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# WONALANCET



## OUT DOOR CLUB

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### ERNEST LEE MAJOR & EARLY PAINTERS OF WONALANCET



As the evening sun drops behind the western pines of Mt. Whiteface, it casts a shadow across The Bowl Natural Research Area, and from Tom Wiggin Trail a descending hiker is treated to a few minutes of alpenglow along its inner ridge. Visitors leaving the Ferncroft parking lot at this golden hour can trace the shaded silhouette of Mt. Wonalancet as it stretches east along the range, stopping under a spotlight Paugus. Heading south on Chinook Trail (NH Rte. 113-A), one can even glimpse Mt. Chocorua for a quick moment through the driver's side window, peeking up over Mt. Mexico. Neighbors on an evening walk stop along the roadside to let cars pass, observing the last retreating fingers of sunlight, before making their way back home. In some of their houses hang memories of similar sunsets past, captured in brushstrokes of oil and pigment on panel and canvas. Yellowed from a century in place, these are the scattered and often unsigned works of an overlooked character who called a cabin in the woods here home: the painter and teacher Ernest Lee Major.

In the Wonalancet Out Door Club's first two decades, horse-drawn coaches and later automobiles brought parties of urbanites seeking a country retreat and

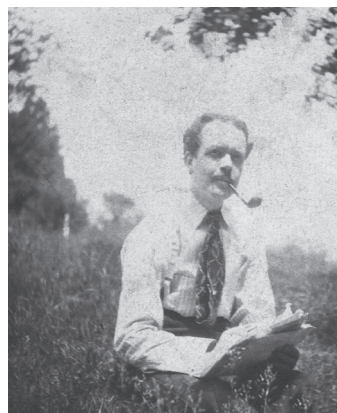
CARING FOR  
THE SANDWICH RANGE  
SINCE 1898

WODC.ORG  
SPRING 2026

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peakbaggers drawn to the expanding trail system. Visitors would lodge at guest houses like WODC founder Kate Sleeper's Wonalancet Farm. While Wonalancet never gained critical mass as an art colony like North Conway, NH, or Ogunquit, ME, many traveling artists were drawn to the beauty of its quiet rural setting and wide-reaching social circuit. One of the earliest artists passing through Wonalancet was likely the Boston and White Mountains painter William F. Paskell. The guest registry at Wonalancet Farm records Paskell as a frequent summer and fall guest from 1895 to 1898. This lines up with known works from that time, tightly impressionistic watercolors of the surrounding area – timeless depictions of the pastures and glacial erratics on Fowlers Mill Road or Mt. Chocorua from the lake. In March 1904, the great American painter Edmund C. Tarbell signed Wonalancet Farm's guest register, although both the duration and artistic output of his mid-winter stay remain unknown. Later that summer, some weeks apart, Wonalancet even drew two young American painters back from Paris, France – the interior and figurative painter Eleanor Norcross, and the seascape impressionist Lionel Walden. The latter would return again over the years, as he was the brother of Kate Sleeper's husband, Chinook dog breeder and Arctic explorer Arthur Walden, and the eldest son of Wonalancet Chapel's summer clergyman the Reverend Treadwell Walden.

While these artists came and went, in 1910 the Boston-based art teacher and painter Ernest Lee Major emerged as the valley's most committed returnee, with Mt. Whiteface as his enduring muse. When he first arrived in Wonalancet, Major was taking his 14<sup>th</sup> summer break from a faculty position at the Normal Arts School in Boston (now MassArt), a pattern he would continue to follow until his death in 1950. He likely rented,



*Ernest Lee Major, the eccentric and devoted painter of Mt. Whiteface*

before purchasing, a cabin backing up to Mt. Mexico and Paugus. The cabin was not much more than a rough-walled studio, with one bed and a small cluttered kitchen. He would eventually share this piece of land, and sell a corner of it, to a fellow forgotten artist: Mr. William McHenry. Like Major, McHenry had his own shack that, behind a set of dutch doors, was filled to the brim with curiosities from his world travels. Neither of these men appear to have signed the Wonalancet Farm guest register, though from oral history we are told that they would come down from their hole-ups, or *plein air* escapades, and join dinner as it was served in the inn's dining room. Their bills were settled with small paintings and pastels of familiar views that have charmed guests since.

Back in Boston, student accounts of E. L. Major's character paint a picture of an odd yet captivating instructor. He relished intimidating his pupils early, with a dry and sardonic wit, while winning them over with his creative teaching style and dedication to great art and its place in history. Students studied directly from Major's reproduction of old masters, and were instructed to examine their own works while standing on their head, with one eye half closed. He was an eccentric, known for a succession of dogs that accompanied him to class every day – a detail evidenced in the decades of school yearbooks where Major's faculty headshots were never without a canine companion. Of note, in 1924, after the passing of his French bulldog "Jimmy Whistler," Major returned from a summer in Wonalancet with a new pup to start the school year, "Minook" the Chinook.

Major would walk through the classroom, providing spirited and wide-ranging lectures, espousing his views on books, plays, paintings, personalities, symphonies and early movies. His devotion to formal technique



and the Old Masters — like the earlier Wonalancet guests Norcross and Walden — had been shaped by studies abroad in France, specifically at Académie Julian in the early 1880s.

Before Major moved to Boston in 1889, his

*Ernest Lee Major and Minook, c. 1929*



*Wood Interior, Wonalancet, New Hampshire, by Ernest Major*

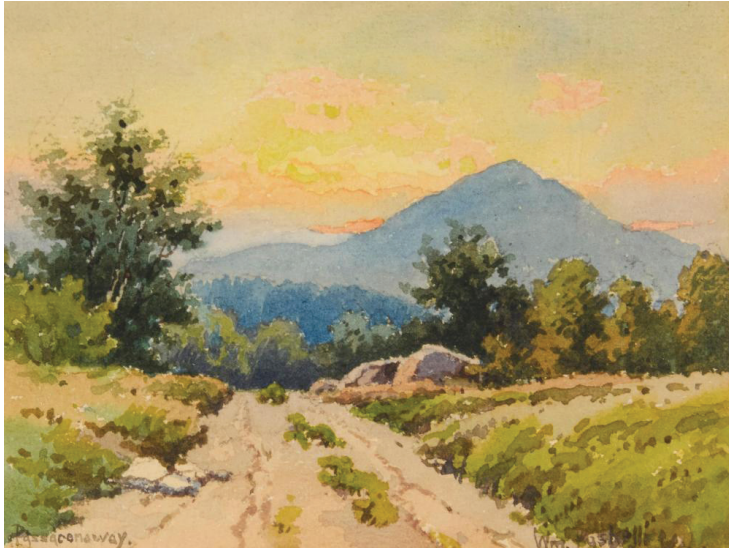
works had been exhibited at the Paris Salon, an honor for any American. At this period in art history, figure painting was held in higher esteem than landscape painting, and while in Boston Major would primarily be known for his portraits and still lives, these early years in France had also planted the seeds of a landscape painter's lifestyle he would replicate in New Hampshire.

Shortly upon his return to the States, Major exhibited in New York several sketches of the French countryside. In these landscapes, Major was following in the footsteps of the Barbizon School painters, a movement of early-to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century French landscape painters that broke from academic tradition, preferring to paint directly from nature in the village of Barbizon and the Forest of Fontainebleau. While few works remain from Major's early years, one can only speculate as to the degree of exposure the artist had to the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters who were also less conventional in their choice of subject matter and technique than his masters at Académie Julian. In any event, the attention the new art drew could hardly have escaped Major's notice.

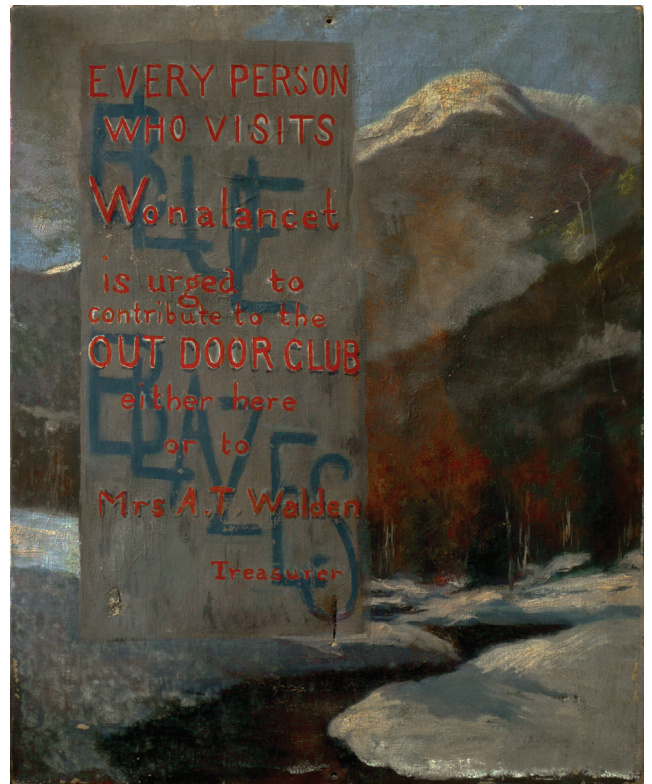
Still, Ernest Lee Major had spent too much time mastering the academic style of painting to abandon it completely. Like many of his contemporaries of the Boston School, his art was a synthesis of French Impressionism and these academic methods. Works like *Mt. Whiteface* or *Wood Interior* display the broken brushwork and dappled sunlight of Impressionism, though the subject's form is never truly dissolved. Unlike the early White Mountain School painters, such as Benjamin Champney, Major did not care to embellish his landscapes in fantasy. His work favored

more intimate observations of his subject's true nature. A century later, those of us who follow blue blazes to these same vistas, or watch the Brook Path's hemlocks light up in the late afternoon, may recognize in Major a fellow Out Door Club member – caught, as we are, under the same everlasting spell of Wonalancet.

– Ben Semmes



Mount Passaconaway, c. 1895-1897, by William F. Paskell



WODC Donation Poster on a heroic landscape invokes BLUE BLAZES and says, in red: “Every person who visits Wonalancet is urged to donate to the OUT DOOR CLUB either here or to Mrs. A.T. Walden, Treasurer”



A Paskell painting said to be from “near Wonalancet”

Contributor Ben Semmes (in addition to his other credits) is the grandson of noted and beloved Wonalancet painter from more recent times, Kit Semmes, who was out in all weathers, painting from the protection of the raised rear hatch of a car, or the shade of an umbrella or wide straw hat.

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William Paskell in the foreground, and Mt. Chocorua, which figures often in his work in the area

vigorously. All to the good, you say. I've cut so much there isn't enough remaining for a 10 page issue, and too much for 8 pages. What to do?

I've ransacked the files and found two documents which will perhaps interest some. One is a letter from a longtime member, Phyllida Willis, written from Hood College in Frederick, MD, in May of 1977. The second is a clipping from the Boston Globe, a dispatch from Wonalancet in October in the 1930's. Hope you enjoy them.

### Climber Makes 50th Ascent of Mt Whiteface

WONALANCET, NH Oct.8. What is probably a modern record for trampers in the White Mountains was established yesterday when Edmund Alden, veteran climber, made his 50th ascent of Mt. Whiteface, which rises above Wonalancet by a three mile trail to an altitude of 4,200 feet.

He expects, before he leaves the White Mountains in time to vote in New York, to make an equal score for Mt Chocorua, which he has climbed 48 times.

Mr. Alden has climbed most of the White Mountains including the higher peaks of the Presidential Range, many times in the nearly 50 years that he has been a summer visitor in this region. He has also been an enthusiastic climber in the Alps and the Rockies, but he loves the mountains of N.H. and often says there is as much beauty and satisfaction to be found in the local climbs as on the more famous mountains of the world.

He is not a climber who goes after records, and has kept no score of any of his mountain trips except for the diary record of his sojourn on his two favorite mountains, Chocorua and Whiteface. He never climbs for time, and selects a day for the clearness of the view that it promises. He spends a five month summer at Wonalancet, and after leaving here often climbs in the mountains of Virginia, on visits to his daughters.

A group of guests at Ferncroft attended a party given by Mrs. E.L. Fisher last evening in honor of Mr Alden's golden anniversary ascent of Whiteface. They recalled the years in which he has been the accepted leader of all the most ambitious tramping parties that put out

from Ferncroft. He is the Wonalancet weather prophet. Almost every day of the summer season begins with numerous queries, after breakfast. "What kind of a day is it going to be for a mountain, Mr. Alden?" Over his pipe the mountaineer considers, cocking a weather-eye toward the sky above Whiteface, and his verdict determines the fate of the day with the Ferncrofters.

A graduate of Amherst College in 1880, Mr. Alden is a member of Phi Beta Kappa scholarship fraternity. Until his retirement, he taught history for many years and was head of the department at Packer College in Brooklyn. He collaborated in the compiling of the *Century Dictionary* and the *History of American Biography*. He is also an authority on the local lore of the White Mountains. He is the mainstay and patriarch of the Wonalancet Out Door Club, and probably knows more mountains by name from a fixed observation point, than any other visitor to the White Mountains. He once named 60 peaks seen from Mt Chocorua. He spend much of the early season in opening trails and suggesting improvements in marking, and clearing the popular paths through the local mountains. Unlike many seasoned trampers, Mr. Alden never disdains the novice at hiking. He loves to win a convert to mountain climbing, and spends hours in planning trips that the less hardy and the children of the party can safely enjoy.

He laments that in his long climbing experience he has never met a bear, but he never expresses skepticism over other trampers' bears.

### To the Officers of the WODC May 1977

I was delighted to receive the WODC Newsletter and learn of the Annual Meeting (1976) decisions to continue current trails maintenance, continue the three Special Use Permits for the shelter sites, and undertake long term efforts to upgrade facilities.

The enclosed check, \$3 dues and \$100 contribution, is a token of my support for the decisions made at the Annual Meeting, and an indication of how much I owe to members and friends of WODC. What I

am about to write may or may not be of interest.

I came first to Wonalancet in the summer of 1934, the summer before I entered college. Mother was working at the Wonalancet Farm, helping Miss Violet Jones, (Walter Jones' sister), operate the Farm for the Waldens. I was "excess" baggage,—free to roam the WODC trails—my first introduction to any hills higher than New York's 1,000 ft Bear Mountain. Those 8 weeks opened a new life for me: active participation in Mt Holyoke Outing Club,—the Cascades, Sierras, Alaska, Switzerland, Tetons,—membership in the AMC, the 4,000 Footer Club, the Appalachian Trail 'project' (of which to date I've seen 1,750 miles, and am nibbling away at the remaining 300), membership in the Ladies' Alpine Club (London, now merged with The Alpine Club), and so forth.

Memories of Wonalancet in 1934: The group of old-timers around the fire in the evening at the Farm—Mr. Walden, Mr. McHenry, Mr. Major, Mr. (Rev) Peaslee. Mr. McHenry, and an artist friend of Mr. Major, who showed me some of the trails. The WODC map on my wall, and trying to see how many of the trails I could hike. It was the early 50's before I ever did the Sleeper Trail from Waterville over to Whiteface! Mrs. Lombard and her kennels of Chinook dogs. Seeing a black bear cross the road at dusk between the Seeley kennels and the bridge over the brook—my first wild bear!

Later memories—starting from the Farm in September '38 with my father the first time I ever climbed Mt Washington, walking up to Blueberry Ledges with Mother when she was in her 80's, almost getting hired to do trail work right after the war in 1946!

And much more.

Sincerely,

Phyllida Willis

## GEORGE HURLEY

One of the quietest but most faithful of our members was George Hurley, who died earlier this year at 91. George was an iconic climber, best known for the many routes he pioneered on New Hampshire's rock faces. It was less well known that he'd been a highly regarded guide in the Italian Dolomites and received national recognition for the first ascent of the Titan in Utah, which was important enough to be included in *Fifty Classic Climbs of North America* by Steve Roper and Allen Steck. George was always willing to help beginners learn the ropes (literally and figuratively) and was a respected teacher who led climbs and climbing classes for EMS, while he gave free lessons to friends until his late 80s.



George was an exemplar of Yankee thrift. While the EMS gigs contributed shiny new garments to his wardrobe, by and large George had a long history of clothing as outstanding (and as fondly remembered) as his ascents – the type of clothing beloved of those British aristocrats who wear the same battered hat and ancient tweeds for decades and regard new clothing as lacking breeding. Some years back, a climbing companion noted that George sported “a harness so old that a carabiner is . . . required to hold it together, and a WWII era canvas pack.” His climbing shoes (unseen) in the photo had been found on the Sandwich Notch Road by Fred Lavigne who handed them on to David Gianpietro who handed them on to George.

George was also an exemplar of Yankee reticence. No one kept count of the number of massive logs that George nosed out and cleared with his ax (he was a brilliant axman) before the rest of us even knew they'd blown down. No one kept count of the number of rescues he quietly aided. The counts exist only in how greatly he is missed.

He leaves his wife, Jean, who loved the woods which she tramped daily, and who led mushroom walks for us, even before George was active in the WODC. They met on a climb led by George.

## WINTER TRAILS REPORT

A few volunteers have continued to keep our trails mostly clear of blowdowns over the winter season. Fortunately, we avoided the significant storm damage of the previous winter, and we hope that continues, so we can concentrate on the spring needs of the trails.

Two weeks before each trailwork date, an email reminder will be sent out. Early in the week of each Trails Day, an email will be sent with details of what we'll be doing, and when and where to meet.

If you would like to be added to the Volunteer Trails Day notification list, or have any questions about volunteering, adopting a trail, etc., email me at [trails@wodc.org](mailto:trails@wodc.org).

## TRAILS DAYS 2026

- MAY 16** Spring Trails Day
- JUNE 6** National Trails Day
- JULY 18** New Hampshire Trails Day
- SEPT 26** National Public Lands Day

*Sign up in advance; we will send details.*

**JACK WALDRON**  
**REMEMBRANCE GATHERING**  
**JULY 25, 4:00-6:00 PM**  
*in the Wonalancet Chapel Grove*

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**AUGUST 16**  
*in the Wonalancet Chapel Grove*

# THE AMERICAN WOLF . . . . . CONTINUED FROM FALL, 2025

(in five books . . . and then some)

“All stories are about wolves. All worth repeating, that is. Anything else is sentimental drivel.”

Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin*

## AMERICAN WOLF

by Nate Blakeslee (2017)

## THE REIGN OF WOLF 21

by Rick McIntyre (2020)



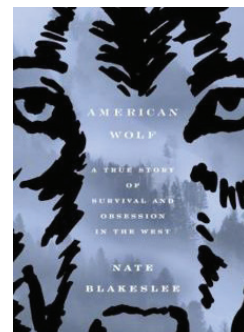
In 1872, the US government created our first national park: Yellowstone. Having driven out the tribes that had originally roamed it (but wouldn't have understood the concept of ownership), it suddenly was managed by a park superintendent and rangers, who followed a strict program of predator control. This meant exterminating all wolves in order to protect the elk, antelope, moose and bighorn sheep that were considered the park's real attractions and ignoring the fact that, as Blakeslee wrote, “wolves and elk had coexisted in Yellowstone for thousands of years, that the two species had in fact evolved in tandem with each other – which explained why the elk could run just as fast as the wolf but no faster. Wolves were the driving force behind the evolution of a wide variety of prey species in North America after the last ice age, literally molding the natural world around them.” It was predictable that the eradication of predators led to the herds outgrowing the food available, and the Yellowstone ecosystem degrading, leading to cycles of boom and bust caused by disease and starvation. Which, in turn, led to the park's leadership deciding in the 1930s that they needed to cull the enormous elk herds, shooting thousands of animals each year. This mass slaughter (mostly in winter and hidden from park visitors) went on for years, while debate about the possibility of reintroducing wolves ran on a parallel track, with the biologists pushing for it, and local hunters, ranchers and their elected officials arguing against it. What with one legal argument and another, it wasn't until 1995 that 15 wolves captured in Canada were radio collared and released into Yellowstone, with an additional 17 introduced the following year. Eight years later, Yellowstone had 174 wolves, divided into 14 packs. It also offered extraordinary wolf-watching. Protected against hunters and angry ranchers, and coming into this paradise of more naive big prey

than any wolves had ever before encountered, the first pack claimed a relatively treeless valley edged by a lightly trafficked Park road, which allowed tourists the chance to glimpse wolves in the wild, and gave rangers and researchers the opportunity to study the behavior of individuals and packs on an ongoing basis. The two books cited here are the results of that opportunity. Rick McIntyre, who might reasonably be called a

fanatic, observed wolves every day, once managing 891 consecutive days with at least one sighting, always keeping careful notes. He shared those notes with Nate Blakeslee (whose book is almost as much about Rick as it is about wolves), before writing his own book.

As to whether all wolves are kind and wise followers of strict pack protocol, I should have stopped reading after the first two books. But honestly, every animal behaviorist, studying troops, packs or herds of any species, has noticed that the group includes athletes and bumblers, geniuses and idiots, kindly leaders and cruel dictators. And the fortunes of each group rise and fall depending upon which traits happen to characterize its leader. Why should wolves be different? Let me tell you a story about Wolf 21, observed by McIntyre but condensed from Blakeslee's book, which overlaps.

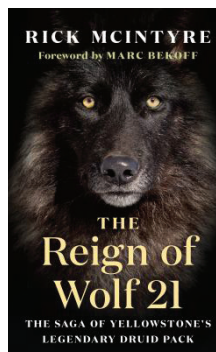
Wolf 21 was a great alpha. During his six-and-a-half-year reign, his pack size rose to 37; the largest known pack anywhere. 21 arrives fortuitously at what will become his pack shortly after the death of both its alpha and beta males, and is accepted by the alpha female (40) and her sisters. 21 impregnates 40 but — he also impregnates her sisters. Turns out that the idea that only one pair mates in a pack is limited to small locally constrained packs, where females other than the alpha are usually the alpha male's descendants. If there is a rule, it seems to be that wolves don't mate with their descendants. But where a male arrives from the



outside, he's free to mate with all the females, and 21 takes full advantage. Nevertheless, for the first three years after 21 joins the pack, 40 (who I've renamed Mean Girl), attempts to prevent her sisters from breeding, attacking them and generally doing her best to keep their pups from surviving. (Historical sideline: 40 became alpha by driving her mother out of the pack in what is described as a "putsch.") However, she produces few pups of her own, while even fewer survive, so the pack stays small. But in the spring of 2000, there's a regime change. 21 impregnates Mean Girl's sister, 42, who I've renamed Sweetie, and he also impregnates Sweetie's adult daughter. Plus, of course, Mean Girl. So, being a good provider, he's running between three dens of pups. One evening, Mean Girl comes upon Sweetie, hunting with another female, and attacks them viciously, forcing submission and then following them back to Sweetie's den, where her very young pups are being guarded by a third female. Rick, of course, is watching tensely as this happens, pretty sure that Mean Girl is going to win the battle and kill the pups. When he spots a badly wounded female the next morning, he assumes that it's Sweetie. But it isn't Sweetie; it's Mean Girl, who dies of her wounds, which autopsy shows were inflicted by multiple attackers. This is the first documented instance of a pack's subordinate members killing their own alpha, and the big question is: will Sweetie and her henchwomen kill Mean Girl's pups? If the battle had gone the other way, everyone is pretty sure that Mean Girl would have ensured that only her pups would survive. Blakeslee writes, "As Rick and his colleagues looked on in amazement, 21 supervised the relocation of the far-flung litters, consolidating the pups — twenty-one in all — into one massive brood. 42 (aka Sweetie) rose to become the new alpha female, and suddenly harmony reigned in the pack, as all the females worked together to raise the enormous litter. Even under normal circumstances, keeping pups fed, healthy and safe from predators is a struggle, and mortality rates of 50 percent are not uncommon. Yet an astounding twenty of the twenty-one Druid pups survived to adulthood, ushering in a golden era for the pack."

21 is not only a legendary progenitor; he's empathic, kind, a great fighter (who doesn't kill the wolves that he holds off) and an outstanding provider. There's a reason Rick's book refers to his "reign."

So, some wolves are mean, and some



are kind; some are abusive and some are collaborative and play well with others; some are gentle and some are murderous. And yes, wolves do murder other wolves and, if you read these books (despite the overlap, I enjoyed both, but if you can only read one, I'd recommend *American Wolf*), you'll see not only wolf-on-wolf attacks, but also pack-on-pack full-out wars. Still, we probably shouldn't forget that Adolph Murie, the doyen of early American wolf researchers, and author of *The Wolves of Mt. McKinley*, has said that his strongest impression of wolves is their friendliness towards each other.

But whatever the behavior of individual wolves and of different packs, the wolves change Yellowstone. The elk are reduced to a population size that the park can support. Since they can no longer afford to casually hang out by the streams, nibbling on the aspen and willow there, and destroying the banks, the beavers return and the stream banks stabilize. The fish populations soar. The wolves kill enough coyotes to bring about a glut of small rodents and these bring in large numbers of raptors and a variety of small carnivores. Whatever park management hoped that the wolves would accomplish in terms of the ecosystem, they get. Their success is, if anything, beyond their dreams. But Yellowstone isn't fenced off from the outside world. The wolves increase and, since they're used to humans who are simply neutral figures in the distance, they wander outside the park. These aren't just books about wolf behavior. Most notably, *American Wolf* is a book about politics and prejudice; wolf behavior and human behavior, and what happens when they run up against each other, which brings us to the last book.

## OF WOLVES AND MEN by Barry Lopez (1978)

**"It was a privilege to observe such an intelligent, elegant species, and humbling to realize how often our own human species falls short in comparison, *Three Among the Wolves*, Helen Thayer**

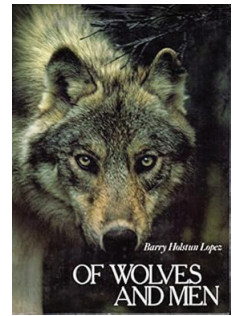
And this is where we come to the most painful part of the story of wolves in America. Starting with the early settlers and continuing today, no animal has been attacked by the white population with such continuing emotions and violent hatred as the wolf. When the settlers arrived, there were an estimated two million wolves in America. By the 1920s, wolves were almost extinct in the US. When the Park Service

decided to introduce that small number of wolves to Yellowstone, they had to import them from Canada. It wasn't simply that wolves might attack stock (in fact, wolves were often blamed for killings done by other animals); bears or mountain lions might kill domestic animals but there was never a concerted effort to wipe out those species. Wolves were killed for profit, for pleasure or for emotional release. Despite its being outlawed, wolves have continued to be hunted by airplane, and trapped, poisoned and shot for the sheer pleasure and excitement of it, perhaps assuaged by the thought that wolves should be killed. Most upsetting are the reports of wolves that have been captured and tortured. These are so similar to reports of lynchings that it's difficult not to think that wolves — like Black or Indigenous people — have been burdened with the darkest parts of the American psyche. Although the torturing represents a twisted extremity, Nate Blakeslee in *American Wolf* asks why the campaign to eradicate wolves was so emotional? Why was it continued past any practical reason? Why did men want to exterminate every last wolf?

And this also seems like the right place to point out that American Indian tribes have always regarded wolves with an admiration and respect described by Lopez as “absolutely pervasive.” Indians have traditionally seen themselves as part of the natural world, surrounded by plants and animals that are more like brothers and sisters than enemies or slaves. While there were differences in how different tribes regarded wolves, depending upon the prevalence of wolves in their territory, and upon whether that tribe depended primarily upon hunting or agriculture, wolves were generally studied and imitated for their hunting prowess and admired for their strength, endurance, allegiance to and care for their families, as well as their support of a wider community — those animals who depended upon sharing or stealing some portion of wolf kills. Indians rarely killed wolves and when they did kill one, it was to receive some practical or sacred benefit from the body, which was treated with great respect. Their wolf tales were as different from those of the settlers as imaginable. Just consider the Oregon Kalapuya tribe's origin myth: The first woman appears with two children, walking down a stone mountain, as grass and rivers spring up behind her. She meets Mother Wolf who offers to watch her children while she explores this new world, and keeps them safe until she returns.

Anti-wolf violence in white America has multiple

roots. It's helpful for those of us committed to protecting wilderness and restoring intact ecologies to recall that the first colonists regarded wilderness as not just evil, but literally Satanic, and saw its destruction as God's work. Early settlers believed that they were carrying out God's will in destroying wolves and savages. These were often conflated, or linked; at least one early Massachusetts proclamation said that firing a rifle within a settlement was illegal, unless it was aimed at a wolf or an Indian.



In 1756 John Adams looked back on an earlier nation and wrote: “The whole continent was one continued dismal wilderness, the haunt of wolves and bears and more savage men. Now the forests are removed, the land covered with fields of corn, orchards bending with fruit and the magnificent habitations of rational and civilized people.”

Although the 17<sup>th</sup> century might have been the high point of killing wolves in the interests of godliness, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was an unholy mix of bloodlust and capitalism as the grasslands of the Great Plains were opened up to the business of grazing cattle. These cattle were sometimes killed by wolves now deprived of their normal prey, since the men who had earlier wiped out beaver in the hunt for pelts had killed over 25 million buffalo between 1850 and 1880. The buffalo hunting not only yielded hides for sale (everything else was generally left to rot), but had the secondary goal of depriving the Plains Indians of an important food source. 1875 to 1895 were probably the deadliest decades for wolves, and also for untold millions of incidental animals, as, in Barry Lopez's words, “thousands of men bought up enormous quantities of strychnine and rode out pell mell on the range. They laid down poisoned meat everywhere, in lines as long as 150 miles.” Just the slobber on the grass from a poisoned animal could kill the next grazer, months or even years later. Whatever small number of cattle might have been killed by predation was sufficient to incite the literal extermination of the wolf. Lopez writes, “No other wild killing ever achieved, either in geographic scope or economic or emotional scale, the predator-control war waged against wolves in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States and Canada. . . Eric Zimen, a German wolf biologist, once remarked that he was utterly unable to fathom the relentless carnage. ‘We killed the wolf in

Europe,' he said, 'and we hated the wolf, but it was not anything like what you have done in America.'”

Wolves in research projects have, for decades, been tranquillized and fitted with very visible radio collars, in the hope of protecting them, making sure that the public knew that killing a collared wolf was illegal. Despite this, Mech's classic wolf studies ended because seventeen of his collared wolves were killed. An experiment to reestablish wolves in northern Michigan ended when all the collared wolves were killed. In 1976, the state of Alaska had the radio-collared wolves in one of its own studies shot in response to pressure from hunters who wanted all game for themselves. Even Adolph Murié's classic research (in a national park) on the wolves of Mt. McKinley, was done under pressure from (illegal) wolf killings and destruction of dens and pups. Yellowstone was an ideal location for wolf studies, partly because a pack settled in a highly visible open area bisected by a road, but really because its location, watched by both park personnel and tourists, protected the wolves from human aggression.

Horrendous as the 19<sup>th</sup> century was in the Plains, New England's wolf hunting was more in the light of sport. Close to 200 years ago, on November 14, 1830, what may have been the best documented and most enjoyable wolf hunt took place in Tamworth, NH. Described in stirring military terms, close to 600 armed men and boys came together, under the leadership of “a war-seasoned veteran,” General Quimby of Sandwich, to kill the vast numbers of wolves said to be coming down from the Sandwich Range. After a 16-hour siege, the troops returned to “the great rock on which the commander-in-chief had established headquarters” (Ordination Rock?), and subsequently marched to the village to be feted by “a cheering and waving of handkerchiefs by the ladies, in windows and on balconies,” after which the heroes repaired to local taverns for refreshment (Charles Beals, *Passaconaway in the White Mountains*). The number of wolves killed by those 600 warriors? Four. And fifty years later, both wolves and their prey had pretty much disappeared from our region.

More than one wildlife biologist has suggested that northern NH is currently a suitable habitat for wolves, and that we might hope that wolves will resettle here, on their own. If this happens, how will we treat them? Given our past treatment of wolves, and our current treatment of refugees and immigrants, I fear for their survival.

– Susan Goldhor



### Can Wolves Survive . . . American Politics

The attacks go on. Gray wolf extirpation has now become a MAGA goal, with the House Natural Resources Committee voting to advance a bill authored by Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ), entitled “Enhancing Safety for Animals”.

Is it accidental that its initials are the same as those of the *Endangered Species Act*? Turns out the animals whose safety is enhanced are the domesticated ones; this bill will remove ESA (the original ESA) protection from the Mexican Gray Wolf subspecies, whose population was down to a number you could count on your fingers before ESA was brought back.

Meanwhile, Reps. Lauren Boebert (R-CO) and Tom Tiffany (R-WI) introduced the “*Pet and Livestock Protection Act*” which would remove ESA protection from northwestern and Great Plains Gray Wolves.

The PLPA includes a hidden landmine; a provision blocking judicial review of delisting ESA. Boebert has charged that ESA wolf protection is the work of “leftists (who) want to cower (sic) to radical environmentalists”.

The leftist-in-chief behind the original ESA was Pres. Nixon, but it seems that truth is as much a victim of the proposed legislation as wolves.

This news comes from **e360**, the Yale environmental news bulletin.

Please read more (and subscribe) at: <https://e360.yale.edu/features/wolves-endangered-species-act>

## NEW TECHNOLOGY

Our handsome wolf standing over a plea for endangered species is a creation of AI. But the text of the message is 100% written by actual persons. For the foreseeable future, while the editors may experiment here and there with AI graphics, all text will be written by verified human members of the WODC.

## KEEPING UP WITH THE NEWS

We are proud of our WODC Newsletter, which is mailed to members twice a year. But there's a lot of information, news and updates that we'd like to share with you between issues of the Newsletter. So this summer we are launching *Mountain Notes*, an email bulletin.

If you'd like to receive it, send your name and email address to [wonalancetoutdoorclub@gmail.com](mailto:wonalancetoutdoorclub@gmail.com) and we'll add you to the list.



Some famous cities extoll their cathedrals; in others, people contend that their bridges are as magnificent as any cathedral. Tucked back up here in the mountains, tiny Wonalancet couldn't begin to afford the entry fee for that fray. But we do have a lovely Chapel. And . . . if you hike around a bit, you will find some interesting bridges, too. Recently a couple of those bridges got quite a bit more interesting.

The Smalley Bridge near the beginning of the Old Mast Road was threatened by a large tree leaning menacingly over it. The bridge survived but ended up needing new railings. Rather than replacing them with something similar – serviceable but mundane – the WODC's Will Viner and Fred Lavigne found some black locust lumber. Black locust is not only a beautiful wood; it's highly rot-resistant and also toxic to insects (and humans – please don't chew!). On the

other hand, black locust trees are often difficult to make into lumber because they rarely grow tall and straight, and their wood is one of the hardest woods in North America.

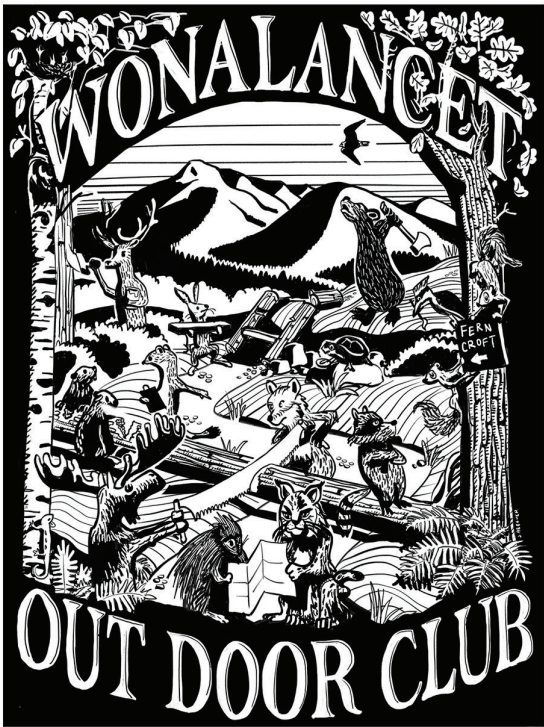
Undaunted, Fred and Will decided not to fight the inherent nature of their material and used a band saw to cut with the curves. Railings with curves? Perhaps a bit unconventional, but now also one of the most visually interesting small bridges in the area.

Another bridge worth a special detour is found toward the end of the Gordon Path, shortly before Wonalancet Farm and Rte. 113-A. This blackened bridge is easy to spot. Its decking is resistant to moss, algae, insects, fire and rot, not because of any paint or chemical wood treatment that was applied, but because bridge magicians Fred Lavigne and Larry Labrie burned it to a depth of 2-3 millimeters with a torch before it was laid down.



Charring wood in this fashion – a centuries-old practice called Yagisuki in Japan, where it was developed – not only protects the wood but also produces a striking visual effect. This effect may not be due just to the unfamiliar blackened surface: some woodworkers report both enhancement of the grain and increased color depth. Have a look and see what you think.

BOTTOM: Larry Labrie watches well-seasoned boards burning in a traditional configuration. Fred Lavigne wields the torch as Larry monitors the progress. TOP: Smalley Bridge, long a great convenience at the start of the Old Mast Road, sports eye-catching new railings.



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