Maine is such a diverse state, it can sometimes seem unfamiliar even to people who live here. Robert Chute of Poland Spring explores that theme in this week’s poem about Down East.

Driving Down East

by Robert M. Chute

Crossing the Penobscot on Route One we enter a different country. Our home state on both sides of course, all part of the Main, but the dull green rainbow bridge was a suspension of disbelief as well as steel.

At Verona Island we expected a guard house with a deadpan downeaster in oilskins to silently check our visas and wave us through.

The houses were familiar clapboard and shingle but smaller, pinched between wild lands, barrens and ledges edging the sea. Life on our inland lakes with its jumble of cobbles seemed safe but not these wave-scoured ledges.

Life on the edge salts speech with words as strange to us as to Summer People. Words regional, individual, or invented to toll the tourists.

Everyone is “from away”: we are, they are, but all in one bag together in the final drag dumped on the deck for culling.