



Forever Wild

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BAXTER STATE PARK
SPRING 2006 VOL. 5 No. 2

KATAHDIN LAKE - Baxter's Vision for a State Park

By Howard Whitcomb

In testifying before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry at a public hearing on LD2015 on February 27, 2006, Howard Whitcomb spoke in support of the bill and shared an historical perspective on the State's proposed acquisition of the 6,015 acre Katahdin Lake parcel. The text of his testimony follows. – Editor

President's Column

by Ken Spalding

Lessons from Katahdin Lake

President Charlie Jacobi is in Bolivia exploring national parks and will bring home new insights into park management, or at least some great photographs. While traveling in South America, he is missing the political drama in Augusta surrounding the campaign to complete Governor Baxter's original vision for his Park, which included 6,000 acres around Katahdin Lake. By the time you read this, we will know the outcome of the legislation that is part of the deal to add this land to the Park, but as I write this column, the outcome is still uncertain.

I tend to think of Governor Baxter as a visionary standing alone in his quest to preserve Katahdin for the people of Maine — "a voice in the wilderness." And I also tend to think that today we have progressed in our thinking about land conservation and that we have the advantage of people loving the Park and its benefactor. So why is it so hard today to pass legislation that benefits the Park?

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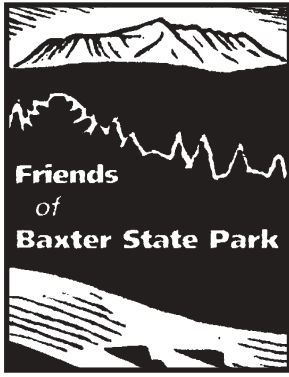
In 1906 Percival P. Baxter was serving in his first term in the House of Representatives. Over the course of the next decade and one-half, he would serve multiple terms in both houses of the legislature—72nd, 78th and 79th (1905-1906, 1917-1920) in the House of Representatives and 74th (1909-1910) and 80th (1921) in the Senate.

It was during that legislative service that Percival Baxter conceived of his plan for a state park at Katahdin to commemorate the first century of Maine's statehood (1820-1920). During the summer of 1920, in anticipation of introducing a legislative proposal for public funding of a state park at Katahdin, Baxter participated in an expedition to Katahdin that was led by Patten lumberman Burton W. Howe. The expedition included not only Baxter, heir apparent as President of the Senate, but also Charles P. Barnes of Houlton, who was widely regarded as the favored candidate for Speaker in the House of Representatives. The expedition's itinerary included crossings of both the East Branch and the Wassataquoik, and the trek from Katahdin Lake to Chimney Pond via Roaring Brook. Baxter's ascent to Monument Peak (now Baxter Peak) was via the Pamola Trail and the Knife Edge.

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View of Mt. Katahdin from Katahdin Lake— Photo by Jym St. Pierre



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Friends of Baxter State Park is an independent citizen group working to preserve, support, and enhance the wilderness character of Baxter State Park, in the spirit of its founder, Governor Percival Baxter.

Baxter's Vision - Continued from p. 1

As planned, Baxter introduced on January 25, 1921, AN ACT to Establish the Mt. Katahdin State Park (80th Legislature, Senate No. 19). Two days later, he delivered an address entitled, "Mount Katahdin State Park," to the annual meeting of the Maine Sportsmen's Fish and Game Association at the State Capitol. In launching his park proposal, he stated, in part, that "[T]he proposed park covers an area of 57,232 acres and comprises the whole of Mount Katahdin, and Katahdin Lake, of itself one of the most beautiful of all Maine's lakes, . . . The park will bring health and recreation to those who journey there, and the wild life of the woods will find refuge from their pursuers, for the park will be made a bird and game sanctuary for the protection of the forest inhabitants." (January 27, 1921, p. 13.)

As a result of the unexpected death of Governor Frederick H. Parkhurst on January 31, 1921, Baxter, the President of the Senate, acceded to the governorship. Baxter's elevation to the governorship dramatically changed the political fortunes of his park proposal. As Governor, he was

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President's Column - Continued from p. 1

In his book *Legacy of a Lifetime*, John Hakola paints a picture of general support for a park around Katahdin in Governor Baxter's time. Before Governor Baxter's first park legislation, there was a 25-year history of effort to create a park around Katahdin, including a 1913 resolve by the Maine Legislature asking Congress to create a national park. Baxter's proposal was supported by the Governor, President of the Senate (himself), Speaker of the House, the Forest Commissioner and Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Game, the powerful Maine State Federation of Women's Clubs and Maine Sportsmen's Fish and Game Association, many of the state's newspapers, local lumbermen, and the platforms of both the Republican and Democratic parties. But Great Northern Paper Company and other landowners opposed it, and they were able to kill Governor Baxter's efforts to create the Park through legislation.

Tens of thousands of Maine citizens enjoy Baxter State Park each year, and Governor Baxter's bust stands in the center of the State House rotunda. Even people who vehemently oppose public ownership of land are hesitant to speak unfavorably of Baxter State Park for fear of being politically marginalized. Yet a bill that would complete Governor Baxter's vision by adding to the Park the 6,015 acres of land around Katahdin Lake, financed completely with private money and purchased from a willing seller, is in serious trouble. The only reason there even needs to be legislation is because the seller insisted upon getting some public

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New on the Website! www.friendsofbaxter.org

- Check out the photo gallery for the latest additions.
- Find out how to make parking reservations for Baxter State Park day use.
- Read about the Katahdin Lake Campaign.
- Get directions to the Friends Annual Meeting on April 29.
- Send news and commentary to news@friendsofbaxter.org

lands as part of a land exchange. Because the conveyance of public lands is involved, a two-thirds vote of the legislature is required.

The result is that a number of groups saw an opportunity to pile-on and get something for themselves out of the deal. Some are philosophically opposed to undeveloped land being closed to hunting, some see it as an opportunity to demonstrate that they have the power to stop it, some want to attach benefits to themselves in exchange for not killing it, and others are just generally opposed to public land and enlarging Baxter Park.

As I write this, it appears that an amended bill will go to the House and Senate. The new bill would split the land between Baxter Park and the Bureau of Parks and Lands and include a long and complicated series of conditions that give benefits to those who have held up passage. Some of the conditions are ironically contradictory and even detrimental to the groups they

were supposed to help. It has all been a grand lesson in civics. It is a graphic demonstration of why Percival Baxter wanted to keep the people's park at Katahdin insulated from politics. The most important lesson is that it is extremely important to have a strong, active and effective citizens group to defend and support Baxter State Park.



Katahdin Lake in sunshine – photo by Jym St. Pierre

Baxter's Vision - Continued from p. 2

unable to effectively shepherd the legislation through the Senate. Even though the proposal was spurned by two consecutive Legislatures, Baxter remained resolute, in the years immediately after he left the Governor's Office, that a state park should be established at Katahdin.

Now we get to that part of the historical record with which we are more familiar. Between 1931 and 1963, Baxter, as a private citizen using his own money, bought and subsequently deeded the 28 parcels, consisting of 201,018 acres, that constituted Baxter State Park at the time of his death in 1969. It is of particular note that process of sequential gifting began on March 3, 1931, exactly seventy-five years ago this coming Friday.

For unknown reasons Governor Baxter was never able to acquire the Katahdin Lake parcel, the NW quadrant of T3 R8, during his lifetime, but we do know that he remained interested in doing so as late as 1946. In a letter to Warden Supervisor Caleb W. Scribner of Patten of March 2, 1946 Baxter stated: "I want to get some of 3R8 where Katahdin Lake is located. If I can get a piece of it, more may follow. That would be nice for our Park." (John W. Hakola, *Legacy of a Lifetime: The Story of Baxter State Park*, note 48, p. 349). It should be noted that as of 1946, Baxter State Park was exclusively a wildlife sanctuary. Non-sanctuary lands were not to become a part of BSP until 1955.

Thus, we come to those portions of LD 2015 that pertain to the Katahdin Lake parcel. Wouldn't it be fitting if the State of Maine, in the 75th anniversary year of the initial deed of trust (1931), were to acquire the lone remaining parcel outside Baxter State Park that Percival Baxter had intended for inclusion in his 1921 proposal for a park at Katahdin? For it was along the shores of Katahdin Lake that Baxter had camped on his trek from Patten to Katahdin in the summer of 1920. He saw Katahdin Lake, along with Katahdin itself, as integral elements of his proposed wildlife sanctuary. I hope this historical account Baxter's vision for a park at Katahdin, including in particular the Katahdin Lake parcel, will inform your committee's deliberations.

Readers write.....

I am looking at your article in the newsletter on burros on the trail... The amusing part of the use of burros came when they reached Chimney Pond. Although we humans were not allowed to swim or bathe in Chimney Pond because the water was supposedly kept pure for drinking purposes, the burros were not subject to that rule. As soon as they got to Chimney Pond and unloaded their gear, they headed for the pond where they bathed and wandered and cooled themselves. Of course, the rangers insisted that the water was pure for drinking...

— Burton Chandler

Send letters to Friends of Baxter
Box 1442, Bangor, ME 04402 or
news@friendsofbaxter.org

Looking Back *by John Neff*

Did Teddy Roosevelt really lose his boot?

Long thought to be a somewhat legendary story, it turns out that during his climb to Katahdin's summit in 1879, Teddy did indeed lose one of his heavy walking shoes while crossing a stream "at a raffle" (as he put it in his own journal.) He had to complete his climb wearing only moccasins. This famous climb with his dear friend and guide Bill Sewall convinced Roosevelt that he was fit for rugged activity after years of health uncertainties caused by a severe asthmatic condition. What an effect on American history!

Hiking Away From Katahdin

By Rex Turner

Mt. Katahdin's wind-raked heights do have an immense pull. However, all of the trails in Baxter State Park, not just the popular routes up Katahdin, offer unique experiences. If you never venture away from Katahdin, you're missing out on opportunities to find beauty, excitement, peace, and wildness.

Southern Part of the Park

The Owl, a knob west of Katahdin's Baxter Peak, doesn't have feathers or eat mice, but it's got a great perch. The 3.3 mile hike (one way) to the **Owls** summit gets you views of the wilds surrounding Katahdin's western flank. Looking up, you see the treeless expanse of Katahdin's wide, above tree-line terrain; looking across the landscape, you pick out scattered ponds noted by Thoreau to resemble a "mirror broken into a thousand fragments, and wildly scattered over the grass, reflecting the full blaze of the sun." The trail to the Owl starts at Katahdin Stream Campground.

The **Marston Trail**, beginning across the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road from Slide Dam, is a rigorous 8.8 mile circuit traversing the peaks of **Mt. Coe** (*see photo on page 5*) as well as **North** and **South Brother** mountains. The views of the northern and western aspects of Katahdin are remarkable as are the vistas looking westward towards aptly named **Doubletop Mountain**. Personally, I rate a late afternoon moment watching a distant moose meander through the Klondike wetland some 900' below as one of my top Baxter experiences. Seeing a 7' tall moose dwarfed by its wild surroundings was something to remember.

Northern Part of the Park

The northern entrance to the park is reached by driving through the towns of Sherman, Patten, and Shin Pond. Once you're in the Park, hiking opportunities abound. Right off the bat, there is **Horse Mountain**. This short 2.8 mile hike to an abandoned fire tower will give you a great lookout across Grand Lake Matagamon and the East Branch of the Penobscot River.

A number of trails fan out from the general vicinity of Trout Brook Farm Campground towards several remote ponds that make fine camping and fishing destinations. Trout Brook Farm Campground is also the eastern trailhead for the 24-mile-long **Webster Stream Trail**, a remote backpacking route through the Scientific Forestry Management Area, a rich wildlife habitat less frequented by the two-legged variety of animal. Grand Pitch on Webster Stream and the pristine shores of Webster Lake are especially serene.

South Branch Campground, east of Trout Brook Campground, enables campers to camp in one spot and explore a variety of rewarding trails. Trails such as **North Traveler** (5.25 miles), **Center Ridge** (7.2 miles when combined with a segment of the Pogy Notch Trail), and **Howe Brook** (6 miles with some use of Pogy Notch Trail), all give hikers a chance to walk

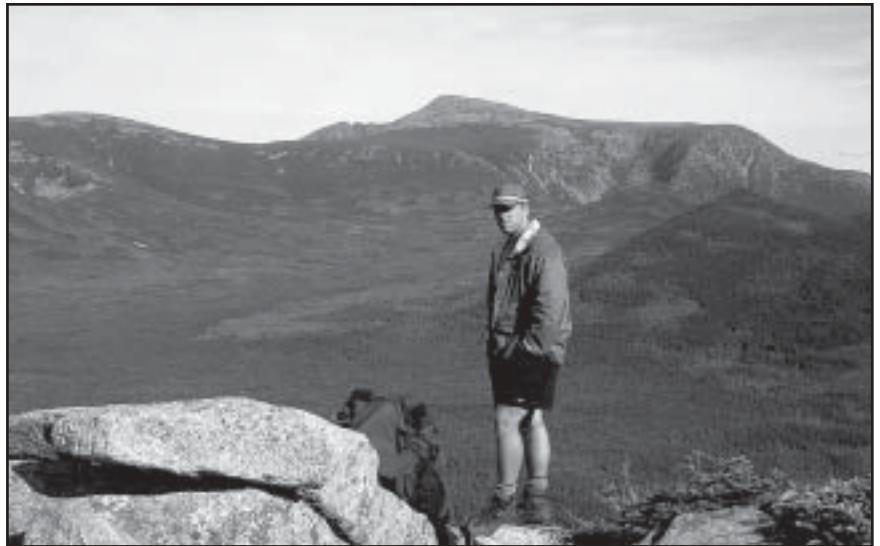
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on ancient lava. (**Traveler Mountain's** rhyolite was formed through extrusive volcanic activity 400 million years ago). Views of the surrounding landscape are inspirational. Other destinations within reach of campground trailheads include **South Branch Mountain, Fowler Ponds, and Pogy Pond.**

Throughout the South Branch Ponds/Pogy Notch region of the Park, take note of how an intense fire just over 100 years ago still affects the forests. Dwarf birches on the Traveler and a limited layer of duff atop mineral soil are just two examples of the old fire's influence.

Share Your Experiences

If you have a favorite BSP trail not on THE Mountain, let me know at news@friendsofbaxter.org what it is and why you love it. I'll try periodically to update our newly refurbished website to showcase some of the trails leading to other remarkable spots besides the Tableland, Baxter Peak, Pamola, Abol Slide, Chimney Pond, and other Katahdin icons. More trails are listed in the "Hikes Beyond Katahdin" page found by visiting www.friendsofbaxter.org.



The author on the summit of Mt. Coe. – photo by Rex Turner

Nine Years' Research Produces New Book on Katahdin

John Neff, Past President and current Board member of Friends of Baxter, is pleased to announce the publication of his book entitled *KATAHDIN, AN HISTORIC JOURNEY: Legends, Exploration, and Preservation of Maine's Highest Peak*. This book brings together various strains of history and story associated with the Katahdin area: native legends, early explorers and climbers, the logging era, sporting camps, trail and campsite histories, the artists touched by the mountain, Baxter's "magnificent obsession," Thoreau's climb, and 20th century stories. It features historic pictures, key maps, and a glossary of place names for the whole region. The publication date is mid-May, but a pre-publication copy may be ready for people to see at the Friends' Annual Meeting on April 29. Information about the book and order forms are available at www.BarnesandNoble.com

It's membership renewal time!

Letters were sent out in early March, and we have had a great response so far. Current membership statistics are:

Maine	241
Other New England States	65
NY-NJ-PA	20
16 other states	37
Total	363

Special Opportunity!

Have you ever been to Katahdin Lake? Here's your chance to visit the area with a man who has dedicated his whole career to Baxter State Park. On Tuesday, May 30th, Retired Director of BSP, Buzz Caverly, Jr., will lead a walk to Katahdin Lake. There are a few spaces left in the group. If you are interested, contact Barbara Bentley at barbarabentley@tidewater.net or tel. 207-763-3014 right away. (7-mile hike round trip)



An early snowfall coupled with extreme winds created a larger than normal windfall this past autumn. – photo by BSP staff

Volunteers Needed for Trail Work in Park

National Trails Day – Park Wide

June 3, 2006

Help clean-up your favorite trail. Individuals and groups are encouraged to participate. Space is limited, so sign up today. A dinner meal will be provided on Saturday as well as camping accommodations for the nights of June 2 and 3. **Prior experience with axes and bucksaws is recommended.**

Challenge Level = Varies Depending On Trail Choice

NOTE: FRIENDS OF BAXTER is forming a group to work on the Russell Pond Trail where 40 blowdowns are reported. We need a few more people. Call now if you can help: 207-763-3014 or <barbarabentley@tidewater.net>

Wassataquoik Stream Trail Relocation – Russell Pond

August 6 – 9, 2006

Re-route approximately 600 ft. of trail that will replace a portion that is wet most of the time. We will hike 7 miles into Russell Pond campground on Sunday August 6th. All participants must be able to backpack their own food and gear into Russell Pond. We have room for two (2) additional volunteers.

Challenge Level = Moderate

Chimney Pond Campground - Saddle Trail

3 dates: June 25 – 29, 2006 July 2 – 6, 2006 July 9 – 13, 2006

Repair erosion and reconstruct damaged areas on the Saddle Trail in alpine reconstruction project. We will use cable winches, crowbars, picks and shovels, to transport rock materials to the affected areas. Dry stone

masonry skills will be utilized to place stone in the trail to arrest erosion and stabilize the treadway. The most difficult aspect of this project is hiking to and from the work site. We will hike up and down 2,600 vertical feet each day from Chimney Pond to the work site on Katahdin. We will backpack 3.2 miles to Chimney Pond Campground to basecamp on the first day of the project (that is a travel day). All participants must be able to carry their own food and gear.

All participants must be in very good physical condition and be able to climb Katahdin 4 days in a row.

We have room for four (4) people for each set of dates.

Challenge Level = Most Difficult

Hunt Trail – Erosion Control

July 19– 26, 2006

Construct rock waterbars, staircase steps and rip-rap. There are several work stations and tasks on this project to choose from. Winch operators, stone setters, and chainsaw winch operators will work in concert to produce the necessary materials to harden the trail's tread.

The worksite is approximately 1.5 miles from the trailhead of the Hunt Trail at Katahdin Stream Campground. Volunteers' accommodations will be wall tents, a shower house and kitchen facilities at Kidney Pond Campground. Enjoy recreating around Kidney Pond!

The duration on this most technical project in the Park is eight days due to organization and set up time for the rigging system. Volunteers should commit to at least four days within the time frame listed above.

We have room for four (4) volunteers.

Challenge Level = Difficult

Sign up by contacting BSP Trail Supervisor Paul Sannicandro, at 207-723-9616 or e-mail messages to paul.sannicandro@maine.gov

Friends' ANNUAL MEETING Saturday, April 29, 2006

Oakland Grange, Oakland, Maine

8:30 am – Gather

9:00am – 12 noon Meeting

Noon – lunch at Grange

1:15 pm – hike on Kennebec Highland Trails

Karin Tilberg, Deputy Commissioner, Maine Department of Conservation, will give the keynote address on the Katahdin Lake preservation effort. Director of Baxter State Park, Jensen Bissell, will present a State of the Park report. There will be plenty of time for discussion and dialogue throughout the morning. Lunch provided by Friends of BSP at no charge will be followed by a guided hike on the Kennebec Highland Trail.

Directions to the Grange: Exit I-95 at Kennedy Memorial Drive (Waterville) and head WEST on Rt. 11 to Oakland. In Oakland bear left (still on Rt. 11), pass three churches, and the Grange is at the head of Messalonskee Lake, at the dam, across from Oakland Water Company. We look forward to meeting with all of you!

Friends' WALK IN THE PARK

July 27, 28, 29, 30, 2006

There are still a few spaces available for two nights at Roaring Brook and two at Chimney Pond. You could take a hike to Katahdin Lake and see for yourself! Or view it from atop Hamlin Ridge. Reserve a space NOW with Barbara Bentley at 207-763-3014 or <barbarabentley@tidewater.net>

5th Annual BSP Roadside Litter Patrol

Saturday, May 6, 2006 9 am to noon

Join Park staff and volunteers for a roadside litter patrol from Togue Pond Gate to Millinocket. Last year's patrol on the North End was a great success. To participate, SIGN UP by May 1st by contacting Park Headquarters. Those who do their share will receive a free barbecue lunch. Call Heather Haskell, Interpretive Specialist, at 207-723-8537 or heather.haskell@maine.gov and she'll order enough food for you!

Need a parking place in the Park?

Maine residents can now reserve a parking place in advance via a phone call to Park Reservation staff at 207-723-5140. There is no charge for this option. Visitors are limited to obtaining one reserved parking space on any given day and must arrive at Togue Pond Gate to claim by 7:30am.

Spaces available for reserving are:

Roaring Brook: 6 spaces

Abol Campground: 4 spaces

Katahdin Stream: 6 spaces

More information on options is available on the Park website www.baxterstateparkauthority.com or at Park Headquarters.

Baxter Park, Then and Now

Glickman Family Library, USM Portland Campus

Thursday, April 20th from 7-9 pm

7th Floor University Events Room

Come join your Baxter friends and celebrate the recent publication of four books about the Baxter State Park region. After the authors each speak briefly, there will be time for questions and comments. Featured books are:

North To Katahdin by Eric Pinder, published by Milkweed Editions of Minneapolis (2005)

Ktaadn Trails: Lucius Merrill and the Paths to Katahdin, published by Bangor Public Library (2005)

Katahdin in History and Story by John Neff, published by AMC forthcoming in 2006

Percival P. Baxter's Vision for Baxter State Park: An Annotated Compilation of Original Sources, Vol. 1-4, compiled and edited by Howard Whitcomb for Friends of Baxter State Park (2005)



L to R: South Peak, Knife Edge, Pamola Peak, Tableland and Great Basin, Hamlin Ridge, North Basin, North (Howe) Peaks viewed from shores of Katahdin Lake - photo by Jym St. Pierre

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We're looking for New Friends

_____ \$1,000	Governor Baxter Society
_____ \$ 500	Katahdin Club
_____ \$ 250	Knife Edger
_____ \$ 100	Hamlin Peaker
_____ \$ 50	Sponsor
_____ \$ 30	Family
_____ \$ 25	Individual

Please make checks payable to Friends of Baxter State Park. Dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. Send to **Friends of Baxter State Park, P.O. Box 1442, Bangor, ME 04402-1442.** Thank you!

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