



Voice of the Wapack

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Celebrating the Centennial of the Wapack Trail

One hundred years ago, two local farmers and former cattle drovers entered the forefront of the long distance trails movement by creating the Wapack Trail. Marion Buck and Frank Robbins were out working on Robbins' farm when they were approached by Albert Annett with the idea of creating a trail over land they knew well, the ridgeline between North Pack and Mt. Watatic. The trail was soon publicized in the Boston papers, and by the following year, Frank and Marion were building the Wapack Lodge to provide rooms and meals to the many hikers. The AMC soon got involved, improved the trail for skiing, and organized skiing and hiking trips along the trail. In our article in the 2021 Fall / Winter issue of this newsletter, we reported that according to the New England Ski Museum the Wapack Trail is the earliest known trail to be maintained for skiing in the U.S.



Frank Robbins and Marion (Buck) Davis, creators of the Wapack Trail and Wapack Lodge

Two of our Centennial events will present details about the creation of the Wapack Trail and the trail's creators. On June 24, the Friends of the Wapack and the New Ipswich Historical Society are hosting a presentation by Larry Anderson at the New Ipswich Congregational Church Hall. Larry is a freelance writer and the biographer of Benton MacKaye, the creator of the Appalachian Trail. Our Annual Meeting on October 21 will feature a talk by Al Jenks about his memories of Marion Davis, with stories of Marion and Frank and life at the Lodge.

We are also hosting several other events this year to celebrate the centennial of the trail, including history and nature hikes. For details on all of our Centennial events see pages three and four in this newsletter. Check our website Wapack.org for a complete listing of events and updates.

The First Century of Wapack Trail Stewardship

Frank Robbins and Marion (Buck) Davis, along with their families and friends, maintained the Wapack Trail in its first decades. Arthur Comey and Tom Cabot of the AMC improved the trail as a cross country ski trail in the early 1920's. The Beebe family, owners of the Temple Mt. Ski Area, maintained the trail along the Temple Mt. ridge. Many others worked to maintain and protect the trail in the first 57 years of the trail. Among the early protectors of the trail prior

to the Friends of the Wapack were Tom Cabot who donated funds to the AMC for trail protection and who gave a right of way over his land on Temple Mt., Laurence and Lorna Marshall who donated their land on North Pack to the USFWS, the creation of Ashburnham State Forest and the Watatic Wildlife Sanctuary, and the many property owners who continued to support the existence of the trail on their land.

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The First Century of Wapack Trail Stewardship (Cont.)



Wapack Trail work crew 1930's

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From 1961 until the founding of the Friends of the Wapack in 1980, the trail was maintained by Alan Burt and Larry Blood, members of the Worcester Chapter of the AMC. In 1960, Larry, Alan and Bruce Langmuir decided to begin leading hikes each year along the Wapack Trail.

On their first outing they found the trail difficult to follow, and lost the trail in many places. There was very little blazing, and no signs. The following year they began clearing and blazing the trail. The AMC sign shop provided signs. Five years into their efforts the trail was better defined and blazing standardized. Their contributions included a reroute of the trail through the Temple Mt. Ski Area. When a property owner further south on the Temple Mt. ridge closed the trail on his land, they got permission from the owner of the adjacent parcel and moved the trail head to the south end of the Temple Mt. Ridge, it's present location.

Larry told me they were happy when the Friends of the Wapack was formed to take over maintenance and trail protection. They continued leading their popular AMC group hikes on the Wapack until 2004, a 47 year run. At one hike they had 50 participants! Larry said that was way too many, so they tried to limit the number to 20 thereafter. Larry is now 89 years old, Alan passed away in 2020, and Bruce passed away in January of this year. If they had not done this work, on their own initiative with support from the AMC for 20 years, the Wapack Trail may not have survived.

By 1980 the future of the Wapack Trail was in doubt. The trail was mostly unprotected. The growing popularity of hiking and increased use of the trail led to erosion issues and deteriorating trail conditions. A local group dedicated to the Wapack Trail was needed. It was to address these issues that the Friends of the Wapack was formed. For the past 43 years this all volunteer organization has successfully worked to maintain and permanently protect the Wapack Trail. Our experienced trail crew has maintained the Wapack Trail and nine side trails to high standards, and all but five miles of the Wapack Trail are now permanently protected. Success in protecting the trail has largely been through partnering with land trusts like Northeast Wilderness Trust, New England Forestry Foundation, town Conservation Commissions, NH Division of Forests and Lands and others.

An important part of our work involves maintaining good relationships with the many property owners across the seven towns and two states traversed by the trail. These include state and federal agencies, land trusts, and private property owners. We strive to continue the legacy of Marion Davis and Frank Robbins of friendly and cooperative relationships with all. The Friends of the Wapack remains committed to protecting and maintaining the trail for future generations. Thanks to all for your help with trail maintenance and for your support!

*-Rick Blanchette,
President*



Wapack Trail work crew, 2022

*Because of the work of
hundreds of people over the past century, we
can look to the horizon of the second century
of the Wapack Trail with hope that the trail will
still be here for all to enjoy in the year 2123,
and beyond.*

- Friends of the Wapack





The Friends of the Wapack

Invite you to join us in celebrating the

Centennial of the Wapack Trail

Wapack Trail Centennial Events

Please join us to celebrate 100 years of the Wapack Trail at these special events.

May 6 - Watatic History Hike

Join Ashburnham Historical Society President Chris Gagnon and the Friends of the Wapack on a tour of the colonial roads around the base of Mount Watatic. We will visit the homestead sites and cellar holes of the first settlers and hear the fascinating story of the “Children of the Woods Tavern” and the families who settled at the foot of Mt. Watatic. This is an easy hike of 2.5 miles. Meet at the Wapack Trail /Midstate Trail parking lot on Route 119 in Ashburnham at 9:00 AM. Contact Rick Blanchette rick@wapack.org.



Marion (Buck) Davis and Frank Robbins laying out the route of the Kidder Mt. Trail

June 24 – From Drovers to Trail Blazers, the story of the creation of the Wapack Trail

Presented with the New Ipswich Historical Society

This talk will relate how local farmers and former cattle drovers Frank Robbins and Marion (Buck) Davis came to create the Wapack Trail and Wapack Lodge, making them pioneers in the growing movement to create long distance hiking trails. Presented by Larry Anderson, freelance author, and the biographer of Appalachian Trail creator Benton MacKaye. MacKaye was a frequent visitor at the Wapack Lodge. New Ipswich Congregational Church Hall, 156 Main Street, New Ipswich, NH 1:30 PM. Contact Rick Blanchette rick@wapack.org.

July 8 -Temple Mt. Ridge History Hike

Join members of the Friends of the Wapack board on a hike along a section of the Temple Mountain ridge from NH Route 101 to the “stone chairs”. This section of the Wapack still follows the original trail route as it was layed out by Marion Buck and Frank Robbins 100 years ago. We’ll bring along photos of this section from the 1920’s and 1930’s and see how those locations have changed over the last century. Meet at the Temple Mountain State Reservation parking lot at 9:00 AM. Bring water and a snack. Distance 3 miles. Contact Mike Przybyla mikep218@comcast.net.



More events on next page!

Wapack Trail Centennial Events

(Continued from page 3)

August 12 - Binney Hill Preserve Nature Hike

Join us for a nature hike at the Binney Hill Wilderness Preserve in New Ipswich lead by Northeast Wilderness Trust Wildlands Ecologist Shelby Perry. We will follow the Wapack and Frank Robbins Trails through the Preserve and visit Binney Pond. We will also visit the site of the Binney Family homestead and colonial era sites along the trails. This is an easy hike of 2 to 3 miles with some rough footing. Meet at the Newest Mall, NH Route 123/124 in New Ipswich at 9:00 AM. We will likely carpool to the trail head due to limited parking. Contact Rick Blanchette rick@wapack.org.



September 9 – North Pack Hike with USFWS

Join the US Fish and Wildlife Service Project Leader and Refuge Manager Matt Hillman and members of his staff for a hike up North Pack on the Wapack Trail in the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge. This was the first National Wildlife Refuge in New Hampshire. Last year we celebrated its 50th anniversary. This is a moderately strenuous hike up the tallest mountain in the Wapack Range, distance approx. 3 miles. Meet at the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge parking lot on Old Mountain Road in Greenfield NH at 9:00 AM. Contact Bruce Myrick for details bruce.monadnock@gmail.com.

October 21 – Friends of the Wapack Annual Meeting and Wapack Trail Centennial Celebration

You are invited! Join us as we gather to celebrate the centennial of the Wapack Trail. This will be an informal gathering to share memories and stories of the life and work of Marion (Buck) Davis and Frank Robbins who created the trail 100 years ago.



Al Jenks, speaking at the Wapack Lodge site for a Wapack 90th Anniversary event

Our special guest speaker will be Al Jenks, owner of Windblown Camping who was a neighbor and friend of Marion. Those who remember Marion are encouraged to attend and share memories. All are invited to hear the stories of this remarkable woman, participate in the celebration and share their Wapack Trail stories. On display will be the guest books from the Wapack Lodge, photos from the early years of the trail, and items from our archives. We will end with the sharing of a delicious Wapack Trail Centennial cake.

Information about times, location and how to register will be included in our Fall newsletter and on our website Wapack.org



Marion at the dedication of the Marion Davis Trail, 1985

Other Events

Hikes with Tom

Looking for a more challenging hike to explore more of the trail? Then join our Trips leader and longtime trail maintainer Tom Brumaghim for these group hikes along the Wapack Trail.

Temple Mt. to Sharon Ledges and Back, June 3

Join our Trips leader Tom Brumaghim for this scenic hike over the Temple Mountain Ridge. We'll summit Temple Mountain, and Holt and Burton Peaks along the way. Hike distance is approximately 7 miles round trip, moderately strenuous. Meet at the Temple Mountain State Reservation parking lot on Route 101 in Peterborough at 9:00 AM. Bring water and lunch. Registration required. Register with Tom by texting him at 603-233-7791. Limit 10 people.

Annual End-To-End Hike, August 26

Hike the entire trail in one day! Group will meet at 6:00 AM at the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge parking lot on Mountain Road in Greenfield. Please call leader Tom Brumaghim to register and for details (603) 233-7791. *Please note: This is a strenuous hike with over 3800 feet of vertical gain and covers 21.5 miles. It is recommended that participants be in good physical condition and have conditioned themselves by doing frequent hikes leading up to the End to End hike.*

You can sign up to receive email workday and event notifications and newsletters at our website Wapack.org.

The Wapack Lodge



The trail's popularity grew so quickly that in 1924 Frank Robbins and Marion Buck decided to build the Wapack Lodge to house paying guests. They found a cellar hole near where the trail crossed Turnpike Road in New Ipswich that had once been a house built in 1776, and atop it they built a one-story bungalow. It proved so popular for overnight stays that in 1936 they cut off the roof, raised it with jacks, and built a second story. With the addition, the lodge could accommodate as many as 25 overnight guests and 100 diners. In a presentation prepared in 2014, Windblown owner



Al Jenks relates that Sunday dinners at the lodge "were extraordinary with fresh vegetables from her [Marion's] garden, chickens butchered that morning, cream from the morning milking, and good cheer all around as people ate at long tables in the cavernous dining room."

Frank Robbins and Marion Buck married in 1946, but Robbins died less than a year later. Marion later married a longtime friend Lawrence Davis, kept up her trail work and ran the lodge.

Usage of the trail was curtailed by World War II as new highways allowed hikers and skiers to travel further afield. The Wapack Lodge closed in 1958. The Davises lived there until Lawrence Davis died in 1964, when Marion sold the building and moved to a trailer across the street. She then worked as the cook at New Ipswich Central School. Many in town remember her fondly from their school days and recall the great meals she served. The building, which had been used as a private home, was struck by lightning and burned down in 1993. *Adapted from "Guide to the Wapack Trail" by the Friends of the Wapack.*



Historical photos in this issue were provided by the Buck family.



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**Wapack Trail Centennial
Events Schedule 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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View of Monadnock from Temple Mt. 1920's



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