



BY EDIE CLARK

THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL WOMAN IN MAINE

Roxanne Quimby once lived primitively in the Maine woods. Today she owns 90,000 acres of those woods, and her goal is to create a national park to preserve the landscape forever. So why do so many people wish she'd just go away?

IN THE EARLY SUMMER OF 1975, 24-YEAR-OLD ROXANNE QUIMBY ARRIVED IN NORTHERN MAINE,

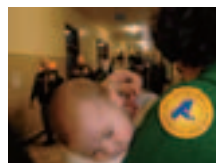
having driven across the country with her boyfriend, looking for a place to homestead. Between them, they had \$3,000. In Guilford, a mill town 50 miles northwest of Bangor, they found 30 acres of woods on a back road for that sum. They planned to build a cabin and live off the land, there at the edge of the fabled North Woods. On the day of their arrival, as Roxanne stepped out of that road-worn Volkswagen bus onto the carpet of pine needles that was to be her home for the next 20 years, you might, if you were paying keen attention, have felt the earth tremble slightly beneath her feet, for the state of Maine would never be quite the same again.

Soon after, in 1976, the last logs tumbled down the Kennebec and brought to an end the legendary world of the river drives, which for generations had been alive with teams of oxen, timber cruisers, camp bosses, and loggers, a place that resounded with the ring of the axe and the smell of fresh sap. When those last logs drifted into the boom, it is possible that no one quite knew the changes that lay ahead for the

JONAS KARLSSON (R., QUIMBY); PAUL REZENDES (NORTH WOODS)

PLUM CREEK CONTROVERSY

December 1, 2007: Citizens for and against Moosehead Lake development testify at a public hearing before Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission in Greenville. Plum Creek opponents fear damage to the environment, while proponents cite the influx of badly needed new jobs.



10-million-acre kingdom called the North Woods. Rather than seeming like an end, this may have seemed like progress. Logs would move on railcars and trucks, as they had been increasingly for many years. It seemed as if nothing much else would change. That chapter of the Maine woods might have been over, but the framework that had supported it all those years—the paper companies that owned that land—would remain. The woods, everyone assumed, would continue to regenerate, and the need for wood and paper would never end.

The purpose of owning this vast timberland was to harvest the trees. Whatever else went on on that land didn't much matter to the paper companies. Thousands of hunting camps rest among the pine and spruce and at the edges of those ponds, there by virtue of a hundred-year lease, given by the paper companies to whoever staked a claim. Hunters and their families built camps, often of logs cut from the property, and knowingly at risk of someday losing the land beneath their efforts. But nothing ever happened. Hundreds of miles of snowmobile trails were cut through the forest. Recreation became the North Woods' secondary use. For generations, the paper companies allowed a special kind of privilege: public use of private land.

ROXANNE KNEW LITTLE ABOUT ANY OF THIS WHEN she arrived. She was not a woodswoman but an aspiring artist. Having just graduated from art school in San Francisco, she envisioned a life where costs would be low so that she could paint and sell her work. She and her soon-to-be husband, George St. Clair, cleared enough trees to build a 20x30-foot cabin. No running water, no electricity, no phone—not a hardship but a challenge. They cleared space for a garden. "We were very idealistic. We did a lot of wood-splitting,

bow-saw work, hauling. It was very different from the way I'd been raised," Roxanne says now. "It was important to prove to myself that I didn't have to live the way my parents lived."

Roxanne, who had grown up in Lexington, Massachusetts, and then moved to San Francisco, had much to learn about life in northern Maine. She worked as a waitress, and George worked occasionally at a local radio station. The old VW bus died, and so they walked where they needed to go. At the end of each year, they had money to pay their taxes and buy the small things they needed. Four years later, Roxanne gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. After a few years, George found a life elsewhere.

So it was Roxanne and the twins, in the cabin. Roxanne needed more money than what she was making. One day, she stopped to buy honey from a pickup truck parked by the side of the road. She became friendly with the man selling the honey, a gruff, bearded beekeeper named Burt Shavitz. He was older than she by 15 years and was having back trouble. She offered to help him, and he gladly accepted, as he could use a woman with a good strong back. That summer, she learned how to keep bees and how to render honey. "I was inspired by the bees, the way they all worked together," she says. "I thought, 'Oh, what good little communists they are. Well, except for that queen in there.'"

She and Burt became partners in life and partners in business. She put the honey into prettier jars, pouring the golden sweetness into little bears and hive-shaped containers. Packaged this way, business picked up. In his barn, Burt had a lot of wax stockpiled. Roxanne saw it as an opportunity. She started making candles and took the honey and candles to craft fairs.

The honey sold steadily. The candles sold well in the fall and through the Christmas season, but

COLLECTION OF MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY (4); FRED J. FIELD (PUBLIC HEARING); ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP IMAGES (MOOSEHEAD AND BAXTER); STANLEY MUSEUM, KINGFIELD, ME (SAWMILL); BETTMANN/CORBIS (THOREAU); JOE DEVENNEY (POND)



people didn't seem to want them in the summer. They melt; they have no allure. So Roxanne looked around for something else to do with the wax and found an old book with some recipes that called for beeswax. On her woodstove, she made up cauldrons of boot polish and furniture polish and poured the substances into little tins. She liked the tins. They looked old-fashioned and homey. And then she discovered a recipe for lip balm.

She labeled the products "Burt's Bees." Burt had all his hives stenciled "Burt's Bees," and when Roxanne was working the hives, she says, "I used

to think that was so funny, as if anyone could actually own a bee!" So she put it on the tins. She found that when people came by her table, even if they didn't buy anything, they liked the name. "People would go, 'Look, honey, Burt's Bees!' and they'd laugh and keep walking, saying things like, 'Burt's Bees, Burt's Bees! Mind your own bees-wax!' They seemed to love to say it," she recalls. "It was so simple, down-to-earth, two syllables, nothing fancy, sort of like Burt, sort of like the product, sort of like the lifestyle I was trying to paint. So I thought, 'Okay, yeah, that's a good name.'"

First Roach Pond, east of Moosehead Lake, site of Plum Creek's first residential subdivision of 89 lots, approved by the state LURC in 1998.

BATTLE FOR THE WILDERNESS | A TIMELINE OF MAINE'S NORTH WOODS



1832

Bangor is world's largest log-shiping port



1846

1,500 sawmills in Maine, 250 in Bangor alone



1864

Henry David Thoreau publishes "The Maine Woods," a classic of wilderness literature



1868

Paper companies begin to expand timbering operations into Maine's North Woods



1870s

Sporting camps proliferate throughout the North Woods



1887

Lumbering industry in Patten, Maine, employs 4,050 men



1931

Former governor Percival Baxter donates first parcel of land, including Mt. Katahdin, destined to become Baxter State Park



1962

With Baxter's 28th purchase, the state park encompasses 315 square miles



■ Elliottsville Plantation ownership, early 2007
■ Plum Creek ownership

Some may have chuckled over the name, but most of them bought it. She couldn't make enough lip balm. She moved her wax and the cauldrons to the abandoned schoolhouse in Guilford. No running water or electricity, either, but she barely noticed, setting the cauldron on the gas range and sometimes working until midnight by the light of kerosene lamps. She added a drawing of Burt to the label, his bearded face representing anything but beauty. Buyers embraced the product even more.

That was the beginning of Burt's Bees, which today is the best-selling natural personal-care brand of cosmetics in the country, a brand market researchers call "lightning in a bottle."

But this little handcrafted product was hardly so back then. Roxanne followed the destiny of her creation one step at a time, a road without a map that led her, after 20 years of living and doing business from a remote Maine town, to North Carolina, where she felt the business climate was more favorable. Maine was high on taxes and low on accessibility. It was 1994. Her twins were in boarding school. As much as she hated to leave, Roxanne left for the South, not with a backpack but with a \$3 million business of her own creation in tow.

THE SAME YEAR ROXANNE LEFT MAINE, THE WARREN division of Scott Paper, one of the two largest landholders in Maine, sold everything it owned to Sappi—South African Pulp and Paper Industries Ltd. It represented a shift in the global market and a shift in the life of the Maine woods at least as significant as the end of the river drives. Apparently no one foresaw that opening the world to free trade would one day steal away the North Woods. China and South America became easier and cheaper places to find wood and paper. Seemingly overnight, the North Woods went up on the block. Tracts of thousands of acres of land came up for sale. A Seattle-based firm called Plum Creek—which turned out to be as much a real-estate developer as a timber company—was buying.

In 1998, Sappi sold its land to Plum Creek: in all, nearly a million acres. If the arrival of Roxanne Quimby caused a tremor, Plum Creek's emergence caused an earthquake throughout this, the largest expanse of wilderness east of the Mississippi.

"Plum Creek is now the largest landowner in the United States," Jym St. Pierre says. He is the Maine director of a group called RESTORE: The North Woods. In 1994, RESTORE put forward the idea of creating a 3.2-million-acre park: Maine Woods National Park (MWNP). "I saw the signs

INTERNATIONAL MAPPING (MAP); BURT'S BEES (HOUSE); COLLECTION OF MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY (LOG DRIVE); THE MOUNTAIN TIMES, BOONE, NC (B. SHAVITZ); PAT WELLENBACH/AP IMAGES (PLUM CREEK); PAUL REZENDES (MOOSE AND NORTH WOODS)

on the horizon, even back in the 1980s, that things were going to change," St. Pierre says. "What I didn't predict was the speed of it. I didn't think it was going to happen this fast. This is not evolution. This is a revolution."

By 2005, Plum Creek had proposed a plan to rezone and subdivide 400,000 acres surrounding Moosehead Lake. The plan included development of two large resorts and nearly a thousand residential lots on a portion of the land. "This is the largest, most controversial project ever proposed in the history of Maine," St. Pierre notes.

Unable to gain approval from LURC (the Land Use Regulation Commission, which acts as a zoning board for Maine's unorganized townships), Plum Creek has revised the plan three times. Its current proposal is under review. Plum Creek has emphasized that most of the land will be placed under "working forest" and conservation easements, a move to calm the fears of environmentalists. St. Pierre explains that some of the easements will continue to allow timbering, road construction, sawmills, cell towers, herbicide spraying, mining, even subdivision, and are not for conservation but for continuous forestry. "You can shape these easements any way you want," he says. "Some of them are very good. These Plum Creek easements have no value."

Plum Creek, however, has forced the hand of many in a state where employment is way down. St. Pierre quotes statistics: 5,000 people once worked in the mills of Millinocket and East Millinocket. Today, only 500 are employed there. That cabbage smell of the paper mills, once known as the smell of money, has been replaced by the faint odor of despair. "I don't blame people for clinging to the hope that some of those days will come back," St. Pierre says. "The forestry industry will survive, but it won't be the driver anymore.

The biggest industry in Maine is tourism, and Plum Creek is trying to tap into that in a way that will give them maximum profit. They buy land cheap and sell it high. They still make money by cutting trees, but they make most of their money cutting up land."








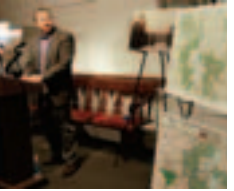
The debate in Maine over what should happen to this abandoned kingdom gets louder with each passing year. RESTORE has been vocal in its efforts to create the Maine Woods National Park, but its proposal has been rebuffed by many a Mainer. One bumper sticker reads: "RESTORE BOSTON: Leave the Maine Woods Alone."

"For a long time, we had this big place, over 10 million acres, as big as the whole rest of New England, that people just forgot about," St. Pierre explains. "It was a big blank spot on the map, and

In Baxter State Park, a cow moose forages in the early-morning fog.



BATTLE FOR THE WILDERNESS | A TIMELINE OF MAINE'S NORTH WOODS, continued

							
1975	1976	1984	1980s	1991	1994	1994	1998
Roxanne Quimby arrives in Guilford, Maine	Last log drive down the Kennebec River	Roxanne Quimby meets Burt Shavitz	Paper companies begin divesting themselves of enormous land holdings in Maine	Burt's Bees incorporates, \$1.5 million annual revenues	Burt's Bees moves to North Carolina	RESTORE: The North Woods proposes creation of 3.2-million-acre national park	Plum Creek buys 900,000 acres of Maine timberland and gains approval for its First Roach Pond subdivision



Percival P. Baxter at Mt. Katahdin, 1962. Thirty years earlier, this area was the first piece of land he purchased and donated to the state, so that "Katahdin in all its glory forever shall remain the mountain of the People of Maine."

headquarters in North Carolina, she conducted herself in the spirit of who she had been in her hippie days. Dogs and children were welcome in the workplace. She kept her desk in the art department, making herself available to any of her 300 employees. She never advertised Burt's Bees.

"I always felt it was much more important what people said about us than what we said about ourselves," she says of the product that sold mostly by word of mouth. Roxanne found that one key to the success of her products was the process of discovery: "Once [the consumer] found Burt's Bees, they felt like it was theirs, it became personal. They put their flag in, as if to say, *This is mine, I discovered it!* And they became really loyal."

Burt accompanied Roxanne to North Carolina but lasted only two months. And so Roxanne bought out his share of the business, and he returned to his converted turkey coop in Maine, where he still lives, with an abandoned beehive in the front yard, goldenrod growing high around it.

In 2003, having grown the business to a phenomenal \$60 million a year, Roxanne Quimby sold Burt's Bees to AEA, a New York investment company, for \$141 million, but retained 20 percent ownership. Not exactly overnight but in the comfort of time, Roxanne Quimby, she of the long skirts and wood-heated spaces, had become a vastly wealthy woman: "At that point, I said to myself, 'Now what, Roxanne? You're only in your fifties and you've got another 20 years of life on this earth. What do you want to do?'"

She went to Hawaii and to Antarctica and all the places she had always wanted to go. She shopped for a home in Palm Beach. She bought six. "I was questing," she says now.

And then she returned to Maine, where the fight for the North Woods was on. She came to realize that "money itself is totally worthless. You

now everybody's scrapping for it. Everything about this is big. It's the last big place. Look around the country. I don't know of any other place that's in play like this. Even Alaska. We're all trying to figure out what the brave new world will be up there."

St. Pierre cites the paper companies' indulgence in letting the public use their private lands: "The biggest reason we don't have a national park in Maine today is because we've had a de facto park for generations. People feel entitled to that land, just because it's always been there."

St. Pierre's father and grandfather worked in the mills and in the woods. "People thought this land was like a permanent institution, like the U.S. government," he says. "They thought it was going to be there forever and always be the same. Well, no matter what happens, that is not the case."

ROXANNE WAS BY THEN SURELY THE MOST unorthodox CEO in America. In her corporate

COURTESY BAXTER STATE PARK (BAXTER); HERB SWANSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX (R. QUIMBY); PAT WELLENBACH/AP IMAGES (MOOSEHEAD AND KATAHDIN LAKES); JERRY & MARCY MONKMAN (TREES); STEVEN LANE (ACCESS)

can't eat it. You can't cover yourself up with it at night and stay warm. Money is only what it does, and so I was trying to find the most meaningful thing to do with it that I can."

And so, establishing a nonprofit foundation called Elliotsville Plantation, she began to buy up the North Woods.

MAPS SPREAD BEFORE HER ON THE LONG TABLE, Roxanne Quimby draws red outlines onto a map of northern Maine. She is formidable, tall and imposing, dressed in black, her long dark hair hanging loose. "Everything in red is mine," she says.

On the map, Baxter State Park cuts a clean, elongated block right in the center of the big, ragged, cranial head of the state of Maine. Baxter State Park is the creation of Percival P. Baxter, who served as Maine's governor for only four years (1921–1925), during which time he tried and failed to make Mount Katahdin, which he regarded as the state's crowning glory, a state park. Despite that failure, "Mr. Maine," as he was sometimes known, never lost sight of that goal. Not a particularly vigorous outdoorsman, Baxter became ill after one of his climbs up Katahdin. Through his fever that day, he vowed to himself that if he lived, he would ensure that one day, the mountain, which then belonged to the Great Northern Paper Company and to one other private owner, would forever belong to Maine.

Starting in 1930 and ending in 1962, Baxter quietly purchased 28 separate pieces of land, a crazy quilt of mountains and streams, ponds, and waterfalls that he put together to form what is now known as Baxter State Park: 202,064 acres, more than 315 square miles of stark wilderness, a place Baxter willed to be "forever wild," and which will remain so through the deeds of his trust. (Through additional purchases after Baxter's death in 1969,

the park now encompasses 204,733 square miles.) These were not simple purchases, given over for the asking price. As he bought more and more parcels and closed most of them to hunting, angry citizens raised their voices. A park, Baxter discovered, was not something everyone embraced.

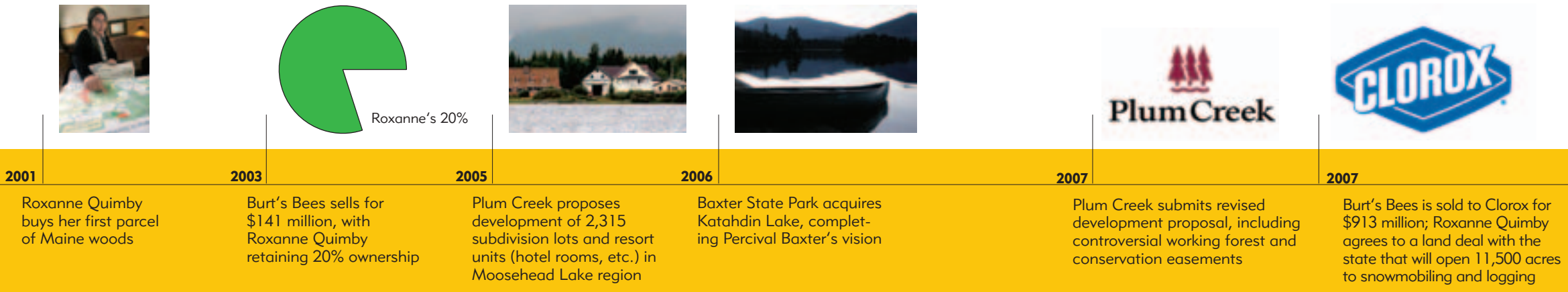
Most of Roxanne's red rectangles are east of the park. She is stitching her own crazy quilt. These are plots of land she has bought. There are others she hopes to buy. Some are scattered and separate. By bargaining and swapping, she is trying to put together a whole. In concert with RESTORE, what she has in mind is a national park. "I feel like my reason for being put on this earth will have been fulfilled because this will live on after me. A park is a demonstration that there is something in America that I can love," she says, her counterculture philosophy re-emerging. "It's very democratic: A Mexican immigrant or a millionaire, for 10 bucks, they both get the same experience."

She is sitting in the front room of one of her many homes, far from the cabin in Guilford. This particular house is in Portland, and it so happens that it once belonged to Governor Percival P. Baxter, whom she admires a great deal. "He is very inspiring to me," she adds, "but there's a difference between us. Governor Baxter inherited his money. He didn't earn it. That makes for a whole different outlook. The way Percival Baxter went about acquiring his land must have been different, spending someone else's money. I fight tooth and nail for every dollar. I'm a businessperson. I don't want to be taken advantage of."

Baxter State Park: "Forever wild"



BATTLE FOR THE WILDERNESS | A TIMELINE OF MAINE'S NORTH WOODS, continued



MILLINOCKET-AREA ACCESS
Most of Roxanne Quimby's parcels east of Baxter State Park are closed to motorized recreation. Recently, however, she offered the state a two-year option to buy significant acreage in the area shown here (Sandy Stream) and open it to vehicles. Two important snowmobile trails in this area will also remain open where they cross other Quimby parcels.

That Roxanne Quimby and Percival Baxter live and lived at opposite ends of the American spectrum is true. The North Woods are Roxanne's passion now, as the bees once were. "It was part of the culture of our family, to be out in the woods," she recalls. "Both my kids hiked the entire Appalachian Trail. The fact that the paper companies were downsizing came at the right time for me. There were all these opportunities. They used the woods and owned the mills, and that did, in some ways, preserve the wilderness because they never cut it up into pieces, so it's still fairly intact. Chesuncook, Northeast Carry, Kokadjo—people carry those places in their minds, and even if they don't get there, it's important that it's there, that they could be there if they wanted to."

BY THE SUMMER OF 2007, ROXANNE Quimby had spent \$39 million to purchase 80,000 acres of wilderness. Nearly 65,000 acres of it lies between Baxter State Park and the East Branch of the Penobscot River. To her mind, a park is the only reasonable destiny for this land: "If we leave this to chance, we will not have the opportunity to make decisions about what happens next."

In the process of making these purchases, Roxanne gobbled up hunting grounds, snowmobile trails, and some beloved primitive camps that families and hunters had passed down through generations. "I own it now," she proclaimed. "Buying the land also means I am buying the right to call the shots."

Roxanne, now the undisputed queen bee of the North Woods, returns to the map: "These two pieces of land here effectively stop all east-west traffic. This bridge, the Whetstone Bridge, here—it's one of the very significant nails in the coffin because it's the only way to get across the river for something like 30 miles. Okay, you can go over the bridge, but you can't go across my land with a car. So you can have your bridge, but it ain't doin' you any good. I'm closing in, and I'm doing this to demonstrate that you cannot leave this to chance."

She is speaking broadly to those who oppose a park, those who ironically also claim they believe in property rights: "Yes, it's a private road, but it's been in such

permissive use for so many years, people forget that the state doesn't own that road."

Up there, where she is pointing, people slapped bumper stickers onto their cars and wore T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan "Ban Roxanne." Letters to the editor condemned her.

"I couldn't believe it," she says. "I was really blown away. I could not believe people would come after me like that, so personally and with such venom. I thought I would be appreciated. I mean, doesn't everybody love a park?"

At the time, Roxanne was on the board of RESTORE: "People up there hate RESTORE, so I put some distance between us at that point. I didn't need that."

But Roxanne and RESTORE work in supportive ways. "We are not a land trust," Jym St. Pierre clarifies. "RESTORE does not buy land. Rather, we're an advocacy group. We promote ideas. The idea of this park is still being hotly debated more than 13 years after it was first proposed. MWNP remains robust, in part, because Roxanne Quimby has made it tangible. There is nothing more real than real estate, and Roxanne has repeatedly said she would like to see the lands she has acquired become the seeds of a new national park. What she owns now would be a very credible beginning."

When Roxanne was growing up, she often played Monopoly. "I loved that game," she says. "I had two sisters and a brother, all younger, and they were always available to play. I hated to lose, so I always made sure, one way or the other, that I won."

This is how Governor Baxter got his park—one piece at a time, with many setbacks and disappointments. But in the end, he won.

Roxanne's plan is somewhat counter-intuitive. She returns to the bees of her past: "To me, ownership and private property were the beginning of the end in this country. Once the Europeans came in, drawing lines and dividing things up, things started getting exploited and over-consumed. But a park takes away the whole issue of ownership. It's off the table; we all own it and we all share it. It's so democratic."

But before she can pass it on to the public, she has to own it.

THE PISCATAQUIS RIVER RUNS THROUGH Guilford, a town of rugged people, about 1,500 of them, most of them working at the local mills that have for years made wood products such as golf tees, tooth-picks, Popsicle sticks, and wooden nickels. Guilford's town manager, Tom Goulette, leans on the counter and talks about the time when townspeople watched the long-haired Roxanne and her company outgrow his town. Everyone has a story about her: how Burt used to borrow the town shovel and take it over to Burt's Bees to clear their walks, as if they couldn't afford to buy a \$10 shovel for themselves. Same with the town broom. Even the town flyswatter was borrowed. Burt's Bees stood out for its long-haired ways and its unorthodox style. "For all the makeup she made, I don't think she's ever worn any," Goulette notes dryly.

"She made so much money in Maine, she had to leave the state to make more money," he adds, somewhat sour that she took her business south. But he corrects himself: "She was different. Hard-nosed, successful. She's made it and she deserves it, just like Bill Gates. I don't agree with her, but I do respect her."

He stops. He's a tall man, bearded and probably the same age as Roxanne. For some years, they shared this town. "Now she's one of those kingdom holders," he says. "She's kicked out all the leaseholders. That doesn't go over very well."

Roxanne closed her properties to snowmobiles and hunting and gave notice to the camp owners. The land was hers now. She made statements in the press that fueled the fire, but then she realized that was not the right path: "I needed to meet with them and hear what their needs were. I feel like we're both at the table as equals. I've never felt any sense of entitlement, and I still don't feel that way, that I'm entitled to anything more or less than anyone else, so I think that puts me in a unique position to work with these folks. And they really like me; I don't feel any antagonism from them. They keep shaking their heads and thinking, 'You're just like a regular person, aren't you?'"

Terry Hill and her husband, Craig, have run the wilderness resort known as Shin Pond Village Campground in Patten for some 30 years now, and they were

among those who felt steaming outrage—not only at the fact of Roxanne’s acquisitions but also at her, this woman who came into the woods like a strike force, money on her belt like repeating ammunition.

“When this started, we were ready to fight,” says Terry. Their resort includes campgrounds, cottages, and miles of snowmobiling trails that cut right through Roxanne’s land. Meetings were called; Roxanne came to listen. A year of meetings has made a huge difference. “In the past year, I’ve done a 180-degree turn in this process,” Terry says. “She’s listening. She’s extended our rights for the snowmobile trails for another year. She’s working hard to be a better neighbor. We don’t know what the future of the Maine Woods will be—none of us do. But we do know that we all love the woods, we love our land, and maybe, in the long run, we all want the same thing.”

THE OLD NORTH WOODS OPEN UP LIKE a trunk full of memories, smelling of camphor and pine needles, woodsmoke and melting snow. When a river driver died, riding a log or busting up a jam, people would find his spiked boots downstream and hang them on a tree near the water. They would hang there for years as a memorial until they disintegrated. We have nothing to hang on the tree now, no vestige of that life gone by.

The Lumbermen’s Museum in Patten is as close as we will likely get. Bud Blumenstock has been a docent there for several years, having retired from managing woodlots from Fort Kent to Kittery. He sees these changes in the woods more optimistically than most, retaining the hope of a forest that will always support the people of that area. “Logging and lumbering have always been a big part of our economy,” he explains. “It’s changed in that Maine is now a village woodlot in the global economy. We’re up against Brazil and China. To be competitive, we have to be efficient. It’s a very complex situation.”

And the players have to bring themselves into that competitive mix. “A logger is no longer a man with an axe on his shoulder,” says Blumenstock. “It’s not unusual for a logger to have a million dollars

invested in his work. When people like Roxanne Quimby come along, they have a lot of money and they want to buy land. I once told Roxanne that I’m a tree hugger *and* a logger, and she said, ‘How do you do that?’ ‘Well,’ I told her, ‘I hug the tree and then I cut it down.’ Parks are nice, but they don’t produce any lumber.”

THE GREAT TREES OF THESE WOODS ARE long gone, and much of the new growth, thinner and less substantial, is not good enough for lumber. These trees are chewed up for wood chips or used in pulp mills to make paper. Much of the land Roxanne and Plum Creek have bought has been damaged by extensive logging. Plum Creek is proposing trophy homes and resorts. Roxanne wants her land to return to wilderness.

Like many people around here, Blumenstock keeps his opinion of Roxanne to himself: “I don’t want to say anything negative about Roxanne Quimby. She has her plan. It’s her choice and her prerogative, but logging is an important industry to the state of Maine. Trees grow. That’s my one-liner. As long as we harvest them wisely, we’ll always have a strong working forest in the state of Maine.”

“OH, ROXANNE QUIMBY? SHE’S MY HERO!” Wallace Drew is the ranger on duty at the check-in station at Baxter State Park’s Matagamon gate. “We compare her to Governor Baxter. When Baxter was buying up the land for this park, people were mad about that, too. He has it in the deeds: *Forever wild*. That means no paved roads, primitive campsites. Most of us understand that these lands need to be preserved.”

From the station, you return to your car and leave this earthly world. It is almost impossible to describe the feeling. The park road—narrow, with grass growing between the dirt tracks—wanders, twists, and turns, mile after mile, edged tightly by trees and canopied with their branches. At openings, there are waterfalls, marshes, or streams, and eventually, majestic Katahdin.

Baxter’s struggle to climb to the Katahdin summit remained one of his few actual experiences on the big mountain, which rises a mile high. When he visited his park later, he came in his chauffeur-

driven Cadillac—a strange sight, the old man viewing his most important legacy from the backseat of a black limousine. He thought about that park every day, his chauffeur reported.

That is true for Roxanne as well. But her struggle is in sharp contrast.

Once, years ago, she came home from selling candles and lip balm at a craft show. It was 3 in the morning and 20 below zero. She was tired and discouraged. She had not sold enough to even pay for her gas home. When she got home, the wind had blown the window of her cabin open, and there was snow all over. “Sometimes you feel like giving up. I did that night,” she recalls. “But then you pick yourself up again. I believe that success is getting up one more time than you fall. It’s not one brilliant idea, but a bunch of small decisions that accumulate. Never underestimate the amount of work involved, the amount of fear involved.”

In November of last year, Burt’s Bees was sold for nearly a billion dollars to Clorox, which stated that it was eager to “grab market share in so-called green products.”

“It feels like closure,” Roxanne said shortly after the sale. The little company that grew is now completely out of her hands. But 20 percent of the sale price went to Roxanne. “That has put a lot more green energy into what I’m planning to do,” she added.

In December, after a year of closed-door negotiations, Roxanne struck a new kind of deal with state officials and local civic leaders. From the Gardner timber company, she purchased 8,900 acres east of Baxter State Park, which she will return to wilderness, and in turn granted the state a two-year option to buy 5,000 acres of her Millinocket-area property plus a working forest easement on another 6,600 acres, guaranteed to be open to motorized recreation and logging. She also agreed to keep open two important snowmobile trails that cross portions of her land, perhaps heralding a thaw in her relations with area sportsmen and residents.

Today, she is working on acquiring still more contiguous parcels on the east side of Baxter State Park. “This feels good,” she says. “Yes it does.”