



Wapack News Fall / Winter 2021

We welcome you back to our annual meeting this year, on Saturday October 16. We missed you last year due to COVID, but with vaccinations and safety protocols in place, we feel that an in-person meeting will be safe. We are looking forward to seeing you again. See details on page 3.

It has been a busy “behind the scenes” year for us. Our website and “General Store” on-line ordering system has been updated with new software and the merchandize ordering flow from our website to our order fulfillment partner Monadnock Worksource improved.

Trail maintenance has continued with many more trees than usual falling on the trails. Thanks to Mike and all who helped keep the trails clear this year, and to those who notified us of down trees and other trail issues. We also held a work day on the Marion Davis Trail on Sept. 25. (See Mike’s article.) We

have welcomed new “Section Captain” trail adopters to our trail crew this year: Martin Higgins, Molly Fink, and Ariana and David Harris.

On September 25 I had the pleasure of joining staff and supporters of the North County Land Trust (NCLT) for a celebration hike on their recently acquired property. This new conservation area

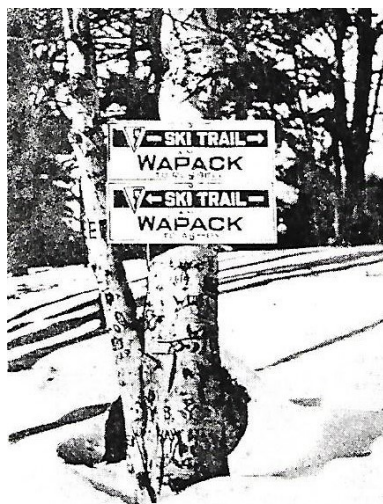


Mount Watatic from property recently conserved by NCLT and Mass. F&G.

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The Wapack Trail’s place in the History of Skiing in the US

Before examining the history of skiing on the Wapack Trail, it is important to the story to note the many popular and historic ski areas that were developed along the mountains of the Wapack Range. The earliest was the Temple Mountain Ski Forest, established in 1935 by Bill Glazier. It was located on the east side of what is now the Temple Mountain State Reservation in Peterborough. It featured a network of ski touring trails and several rustic cabins heated with wood, advertised as providing “low cost winter weekends.” Though ski touring continued, this was the time when downhill skiing was also becoming popular. Expert ski instructors



Wapack Ski Trail signs circa 1930’s.

came to America from Europe, founding ski schools teaching the Arlberg Technique. Soon ski trains started running to New Hampshire from Boston. The summit auto road on Pack Monadnock was a big draw for early downhill skiers. Bill Currier reminisced about skiing the auto road in the 1930’s at our annual meeting in 1996. “A lot of people used to climb up the auto road and ski down it, a lot of people; it was amazing! There were people from Peterborough of course, Fitchburg, and the whole general area used to come up there. Usually you skied the lower half of it, but occasionally you’d climb all

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Events

Annual meeting, October 16

See next page for details.

Trail Work Days

We are considering another work day this Fall. Check our website or watch your email for announcements.

You can sign up to receive email workday and event notices and newsletters at Wapack.org.

Trail Maintenance Report

The Friends of the Wapack had their first workday since the start of the pandemic on September 25th. Five hardy souls showed up. We rebuilt and improved drainage on the upper section of the Marion Davis Trail in Miller State Park. With the pandemic there has been a significant increase in use, especially at Miller and at Mt. Watatic, and Wapack National Wildlife Refuge. This use, together with the wet weather since July, required the rebuilding of these water bars. We were able to clear out the water bars and improve drainage and brush in areas where users are going off the main trail. Thanks goes out to David Brooks, Tom Brumaghim, Anne Reed, and Steve Dyke who made the day a success.

Besides the rain, the summer also brought a number of strong storms one of which took a number of trees down between Barrett Mt. and New Ipswich Mt. These downed and damaged trees were removed in July. Thanks to Tom Brumaghim and Sean McInerney for helping out with this and schlepping the chainsaw.

- Mike Przybyla, Trail Master



Left: July storm tree clearing on Barrett Mt. Above: crew members at work. Right: a nice restored waterbar.



Wapack News (continued)



was purchase by NCLT, in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, conserved 200 acres which includes the south peak and south slope of Mt. Watatic, completing the preservation of Watatic's summit. NCLT will retain 15 acres at the base of Watatic, which includes an old farm house (see photo). Plans are to use the building as a conservation education center. The FOW contributed to the purchase of the property and promoted the campaign in our newsletters and emails. It was great to see the NCLT staff and supporters and to connect with new and old friends.

- Rick Blanchette, President



The Friends of the Wapack

2021 Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 16

Sharon Meeting House, Rte. 123, Sharon, NH

Featured Guest Speaker: Chris Pryor

“NEFF and the Past, Present and Future of the Lincoln Davis Memorial Forest ”



You're invited! Please join us on October 16 for our 2021 annual meeting at the Sharon Meeting House for an in-person, indoor presentation. Our special guest presenter will be Chris Pryor, the Director of Forest Stewardship for the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF). Chris's talk will include the fascinating history of NEFF's very first preserve, the 76 year old Lincoln Davis Memorial Forest, including the former blueberry business that was on the property, past residents, and the current status and future plans for this historic forest. Chris will also talk about NEFF and the many other properties that they protect in our area.

The Lincoln Davis protects a beautiful section of the Wapack Trail along the Temple Mountain ridge in Sharon. The preserve has grown to include Cabot lands and other parcels over the years. In 1997, NEFF, the FOW and the towns of Sharon and Temple protected the Wapack Trail through these lands under the NH Municipal Trails Act. NEFF has been an important partner in protecting the Wapack Trail, so we are excited to welcome Chris to our meeting.

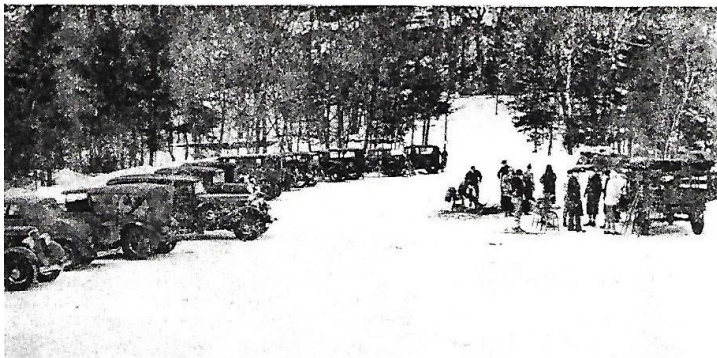
Chris began working at NEFF in 2001 to manage the organization's communications, and then became the Conservation Easement Coordinator in 2003. For nine years, he was responsible for the monitoring of 135 easements covering over 1.142 million acres in seven states. Chris is now the Director of Forest Stewardship. He oversees the management of NEFF's 38,000 acres of Community Forests. Before joining NEFF, Chris worked in New Hampshire, Colorado, and West Virginia. Chris received his degree in forestry from Virginia Tech. He is a licensed forester in Massachusetts and an SAF Certified Forester.

We request that you register for this event soon at our website Wapack.org. We will monitor the number of registrations to help ensure safe social distancing.

To ensure the health and safety of everyone, please know that we will have **COVID-19 protocols** in place at the event. Masks are to be worn by everyone while indoors, with the exception of active speakers on the stage. We will have masks available at the door for those who need them. Also, though we will not be asking or verifying vaccination status, please stay home if you are unvaccinated for reasons other than age or religious or health exemptions, or if you show symptoms of COVID-19. Children too young to be vaccinated are welcome. Thank you so much for your cooperation.

- **9:00 AM Hike (optional)** Join us on a morning hike on the Berry Pasture Trail at the Lincoln-Davis Memorial Forest in Sharon, NH. Meet at 9:00 AM at the Sharon Meeting House. For details contact Mike Przybyla 603-878-3350 or email Mike at mikep218@comcast.net
- **12:00 Noon (optional)** Informal “bring-your-own” lunch at Sharon Meeting House. Bring a dessert to share if you like. *Weather permitting we will have lunch outside.*
- **12:30 PM** Gathering and sign-in
- **1:00 PM** Speaker **Chris Pryor**, followed by highlights from this year, election of officers for 2022, and awarding of door prizes.

Wapack Skiing History (continued)



Skiers parked at Pack Monadnock, 1930's.

the way to the top and run that section.”

Across the road from Pack Monadnock, Charlie and Lucie Beebe of Peterborough bought several hundred acres on the north side of Temple Mountain and opened Temple Mountain Ski Area in 1937. It had a rope tow and was one of the first downhill ski areas in country. The Ski Forest didn't last long but Temple Mountain Ski Area thrived for more than 60 years, adding snowmaking, chairlifts, including the first quad chair lift in New Hampshire, and cross-country trails, until it closed in 2001. The property is now Temple Mountain State Reservation.

At the southern end of the Wapack Trail, a ski area was established on Mount Watatic around 1940. By the 1970's it had added snowmaking and chairlifts and a two story base lodge. I remember night skiing there in the 1960's when they had two T-bars. It shut in 1984.

A much smaller affair was Kidder Mountain Ski Area in New Ipswich. It was located just off Appleton Road and operated by the Koivula brothers. It had two short rope tows and less than 100 feet of vertical drop, and was popular with locals from 1962 to 1967. There were two main slopes separated by a narrow band of trees, and two narrower trails, one on each side of the ski area, and a warming hut at the base.

The last ski area to operate along the Wapack was Windblown Cross Country Ski Area. It was opened in 1972 by Al Jenks in fulfillment of his boyhood dream of operating a ski area. Windblown was a great success, with a large loyal following. It offered 40 kilometers of groomed ski trails and snowshoe trails with beautiful views, a spacious lodge with a fireplace and great food, a ski shop with rental equipment, warming huts, and cabins and overnight shelters for rent. It is fondly remembered as a place for skiers to connect with nature and each other.

Windblown was the last operating ski area on the Wapack Range when it closed in 2020. It seems appropriate that the the first and last ski businesses along the Wapack were cross-country areas.

These historic ski areas place the Wapack Range firmly in the annals of skiing history. There is much more that could be said about these ski areas in future articles. But what is the Wapack Trail's contribution to skiing history?

What was the first ski trail in the US?



Otto Schniebs skiing the Wapack Trail on an AMC ski trip in 1929.

Schniebs came to the US from Germany in 1927 and taught the Arlberg Technique, founding ski schools and popularizing the sport. Sixteen of his students made the US Olympics teams. Photo courtesy of the New England Ski Museum.

Here is a quote from a letter written by Tom Cabot, addressed to our then Historian, Constance Hall, dated December 10, 1993.

“My first clear memory of those trails was working at least one weekend and maybe two in the summer of 1924 with a group from the Appalachian Mountain Club headed by Arthur Comey to get the trail over Temple Mountain and Barrett Mountain properly cleared so they could be used for skiers. Later in that year, I started making arrangements for taking a group of Harvard students who had just joined the Harvard Mountaineering Club, of which I was co-founder with Henry Hall and Henry Schwab, on a cross-country skiing trip from Russell Station in Greenfield to the Ashburnham Sta-

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Wapack Trail Skiing History (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

tion in Massachusetts, spending one night at the Wapack Inn [Lodge]. There were about thirty inches of new snow. I have written several accounts of the trip because it ended in a nearly fatal accident to Bob Balch, who was then a Harvard freshman. Actually, he survived to become a professional skier, and a member of the Tenth Mountain Division. He was lost in the sinking of a transport in World War II.”

So this story from Tom Cabot puts the date of opening the Wapack Trail for skiing at 1924. Here is a quote from the Journal of the New England Ski Museum, issue number 105, Summer 2017:

“New Hampshire was the scene of the first American efforts to create trails through the forests specifically for skiing. Some members of the Appalachian Club began this work in 1923, trimming and widening the new Wapack Trail in the southern part of the state into a ridgetop cross-country twenty-one-mile ski route that traversed the numerous summits from Mount Watatic on the Massachusetts border to Pack Monadnock.”

So based on Tom Cabot’s letter and this information from the New England Ski Museum, it appears that the Wapack Trail could well have been the first ski trail in the US.

There is also this reference to the Wapack Ski Trail from the January 25, 1935 issue of The Ski Bulletin, Volume 5, Number 6.

“When volunteer parties of Appalachian M. C. skiers, with axes and brush hooks in 1927 began chopping a ski trail over Barrett and Temple mountains in the Wapack Range 50 miles northwest of Boston, we doubt if a single mile of downhill ski trail had been constructed (as such) or was even projected, anywhere on this continent.. Twenty miles of trail were completed in the Wapack region before the idea spread farther northward in New Hampshire, first to the Belknaps in 1931, and then in 1932 to Franconia Notch, N.H., and also to the edge of the Adirondacks in North Creek, N.Y..”

This Ski Bulletin article author was apparently unaware of the earlier 1924 Wapack Trail ski trail work related by Tom Cabot, but even 1927 predates other ski trails according to the author.

I recently asked Jeff Leich, Director of the New England Ski Museum, if, based on this evidence, the Wapack Trail was the first ski trail on the continent. He said that he could not vouch for Canada, but he indicated that there are no known records of an earlier ski trail in the US. So I think we can safely conclude that the Wapack Trail was in fact the first ski trail in the USA. All the more reason that the Wapack Trail deserves the appellation “Historic”, and another reason to work to protect and preserve the trail for future generations.

- Rick Blanchette, President

Thomas D. Cabot



Tom Cabot and his wife Virginia at our annual meeting in 1993. Tom was honored at the meeting with an award from the Friends and the naming of 2.2 miles of the Temple Mt. ridge the Cabot Skyline in his honor, in recognition for his "donation of a trail easement across these lands and lifelong friend of the Wapack Trail. "Tom was 96 years old.

Tom Cabot was a remarkable man of many accomplishments and interests. Among those are philanthropist, civil servant, (including serving in the US State Department), horseman, conservationist, engineer, business man, sailor, world explorer, fund raiser, mountaineer, pilot (WW I), skier, author, and a major supporter of the preservation of the Wapack Trail. For more about Tom Cabot, read his autobiography “Beggar on Horseback.”

“To my mind the most important thing for the future of the [Wapack] Trail is to have rights of way. I have given several miles of rights of way myself, and have often helped to get rights of way from others.”

- Tom Cabot, from his letter to Connie Hall, December 10, 1993



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**Annual Meeting
Notice Enclosed**

Founded in 1980, the Friends of the Wapack are an all volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to the maintenance and permanent projection of the Wapack Trail and certain side trails.

The Friends of the Wapack, Inc. is recognized as a charitable corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the US IRS code.

The Wapack Trail is a 21 mile hiking trail that traverses the Wapack Range from Mt. Watatic in Ashburnham MA to North Pack in Greenfield NH. Completed in 1923, it is the oldest interstate hiking trail in the Northeast.

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