Features

4 The Great Adirondack Pass – Don Seauvageau
14 Mountain Vignettes
  My 46th on My 46th – Daniel Auwarter #7934
  Conquering Algonquin – Maddux Tennant
18 Requiem for a 46er Finishing Trip – Chuck Schwerin #942

Columns

2 President’s Report – Brian Hoody #4410W
10 Talking Points– A Conversation with Nancy LaBaff #5911W
24 Boulder Report – John Sasso #7130W
28 PEEKS Sketches – Mike Becker #1889W
30 Finishing Class 2017
48 Club News
  ADK 46ers Clark & Marshalls’ 100th Anniversary Celebration August 3-5, 2018 – Mark Simpson #6038
  Trailmaster Report #1 – Peter Nicker #3202Y
  Trailmaster Report #2 “The Challenge” – Sam Dolly #3390W
  Lean2Rescue and BOCES “Paying it Forward at Rocky Falls” – Bob Liscia #640W and Doug Arnold #4699W

56 Letters
56 In Memoriam
**President’s Report**

This will be my final missive as President of the Adirondack 46ers. The old adage—Time Flies—applies here; it seems like just yesterday that I started this endeavor. The take-aways from my tenure are two fold:

1. keep an open mind; and
2. always realize that there is more to learn.

I feel that as a group we have evolved with the times. We are a much bigger club than we were even five years ago thanks to back-to-back record number of finishers over multiple years. But I still feel that we retain some of our original character; I’ve said it before and I will say it again—I think that, for a lot of folks, becoming a 46er these days is just as exciting as it was 50 years ago. The sense of wonder and adventure is still to be found out there among the rocks, streams, trees, and mud.

I leave you in capable hands as our group moves into the future. And while there are unknowns there to challenge us, I’m sure that, as a group, we will rise to the occasion as we have done in the past. Sometimes the path that we trod is not clear—it goes down, around, and then up over a false summit or two before finally becoming apparent.

Climbing the 46 can sometimes be controversial (such as choosing to hike during mud season). It is important to keep an open mind to change, to listen to, and work with our partners such as the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Adirondack Mountain Club. Collaboration helps us convey a unified message of Leave No Trace, best practices regarding group size, disposal of waste, et cetera. It is important to remain ever vigilant to help protect the mountains that we have all come to love so dearly. I have enjoyed my time as president, but now it is time for me to step back, to let others take a turn at the front of the line, but I am not going away. I certainly plan to join a few trail crew outings in the upcoming years. As Grace used to end her letters to corresponding hikers—Good Climbing!

Brian Hoody #4410W

**The membership of the Adirondack Forty-Sixers Inc. consists of hikers who have climbed to the summits of the 46 major peaks of the Adirondacks. The club is dedicated to protection of the Adirondack environment, to education in Adirondack wilderness ethics, and to participation in work projects in cooperation with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to meet these objectives. The views expressed by contributors to this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Adirondack Forty-Sixers, Inc.**
The famous Indian Pass is probably the most remarkable gorge in this country, if not in the world...

I had expected, from paintings I had seen of this Pass, that I was to walk almost on a level into a huge gap between two mountains, and look up on the precipices that toppled heaven high above me. But here was a world of rocks, overgrown with trees and moss—over and under and between which we were compelled to crawl and dive and work our way with so much exertion and care, that the strongest soon began to be exhausted.

—Joel T. Headley, 1849, The Adirondack; or, Life in the Woods

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Adirondacks had become a favorite destination for the adventuresome tourist. No two natural wonders of the region were more intriguing than the highest peak in New York State, Mount Marcy, and the Indian Pass. The iron works at McIntyre, which became the hamlet of Adirondac in 1848, had become the central base camp for visitors to the region. Accommodations were available there, as well as provisions and local guides. Joel Headley stayed there and did summit Marcy two days before taking on the Pass. Accompanying the chapter of his 1849 book The Adirondack; or, Life in the Woods describing the Indian Pass visit he included a sketch which he maintained to be the most "correct an idea of it." (See Figure 1)

Interestingly, the sketch was titled ‘Adirondack Pass’ and in a later chapter while camping along the shore of Lake Henderson Headley refers to the gorge as Adirondack Pass. So which was it, Indian or Adirondack? Inquiring minds want to know.

I pulled my trusty Donaldson, A History of the Adirondacks, off the shelf to seek the answer. Sure enough, on Page 164 of Volume I, "The Indian Pass, or the Adirondack Pass as it was formerly sometimes called, is a stupendous gorge between two mountains, Wallace and McIntyre", lying a short distance

Figure 1. 1849 Headley Ingham sketch, page 69.
The un-capitalized reference to this geological feature as “a notch” clearly indicates he did know of a common local name. Notch was a typical regional term1 for a pass, as in the still-existing Wilmington Notch. The exploration party stayed in the notch traveling to the ore beds and on their return to North Elba. This is the only documented passage by this route related to the development of the ore beds at the head waters of the Hudson River. By 1828, an act had been passed by the state legislature to create a road from Cedar Point4 passing through the iron works property on toward the iron works (on toward the Newcomb Iron Works) via “The Notch” after descending the Hudson and a fork of the east branch of the AuSable commenced its course in opposite directions, for different and far distant points of the Atlantic Ocean. The elevation of this spot proves by our observations to be more than four thousand seven hundred feet above tide water.

The precipice which we measured, and over which we looked, is from one station 1,200 feet high. Taking its height from another station it is 1,000 feet. This precipice extends about a mile, though it does not preserve this great elevation the whole distance. This probably the greatest natural curiosity in the State except Niagara Falls; it is well worthy a visit by lovers of magnificent scenery.

For the 1837 survey, Ebenezer returned to the High Peaks, this time visiting the McIntyre region. This survey had several historical accomplishments, including discovery of the highest source of the Hudson River. From Redfield’s report:

1 A.M. we arrived at the head of the stream on the summit of this elevated pass, which here forms a beautiful and open mountain meadow, with the ridges of the two adjacent mountains rising in an easy slope from its sides. From this little meadow, which lies within the present limits of the town of Keene, the main branch of the Hudson and a fork of the east branch of the AuSable commenced its course in opposite directions, for different and far distant points of the Atlantic Ocean. The elevation of this spot proves by our observations to be more than four thousand seven hundred feet above tide water.

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the colors seen. Later in their studios, they went public. Travelers and artists first saw it from the title ‘Adirondack Pass’ in his 1849 book. In his 1842 ‘Geology of New York’ survey, he had a section entitled ‘Adirondack Pass’. In the midst of the mountains of Essex County, at the source of one of the main branches of the Hudson, there is a deep, narrow gorge, which has been denominated the Adirondack Pass. In its general character, it is in keeping with what appears on all sides where this fathomless bed of sandstone or rock, except that the scale on which this gorge has been formed is far larger and more magnificent.

From the description that followed in the report, there was no doubt it was the Indian Pass. To summarize, Emmons had used the names “The Notch” (1837), “Indian Pass” (1838) and “Adirondack Pass” (1842) for the same gorge. Headley was familiar with these reports since he used Ingham’s sketch and used both the old Indian Pass and the “new” Adirondack Pass in his book. There was at least one holdout for the Notch nomenclature. In June, 1844 after the British actor, William Macready, visited McIntyre with Henderson’s friend David C. Colden he wrote to his wife, that “we went with Henderson and Colden, and two attendants (guides), on our excursion to one of the grand passes of this wild region called the Notch... The Pass, or glen, we went to see, exceeds in beauty and grandeur and is more readily accessible from this locality than from any other habitable point.” This is an important point and one that I answer a thousand times. Yes. These are two of the most enduring guidebooks published in the latter part of the century.

References Later in the Nineteenth Century

Numerous explorers of the region visited the Pass in the middle of the century and wrote of their experiences. Most notable were Richard Henry Dana Jr. of Two Years Before the Mast fame in 1847 and T. Addison Richards, a well-known travelogue writer of the time in the early 1850s. The most notable attractions in the area for both authors were first Mount Marcy and secondly the Indian Pass.

In the late 1850s, the iron works at Adirondack shut down. However, visitors to the region could still find welcome in the village by the local caretaker. The Indian Pass has faded into history. Despite concerted efforts by the state geologist and Charles Ingham’s popular painting, the name did not stick and the Pass reverted back to earlier times. A likely explanation is the name Evans at its source of Evans Brook, where the name most likely originated.

Indian Pass

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The Nineteenth Century Guide Books

The first popular guidebook by W. H. H. Murray in 1869 does not mention the High Peaks region as a “section of the wilderness to visit” so it appears unlikely Murray personally visited.

However, in 1872, E. E. Wallace published a more complete guide to the Adirondacks region. Descriptive Guide to the Adirondacks. On Page 383, he states, “The Adirondack or Indian Pass, 5 m. N.E. of the Iron Works, is more readily accessible from this locality than from any other habitable point.” This is perhaps the last mention of Pass in literature. Accompanying the guide is a sketch of “Indian Pass from Lake Henderson.”

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The guides were the common thread. John Cheney, “the mighty hunter,” was a guide for Emmons on his first ascent of Mount Marcy and piloted a small party up a side trail. The next month, September 1837, Cheney was C. Fennos Hofmann’s guide on his failed attempt to summit Marcy and also an overnight trip to the Indian Pass. In a section of his book, Wild Scenes at the Sources of the Hudson titled “A Rough Tramp” Hofmann describes the “walk to the Indian Pass.” John Cheney had described it by his father Sabael, the first resident of Lake Sabael. Sabael first came to the area through the Indian Pass in 1762 and his son had escorted the 1826 Henderson party through this pass. This party was a different sch with the south side of the High Peaks. Native American guides were well known but, with the exception of Mitchel Sabattis, rarely mentioned in the writings of the day. It is known that Elijah guided Farrand Benedict, the Vermont professor, on his exploration of the High Peaks since he (Elijah) ultimately adopted Benedict as his last name. It is also likely Elijah was one of the nameless guides accompanying Emmons on the first ascent of Marcy in 1837.

After traversing the Pass, Sabael traveled down the Hudson and up the Indian River to Indian Lake to become its first settler and providing the name for these features. It is only logical that the local community would also know the Pass as “Indian.” The guides for the most part being non-literate woodsmen would have never read the articles written about Adirondack Pass and only referred to it by their regional name while escorting the “sports.”

Today, the deserted village of Adirondack, later known as Upper Works, is still the starting point for exploration of the High Peaks. From that trailhead, both Mount Marcy and Indian Pass may be accessed. The legacy lives on.

Notes

1. This peak is now known as Algonquin. At 5,112 feet elevation, it is the second highest peak in the Adirondacks. Credit for the change of name is given to Verplanck Colvin where it first appeared in the 1886 report table of altitudes.

2. The entire original letter is preserved at the research library of the Adirondack Experience in Blue Mountain Lake.

3. The separation between mountains is referred to by numerous regional terms including: notch, pass, divide, hallway, crutch, etc.


5. Their actual measurement was 4,270 feet. Lake Tear of the Clouds is the highest pond and romantic source of the Hudson but at 4,295 feet elevation is nearly 500 feet lower than the source of the Opusdantic River.

6. Included Emmons, William Redfield, Archibald McIntyre, David Henderson, James Hall, Charles Ingham, Mr. Strong, Professors Miller and Turrey, Emmons Jr. and five guides. John Cheney is the only guide mentioned by name.

7. The painting was given to Archibald McIntyre, the principal of the iron works bearing his name. It is now at The Adirondack Experience -The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake.

8. David C. Colden of Jersey City, New Jersey, is the name sake of the mountain and the lake. Emmons named the peak McCartney in honor of Duncan McCartney one of the original mine owners but, ultimately, Colden stuck.

9. Indian Pass, Panther Gorge, Clove or Notch of Whiteface and “the gorge between Dial (now Nippletop) and Dof’s Peak” now Hunter’s Pass.