



Voice of the Wapack

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President's Note

Our Spring / Summer issue of this newsletter focused on the story of the creation of the Wapack Trail and the Wapack Lodge, the roles of the trail founders, Frank Robbins and Marion Davis, and the maintenance and protection of the trail over the past century. These articles are presently available on our website, Wapack.org. As we near the end of this centennial year, our focus for this issue is the same as for our upcoming annual meeting, to share personal remembrances of Marion, Frank, the Trail and the Lodge. Pages 4 and 5 are dedicated to these memories. Our first article below reports on the many centennial events that we have held thus far. The feedback for all has been great. We thank all of you who have participated!

Our annual meeting will feature a presentation by Al Jenks titled "Tales of the Trail: Her Story, My Story". Al will relate his memories of Marion Davis and stories about her

life, including the creation of the Wapack Trail and the Lodge. He will also tell his personal story of how he became Marion's neighbor and friend, and how he came to create Windblown Cross Country Ski Area. We hope that you can join us. Details about our annual meeting are on page 3.

It was my pleasure this year to welcome Gail Coffey as our newest Director. Gail's many talents include grant writing and web design. She is also an ecologist who has led events with the Bever Brook Association, the Harris Center, and others. She has also worked with the Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations. Gail and her husband Gerry are the adopters of the Beebe Trail and the Raymond Trail. Gail brings a wealth of experience and talents to our board. We are excited to have Gail on our FOW team. Welcome aboard Gail!

- **Rick Blanchette, President**

A Memorable Centennial Year

We kicked off our Wapack Trail Centennial Celebration

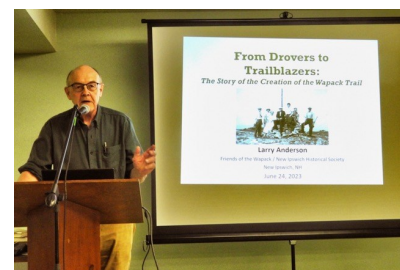


Chris Gagnon, at the site of the Spalding homestead.

with a history hike around Mt. Watatic on May 6. The hike was lead by Chris Gagnon, president of the Ashburnham Historical Society. Chris led us to the sites of the Children of the Woods Tavern and the homesteads of the Spalding and Nutting families, where we heard the stories of these first settlers of that area. We made a stop at the Borden Monument on the NH / MA state line, where Chris explained the remarkable 19th century surveying technology used to establish the state line.

Our second centennial event, done in collaboration with the New Ipswich Historical Society (NIHS), was a presentation by Larry Anderson.

Larry is a freelance author and biographer of Appalachian Trail creator Benton MacKaye. MacKaye was a frequent visitor to the Wapack Lodge. The event was held at the New Ipswich Congregational Church hall. Larry's topic was "From Drovers to Trail Blazers, the story of the creation of the Wapack Trail." Larry described the annual cattle drives from Concord MA to New Ipswich, in which Frank Robbins and Marion Davis participated. His main focus was placing the creation of the Wapack Trail in the context of the long



Larry Anderson

A Memorable Centennial Year (Cont.)



Group gathered for the "Drovers to Trail Blazers" presentation

65 attendees. There were exhibit items from the FOW and the NIHS. Refreshments were served.

On August 12, the Friends of the Wapack and the Northeast Wilderness Trust (NEWT) held a nature and history hike at the Binney Hill Wilderness Preserve in New Ipswich. The hike was led by NEWT Wildlands Ecologist Shelby Perry.



Shelby Perry leads the group along the Frank Robbins Trail

Shelby pointed out and explained many interesting things along the trail, from mushrooms to tree growth patterns, to toads and wildflowers, and nature's re-wilding process. Shelby's enthusiasm and interest in nature is contagious; everyone commented about how much they learned about nature and enjoyed the experience. We also stopped at the site of the Binney family farm, where Rick Blanchette told the story of the first settlers of Binney Hill.

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Despite the forecast, we had a good turnout for our September 9th hike at the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge to the summit of North Pack. The hike was co-lead by refuge manager



Mike Przybyla, Rick Blanchette, Matt Hillman, Bruce Myrick

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Matt Hillman, and FOW board member Bruce Myrick. Matt spoke about the Refuge and answered questions along the way. Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the refuge with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and erected a plaque to honor the donation of this land by Laurence and Lorna Marshal. (See photo).

On September 23 we held our Temple Mountain history hike. We enjoyed a loop hike on the Beebe and Wapack Trails and also hiked out and back to the stone chairs. We discovered the sites of several trail photos from the 1920's, and Rick pointed out sites of the former Temple Mountain Ski Area and related some of it's history. We had a great turn out despite the foggy skies, which did clear up late in the morning.



Remembering Sean McInerney



It is with great sorrow that we heard of the sudden passing of Sean McInerney. Sean was a key member of our trail crew. I first remember Sean at a trail workday to clean up after the 1998 ice storm. He also cleared trails after the great 2008 ice storm. He was an important part of our crew that restored the historic CCC shelter at the summit of Pack Monadnock at Miller State Park. Sean helped create the Beebe Trail, and participated in many trail work days over the years. He adopted the Berry Pasture Trail and a section of the Wapack Trail. Sean was a Scout Master, and in 2008 he helped his son Jon with his Eagle Scout Project, which included building the kiosk and benches at the trail head parking lot on Temple Road in Sharon. I could go on and on about all that Sean has done for the trails. Mostly, he was a good friend who was always cheerful and considerate, and lifted us all in our work on the trail. Rest in Peace, Sean. - **Rick Blanchette**



The Friends of the Wapack

Invite you to join us in celebrating the

Centennial of the Wapack Trail

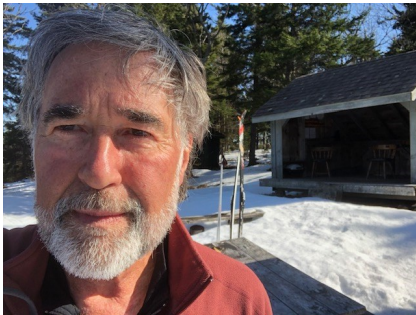
At our Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 21, 2023

Sharon Meeting House, Rte. 123, Sharon, NH

Featured Guest Speaker: Al Jenks

“Life along the Trail - Her Story, My Story”



Al Jenks

Join us as we gather for this final event of the Centennial year of the Wapack Trail. Our special guest speaker will be Al Jenks, the owner of Windblown Camping. Al will share his memories of Marion Davis, and stories about her life and of the creation of the Wapack Trail and Lodge. He will weave his personal story into the narrative - how he came to purchase land on Barrett Mountain and create Windblown Cross Country Ski Area, and thus became a neighbor and friend of Marion's. Those who remember

Marion are encouraged to attend and share memories. All are invited to hear about 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 sharing a delicious Wapack Trail Centennial cake.



Marion (Buck) Davis, at the dedication of the Marion Davis Trail, 1985

Please Note:

We request that you register for this event soon at our website Wapack.org. We will monitor the number of registrations to help us plan for the event. Car pooling is encouraged.

Agenda

- **9:00 AM Hike (optional)** Join us on a morning hike on the Wapack Trail on Barrett Mountain. Meet at 9:00 AM at Windblown Camping, Route 123/124, New Ipswich, NH
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.
- **12:30 PM** Gathering and sign-in.
- **1:00 PM** Friends of the Wapack Annual Meeting and presentation by Al Jenks

Making the Wapack Trail and Lodge, as told by Marion Davis

Shortly before her death in 1986, Marion Davis recorded her memories at the encouragement of her brother, Walter Buck. The following is an excerpt from the 43 page transcript of that recording.

In 1922 Albert Annette came over to the farm [in Rindge]. Frank and I were haying down in the field. He wanted to talk with us so we came up and sat on the piazza. From the farm you had a wonderful view of the Temple Mountain range and over into the pastures you could see there. We sat and talked to him. Why he had come he said he knew Frank knew all of that area because he had pastured cattle so many years. Allan Chamberlain was up to The Ark and he had been pretty busy writing a story about Monadnock Mountain [The Annals of Grand Monadnock] and he had talked with him about the feasibility of a trail over the range from Watatic through over the Temple Mountains. He had suggested to him that Frank Robbins was the man that would know how to do a thing like that, so he had come over to see him. He wanted to know if he would meet with Chamberlain and go over the trail so that's what started the trail business.

I can remember taking them down to Binney Hill Road, and they came through over the mountain. I went back to the farm, Mable put up a lunch and I came over to where the old Brown place was where we built the [Wapack] Lodge later. I went up on the mountain and met them with their dinner. Two or three days later they did the same thing over the Temple Mountain Range. Then Frank and I began laying out trails from Watatic. We started at Watatic; we did this Sundays. When we were busy with cattle during the week we could take Sunday's off.

We just about completed the layout of the trail that year and then Arthur Comey—he was a city planner for the city of Boston—and a very active member of the Appalachian [Mountain] Club. He came up to see us one day. He had been hiking around and had discovered the trail and he said he thought it would be wonderful if they had a ski trail go through on it too. He asked if we objected and Mr. Robbins told him, “No, go ahead”.

Well, having a trail was the incentive of having a place to put folks up overnight. For years Alice [Marion's Sister] had been at me to go in with her on a tearoom busi-

ness somewhere. Frank said, “All right, we'll start and build on the old Brown cellar hole”. It was in 1923 that we started in cleaning out the cellar hole. That fall he and I cut timber down at the old Peppermint then some up on the side of Mt. Grin and we hauled it down to where the Lodge was. It's a strange thing but right off that fall a mill set up right down by the old Peppermint. They had a portable sawmill down there and Frank went down to see if they would cut our lumber. They said yes they would saw it out for us if we got it down there. So we got it down the road and they took it down to the mill, sawed out as Frank had marked it for us. They even brought it back up to the side of the road. We had to bring it up to the Lodge and “stick it up” so it could dry.



Frank Robbins

Then next spring he hired a planer of Harris Rice and drew that over there. We had two tents ... that we set up over this planer rigging. We rigged up a little splitting saw arrangement besides and we planed that lumber, the dimension stuff and the boards.

With two horses and a tipcart from the farm we cleaned out the cellar—two tipcarts full of dirt and debris we took out of that old cellar—the old Brown place. Then we went to work, layed the sills and so forth, got a framework up for a house. We didn't board the first floor at all; just got the framework up for a bungalow that was 30' wide by 40' long. ...

December 8, it had got to be pretty cold weather—we put the roofing paper on. The night before Frank had brought those rolls of roofing paper to the kitchen at the farm and set them up around the kitchen stove to warm. Then we took it out and put it into the Model T, covered it with blankets and headed for the Lodge. And do you know we got the whole of that roofing paper on that roof on that day, nailed on. In the spring after the planting was done we went over there to work on that building. ... a phoebe had built her little nest up in one corner of that building and hatched out her babies. That kept it interesting. I had a 3-burner kerosene stove and I stayed there and worked laying the flooring. Then I began putting in the windows

- Marion Davis

Fond Memories of the Wapack Lodge

When I heard that the Wapack Lodge had burned to the ground a flood of memories rushed to my head. It was a special treat during my childhood when it was announced that we five Buck children were “going to Aunt Marion’s”. We all piled into the car, and we made that long trip from Fitchburg to New Ipswich. As soon as my Dad parked at the kitchen door of the Lodge we lept out and ran into the kitchen for a hug from Marion and a joke with Uncle Frank Robbins. He had nicknames for each of us. I was “Constantinople”, and my brother Buddy was “Budweiser Beer”. Usually the kitchen smelled of baking bread and roasting chicken, and we nearly always left with a fistful of cookies.

From there we went by car or on foot past the Annex (built when the 2-story lodge could not accommodate all the guests) up through the blueberry pasture to the evergreen cathedral of towering trees. There the seven of us ate my mother’s huge lunch and began thinking of excuses for not having to pick the required pail full of blueberries before we could play. Since more berries went into our mouths than pails I doubt if any of us ever picked enough to make a difference. Sometime I brought a friend, and we played dolls while the three boys hid and hunted among the trees as cow-boys and Indians. That entire forest blew down in the 1938 hurricane at the same time it knocked down the Lodge garage and took the roof off a cabin on the hilltop behind the Lodge.



The Lodge may be gone but fond family memories will always be with me. - *Connie Hall (1993)*

Memories of Marion Davis - by her younger brother

Marion was an exceptionally outgoing, friendly, pleasant person. From the time she was a young girl she would organize games or activities and was very good at it. Two of the games were “Run, my good sheep, run”, where you would chase one another through the fields and woods, and “Duck on the rocks”, where you would place a stone on top of a boulder and try to knock it off by throwing stones at it.



At one time she organized and produced a minstrel show. She planned it and even wrote the parts for the various participants. There was an interlocutor and the show was staged on the lawns of Catherine Otto’s. It was a great success and Marion directed and planned it. Marion was also a member of the Seven Member Sewing Club that met weekly at each other’s homes.

There were woods across the road from our house. Marion got together some of us, neighbors and family, and we took hatchets to cut saplings and brush to form a house with rooms. It was used and enjoyed my many, usually under Marion’s direction. Marion’s sister Alice remembers that some of the saplings took root.

Marion loved the outdoors and was a strong believer in self-reliance and fairness. She was one of the active players on our neighborhood baseball team. I remember once when one of the neighbor’s boys began to abuse another child and Marion told him to stop. He didn’t, so Marion forcefully and firmly stopped him.

Marion bought a small flock of sheep, partly to keep weeds and grass from growing too tall, but also for meat for the table at the Wapack Lodge. One night some dogs attacked and killed some of the sheep. Marion was devastated and decided to sell the remaining sheep. She used the sheep’s pelts to make powder puffs, many of which were sold at state fairs.

Marion was always smiling, good natured and made many friends. - *Walter E. Buck, Sr. (1999)*



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**Annual Meeting Details
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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