



FOREVER WILD



Newsletter of Friends of Baxter State Park Winter 2019 Vol. 18 No. 1

Executive Director's Column

by Aaron Megquier

The Wabanaki, or People of the Dawnland, are the original friends of the land that we call Baxter State Park. Katahdin is a deeply sacred place for Wabanaki people. Maine's Native people have a track record of stewardship of this land that spans many millennia. Perhaps more importantly, they built a system of cultural traditions and institutions to care for it in perpetuity. European settlers have made a pretty concerted effort to destroy that culture over the past 500 years, but it lives on in today's Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Micmac, and Maliseet people.

As someone working to support Baxter State Park, I feel that this is a major gap in my own understanding. I've read lots of books about Native history and culture, but that sort of learning can only take you so far. It's too easy to get stuck thinking in the past tense. The present – and future – of Wabanaki people is also deeply deserving of our time and attention. I've been trying to fill my own knowledge gap this year as part of a groundbreaking program called First Light Learning Journey. I'll have more to say about this wonderful program once I have completed it, but it's an innovative, 18-month program that strives to foster awareness and points of relationship between Native and non-Native conservationists in Maine.

As part of the program, I've had the opportunity to meet with many Native leaders on their home ground, hear their stories, and learn about the issues they are facing. I spoke with several Passamaquoddy and Penobscot elders who told me that plant medicines collected in the shadow of Katahdin are more powerful than those collected elsewhere in Maine. As part of our own Maine Youth Wilderness Leadership Program this summer, I spent a transformative day at Russell Pond learning from Barry and Lori Dana of the Penobscot Nation. Despite my own deep and lifelong

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The three members of the Baxter State Park Authority are responsible for the careful stewardship of the Park's spectacular wilderness values according to the Deeds of Trust left by Percival Baxter.

– Photo © Ross Knowlton

A New Baxter State Park Authority Takes Shape

by Aaron Megquier

The Baxter State Park Authority is in transition following the election of Janet Mills as Maine's 75th Governor. The three-member Authority is made up of Maine's Attorney General, Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Director of the Maine Forest Service. Percival Baxter created this unique governance structure to help ensure that Park managers brought a wide variety of skills and expertise to the table.

Governor Mills served on the BSP Authority herself from 2009 to 2011, and from 2013 to early 2019 during her tenure as Maine's Attorney General. Serving with her on the BSP Authority were Douglas Denico, in his role as Director of the Maine Forest Service, and Chandler Woodcock, in his role as Commissioner of Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Despite their political differences, these three public servants worked together as a cohesive team to guide the Park through a period of growth and management challenges. Friends would like to express its gratitude to all three of these Authority members for their years of thoughtful, loyal, and skilled service to Baxter State Park.

At the time this issue went to press, two new members of the BSP Authority were already on the job. Aaron Frey was elected as Maine's 58th Attorney General by the

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Friends of Baxter State Park is a 501(c)(3) organization working to preserve, support, and enhance the wilderness character of Baxter State Park in the spirit of its founder, Percival P. Baxter.

Executive Director's Column

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connection to Baxter State Park, I recognize that the relationship between Native people and the Park goes far beyond anything that I have ever known. It is all-encompassing, reciprocal, and profound.

Baxter State Park recently made a change that I hope will benefit Maine's Native people. A rule allowing Park visitors to harvest "berries and fiddleheads" for personal use was broadened to include "wild edible or medicinal plants and mushrooms." In my experience, this won't affect the majority of Park visitors. It takes a lot of knowledge to safely eat a wild plant, and an even deeper connection to the natural world use a plant effectively as medicine. Few people today have that knowledge or connection, but the world would be a better place if we did. For Wabanaki people who want to collect plant medicines in the shadow of Katahdin, after generations of not being able to do so, I hope this is a meaningful change.

As my own learning continues, I hope that I will be able to help Friends and the Park build stronger relationships with Maine's Native communities. Forever is a long time, and acknowledging that we have a lot to learn seems like a good place to start.

Answer: Trivia Question in Fall Newsletter

In our fall newsletter, we asked "About how many miles of trails did Baxter State Park have in the early 1960s?" Answer: depending on where you draw the line on "early 1960s," an answer in the 75 to 80 mile range would be correct. Congratulations to Linda Babcock for answering correctly!



Membership Matters

by Sarah Holland, Administrative Manager

In this winter issue of *Forever Wild*, we continue our series of articles profiling members of Friends of Baxter State Park. This member profile is especially poignant because it was written and published posthumously – Dave Getchell Sr. passed away on November 10, 2018. This member profile was written by Barbara Bentley with contributions from others who knew "Getch" well.



Member Profile: David R. Getchell, Sr.

Dec. 30, 1928 – Nov. 10, 2018

"The scene was bleak – and magnificent. Leaning on my ski poles after a steady climb around the lower hump of Hamlin Ridge, I looked into the North Basin where snow covered talus swept up to grey cliffs streaked with ice gullies and frozen waterfalls. ... I was alone in an immense black and white world with no signs of man near or far."

– Dave Getchell, Sr.

This is how Dave Getchell, Sr. began his first article in Vol. 1, No. 1 of the Friends of Baxter State Park newsletter, *Forever Wild*. Dave was struck by the rare sense of true wilderness he experienced there. With his three companions out of sight and the ranger back at Chimney Pond, Dave noted that there were only five humans in the 200,000 acres of Baxter State Park and gave credit to Percival Baxter for his foresight in providing this opportunity for him and for others.



Eric Hendrickson said about Dave, "What I liked best about him was his love for the outdoors; you could see it in his eye when you talked to him."

Dave was at home in the world – in the woods and rocky mountains, on the waterways in his 18' open boat, and even on the road pedaling his bike. He was a genius in inspiring others to explore and enjoy the wilderness and to become stewards of the paths they travelled. His complete faith in the intrinsic goodness of all people allowed him to

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Park Authority Takes Shape – Continued from pg.1

Legislature in December, and took his oath of office on January 8, 2019. Maine is the only state in the nation in which the Legislature elects the Attorney General. Frey formerly worked as a Defense Attorney, and also served three terms in the Maine House of Representatives representing Bangor and Orono. He is 39 years old and lives in Bangor.

Judy Camuso was nominated by Governor Mills on December 19 to become the next Commissioner of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Camuso has served in the department since 2007, most recently as Director of Wildlife, and also spent 10 years as the Staff Naturalist for Maine Audubon. She is trained as a wildlife biologist and lives in Freeport, Maine. Camuso was confirmed by the Maine Senate on January 31, becoming the first woman to serve as Commissioner in the Department's 139-year history.

The new Director of the Maine Forest Service had not yet been announced when this issue went to press. This position reports to the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. Governor Mills has nominated Amanda Beal, former president of the Maine Farmland Trust, to serve as Commissioner of that department. Once confirmed by the Senate, we expect that Beal will be involved in assembling her team and choosing a leader for the Maine Forest Service.

During the October 2018 meeting of the BSP Authority, Doug Denico called upon those present at the meeting – including FBSP staff and Board members, BSP Advisory members, BSP rangers, and others – to help bring the new Authority members up to speed. He spoke about the steep learning curve that he experienced, and the benefits of sharing the collective knowledge in the room. This is a task that Friends would be honored to help with over the months and years to come. In the meantime, we would like to extend a very warm welcome to the new members of the BSP Authority.

Dave Getchell – Continued from pg.2

communicate with people he met in a way that brought out the best in each person and situation. Dave also knew that, in our increasingly crowded world, wilderness needs friends.

To that end, in addition to his professional career as an author and editor, Dave was instrumental in founding citizen groups that continue to befriend and steward wild areas in Maine.

These include the Maine Island Trail Association (launched in 1988 with the creation of the first water trail in the nation, linking hundreds of coastal island from Kittery to Eastport) and the Georges River Land Trust's Georges Highland Path (a 50-mile network of low impact footpaths spanning the length of the watershed.) Dave once said, "Knowing Mainers as I do, I am sure people, if they have no legal obligation, will be willing to share their land on a handshake agreement. 'Sure, come ashore. We welcome you as long as you take care of it.'" Volunteer stewards still play an important role in the organizations he helped create.

And when Baxter State Park needed friends, Dave was there working to create Friends of Baxter State Park. Former BSP Director Buzz Caverly remembers Dave as the diplomat who came up with a compromise in the bitter controversy over snowmobile use in the Park, a solution that holds to this day. Dave knew the Park well, served on the Park's advisory body, made a career of volunteering in the Park, and for years was the go-to person for search and rescue, often accompanied by his son, Dave, Jr. For-



Suited up in climbing gear, Getch prepares for an ascent. He and his son Dave, Jr. mounted many a search and rescue mission in the Park and trained others to do the job as well.

–Photo from Getchell family collection

mer BSP Director Jensen Bissell, during his tenure as manager of the Scientific Forest Management Area of the Park, welcomed the Getchells' annual volunteer visits. "In return for their efforts on upkeep at the cabin at Webster Lake and project work in the SFMA, Dave would apply his fly fishing talents to the trout of Webster Stream. Dave's talent was significant, and fresh trout was always on the menu during their stay."

Dave was a man of action: let's go fishing, volunteer now, hike this trail, launch your boat there. And this was what he did for Friends of Baxter State Park. He zeroed in on what we could do for the Park and for our members and galvanized us into action. Hence, the quarterly newsletter, the lively annual meetings, the useful and informative *Know Before You Go* brochure – all designed to bring people closer to the wilderness park, to inform their use, and to build their love and stewardship. Thank you, Getch!

Although I first met Dave and his wife Dorrie when they were reporting on their cross-country bicycle trip at the Camden Public Library (they'd had so much fun going West that they turned around and bicycled back home), Dave truly became my mentor during the formative years of Friends of Baxter State Park. He handed off to me the editorship of the newsletter in 2005, and his example subsequently guided me through six years as president. Initiatives like Walks in the Park, volunteer chainsaw crews, and Warm Winter Weekends further engaged our members in supporting the Park.

Dave mentored many others, too. Each of FBSP's early presidents credits Getch for our successes. Holly Dominie: "Dave's quiet, reasoned perspective was fundamental in creating a strong foundation for the Friends of Baxter State Park. Few people are as humble in their accomplishments as was Getch." Charlie Jacobi: "When I became President of the Friends in 2004, Getch served as Vice President and was the steady hand steering the ship behind the rookie." Although Dave retired from the Board in 2005 and became an Honorary Director in 2007, his interest in and support of Friends of Baxter State Park never waned. He generously shared his Maine Coast Heritage Trust's Espy Land Heritage Award with us in 2008. He and Dorrie attended our annual meetings regularly, including the most recent one in the Spring of 2018.

Now Dave Getchell, Sr. has "gone fishin'" for good and left a tremendous legacy for us all – family, friends, colleagues, and aficionados of wilderness wherever they are, on whatever land or water trails they follow. FBSP's first President John Neff says that Maine is an even more special place in which to live because of Dave's life. We all agree.

President's Column

by Dick Klain



Members of Maine's volunteer search and rescue teams participating in advanced rope rescue training in 2013. These are some of the brave folks who volunteer their time and expertise to help those who get into trouble on Katahdin.

— Photo © Steve Mitman

Turning Back

Recently the *Bangor Daily News* reported the rescue of two climbers who were hiking the Knife Edge of Katahdin. I do not know of any details except those that were reported in the paper. Ranger Michael Winslow and a volunteer at Chimney Pond started out in the middle of the night to find two hikers whose presence became apparent because of their headlamps. The rescue team met them halfway up the Dudley Trail. The hikers and the rescuers got back down safely to the ranger cabin at Chimney Pond around midnight. I can only surmise that the hikers were in pretty rough shape and the fact that they had been wearing helmets had saved their lives from several "falls" around the chimney area of the Knife Edge where they lost the trail in white out conditions. "Mistakes and the resulting consequences often are magnified in winter, they said, and rescue could end up being hours away." Baxter State Park Director Eben Sypitkowski said in the press release, "It is your responsibility to minimize hazards by using good judgment."

Over the course of many years I have led and participated in nu-

merous climbs in Baxter State Park, the White Mountains, and the Adirondacks in winter as well as other seasons. My hiking out west has been limited to the non-snow seasons but at those elevations snow was frequently visibly abundant. I am not what some would call an adventurous hiker who challenges himself at all turns. I am a recreational hiker. One of my personal challenges has always been to operate within self-imposed norms of safety. My enthusiasm over the years has led to sometimes questionable circumstances. Curb-ing that enthusiasm is what Eben calls "using good judgment."

Whenever I read about tragedies or even near tragedies that occur on mountains or at sea my heart goes out to those who participated and those left at home. My second thought frequently is "what were they thinking?" followed closely by "there, but for the grace of God go I." Circumstances can change quickly in the mountains especially in the winter. I have headed up Mount Washington at least four times with the goal of summiting using leg power, only to be turned back by inclement weather. Once my party actually spent a cold night in an avalanche shelter within sight of the observatory because we couldn't get off the mountain due to ice in mid-October. The next day it melted but not before we had turned back. By the time we got to the trail head it was sixty-five degrees. Could we have made it to the summit? Who knows? We made the decision to turn back that morning because of our unwillingness to take the risk of catastrophe. We all went back to work the following day, wiser for the adventure and more respectful of the weather shifts on that mountain. Katahdin and many of the other peaks in Baxter are no different. They deserve respect.

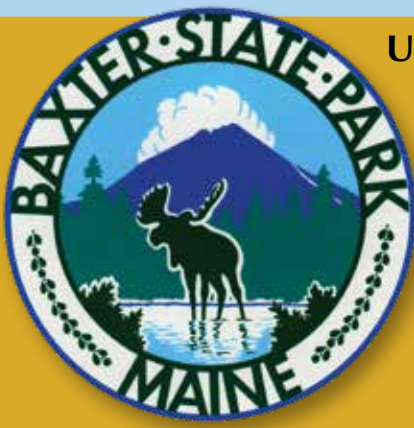
People ask me is it safe to climb or hike in the winter at Baxter State Park. My response is always the same, "It depends." It involves trust in your group. It involves trust in yourself. It involves trust in your gear. It involves trust in the weather report. It involves creating a plan and knowing when to abandon it. I remind people that getting to your goal should not be attaining a summit but returning to your starting place safely with wonderful memories. Finally I will ask, "Is your life really worth all those others who may try to rescue you?" Friends of Baxter State Park provides scholarships for Maine's search and rescue volunteers to attend advanced skills workshops. The park staff and these trained volunteers put their lives at risk to help those in need. They deserve our respect. We can show our respect by not having to put them in harm's way. Enjoy Baxter State Park. Be safe out there - especially in winter.



— Calendar cover photo © Donna Lawson

2019 Baxter State Park Calendars on sale

Do you still need a calendar for 2019? Our 2019 Baxter State Park calendars are now on sale for \$10, including tax and shipping. You can order online at www.friendsofbaxter.org, mail a check to PO Box 322, Belfast, ME 04915, or call (207) 505-5779. All proceeds benefit Friends of Baxter State Park.



Update from Baxter State Park by Eben Sypitkowski, BSP Director

This winter caught many of us unawares in mid-November, and the ground in our area has stayed more or less white since. Our Rangers have been to Chimney by snowsled as early as ever; there hasn't yet been enough snow to get into Russell that way. By most accounts we're off and running with the winter tasks of hauling materials and preparing for the busy season.



After sustaining flooding damage last spring, the Chimney Pond Ranger station was repaired over the summer and is back up and running.
— Photo courtesy of Baxter State Park

With the winter weather we've been reminded of the power and danger in Pamola's wrath. A somewhat unprepared party ascended Cathedral and attempted the Knife Edge. Disoriented in 50 mph winds and the resultant whiteout, the pair traversed a few feet below the Knife Edge from South Peak almost to Pamola. Their flexible boots with stiff crampons proved insufficient for the job. By the time they reached the Dudley Trail they had lost all their spiky things and had taken a number of dangerous falls as a result. Had Ranger Mike Winslow not been looking out the window at the Chimney Pond Ranger Station to see their headlamps making

their way down the Dudley Trail, this event might have produced a darker outcome.

We must remember to respect the mountain and the power of the wind, be honest about our skills and abilities, and humble enough to turn back when things get gnarly. It is up to the visitor to take this responsibility for him or herself. Rescue may be hours or days away, or not come at all. Wilderness is certainly a place to challenge yourself. With that privilege comes the responsibility to do so in a way that does not depend on a rescue. Yes, we have talented staff well versed in rescue methods, but these situations are always dangerous, even to them.



Elise Goplerud will begin work on March 4 as Baxter State Park's new Interpretive Specialist. She has previously worked in the Park as a Wilderness Educator and a Backcountry Roving Ranger.
— Photo courtesy of Baxter State Park

Speaking of our talented staff, in December we hired a passionate forester, Mike Pouch (pronounced "punch") as the Resource Manager. Mike brings his sharp wit and humble approach to us from New England Forestry Foundation, where he was working on a definition for exemplary forestry in the region. We promoted Elise Goplerud to full time as Interpretive Specialist from her post as Backcountry Roving Ranger. Elise brings a background in parks, interpretation and a can-do attitude to her new role in our information and education department.

We've also said "goodbye" to some long time Park folks this year; Nancy Moxley, a part of our Baxter family in some way for more than 20 years, took her leave in December. Betsy Dawkins, longtime Nesowadnehunk Ranger, retired this year as well. We also said "adieu" to Rebekah Morrison, one of our Trail specialists, who, in conjunction with Liz Thibault, restructured and refocused the 220+ mile trails program that is the circu-



It was an early snow year in the Park, with lasting snow arriving in mid-November. In this photo, Ranger Dave Loomer is shoveling off a bridge on his way to Chimney Pond in late November.
— Photo courtesy of Baxter State Park

latory system of this Park.

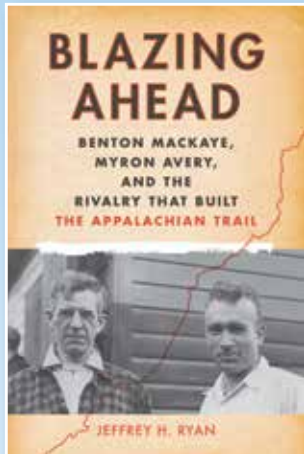
There seems to be a perception that our stellar seasonal positions with benefits are unattainable. This is not the case! We often have openings, and we are always looking for folks with passion, curiosity and humility. So please, if someone you know loves the park and wants to join our family, encourage them to reach out. They can look on www.indeed.com for our available positions, look at our website for rolling applications for seasonal positions, or give me a call to see what might be on the horizon. Soon we'll be posting a 5-6 month trail specialist position to work with our trails maven Liz Thibault. I would rank this position as among the most desirable outdoor gigs coming this year in Maine. Additionally we have at least two campground ranger positions and a gate position available now! There may be more soon. Come join us and share in Governor Baxter's magnificent obsession!

Baxter State Park Trivia

What is the shortest route, by trail, from a roadside trailhead to a named summit in Baxter State Park? Please send trivia answers to Sarah Holland at admin@friendsofbaxter.org.

Book Review: : *Blazing Ahead: Benton MacKaye, Myron Avery, and the Rivalry that Built the Appalachian Trail* by Jeffrey H. Ryan

Book Review by Howard Whitcomb



Blazing Ahead: Benton MacKaye, Myron Avery, and the Rivalry that Built the Appalachian Trail, by Jeffrey H. Ryan, was published in 2017 by Appalachian Mountain Club Books.

– Cover image courtesy of Appalachian Mountain Club

Jeffrey H. Ryan's recent book, *Blazing Ahead: Benton MacKaye, Myron Avery, and the Rivalry that Built the Appalachian Trail*, is a fascinating account of the two principals responsible for the inspiration and implementation of the Appalachian Trail. The volume fills a long-standing void in the trail's celebrated history. The MacKaye story has been told in his definitive biography by Larry Anderson, *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); however, an in-depth account of Myron H. Avery's preoccupation with the actual building of the trail has never been told, other than in a brief profile of Avery's life by Robert A. Rubin, that appeared in a special issue of the Appalachian Trail Conference's special issue of *Appalachian Trailway News* in 2002.

Thanks to Ryan's efforts, the Avery Collection in the Maine State Library has finally been carefully mined to document his indisputable role in the AT's early history, including his determination to have Katahdin as the trail's northern terminus. Ryan, the author of *Appalachian Odyssey* (reviewed in the Fall 2018 issue of *Forever Wild*), makes no pretense of writing a biography, but his culling of the collection's voluminous correspondence provides insights into the troubled, often tormented, relationship with MacKaye, as well as with other major figures in the Appalachian Trail Conference (now the Appalachian Trail Conservancy) and the Appalachian Mountain Club. If you weren't in agreement with Avery on a whole host of issues, such as outlets for his prolific writings, nomenclature, and leadership roles, you risked vitriolic responses.

The irrevocable breach in the rivalry between Ryan's "dreamer" and "doer" was over the construction of the Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park. MacKaye sided with those calling for parkways and highways on the "lower flanks and levels" of the Appalachian ranges, rather than on the ridgeline, whereas Avery simply wanted an uninterrupted trail built, irrespective of the compromises that he had to make. Avery prevailed and the two men were never again to speak to each other. Ryan concludes: "Myron Avery seized control of Benton MacKaye's idea and built a fiefdom – and a legacy – around it. . . . If the AT was ever going to be built, it needed a Myron Avery. One may find fault with Avery's approach and outbursts, but it's hard to find fault with the outcome."

Blazing Ahead also contains valuable appendices, consisting of MacKaye's seminal article in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* – "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning"; a catalogue of Avery's prodigious AT work trips; and key milestones in the development of the trail.

Jeffrey H. Ryan's new book on the MacKaye – Avery rivalry deserves to become a staple in the rich literature of the Appalachian Trail.

Friends hosts reception for new Park Director Eben Sypitkowski



On November 27, 2018, Friends hosted a reception for new Park Director Eben Sypitkowski at the Viles House in Augusta. With the help of more than 60 of our members, we were able to provide a warm welcome to Eben as well as several other new members of the Park's Administrative Team. Attendees enjoyed delicious food catered by Bagel Maine in Augusta and great beer donated by Bissell Brothers Brewing in Portland. Many thanks to the Elsie & William Viles Foundation for hosting this wonderful event!
– Photo courtesy of Baxter State Park

Save the Date: 2019 Annual Meeting
Saturday, April 6, 9:00am - 1:00pm
Governor Hill Mansion, Augusta, ME

BAXTER STATE PARK Revised 1963

Baxter State Park, containing 200,000 acres, was a gift to the State of Maine by former Governor Percival P. Baxter. It is a paradise for the naturalist, mountain climber, and hiker.

Governor Baxter expresses the spirit of the Park as follows:

Man is Born to Die, His Works are Short-Lived
Buildings Crumble, Monuments Decay, Wealth Vanishes
But Katahdin in All Its Glory
Forever Shall Remain the Mountain of the People of Maine

There are 46 mountain peaks and ridges, 18 of which exceed an elevation of 3,500 feet, the highest being Baxter Peak, 5,267 feet. The Park is intersected by about 75 miles of trail, leading from or between the seven campgrounds, which makes it possible to explore in natural surroundings, yet with safety.

ABOL CAMPGROUND

This campground is on the southwest side of the Park, 24 miles from Millinocket by automobile road. It is the newest of the campgrounds, the smallest reached by automobile, and is located in a wooded area at the foot of the Abol Trail.

This trail is the oldest and most historic of all the Katahdin trails. It utilizes a landmark, the Abol Slide, which came down in 1816. For many years climbers from the West Branch of the Penobscot River reached the summit by way of this slide.

The Abol Trail provides a direct ascent to the summit of Katahdin, 2½ miles to the Tableland and another mile to Baxter Peak (3¾ miles).

Many trails lead off the Nesowadnehunk road (the approach road) to ponds and along streams in the area and to the Appalachian Trail leading down Nesowadnehunk Stream to the Penobscot West Branch.

The campground is particularly suitable for those who wish to spend most of their time on the Tableland or slopes of the mountain, those who like a secluded woodland camping area, those who wish more quiet and privacy than can be found in larger campgrounds, or who wish a quiet base from which to explore the many trails to mountains and ponds on the south and west side of Katahdin which may be reached by car on the Nesowadnehunk tote road.

Accommodations

A ranger is in charge of the campground and assigns space to campers. There are 12 lean-tos and 8 tent spaces. Of these, there are two pair of lean-tos and one pair of tent spaces. The others are all widely spaced, surrounded by trees and shrubs, and afford a feeling of quiet and solitude.

Fees

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Shelters (Lean-tos) | .75 per person per night – minimum \$1.50 |
| Tenting or trailer space | .25 per person per night – minimum \$1.00 per site |
| Wood | .50 per bundle, when available |

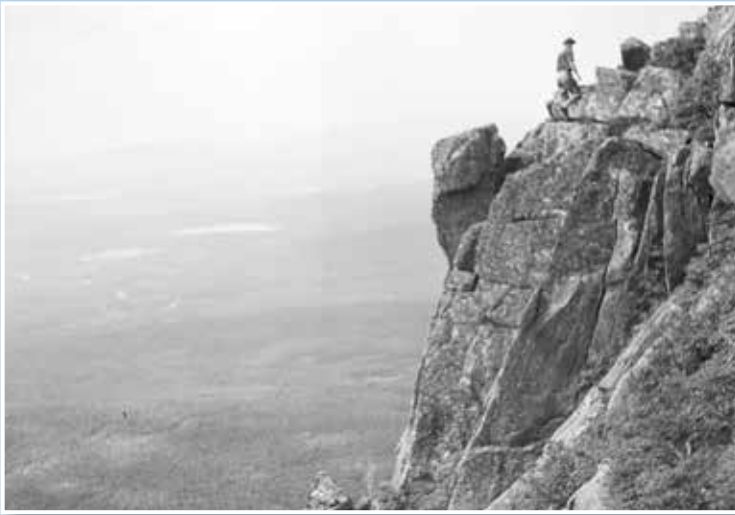
Reservations must be paid in advance to assure accommodations, and confirmed by Melon Taylor, Supervisor; or Mrs. Helen Gifford, reservation clerk; Millinocket, Maine. Tel. Millinocket Park 3-5201.

The Park is open to the public from May 15 to October 15. There are privately operated sporting camps at Kidney Pond and Daicey Pond in the Park, and at Togue Pond and Nesowadnehunk Lake near the Park.

Many thanks to Stuart Thomsen for sending this BSP handout from Abol Campground, dated 1963, that inspired the trivia question in the fall newsletter. It references "about 75 miles of trail," in addition to providing a fascinating window into the early days of the Park.
– Courtesy of Stuart Thomsen

Looking back...

by John W. Neff, Author of *Katahdin: An Historic Journey*



A hiker scales the west side of Katahdin in the summer of 1939.

– Photo © Norman Spear, courtesy of Gail & Stephen Stone

An Extraordinary Baxter Park Traverse

Once in a while, the record of an astonishing climb of Katahdin is discovered, requiring one to stretch the usual rational possibilities to the limit. In June of 1912, three Colby College professors decided to climb Katahdin, took the train in Millinocket, and began their odyssey by walking all the way to the base of the Abol Slide in two days. They were guided only by a “diagram that Thoreau had made” after his 1846 partial ascent of the mountain and which they borrowed from the college library. The next day they climbed the steep trail up the avalanche and finally stood on the summit in the late morning. It was clear, but clouds were beginning to gather. Whether by design or otherwise (the account does not reveal) the group descended “the other side” of the mountain, and over several days they passed a “body of water” (Katahdin Lake?), reached the Wassataquoik Valley tote road, slept near a lumberman’s “bunkhouse”, and encountered a number of loggers. On their final day they arrived at the west bank of the East Branch of the Penobscot River, calmly hailed the Lunksoos ferryman, and were carried across the river. The final day they hiked up to the railroad station at Stacyville in time to catch the late afternoon train back home to Waterville.

To my knowledge, there is no record of such a lengthy traverse in all the Katahdin literature, with the possible exception of Donn Fendler’s clearly unintentional traverse in 1939. To follow such an itinerary of thirty or so miles - many more by primitive foot trails - would test the very limits of endurance and fortitude. To have done it more than a century ago with primitive equipment is indeed impressive.

{My thanks to Friends member Bill Geller who discovered this story in a 1970 Lewiston Journal Magazine Section during his research}

History of the Keep Lot on Katahdin Lake

By Earl W. Raymond

In John Neff’s book *Katahdin: An Historic Journey* he covers Rev. Marcus R. Keep’s amazing time spent on the mountain from 1846 to well into the 1860’s. Marcus Keep was from Ashland, Maine and had to travel about seventy five miles, by walking or by horse, to reach the Hunt Farm on the East Branch of the Penobscot River. From the Hunt Farm to the outlet of Katahdin Lake is eleven miles and then finally the seven miles up the Keep Ridge to Pamola and the summit of Katahdin.

In 1859, the Maine Legislature passed a resolve entitled Resolve in Favor of Marcus R. Keep Approved February 19, 1859. The Legislature granted Keep a 200-acre lot “in consideration of services and money expended by Marcus R. Keep in opening a pathway from the east branch of the Penobscot River to the summit of Katahdin Mountain.” Keep chose his lot on the east side of the pond facing Katahdin in T3 R8 WELS. The lot also included the outlet of Katahdin Lake where he had a log cabin.

In 1858 there was a survey made for The Mount Katahdin Road Company from Stacyville to the summit of Katahdin. The Journal & Survey notes for Saturday, November 6, 1858, include the following: “to a Maple tree marked angle No 12, standing in KATAHDIN Path (Keep Path, they were surveying along the south side of Katahdin Pond toward the outlet). We arrive there at 6 o’clock, and there is every appearance of snow storm, we leave and go ahead to the camp and remain for the night.” This had to be Marcus Keep’s log cabin, as Marcus R. Keep is recorded in the field notes as a chainman on the survey crew and they were at that time at the outlet of Katahdin Lake.

The parcel of land as deeded by B.W. Norris, Land Agent of Maine to Marcus R. Keep dated 6/27/1860, and recorded 10/02/1862, is as follows: “Said lot located at the outlet to Katahdin Pond adjacent to said pond, extending north and south eighty rods each way said lot containing 200 acres, more or less, according to the survey and plan of said lot returned to the land office in 1859 by Noah Barker, surveyor, reference to said.” There is no mention of a right of way to the Keep Lot in the deed. The Barker plan could not be found recorded in the Penobscot County Registry of Deeds.

A little more than two years later, on September 23, 1862, Marcus R. Keep of Ashland took out a mortgage to Ebenezer S. Coe of Bangor for \$50. The mortgage was recorded as payable one year from the date with interest. After seventeen years of owning the lot, Keep conveyed it to Ebenezer Coe on January 1, 1866. The Keep Lot was devised by will to Thomas U. Coe in January of 1900. Thomas U. Coe owned the lot for about one year and sold it to James W. Sewall & Ira D. Eastman on 12/21/1901. The ownership of the lot then passed, by will, to James W. Sewall Jr. on 7/03/1905. The lot then stayed in the name of James W. Sewall Jr. for 21 years.

Louise G. Sewall (dowager of James W. Sewall Jr.) became the owner of the Keep lot on 4/16/1925, recorded 1/11/1926. That very same day it was deeded to Frank C. Wright and then on to the Katahdin Lake Club on 1/11/1926. When Louise G. Sewall conveyed the lot to Frank C. Wright in January 1926 she reserved /retained the following portion of the original 200 acre Keep Lot. “being a part of the Keep Lot bounded and described as follows, to wit: all that parcel of said lot.....as lies southerly of a line drawn parallel with and 500 feet southerly from the northerly line of said lot.” This 500 foot strip, 43 acre remainder of the original 200 acre Keep Lot is the one that has come down to the Sewall heirs. After five years the southern part of the Keep Lot went back to Frank C. Wright on April 10, 1931. Then after another 13 years he sold it to the Huber Company on May 1, 1944. Huber conveyed their part of the Keep Lot to the Baxter State Park Authority on March 1, 2012.

The 43-acre lot remains in the ownership of the James W. Sewall heirs as a privately owned “in-holding”, surrounded by land owned and managed by the Baxter State Park Authority. In December of 2013, the Baxter State Park Authority voted to accept the “Keep Lot North” conservation easement granted by Sewall family members Tingly Sewall, James Page, and Thomas Gary covering this historic parcel of land on the shores of Katahdin Lake.



Friends of Baxter State Park

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Thank you!

Please join us for Warm Winter Weekend

The 12th annual Warm Winter Weekend has already begun to fill up. Any member interested in attending should call New England Outdoor Center (NEOC) on Millinocket Lake at 1-800-766-7238 to make reservations. Please be sure to mention that you are calling from Friends of Baxter State Park. The dates are Thursday, March 14 through Sunday, March 17, 2019. The cost is \$212.25 per person for the weekend. Non-members should join Friends of Baxter State Park at www.friendsofbaxter.org prior to registering with NEOC. As of early February, snow and trail conditions are excellent! We are looking forward to a wonderful time. If we get more than thirty-five registrations we will create a waiting list, and may be able to accommodate additional guests depending on the lodging availability of NEOC.

