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Within Katahdin's Realm: Log Drives and Sporting Camps - Chapter 03: The West Branch of the Penobscot River: Ambajejus Falls to Ripogenus Dam

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Within Katahdin’s Realm:
Log Drives and Sporting Camps

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Chapter 3

The West Branch of the Penobscot River: Ambajejus Falls to Ripogenus Dam

Logging: Pre-1840

Some loggers began cutting and moving upriver from Nicatou Island in the mid- to late-1820s and early 1830s, and others were cutting easterly from Moosehead Lake toward the Upper Chain Lakes: Ripogenus, Caribou, and Chesuncook. In the winter of 1830, Nicholas (Nick) G. Norcross, a lumberman from Bangor, cut upstream from Ripogenus Gorge.¹ Other early loggers were cutting around Chesuncook Pond and toting distances to the river between Ripogenus Lake and the foot of Ripogenus Gorge and Big Ambejackmockamus Falls. Whether they came east from Moosehead Lake or up the West Branch of the Penobscot River is unknown.

In 1832, Joseph L. Kelsey surveyed T2R9 W.E.L.S., which includes the West Branch between the foot of Debsconeag Deadwater and the head of Pockwockamus Deadwater, and found that loggers had not yet cut the fine timber at this southwest edge of the township.² Five years later, Charles T. Jackson described the forest around the Debsconeag Deadwater as mainly hardwood, rock maple, yellow birch, and ash with no pine in the immediate area of the shore.³ The implication was that loggers had already cut the pine. Perhaps Robert Gibson’s men had done some of that cutting because by 1835, his crew had reached Nesowadnehunk Stream and


² Kelsey, Joseph L. Field Notes for Survey of September–October 1832 of T2R9 and T2R9, lot map by Joseph L. Kelsey, 1832

logged in this river section for at least a couple years. Gibson established what James T. Hodge
estimated in 1837 to be an 80-acre farm on the large flat interval on the north side of the river
between Abol and Nesowadnehunk streams. A year later in August, J. W. Bailey found oxen
grazing on the wild grasses on an island below Abol Falls. Nearby he ran into Gibson’s men
going to cut wild meadow hay for crews that would be cutting up on Nesowadnehunk Stream.
Joseph Blake traveling in the same year by foot to Mount Katahdin stopped at the Gibson farm
and spent the night with the two men who were there to cut hay. The log camp was still
standing, but vacated when Henry David Thoreau came to climb Mount Katahdin in 1846.

Above Ambajejus Falls, the early loggers likely went through the easily negotiated
thoroughfares into Passamagamet and First Debsconeag lakes. Other than these, they probably
did not reach up the side streams, or if they did, only the lowermost portions that required no
stream clearing for driving. The one exception was Nesowadnehunk Stream, which was open,
wide, and had a significant flow of water.

By 1837, loggers still had not established a developed tote road or carry around
Ripogenus Gorge to Ripogenus Lake. On his carry, Hodge passed through burned land and
found an abandoned logging camp at about the halfway point. Nearly a mile and a half up the
south shore of the lake and on the east side of the point before reaching the drainage from a
pond, he passed a large log cabin and farm. This was probably another of the farms Joseph Blake

8 see footnote 4
stopped at in 1836. In the fall of 1841, two men tended the farm and raised hay for the loggers of the coming season.9 By 1856 when Henry Bowditch and his party found the farm, loggers had abandoned its 100 cleared acres with five or six barns and a substantial house.10 The Theodore Winthrop party was at the site in 1860 and reported three barns, a house, and a grass-covered hillside with a view of Katahdin.11 Three of the four buildings were still standing in 1870, but near collapse. Fanny Hardy Eckstorm, who visited the old farm in 1889, could never find anyone who knew the person who built it.12

The lumbermen’s farms such as that of Gibson and the unknown lumberman on Ripogenus Lake reflected the nature of logging in these early years. The crews were small, few in numbers; their camps were crude and the food was the same daily. The early crews built small farms near water and close to natural meadows that they hayed for winterfeed for the oxen. These farms also had meadows for the oxen that stayed behind after the drive to avoid the long trek back to a farm down country. The farm hands stored crops for human consumption in root cellars carved out of steep banks such as the one still visible behind the old Gibson clearing. No winter supply line served these camps. When the men came in, they brought all they needed for the cutting and driving season.

**Moving Supplies between Ambajejus Falls and the Ripogenus Outlet**


The West Branch current carried the logs downstream from Ripogenus Dam to Ambajejus Lake beginning about 1830, but that same current prevented the waterway from becoming the main supply line for loggers operating above Nesowadnehunk Deadwater and in the Upper Chain Lakes. Some loggers of the 1830s did use the waterway as their highway to reach the lakes and flat country above Ripogenus, but by 1840, the established tote road supply lines bypassed this section of the West Branch. Those cutting in this area used the circa 1838 Caribou Lake Tote Road, which branched off the Nahmakanta Tote Road above Upper Ebeemee Lake to head northwest to the Morris farm at Caribou Lake. For those cutting on the West Branch below Nesowadnehunk Stream, supplies traveled the Nahmakanta Tote Road from Brownville to the south shore of South Twin Lake and across the lakes to Ambajejus Falls to begin the journey upriver to the cutting camps.

Small crews, which came via the Nahmakanta Tote Road before ice-up, probably used bateaux to reach the site where they built the cutting camp and made other preparations. If they brought any oxen or horses, then they likely built a raft to carry them and the supplies to the lake site or across the 14 miles of the Lower Chain Lakes to get to the mouth of the West Branch at the head of Ambajejus Lake. The alternative was an uncut route through the woods. More oxen or horses came in once the ice was strong enough to support them and hauled the logs to the landings after the cutting ceased in mid-January.

Moving the loads across the Lower Chain Lakes whether on ice or on water was relatively uncomplicated. Moving up the West Branch from the head of Ambajejus Lake with open water was strenuous and in winter challenging when there was too much ice for bateaux and not enough to support a team. At the head of the lake, the animals began a walk along the river’s edge on the drivers’ paths for another dozen or more miles upriver. Previous years’ cuts took the trees at the edges of the river and perhaps left the riverbank area open enough for the
teamsters. The river may have been naturally low, and the teams may have walked the river edge.

At the first two carries, Ambajejus Falls and Passamagamet Falls, oxen-drawn carts and jumpers were sometimes available to transport the bateaux and materials. Depending on other loggers’ camp locations, oxen might be available at the other portages. If no team was at a portage, then as many as a dozen men, depending on the size of the bateau, carried the 800 to 1,000 or more pound boats and others moved the supplies. Three other portages—Debsconeag, Pockwockamus, and Abol falls—were necessary to reach Nesowadnehunk Stream.

The lumberman had to prepare for how he would move supplies over the open water in the fall and over the ice in winter so that he had enough for the pre–ice-out season when neither bateaux nor animals could move supplies. Teamsters could haul from January until at least mid-March, 75 days. The crew would need another 50 to 75 days of supplies to last them well into May. In the 1877 season, an estimated one hundred men and thirty-two oxen worked at three camps on the river below Abol Falls. The hay for thirty-two oxen for January into May, 150 days, amounted to 96 tons or more than a half ton of hay per day. On a daily basis, the men consumed 125 pounds of dried beans at two servings per meal for each of the day’s four meals, a half-barrel of salt pork (138 pounds), and a barrel of flour (215 pounds).  

13 The supply depot for these men was likely Brownville, 45 to 55 miles south. The daily toting distance was 10 miles, a little more on the lakes, with a load of two tons or more drawn by a pair of oxen. The teamsters stopped at the Norton and Philbrook shanties and then perhaps at the shore of South Twin Lake followed by a camp on Ambajejus Lake and the cutting camp upriver the following day. The men and animals at the camps consumed more than a ton of supplies a day, and they needed to stockpile seventy-five days of supplies. Thus, at a minimum, an average of two tons of supplies

13 Fanny Hardy Eckstorm Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections
needed to reach the camp each day. Each shanty had two oxen teams: while one team was toting two tons to the next shanty, the other was returning from the same shanty.

The shanty stop on Ambajejus Lake may have been at the boom house near the foot of the lake and 10 miles from the stop at the edge of South Twin Lake. Loggers built the boom house about the same time the Nahmakanta Tote Road opened (c. 1835). Accounts of early river travelers indicate that the camp had apple trees, which, along with the favorable flat area, suggests it could have also been a farm.

Sometime in the 1870s, a major supply line from the east reached the midpoint of the West Branch. The route went north from Mattawamkeag to Shin Pond and then west across the land north of Mount Katahdin to reach the Nesowadnehunk watershed, which it followed to the West Branch at Nesowadnehunk Falls, a distance of 55 miles. In 1887, eighty-four loggers and twenty-eight horses landed logs between the Big Eddy and Ambejackmockamus Falls. Their supplies may have come via the new route rather than what their predecessors used until soon after 1870, either the Caribou Lake Tote Road or negotiating the river.

Even with loggers cutting for about fifty years in the West Branch valley, loggers did not begin to move west of Millinocket Lake until the late 1870s. At first, the tote road went from the Fowler farm site up the west edge of Millinocket Stream, crossed Millinocket Lake northwesterly, and over time went on to pass between River Pond and the river that it followed to Nesowadnehunk Stream. When the railroad reached Millinocket Stream and Millinocket Station opened in 1894, use of the tote road increased dramatically. Loggers cutting on Ambajejus Lake and upriver no longer had to deal with the logistics of crossing the Lower Chain Lakes from the end of the Nahmakanta Tote Road.

Millinocket Station became home to the railroad section workers and served as a supply depot. The names of the first lumbermen to build a depot camp or storage structure or farm at or
near Millinocket Station are unknown. George A. Gray, who led logging crews on the north side of the river between the Debsconeag Deadwater and Ripogenus Lake from the 1880s into the 1900s, might have been one of those who built a storage facility here. Another likely lumberman was Charles W. Mullen, who had the vision for Great Northern Paper Company (GNP), logged on Millinocket Stream in the mid-1890s, and built storage barns predating GNP elsewhere on the Lower Chain Lakes area. These men and their colleagues may have also summered their animals here.

In 1899, the tiny community of seven year-round residents mushroomed with the construction of the GNP mill at the Fowler farm site. A year later, the new company began to develop a supply depot near Millinocket Station. The site’s first documented logging-related structure was a GNP barn in 1900. It became known as Gray Barn, but neither its builder nor for whom it was named is known. GNP crews brought their sick horses here for care and others for rest between logging seasons.

The company built another barn on the tracks to the south in 1909. In another four years, GNP added a third barn with a capacity for 50 horses and 300 tons of hay, a grain storehouse, and a “feeders bunk house.” The 300 tons of hay fed about 850 horses for six months. This site was now the major supply depot for logging operations at Shad Pond, Nollesemic Lake, and the storehouses on lower Nesowadnehunk Stream (Foster’s), Grant Brook, and Nahmakanta Stream at Pemadumcook Lake.14

Loggers made a succession of quick relocations of the 1880s tote road between Fowlers farm and Ambajejus dike.15 They eliminated the Millinocket Lake crossing in favor of following the shore. Then they developed a route west from Millinocket Stream above Smith Brook,

14 West Branch of Penobscot River (Upper and Lower Lakes), supply distribution map, 1914–1915 at Katahdin Forest Management Maine Division of Acadian Timber Archives

staying north of Hammond Ridge and reaching the lake’s shore 2 miles east of Ambajejus dike. Following that change, GNP cut the road so it went directly from Millinocket Station to the dike.

The first shanty stop was Grant Brook camp at Grant Brook, 10 miles from Gray Barn. The camp was at an important tote road junction. In 1902, lumberman John B. Ross cut a tote road northeast from less than 2 miles above the camp to Basin Ponds.16 About 1910, GNP cut a major artery west crossing the West Branch and continuing on to the Debsconeag camp at the mouth of Nahmakanta Stream on Pemadumcook Lake.17 At Grant Brook camp, crews added a cookhouse and bunkhouse and two log hovels in 1908, and a superintendent’s camp for four men two years later.18 The camp also had a telephone switch transferring calls from Cooper Brook and Nesowadnehunk Stream operations to Millinocket. The camp’s capacity grew to one hundred men. In 1934, when a fire burned across this area, Charlie Glaster’s crews saved the structures and used them as they cut the salvageable timber.

From Grant Brook camp, the tote road continued westerly over what loggers called Pockwockamus Hill to reach Abol Stream below Abol Pond.19 The second shanty stop was Abol Camp, which was above the Abol Pond outlet on the east side of Abol Stream near Lower Abol Falls. The camp also served as a logging camp. From here, early loggers continued with their logging horses on a tote road along the river to the Big Eddy at the foot of Ripogenus Gorge. About 1900, loggers started cutting a tote road from the camp up along Abol Stream’s north side and over the ridge to reach the headwater ponds of Katahdin Stream and then Nesowadnehunk

17 GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 1 Range 9, May 4, 1920
Stream north of Kidney Pond area, which the tote road reached about 1908. Here, 6 miles from the West Branch and 28 miles from Millinocket, the road connected to the tote road from the north that loggers had established in the 1870s. Foster’s storage house and bunkhouse (capacity of fifty men) was near the junction, in use in the 1890s, still in good condition in 1920, but closed a couple years later.

In 1910, the tote road, now known as the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road and sometimes called the Millinocket Tote Road, replaced the 1870 Nesowadnehunk Stream Tote Road from Shin Pond as the supply route to the Nesowadnehunk region. Seven years later, the road was part of the rough, not always open, circuitous route from Ripogenus Dam to Greenville. A person claims to have driven from Greenville to Millinocket in 1917, but in 1928, the drivable portion of the road from Greenville ended at Nesowadnehunk Stream.

By 1929, people could drive from Millinocket to Ambajejus dike, but the road beyond there was exceedingly rough. That year, a visitor traveled in by truck on a bad two-rut road to Lower Togue Pond; he chose to ride the rest of the way to Grassy Pond on a horse-drawn tote sled. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) work crews rebuilt the roadbed between Millinocket and Ambajejus dike in 1933. In the following year, they continued on to Pockwockamus Stream and ended at Nesowadnehunk Stream near Foster’s Storehouse. Kenneth Reed Sr., grandson of Captain Edwin A. Reed who had a circa 1900 sawmill on Millinocket Lake, was the

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20 letter exchanges between Fred Gilbert and F.M. Simpson c. November 1911, GNP Papers University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections


supervisor for the CCC road and phone line crew. Even with these improvements, trucks still transported the horses four at a time from Gray Barn to Grant camp to begin their walk to logging camps farther west in 1936.

A mid-1930s Works Progress Administration (WPA) crew of sixty men encamped on the north side of the West Branch at Big Ambejackmockamus Falls worked on the tote road from the Abol camp to the Big Eddy. The crew made repeated attempts to bridge Nesowadnehunk Stream near its mouth at the West Branch, but the bridges washed out each subsequent spring. No one made a future attempt to improve the tote road along the north edge of the river from Abol Stream to Ripogenus Gorge.

No supply routes ever developed on the south side of the river until 1952 to 1953 when GNP built the Abol Bridge and road to Ripogenus Dam. Thus, moving supplies, men, and animals back and forth across the West Branch of the Penobscot River was necessary, but always challenging and difficult. For nearly the first seventy years of logging, rafts and bateaux were the only means for crossing the river other than waiting for it to freeze. It was impossible to ford the river at any location during the spring drive. A possible early bridge (pre-1890), one suggested by Ralph Boynton’s grandfather who had a camp in the 1890s at the Debsconeag Deadwater, was a floating structure built between Wheelbarrow Pitch and the foot of Debsconeag Falls.

The tote road from Grant Brook camp to Debsconeag camp at the mouth of Nahmakanta Stream on Pemadumcook Lake (c. 1910) crossed the river between Ambajejus Falls and Passamagamet Falls. In the first years, the crossing may have been by ferry, but by no later

25 Ancestry.com
27 conversations with Tony York
28 conversations with Ralph Boynton
29 GNP Division of Forest Engineering, Township 1 Range 9, March 24, 1932
than 1919, a floating bridge linked the north edge opposite the island below Passamagamet Falls to the island and bridge, supported by rock cribs, to the river’s south edge; loggers used it into the late 1940s. When logs came downriver, the bridge swung downstream to allow passage. Sometime before the 1950s, a short-lived bridge with a mid-river supporting rock crib pier immediately above Ambajejus Falls replaced the floating bridge. Crews made another attempt at the same site in the late 1950s when they narrowed the river and put in a steel span.

Someone burned the bridge with the supporting rock cribs about 1975. Cranes quickly pulled the steel from the river, and in 1993, GNP built the current bridge.

A cable ferry crossed the river near River Pond from the 1920s through at least 1934. The ferry was a double-ended raft with a wide gangplank at both ends. A pulley system connected to the overhead cable, which spanned the river, enabled a man to position the barge such that the current carried it back and forth across the river, much like a sailboat tacking. One of its primary functions was to ferry horses. GNP made an attempt in 1934–1935 to build a bridge in the area to support a tractor’s crossing the river, but a spring freshet washed it out on March 8 or 9, 1936.

At the Big Eddy, horses, which teamsters brought up along the north bank of the river, crossed on the ice until 1953 when the McKay Power Station started operating. GNP built the first bridge at the foot of the eddy in the 1960s and replaced it multiple times before abandoning the site. The bridge had three piers. The river lapped at the bridge’s floor, so crew members used

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30 conversations with Doug Farquhar and Chuck Harris
31 conversations with Doug Farquhar and Chuck Harris
32 Geller personal knowledge due to presence in the area
33 conversations with Chuck Harris
35 conversations with Peter Pray
bulldozers to deepen the area at both ends of the bridge and immediately below it to try to alleviate the situation. Truckers drove across it with their doors open in case they had to jump. Crews did not successfully build a bridge of any permanence in this area until the 1971 Telos Bridge.

In at least one instance, the logging operator did not try to bridge the river. At the narrowest section of the Nesowadnehunk Deadwater, Gerald Ladd’s operation used a highline cable in the early 1960s.36 It brought the white birch cut on the north side of the river to the south side, but the operation proved costly because of the number of times the men handled the wood. Ladd’s skidders reached the area via the old WPA road on the north side of the river and forded Nesowadnehunk Stream on the ledges immediately above the West Branch.

**Development at the Ripogenus Lake Outlet**

From the first to the last log drive, in 1971, the Ripogenus outlet was a yearly gathering point for loggers driving the river. The supplies for the community came from the west until 1953. For the first fifty-four years, they arrived via tote road from Brownville to Caribou Lake and across the lakes to the outlet. When the railroad reached Greenville in 1884, the route changed to crossing Moosehead Lake to Lily Bay and the start of the Chesuncook Tote Road, which went through Grant farm at the foot of Ragged Lake and on to the Ripogenus outlet. From the Grant farm east, the route to the dam has not changed much.

The Ripogenus community began to develop where the portage path and later tote road around Ripogenus Gorge left the southeast corner of the lake. Before the dam was built, the area was a 250-yard or more wide 100-yard deep flat plateau where loggers could pitch their tents,

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36 conversations with Tony York
cook, beach their bateaux, construct their headworks, and manage the log drive on the lake.37 At the east end of this plateau, the lake narrowed for a short distance before it dropped into the gorge. The opening of this narrows was the likely spot for the trip boom. Until about 1914, the Ripogenus community was transient. During these years, men were here only during the drive or in the fall to make river improvements or build and repair any dams. When the Penobscot Log Driving Company (PLDC) built the first buildings or the boom house, which in 1905 housed twenty-six men, is unknown, but the 1917 dam flooded out their buildings.38 The new impoundment raised the lake surface to 940 feet, 47 feet higher than it was with the roll dam and 60 feet higher than the lake’s original level. Activity at the outlet increased in 1914 with the start of construction of the new dam, which the Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) manned year-round.

The men and supplies for the construction of Ripogenus Dam came in from the west.39 The railroad brought the materials to Kineo Station where crews off loaded them to barges that they towed to Lily Bay. Here, GNP rented the Hollingsworth & Whitney wharf and large storage building and built another. The company rebuilt the 30 miles of road from Lily Bay to the dam site and installed a 2,200-foot cable, a snub line, at Sias Hill to slow the descending speed of the trucks and horse-drawn wagons and sleds. No auto road ran directly from Greenville to Ripogenus Dam. One first had to get to Lily Bay, according to Fred Law, who managed the gas and oil needed to keep the trucks running.40

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37 GNP Division of Forest Engineering, Buildings, Ripogenus Dam, December 28, 1916; area topographically mapped to pre-1900 waterlevels
38 GNP Division of Forest Engineering, Buildings, Ripogenus Dam, December 28, 1916; area topographically mapped with all structures
40 see footnote 39
Before dam construction started, crews cleared eleven acres near the dam site, set up a sawmill, placed a rock crusher on the dam’s south side below the hilltop quarry, built chain conveyors to bring rock and sand to the site, positioned four cranes, constructed quarters and an accompanying sewer system for 500 men, drilled a well, opened a schoolhouse, and set up an electrical generation system that made it possible for crews to work twenty-four hours per day. During the first year of construction, teamsters hauled in all the materials. For the second year, 25 teamsters learned to drive one of the fifteen trucks the company purchased for hauling the cement.

After the dam’s completion, the community had both transient and year-round residents. The little village included housing for loggers and their families, river drivers, game wardens, and dam personnel. A building on the north end of the dam and overhanging the downstream bank above the sluice had four sets of bunks in two back rooms and a front room with tables and chairs and kitchen area. Crews used the structure until the end of the drives. The summer dam tender’s camp and drive boss’ camp were on the hill above the dam on the south side. GNP tore down and burned the drive boss house in the 1980s. On the other side of the hill on the west side of the road, which was the original tote road around the gorge, was the game warden’s house and nearby the winter dam tender’s camp. Just below that on the lake side of the road was the boom house dating from about 1917, which existed until 1996. GNP also had a stable and storage buildings nearby in which it kept such equipment as river-driving materials not needed downriver. A GNP Nelson Levasseur crew took down these buildings about 1969.

Between 1950 and 1953, construction crews built the McKay Power Station below the dam. Once again, the men and materials came from the west, and the men built barracks, dining facilities, and a company store southeast of the dam. At the project’s completion, GNP closed the

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41 conversations with Peter Pray and Quinten Clark
store, converted the barracks into eight family homes for those hired to man the power station, and built a schoolhouse, which served the power station’s, warden’s, dam keeper’s, and Chesuncook Dam site families’ children until 1960. After about a year, GNP automated the power station and only one employee remained to ensure the automation worked properly—Lewie Pray with his family.

Logging and Logging Camps on the River

The sites of the earliest logging camps on the river were at what turned out to be strategic positions for the duration of the log-driving era. The one at Passamagamet Falls served loggers on Passamagamet Lake. A few miles upstream, the camp at Debsconeag Deadwater served the loggers in and around First Debsconeag Lake and Hurd Pond. From the camp on Pockwockamus Deadwater, loggers worked into Pockwockamus Stream to the north and Hale, Pitman, and Mud ponds to the south. At Abol Stream, the camp supported loggers on Abol and Katahdin streams and Foss and Knowlton Pond. The camp at Nesowadnehunk Falls and Stream supported those on lower Nesowadnehunk Stream. At the foot of Horserace Rapids loggers cut south into the Horserace Ponds. The Big Eddy camp loggers cut to the north at Fowler and Sewall ponds and Rocky Pond to the south. The Ripogenus outlet camp supported cutting around Holbrook and Chesuncook ponds. The precise dates of most of the operations of these camps are unknown, but loggers used them repeatedly over the years.

In 1846, Henry David Thoreau stopped for a meal at the head of Ambajejus Lake at an abandoned lumber camp, which at one time had five to seven buildings. A circa 1919 camp

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42 Most of the camps mentioned in this section appear on old maps of the river; some but not all maps are cited. Working down river from Ripogenus Dam to Ambajejus Lake the townships are: T3R11, T2R10, T2R9, and T1R9. Maps include: Township 3 Range 11, nd; Township 2 Range 10 nd; GNP Division of Forest Engineering, Township 2 Range 9, October 4, 1934 and Township 1 Range 9, March 24, 1932 available at Katahdin Forest Management Maine Division of Acadian Timber Archives

was on the river’s north side at the head of the narrows above Ambajejus Falls, and another was on the south side of the river farther upriver and below the first island. In at least the 1920s and 1930s, this camp served primarily as a bateau storage facility to eliminate the need to bring the boats back up over Ambajejus Falls. At Passamagamet Falls, a logging camp was on the north side on the point at the foot of the falls and another, operating before 1900, was on the carry. About 1920 at the head of the falls, Joe Turcott either rebuilt or built the still-standing boom tender’s cabin, which Peter J. McPheters and Chuck Harris have periodically repaired to preserve it.

Camps on the Debsconeag Deadwater were on the north side between the first beach and the head of the deadwater. The drive crew had a sorters camp at the cove on the south side opposite the two islands at the outlet and carry trail to Passamagamet Lake. Another logging camp was on the south side just below the mouth of the thoroughfare into First Debsconeag Lake. Opposite the camp and on the island was a small camp that housed men who counted the logs any time they came through. Another camp was at the head of the deadwater on the south side behind the logan, a logger’s term for a side pocket of water at the river’s edge.


44 conversations with Doug Farquhar
45 Geller found the one on the point during a field exploration; the other was on the carry around the falls and later became a sporting camp
46 conversation with Chuck Harris
47 conversations with Ralph Boynton whose family in the 1890s bought the camp on the deadwater that was a logger’s camp. Some old pictures of the Joe Francis sporting camp at the site show a substantial number of buildings.
48 conversations with Doug Farquhar and Map of Township 1-R-9 Piscataquis County, Maine, The Great Northern Paper Company Owner
49 conversations with Ralph Boynton
In 1921, the James Sewall Company’s survey indicated that the logging camp at the Debsconeag carry was in good condition and could hold thirty men and six horses.\textsuperscript{50} Also on the south side 200 feet up Debsconeag Falls portage was a watchman’s cabin.\textsuperscript{51} Ralph Boynton, owner of the camp on the north side at the head of the falls, hunted the area and found the camp with a small pen for farm animals.\textsuperscript{52} Clinton E. Boyington, who lived on nearby Hurd Pond, used to talk by phone in the winter in the 1930s with the person living here.\textsuperscript{53} McPheters, who picked the rear of the drive (1960s), ate meals in a building with kitchen on the north side at Wheelbarrow Pitch, the set of rapids immediately above Debsconeag Deadwater.\textsuperscript{54} No living quarters were there at that time. As a youngster, he brought ice from the First Debsconeag Lake ice caves to the cook in exchange for pie or some other tasty food.

Above Debsconeag Falls and near Pockwockamus Deadwater’s upper end on the south side about 1900 was George A. Gray’s logging camp. Another camp of several buildings, perhaps developed about 1920, was a little farther upriver at Pockwockamus Falls; they were in fair condition in 1932 and being used by a Native American for hunting and trapping.\textsuperscript{55} A depot camp was on the north side of the deadwater above River Pond in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{56}

At Abol Falls in 1916, a camp was at the foot of the falls.\textsuperscript{57} By the 1950s, the Abol camp moved a short distance upriver above the falls to the mouth of Abol Stream. While a Great

\textsuperscript{50} Sewall, James W. Field Explorations for Township T2R9, 1921.
\textsuperscript{51} GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 2 Range 10, October 10, 1934
\textsuperscript{52} conversations with Ralph Boynton
\textsuperscript{53} conversations with Bill Boyington
\textsuperscript{54} conversation with Peter J. McPheters
\textsuperscript{55} Sewall, James W. Field Explorations for Township T2R10, 1932
\textsuperscript{56} conversations with Tony York and Doug Farquhar
\textsuperscript{57} map and explorations with Tony York
Northern Paper Company (GNP) crew was building the Abol Bridge between 1950 and 1953, the road crews stayed at Chesuncook Dam and the bridge crews stayed at Abol camp near the bridge. The camp included an office, which was near the current store, a meat locker building, a cookhouse, and two bunkhouses—all of which faced the West Branch of the Penobscot River. During the construction, a floating bridge spanned the river so people could walk across. Above Abol Stream and opposite the mouth of the outlet stream of Foss and Knowlton Pond was a lumber camp close to a no-name pond the loggers called Second Joe Francis Pond.

A number of camps operated at different times in the Nesowadnehunk Dam area. One camp was off the dam’s north wing and housed thirty-five to forty men. The camp’s horse hovel was near the pool below the dam. The dam and boom tender’s cabin was on the north side just above the mouth of Nesowadnehunk Stream. The West Branch Driving and Reservoir Dam Company (WBD&RDC) inventory also listed a “boom house” at this location. In 1905, Gerrit S. Stanton, who was on his Mount Katahdin trip, had a meal at a logging supply camp on the south side above the dam. A camp, on the south side below the mouth of Nesowadnehunk Stream, supported the cutting around 1930. At the head of Nesowadnehunk Deadwater near the mouth of Horserace Brook was a large camp (c. 1913) with blacksmith shop.

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58 conversations with Roy Douglas Nelson, Jr.
59 conversation with Tony York
60 TWP. 2 RANGE 10 PISCATAQUIS CO., no date available at Katahdin Forest Management Maine Division of Acadian Timber Archives
61 Maine Appalachian Trail Guide 1934
62 West Branch Driving and Reservoir Dam Co. 1920’s-1950’s, “structures 1953;” available at Millinocket Historical Society
64 field exploration and conversation with Tony York
65 field exploration with Jay Robinson
The last camp was at the Big Eddy where loggers built structures on both sides of the river. GNP burned the last of these camps in 1957–1958. The complex on the south side included a camp, an office camp, a cookhouse, and sleeping quarters for one hundred men. Just above the eddy at what loggers called “the crib works” was a watchman’s cabin. The drilled holes in the rock at the site supported the signal flags.

Some cutting documentation remains. In 1877, Moses P. Wadleigh and Charles H. Estes cut on Pockwockamus Deadwater. Howard Perkins cut and hauled cedar onto the Debsconeag Deadwater with twelve men and four horses in 1883. Upriver in 1887, Samuel White with twelve horses and about thirty-six men hauled into Ambejackmockamus Falls, John F. Fowler with sixteen horses and about forty-eight men hauled to the foot of Ripogenus Gorge, and just above him was Wadleigh with twelve horses and about thirty-six men.

The harvest along the river between the Big Eddy and Ambajejus Falls yielded seven million board feet of timber in 1889. Justice Hathaway contracted for cutting one million feet on the river. Henry Priest cut a million feet in the Ambejackmockamus Falls area. In the

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66 field exploration with Peter Pray

67 Pre c.1900 cutting information is footnoted. Post c.1900 cutting information, unless otherwise footnoted comes from GNP mapped cuts maps and they are as follows: (1) Ripogenus Dam to the head of Nesowadnehunk Deadwater – Township 3 Range 11, March 4, 1935, May 23, 1950 (two maps with the same date); (2) Nesowadnehunk Deadwater to Pockwockamus Deadwater - Township 2 Range 10, October 10, 1934, April 5, 1932, May 16, 1955 (three maps with same date); Pockwockamus Deadwater to Debsconeag Deadwater – Township 2 Range 9, October 4, 1934; Debsconeag Deadwater to Ambajejus Lake – Township 1 Range 9, May 4, 1920, March 24, 1932 (two maps with same date)

68 Bangor Daily Whig and Courier, October 26, 1886

69 Bangor Daily Whig and Courier, January 25, 1883

70 Bangor Daily Whig and Courier, October 26, 1886

Nesowadnehunk Falls area, two jobbers, Roger Hersey and Charles Dudley, cut five million feet. A total of 165 men and 46 horses worked these areas.\(^{72}\)

In 1901, Gray cut around the foot of Ripogenus Lake and on the West Branch.\(^{73}\) During the following season, crews cut in the area of the Big Eddy and landed the logs at the eddy. A year later, logging took place between Horserace Brook and Pockwockamus Deadwater, and at the Debsconeag Deadwater. In 1905, loggers cut on or near the Nesowadnehunk Deadwater and landed the logs on it. Frank E. Tuck and Wilmont H. Davis logged from the Horserace Rapids to Pockwockamus Deadwater area again in 1907.\(^{74}\) Loggers cut the south side of the river that included the Little Holbrook and Holbrook ponds’ drainage from the Big Heater in Ripogenus Gorge to Ripogenus Dam in 1910. A 1913 crew cut the south side of the river from below Big Ambejackmockamus Falls to the mouth of Horserace Brook. Ed White was one of the loggers hired to cut a 4.5-foot in diameter pine up behind Carry Pond where they logged in 1914.\(^{75}\) The Cassidy family bought the monster log and used four horses to haul it to the Arches at Ripogenus Gorge where they made a special landing for it. In 1917, loggers cut the drainages on the north side of the river that flow into the area of the Arches. Two years later, a crew cut the south side of the river from Passamagamet to Ambajejus Lake, and in 1922, one cut north of Passamagamet Falls and deadwater.

Loggers cut west of Pockwockamus Deadwater in 1932, and two years later, they harvested the north side of the river between the Big Heater and Ripogenus Dam. Crews cut the

\(^{72}\) see footnote 71

\(^{73}\) Assessments Penobscot Log Driving Co. 1864-1920 available at Katahdin Forest Management Maine Division of Acadian Timber Archives

\(^{74}\) Scalars’ reports by location 1901-1913, GNP Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections

\(^{75}\) Fanny Hardy Eckstorm Papers, personal journal, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections
south side from Nesowadnehunk Deadwater to the foot of Pockwockamus Deadwater in 1934. A year later, they cut from the north side of the lower end of Pockwockamus Deadwater to the foot of the Debsconeag Deadwater. A crew logged the drainages on the north side of the river between the Big Heater and Little Ambejackmockamus Falls in 1935, and the following year they cut the Carry Pond drainage and from below the Big Heater to below Horserace Rapids. Three years later, they continued to cut the south side below Horserace Rapids and on the north side in the Passamagamet Falls area.

In 1940, crews cut the south side of the river from the foot of Debsconeag Deadwater to Moose Pond and, two years later, cut the south side between the deadwater and Hurd Pond. Rene and Wilford Levesque cut pine south of First Debsconeag Lake where the land slopes to the lake and the deadwater in 1953. Loggers probably landed the last logs cut along the river about 1953 when the road between Abol Stream and Ripogenus Lake opened and GNP started trucking greater quantities of wood to the mill. The cut of a 1954 crew working on both sides of the river above Ambajejus Falls may have gone into the river.

**Logging on the Tributaries**

**Passamagamet Lake**

Logging took place around the lake perhaps as early as the mid-1830s, but who cut when and where on the lake for the first seventy years is unknown. The earliest camp was likely the one at the carry trail from the cove on the lake’s north side to the river edge at the foot of Debsconeag Deadwater. Loggers used this route to bypass logs backed up between Passamagamet Falls and the deadwater. From about 1900 to 1915, the Elias Boyington family had a homestead at the site. The camp may have reverted to a logging camp that loggers abandoned by the 1940s. The Ernest

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76 GNP *Weekly Newsletter*, January 1953
Mayo family also had a homestead on the lake at an unknown location about 1900. Both families likely logged on the lake. Elias Boyington worked for the Penobscot Log Driving Company (PLDC) in 1906 and in the spring of 1909, he and his wife Gertrude provided boarding and lodging for loggers.\textsuperscript{77}

Thomas Weymouth logged the area in 1901.\textsuperscript{78} A 1908 scalar’s report recorded logging at the west end of the lake in T1R10 W.E.L.S. Loggers cut the north side in 1912. A logging camp at the lake’s northwest corner operated in 1914 and perhaps the following year when loggers yarded on the ice. The depot camp for the operation was on Pemadumcook Lake at the mouth of Nahmakanta Stream. In 1932, Ernest Ladd landed some of his pine on the lake.\textsuperscript{79} Loggers returned to cut the north edge of the lake in 1940 and the south edge a year later. Crews cutting to the west of the lake in 1944 hauled to the lake. From 1946 to 1948, Wilford Levesque had crews logging between the northwest end of the lake and Second and Third Debsconeag lakes.\textsuperscript{80} The main camp was near the Ambajejus Boom House. Shorty Budreau towed barges of supplies, hay, and horses from Elmer Woodworth’s wharf at Ambajejus dike to a staging camp at the mouth of Nahmakanta Stream on Pemadumcook Lake for those cutting on that side. He took men in early Mondays and brought them out on Fridays, and made another one to two trips during midweek. The trip took two hours each way. Loggers cut west of the Passamagamet Lake in 1950 and either hauled to the lake or trucked out the Grant Brook Road using a new West Branch bridge. Three years later, Ladd cut pine, long logs, on the lake, and Dana Brown towed

\textsuperscript{77} West Branch Driving and Reservoir Co. January 1903 – March 31, 1913

\textsuperscript{78} Scalars’ reports by location 1901-1913, GNP Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections

\textsuperscript{79} mapped cut on Plan of T.1 R.10, State Ass. Report, 1914

\textsuperscript{80} conversations with Shorty Budreau
the boom out of the lake and released it above Ambajejus Falls.\textsuperscript{81} All the logs got hung up in a jam. Brown put the nose of his motorboat against the pile and pushed at full throttle for some time before it finally began to move. The experience convinced him that the decision to go to short wood was a good one; it did not take much to create a logjam.

**Debsconeag Lakes**

The thoroughfare between the northwest corner of the Debsconeag Deadwater and First Debsconeag Lake is the entry to an extensive watershed that flows out of the hills south of Rainbow Lake and east of Nahmakanta Lake. Substantial logging reached beyond First Debsconeag Lake all the way to Eighth Debsconeag Lake. This watershed’s history is in the Debsconeag Lakes chapter.

**Hurd Pond and Little Hurd Pond**

Logging on the Hurd Pond drainage began sometime soon after 1832. The early loggers likely drove the stream from Hurd Pond to the Debsconeag Deadwater after they cleared it and without the support of a dam. When they built the first dam is unknown, but one was in place in 1908.\textsuperscript{82} Roy Nelson Sr., Walter Dickey, and Ralph R. Boyington rebuilt the dam’s one sluiceway in the winter of 1913.\textsuperscript{83} Given the life of cribs above water, estimated to be thirty years, the prior dam could have been built about 1880. The side dam at the east end of the dam was about 400 feet long; the one at the west end was perhaps 100 feet.\textsuperscript{84} Drivers last used the dam in 1936.\textsuperscript{85}

Hurd Pond had three logging camp locations, but their years of use are unknown. One camp, appearing on a circa 1900 Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) map, was at the north

\textsuperscript{81} conversations with Dana Brown

\textsuperscript{82} Plan of Township 2 Range 10 W.E.L.S., December 10, 1908

\textsuperscript{83} conversations with Roy Douglas Nelson, Jr.

\textsuperscript{84} determined by Geller on a field trip to the site

end of the pond between the inlet brook and the stream from the no name pond. The second was at about the midpoint on the east side where the tote road from Pockwockamus Deadwater touched the pond. A third camp was on the east side not far from the dam. In the late 1940s, all that was left were the remains of what looked like a horse hovel.

The earliest documented logging is that of Henry Priest and Justice Hathaway in 1887. James F. Kimball cut at the pond in 1901, and the following year at the pond and along the brook. Scalar’s reports from 1903 and 1904 indicate that logs were on the pond and on the brook. The 1906 scalar’s report had logs only on the pond. GNP’s 1916 map outlined the area to be cut near the pond. P. J. Murdock’s 1922 cruiser report suggested that cuttings throughout this watershed were twenty to twenty-five years old. He noted loggers cut the area for long logs, but many bunches of good size trees remained. Loggers returned to cut in various areas around Hurd Pond in 1933, 1934, and 1935.

Loggers toted to Hurd Pond from two directions. The oldest documented route was an 1893 tote road from the Debsconeag Deadwater near the First Debsconeag Lake thoroughfare up the west side of the stream to the Hurd Pond dam; loggers used it into the late 1930s. Another

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86 Great Northern Paper Company. Township 2 Range 10, undated, c. 1900
87 TWP.2 Range 10, nd
88 see footnote 87 and found on Geller field exploration as were the other camps on the pond
89 conversation with Shorty Budreau
90 Bangor Daily Whig and Courier, October 26, 1886
91 Scalars’ reports by location 1901-1913, GNP Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections
92 GNP Division of Forest Engineering, Township 2 Range 10, cruise map, 1916
93 Hurd Pond Watershed T.2, R.10 W.E.L.S. June 1922
94 mapped cuts on: GNP Division Forest Engineering, Township 2 Range 10, May 16, 1955 (2 maps with same date); October 10, 1934; April 5, 1932
95 GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 2 Range 10, cruise 1916
road came from the West Branch near River Pond to Hurd Pond’s upper eastern edge, crossed
the stream connecting the Hurd and Little Hurd ponds, and continued on to Rainbow Lake.96

At Little Hurd Pond, which is a mile northwest of Hurd Pond, a logging camp was at the
end of the tote road on the east side of the stream at the edge of the Pitman Pond drainage.97 The
camp included a root cellar and two other stockade-style buildings. The proximity of the camp to
the Pitman Pond’s drainage suggests loggers hauled from those ponds to either of the Hurd
ponds.

Loggers drove from Little Hurd Pond during the early years, but the outlet contains no
rock crib remnants.98 The pond’s outlet has ax and saw cut logs and the outlet stream is heavily
eroded. Where its outlet stream pitches out of a large beaver flowage and down a steep hillside to
Hurd Pond was a sluice, the remains of which Jay Robinson, a nearby camp owner found.99 In
later years, crews hauled from the area to Hurd Pond with the last haul being in spring 1936
when a tractor hauled that year’s 7,000 cords and another 2,500 cords left from the previous
season to the Hurd Pond outlet.100 The depot camp for this operation was at Grant Brook. This
drive is an example of how mechanized equipment began replacing small stream drives.

The tractor supporting this last drive brought the remaining crew out at night on March 8
or 9, 1936.101 Soon after they crossed over the West Branch on a log bridge in the River Pond
area it washed out. The crew had planned to leave the following morning, but the cook had a

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96 Katahdin to East Branch Pleasant River, October 1935, prepared to accompany The Guide to the
Appalachian Trail in Maine, 1936

97 Geller discovery on a field trip

98 Geller discovery on a field trip and conversations with Jay Robinson

99 conversations with Jay Robinson


101 see note 100
premonition and insisted they leave that night with the last of the camp materials. Rain started as they left and continued relentlessly through the night and into the following day.

**Daisey and No-Name Ponds**

A pre-1900 tote road left Hurd Pond at the mouth of Trail Brook, paralleled the brook’s south side, but well away from it, and went over the height-of-land to Daisey Pond where it forked with one route going on to Rainbow Lake’s east end and the other toward Big Minister Pond’s northeast corner. At the height-of-land was an old logging camp. Although Daisey Pond drains into the Debsconeag watershed, it is close enough to the low height of land that loggers could have hauled to Trail Brook or to Hurd Pond.

Trail Brook drains the no-name pond east of Daisey Pond. Some area folks think logs may have been driven down the stream. Although the pond’s outlet shows no sign of anything other than beaver dams, the stream does have a well-defined channel, so it might have supported a series of splash dams to move the logs on to Hurd Pond. Hauling to Hurd Pond along the upper end of Trail Brook was not possible without cutting a haul road into the hillside to prevent side-slipping. Where the stream enters Hurd Pond, the embankments suggest loggers used a side dam.

The second no-name pond, northeast of the first, drains into the northwest corner of Hurd Pond. The stream is small and shows little indication that large quantities of water came down it. The distance from the pond to Hurd Pond is short so loggers could have yarded their logs on the ice of Hurd Pond.

**Mud Pond**

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102 Katahdin to East Branch Pleasant River, October 1935, prepared to accompany *The Guide to the Appalachian Trail in Maine, 1936*

103 Geller field exploration

104 Geller field exploration
Mud Pond outlet stream, about a half-mile long, enters the West Branch’s Pockwockamus Deadwater on its south side behind the largest island, which river driver’s called Camp Island. The stream is a trickle across a broad flat area with no visible channel. The pond’s proximity to the river is such that hauling across the flat drainage was practical.\textsuperscript{105}

**Hale Pond**

Logging around Hale Pond likely took place in the late 1830s given the ease of the haul to the West Branch. Near the head of Pockwockamus Deadwater, an early tote road went west along the north side of Hale Pond’s outlet stream, across the pond, and up to the low height of land to Pitman Pond. Whether loggers ever drove the Hale Pond outlet stream is unknown, but the outlet has no evidence to suggest a dam.\textsuperscript{106} Between about 1920 and 1934, loggers used the nearby depot camp and the ferry at Pockwockamus Deadwater to reach the area. Logging in the area stopped about 1935, partly because of a nearby 1934 forest fire that burned around the eastern half of the pond.\textsuperscript{107}

**Pockwockamus Stream Drainage**

Pockwockamus Stream flows from Pockwockamus Pond westerly through swampy lands passing through Compass and River ponds to reach the West Branch at Pockwockamus Deadwater. The flat land, short distances, and ice of the waterway likely precluded the need for any dams.\textsuperscript{108} The earliest cutting records found indicate that logging on the north side of the

\textsuperscript{105} based on Geller field exploration

\textsuperscript{106} Geller field exploration

\textsuperscript{107} mapped burn area – GNP Division of Forest Engineering, Township 2 Range 10, May 16, 1955

\textsuperscript{108} Geller field exploration
drainage occurred in 1877, perhaps 1901 and 1907, 1933, 1934 when salvagers operated in the
burn of 1934, and 1935.\textsuperscript{109} For subsequent cuts, loggers hauled their logs by truck to the mill.

\textbf{Abol Stream}

Loggers first cut on Abol Stream after 1833. The earliest documented logging is that of Priest,
presumed to be Henry Priest of Nicatou, in 1889.\textsuperscript{110} Three years later, crews logged the area
around Abol Pond and Togue Pond The Abol Pond dam that existed in 1896 had one gate and
sluice, and may have been built for that cut.\textsuperscript{111} In 1899 when George Witherle visited the area,
his daughter noted a Foster camp not far above Abol Pond on Abol Stream.\textsuperscript{112}

The “Abol Camp,” on Abol Stream above the first steep rise a half-mile north of Abol
Pond, was a shanty and logging camp that likely dates back to the early 1890s. The tote road that
began to develop westerly from Millinocket Station in the mid-1890s originally crossed the ice
of Abol Pond about a half-mile east of the dam.\textsuperscript{113}

About a mile north of Abol Pond is the south boundary line of T3R9 W.E.L.S. A 1915 F.
B. Hussey survey of this township indicated that loggers had not yet penetrated the area.\textsuperscript{114} He
assessed Abol Stream as drivable and recommended hauling directly to Abol Pond. Given the
three other townships Abol Stream passes through in the immediate area, it is unclear when
loggers first cut the virgin timber.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{109} Scalars’ reports by location 1901-1913, GNP Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special
\bibitem{110} Hempstead, Alfred G., \textit{The Penobscot Boom}. Orono: University of Maine Press, 1931.
\bibitem{111} picture labeled “Abol Dam,” The Maine Sportsman, July 1896, p.8
\bibitem{112} Witherle, George H. “Explorations West and Northwest of Katahdin in the Late Nineteenth Century.”
Boston: Reprinted by the Appalachian Mountain Club, 1950.
\bibitem{113} GNP, Township 2 Range 9, road map, June 20, 1912
\bibitem{114} Hussey, F. B. “Estimate and Exploration of Township 3, Range 9, W.E.L.S.” GNP Division of Forest
Engineering, July 30, 1915
\end{thebibliography}
Logging continued periodically until 1935. Old-time loggers talked about cutting cedar for railroad ties in the area of Abol Slide and flushing them out on the spring freshet. This would suggest these loggers had a lumber camp on the stream well above “Abol Camp.” Old accounts mention a dam “a ways” up Abol Stream. In 1901, James F. Kimball logged in the “Abol area,” but whether his camp was the Abol Camp or the one on the stream’s south side just upstream from the West Branch is unknown. The camp near the West Branch appears to have been composed of four buildings: a cooking and dining building near the stream and three other buildings opposite it. A circa 1917 “Abol Lumber Camp” was perhaps “Abol Camp.” A 1921 James Sewall Company survey of T2R9 referenced “Abol Camp” as being in good condition. Loggers cut either side of Abol Stream in 1933, but cutting ceased with the 1934 forest fire that burned easterly from this area. In the fall of that year, Charlie Glaster, who was using Grant Brook camp as his depot camp, was in charge of cutting salvageable timber. His crews also cut 25,000 cords outside the burn along Abol Stream.

The 1935 Abol Stream drive of 7,000 cords, releasing 300 to 500 cords at a time, took twenty-two days. The stream was so rough that most logs had no bark by the time they reached the river. The drivers used two splash dams and a dam “half way down to the West Branch” to sustain the drive. The dams’ locations and whether the dams were new or rebuilt are

116 Scalars’ reports by location 1901-1913, GNP Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections
117 field exploration with Tony York
118 Sewall, James W. *Field Explorations for Township T2R9*, 1921
120 see footnote 119
121 see footnote 119
unknown. Given Abol Pond’s proximity to the boggy end of lower Abol Stream, the pond’s water may have supported the drives from upstream by pushing the logs through the bog area. The drivers may have also used small three-log rafts, as was the practice in bogs and slow current areas of small streams.

Percival Baxter purchased the area around the current Abol Campground, the southeast corner of T3R10 W.E.L.S. in 1945, with GNP holding the timber rights and use of the roads until December 1954. It seems likely that no logging took place between a 1936 cut and 1945 given the magnitude of the 1935 cut. If loggers cut between 1945 and 1953, then they trucked their cuts either to Nesowadnehunk Stream, where GNP did retain dam rights, or to the mill.

**Katahdin Stream**

Katahdin Stream flows southwesterly off the steep side of Mount Katahdin. When the stream reaches the plateau and Grassy Pond immediately south of Tracy and Elbow ponds, it changes direction and flows southeasterly to the West Branch. A tote road followed the stream’s east side from the river to Grassy Pond where it connected to the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road. Loggers drove Katahdin Stream, but from where and in what years, are unknown. Somewhere on Katahdin Stream was a roll dam.

Loggers who cut the stream below the extended bog immediately downstream of Grassy Pond either drove the stream or hauled down the tote road to the river or both depending on the year. Loggers cutting upstream from the bog likely hauled to Nesowadnehunk Stream, a short distance away.

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123 roads and mapped cuts on map of Township 3 Range 10, c.1915
124 clues to this are the mapped roads and camps (footnote 123) and a dam
The earliest logging on Katahdin Stream was probably on its lower end below the granite ledges, perhaps in the 1840s. By the 1880s, someone was likely cutting in its headwater ponds area close to Nesowadnehunk Stream given that Bowman and George A. Gray had logging camps to the west on Lily Pad Pond, Beaver Brook, and Fowler Pond circa 1880 and Largy was in the Lily Pad Pond area in the 1890s. The supply line for these loggers was probably the tote road from Patten to Nesowadnehunk Lake and down along Nesowadnehunk Stream.

Loggers supported by the developing Nesowadnehunk Tote Road cut the area in 1908 and nearly yearly through 1916. They cut in two different places along the stream in 1915 and 1916. A 1920 Sewall survey stated that crews had recently cut the drainage hard. In 1929, the H. L. Boyle crew cut 8,000 cords. Three years later, Michaud cut pine in a swath that ran north from the river between Katahdin Stream and Foss and Knowlton Pond’s outlet stream north to Elbow Pond. Loggers cut east of Katahdin Stream on the lower slopes of Mount Katahdin above the campground in 1935. Doug Farquhar’s grandfather was part of these operations, and he used oxen.

Loggers built camps in various locations. Not far upstream from the West Branch on a flat area 12 feet above the stream on the east side was a logging camp with horse hovel and blacksmith shop. A couple miles above that at the foot of a great bog that stretches to Grassy

126 GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 3 Range 10, June 1911 and see footnote 127
127 Sewall, James W. TWP.3 R.10 W.E.L.S. Piscataquis County Maine. July 1920
129 mapped cut on GNP map Township 2 Range 10, April 5, 1932 and conversation with Doug Farquhar
130 conversations with Tony York and a field visit
Pond and on the east side was another old logging camp. The dates of these two camps’ operations are unknown. About 1910, the Baker logging camp was due north of Tracy Pond on a main tributary of Katahdin Stream. Boyle had a camp west of the outlet of Grassy Pond on the tote road to Daicey Pond in 1928. A year later, McLain had a logging camp and logged the general area.

When Percival Baxter made his first land purchase for the park in 1931, an area encompassing the headwaters of Katahdin Stream, the prior owners retained no timber rights. Three years later, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) rebuilt the road from Togue Pond to Katahdin Stream where it created Katahdin Stream Campground and built the dam for the campground pond. In 1945, Baxter bought the land from the town line, about 1.5 miles up Katahdin Stream, north to property he previously purchased. GNP held the timber rights in this area until December 1954 and the right to haul wood over the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road. Crews cutting after 1945 trucked their wood to either Nesowadnehunk Stream or the mill.

Foss and Knowlton Pond Drainage

Loggers reached Foss and Knowlton Pond from the river via two tote roads, one along its outlet stream and the other from the river near Nesowadnehunk Stream to the pond’s southwest corner. They never dammed the pond or drove the stream. Given the circa 1880 logging to

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131 found on Geller exploration

132 Frederic B. Hyde, Map of Kidney Pond Region, Piscataquis County, 1913 (appeared in In the Maine Woods 1913)


136 untitled map TWP.2 Range 10 Piscataquis Co. undated
the east and west, lumbermen probably built the roads before 1900 when they first appear on a map.

Loggers may have first cut the area about the time Robert Gibson was using his farm. Perhaps twenty years later, Phineas Foss and Knowlton, landowners in the area and the first ones to extend the tote road from Patten down along Nesowadnehunk Stream to the West Branch in the late 1870s, also cut in the area.\textsuperscript{138}

In 1930, the Boyle operation had a logging camp northeast of the outlet.\textsuperscript{139} The supply route was the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road, and the depot camp was likely at Grant Brook. Teamsters either hauled on the tote road along the stream to the West Branch or to the mouth of Nesowadnehunk Stream. This may have been the last cut on the stream. Baxter acquired the property in this area, the southern boundary being the east-west line at the mouth of the pond in 1945.\textsuperscript{140} GNP retained the timber rights until 1954 and its crews probably trucked any cut to the mill.

\textbf{Nesowadnehunk Stream}

Nesowadnehunk Stream drains an extensive watershed to the west and north of the Baxter Peaks.\textsuperscript{141} Loggers cut the northern portions of it with the supporting tote roads coming across the north side of Mount Katahdin from Patten. Loggers drove the stream from 1851 to 1961 when the last drive started from Nesowadnehunk Lake. Crews completed both Toll Dam and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{137} Geller field exploration


\textsuperscript{141} This subsection is simply an acknowledgement that Nesowadnehunk Stream was a significant logging waterway that was active for over 100 years. An excellent more in depth treatment of this waterway is in John W. Neff’s \textit{Katahdin: An Historic Journey}. Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2006.
\end{flushleft}
Nesowadnehunk Lake dam in 1879 and built Slide Dam a year later. Those who built these dams walked overland from Nicatou, and bateaux brought the necessary tools up the West Branch. An 1880 Sewall map shows one tote road that came up the east side of Nesowadnehunk Stream from the driver’s path on the north side of the West Branch.\textsuperscript{142}

The Nesowadnehunk Dam and Improvement Company repaired Toll Dam for the last time in 1928. In 1933, the dam was still a key water storage dam, but by 1938, it was not.\textsuperscript{143} In 1949, the company became a subsidiary of GNP, and a year later rebuilt the lake dam as part of the GNP water storage system needed for its power generation.\textsuperscript{144}

In 1958, Robert MacDonald worked the Nesowadnehunk drive starting in June and ending in early September.\textsuperscript{145} His assigned spot was at Niagara Falls, and he picked the rear. The crew worked Monday through Friday and ate and slept in cabins at Nesowadnehunk Field. The boss encouraged them to get wet early each day and harped on sacred rules. One of those was to not pull logs from the front of a jam. One day without thinking, MacDonald pulled a log from the front of a jam. He raced over the logs toward shore, but five feet away, he fell in. A fellow worker held out a pick pole that he grabbed and got safely to shore, as the jam broke apart. He felt lucky to be alive, but the next day he no longer had a job.

A more comprehensive description of logging on Nesowadnehunk Stream is in John Neff’s book, \textit{Katahdin, An Historic Journey}.

\textbf{Horserace Ponds}

\textsuperscript{142} T3R10 1880 available at James W. Sewall archives


\textsuperscript{145} conversations with Robert MacDonald
The Horserace Ponds drain into the West Branch at the foot of Horserace Rapids. The Zebulon Bradley 1842 survey noted that an undated fire burned southeasterly from the Big Eddy across the Horserace Ponds and left nothing of value for timber between the river and the ridgeline above it. Whether loggers culled the area of its pine before the fire is unknown. Bradley also mentioned a forest fire burned the northeast corner of T2R11 W.E.L.S. and that may have deterred loggers for some number of years. Based on George Witherle’s notes of a trip through the area in September 1885, it appears that loggers had still not cut away from the river. Loggers cut the upper end of the ponds in 1913 and the western hillside in 1916. The Rainbow fire of 1924 burned to the south shore of the ponds. The camp supporting logging operations was a few hundred yards above the mouth of Horserace Brook at the West Branch.

Whether loggers drove from the ponds or hauled down the tote road or both is unknown. Where the stream meets the river, loggers probably used the large cove as a log collection point. Below the ponds, the road’s southern fork went over the ridge to the north shore of Rainbow Lake.

Fowler and Sewall Ponds

The drainage from these two ponds flows to the north side of the West Branch about a mile below the Big Eddy. Given Moses P. Wadleigh logged on the opposite side of the river in the early 1840s; it may be that logging first took place about that time on this side too. In those

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146 Bradley, Zebulon. Field Notes for Survey of August 15, 1842 of T2R11

147 Witherle, George H. “Explorations West and Northwest of Katahdin in the Late Nineteenth Century.” Boston: Reprinted by the Appalachian Mountain Club, 1950.

148 two maps: GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 3 Range 11, March 4, 1935 and May 23, 1950

149 mapped on GNP Division Forest Engineering Township 2 Range 11, July 14, 1950 (the label on the pond is Rocky; the name changed to Horserace later)

early years, access to the ponds was from the West Branch. Whether the pond had a dam is unknown, but both ponds are within hauling distance of the river. Bowman and Gray Lumbering logged the area around Fowler Pond in 1880 and had a camp at the pond.\textsuperscript{151} The next documented cut was in 1931 when loggers used a camp near the confluence of Fowler Pond and Sewall Pond outlet streams and hauled to the river.\textsuperscript{152} Trucks hauled subsequent cuts up the north side of the river and crossed at the Big Eddy and later Telos Bridge.

**Rocky Pond**

Rocky Pond rests at the edge of a relatively high plateau a mile south of the Big Eddy. Loggers perhaps cut in the area as early as the 1840s given that cutting took place at that time in the nearby Little Holbrook Pond area. The next documented cutting was the west side of Rocky Pond in 1911, and twenty-three years later, loggers cut a much larger area that encompassed the whole pond and east as far as the upper Horserace Pond.

Given the terrain, any cut went to the West Branch, but how loggers got their logs, especially long logs, there is unknown. Peter Pray, who lived at the Big Eddy, heard that they drove pulp-length wood down the hillside at one time, perhaps in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{153} The noise of rushing water woke him one rainy night. Rain washed out the pond’s beaver dam, and that experience convinced him short wood could have been driven. Truckers hauled cuts after 1953 to the mill.

**Little Holbrook, Holbrook, and Chesuncook Ponds**


\textsuperscript{152} mapped cuts on maps: GNP Division of Forest Engineering, Township 3 Range 11, May 23, 1950 and March 4, 1935

\textsuperscript{153} conversations with Peter Pray
The first logs cut in the Holbrook ponds’ drainage were by Moses P. Wadleigh in 1841.\textsuperscript{154} He had only the best pine culled and hauled to the West Branch just below Ripogenus Gorge. Other loggers cut around Little Holbrook and Holbrook ponds in 1886 and between Holbrook Pond and Chesuncook Pond in 1911.\textsuperscript{155} The Kenneth McRuer Clark 1913 cruiser report indicated that logs of this area would have to go out to the West Branch and that loggers were going to cut in the area soon after 1913.\textsuperscript{156} With the exception of a few small isolated areas, GNP temporarily suspended logging in the eastern portion of the Holbrook ponds area following the 1924 Rainbow forest fire. It was not until after the 1953 road from Ripogenus Dam to Abol Stream opened that cutting resumed and trucks hauled those logs to the mill. Loggers continued cutting the western and northern areas between Little Holbrook Pond and the West Branch with the last cuts using the waterway for drives before World War II.

Loggers, around 1900 and likely earlier, reached Little Holbrook Pond via a tote road running directly from the West Branch up along the west side of the outlet stream.\textsuperscript{157} At the pond old corduroy of substantial dimension leads into the pond.\textsuperscript{158} The loggers likely crossed the ice to the tote road, perhaps with corduroy, along the short stream into Holbrook Pond.

Loggers had a few options for moving logs from Little Holbrook Pond area to the West Branch. The grade of the tote road is steep and would require a snub line. Another option was to haul west to Chesuncook Pond, a mile away with a 50-foot elevation difference. No mention of this route is made in Clark’s 1913 cruiser report, and no map shows a connecting tote road.

\textsuperscript{154} Bradley, Zebulon. Field Notes for Survey of August 15, 1842 of T2R11.

\textsuperscript{155} Ira D. Eastman, Township No.2 R.11 (W.E.L.S.) as explored in October 1900 and GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 3 Range 11, May 23, 1950

\textsuperscript{156} Clark, Kenneth McRuer. “Growth Plan of TWP 2R11 W.E.L.S. June–July 1913.” (Sewall Co.)

\textsuperscript{157} GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 3 Range 11, 1914

\textsuperscript{158} Geller field exploration
Whether a driving dam ever existed at Little Holbrook Pond is unknown, but a dam with a 5-foot head would have created a thoroughfare between Little Holbrook and Holbrook ponds.\textsuperscript{159}

Moses P. Wadleigh also cut in the Chesuncook Pond drainage in 1841. Some of those logs went to Ripogenus Lake and others to Chesuncook Lake. It does not appear from the Zebulon Bradley survey that Wadleigh dammed Chesuncook Pond to help move logs to Chesuncook Lake. Who logged the area during the next nearly seventy years is unknown. A logging camp was at the outlet of Chesuncook Pond in 1910 when loggers cut the area west of the pond.\textsuperscript{160} Another camp that was just north of the northernmost cove of the pond supported cutting east of the pond in both 1910 and 1911 cutting seasons. A dam appeared at the mouth of the pond on a 1914 GNP map.\textsuperscript{161} In 1926, C. M. Hilton and Patrick Whalen logged the area and rebuilt a dam at pond in 1925.\textsuperscript{162} Their construction project also included six side dams totaling 2,000 feet raised a 4-foot head. Such elaborate work suggests that logging took place over multiple-year periods in a number of cutting cycles.

Two tote roads reached Chesuncook Pond.\textsuperscript{163} The earliest one ran from the southeast cove of Chesuncook Lake along the north side of Chesuncook Stream to the dam site. Another tote road left Ripogenus Lake near its outlet and went to the northernmost point of the pond. A 1924 Sewall survey recommended not hauling logs over this road because the log landings on the shores of Ripogenus Lake were not viable during the winter.\textsuperscript{164} The dry-ki was frozen and to

\textsuperscript{159} Geller field exploration

\textsuperscript{160} GNP Division of Forest Engineering T3R12, August 7, 1916

\textsuperscript{161} GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 3 Range 11, 1914 and GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 3 Range 11, March 4, 1935

\textsuperscript{162} Hempstead, Alfred G., \textit{The Penobscot Boom}. Orono: University of Maine Press, 1931.

\textsuperscript{163} GNP Division of Forest Engineering Township 3 Range 11, March 4, 1935 and T.3 R.12 W.E.L.S., July 1, 1924

\textsuperscript{164} Sewall, James W. Field Explorations for Township T3R12, 1924
mix that with timber caused problems. The last drive on the stream was before World War II. When Gerald Ladd logged the area in the 1950s and 1960s, he trucked the wood on the new 1953 road between Abol Stream and Ripogenus Lake.¹⁶⁵

**My Field Explorations**

I had plenty of unanswered questions for each of the tributaries between Abol Stream and the Big Eddy so I explored them all. To drive Abol Stream for twenty-two days with 500 cord per day released took a lot of water. One source might have been Stump Pond, but my thrashing in the brush there led to nothing. A possible dam site was on Abol Stream at or below the mouth of Stump Pond’s outlet stream, but I found nothing here either.

Topographical maps gave me no clues about where to find the roll dam on Katahdin Stream. The maps did suggest that if there were another dam of some kind, it would be at the foot of the extensive bog below Grassy Pond. I bushwhacked to the location and found nothing other than the nearby logging camp. I continued down along the stream, found corduroy of the old tote road, many sharp turns in the stream, and one beautiful granite ledge after another, all of which could have used a roll dam, but I saw no remains. Given the difficulty of driving the stream and the need for a large amount of water, Lost, Grassy, Tracy, and Elbow ponds might have been water sources, but my inspection of these ponds’ outlets was inconclusive.

When I was at Foss and Knowlton Pond in early spring, I looked into the outlet from a high snow bank and was sure I saw the rock cribs of a dam, so I was surprised when I found no one drove the stream. As a check, I walked in on sections of the old tote road corduroy, which in places was like a bridge with the stream under it, climbed up and around a huge boulder blocking a ravine, and did not see a crib log at the outlet.

¹⁶⁵ Ladd probably cut birch as he did at Nesowdnahunk Deadwater on the north side
From the Big Eddy, I walked downriver to the outlet stream of Fowler Pond. The stream twists and turns its way up the hillside, and I quickly concluded loggers did not drive it. I would have concluded the same thing across the river on the outlet stream from Rocky Pond had it not been for what Peter Pray had told me about the washed out beaver dam. I zigzagged across the mile-long steep hillside to the river to see if I could find anything that might suggest a sluice or old haul road that used a snub line, but I found nothing. Perhaps they did drive it a few times given the straight channel.

At the Horserace and Little Holbrook ponds’ outlets, I found nothing to suggest either had a dam. A few well-placed logs could raise the ponds’ water level. The channel downstream of both ponds is eroded and the trees are of relatively the same size, which suggests loggers may have clear-cut the waterway and driven the stream with a horse dam.

The Log Drive: Ripogenus Dam to Ambajejus Lake

For about the first eighty-five years, most of the log drives’ changes involved river improvements. With the completion of the 1917 Ripogenus Dam, which flooded out the Chesuncook Dam, the A.B. Smith towed booms to Ripogenus Dam. Between 1914 and about 1918, loggers stopped cutting long logs and shifted to 4-foot pulpwood. The use of short wood greatly reduced jams in Ripogenus Gorge, and over time with future river improvements, the jams all but disappeared, one exception being at the Passamagamet Falls trip boom. In the mid-1940s, motorboats replaced the bateaux on the river, and in 1967, a new sluice, primarily for water conservation, bypassed the upper end of Ripogenus Gorge. About this same time, a system of water jets along the edges of a funnel structure leading to the sluice at Ripogenus Dam kept the logs moving. One necessary task never changed: a crew had to pick the rear of the drive.

River Improvements
For years, loggers worked at improving the flow of logs between the Ripogenus outlet and the head of Ambajejus Lake. In 1846, James Jenkins, who had a farm to the north at Lobster Lake and who drowned on a drive in Ripogenous Gorge in 1848 at what became known as Jenkins Rock above Little Heater, used black powder to blow up large rocks in Ripogenous Gorge. In 1865, the first dams near Ripogenus Lake outlet blocked the dry-way and the east arch. A crew deepened the river channel in 1866 and blasted more rocks in 1874. William Jasper Johnston rebuilt the dams in 1882 and five years later built a roll dam across the channel leading into Ripogenous Gorge. The dam, whose primary purpose was to flood out a difficult set of rocky rapids, had a sluice, but no gate as the Chesuncook Dam controlled the water. Johnston returned to repair the dam in 1889, his last year of work for the Penobscot Log Driving Company (PLDC). A crew rebuilt the roll dam again in 1903, the same year another crew built the Nesowadnehunk Dam at the head of the falls above the confluence of Nesowadnehunk Stream and the river. The dam was primarily for water storage, and the Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) did not rebuild it after high water washed it out in 1932. Around 1900 drivers built the roll dam just below the Big Eddy at a cost of $14,000. By 1914, it had no value and GNP did not replace it, but in the fall of that year, Frank Dority built a roll dam above the eddy for $14,172. Either of these dams could have affected the currents in the eddy.

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166 “Improvements on the West Branch of the Penobscot River,” The Northern, May 1928
168 see footnote 167
169 William Jasper Johnston Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections
171 Information Regarding Sub Company River and Stream Improvements, October 31, 1928 found in GNP Papers University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections
172 see footnote 171
As early as 1911, GNP was studying the river’s water flow and considering a larger dam and sluice at Ripogenus Lake coupled with a dam at Big Ambejackmockamus Falls with a 7,000 foot sluice ending at the foot of Horserace Rapids. GNP’s only action was to replace the Ripogenus Dam in 1917. The new cement dam, just downstream from the roll dam, flooded out the Chesuncook Dam and made what had been the three separate Upper Chain Lakes—Ripogenus, Caribou, and Chesuncook—into one. Originally, the dam’s sole purpose was to collect water for drives and the mills. In 1923, the legislature allowed the level of Ripogenus Lake to be increased by 4 feet, gained by using stop logs. Starting in 1953, some of the water turned the turbines of the McKay Power Station. The last substantive change at Ripogenous Dam was the 1967 relocation of its sluice to the top of the gorge’s north edge ending at the cliff top above the pool at McKay Power Station at the foot of the upper portion of the gorge.

When loggers were not trying to alter the flow of the river, they were building, repairing, or rebuilding structures that helped prevent logjams. At places where the river split into two channels, the men constructed side dams of rock cribs to keep the water in the most opportune, usually straightest, channel. In addition to the one at the Ripogenus outlet, loggers built side dams at the back channel immediately above the Big Eddy, below Little Ambejackmockamus Falls (c. 1904), just above Abol Falls on the right side of the low island, at Debsconeag Falls, and above the island on the left channel upstream of Ambajejus Falls.

Side booms kept logs out of coves, inlets, and swampy areas. At the entrance to River Pond, loggers built a dike to keep water and logs in the river. Shear booms kept logs in the current at Ripogenus Gorge, the Big Eddy, Ambejackmockamus Falls, The Ledges, Horserace

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173 Fred Gilbert Letter of June 29, 1911 to Garret Schenck, GNP Papers University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections
174 conversations with Peter Pray and Quinton Clark
175 evidence of the old structures remain at these sites
Rapids, Nesowadnehunk Falls, Abol Falls, and Ambajejus Falls, which were all jamming sites. Without the side booms at the Big Eddy, logs traveled in a circle for three days before exiting. At the foot of Pockwockamus Deadwater where the river bends sharply to the southwest, loggers set up triple booms to keep the logs out of what they called the Frozen Ocean. Where the river widened, as at the Debsconeag Deadwater, loggers positioned rock cribs with connecting boom logs to form a channel to keep logs in the main current.\(^{176}\) Even with these booms, the strong current pushed treetop logs, the heaviest because of all the knots, under the booms.

Over the years, crews also constructed abutments and smoothed the river’s rock walls with a smooth bank of vertical logs, known to loggers as spiling. Both strategies helped to prevent jams. They used the spiling in the lower rocky gorges just above the Big Eddy at the Big Heater.\(^{177}\) A crew used some logs of the 1883 Howard Perkins cut for abutments at Wheelbarrow Pitch.\(^{178}\) Similar abutments were at the head of the Debsconeag Falls and below the Debsconeag Deadwater.

However, despite all the improvements, jams persisted. About the mid-1890s, some 60,000 long logs got hung up on a ledge at Debsconeag Falls.\(^{179}\) Percy Johnston, Jasper’s son, removed the ledge by blasting, and the logs came out on the next drive. Even in the 1930s, Peter J. McPheters, sitting at his father’s camp on First Debsconeag Lake, heard the occasional blasting to free a jam.\(^{180}\)

\(^{176}\) the line of cribs in the deadwater is still visible (Geller exploration)

\(^{177}\) conversations with Chuck Harris and Peter Pray

\(^{178}\) Bangor Daily Whig and Courier, January 25, 1883

\(^{179}\) William Jasper Johnston Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections

\(^{180}\) conversations with Peter J. McPheters
The Drive

Preceding each year’s drive were preparations along the river. A small crew of perhaps six to ten men moved into each of the driving camps for the duration of the drive. They readied all the various types of booms and headworks, took care of any problem areas of the previous drive, reopened the drive paths on both sides of the river, and set up the watch and signaling systems. For years, perhaps from the earliest days, the main driving camps were at the Ripogenus outlet, the Big Eddy, Nesowadnehunk Falls, Abol Stream, Pockwockamus Deadwater, Debsconeag Falls, Passamagamet Falls, and Ambajejus Falls. These camps were all on the north side of the river except the Big Eddy, where it was at some point on both sides. Sometime, probably after the 1934 forest fire at Pockwockamus Deadwater, the drive boss set the drive camp at the former sporting camp’s site on the south side.

Once the logs started floating downriver, each camp’s crew’s first priority was to keep the center of the river channel open. The toughest places for the drivers were Ripogenus Gorge, Big Ambejackmockamus Falls, Horserace Rapids, and Debsconeag Falls because bateaux either could not or only with great difficulty work the area. Some drivers lost their lives working these difficult rapids, but others lost their lives at lesser rapids. The crew at Abol Falls placed a man in the middle of the river on what became known as “The Gray Rock of Abol.” In 1857, George Goodwin of Stetson, Maine, was on that rock doing his job, but somehow lost his balance and fell into the river and drowned. The crew stopped to look for the body, but they did not find it. A month later, the Joseph Blake party on its way to climb Mount Katahdin found Goodwin’s body at Pockwockamus Deadwater and buried him on the deadwater near the mouth of the

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181 The description of this log drive, built around Con Murphy’s drive of 1891, is an informed educated guess based on reading. The reading does not include any person’s daily log of a drive. Fanny Hardy Eckstorm’s papers at Fogler Library have her observations notes on the start of the drive, but she did not follow it down river.

stream from River Pond. On their return trip, the group brought a slate type stone from the top of Mount Katahdin and nailed it to a tree at the grave. An old Indian guide was still caring for the gravesite fifty years later. Perhaps the old guide was Joe Francis who worked the drives and lived summers at Debsconeag Deadwater. In other instances, drivers chiseled the name of a lost man in a rock near the site. Someone probably stationed at Pockwockamus Deadwater, chiseled “Robert E. Cyr June 9, 1894” in a rock at Pockwockamus Falls. Cyr, a river driver, probably died working at the falls.

The drive camps remained fully staffed until about 1920 when the crew was a couple of watch people. The structures at these sites, except Pockwockamus Deadwater where the crew used tents beginning in the late 1930s, were still on the 1953 inventory for the West Branch Driving and Reservoir Dam Company (WBD&RDC) when it merged with GNP. The WBD&RDC also owned the river’s piers, booms, and abutments.

The current between the Ripogenus outlet and Ambajejus Lake was generally sufficient to keep the logs moving through the deadwaters. Logs did, however, get caught along the edges and pushed into the woods, especially when the water was high or water had to be released from the dam to break a jam. Side booms broke, and the current pushed logs into coves. A crew “swept them” by anchoring one end of a string of boom logs to the shore and tying the other end to a headworks or bateau that pulled the boom around the logs and out into the current. If loggers did not have a string of boom logs, then they quickly made a sheepshank boom with a 1,000-foot rope. To construct this boom, crew members pulled logs one at a time from the river, looped a half hitch around one end, ran the rope the length of the log, tied another half hitch, pulled in

184 field exploration with Jay Robinson
185 *West Branch Driving and Reservoir Dam Co. 1920’s-1950’s, “structures 1953;”* available at Millinocket Historical Society
another log and tied the half hitches, and continued the sequence until they had a string of logs
the desired length held together by the rope.

Once the GNP mills were operating in early 1900, deadwaters and coves from
Debsconeag Deadwater downriver became occasional storage areas that drivers emptied by using
headworks. The 1921–1922 GNP headworks inventory listed them at Ambajejus Lake (5), the
foot of Passamagamet Falls, Passamagamet Lake, and the Debsconeag Deadwater.

On the earliest drives, jam watchers stationed themselves in view of each other between
the Ripogenus outlet and the Big Eddy at the foot of Ripogenus Gorge. About 1881, a traveler
reported that a man signaled with flaming birch bark torches, a necessity at night as sluicing at
Ripogenus Dam only stopped with unfavorable wind conditions or for the removal of a jam. A
little later, they used flags. At the Big Eddy, the watchman could see up the back channel to
“the crib works,” the station of the next watchman. This person could see as far as a west side
cliff site at the Little Eddy, sometimes referred to as the Little Heater. The next site was on the
former cliff at the McKay Power Station, which was in sight of the outlet. When the signalers
first used phones to replace other signaling methods is unknown, but Fred A. Gilbert, who
directed the drives from 1901 to 1903, did not trust them and used the signal system. A 1905
traveler noticed locked telephone shacks at vantage points in Ripogenus Gorge.

Along the length of the river, runners, later replaced by phones, carried the necessary
communications between the drive camps and trip boom sites. The first trip booms were at
Ripogenus, Abol, Debsconeag, Passamagamet, and Ambajejus falls. The drivers likely added one

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186 Bar Harbor Record, March 26, 1891
189 The Maine Sportsman, “Down to Katahdin,” September 1905
at Nesowadnehunk Falls with the completion of the dam and boom house in 1903. A 1921–1922 GNP trip boom inventory showed trip booms still in use at each of these falls except Nesowadnehunk. The drivers used the trip booms at Ripogenus, Passamagamet, and Ambajejus falls through the end of the drives. Each of these boom sites was enough above each falls so that when the boom was open, the end that swung downriver was just above the falls. Drivers opened and closed these booms from the north bank of the river. In some instances, such as at the site above Ambajejus Falls, drivers anchored the south end of the boom to a rock crib pier near the shore.

The watchman and boom tender automatically closed the trip boom if a jam occurred and they could not dislodge it. In that case, they sent a runner downriver for help to come up to work the jam. The watchman and boom tender also closed the trip booms above both Ambajejus and Passamagamet falls if a wind was blowing up Ambajejus Lake from the south because it would collapse the open boom bag by pushing the boom logs against the shore.\(^\text{190}\) Closing a trip boom could also cause a jam behind the boom with the pressure of oncoming logs forcing others under water and often stacking them down to the river bottom. In some cases, the drivers used dynamite to break these jams. Dana Brown did not like it if the charge did not go off as calculated because it left considerable doubt about where the charge was and whether it would still go off.\(^\text{191}\)

In 1863 when cruiser G. C. Pickering, who had worked along the lakes and river for fourteen previous years, finished his work west of Caribou Lake, he paddled back across the empty lake to the outlet and down the shallow stream in rapids to Chesuncook Lake and from

\(^{190}\) conversations with Dana Brown

\(^{191}\) see footnote 190
there to the Ripogenus outlet. Some 200 men were beginning to sluice as many as 500,000 logs for a 117-mile journey to Bangor that would take three months. The drivers had a number of headworks anchored to the shore. Pickering watched a jam form just above the opening into Ripogenus Gorge; the men stopped sluicing as others closed the trip boom; 100 men immediately emerged to prod, poke, and pry logs, and when the jam began to break, they scampered as nimble as squirrels to the shore. The men were equally ready for a jam in the gorge, and as soon as it began to form, the strong arms and hands of others lowered 20 men tethered to ropes over the cliffs and onto the logs. When the logs began to move, there was no place to run other than toward the cliff. As they ran, the men above pulled the ropes as fast as possible to get the men into the air above the tumbling logs. Inevitably, they slammed into the cliff walls and arrived at the top a bit bloody but alive. After 1879, if loggers were not successful in picking jams apart, they resorted to dynamite.

On June 8, 1891, when Fanny Hardy Eckstorm arrived at the Ripogenus outlet, nearly 200 men under the leadership of Cornelius (Con) Murphy were working and beginning to move downriver. The drive was a combination of the logs from all the lumbermen cutting above the Ripogenus outlet. It included twenty-four lumbermen in 1864, thirty-eight in 1871, and twenty-nine in 1876.

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193 Fanny Hardy Eckstorm Papers, University of Maine Fogler library Special Collections, personal journal

Eckstorm saw the steamer, *John Ross*, when she and her father came down Chesuncook Lake and knew it likely reduced the number of men needed for headworks operations for this year’s drive. As a counter to that loss of jobs, the boat burned a cord of firewood an hour. Before the *John Ross*, men, two on each of the six to eight arms of the headworks, worked day and night and took three days of reasonable weather to tow a boom of logs the length of Chesuncook Lake. At the dam, they released the logs and sluiced them into Ripogenus Lake where they re-boomed them in boom bags of two to three million board feet each for their twelve-hour, three-mile journey, towed by headworks, to Ripogenus Dam.

Some of Murphy’s men had just spent fourteen days sluicing the estimated twenty-five boom bags of long logs while others kept the gorge free of jams. The sluicing crew worked twenty-four hours a day, but only with no wind or a favorable north wind, which kept the logs congregated at the sluice. As the boom emptied, a crew on a headworks took up the slack so a south wind could not push the logs away from the dam.

While one crew sluiced the last of the logs, others packed and started moving the encampment downriver to a site selected by Murphy. They took all the food they needed to reach Ambajejus Lake, the next re-stocking point. This was the first year teamsters used horses (instead of oxen) on the carry. While the horses toted the nineteen bateaux for the drivers and seven for the wangan (primarily the food, tents, and material of the drive boss, cooks and blacksmith), the men carried the rest of the supplies and materials. Two hundred men consumed two barrels of flour and a barrel of pork a day, and all that and more had to accompany the drive. Two men with a 215-pound flour barrel or a 272-pound salt pork barrel suspended from a pole resting on their shoulders moved 105 of them across the carry. The wangan included twelve tents for sleeping and cooking, extra tools, and the materials need by the blacksmith. Twelve to fifteen men carried the 1,000 feet of 1.5-inch diameter anchor line that they used to sweep stray logs out
the coves and eddies, sometimes pulled by hand and other times by either a bateau or by headworks. The men portaged nine times to reach Ambajejus Lake (Ripogenus Gorge, Big Ambejackmockamus Falls, Horserace Rapids, Nesowadnehunk Falls, Abol Falls, Pockwockamus Falls, Debsconeag Falls, Passamagamet Falls, and Ambajejus Falls).

Each bateau crew unloaded its boat at the foot of the upper section of the gorge where the stream from Little Holbrook Pond enters the river. Here, the master bateau pitcher applied his pitching skills to the bottom of each boat before it began work on the lower mile and a half portion of the gorge. The wangan bateau crew generally carried through to the Big Eddy at the foot of the gorge. Once the wangan crew reached the next campsite, the cooks and their crew set up the camp and began cooking again. The 200 men ate the evening and first meal of the next day at the camp. A crew of assistant cooks, known as cookies, delivered the day’s other two meals, some by hand sled and some by bateau that had to be poled back to camp. This was the first year the wangan was at the rear of the drive, which meant the cookies traveled as much as 6 miles downriver to deliver a meal.

Francis and Steve Stanislaus were in charge of the 1891 picking-the-rear crew, those men who began working downriver removing stranded logs after the sluicing. While many of the men portaged the wangan, Francis and Stanislaus dispatched their best drivers, all the Native Americans, downriver to begin the work. For some reason, Murphy had told them to leave the logs that had built up at the dry-way below Ripogenus Dam. Eckstorm had noted in her 1889 trip journal that the drivers did not pick every log and left some jams that posed little interference. Time was precious given the amount of water still available behind Chesuncook Dam, the amount of time it had taken to move the logs through Ripogenus Dam, and the estimated number of minor side jams and logs to be moved back into the current downriver.
Once the crew completed the portage, they spread out along both sides of the river. Below the dam, they picked and otherwise manhandled logs jammed against the dry-ways and caught along the edges of the gorge. The nineteen bateau crews of eight men each, a man with a pick pole in both bow and stern, worked logs hung up mid-river, moved men from one jam to another and back and forth across the river as needed. Downriver, others were beginning to work the edges. As the men finished picking near the camp, the drive boss ordered the camp moved to another designated location. The choice of locations depended on the movement of the logs, rather than on the location of the drive camps. As they passed the drive camps, their crews moved on with the drive. At the mouths of the tributaries, drivers of those cuts had their logs ready to move into the river. These additional men often swelled the total crew to more than 300 men.

How far and often the camp moved depended on available water, the volume of logs to be picked, and weather. The goal was to be at Nicatou at the mouth of the West Branch on the Penobscot River by early August in time to join the East Branch of the Penobscot River drive. Typically, the drive crew needed thirty days under reasonable conditions to reach Ambajous Lake and another two weeks to move the logs to North Twin Dam. Lots of rain or too little water or strong winds blowing upriver or across the lakes could slow the drive considerably or even stop its movement altogether. The rear of Murphy’s drive reached North Twin Dam on July 17 in 1891.195 This portion of the drive between 1875 and 1900 typically took about six weeks as it probably did before 1875.196

The completion of the 1917 Ripogenus Dam and the transition to short wood were major steps in establishing a constant water supply and reduced labor costs. The A.B. Smith, using ten

195 Penobscot Log Driving Company Record Book, available at Katahdin Forest Management Maine Division of Acadian Timber Archives
196 calculated on basis of information in Penobscot Log Driving Company Record Book
tons of coal per day, could now tow directly to Ripogenus Dam. From 1917 to 1971, a crew of about fifty men handled the booming, towing, sluicing, and picking the edges of the Upper Chain Lakes. Typically, it took two to three days to fill a boom at the head of Chesuncook Lake and tow it to Ripogenus Dam. In the mid-1960s, booms of 4,000 to 5,000 cords started arriving at the dam in mid-May as they had since the first years. Some years, ten to fifteen men working twelve-hour shifts sluiced twenty-four hours per day taking at least a couple days with favorable wind to sluice the logs of one boom. In other years, crews sluiced 1,200 to 1,500 cords (or 86,400 to 108,000 logs) in an eight- to ten-hour workday seven days a week. By the mid-1960s, GNP incorporated the successful trough and water-jet-sluicing system put in place a few years earlier at North Twin Dam. In 1968, drivers used the new 4,980-foot sluice to the pool at McKay Power Station. The sluice saved water no longer needed to move the logs through the tough upper portion of the gorge. However, with the power station regulating the flow of water, drivers had to relearn the nuances of the river and adjust how they typically worked the river.

Short logs got hung up in the river, but generally did not impede the flow of most logs. Few jams occurred in Ripogenus Gorge, and when they did form, drivers broke them by releasing more water and sometimes by blasting. Over time, the drivers discovered they no longer needed a crew at each drive camp. Even the watch people at these typical jamming points were no longer necessary. If a jam developed some place on the river, then trip boom operators detected it by the flow of logs.

Another circa 1920 change was the timing of the drive. All the logs were now going to the GNP mills, so there was no rush to move all the logs downriver as fast and expeditiously as possible. Instead of the work being completed by mid-June as it had been, the crew worked into mid-August, as they did in 1926 when the A.B. Smith towed sixty-two booms, or even early
September as in 1966. GNP needed a constant flow of logs and a buildup of inventory for winter use.

In the 1920s, the short-wood drive, including sluicing, from Ripogenus Lake to Ambajejus Lake with bateaux took thirty to forty days and sixty men to complete.\textsuperscript{197} As they picked the rear, the dam keeper timed the release of water to reach each day’s starting point when work commenced.

When the drivers switched from bateaux to flat bottom motorboats in the mid-1940s, thirty-five to forty men split between both sides of the river plus boatmen completed the picking the rear portion in ten days or more pending conditions.\textsuperscript{198} Given the small size of the crew, they stayed at the drive camps as they moved downriver. During this era, crews replaced the aging drive camp structures with frames covered in tar paper and paper machine felts. A camp typically included a cook room and bunkhouse.

Winds hampered the 1947 operation when thirty-eight men picked the rear starting September 1 and finishing September 22.\textsuperscript{199} For this drive, crews repaired the camps at the Big Eddy, Nesowadnehunk Falls, and Abol Falls along with the boats assigned to each camp.\textsuperscript{200} The 1949 drive took four weeks because of strong winds, which caused the drive crew to leave logs in the trip boom at Hopkins Pitch immediately above Passamagamet Falls.\textsuperscript{201} This was the last year the men took horses down the river with the rear of the drive. Their route was the river’s south edge.

\textsuperscript{197} Levasseur, Nelson. Interviews on January 5, 1988; November 9, 1988; November 10, 1988. Aired on MPBN TV Bud Leavitt Show. Tape provided by Tony Cesare of Millinocket, ME.

\textsuperscript{198} see note 197

\textsuperscript{199} GNP \textit{Weekly Newsletter}, September 1947

\textsuperscript{200} GNP \textit{Weekly Newsletter}, August 1947

\textsuperscript{201} GNP \textit{Weekly Newsletter}, June 1949
By the mid-1950s, the nature of picking the rear had changed again. GNP linked Ripogenus Lake to Abol Stream with a road along the south edge of the river. At Abol Stream, the road connected with the road to Millinocket and its side roads to Pockwockamus and Debsconeag deadwaters. Vehicles now moved the drivers and their boats quickly from one place to the next. GNP opened only the drive camps necessary for the year’s drive as determined by an assessment of how much had to be picked. In 1958, GNP burned the drive camp at the Big Eddy; it only took a day for the drive crew to move through this area.²⁰² The rear crew by the early 1960s was about twelve men, and by then, they were not using the drive camps.²⁰³ A few years later, only a cooking and eating camp remained at Debsconeag Falls. At the end of each day, the crews beached their boats, and the drivers took a vehicle to more hospitable quarters. During the last drive in 1971, men purposely sank a number of unnecessary boats in the pool below Debsconeag Falls because the boats had no future use.²⁰⁴

Even though the drivers picked the rear, they left the “deadheads,” logs that no longer floated. In some areas, the spring current pushed them along with many reaching the Debsconeag Deadwater where they slid under the side booms and in to shore. With the new 1943 road into the deadwater, crews began to salvage these logs. One early operation was in 1947 when crews loaded the logs on rafts, which crews towed to the beach where they put the logs on trucks bound for the mill.²⁰⁵ The twelve-man crew removed 1,550 cords at about 35 to 40 cords a day, but 750

²⁰² conversations with Peter Pray
²⁰³ GNP Weekly Newsletter, January 1961
²⁰⁴ conveyed to Chuck Harris from Nelson Levasseur
²⁰⁵ GNP Weekly Newsletter, April 1947
cords a year later and 350 cords in 1949.206 In 1948, a crew removed 300 sunken hemlock boom logs, which had been under water since 1937.207

Until 1929, the typical West Branch 4-foot wood drive was 250,000 cords.208 In 1930, it dropped to 136,000 cords, and for each of the years 1931, 1933, and 1935, it was 200,000 cords. In the other years, loggers drove from 3,000 to 62,000 cords or enough to keep the needed inventory. From 1936 through the World War II years, the drive was typically 140,000 to 180,000 cords. After the war and through 1951, loggers drove 300,000 cords. Between 1952 and the last drive, the cord count varied from 52,000 to 175,000 to 73,000 in the final drive.

Chuck Harris, who worked the drives from the late 1960s and until they ended, said that during the drive the air smelled like balsam, the earth shook, and the sound of thunder was constant as the logs came through, pounding against the cliff walls above the Big Eddy. When the drives ended in 1971, Harris was part of the crew that dismantled this area’s spiling and gathered the remaining boom logs. Other crews removed all but a few sections of the sluice between the dam and the power station.

**My Explorations, Some of What Can Still Be Found**

I have always been curious about what I could find paddling up the river that would tell of its history. I followed the old carry at Ambajejus Falls and discovered the hill Henry David Thoreau and other travelers talked about walking over. On the opposite side of the river, the driver’s path is still open. At Passamagamet Falls, my dad and I portaged on the old driver’s path, passed the front of the outline of the old logging camp, and put in at the still-standing and open trip boom

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206 GNP *Weekly Newsletter*, June 12, 1948 and June 1949
207 GNP *Weekly Newsletter*, September 1948
tender’s camp. Later, I walked back and forth through a wonderful grove of pine on the main
carry around the falls. On the other side of the falls was an abundance of metal with a boom
chain protruding from a living tree. Rock crib piers and boom logs dotted the river and led us
into the Debsconeag Deadwater. In exploring the land between the two large beaches, we found
metal from the old camp. We walked the Debsconeag carry on the south side, and I thought of
Red Frasier and his bateau crew in 1930 at the head of Debsconeag Falls. Knowing that if they
were not on time for the evening meal at the Debsconeag camp, they would not get any food,
they successfully ran the falls instead of portaging.

Sometimes I have walked the river’s banks in search of history. At Pockwockamus
Deadwater, the rock crib abutment of the cable ferry landing on the south side is visible beneath
the surface of the water. Above here in the Abol Falls area, I looked for the “Gray Rock of
Abol,” but even at low water I could not see the Eckstorm described rock. On the opposite
side, I walked out on the manmade dike narrowing the entrance to River Pond. From Abol
Stream, I walked the old WPA road, crossed Nesowadnehunk Stream on the ledge, continued on
the old road, and passed through the visible remains of the Nesowadnehunk drive camp. I picked
up the road’s other end at the Big Eddy and followed it downriver looking for an old camp I did
not find. The old driver’s path along the river on the south side below the mouth of
Nesowadnehunk Stream is more like an old road and passes through an old camp not yet fully
grown in. The outlines of the foundations of the drive camp at Abol Stream are visible along the
edge of the tote road. One of the buildings is still standing at the Big Eddy. A few pieces of the
mostly removed rock cribs on the back channel are still present. The old path to the signal point
above the Little Heater is open. Below Ripogenus Dam are the remains of the dry-way dam.

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209 conversation with Ralph Boynton

Pieces of the sluice from the dam to McKay Power Station are still in place in the woods. I still want to walk the edges I have missed and explore such areas as both sides of the river at the floating bridge site below Passamagamet Lake and the old carry from Passamagamet Lake to the Debsconeag Deadwater.