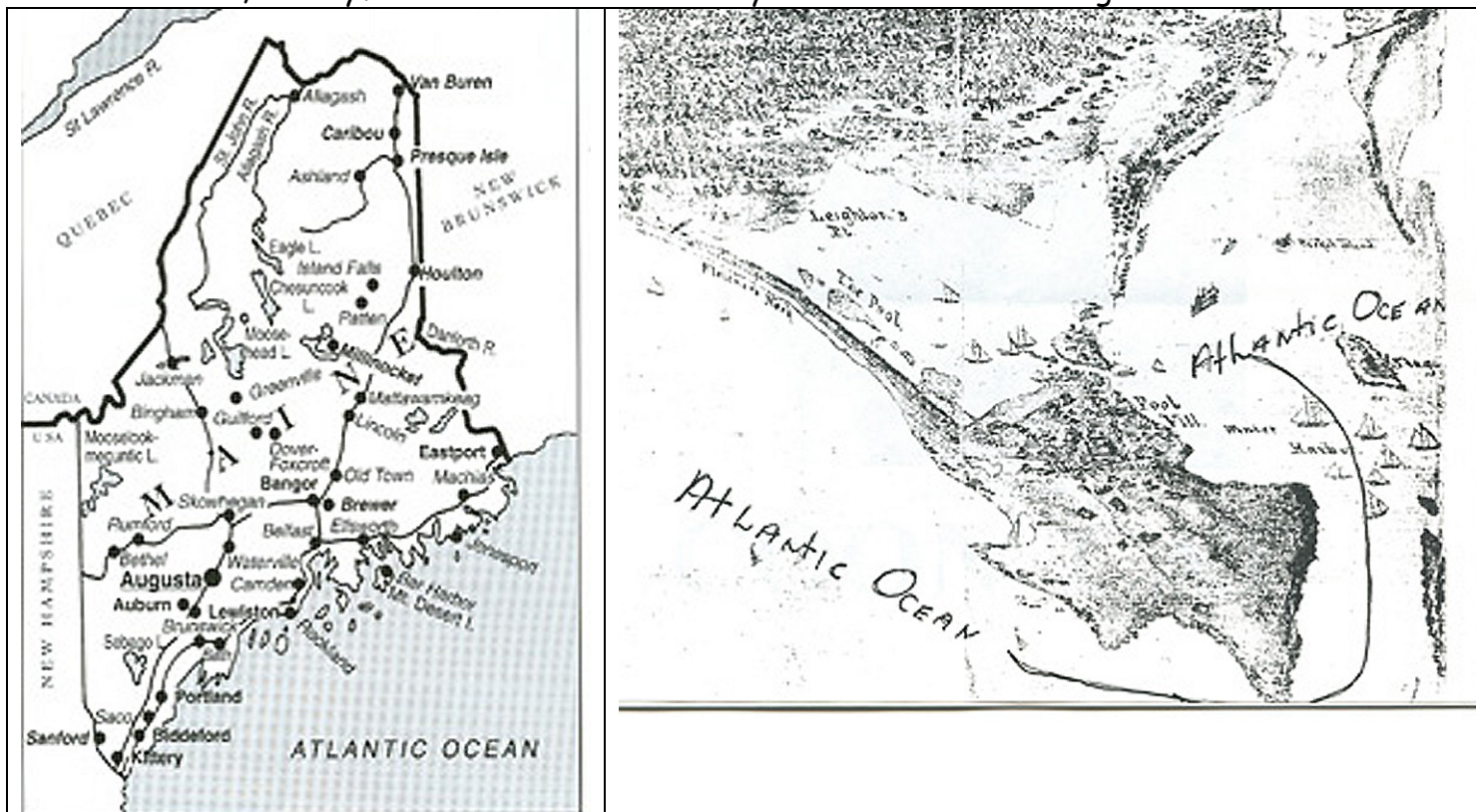


## Poly Lines Over The Decades

Tracking those early Polydactyl Maine Coons can be a difficult process of finding fact from myth. Historically the Polydactyl Maine Coon Cat probably made up 40 % of the original population of Maine Coon Cats. "Old timers (who were residence of Maine) once gave away coon cat kittens to any passing tourist that asked for one" (*Down East*, "How Do You Get A Maine Coon Cat To Sit Still", Jeff Clark. 1994). Some sources have been noted as saying you can tell New Englanders by the cats that they keep. Since double pawed or polydactyl cats have been a New England favorite for almost 300 years, one can trace the last three centuries migration of region residents by keeping an eye out for these large-footed felines. According to Mimi E. B. Steadman who quoted Dr Neil B Todd of Boston University, Department of Biology, as saying the "estimates that after 1680 within 50 miles of Boston, polydactylism can be used to trace the migration of New Englanders into Canada during the American Revolution." "Studies done on polydactylous cats, beginning in the 1940's, showed that the trait probably initially occurred in cats who came over from England to the Boston area with the Puritans in the mid-1600 (Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, *Cat Watch*, Vol., 2, No 4, April 1998). For more information see the article tilted "[When They Had Jobs](#)" Today we have basically 3 established lines of Maine Coon Polydactyls. They are the Tarbox Cats from the Choate Line, Pussyfoot also know as the Pussytoes lines and the Dirigo lines.



Above left is map of Maine and right is map to Tarbox Farm

Traveling north on Interstate 95, ninety miles north of Boston, Massachusetts to Biddeford, Maine you may still find the Pool Road. This is where the Tarbox Farm and more importantly the Tarbox Barn was located. At the foot of the Tarbox Farm there is a body of water known as "The Pool". The Pool is from the Saco River and the Atlantic Ocean. The tide ebbs and flows so that when the tide is in, the Pool is very deep and very shallow when the tide is out. One of the tales about the origin of the Maine Coon cat comes from ships anchoring in the Biddeford Pool. One of these ships was the Glen Laurie whose captain was Enoch Snow from Provincetown, MA. His ship traveled to the Maine coast with its cargo to trade with the settlers. The young cabin boy, Tom Coon, of the Glen Laurie was in charge of the captain's cats. When the ship stopped at various ports Tom's job was to find cats that could tackle the biggest harbor rats and win the battle. While Tom was catching these wharf cats, the sailors would be visiting the taverns. One day when Tom was watching the cats stalking and killing the big wharf rats, a beautiful black, orange and white longhaired (calico) cat befriended him. Tom was so taken with this cat he hid her in his footlocker. Once they were out to sea he realized that this beautiful calico was expecting kittens. According to foke lore all of her three kittens had extra toes. While the ship wintered in the Biddeford Pool, Joseph Tarbox let Tom and his cats stayed at the Tarbox Farm. These longhaired kittens were known as Tommy Coon Cats or Coon's Kittens from Tom Coon. For many years Tom who later become Captain Tom Coon, visited his cats at the Tarbox Farm. Chockie Couture Choate, Silver McTabby Shaded Polydactyl was the foundation polydactyl descended from Tommy's Coon Cats. (The above paragraph on the Tarbox Cats was taken for "[The Origin of the Maine Coon Cat](#)" by Lida Choate of Tarbox Farm. For another story on one of the Tarbox Farm's current show cats see [Body By Poly](#)).

Pussyfoot or Pussytoes cattery was owned by Hannah Dreckman. She started breeding Miane Coons in 1978 and named her cattery after one of her cats, Pussyfoot. Her cattery had to be registered at Pussytoes in CFA but she preferred name was Pussyfoot. Her first cat was Catwood Peavine ( named for a horse). Peavine was a polydactyl and she showed him as an AOV. Pussyfoot Pretty Redwing was polydactyl but Pussyfoot Sean Connery was not. Sundar Abishai was polydactyl. Her sire was Sam Spade Perry and her dam was Gray Luv Perry who was polydactyl. Mrs. Voth, owner of Sam Spade Perry and Gray Luv Perry signed the pedigree indicating that Sam Spade Perry and Gray Luv Perry (polydactyl) to be the foundation cats in that breeding. The Voths obtained many of their foundation cats from the Humane Society Shelter in Madison, Wisconsin. Hannah Dreckman said that most of the time polydactyl females were used as breeders rather than using the poly males. She bred some polydactyls and said she never observed that extra toes caused them any problems. One of her polydactyls cats used his "thumbs" very well to help pick up popcorn from a bowl. Dunkle was a males polydactyl and sired one litter . Punch Dunkle's littermate brother,

Pussyfoot the Boxer was polydactyl and was owned by Charlemaine Cattery. The sire and dam of these two were Meunerie Gabriel and Pussyfoot Jet Setter P. Hannah Dreckman also reported that some of the Whittemore cats were polydactyl.

Dirigo Maine Coon Cats, Windham Maine.

Beth Kus of Dirigo Cattery has been breeding cats for 30 years and has been actively involved in Foundation breeding and the preservation of the Maine Coon's heritage. Over the course of the years she has noted how the originating Maine Coons differ from the cats we see today in the show ring. Some of her observations are as follows:

It seems that the non-pedigree Maine Coon cats that we the foundation were smaller than the cats we see today. The coat was distinguished by heavy, coarse, guard hairs and had a fine downy hair as the insulating layer close to the body. Newer coats today are somewhat finer in texture. Lynx tips in the ears are not as pronounced in Foundation cats but have been improved by breeding. Frills or britches and the ruff remain lovely in the cats of today and yesteryear. It is possible that the Foundation cats had heavier coats due to the fact they were outdoor cats and needed to adapt to climate. The body type has always maintained its distinctive shape.

It is well to note also that varying "types" or different looks of the Maine Coon can be seen in far reaching geographic areas and specific looks have been deliberately selected and bred for.

One of the Foundation Lines where the Maine Coon Polydactyl originated was Dirigo. I believe there were 2 separate Dirigo lines of polys. One behind Dirigo Wild Native Hooch, who sired Amos P and one, was Phoebe who is the dam of Dirigo Mitsigirl P.