

WONALANCET OUT DOOR CLUB

Newsletter



November, 2012

CARING FOR THE SANDWICH RANGE SINCE 1892

THE DEATH AND BIRTH OF TRAILS ISSUE

Gleason Trail, 1892 – 2012

Obituary for a Hiking Trail

Lay her i' the earth:

And from her fair and unpolluted flesh

May violets spring!

The Gleason Trail, first hiking trail up Sandwich Dome from the eastern side, was euthanized by the Wonalancet Out Door Club in the summer of 2012. Her end came quietly, with no discomfort. The final illness was redundancy, complicated by erosion, poor drainage, and a lack of treks appeal.

Known by many names over the years, the Gleason Trail came into this world as the “Sandwich Dome Path” in August 1892. Widely admired for her beauty in her youth, she was immediately popular with guests at William McCrillis's farm and boarding house in Whiteface Intervale. During these years she was adorned by a cathedral-like virgin spruce forest that flanked much of her route. Professor Charles E. Fay, a founder and early president of the Appalachian Mountain Club, opined that this raiment was “the finest spruce growth that I know of in the whole Sandwich Range, or remember ever having traversed.”

Professor Cornelius Weygandt, a popular author of Americana in the mid-twentieth century, hiked the “A.M.C. Trail” (as she was then called) and was stunned by her beauty. Writing two decades later, his memory of the encounter was still vivid: “It is late morning of a September day . . . There is a note of autumn on the air even in the dimness of the stand of tall spruce that rises above the path up the mountain. We are standing by a spring that rises gently, without a bubble, from the very root of a mast-high tree, a spring that rises secretly, steadily, a delight to the eyes and a refreshment to lips dry with the climb. All around us are first-growth

spruce, hundreds on hundreds of them, their great trunks all purplish brown in the shadowed woods.” Weygandt called this cloak of spruce on the mountainside “Wonder No. 1 of the Seven Wonders of Sandwich”.

In 1911 the AMC August Camp made its home base in Whiteface Intervale. The opening trip was a climb of Sandwich Dome. Two of the campers present that year were unmarried Appalachians in mid-life: Alice Jose, a Radcliffe graduate who had summered since childhood at the foot of Sandwich Dome; and Albert Gleason, a Harvard graduate and successful Boston lawyer with strong rural roots and a growing interest in the White Mountains. Perhaps the two were already falling in love when Alice took Albert up the beautiful trail through the spruce grove for the first time. In any case, they were engaged in 1913, and went on to marry, and enjoy together many mountaineering and back-country camping trips over the years. But no matter how far they ranged, their mountain home was always with Alice's family in Whiteface Intervale.

Albert Gleason had a strong soldier's heart. During the Spanish-American War he was an officer in the Coast Artillery that defended Boston. He was very proud of this service, so much so that his friends took to addressing him by his military title, Captain Gleason. In the early years of his marriage to Alice the United States entered World War I. Albert suffered a great disappointment when he was turned down for military service because of his age. More disappointment, even heartbreak came – not just for the Gleasons but also many others who loved the Sandwich Range – when the Great War drove up the price of high-grade spruce lumber and drew an army of loggers to the slopes of Sandwich Dome. The war was brief for the United States, but once the timber operation was in motion, it did not stop with the Armistice.

Soon the giant spruce were gone forever. The beautiful trail herself became a casualty of the Great War. The sun beat down on the mountainside, now stripped of

timber and littered with slash. Hikers found the trail difficult to follow, hot, dry, and tedious.

Even before this man-made disaster blighted the trail, the AMC had begun to lose interest in her. They asked the Wonalancet Out Door Club to take over maintenance of the old "AMC Trail". Flattered, perhaps, we agreed to this taxing responsibility. The "AMC Trail" thus became the "Bennett Street Trail (WODC)" in the AMC guidebook.

Dutifully we struggled each summer to reconstruct what logging obliterated each winter. In spite of the best efforts of the Wonalancet club, the much-worked-over trail quickly became little more than a maze of patchwork relocations. Faced with this hopeless situation, we finally decided, in 1925, to abandon the old trail and cut a new route on the other side of the ridge. Adding insult to injury, when the WODC gave up on the old trail, we took her name and bestowed it on the new route. So the name "Bennett Street Trail" effectively migrated from the south side of the ridge to the north side. That was the end of the now nameless old trail for more than 15 years.

But the proud Captain Albert Gleason never forgot the beautiful trail, or the time he spent there with Alice. A few years after Alice Gleason died, Albert re-opened the trail, dubbing her the "New Old Trail." The blazes were hardly dry, and the announcement of the New Old Trail in *Appalachia* not even three months old, when the 1938 Hurricane charged ashore and wiped her off the map once again. Ultimately, however, the mighty hurricane proved no match for the indomitable Captain Gleason, who rose one more time in defense of the trail. At his death in 1953, at the age of almost 91, he left a considerable sum to the AMC for trails, particularly in the Sandwich Range, and most particularly for this trail. In recognition of the tenacity of Captain Gleason, and no doubt with an eye to his great generosity, the AMC gave the trail a new name – the Gleason Trail – although whether this referred to Albert or Alice, or perhaps to both, was never explained.

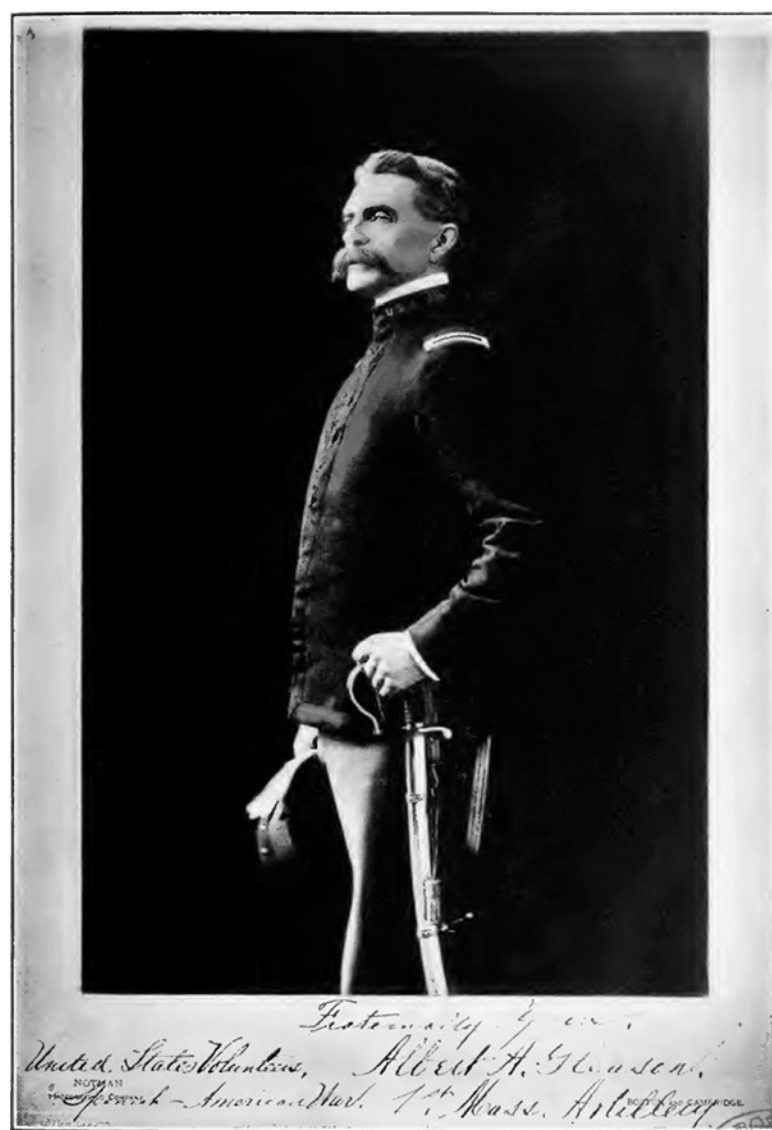
In the decades since, the AMC-maintained Gleason Trail and the WODC-maintained Bennett Street Trail have had their relative ups and downs. Recently, however, the WODC has held the clear advantage in trail maintenance, even coming to the aid of the Gleason Trail on behalf of our wayward brethren from Boston.

As of the summer of 2012, maintenance of most of the Gleason Trail was permanently discontinued per decision of the Forest Service. This will allow vegetation to retake the treadway. The Sandwich Range Wilderness will close over her. But the Forest Service does not prohibit citizens from walking where they will in their own National Forest. For hiking from

Whiteface to the summit of Sandwich Dome the only practical route is the Bennett Street Trail, but historically-inclined trampers are welcome to hunt for vestiges of the old route.

Neither the memory of the original trail up Sandwich Dome from the Wonalancet side, nor the memory of Captain Albert Gleason and his beloved wife Alice will be lost: the first half-mile of the Gleason Trail will continue to exist, maintained by the WODC as a comparatively quick and dry cutoff for hikers on the Bennett Street Trail.

No memorial service is planned. Flowers, we can be sure, will take care of themselves. However, those wishing to make gifts in memory of the departed are advised that donations to the WODC trail fund will be gratefully accepted.



Captain Albert A. Gleason (shown here in his treasured Spanish-American War uniform). Twice he saved the trail that he loved.



Look What the Stork Brought!

Birth Announcement for a Hiking Trail

*Little yawns and slumberry sighs,
Nursery rhymes and Lullabies!*

On July 21st a beautiful new baby trail came into the world, spreading joy and gladness everywhere. The proud parents are the Wonalancet Out Door Club and the White Mountain National Forest. No one was able to weigh the newborn; but the midwife assured us that this is a big baby. Length about 9000 feet.

Our bouncing baby trail has been christened the “new McCrillis Path”. Its birth is a special delight because the old McCrillis Path had suffered decapitation at the Whiteface end. Although that certainly was a painful experience for us all, our spirits soared as we began to see that the old McCrillis Path had to die – so that it could be reborn.

The unfortunate closure of the old McCrillis Path reminded the hiking community in a most pointed way of something we have too long taken for granted: the beneficence of private landowners. Most WODC trails begin on private land, and many pass significant distances on that land before entering the National Forest. We are very lucky that most landowners are incredibly generous in this way. Not only do they allow hikers passage, but also often watch over and sometimes help maintain the trails. When necessary, they have aided hikers in distress, and on occasion even entertained hikers in need of local color.

Our good luck, however, ran out on the old McCrillis Path. For two centuries the community kept that old road open from Whiteface Intervale to Wonalancet. But several years ago a landowner along the route decided to close his end of the trail, and began earthmoving operations that assured the original route of the old McCrillis Path could never be located, let alone reopened.

The WODC tried many potential remedies, but the situation grew ever less hopeful. Then, up stepped the Club members who became the godparents of the new McCrillis Path. George and Nancy Bates knew every detail of the local landscape from years of hiking and skiing it. They developed a plan, and waited for their opportunity. When the critical property, the historic Ambrose farmstead, became available, they bought it and converted most of it into conservation land. George built a trail through the woods and along existing

overgrown roads. He swung his trail alongside a scenic stretch of the Captain Neal Brook so that hikers could enjoy a flume and several small waterfalls. With this piece in place, he consulted with the Forest Service and the WODC. If just a half-mile of new trail could be built through the National Forest, the route from Whiteface to Wonalancet would be made whole again.

But that new trail would have to pass through Congressionally designated wilderness. While there is no absolute prohibition against creating hiking trails in wilderness, it can never be done without a very good reason. The staff of the White Mountain National Forest went to work. They sent experts from various disciplines to inspect the land, they weighed public comment – much of it from WODC members – and they studied the Forest Plan. The process was so thorough that it took several years. George and Nancy waited. WODC waited.

At last every factor had been considered and the decision was made: a new trail could be created along the shortest practical route. By this time George Bates, members of the WODC, and Forest Service trails specialists had already been all over the land, laying out various routes. The final path was chosen and marked one day last April.



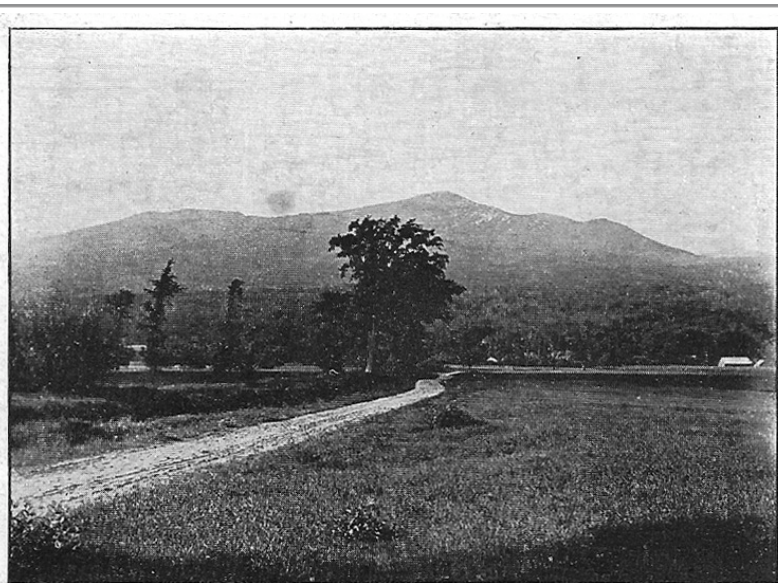
Laying out the new trail: Fred Lavigne and Jack Waldron of WODC, Jana Johnson and Cristin Bailey of the US Forest Service. Jana is holding a handful of pinflags for staking out the final location so the trail crew will know exactly where to build the treadway. (photo by Doug McVicar)



Under the incredible pressure of this exacting work, the team is beginning to crack. Here Jack, Jana and Fred are squabbling over a difference of inches in trail placement, while Bailey eggs them on. Either that – or they're just clowning for the camera. (photo by Doug McVicar)

Then WODC trail midwives went to work with the help of rock bars, axes, hoes, a griphoist and other obstetrical implements. A new trail was born!

Our new McCrillis Path, through the Ambrose Farm and the National Forest, forms the missing link in a continuous 4.2 mile route from the Whiteface kiosk parking area to the Wonalancet kiosk parking area. This trip is one of the easiest walks in the WODC system. It offers more touristic variety than any other WODC trail and, probably, mile-for-mile, more than all but a few foot-routes anywhere in the White Mountains.



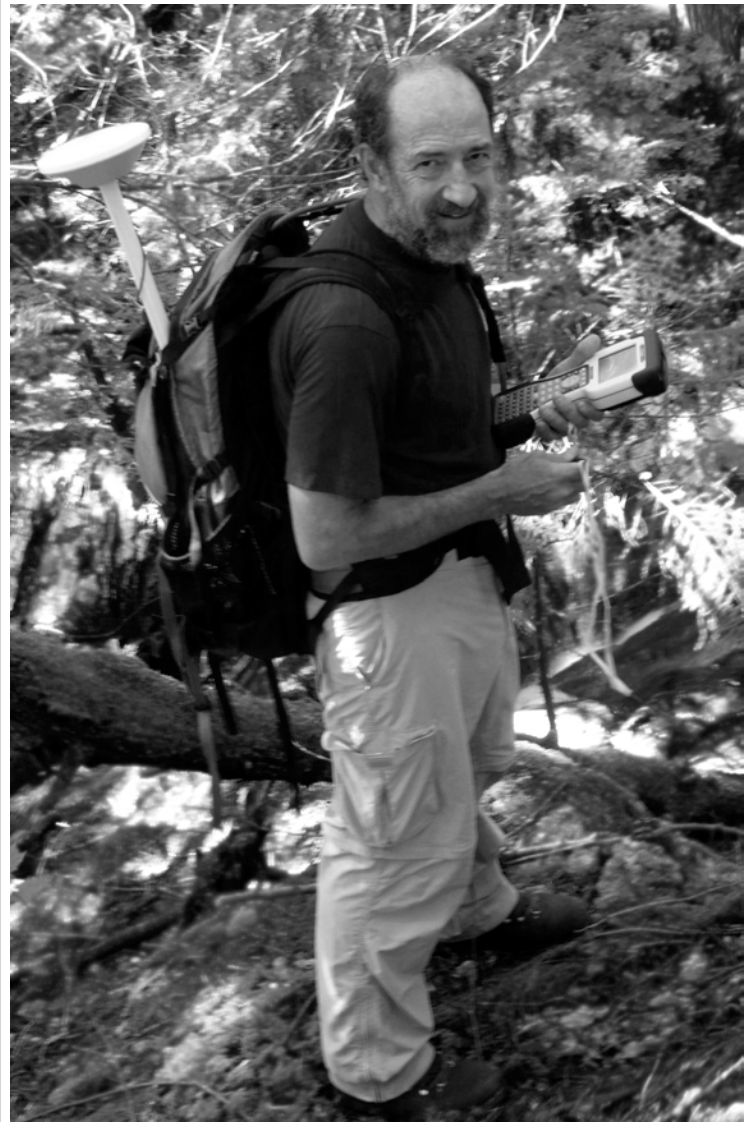
Mt. Whiteface, Whiteface, N. H.

Whiteface Intervale about 1905. When Robert Frost visited, he said it was the most beautiful place in New Hampshire. The road is paved today, but the Intervale doesn't really look that different.

Of course the standard guidebooks and maps don't show all this yet. But elsewhere in this number of the *Newsletter* we're publishing a special pull-out-and take-it-with-you map and trail description by WODC cartographer extraordinaire Mike Bromberg. So please come by and see our new baby.

No shower is scheduled. (In fact we've already had a couple of showers – during various trail work sessions.) And we won't be needing diapers, as this baby was engineered to be entirely self-draining. But those wishing to make a gift in celebration of the arrival of our little cherub are advised that donations to the WODC trail fund will be gratefully accepted.

Doug McVicar



Mike Bromberg, WODC's cartographer, with his professional GPS gear, hard at work mapping the new trail. Remember you saw it here first! Pullout map of new McCrillis Path, courtesy of Mike. (Photo by Doug McVicar)

The Editor wishes to convey her heartfelt appreciation to Doug McVicar, who has acted as co-editor, without title or portfolio, on this (and selected other issues of the) newsletter.

The New McCrillis Path

hot off the GPS from
Mike Bromberg, WODC Cartographer

McCrillis Path, 3.3 miles (WODC): Mapmaker's Notes

Do not confuse this with the WMNF McCrillis TRAIL that ascends Mt. Whiteface. This newly-relocated path connects Wonalancet and Whiteface Intervale, partly following an old town road. The grades are easy to moderate and there is water. This trail is good for skiing; a new ski trail allows loop trips. Park at Flat Mtn. Pond Trailhead.

0.0 Cross bridge and follow Whiteface Intervale Road L from the parking lot.

0.6 Shortly after passing a cemetery R, the public road ends. Turn L onto a gravel driveway just past the former Whiteface Auto Body (no parking here). Follow driveway N.

0.9 Turn L off driveway onto new trail. Soon bear L at jct. with ski trail. This ski trail offers an alternative route, rejoining the main trail at 1.6 miles. Begin climbing moderately.

1.4 Side paths lead L to waterfalls on Captain Neal Brook. Pass a viewpoint R, then the trail turns R and levels out.

1.6 Ski trail rejoins R. Continue on easy grades and cross into the WMNF and Wilderness.

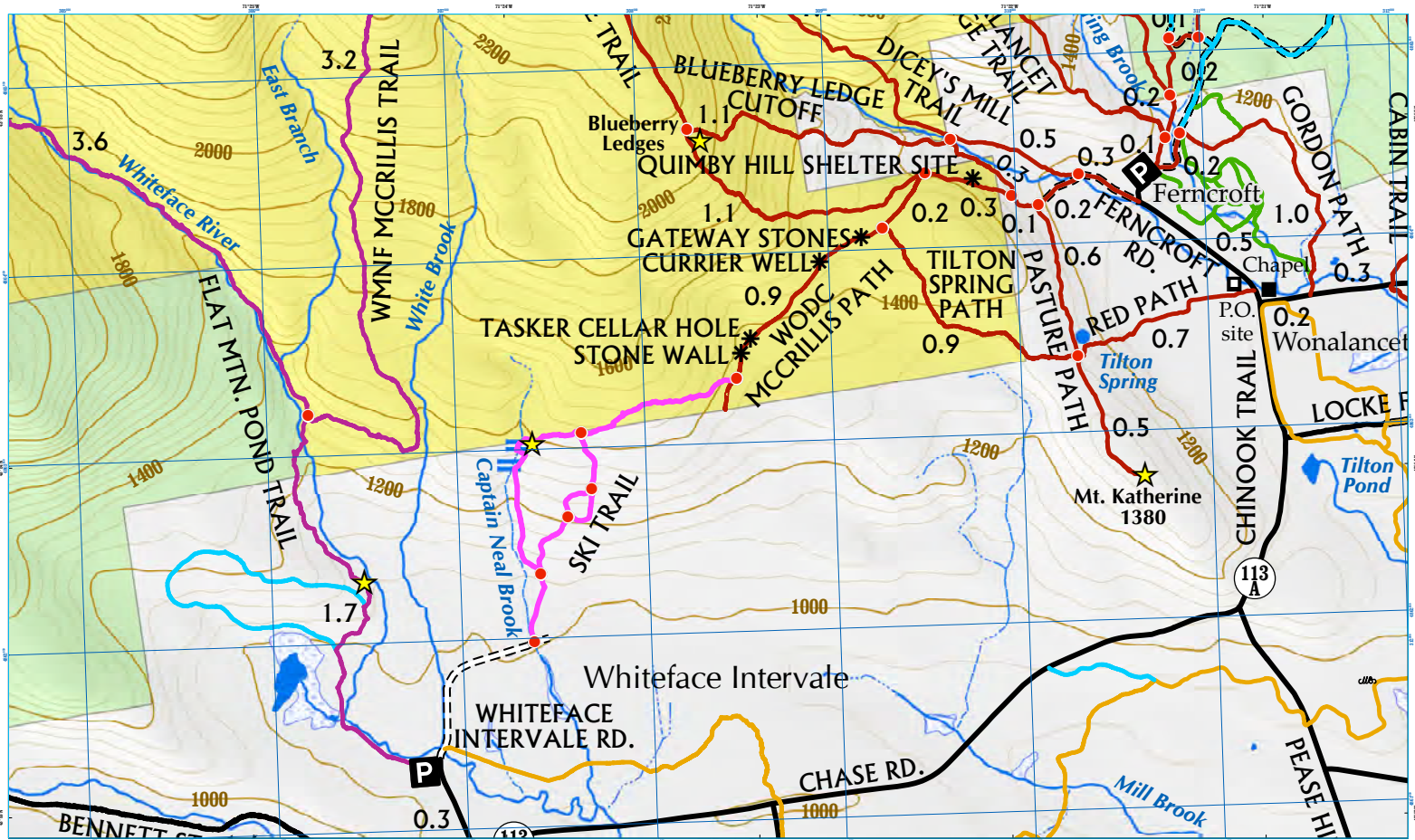
2.3 Bear slight L to merge with old town road. Pass stone wall and cellar hole remnants.

2.6 Cross a wide stream, then cross a wet area.

3.1 Jct. Tilton Spring Path R. McCrillis Path climbs easily, leveling off at the top of a ridge, then descends moderately.

3.3 End at jct. Blueberry Ledge Trail. Ferncroft parking area is 0.9 miles R.

Editor's Note: put this page in a plastic bag & keep it in your pack.



Tales from the Trail Adopters: Part II -- The Trail Czars

One of the reasons that ordinary folks like you and me can volunteer to become Trail Adopters, is the existence of someone called the "Trail Coordinator" who oversees all the trails and steps in where needed. Fred Lavigne is the current Trail Coordinator and he was matched in his efforts until a few years ago by Peter Smart, the former Trail Czar, who labored under the title of "Trails Chair". (More about that later.) The number of hours that these two have put in on the trails is inconceivable -- how do they make a living, given that they appear to live in the woods? And what are the requirements for Trail Coordinator (just in case anyone out there is plotting to oust Fred and take over)? Here they are -- take careful notes.

First, there are the obvious ones: physical strength, chainsaw and axe skills, balance and endurance, at ease in the forest, impeturbability under attack by biting insects, soaking rains, heat and cold, blah blah. & etc. Being able to work with stone and make water go where you want it to are big pluses. And, it's a major help to have a spouse/partner who's happy to join you out there, thus keeping you happy (unless, of course, yours is the type of marriage where you spend time on the trail to get *away* from your spouse, and the less said about that, the better) and willing to chip in on the trail work, thus giving the Club the benefits of a twofer. It goes without saying that you'd have to be able to work with Jack, but then who isn't able to work with Jack? Of course, you'd also have to work amicably with the Forest Service personnel, the student summer hires, the professionals hired to carry out specific tasks, and the Club's volunteers. You'd have to listen carefully and communicate clearly. You'd have to be the boss when needed, and be willing to take instructions at other times. But perhaps the most unexpected and most difficult requirement was mentioned over and over, as I talked to seasoned volunteers -- the ones who'd put in untold hours of slave labor over the years, working with Fred and/or Peter: that they'd made that labor *fun*. Somehow, they had been able to create a party atmosphere, using heavy tools, blisters, bug bites, exhaustion and gorp as the ingredients. And, underlying all this, you have to be happy being alone in the woods, and happy being with others in the woods. Maybe you just have to be a happy person. You could be a miserable mope of a misanthrope and still do a great job as a trail adopter (assuming someone with those traits

would volunteer). But you couldn't be the Trail Coordinator.



A surprise party after trailwork. Judy discovers her birthday cake! Peter tries to look innocent. (Photo by Larry Labrie.)

Okay, now that you have the basic requirements, how do you get started as a TC? Well, the classic way is to be a really really dedicated adopter. Sort of the way running a B&B is considered to be the training ground for innkeepers. Fred got started in 1993 when Doug Mayer was moving up to Randolph and wanted someone to take over the Rollins Trail. Within a year, Evelyn MacKinnon joined in. (It's important to note that Fred'n'Ev are, like Peter'n'Judy, inseparables.) At that time, there was a Trails Committee, with Peter as head. The Committee needed members and George Zink tapped Fred. This was an era of great (and eccentric) volunteers who tended to make trail tending into wild parties. Far be it for me to name names, but journalistic ethics demand that I mention Fred, Chris Conrod, Doug McVicar and Larry Labrie (along, of course, with Peter) as frequent perpetrators. Somehow, though, a tremendous amount of trail work got done between parties.

Doug Mayer must have been a powerhouse or at least a champion arm wrestler because not only did he get Fred to take over his trail in 1993; he also got Peter to take over as head of the Trails Committee in that same year. Maybe others helped to twist Peter's arm; careful perusal of the '92 newsletter shows that Peter was already on the Committee, whose chairman then was Dana Steele. (It's amazing how much you can learn from those old newsletters which are available for download on our website. They go back to 1972, at which point the newsletter was one typed page and dues

were \$3. My research went swimmingly until I realized that fifteen of my worthy predecessor's twenty scintillating issues never got committed to pixeldom. Knowing Chris as I do, I can only attribute this to his almost pathological modesty.)

In or around 2003 (alas, this is one of the missing years on the web), Peter dragged his exhausted body off the Trails Committee Chairmanship, having given ten years of his work and life. His level of commitment can be judged by his having been named "Volunteer of the Year" for the state of New Hampshire in 1994, one year after taking on the burden.



The three stooges (Chris, Fred & Doug) horsing around Camp Shehadi (2000). No wonder it had to be dismantled shortly thereafter. (Photo by the fourth perpetrator: L. Labrie)

In 2005, Jack Waldron ascended to the Presidency, with Dick Daniels as Trails Chair. In the absence of printed evidence, I assume that a gradual evolution from then on led from work with the Student Conservation Association crews, aided by a large Trails Committee, consisting of Jack, Fred, Ev, Peter and Judy, Chris Conrod, Larry Labrie, and David and CC White, to a condensed Trails Committee consisting of Jack, Fred and Larry. Since the SCA crew was housed at Mead Base when they weren't camped on the trail, and since Fred and Ev lived closest to Mead, most of the work ended up in their laps. Fred (by which I mean Fred'n'Ev) ended up hiring, training and overseeing the students, lassoing and hog-tying WODC volunteers to help them, and generally being *in loco parentis*. Jack did (and still does) the grant writing and paperwork to raise the money to pay the crews, and the third member

of the troika was and remains the Forest Service who provided the crews with a leader and often provided a vehicle as well. Even as the SCA crews have been replaced with professionals, the Forest Service has continued to be an active partner, and -- often -- the provider of the funds to hire those professionals. While WODC has had a succession of leaders, each of whom has had a somewhat different method of keeping the trails in good shape, our partnership with the Forest Service has remained sturdy, cordial and functional.

It's clear that each Trail Czar has a different M.O. There's plenty of room for individual strengths and preferences. Peter was brilliant at getting volunteers out on the trail, and at inducing local groups (everyone from the Community School to the Over the Hill Club) to spend a day working with him. The more professional hires approach that the Club has taken of late calls for a different set of tasks, although I hasten to add that **volunteers are still necessary!** For example, when Jed Talbot and his crew were hired to work on Blueberry Ledges (no one realized that they'd be there for three years), someone (Jack, Fred and Ev) had to locate and outfit their camp site (in winter using a GPS), setting up a privy, a bear hang (a cable on pulleys between two trees to pull food up), a food prep table, and a bear-proof box. Jack raised the money to pay Jed's hiring costs, and Fred organized volunteers to help Jed get the work done and maximize value for money.

Every fall, Fred, Jack and the Forest Service assess the trails, noting where work is needed. Jack then writes a grant proposal, describing the work, the time required and the cost. They plan the WODC Trail Days, deciding when and what to do. On those days, Fred gets the equipment ready and plans how to organize the day so that the volunteers get the tasks done and have fun (otherwise, no one would do it twice). When a trail has no adopter (like the Wonalancet Range Trail), Fred will energize one or two helpers and just do it. Most of the time though, he's doing bits and pieces where the adopter can't cope with a big blowdown or a washed out area. Please keep in mind that Fred can't walk every trail every week, and a blowdown can occur at any time. He depends on **YOU** to let him know what's happening. Just call him at: 603-284-6919 or email Jack at: jkw@jackw.mv.com.

Of course, Fred is a consummate trails pro. It helps that his profession (when he has the spare moment to practise it) is logging and forestry. Unlike the rest of us trail bumblers, he never puts a foot wrong. This

explains the Halloween when he and Ev went up Dicey's for an overnight, dropping the gear off at a suitable site before heading to a giant blowdown at the far end of the Rollins. Suddenly realizing it was 5 PM and their camp was not set up, they hiked back down Dicey's in the increasing dark, only to find. . . no, change that. . . only *not* to find their camp. They donned every item of clothing they had in their packs, stuck their feet into the now empty packs, covered themselves with leaves and lodged next to a boulder for the long, cold, hungry night. Ev is now the keeper of the clock. (And the storyteller.) S.G.



Top: Fred'n'Ev at home today. (S.G. photo)

Left: Fred'n'Ev on Blueberry Ledge Trail in 2001 (Larry Labrie photo)

Right: Larry Labrie, because we never got a photo of him last time, and because he clears those 200 + water bars on Dicey's Mill for us each year. (S.G. photo)



Trails Report for 2012 Season

The 2012 season was somewhat atypical in that we didn't field a trail crew to undertake a significant trail reconstruction project. Despite that the season was busy and successful.

We held four volunteer trail work days, but lost the June date to rain. In May, we did annual maintenance on the Bennett Street Trail and, in September, on the Dicey's Mill Trail. The July day was dedicated to finishing up the relocation of the McCrillis Path through the forest to George and Nancy Bates' land in Whiteface Intervale. This relocation was our major volunteer effort of the season. 14 volunteers worked a total of 181.5 hours to relocate this section of McCrillis Path. Fred Lavigne led the effort with David Giampietro providing contagious enthusiasm as well as lots of labor. George Bates had laid out and cut the section of McCrillis Path on his land. Jed Talbot and crew (supported by a donation from the RNAV Foundation) added some stepping stones and cut a long switchback on this section of the McCrillis. Whew!

Our Trail Patrol put in 180 hours of annual maintenance throughout our trails. The money we budgeted for the Trail Patrol was supplemented by generous donations from both Al Gerrish and Mary Breasted-Smyth and Ted Smyth. And, we had innumerable hours contributed by adopters, their friends, and guilt-stricken passing hikers. Maintaining our trails is a community effort and once again the community responded generously with labor, financial assistance, and a can-do attitude. Heartfelt thanks to you all!

Jack Waldron, Trails Chair

Report on 2012 Annual Meeting

The 120th WODC Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, August 19th, at the Wonalancet Union Chapel. The meeting was preceded by the Inaugural Hike of the new section of the McCrillis Path to Whiteface Intervale, followed by a potluck supper.

20 members and friends took the hike and enjoyed the new route. The section in the vicinity of the Captain Neal Brook is gorgeous, followed by a nice view of Mt Israel and Young Mountain, and then a gentle undulating course through the Sandwich Range Wilderness (where we formed two groups, of course) to meet the original McCrillis Path.

The meeting was called to order at 6:50 P.M. with 40 members in attendance. After dealing with normal business, Doug McVicar related some of the history of WODC's efforts to keep the McCrillis Path open to the public and the events that led to the current relocation. The work and generosity of George and Nancy Bates were key to finding a long term solution. At this point Jack Waldron announced that the Executive Committee had recommended that Lifetime Memberships be awarded to both George and Nancy Bates as well as Fred Lavigne and Evelyn MacKinnon. Motions to grant these Lifetime Memberships were passed unanimously.

Jack then presented George and Nancy with a framed Andy Thompson photograph of the Whiteface River inscribed: "In grateful recognition of their dedication to the trails of Wonalancet and Whiteface Intervale, and their extraordinary generosity and labor in reestablishing the McCrillis Path, the Wonalancet Out Door Club is pleased to award George and Nancy Bates Lifetime Memberships, as of August 19th, 2012."

Jack presented Fred (Evelyn had a family commitment)

with a framed Andy Thompson photograph of Wonalancet in Winter inscribed: "In recognition of their roles as tireless crusaders for the expansion of the Sandwich Range Wilderness; as counselors, trainers and role models for uncounted student trail workers; and as caretakers and overseers for all of our trails (and then some), we gratefully award Fred Lavigne and Evelyn MacKinnon Lifetime Memberships in the Wonalancet Out Door Club, as of August 19th, 2012".

After an expression of spontaneous joy and gratitude to our new Lifetime Memebbers we adjourned at 8: 03 PM. **J.W.**



A long-awaited and very happy moment. Jack presents Andy's framed photo (thank you, Andy) to Nancy and George Bates.

WODC ORDER FORM

(SHAMELESS COMMERCE DIVISION)

PLEASE MAIL COMPLETED ORDER FORM TO:

**WODC MEMBER SERVICES
HCR 64. BOX 248
WONALANCET, NH 03897**

NAME

STREET

CITY, STATE, ZIP

PHONE (.....).....

EMAIL

QTY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	TOTAL
	WODC Patch	3.00	
	WODC Map & Guide (3rd edition) Members Non-Members	6.00 8.00	
	Unfolded WODC Map & Guide	9.00	
	3 or more unfolded Maps - each	7.00	
	WODC Historical Collection (CD)	25.00	
	"Serene Green" Cotton T-shirt (Old Logo) Specify M. L or X-L _____	18.00	
	Synthetic (silky!) Navy Blue T-shirt (New Logo - see design on website). Specify M, L or X-L _____	18.00	
	New Memberships (not for renewals!) <input type="checkbox"/> Pathfinder <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Blazer <input type="checkbox"/> Five Year	15.00 25.00 50.00 250.00	



Editor's Ramble . . . Capitalism and Socialism in the Forest. For a long time I thought of the forest as the ultimate in capitalist ecosystems, where sunlight was the capital and the trees reaching the canopy were the Donald Trunks of the system. As to those below. . . well, every system has its losers, right? After all, it's just the unavoidable underside of having winners. Maybe everyone thought of the forest this way until a decade or so ago, when researchers looking at soil fungi discovered that the above ground capitalism in the forest had a socialist underground, with a complicated fungal web connecting the plants together by their roots, taking from the haves to give to the have-nots. A fungal safety net! Fungi as Robin Hoods! All of a sudden, sunlight went from being Capital to being Raw Material, which the canopy photosynthesizes into the *real* capital of the forest: carbohydrates in the form of sugars. This was the point at which Capitalism, Red in Tooth and Claw, showed its soft underbelly and morphed into the safety net of social services delivery.

What were we all thinking when we pictured big trees as robber barons? How did we think the rest of the forest survived? In some estimates, big trees leak out as much as 40% of their sugars from their roots, most of which goes directly to the trees' fungal partners which are attached to the tree roots so thickly as to cover them, but which also maintain connections to each other and to other plants. It's this network, which some clever person has termed the "wood-wide web" which keeps those light-deprived seedlings alive on the forest floor. That tiny hemlock tree that doesn't even reach your knee and has a stem thinner than a pencil? -- it might be a hundred years old. Supported by the net, it's waiting for an ice storm or a hurricane or a logger to open up the canopy and give it sun to grow.

Not all the donations of sugar from the big trees' roots go directly to the fungal web. Some gets leaked into the soil where it's grabbed by the bacteria, the arthropods, the nematodes. . . all the tiny creatures that live there and maintain the ecosystem via soil health and fertility. And how did we think the big trees survived without that underground source of physical support and nutrient supply? No tree is an island. No tree lives by sunlight and carbon dioxide alone. Tree roots exist for physical support. They're not really very good at accessing water and nutrients; the N-P-K that gardeners supply as fertilizer. It's the fungal web that can find distant patches of water; that can leach phosphorus from minute mineral particles, that rots debris to get nitrogen, and then shares all this with the big trees in exchange for sugar. Even physical support for a big tree depends upon healthy soil, created by the bacterial and fungal glues that bind mineral particles into little bundles; by the fungal filaments that bind those bundles into bigger ones; by specialized fungal chemicals sequestering carbon and providing tilth -- for all the minute organisms, ultimately dependent upon sugars from the canopy, that maintain tilth -- that magical ability of healthy soil to hold together and yet allow water and air to penetrate.

I've thought about this a lot and I wonder, who's smarter: us or the forest?

Susan Goldhor



Wonalancet Out Door Club

HCR 64, Box 248

Wonalancet, NH 03897