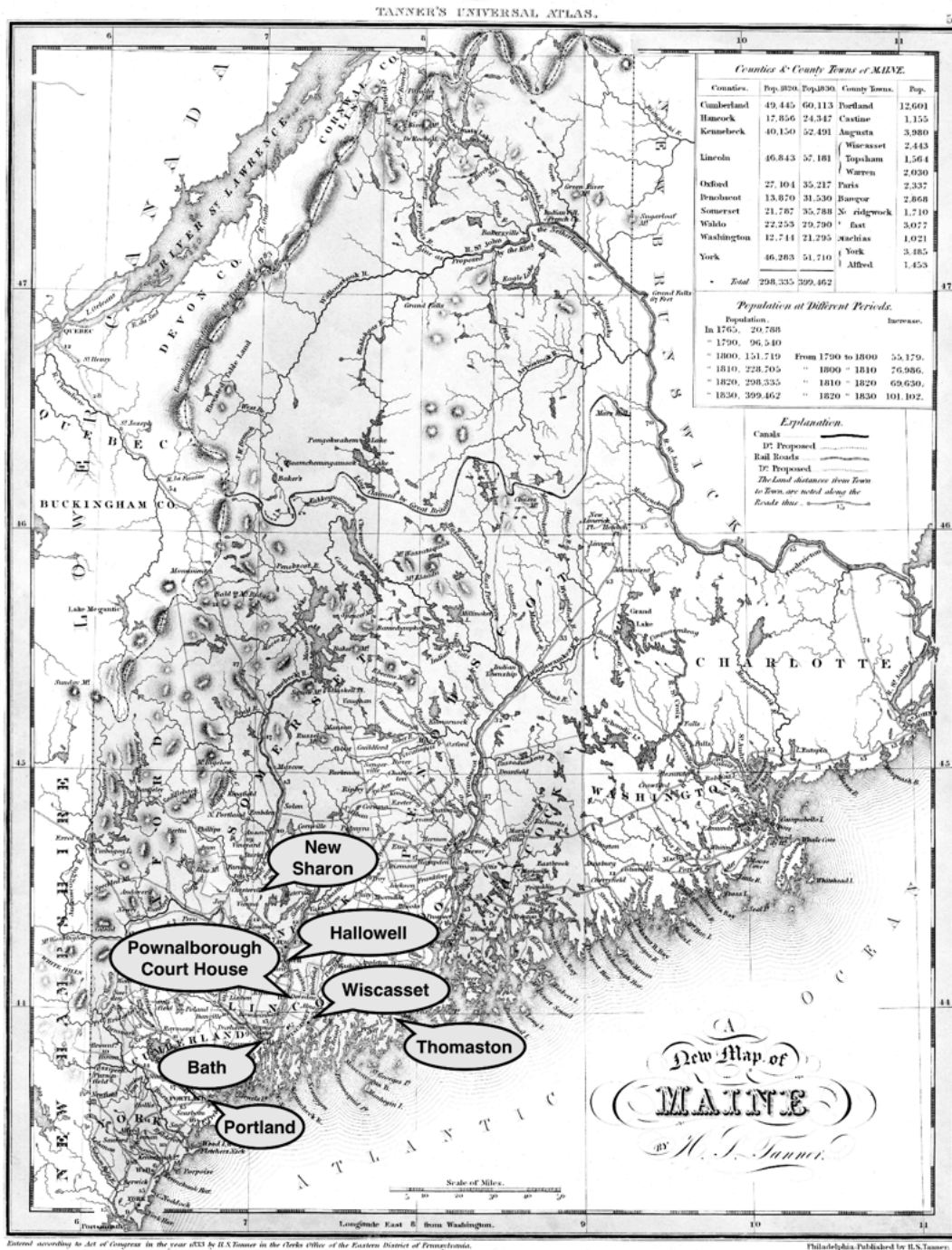


# The Prescott Girls - Study Guide

## The Geography of *The Prescott Girls*



Map of Maine showing the towns connected to the Prescott family story, including New Sharon, the Pownalborough Court House in Dresden, Hallowell, Wiscasset, Thomaston, Bath, and Portland.

# Why Geography Matters in the Story

The events of *The Prescott Girls* take place in **Maine during the 1830s**, a time when travel was slow and communities were often connected by rivers and coastal shipping routes.

Understanding the geography of Maine helps readers see how the Prescott family moved through the region and how the towns were connected.

Many of the places marked on this map were important trading towns or river crossings that played a role in everyday life during the early nineteenth century.

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## Key Locations on the Map

### New Sharon

New Sharon is where the Prescott girls were born. Their father, Warren Prescott, worked as a schoolteacher there.

After his death in 1833, the family left New Sharon and traveled to Dresden to live with relatives.

Because travel was slow in the 1830s, this journey would have taken **several days by wagon**.



### Pownalborough Court House (Dresden)

The **Old Pownalborough Court House** in Dresden became the new home of the Prescott family.

Originally built in 1761 as a courthouse, the building later became a family residence. Rebecca Johnson Prescott and her daughters moved there to live with her brothers.

Today the building is preserved as a museum and historical landmark.

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## Hallowell

Hallowell was an important river port on the Kennebec River and, in the early 1800s, one of the busiest commercial towns in Maine. Ships and river vessels regularly stopped at its wharves, carrying lumber from the inland forests, grain from nearby farms, and a wide range of goods and supplies needed by the communities along the river. Warehouses, shops, and bustling streets made the town a center of trade for the surrounding countryside, and families from nearby towns often traveled there to buy and sell goods.

During the winter months, when deep snow covered the roads and the river traffic slowed, travel continued by sleigh. The Prescott girls and their family would journey to the winter market in Hallowell, bundled in cloaks and blankets as the sleigh bells rang across the frozen countryside. These winter markets were lively gatherings where farmers brought produce and goods to trade, and townspeople came to purchase supplies, hear news, and visit with neighbors.



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## Wiscasset

Wiscasset was one of the largest and wealthiest towns in Maine during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

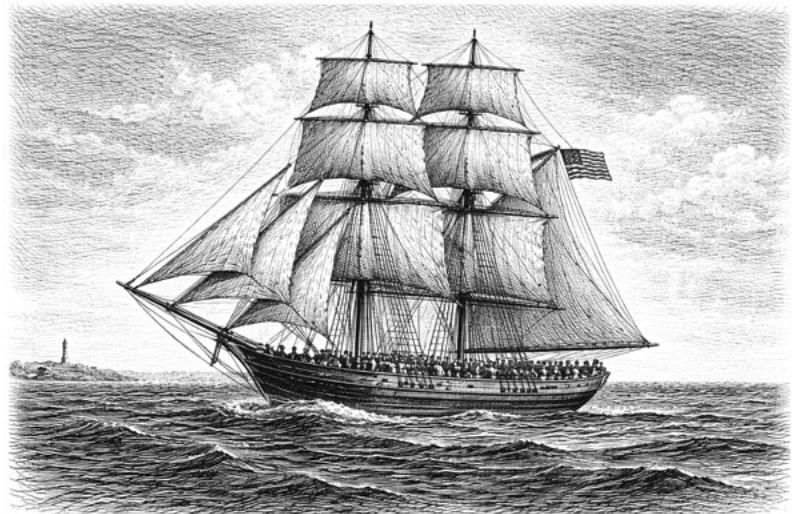
Because of its deep harbor and shipbuilding industry, it became a center of trade and shipping. Many travelers moving along the Maine coast would pass through Wiscasset.

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## Bath

Bath became known as the “**City of Ships.**” Shipyards there built sailing vessels that traveled throughout the Atlantic world.

In the Prescott girls’ time, shipbuilding and maritime trade were major parts of the Maine economy. This is where Uncle Rowland docked his ship over the holiday.



## Thomaston

Thomaston was another coastal town connected to shipping and commerce. Lime quarries nearby supplied materials used in building and trade throughout New England.

Many families in this region had relatives who worked at sea as sailors, merchants, or ship captains.

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## Portland

Portland was the largest city in Maine and an important port.

From Portland, ships traveled to Boston, New York, and other Atlantic ports, connecting Maine communities to the wider world.

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# Travel in the 1830s

In the early nineteenth century, most travel took place by:

- wagon or horseback
- riverboats
- coastal sailing ships

Roads were often rough, and journeys that might take hours today could take **several days**.

The Prescott girls' move from New Sharon to the courthouse in Dresden would have been an important and emotional journey for the family.

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# Geography and Daily Life

The towns marked on this map show how people in early Maine lived close to rivers and the coast.



Rivers such as the **Kennebec River** served as important transportation routes. Coastal towns supported shipbuilding and trade, while inland towns were often connected by wagon roads.

Geography shaped where people lived, how they traveled, and how communities developed.

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## Questions for Discussion

1. Why were rivers and coastal towns important for travel and trade in the 1800s?
  2. How might the Prescott girls' journey have felt compared to traveling the same distance today?
  3. Why do you think many towns in Maine developed near rivers or harbors?
  4. What challenges might families have faced when moving long distances in the nineteenth century?
  5. How does seeing the map help you understand the story of the Prescott family?
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## Activity

Using the map, trace the journey from **New Sharon to the Pownalborough Court House in Dresden.**

Think about:

- how long the trip might take by wagon
- what rivers or towns the travelers might pass
- what the landscape might look like along the way

Imagine making this journey in the 1830s. What might you see along the road?

Map of Maine, 1833

Tanner, Henry Schenck, *A New map of Maine by H.S. Tanner* (1833), Maine Bicentennial 17.

<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainebicentennial/27>