Friends of Baxter State Park

Forever Wild

Newsletter of the Friends of Baxter State Park
Summer 2011 Supplement

President's Column

by Barbara Bentley

The progress of the Wassataquoik valley's recovery of its wild state has been evident to my family on our annual visits to the area for the past fifty (50) years. As children, we played in the open fields of New City, imagining what buildings stood on the various foundations. Artifacts were our toys. Today, we have to point out to our grandchildren that this "was" the area of New City. Remains of dams all over the watershed made river crossings easy and created swimming pools below them. We now rock hop or wade, and we know where dams used to be when we find spikes in the woods by the streams's shore. Burned areas were plentiful, providing perfect blueberry habitat; we made jam and dumplings over our campfire. Today, we forage far and wide for a few berries to sprinkle on our cereal. Our parents' passion for bushwhacking led us up many a mountain via abandoned logging roads and over sparsely wooded slopes. Today's excursions involve a lot more of "bush" and "whack," not to mention use of the compass and map where sight lines used to do. We could easily read the message on Inscription Rock, traces of which are barely discernable to the trained eye today. The paint applied to the chiseled inscription by Ralph Dolley in 1955 is all but gone. Views were plentiful from the trails. We now hike in the shade and stop to savor a view when we find one. Dry-ki around lakes and trees killed by forest fires made firewood plentiful. Many campers now cook on portable stoves, and others go farther afield to find downed dry wood to burn.

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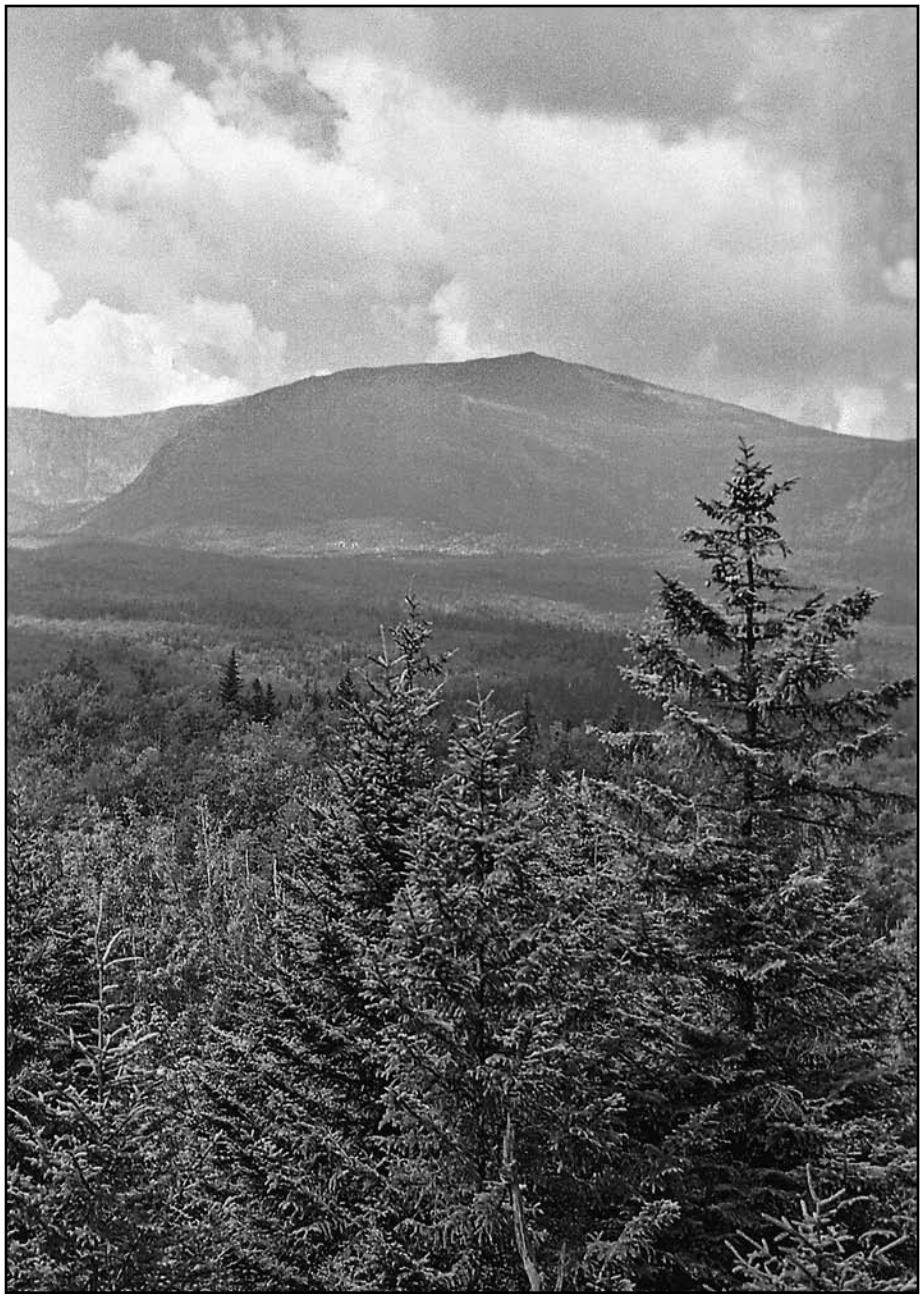


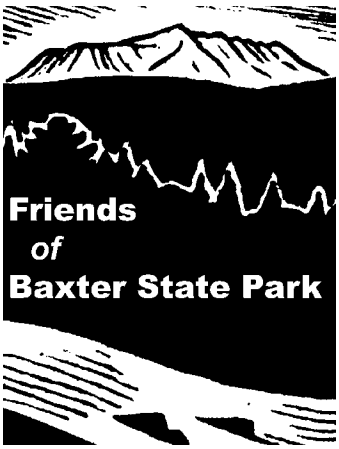
North (Howe) Peaks of Ktaadn are seen here in a photograph taken from trail along South Branch of the Wassataquoik in August 1946. *– Photo © Gary M. Boone*

A Wassataquoik History

by Gary McG. Boone

Preface

Beginning in the early 19th century, the Wassataquoik valley was steadily transformed from dense pine and spruce forest to scattered residual pockets of spruce and fir on the surrounding higher mountain slopes. The change was initiated by intense logging, operated by means of the water pathways down the Wassataquoik to the Penobscot River. Following three phases of logging, great



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fires that fed on slash and debris reduced rich duff to a thin layer of mineral soil that exposed a sea of glacially transported boulders. This was the condition that former Governor Baxter inherited when he acquired the valley in T4, R9 for Baxter State Park. Since then, the forest has begun to regenerate, first with birch and poplar, followed by gradual recurrence of spruce, fir, and pine. With the Park's commitment to Governor Baxter's "forever wild" vision, this evolution continues. One must recognize, however, that the Park remains at the mercy of ecological forces, such as outbreaks of spruce budworm or other invasive species, lightning- or human-caused forest fire, climate warming, or drought. Predicting the future of the Wassataquoik, and by extension the Park surroundings, may be possible only with an understanding of its fragile past, and its inherent vulnerability.

In 1929, Myron Halliburton Avery published *The Story of the Wassataquoik — A Maine Epic*. John Neff (2006) mentioned this article in *Katahdin — An Historic Journey* (p. 91 - 99), but it is still a much-neglected account (1929a) of Maine's transformation of the North Woods. Avery's article, in hindsight, gives us a missing perspective on what was, near the turn of the last century, massive change in what is now the central area of Baxter State Park. A second Avery article (1929b) extends his discussion of fires, especially that of 1915 in the northern part of the Wassataquoik watershed and into T4, R10 to the north. Lester F. Hall's journals of the first half of the 20th century have filled in this perspective (*in* Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Most people who love the Park are familiar with Percival Baxter's dogged perseverance in purchasing piecemeal the lands for the Park beginning in 1931 (Whitcomb, 2008). Baxter's vision of "forever wild" for the Park is in stark contrast to the devastation of the forest prior to Baxter's completing his purchases. To emphasize this striving for wildness, Jensen Bissell, current Park Director, wrote in his State of the Park address (2010), "[We] manage most of the Park in such a way that nature is the primary, principal and dominant force of change in the landscape . . .We are approaching the 50-year anniversary of Baxter's final Park purchase, and the Park is in many ways a wilder place than it was then."

Township T4, R9 in the central part of the Park, purchased by Baxter in 1941 and 1942 (Whitcomb, 2008), illustrates Bissell's statement better than in almost any other area. T4, R9 encloses the upper part of the Wassataquoik watershed, well removed from the perennial focus on Ktaadn[1] since the earliest days of the white man's discovery, and also removed from the newer, northern part of the Park in which The Traveler holds its own pre-eminence.

The Wassataquoik valley here is partly hidden by the massif of Ktaadn and its surrounding high peaks to the south and by Mullen Mountain, Wassataquoik, the Pogys and by the mass of The Traveler, in its northern perimeter. As such, T4, R9 ought to preserve the wildest history of the Park for it is still in many ways the most difficult of access and, by that token, should be leagues ahead in the Park's goal of "forever wild." But, as recorded by Avery and Hall, it had much catching up to do.

The forces that transformed much of the North Woods were at once by the hand of transplanted Western Civilization as well as by the capricious hand of Nature. The causes of transformation were about 50-50 in T4, R9, and so I propose that "forever wild" here takes on the dimensions of a massive, ongoing experiment in which Nature may yet gain the upper hand in succeeding generations to produce a remote forest scene perhaps not unlike what may have existed prior to the 1800s.

I last trod the banks of the Wassataquoik in 1946 on my way to Fort Mountain and the Northwest Basin (Boone, 2009). The stream and valley I saw were not much changed from that of Avery's account. For example, the New City clearing and relics of camps were still much in evidence, and old stumps of pine and spruce, many of them fire-charred, were a common sight. An account that Lester F. Hall, one of the more intrepid trail-blazers of the Ktaadn Range, wrote in 1938 (pp.117-118, *in* Kirkpatrick, 2010) gives the same impression:

This valley was at one time the home of some of the largest pines that ever grew in Maine. I remember coming across one stump. . . near the bank of the Wassataquoik, that was actually large enough to turn a yoke of oxen on. All of these trees were cut down with axes and as the snow was probably very deep. . . the stumps are several feet high.

What a place this valley must have been in those days! Silt from the mountain streams, loaded with minerals and decayed vegetation and deposited over the valley during the spring floods, . . . made a deep rich soil which gave these old pines abundant nourishment.

i.

Avery, as did Hall, had a fascination that bordered on love for the Wassataquoik. His article of 1929(a) begins in typical Avery style, with a vivid description of the stream itself, ". . . a brawling mountain torrent of the clearest water, tumbling along a bed choked with enormous pink granite

[1] An early, Thoreauesque spelling preferred by the author.

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boulders." After describing the main branches of the stream, he embarked on its history: "The Wassataquoik has known all phases of lumbering; it has floated the drives of old pine days, . . . it has battled the long spruce logs and finally yielded, subdued, when in the march of industry the long logs gave way to the pulpwood drives."

Twice Avery paid respects to "the forward march of the lumber industry" and "the march of industry." Marching — more often stumbling it was — and toward an end that, as he noted, ended with desolation in its wake.

"The story . . . begins with the old pine times . . .probably in 1841." That date must refer to the later phase of this search for pine, which earlier had begun in pre-Revolutionary days and then extended inland well into the early 1800s. He wrote, "The search for the 'Mast Pines' for the British Navy, trees thirty-six inches in diameter and as many yards in height, and its attendant enforcement of the King's Broad Arrow policy did not reach as far east as the Penobscot." This is questionable. Dee Caldwell, in his mapping of the glacial geology of the Park in the mid-1950s, told me he had seen somewhere north of Russell Mountain a Broad Arrow (an inverted V some 8″ high) axed into a large pine stump that stood about 5 feet above ground level. One may question whether this was typical of the height at which the Arrow was usually cut. But there it was. Mast pines or not, giant pines of venerable age were sought after in this part of Maine. Lore A. Rogers, who lived to the venerable age of 100, wrote (1962a) of such trees that were widely dispersed throughout the forest and of the methods used to locate them and prepare the ground on which they were felled. As the pines on low-lying land were harvested, operations moved to higher ground, often on mountain slopes. Long logs, each weighing tons, were gingerly worked downslope. Men used ingenious methods to "snub" a log; that is, a log fastened to rough-cut runners front and back, to brake the pull of gravity on the way down. Thus the name "Snub Pitch" at South Pogy Mountain's steep valley headwaters of Snub Brook, which joins Pogy Brook's waters on their way into the Wassataquoik.

As Rogers wrote, "By 1850, most of the white pine that was within easy reach of the lumbermen had been cut." Felling and snubbing the tons of long timber down steep mountain valleys — *within easy reach?* And Avery continued, "The cutting of the massive, largest pines declined even before Thoreau visited the East Branch in 1857, well before the coming of the first spruce loggers in 1863 . . ."

ii.

Avery devoted much space in his 1929a article to describing the inordinate difficulty of getting long logs off mountain slopes and down the Wassataquoik, with accompanying decimation of their potential yield. "Eight-foot cuts of huge pines were found stranded and rotted on Grand Falls [of] the Wassataquoik when Tracey and Love cleared the stream for driving" of long spruce logs. That began in 1883. *See facsimile of wording on Inscription Rock on page 5.*

The "distinguishing feature was the great number of dams to control the stream for driving. From Dacey Dam to Russell Camps, they built 23 dams. An instance of this method of stream control was at Ledge Falls, where standing on the center dam on the Falls, [one could see] two dams on each side. . . Save for the pine cuttings, [the Tracey & Love operation] was entering a virgin forest" – *hardly a virgin forest* – and "was the first to use dynamite on the Wassataquoik. . ."

Their task in T4, R9 was "to cut the town." A major storm, "the Maine Cyclone," created tremendous blow-downs (Coolidge, 1963, p. 131). The "blowdowns greatly impeded the operation," and in 1883-4, they only cut wind-thrown timber. This was followed later in 1884 by "the first of two terrific fires in the Wassataquoik region. Twen-

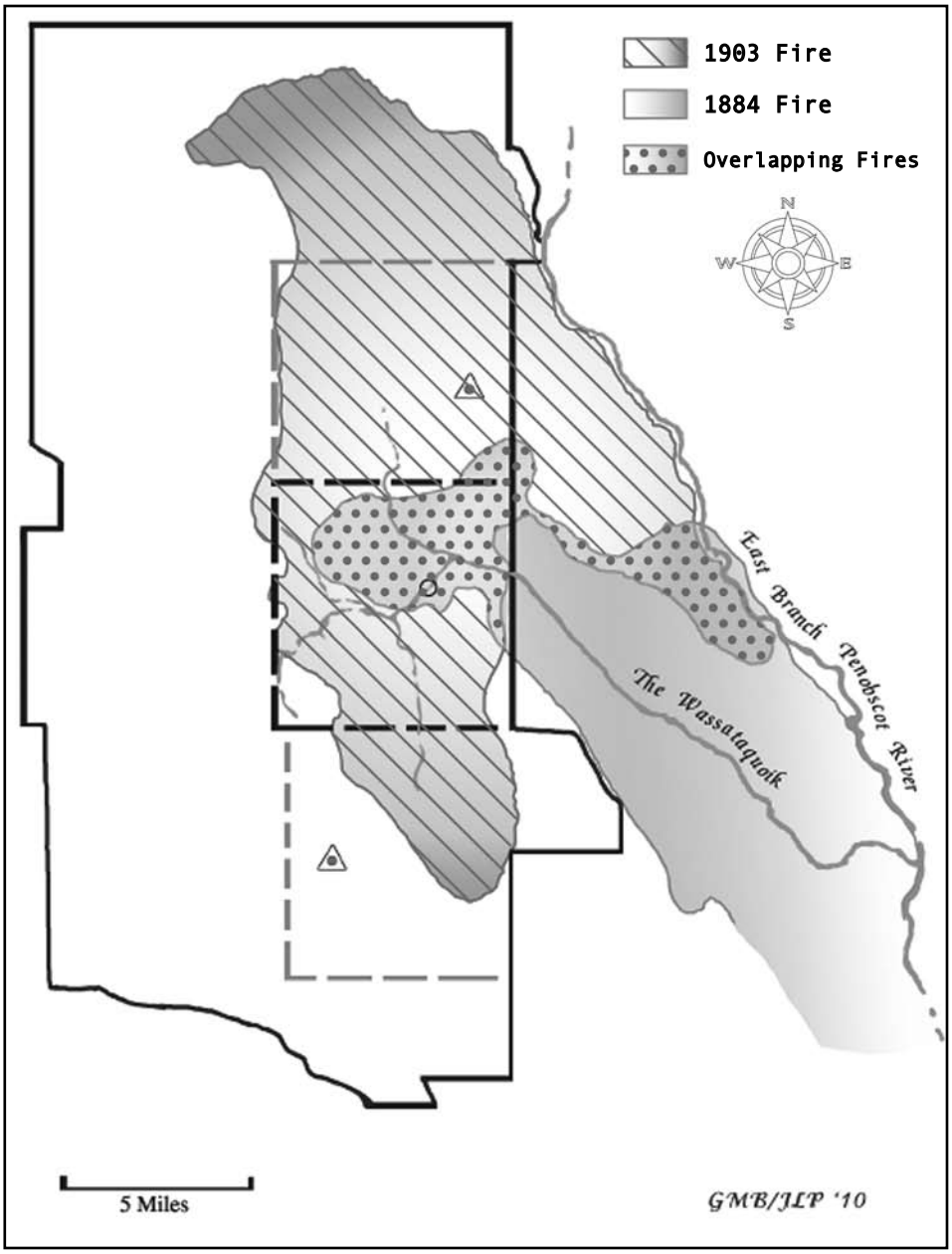


Figure 1:
Outline map of Baxter State Park and adjoining area eastward. Black dashes in central area of Park outline T4, R9 township, the principal focus of this article. Note overlapping areas of 1884 and 1903 forest fires (patterned as defined in legend, upper right) in upper Wassataquoik watershed in this township. Forest fire coverage derived from Samuel N. Spring's map of 1904. Lighter dashes locate T3, R9 adjacent to south, and T5, R9 to the north, with triangles to mark Baxter Peak of Ktaadn, and summit of The Traveler, respectively. Small circle on upper Waasataquoik, location of Inscription Rock.

ty-two thousand acres were burned over in four days." This covered most of T4, R9 and country to the east and southeast to the East Branch. *See Figure 1 on page 3 and Figure 5 on page 7.*

Nature was putting up a fierce battle of resistance to the "forward march" of lumbering. After being destroyed by the 1884 fire that claimed so much of the Wassataquoik forest, Old City, Russell Camp (later the site of the New City Camps), and Bell Camp were rebuilt. "A tremendous cut of the burned wood was made in 1884-5. Over 300 men were . . . in the operation and 11,000,000 board feet of logs were driven into the . . . East Branch from the Wassataquoik." (Avery, 1929a). "In the task of cutting T4, R9, Tracey & Love were succeeded by Ayer & Rogers. Col. Luther B. Rogers, of Patten . . . had driven pine on Trout Brook in 1857. Ayer & Rogers operated on the Sourdnahunk and the Wassataquoik from 1891 until 1901, when [they] in turn, disposed of their holdings to the Katahdin Pulp & Paper Company." It was during the Ayer & Rogers operation that Col. Rogers's young son, Lore, who was clerking for his father, took the photograph reproduced here as *Figure 2 on page 4.*

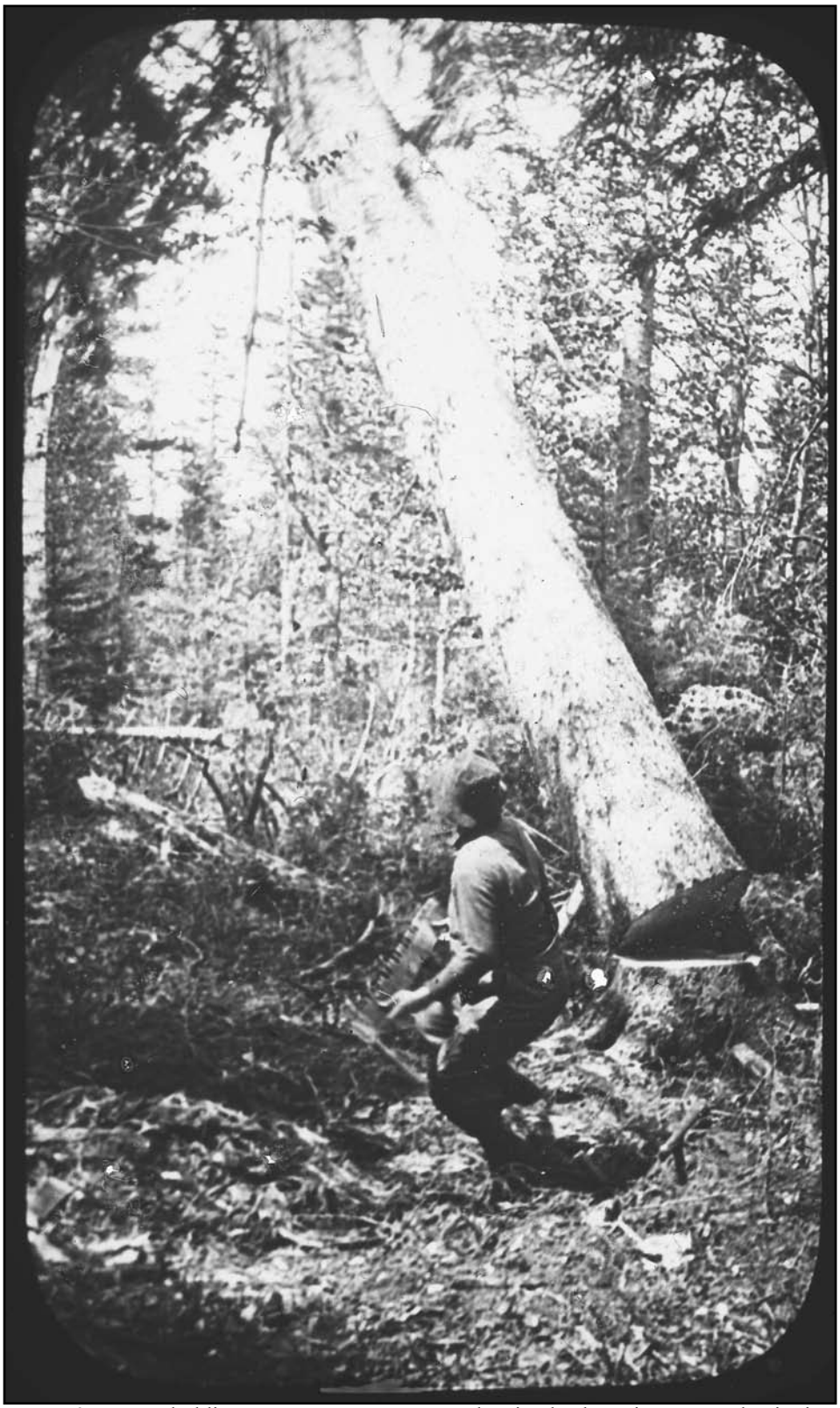


Figure 2: Logger holding two-man crosscut saw, glancing back at giant spruce beginning its fall. Photograph taken by Lore Rogers, ca. 1898, during the Ayer & Rogers operation in the Wassataquoik valley. Courtesy © Estate of Lore A. Rogers.

In a second article (1962b), Rogers gave a vivid description of a logjam on the Wassataquoik that is worth quoting:

The common conception of men running about looking for the 'key log' unduly simplifies the situation. Before any such key log could be found and loosened, rapidly increasing water pressure and more logs wedged the foremost ones so firmly that no single log could be said to be holding the jam. The men loosened all the logs that they could move on the front of the jam, working fast and methodically to pick, roll and pry a channel back into the tangled logs. Suddenly, the jam 'hauled.' The whole mass began to move. The men ran and leaped over the rolling, tumbling logs, heading for shore. The more experienced, once they reached land, kept right on going to get out of the way of the men racing behind them. Sometimes a man did not make it to land — and on the shore there would be another mound, marked by a crude wooden cross, or simply a name and a date cut on a tree.

When no amount of prying and twisting with the peaveys could break up a jam, experienced axmen went out to cut the logs loose, taking their chances of getting away if the jam hauled when a log was cut. In some difficult situations, dynamite was used to blast free a single log. A hole was bored. . . and a half stick of dynamite, with detonator and fuse, was packed into the hole and set off.

Lore Rogers continued his story of the spruce drive by describing the construction of squirt dams "built the previous autumn [to reduce] the danger of bad jams" (pp. 27 - 28). Sluiceways were built into them. "A long platform over the sluiceway provided a place for the men to stand to 'h'ist' the gate. . ." Hallowell's photograph of Inscription Rock shows Mammoth Dam in the near foreground. This view of the dam seems to fit Rogers's description of a squirt dam, the "squirt" referring to the new splash of water to send logs on their way, during the spring drive, once the pond behind the dam filled up again. It must have been around this time, 1900, that the noted painter George H. Hal-

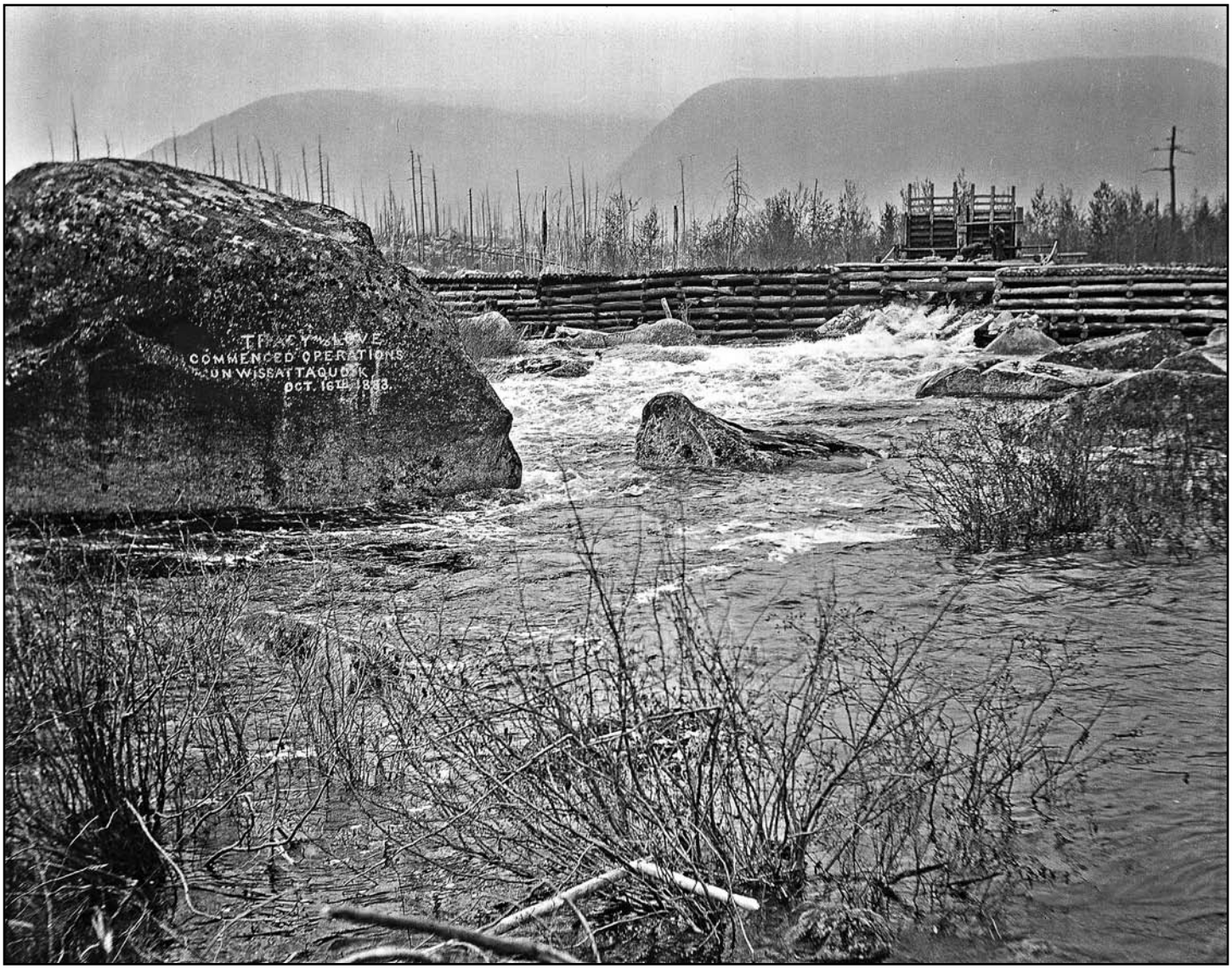
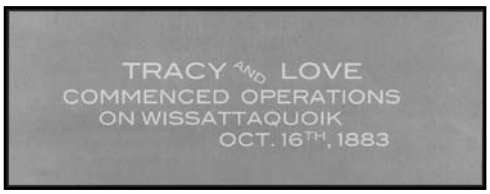


Figure 3:
Inscription Rock in upper Wassataquoik valley. View is upstream toward west-southwest. Mammoth Dam in near distance, showing platform with two sluice gates. You may be able to just make out three men in front of right-hand gate, one kneeling, the other two standing, one almost hidden behind the other. East end of Mullen Mountain, center right in far distance; NW flank of Ktaadn at left. Note burnt sentinels of the 1884 forest fire fringed by young poplar or birch in near distance (center and left). Ice on smaller boulders in stream suggest photograph may have been taken in late Fall.
– Photograph by George H. Hallowell, 1900. Courtesy of Maine State Library, © Myron H. Avery Collection

lowell took his view-camera photograph from Inscription Rock looking west southwest up the Wassataquoik main branch. *See Figure 3 and text of inscription on rock on this page.*

Lore's young sister, "Lou," wrote of her days as a child in the late 1890s: "In all [the] woods life — from the winter camps with their vigorous activities to the spring drives of logs with crashing white waters, the log-jams, the ringing bing of cant dogs, dams with their roaring sluice-ways — we children belonged, not so much looking on as feeling part and parcel of it." In summer, "Piling on buckboards behind teams of horses . . . spending a week or two on some distant lake . . . or back over the tote roads to the fire-swept Wissataquoik[2] Valley for



blueberries. . ." (Rogers, 1927). The fire she referred to had to have been the immense fire of 1884.

Avery's history of logging continued: "On this [T4, R9] north half of the town, in 1895, Col. Rogers built an elaborate log sporting camp on the East Branch, which was named Lunksoos Camp." The name was, and still is, locally pronounced "Lunkasoo." The original camp still stood well into the 20th century. The name survives in Lunksoos Mountain, the modern Camps, and a small lake to the northeast of the East Branch. *See Figure 4 on page 6.*

It is curious that "this north half of the town" as described by Avery was not in T4, R9, but in T3, R7, where the Wassataquoik flows into the East Branch. Its history would figure again at the close of the 1939 saga of Donn Fendler.

iii.

As if the Wassataquoik region had not endured enough in the cutting and driving of pine and spruce, and the great fire of 1884, another and greater fire decimated all of T4, R9 and much of neighboring townships in 1903, claiming a total of 267,587 acres (132 square miles). This is claimed as the most de-

[2]This early spelling is seen on Inscription Rock (see photo above) and appears in quoted text and titles listed in the References.

structive fire in the State's recorded history. Philip Coolidge, in his book *History of the Maine Woods* (1963), listed the townships affected by these two immense fires, several of which are now in Baxter State Park: T3, R9 (Katahdin Twp.), practically all of T4, R9 (Wassataquoik) and T5, R9 (The Traveler and So. Branch Ponds), and much of T6, R9, parts of T4, R10 and T6, R10. Within the present area of the Park, it was a total of 68,590 acres, or roughly one-third of the Park's area now of 209,501 acres. The remaining green timber survived mainly on steep mountain slopes. The fire began in the Matagamon region, spread across the western part of The Traveler and down through Pogy Notch. *See Figure. 1 on page 3.*

Avery's article touched briefly on the campfire cause of the 1884 fire but omitted the cause of that of 1903. For all the big fires in Maine in those years and their causes, *cf.* Coolidge (1963). Lightning, wind, and a dry season are nature's contributions, but slash, erosion of forest soil that acts as a sponge to hold moisture, and carelessness are among the worst of the contributions of the early "operations" and continued well into the 20th century. Coolidge mentions the invention in 1827 of the friction match ("lumber matches"). Most early lumbermen smoked a pipe, and often the bole, presumed dead, was knocked out and never checked to see if it was still burning. The incoming fad of cigarettes in the late 19th century, of course, didn't help any.

iv.

Cutting began anew by Edward Draper in 1910 by salvaging burnt timber as well as new green wood, but this time all was cut into 4-foot lengths as pulpwood. The Draper operation also repaired old dams, built new ones, and constructed sluiceways on the north slopes of Katahdin, from the Brothers to Annis Brook, on Mullen Mountain, and a 1,600-foot one on the south slope of South Pogy (this one at a NW-SE angle to the southerly fall-line into Wassataquoik Lake). Draper also "operated fairly well up into the Northwest Basin." Avery's article (1929a) has for a frontispiece a desolate-looking photograph taken by E.B. Draper looking into the Northwest Basin, following extensive logging there.

Avery devoted much description to Draper's operations that spread northward up Pogy Notch to include the Trout Brook valley, and eastward to Katahdin Lake and the east side of the Turners. In what is now the Park, Draper seemed to be everywhere at once. ". . . as the Tracey & Love operations were distinguished by the great number of dams built on the Wassataquoik, the Draper operations were marked by its sluices and snub-hills."

v.

Unlike discrete events such as violent storms, forest fires, and lumbering, biologically caused destruction in the forest is often less well defined or recognized. Where, for example, does damage caused by spruce budworm defoliation fit in a history of the Wassataquoik? Perhaps it was this characteristic lack of a noticed beginning and end, in time and space, that caused Avery either consciously or unconsciously to omit such a subject from his epic story of the Wassataquoik. The infestations by the spruce budworm in Maine's forests illustrate the difficulty of treating this aspect in the definitive manner common to many works of history.

Wilkins (1978) provided an overview of the budworm issue statewide, in which he focused on the outbreak of the 1970s. This led to my initial belief that damage in the valley of the Wassataquoik had been negligible. But Barbara M.S. Bentley, president of the Friends of Baxter State Park, has related to me her eye-witness account of how the forest in the upper Wassataquoik valley had been denuded during that outbreak (Bentley, personal communications, July 2010). This prompted a re-assessment of the wiles of the spruce budworm, especially in the North Maine Woods.

It appears there is no punctual "off-on" switch to noticeable damage by this caterpillar of the little moth by the same name. David B. Struble, a chief entomologist with the Maine Forest Service, provided me with a most valuable and intensive short course on the subject (Struble, personal communications, August 2010), as I briefly summarize here:

R. Scott Anderson (1986), then a graduate student at the University of Maine, was among the first to document that the budworm and its close relatives have been around since the forests began to take hold in post-glacial times (ca. 10,000 years ago). He found microlepidopteran remains in cores taken from Upper South Branch Pond that are keyed to radiocarbon dates. In three instances, these remains increased upward in the core, capped by a layer of charcoal —proxies that tell of forest fires that were roughly synchronous with periods of maximum infestation leading to widespread tree death.

Lloyd C. Irland and others (1988) summarized what may be a symbiotic relationship between the spruce budworm and conifers, especially fir trees, that is episodic across varied geographic areas.

David B. Struble (op. cit.) kindly provided me with Maine Forest Service chronological data on budworm damage. In areas now within the Park, heavy damage is reported in 1919, followed by medium to severe damage from 1972 to 1984.

What does this information foretell for the valley of the Wassataquoik? There was a hiatus of roughly 60 years between severe outbreaks in the 20th century, but over the last approximately 200 years, outbreaks regionally have varied from roughly 30 to 100 years (Blais, 1983, *in* Irland, et al., 1988, p. 5). I cannot but conclude that episodic periods of severe defoliation are part of a renewed concept of "forever wild." Can we also assume that century-length recovery holds true following massive fires?

After the lumbering operations denuded

Figure 4: Col. Luther B. Rogers' Lunksoos Camp, photographed by ©Lore A. Rogers ca. 1905. Located on the East Branch about 1/2 mile above the mouth of Wassataquoik Stream. Hayfield in foreground provided hay for horse teams between Stacyville and the Wassataquoik operations. This camp also appears in Donn Fendler's story (1939), p. 103

Figure 5: Denuded hillside near Orin Falls on the Wassataquoik, photograph taken eight (8) years after the fire of 1884. – Lucius Merrill photograph (1892), ©Bangor Public Library, 2005. [Merrill gave the location as "Orvius Falls."]

the south slopes of South Pogy, Lester Hall remembered in his journal for 1955 (*in* Kirkpatrick, 2010, p.232): "The last time we were in here was around . . . twenty years ago . . . the southern part of Pogy has, at last, clothed herself with a mantle of green trees, hiding the ugly scars of the great fire[s]. A fair sprinkling of evergreens are showing up among the birch, maple and poplar. . . . The big fires of 1903 and 1912 [he may have been referring here to that of 1915] hit Pogy hard, and as I remember it twenty years ago [1935], it was just a mountain of blackened stubs with a light scattering of poplar coming up among them. It seemed almost a futile struggle to strive for existence in a place where the very soil had been burned to the rocks."

Avery (1929b) described how much of the south slopes of South Pogy, parts of Mullen, Wassataquoik, and North Pogy had suffered from these fires, and even northward into a large burned-over area between the valley of Gifford Brook and the South Branch Mountain peaks (p. 20 – 24). Avery here was describing mainly the fire of 1915, for which Coolidge (1963) lists only 7,000 acres burnt in T4, R10, but as both Avery and Hall document, that fire also burnt over the NW corner of T4, R9 (again), and the west half of T5, R9.

So all told, the upper Wassataquoik valley suffered three major fires between 1884 and 1915.

For the pace of recovery, a lesson might be gained from the volcanic Cascades of Washington:

A fresh look at Mount St. Helens (Perkins, 2010) summarized the devastation of 212 square miles (equal to almost six townships the size of T4, R9) north of the volcano, caused within four hours of the initial blast on 18 May 1980, and the subsequent tentative beginnings of new plant growth in the sea of ash since then. Although infinitely more spectacular than the five decades of unrelenting forest denudation by lumbering and fire in the Wassataquoik valley of T4, R9, recovery may have some parallels. As Perkins wrote, "The region's [of Mt. St. Helens] ecosystems may not resemble those in place before the eruption for a couple of centuries." Almost a century has passed since the heyday of lumbering ended in the Wassataquoik. However, the parallels in climate and topography between the Cascades and Baxter State Park might well suggest it will take another century before the landscape of the Wassataquoik returns to its former "forever wild" appearance; perhaps all told, seven generations of human succession. Not for lack of historical experience, the native North Americans speak of preservation for the seventh generation.

But there were few, if any, records in the 1920s to allow Avery to embrace that perspective, for he wrote at the end of his 1929a Story of the Wassataquoik, "The Wassataquoik of to-day [the late 1920s] presents a curious contrast. It is entirely deserted and abandoned. . . .The spruce and pine of its glorious lumbering past are gone. Bared rocks, burned soil, a scraggly growth of 'popple' and birch — the aftermath of two terrific fires — an old field or two, ruined dams and tumbling down camps and . . overgrown road[s] . . . From the wilderness to a wilderness again, another cycle of the Wassataquoik is complete."

Its completeness is now assured into

This view from the slopes of South Pogy overlooking Wassataquoik Lake to Wassataquoik and Mullen mountains shows extent of tree re-growth. *– 2009 Photo © Bill Bentley*

This view from Six Ponds looking toward Wassataquoik Lake shows cliffs on South Pogy with reforestation on slopes and summit. *– 2009 Photo © Bill Bentley*

The meadows of New City are long gone; alders, pines, birch, and spruce are taking over. Brush is cut annually to keep a trail open. *– 2009 Photo © Barbara Bentley*

the future by Baxter's protection. In geographic microcosm, but with striking intensity and carrying the same inevitability of succession, Avery's story mirrors Dean Bennett's saga *The Wilderness from Chamberlain Farm* (2001). A photograph taken by Lucius Merrill in 1892 (*in* Judd and Kellogg (2005)) is mute and powerful testimony to Avery's final description.

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President's Column *– Cont. from p. 1*

(See photos of Wassataquoik valley in 2009 on pages 8 and 10.)

In this history of the Wassataquoik valley, Gary Boone suggests that it may take seven generations of human succession for the area to return to its "forever wild" state. The pace of recovery, in addition to the forces of nature, will depend on human behaviors and the Park policies that govern them – impact of visitors to the Park as well as the manner in which the Park deals with wildland fires and the periodic or episodic insect outbreaks.

Now in our fourth generation of campers, our family is gradually being won over to the *Leave No Trace* ethic. No more cutting green fir boughs for a bed or a sapling for a ridgepole, and we cheerily "carry in - carry out." A bath in the stream is a thing of the past. While numbers of campers may have increased, their effect on the environment has been reduced.

Park Director Jensen Bissell, himself a forester, addresses the Park's current policies regarding wildland fires and outbreaks of insects like the spruce budworm as follows: *Baxter State Park's long history of forest fires has played a major role in shaping the forests that cover the Park today. The*

Continued on p. 10.

Once trophies carried home by visitors, some artifacts from past logging eras remain and are protected by the Park. This plow is located trailside near site of former New City.

– 2009 Photo © Barbara Bentley

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About the Author

Gary McGregor Boone taught geology for 36 years – 6 in Canada and then 30 as professor at Syracuse University. For 30 summers, he did research mapping in western and central western Maine with the Maine Geological Survey. He was co-editor of the 1985 Bedrock Geological Map of Maine. Now residing in Presque Isle, he keeps a close eye on the geology of Baxter State Park, including the alpine regions of some peaks in the Wassataquoik valley, and publishes occasional papers, including this one with Friends of Baxter State Park. We look forward to his next.

[3] *The Maine Naturalist* was published quarterly over the decade 1921 - 1931. It can be accessed in most of the major libraries of the State in their Special Collections.

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Thank you!

The Wassataquoik valley, the heart of the Park's back country, is viewed here from the Northwest Basin trail near Lake Cowles en route to Davis Pond. L to R: North Brother, Fort, and Mullen mountains with the eastern shoulder of the Northwest Basin on the right.
– 2009 Photo © Bill Bentley

President's Column *– Cont. from p. 8.*

Maine Forest Service has the primary responsibility for forest fire management in the Park. The MFS defines two primary types of wildfire: natural wildland fire caused by natural events such as lightning, and human-caused wildfire initiated by human actions or activity such as an escaped campfire, a discarded cigarette or a willful act of an arsonist. In the case of human caused wildland fire, the Forest Service will work actively and aggressively to contain, control and extinguish the fire. In the case of naturally caused wildland fire, the Forest Service and Baxter Park will work through a decision model to evaluate the appropriate actions regarding control, containment of the fire.

Similar to wildland fire, periodic or episodic insect outbreaks such as the spruce budworm have affected the structure and composition of the Park's forests. History suggests that insect epidemics will continue to play an ecological role in the Park in the future. In general, natural events will be treated as a part of the Park's natural ecology and allowed to unfold with policy or procedural changes implemented only to protect the safety of visitors and structures. The Park may employ more direct and serious approaches to address events regarding invasive or exotic insects or plants not native to the Park's ecology and that may significantly threaten the forest or ecologic structure of the Park.

My family and I will be returning to the Wassataquoik valley for another week this summer – our 51st – and we will keep an eye on the region's recovery of "forever wild." I wish the Gray Jays and Whippoorwills would join us! I miss them.