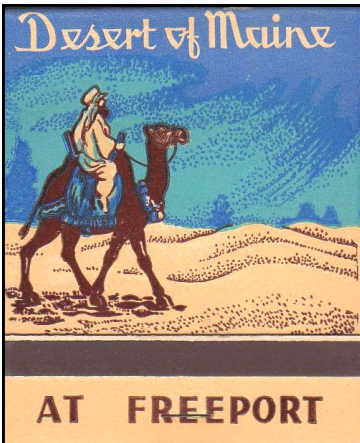




## An American Tour: 27



### The Desert of Maine??



“The story of this strange place began more than 10,000 years ago, Mr. Doyle explained, when the glaciers of the last Ice Age slowly scraped the soil and ground rocks into pebbles and then to a sandy substance known as glacial silt, forming a layer up to 80 feet deep in places in southern Maine. Then, over the centuries, topsoil formed a cap, concealing the “desert,” enabling forest to grow and, when settlers came to North America, supporting agriculture.

Enter William Tuttle, a farmer who bought 300 acres of prime farmland in 1797. Tuttle built a large post-and-beam barn on the site and operated a successful farm for decades, raising cattle and crops. His descendants added sheep to sell wool to textile mills. Poor crop rotation and overgrazing by sheep, which tear the plants out of the soil by the roots, resulted in soil erosion and something eerily beyond. One day, a patch of sand the size of a dinner plate became exposed. It grew until the family became alarmed. But it was too late. The “desert” had made its entrance, and the more the soil eroded, the more the sand underneath was exposed.

THE Tuttlés didn’t give up right away, and tried for years to fight the inevitable. But slowly the sand claimed the farm, swallowing buildings and pasture. By the early 20th century they abandoned the place. Proving that one person’s disaster is another’s gold mine, Henry Goldrup bought the farm in 1919 for \$300 and opened it as a tourist attraction in 1925. It now attracts 30,000 visitors a year, according to Mary and Bob Kaschub, who work as tour guides.” [<http://travel.nytimes.com/2006/09/22/travel/escapes/22down.html>] [Note: That’s a nice Lion Giant Feature in the upper left]

