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Within Katahdin’s Realm: Log Drives and Sporting Camps - Chapter 08: Fisk’s Hotel at Nicatou Up the West Branch to Ripigenous Lake

William W. Geller

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Within Katahdin’s Realm:
Log Drives and Sporting Camps

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William (Bill) W. Geller – researcher and writer
108 Orchard Street
Farmington, Maine 04938 or 207-778-6672 or geller@maine.edu
https://sites.google.com/a/maine.edu/mountain-explorations/home
Part II

Sporting Camps and People of Maine’s West Branch

Watershed

Introduction

Before starting this history project, I had heard a great deal about Maine’s sporting camps, but when I went in search of historical information, I was surprised by how little had been collected and published. Many of the people I interviewed for this book have a connection to a sporting camp, private camp, or trapper’s camp, and I have been fortunate to talk to one or more people associated with most camps described in my text. I have included structures built between about 1890 and 1920, but I made some exceptions if the inclusion helped develop a better understanding of the locale’s history. I talked to a significant number of people who have a camp built more recently than 1920. Most of these people had family who grew up at an old camp, trapped, or logged. Although I have not included these camps, I am most appreciative for the area history they provided. For camps on Millinocket Lake, the Lower Chain Lakes, and the Jo-Mary lakes, I made no effort to look beyond a 1918 Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) lease list and Prentiss & Carlisle lease information.

The Beginning of the Sporting Camp Era

For years, Native Americans traveled to their camps in the lower West Branch region to hunt and fish. They were the earliest guides for adventurous white men. By the 1870s, white trappers, who were also loggers or teamsters, were also guiding and using active and abandoned logging camps and trappers’ camps, tiny ones they built to provide shelter during their winter trapping travels.
Beginning in 1874, early guidebooks written by John Way, Captain Charles Farrar, and Lucius Hubbard promoted travel on the West Branch of the Penobscot River, and Moosehead Lake and their tributaries. The last of these early guidebooks was Hubbard’s published in 1893.

Advertising in these publications were two early hotels, the Mount Kineo House on Moosehead Lake and the Silver Lake Hotel at Katahdin Iron Works. At this early time, neither Norcross nor Millinocket existed as communities. Hotels multiplied once the railroads reached Katahdin Iron Works (1882), Greenville (1884), and Norcross (1894). One of the earliest ads for a sporting camp was for Eph Gerrick’s on B Pond in 1889. It was accessible from Katahdin Iron Works by a 12-mile rough buckboard ride on the Chamberlain Lake Tote Road.

Before the trains reached the area’s boundaries, travel into the interior for adventurers, referred to as sports, necessitated a guide who was typically a hunter, trapper, logger, spruce gum picker, and in general made a livelihood living off the land. Most guides had a number of small rough trapper camps to which they took the sportsmen. Some used tent camps. These early travelers also took advantage of the shanties and used abandoned lumber camps. The few families who had moved into the areas to farm and log also opened their doors to travelers for lodging and meals as a way to sustain their livelihoods. The early guides made their services available through the hotels and advertised during the hunting and fishing seasons. The conditions were rough, and the parties were small and few in number.

With the expanded reach of the rail lines, the number of sports increased. A yearly Bangor and Aroostook Railroad publication, consistently titled In The Maine Woods beginning in 1900, was a guide that included the camps and guides at each station stop. By 1898, Norcross and Greenville were the two most important rendezvous points for sports. Guides met their sports at the train station and accompanied them to the camp. As the number of adventurers
increased, so did the number of camps. Gradually, the clientele changed and required a less rustic camp. The camps expanded from one or two buildings to multiple buildings, including sleeping cabins and a main lodge for gathering and dining.

In almost all instances, the sporting camp operation involved the whole family. Proprietors’ wives cooked meals that were as good as the country inns and hotels. Their children worked the gardens, picked the native fruits, fished, and tended the chickens and animals. The distances were too great and travel too difficult to regularly bring in fresh foodstuffs the sports expected. By 1910, the camps and the railroad were focusing their advertising on women and families, and guests were coming for extended stays. The camps hired guides to lead their sports to the best fishing holes and hunting spots. Proprietors built small branch camps, generally a single small log cabin a day away from the main camp, to enable their sports to reach more distant choice spots.

The Maine guide law required that nonresident sports going to the woods to hunt or fish or camp and kindle a fire on wild lands of the State of Maine be accompanied by a registered guide for the period May through November. No guide could act as such for more than five persons at a time. A guide typically packed and unpacked the canoes, took care of the fire, pitched the tents, cut boughs for beds, and cooked the meals. He recommended a route and led the way. For fishing, he took sports to spots where they usually caught sizable fish. During hunting season, he knew the likely locations of game and drove it toward the sport. Many learned to entertain the sports through storytelling. At the end of each evening, the guide heated the pitch to patch the birch bark canoes. If the water was low or the guide knew he would be in a rocky area, then he affixed wood slats, known as “shoes,” to the canoe bottoms to protect them from the rocks.
Guides did more than just guiding. As winter caretakers, they built camps, cut and stored ice, and helped bring in supplies. They dragged in heavy dry good loads over the ice, not always with the help of horses; at other times, they used canoes or bateaux and, in later years, motorized watercraft. In the mid- to late-1940s, floatplanes began to bring in supplies. Snow machines first appeared about 1960 although clever woodsmen built other mechanical snow traveling contraptions before that.

Running a sporting camp was more a labor of love and way of life than anything else. The families who owned them worked hard. In the early years, the owners joined logging crews in the off season, hunted, trapped, picked spruce gum, served as fire wardens, built camps for others, ran phone lines, and did about any woods job imaginable to retain their camps and put food on the family table. When the Millinocket mill came on line, some of them also took a job with the mill. In more recent times, one owner was a barber in Millinocket and another worked the swing shift at the Millinocket Post Office.

In Maine, a traditional early summer phrase is “have you been out to camp yet?” Some folks in this region may have started using the phrase soon after Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) formed in 1900. A 1918 GNP lease list had numerous camps on Shad Pond, South Twin Lake, and Millinocket Lake. Nearly all those holding a lease had a Millinocket address. Starting before 1910, some of these camp owners rented their camp for portions of the summer.

The number of sporting camps along the West Branch of the Penobscot River peaked in the 1920s. Areas once reached only by water travel began to be accessible by sometimes-drivable tote roads. By the 1930s, downriver canoe trips had become a small fraction of what they once were. In 1933, only two of the original seven sporting camps between Ambajejus Falls and Pockwockamus Deadwater on the West Branch were operating. Ambajejus Camps below
Ambajejus Falls seemed to cease consistent commercial operations in 1933, and Katahdin View Camps was destroyed in the 1934 forest fire. In the Jo-Mary watershed, two of the six camps established about 1900 continue to operate: Buckhorn and Yoke Pond camps. On the Lower Chain Lakes and Millinocket Lake, four of the nine first sporting camps closed by the early 1930s as leases became available for individual camps. Only the Whitehouse Camps and Millinocket Lake Camps, now Big Moose Inn, were still operating in 2013. White House Landing was the jumping off place for the early twelve camps at Third and Fourth Debsconeag lakes, Rainbow Lake, Nahmakanta Lake, and Prentiss Pond. Only the Nahmakanta Lake Camps, Fourth Debsconeag Lake’s Pleasant Point Camps, and Rainbow Lake Camps remain in operation. Most of the others closed between 1920 and 1934.

Chapter 8
Fisk’s Hotel at Nicatou Up the West Branch to Ripogenus Lake

Pre-1894: Camps and People

The earliest encampments on the river were those of the Native Americans. Major Joseph Treat’s 1820 maps recorded them at Nicatou Island, the mouth of both Millinocket Stream and Nollesemic Stream, the foot of Grand Falls, just below Quakish Lake, above Quakish Lake at Nolumbajeck Pool, the outlet of North Twin Lake (north side), Ambajejus Point, and the head of Ambajejus Lake (north side). Native Americans also had camps at the foot of Ambajejus Falls (north side), the head of Ambajejus Falls (north side), Passamagamet Falls (north side), the foot of Pockwockamus Deadwater (north side), above Katahdin Stream between two logans, and the
Big Eddy on the north side.¹ When these sites were first and last used and whether they had any kind of structures is unknown except that the Katahdin Stream site had a double-decker lean-to.

About a half-mile above Katahdin Stream, Native Americans left the river at the outlet stream of Foss and Knowlton Pond.² This was the start of one of their canoe routes that bypassed the rough section of the river to get to the Upper Chain Lakes. The Ulakael-ahwangan or “Entrails Route” reached Ripogenus Lake via Foss and Knowlton, Lost, Daicey, Kidney, Big Rocky, Little Rocky, Slaughter, McKenna, and Little Harrington ponds, Harrington Lake, and Ripogenus Stream.

The first white travelers stayed at the farms (c. 1826) of early settlers such as Benjamin Crocker at the mouth of Salmon Stream, James Howard at the confluence of the West and East Branches of the Penobscot River, Israel Heald near Burnt Land Rapids, George McCausland at Schoodic Stream, and Thomas Fowler Sr. at Nollesemic Pond.³ In 1852, Benjamin N. Fisk opened a hotel in Nicatou on the river’s east side. Frederick E. Church, the famous landscape painter, and his colleague and guide stayed at Fowler’s on Millinocket Stream in August 1856. Manly Hardy stayed there and used the Fowlers’s carry services on his fall 1857 trip. The Fowler home was still in use in 1885 when George Witherle came through and stayed a night.⁴ In 1889, Charles T. Powers, who bought the Fowler place, hauled Hardy’s and his daughter Fanny’s

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⁴ Witherle, George H. “Explorations West and Northwest of Katahdin in the Late Nineteenth Century.” Boston: Reprinted by the Appalachian Mountain Club, 1950.
dunnage over the carry between the foot of Quakish Lake and Millinocket Stream. These sites with subsequent owners and other later farmsteads were the only ones to serve travelers on this section of the river from 1826 until about 1894.

Some early travelers like Charles T. Jackson in 1837 went from the Fowler farm up Millinocket Stream to Millinocket Lake and then paddled to its northwest corner where they made the short carry into Ambajejus Lake and paddled through the lake to the mouth of the river. Others, such as G. C. Pickering, a timber cruiser on his way back to Bangor in 1863, used the reverse of the route. However, a sporting camp did not open at the carry until about 1890. Charles A. Hale ran the early 1890s camp that was on the north side of the carry.

Once over the Fowler carry to Quakish Lake, travelers paddled through the lake and had to use a long pole to push the loaded canoe up through the rapids, known as poling, to the outlet of Elbow Lake at North Twin Dam. When and who built the first camp at North Twin Dam is unknown, but Henry David Thoreau mentions one used by loggers in his 1846 journal. This camp may have been the one built by Benjamin P. Gilman’s crew members when they constructed the dam in fall 1841, as there was no camp there at that time. In 1856, Henry I. Bowditch stayed at a camp on the hill above the dam on his way to climb Mount Katahdin. Witherle’s 1886 notes mentioned a set of camps at North Twin Dam, probably the Luther M._____


8 Bangor Daily Whig and Courier, November 16, 1841, p. 2.

Gerrish place. At the time, Gerrish was in charge of the water and the boom during the drives and lived at the dam. His father, Hiram Gerrish, likely introduced Luther to the area as Hiram had registered a log mark in 1856 and another in 1874. Hiram also worked for the Penobscot Log Driving Company (PLDC) in 1863 when Luther began serving in the Civil War.

Before the railroad arrived in 1894, Luther was operating Gerrish Camps, also advertised as Gerrish Hunting Camps at North Twin Dam, and was the guide for the engineers and survey party for the railroad. He had performed a similar service for the Canadian Pacific and other rail lines in Maine. In June 1894, Luther’s camp was a flag stop on the railroad. By 1900, Luther, his wife Avia, and two children resided at the camp year round. When the Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) bought the Gerrishes out in 1918, the camp was a row of cabins, some log and some frame, connected by a long porch walkway with a dining room at one end and office at the other. Whether Luther built the camp or took over the old logging camp is unknown, but it was common at this time for sports and loggers to use the same camp because their seasons were different.

Between about 1840 and the early 1890s, a common stopping point between North Twin Dam and Ambajejus Falls was at the foot of Ambajejus Lake. In 1877, F. S. Davenport stayed at the boom house, “Ambajejus House.” Charles E. Hamlin’s account of his 1881 trip upriver

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10 see footnote 4

11 registered log marks are in a volume organized by year at Penobscot County Registry of Deeds

12 Penobscot Log Driving Company, payments ledger 1863, 1871–1893 available at Millinocket Historical Society

13 1918 GNP chart of leases, GNP Papers, University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections

mentions the Ambajejus House or Boom House at the entrance to Ambajejus Lake. At the time, travelers reported that this building was the last roof on the river until one reached Ripogenus Lake. In 1884, Witherle stayed at what he called the Ambajejus Boom House and noted a few scruffy apple trees growing nearby. Fanny Hardy Eckstorm and her father Manly stopped at the Ambajejus House on their trip down the West Branch in 1889. Lucius Hubbard’s 1893 guidebook describes a structure he titled Ambajejus House that loggers also used. In 1899, J. Bispham Stokes and Charles W. Pickering stopped at the Ambajejus House and noted fruit bearing apple trees and a dilapidated structure that could house 100 men.

The next encampment for early travelers, often with a Native American guide for those intending to climb Mount Katahdin, was either at Pockwockamus Deadwater or the mouth of Abol Stream. In 1820, Treat stayed at the Captain Francis Lolar camp on the east side of the river on Pockwockamus Deadwater and climbed Mount Katahdin with Lolar and Louis Neptune, another Native American guide. Their route went through River and Compass ponds and then overland, avoiding the many swamps and passing Abol Pond to reach the slide that they followed to the top of Mount Katahdin. Prescott H. Vose and Bela Fowles may have used this route when they paddled up the West Branch and into Pockwockamus Stream in 1894. At some point above Compass Pond, they used a mile and a half portage to the south shore of Upper Togue Pond where they paddled to the portage to Abol Pond. At the foot of Abol Pond, they picked up


16 see footnote 4

17 see footnote 5


19 see note 1

20 Vose, Prescott H. “Katahdin in ’94.” *Appalachia* 15, no. 7 (June 1949).
the trail to Mount Katahdin. Between about 1890 and 1915, Joe Francis used the Pockwockamus starting point and took an overland route of about seven miles to the Abol Slide. The route crossed a number of nice streams, but avoided bogs and open bodies of water according to George A. Phillips’s account of his trip in 1905.21

J. W. Bailey (1836), Thoreau (1846), Joseph Blake (1857), and other sports camped at the mouth of Abol Stream.22 When Church’s party stayed at Abol Stream in August 1856, they had to replace the hemlock bark roof of the shelter.23 Although most starting from Abol Stream appear to have used some variation of paths on the east side of Abol Stream to reach Abol Slide and Mount Katahdin’s summit, a couple old maps show a Katahdin trail starting up along Katahdin Stream before swinging easterly to Abol Slide.24

From the mouth of Abol Stream upriver to Ripogenus Lake was another strenuous day. However, after about 1860, many of the travelers came down river—such as G. C. Pickering in 186325, a writer for the Portland Transcript in 187326, and in later years the Witherles, Eckstorms, and others. Early guidebooks, starting with John Way’s of 1874, the first, and then Hubbard’s and Charles Farrar’s in the 1880s and 1890s, promoted the West Branch canoe trip as a downstream adventure starting in Greenville and ending at Nicatou. During these early years,


23 Theodore Winthrop, Life in the Open Air, (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863).

24 Plan of Township 2 Range 10 W.E.L.S., December 10, 1908 and GNP Division of Forest Engineering, Township 2 Range 10, February 12 1915

25 see footnote 7

canoe travelers might find a horse with cart available to transport the gear and canoe at the portages while they walked. From Ripogenus Lake to Abol Stream or Debsconeag Deadwater was a day’s journey. The following day travelers could reach North Twin Dam.

The journey changed in 1893–1894 when steamboats began to ply the Lower Chain Lakes and the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad opened a station at the foot of North Twin Lake.

Post-1894: Nicatou to North Twin Dam

The stretch of river from Nicatou to North Twin Dam as an entryway to destinations farther up the watershed ended in 1894 when the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad reached North Twin Dam and Millinocket Stream. The company built a section headquarters facility two miles south of the dam at the foot of a North Twin Lake cove and built another farther up the tracks at Millinocket Stream. Lumbermen and sporting camp owners used the railroad to bring men, guests, and supplies north from Bangor.

Those farms on the river that once served loggers and travelers remained as working farms and their connections were through Nicatou. Whereas they had once served adventures on the river, they were no longer a part of the transportation line for those headed to the sporting camps. The only sporting camps below the North Twin Dam were those on Nollesemic Lake, and sports generally reached them from Millinocket Station, which was at Millinocket Stream crossing.

Nollesemic Lake hosted a sporting camp in 1897 on the west shore just north of the Long A township (TAR8 & 9 W.E.L.S.) about its mid point, who the proprietor was, and when it first opened is unknown.27 In fall 1899, William L. and Anna Hobbs and their son Billy opened Nollesemic Lake Camp, which was a combined carriage and boat ride of five miles from

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Millinocket Station. It was about half way down the lake on the west side. William Hobbs, with the help of his father, was still operating in 1905. The 1910 census listed him as a guide, which suggests the camp may have sold to A.E. Chadbourne who was running the camp in 1911. He apparently ran the camps until he moved to Ambajejus Camps in 1916. How long the camps operated after he left is unknown. In 1912, another sporting camp was operating a short distance from the water at the dam’s west end. Both camps were on the main tote road from Shad Pond. Who owned and operated the second camp is unknown.

Once the Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) mill was completed (1900) and the Millinocket population mushroomed, some residents built personal camps as a place to escape to on Shad Pond (previously called Nollesemic Pond), Mud Brook, and Quakish Lake. The 1918 GNP leases for the south side of Shad Pond were the camps of Thomas Griffin, Harry S. Stout, A. D. Tibbitts, and Joseph Levesque. On the north side of the river between Grand Fall (known locally as Grand Pitch) and Shad Pond were Harry Reddy and Frank Cympher, and John C. Brown was on the south side. Shad Pond’s proximity to Millinocket made it a popular spot in the early years, perhaps through the 1940s, even though the water coming down over Grand Pitch had been largely diverted to the mill for years. About 1951, high water broke the dike on the mill’s bark pond, and all the bark and residue washed into Shad Pond. Albert L. Fowler, who picked the rear of the drives in the 1960s, described Shad Pond as covered in a crusty scum. By the late 1960s, only three camps were on the pond. Cecil “Honk” Robbins’s camp, which was near the mouth of either Trapper Brook or Nollesemic Stream, was possibly on the 1918 lease

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29 Chadbourne, A. D. Ad for Nollesemic Lake Camps. Also *Field & Stream* 16, no. 3 (July 1911): 361

30 P.L. Sawyer, “Plan of West Hopkins,” 1912
list and is no longer standing. Bing Dicentes’s camp was on Trapper Brook logan and is no longer standing. Mortimer Skinner’s father built the oldest still-standing camp sometime between 1920 and World War II at the mouth of Shad Pond on the south side.\(^{31}\) When Skinner returned from World War II, he lived at the camp and was a logger, river driver, and successful trapper and hunter. He also had a camp, which he purchased from Adel Harding, three or four miles in on nearby Mud Brook. Skinner gave the Shad Pond camp to his niece Barbara Ramsey, and she has passed it to her son.

The next three camps upriver were at Quakish Lake. The earliest camp was Camp Otter, which served as a hunting camp in 1903. Where it was on the lake, who built it, and how long it functioned is unknown.\(^{32}\) Another hunting camp sat back from the lake near the mouth of Quakish Brook on the south side and belonged to Weddy Graffert. In the 1920s or 1930s, he either took over the camp or built it. After he stopped using it in the 1960s, the camp remained unused. About 1930 on the east side of a shallow cove west of where the West Branch enters the lake, Wendall Tibbitts and Francis Arbo reerected a log camp they moved from North Twin Dam.\(^{33}\) Members of their family, the Stetsons, had used it as dam tenders. The Everett Littles lived in the camp year-round for a while in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the 1970s, it was still fairly solid, but it was not standing in the 1980s.

After the Gerrishs left the camp at North Twin Dam, the GNP never issued another lease for a commercial sporting camp for the site. About 1920 GNP constructed a building known as the “Gerrish Place” that its employees used. The building is still on the knoll above the railroad

\(^{31}\) information on Shad Pond provided by Chuck Harris, Barbara Ramsey, and John Decentes.

\(^{32}\) *The Maine Sportsman*, Editor, 11, no. 123 (November 1903): 42.

\(^{33}\) conversation with Albert Fowler
tracks at the south end of North Twin Dam and in the general area of the Gerrish camp according to old maps and pictures. The renovated structure is the current home of Frank Crosby.34

**Post-1894: Norcross Community**

Before 1894, the only people at the foot of the teardrop cove at the south end of North Twin Lake were occasional loggers who cut nearby. Lucius Hubbard’s 1893 guidebook, which included West Branch canoe trips, mentioned the railroad, but did not use the word *Norcross*. When the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad reached the cove in 1894, the site became known as Norcross and a key year-round community began to form. Railroad workers, loggers, guides, and others who made their livelihood in the area built homes. Within a few years, Norcross joined Greenville as a major embarkation point to the quickly developing and expanding sporting camps around the Lower Chain Lakes and on the lower West Branch of the Penobscot River. During the next twenty-five years, the private railcars of the well-to-do such as the Marcus A. Hanna family of Cleveland’s coal and steel industry and the Joseph W. Lippincott family of the independent Philadelphia publisher J.B. Lippincott Company, parked on the Norcross siding while the families and friends stayed at their camps.35

Two of Norcross’ earliest businesses were the Stratton House and Atherton’s general store. Ernest A. Atherton, the railroad station agent who eventually married Luther M. Gerrish’s sister, Alice, sold dry goods, groceries, and other material in support of both loggers and sports. Fred M. Peasely quickly bought him out, renamed it the Sportman’s Outfits Company, and added a post office on July 27, 1894, when he became the community’s first postmaster. About 1897,

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34 conversation with Frank Crosby
35 conversations with Albert Fowler and other family members
he established a moccasin factory and employed nine people who tanned hides and made moccasins.  

Wilbur R. and Emma Stratton built and managed the first hotel, the Stratton House, in summer 1894. The big white building constructed of sawed lumber was a beacon on the knoll overlooking the cove. Within months of the railroad’s completion by the 1,000 men who worked the section from Brownville to North Twin Lake, the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad was running daylong excursion trips with as many as 400 people and live bands to the hotel for a meal and lake tour on Stratton’s steamboat. Churches joined the company as the primary sponsors of trips for observing the fall foliage and the spring log drive.

Stratton’s guests enjoyed the meals of fresh fish he caught from such nearby lakes as Nahmakanta Lake, where in May 1895 he returned with a reported 100 pounds of trout. After his hotel burned in 1897, Stratton, who was not in good health, continued to run his lake transportation business from his wharf on the lakeshore below his old hotel site. His steamboat, and eventually those of others, spared travelers the traditional long paddle to the far ends of the Lower Chain Lakes. Enough business warranted an 1898 steamer schedule of Norcross departures after the morning trains on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

36 Much of this paragraph’s information came from Ancestry.com


38 Bangor Daily Whig and Courier, August 8, 1894, p. 3.

Stratton did not rebuild the hotel, but a year later, Fred A. Fowler, grandson of Thomas Fowler Sr., built the Norcross House, nearer the railroad. The house included a dining room, bunkroom, and bar for woodsmen and guides. Another portion, which served sports and their families, included a dining room, living room, laundry, and library on the first floor and eight double bedrooms on the second floor. By 1911, the house had gas and electric lights, steam heat, hot and cold running water, and private baths. The house served primarily transients as sports got off the train and perhaps used the house’s facilities for at most a 24-hour period, and many times only a couple hours while waiting for their guide. Guides might stay a night if their sport was on an early train. Loggers stayed overnight as they passed through.

In 1899, Fred Fowler continued to acquire community businesses when he bought Peasely’s supply store and moccasin factory. Fowler kept the store open and ran the factory until it burned December 28, 1901. Albert F. Fowler, who was living with his brother, succeeded Peasely as postmaster on September 19, 1899. Fred Fowler continued his purchases in 1902 when he bought out Mooney and Higgins to whom Stratton had sold his transportation business, which included the steamboat Gypsie. At this time, Fred Fowler formed the Norcross Transportation Company, which also included the Norcross House, the supply store, and the post office. The last major Fowler purchase was in December 1905 when Albert F. Fowler bought the property on which much of the Norcross community rests, lot 93, from Charles W. Mullen.

The Norcross Transportation Company grew as the sporting camps continued to multiply. With the establishment of the Millinocket community in 1900, Norcross soon became a popular destination for day trips. Ralph Bragdon Sr. used to pump a handcart down the tracks from Millinocket Saturday nights to play in a band for the dances at the Norcross House.40 Others

40 conversations with Ralph Bragdon
came to swim at the beaches. In 1903, the Fowler brothers advertised four steamers, *Gypsie, Isma, Anna Bell*, and *Frances*. At ice-out in 1904, Fred A. Fowler and John H. Rice launched the *Rainbow* with Robert Sawyer as captain. In that same year, the Fowler brothers built a new wharf south of the Stratton wharf site. In 1905, Gerrit S. Stanton noted in his log that he was on a crowded steamer and numerous folks were canoeing or camping on the river.\textsuperscript{41}

In 1911, Norcross Transportation Company boats were *Orca, Rainbow*, its biggest at 65 feet, and *Minnie Ha Ha*. They were now operating daily with stops at Jo-Mary Stream, Nahmakanta Stream, Porus Island, Millinocket carry, and Ambajejus Falls. The steamers varied in size, carried twenty to forty people, and towed a scow with supplies, luggage, and horses. The company operated the *Peapod* at some point in time, and in the 1930s, one of the boats was *Rex*. At times, a boom-towing steamer, which had the right of way through all the narrows, interrupted the passenger steamer schedule. George Witherle experienced such a delay on his September 1901 West Branch trip.

The hay days of the Norcross Transportation Company ended by the early 1920s, and a slow decline set in. Fewer folks were coming through on the train, and people were no longer as dependent on the one store. In 1922, the company took its largest boat, the *Rainbow*, out of service. Families who once came for months at a time began to come for shorter stays. By 1926, the once-daily steamer schedule was Tuesdays and Saturdays. The store closed in the late 1920s.

The early roads to Millinocket bypassed Norcross until about 1935 when the road to Brownville was cut and passed over the North Twin Dam. Furthermore, cars could negotiate the road from Millinocket to Ambajejus dike by the mid-1920s and for those on the West Branch watersheds above Ambajejus, this eliminated the need to cross the Lower Chain Lakes. The wharf at

Ambajejus dike took some of the business that was once at Norcross. The *Mini* came out of the water in the 1930s. A few of the company’s smaller boats saw limited use in the late 1930s. Rail passenger service declined to the degree that Norcross became a whistle stop in 1937. The transportation business ended by World War II and never revived. The post office closed in 1946 with Albert F. Fowler still its postmaster. The Norcross House ran into the late 1960s and was torn down in 1968. In 1970, the Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) bought the wharf and property that included the house and removed the wharf in the winter of 1975.

The Fowler family has had a continuous presence in the community since 1893 when Fred Fowler totted the steam boilers for the Penobscot Log Driving Company (PLDC) steamship to North Twin Dam. Fred moved into the community with his building of the Norcross House. In 1906, Albert built his small family home on the small rise behind the house. The Fowlers leased and sold small building lots to support the growth of the community. A number of sporting camp owners and their guides lived here during the off-season. The Fowlers built the schoolhouse for ten children in 1909 next to the Norcross House. John J. Fowler, grandson of Thomas Fowler Jr., started working on the boom jumpers and towboats about 1928 and continued until the drives on the Lower Chain Lakes ended in 1971. Beatrice Fowler, wife of John J. Fowler, taught at the school until 1965 when it closed. Albert L. Fowler, John’s son, worked the drives in the mid-1960s. The old Fowler home was still standing in 2012 and owned by Don and Faye Pudney who have preserved it. In 2014, Albert L. and Marian Fowler lived in the old Charles A. Daisey home that dates back to about 1904. The Rice Cottage, the oldest building of the community in 2014, is still in use.

**Post-1894: Camps on the Lower Chain Lakes**
A little more than a mile south of Norcross on South Twin Lake above Perkins Siding, W. H. Pond opened South Twin House in summer 1894.\textsuperscript{42} Pond may have been Wilmont H. Pond of Brewer who was a lumber surveyor.\textsuperscript{43} In September 1894, the \textit{Daily Kennebec Journal} listed Henry W. Thaxter as the manager and F. W. Lincoln as proprietor. By 1900, Pearl S. Willey was the proprietor.\textsuperscript{44} Willey either added a second steamer \textit{Irma} or replaced the house’s first steamer \textit{Josephine}. However, in 1901, Wilbur R. Stratton bought Willey’s remaining boat or boats and provided the transportation for the house. During the winter of 1902–1903, Willey renovated and refurbished the house and, beginning with the 1903 season, leased the establishment to Smith and Gilman. By 1908, Willey was again managing the house and did so through at least 1918. He had outlying camps at First Debsconeag Lake and Nahmakanta Lake, but their years of operation, history, and exact locations are unknown. The camps may have been logging camps because numerous accounts tell of hunters and fishermen staying at operating logging camps in the 1890s.

In 1894, twelve guides in the Norcross, Millinocket Station, and Medway area advertised their services and met their sports at the Norcross Station: W. T. Ray and Freeman W. Powers of Medway, Charles T. Powers of Millinocket Station, and Charles J. Hathaway, Charles A. Daisey, Irving O. Hunt, D. G. Stevens, H. T. Holmes, C. F. Shedd, Charles H. Fortin, Bert Haynes, and Frank W. Brown, all of Norcross.\textsuperscript{45} Although the location of these men’s homes may have been

\textsuperscript{42} Information for the South Twin House generally came from “In the Maine Woods” and \textit{The Maine Sportsman}, Editor, 2, no. 22 (July 1895): 19.

\textsuperscript{43} Specific information about specific people generally came from ancestry.com. \textit{The Maine Sportsman}, July 1895 has Pond information.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{The Maine Sportsman}, Editor, 10, no. 116 (April 1903): 162.

\textsuperscript{45} from \textit{In the Maine Woods}
in one of the three communities, they likely had some kind of a camp on a nearby body of water. Powers and Hunt both had a camp on Millinocket Lake and Haynes’s camp was on Jo-Mary Island. Daisey had a camp on Nesowadnehunk Lake in 1904, but where he might have had a camp before then is unknown. Other guides advertised both a camp and services. The Benjamin C. Harris camp was a 25-mile steamer and canoe ride up the West Branch to Pockwockamus Deadwater, Joe Francis was on the river at Debsconeag Deadwater, and Darius Warren (D. W.) Hopkins was on Nahmakanta Lake. Bert F. Hobbs’s camp was on Upper Jo-Mary Lake.

In 1897, the guide list expanded to include Luther Green on South Twin Lake (location unknown); Frank Gerrish, son of Luther Gerrish, on North Twin Lake (he may have worked from his father’s camp beginning in 1898); and H. L. Stinchfield and Fred Heath on Pemadumcook Lake near the carry to Third Debsconeag Lake with outlying camps on Rainbow and Jo-Mary lakes at unknown locations.

Whether Stinchfield and Heath built their camp on Pemadumcook Lake or were using a former logging structure is unknown. They were still operating in 1904, but ceased about 1910 when the Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) began to construct its depot camp at the portage to Third Debsconeag Lake.\textsuperscript{46} Beginning about 1915, this area became known as White House Landing. About five years later, Joseph and Grace McDonald opened the depot camp as a GNP retreat and began serving sports in the late 1920s.

Near the southwest corner of Pemadumcook Lake, someone had a circa 1900 sporting camp on the south side of Twitchell Brook, just above the north-flowing tributary.\textsuperscript{47} Who owned

\textsuperscript{46} post 1910 information comes from GNP company records available at University of Maine Fogler Library, Millinocket Historical Society, and Katahdin Forest Management Maine Division of Acadian Timber Archives

\textsuperscript{47} maps pertinent to this paragraph include: “T1R10,” c.1902 Property of Bradley Land and Lumber Co.; “Plan of Township 1 Range 10,” traced by R.C.S., 1911.
this camp and when they built it is unknown, but it was in the path of the 1911 forest fire. In 1924, Harry L. Cypher had a small branch camp of his Ambajejus Camps some place in the area.\textsuperscript{48} About the same time, a sporting camp of an unknown proprietor was on the point to the west of Stephensons Landing.

Three different individuals had a camp on Pemadumcook Lake at Porus Island, a seven-mile water journey from Norcross.\textsuperscript{49} When G. W. Pickering opened his camp is unknown, but he advertised the Hermitage Private Camps from 1894 through 1905. Beginning in 1893, the camp served as the original regional headquarters for the Maine Sportsmen’s Fish and Game Association, a group of men dedicated to the enforcement of the fish and game laws and the propagation of fish. Pickering lived here year-round at different times in his life including circa 1900. Bela Fowles advertised his camp in 1894 and 1897. He was a blacksmith living in Nicatou where he and his wife moved in 1864–1865. He died in 1903.

Walter McPheters, proprietor of Camp Aleppo, was from Costigan, Maine, and guided south of the Lower Chain Lakes in the mid-1880s. He opened his camp by 1897 and was still operating at sixty-two years of age in 1912 when he was fined $110 for maintaining a sporting camp without a license.\textsuperscript{50} He also had outlying camps at Rainbow and Third Debsconeag lakes. He died in February 1918.

When Pickering, McPheters, and Fowles stopped operating and what became of their camps is unknown. The original camps are no longer standing, and no evidence of their remains

\textsuperscript{48} Cypher camp brochures
\textsuperscript{49} in \textit{In the Maine Woods}
\textsuperscript{50} Maine Department of Attorney General, \textit{Report of the Attorney General for the two years ending November 30, 1912}
was evident when Frank Fernald Jr. of Augusta first built on the island in 1970. His first camp burned, and the family’s rebuilt camp is still standing, but under different ownership. 

About 1900 at Norcross, Guy Haynes moved into a camp on a nearby point, which was eventually named for him. Guy, brother of Bert Haynes and previously co-owner with him of Buckhorn Camps on Middle Jo-Mary Lake, was a successful guide for many camp owners and had a camp at both Rainbow and Third Debsconeag lakes. His guiding included those who came to climb Mount Katahdin. In October 1905 when Guy was guiding on the Katahdin plateau, he made what was one of the last sightings of a caribou herd in Maine, a yearling bull, two cows, and one calf. Guy married Alice N. Randall of Vassalboro, Maine, in April 1915, and soon moved to Vassalboro. He sold his camp in 1919 to Maynard M. and Lillian Marsh. The current owner is the Moore family, which has retained some of the original structure in the current camp.

Before 1907, John B. and Madline Michaud built a combined home and sporting camp on the south side of Pemadumcook Lake at the mouth of Nahmakanta Stream, nearly opposite the Stinchfield and Heath camp. Guests arrived here by steamer and may have rested for an evening before venturing on. In 1910, the camp was their year-round residence, but how long they resided there is unknown.

William (Bill) Moriarty opened Camp Rough House at Norcross before 1907. He advertised an outlying camp at Nahmakanta, Rainbow, and Third Debsconeag lakes, and Musquash, Female, and Pollywog ponds. Whether his wife Josephine (Fransway) ever resided in

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51 conversation with Frank Fernald
53 information from *In the Maine Woods* and ancestry.com
54 information from *In the Maine Woods*, ancestry.com, and GNP records
Norcross is unknown, but in 1910, and married, she was living in Old Town with her father. At Nahmakanta Lake, Moriarty shared a camp with John Michaud and another with Horace Cushman. The exact locations of his other camps are unknown. His Norcross neighbors felt his camp was aptly named. Moriarty was a popular, big, strong man who guided for many camps in the area. In 1903, he became GNP’s first telephone lineman when a line connected Millinocket to Chesuncook Dam. About 1909, when guiding with Charles A. Hale at Twin Pine Camps on Daicey Pond, Bill’s sports, impressed with his strength and skill with a bateau, hired him to take them down the Colorado River. They paid him for each day he was away from Maine. When he saw the boat they wanted to use, he refused to complete the deal. At their expense, he then spent the summer building a proper bateau in which they successfully navigated the river. While away, he wrote a personal letter about the trip to the Fowlers.\textsuperscript{55} Moriarty’s years of operation are unknown, but he sold his Norcross lot in 1916 and died in the summer of 1926.

Robert and Persis McDougall bought the Moriarty lot from Norcross Transportation Company in 1916. The McDougalls succeeded Melvin H. and Blanche B. Scott as proprietors of Nahmakanta Lake Camps in 1922. The Scotts also owned a home and house lot purchased from Norcross Transportation Company. Daisey purchased his one-acre lot, Cottage Lot, and three buildings in 1916 from the company. He was proprietor of Camp Phoenix at Nesowadnehunk Lake from 1904 to 1931.

The 1918 GNP lease file listed a number of other camps on North Twin, South Twin, and Pemadumcook lakes. On Pemadumcook Lake, Albert F. Fowler took over the lease from S. R. Adriance on a private camp on Little Porus Island. The Fowlers used the island as a stopping point for sports traveling the Lower Chain Lakes. What became of the camp after the Fowler

\textsuperscript{55} Fowler family has the letter in their files.
ownership is unknown, but no sign of the former camp existed when James (Jimmy) Altee Goodwin built a camp on the island soon after returning to Millinocket after World War II (1946). He eventually sold the camp, and the subsequent owner’s family failed to keep it up. It disintegrated, and no camp has since replaced it.

Tom Perrow had a camp at what eventually became known as Perrow Point on the north shore of North Twin Lake. For a short time, the point also became known as Pirates Point. A coal barge broke loose from Coal Shed Point and drifted by the camp, Perrow caught it, towed it to his camp, and returned it with a little less coal. Perrow, who came to work at the mill, passed the camp to his son Ernest, who owned it for a time, but the camp was no longer standing by 2012.

At Norcross, Dr. G. W. McKay, Mrs. F. C. Bowler (previously occupied by H. H. Pope), George W. Stearns, Harry Theall (previously owned by H. P. McNaughton), and Harry E. Reed each had a 1918 lease with a building on lot 63. McKay camp is on the mainland at the crossing to Reed’s Island. The Stearns’s camp, previously occupied by A. W. Merrill, is the first one on the island after crossing the bridge. The original Reed camp, built by Harry and Adelaide “Marm” Reed in 1912, burned. The Reeds rebuilt in 1938 two lots away, and the camp is still in the family. Whether any portion of the Theall camp or the Bowler camp is still standing is unknown.

On South Twin Lake, the Eugene Henry Smith home in 1910 was near Perkins Cove and Estes’s mill on the east side of the railroad tracks at Grant Brook. Smith moved either here or

56 conversations with James Goodwin
57 conversations with Ernest Perrow
58 information also provided by Anne Erickson of the Harry Reed family
59 the details about Smith come from ancestry.com and Eugene Smith buildings, lot 91, South Twin Lake,
Norcross with his wife Adilea and children from Greenbush in 1897. He was a woodsman and trapper who was also the fire warden in at least 1910, about the time Adilea died. At one time, he was the dam keeper at Nahmakanta Dam. He resided here with his daughter Lydia until his death in 1931 at eighty-three years of age. The homestead consisted of a one and a half story home, two hen houses, a pig house, a storage shed, and another shed. A subsequent owner incorporated one of the original buildings in the current standing camp that is owned by Rick and Debbie Levasseur.

The Charles Russell camp was on South Twin Lake’s west side of the thoroughfare into North Twin Lake at what is known as Russell Point. Someone built the structure before 1915, and a camp, perhaps the original, was still on the site in 1938. Ed McMan built the current camp in 1941–1942 for Peter Pickilis who, with the help of young Erv Marston, who was caretaker for a time, dug and rock-lined the camp’s well and did the camp’s other stone work. Pickilis did engineering work at GNP and later became supervisor of the Millinocket wastewater operation. One piece of local lore is that the site was at one time a tuberculosis sanatorium. The camp is still in use.

James H. O’Conner had a camp on the 1918 lease list. It was on the west side of South Twin Lake on the end of the point at the opening to Perkins Cove. Lightning struck a huge nearby pine, and the camp burned. A Mr. Donnelly built another camp at the tip of the point. He cut logs at the head of the lake, towed them to the site, and built and sold the camp before leaving for World War II so his family would have money while he was away. John A. Jones’s

c. 1912, available at Katahdin Forest Management Maine Division of Acadian Timber Archives

60 conversations with Erv Marston
61 conversations with John J. Jones
grandmother bought the camp, which was eventually replaced by John’s family, which retains the lease.

Luther Green, Percy Pinette, and Frank Johnson each had an early camp on the Lower Chain Lakes, but their locations are unknown, as are the owners of three known camp locations. Johnson advertised Camp Welcome in 1906, but his years of operation are unknown. Pinette’s camp was standing in 1915. He gave it up in 1918, and its fate is unknown other than it was still standing in 1938. Green’s camp was on South Twin Lake. One camp, no longer standing, was at the mouth of South Twin Lake on the west side due west of what is locally referred to as Spring Island. The second camp was at Lincoln Cove in South Twin Lake’s southwest corner. The Lincoln Cove camp appears on 1915 and 1924 GNP maps. One local opinion is that brothers Alex and Joseph (Joel) Levesque built the Lincoln Cove camp in the 1920s. At the very least, they rebuilt the camp, which was still in use in 2014. Their family moved to Millinocket just before 1920, and their dad logged. Alex eventually became a barber in Millinocket. The third camp was on west side of the mouth of East Ragged Stream below the long point. This camp appears on the 1915 map, but not the 1924 map. What happened to the camp is unknown, but when the Wally Gould family built in close proximity in 1970–1971, they found no signs of an old camp. Two lots away, in the area of the current boat landing, were some old remains, but what they may have been is unknown. The Goulds might have found the remains of a structure at the end of the Nahmakanta Tote Road, which ended at the lake at either West or East Ragged Stream. Wally’s grandfather, Ernest Knight, guided for Bert Haynes at Buckhorn Camps on Middle Jo-Mary Lake, traveled back and forth from Norcross to his home at Knight’s Landing

62 conversations with John Barton and Wally Gould

63 conversations with Wally Gould
on Schoodic Lake via the Nahmakanta Tote Road, and piloted the steamboat *F.W. Ayer* for a year at the turn of the century.

The Levesque brothers built another camp in the 1920s at the end of the point extending north from the west side of the mouth of East Ragged Stream. This camp appears only on the 1924 map. The original camp burned in the early 1930s, but it was rebuilt and sold in 1938 to the Barton family, which continues to hold the lease and has maintained the original structure.

**On the River: Ambajejus Falls to Ripogenus Dam**

Beginning in 1893, some guides and guests began taking the steamboat from Norcross to Seldon J. McPheters’s Camp Wellington landing at the head of Ambajejus Lake. Other guides met their guests at the landing, and some still paddled clients the 12 miles across the Lower Chain Lakes. During the next seventeen years, at least ten proprietors built sporting camp complexes between Ambajejus Falls and Nesowadnehunk Lake, a distance of 25 miles. By the early 1920s, however, the use of the upriver route was in decline and some camps had already closed.

A sports upriver journey began with a carry around Ambajejus Falls on the north side of the river. In the earliest days, enterprising camp owners at Ambajejus Falls, Passamagamet Falls, and Ripogenus Gorge had a horse and cart to move materials across the portage for a small charge. At Wheelbarrow Pitch below Debsconeag Falls, travelers shared a wheelbarrow. In 1901, Arthur Dugmore on his solo trip to Mount Katahdin used the service at Ambajejus Falls.64 In 1905, a McLain, probably Albert or his son Will, was the teamster at both the Ripogenus and Chesuncook carries.65

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64 Dugmore, A. Radclyffe. “Alone Up Mt. Katahdin.” *Everybody’s Magazine* 4, no. 22 (June 1901). Will’s name appears in the Colt records in Samuel P. Colt Papers at the University of Rhode Island Library.

Those traveling across the Lower Chain Lakes and on the West Branch of the Penobscot River often had to contend with floating logs in at least a couple ways. The steamboat ride from Norcross took two hours in 1905, and the boat would sometimes scrape bottom in the narrow passages. If a boom towing boat was approaching a narrows, the passenger vessel waited until the boom was through. Side booms made the entry into coves and tributaries difficult. At some point, a law required loggers to maintain access to tributaries, so crews built side booms with boat holes, identified by finding a much smaller diameter boom log between two regular size boom logs. By approaching the small log slowly and riding up on it, the log sunk and the boat passed on. Boom chains, well below the surface, connected the large boom logs and provided the necessary strength that the small boom log did not. This did not prevent the floating logs from gathering and blocking the river in general. When that happened, camp proprietors sometimes contacted the nearby drive camp. Dana Brown, who worked at the Ambajejus Boom House, took some of these calls and would send a workboat for the guests.66 For others, such as Ralph Boynton who crossed the Debsconeag Deadwater one evening to fish in First Debsconeag Lake, the problem was somewhat different.67 As he and his brother fished, the wind changed direction and pushed the pulp logs back upstream making the Boynton brothers’ way back across the deadwater exceedingly difficult.

At Ambajejus Lake

Guides and their sports disembarked at the head of Ambajejus Lake. Those traveling after 1903 were spared the carry around Ambajejus Falls if the new North Twin Dam was holding a nearly

66 conversations with Dana Brown
67 conversations with Ralph Boynton
full head of water. Some proprietors had canoes at each of the six upriver carries so they did not have to portage one depending on the number in the party.68

About 1893, Seldon J. and Lizzie McPheters opened Camp Wellington at the head of Ambajejus Lake. It quickly became a depot for both travelers and the upstream camp owners. When camp proprietors upriver needed something, they left word at the camp, and Seldon relayed the message to the store at Norcross. The steamer delivered the goods, which Seldon stored until the camp owner picked them up. By 1905, a phone line connected the camp to Norcross and to some camps upriver.

Seldon sold the lease in 1907 to Frank E. Tuck and Wilmont H. Davis (of Enfield). He may have sold as a result of his Penobscot Log Driving Company (PLDC) work piloting the West Branch #1.69 Tuck and Davis also conducted winter logging operations around the Lower Chain Lakes, and Tuck served as a deputy fire warden in at least 1910. Arthur E. and Ursula Chadbourne, who had previously run Nollesemic Lake Camps, assumed the lease in 1916, renamed it the Ambajejus House, and built an outlying camp upriver on an island in Hurd Pond. Ursula had been a sporting camp cook, and Arthur was a guide and woods worker living in Bradford. Harry L. Cypher took over the operation in 1924, called it Camp Cypher, added a 12 by 12 outlying camp at Twitchell Brook on Pemadumcook Lake, and ran a boys camp for a time before selling in the late 1940s to four men from Massachusetts; Taylor, Buckley, Meinhold, and Draper, who named the camp Ambajejus Camps. Harry D. Robinson bought the camp in the 1950s and sold to Charles Coffin in 1972. The camp is still in the Coffin family under the care of

daughter Cheryl Barden and her husband Al, who use it as a private family camp. One of the early proprietors opened a grazing field for cows between the camp and the first logan upriver on the south side.

**At Passamagamet Falls**

When travelers reached Passamagamet Falls, they could portage or tote on either side of the river. The east side portage trail went from the cove below the falls to the cove above the falls. Parker’s Passamagoc Carry Camp in 1899 was on the east side portage, and Joseph W. Cripps, who would eventually own the camp, guided for Parker.70 Travelers used the west-side portage route when drivers closed the trip boom at the head of the falls and logs backed up to the Debsconeag Deadwater. Cripps was probably the guide Arthur Dugmore met at the carry in 1901 who gave him some guidance in how to pole a canoe up through the rapids.71

In 1901, Cripps and T. Graham apparently bought Parker’s lease and named the two-camp complex Camp Pleasant.72 Graham bought out Cripps in 1904 and added two more structures, one 18x34 feet and the other 19x20 feet. At some point, Ralph R. Boyington, who had grown up at his family’s place on Passamagamet Lake took over the lease. From 1917 to 1928, Eugene O. and Hattie M. Powers Hale managed the camp whose name in advertisements reverted to Passamagoc Carry Camp. They also had a camp on Millinocket Lake that they managed from 1899 until sometime before 1918 and one at Rainbow Lake that they owned between about 1923 and 1928. Eugene, a logging operations foreman during the winter, was

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70 *The Maine Sportsman*, November 1899.

71 see footnote 64

72 much of the information in this paragraph comes from *In the Maine Woods* and Neff’s book (footnote 69)
head of a Debsconeag logging camp in 1917–1918 and logging camps at Rainbow Lake in the 1920s. What became of the Passamagamet camps after the Hales’s departure is unknown.

To reach the west side portage at Passamagamet Falls, canoers paddled west through the thoroughfare below the falls into Passamagamet Lake and along the north shore to the spit of land that separates the lake from the downstream end of the Debsconeag Deadwater. 

Elias and Gertrude A. Boyington, along with sons Clinton E. and Ralph R., and hired hand Alphonzo Murphy lived here year-round beginning sometime soon after 1900. The Boyingtons came north from Prentiss, Maine. Their homestead also served as the Passamagoc Outing Camps, which advertised between 1908 and 1910. Their 1909 advertisements highlighted fresh milk and eggs and daily mail. The family also provided lodging and board for loggers in at least 1909. By 1917, Ralph was living in Millinocket with a wife and child, guiding for others on the river and logging on Chesuncook Lake, and Clinton was guiding out of Norcross. Later he worked at and ran the camps at Hurd Pond up-river. The farmstead fell into disuse before 1920, perhaps soon after Gertrude died.

One of their guests in 1911 was thirty-one-year-old Cecil B. DeMille with his family and friends. DeMille was in search for inspiration for a play he was asked to write. He found it one day when he was floating in a canoe and noticed larvae that, as he watched during the day, transformed into dragonflies. The person for whom he wrote the play liked the idea, but not the presentation, changed it, successfully produced it, and put his own name on it as the writer. Cecil was disappointed at the time, but later in life acknowledged the changes improved what he wrote.

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73 information on the Boyington area came from “In the Maine Woods,” Bill Boyington, grandson of Elias (son of Clinton), Jack Hale, Betty Hopper, Robert Leet and ancestry.com
Living on the lake about 1908 at an unknown location were Ernest T. and Grace E. Mayo with their two daughters, Doris and Marguerite, and Philis C. Boyington. Grace and Philis were daughters of Elias and Gertrude Boyington. The Mayos came from Prentiss where their two daughters were born, and he was a lumber camp cook and guide. Philis married their Passamagamet mail carrier Thomas Leet in 1911; he later worked for the Great Northern Paper Company (GNP). Marguerite married Henry S. Michaud and their daughter Betty and her husband Buzzy Hopper became proprietors of Nahmakanta Lake Camps. Doris married Rex Hale, a guide at the time, but later Millinocket’s first mail carrier (1927). Ernest and Grace abandoned the camp by 1918 when they were living in Norcross and he was guiding. By 1920, the marriage had dissolved and Grace married Roy Bradeen, who managed the sporting camp at Kidney Pond. Ernest Mayo moved north to T4R10 W.E.L.S. where he and Rex Hale joined Maurice York in lumbering. Mayo and Hale also guided for York at his Daicey Pond sporting camp. In the early 1920s, Mayo guided a hunter into the area west of Mount Katahdin known to the Native Americans as the Klondike. He was one of the few guides willing to penetrate the area. The pond at the foot of the west wall of Mount Katahdin became known as Mayo Pond for a time. Mayo continued to guide and take care of camps in the region until he died. Nearly forty years later, Hale was caretaker of Stephen J. Chamberlain’s camp at the mouth of Nahmakanta Stream—a job previously held by Mayo.

The Boyington camp location become the site of a logging camp, but when and for exactly how long is unknown. When Harry L. Cypher sold the Ambajejus Camps in the mid-1940s, he built a camp at the site from a pile of cedar logs left from a past logging operation; he only needed to provide materials for a roof and floor. Cypher hauled in his 250-pound bottled

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74 conversations with Doug Farquhar, Chuck Harris, and Dana Brown
gas by hand using a wheelbarrow at the Ambajejus carry. By the time he sold in the 1970s, the
camp was in poor condition because the people he had hired and paid to maintain it had not done
so. In 2001, Ray and Leslie Cooley bought the lease and renamed the camp “Moon Lake
Lodge.” Floodwaters soon after 2001 put water 51 inches deep inside the camp and floated it
far enough from its location that a section of the roof dripped on land not within the lease. In
2011, they had the camp jacked up and the sills replaced. The Cooleys found remnants of what
might have been an old hen house and the foundation imprint of a 30- by 50-foot building. The
old metal left in the area suggests that people used the site for many years.

At Debsconeag Deadwater

From the east side carry at Passamagamet Falls guides paddled up-river to the mouth of the
Debsconeag Deadwater and nearly a mile across it to Joe Francis’s sporting camp on the east
side. He advertised in 1894, but was operating before that. The camp, which may have been part
of an abandoned lumber camp, was on the water immediately west of the drainage that flows into
the deadwater at the north edge of largest beach. Loggers also used the camp. Francis
participated in the log drives and was known as one of the best big game guides in the area.

Francis, born in 1846, was a governor of the Penobscot Tribe, married Elizabeth Francis,
and fathered at least one child, Clara, born in 1869. Although he spent much of his time in this
area, his home was Indian Island at Old Town where Elizabeth was a basket maker. As many
Native Americans did, Francis trapped, hunted, guided, and worked the river drives. In 1894, he
was on the log drive with his cousin and friend Lewey Ketchum, and at some point, Francis was
the watchperson and a boom tender at Debsconeag Falls.

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75 information from Ray and Leslie Cooley
In the early 1890s, Francis, who had no lease, sold to Charles and John Boynton, who used it as a private camp. In 1898, the Northern Development Company, which became GNP in 1899, sent cruisers through to identify camps without a lease and to initiate one. As they had done during Francis’s ownership, loggers continued to use the camp much to the dismay of the Boyntons who often found it occupied when they came up to use it. The struggle, of which Francis was not a part, finally ended in 1937 when GNP acknowledged the problem and gave the family a new lease on land at the head of Debsconeag Falls on the east side. The old camp, which high water washed into the river the following spring, was visible for many years with only the roof showing above the water. The Boyntons built their new camp in 1938. Ralph Boynton, grandson of John Boynton, inherited it from his father Walter R. (Bill) Boynton, burned the camp in 2000, and built a new one.

Over the years, the Boynton family has had many connections to the region’s camps. Ralph’s step-grandfather, John Farrington, began living in the logging camps at age fourteen, became a teamster, left for a time to serve in the navy in World War I, and returned to guide for proprietors in the area between Ambajejus Lake and Ripogenus Dam. Most of his guiding trips started at the head of Ambajejus Lake where he picked up clients and supplies. With two 20-foot canvas-covered canoes, he took his parties upstream, many to climb Mount Katahdin and others as far as Frost Pond north of the Ripogenus Lake outlet. During the winters, he trapped and watched over such camps as Clifford’s Rainbow Lake Camps at Rainbow Lake and Pleasant Point Camps on Fourth Debsconeag Lake. As a recluse, he enjoyed being alone for long periods. Ralph’s grandmother worked as a cook in the camps in this same area. Ralph’s father worked at his Uncle Manley Boynton’s Rainbow camp during his high school summers. One summer,

76 information for this time and area from Ralph Boynton
Walter became close friends with a father and son. Before they left at the end of the summer, the father offered him the opportunity to attend Princeton University at no cost. He decided not to accept the invitation.

Beginning in the mid-1950s, Ralph joined his step-grandfather on multiday fishing trips. From their camp at the falls, they paddled one of the 20-foot canoes through the First Debsconeag Lake, camped on Second Debsconeag Lake at the inlet from Big Minister Pond, fished the Minister ponds, and hiked the tote road from Minister Cove on Third Debsconeag Lake to Rainbow Lake. From there, they went on to Nahmakanta Lake where they fished Nahmakanta Stream and the salmon hole at the foot of the dam. Their gear included a piece of plastic, sleeping bag, a frying pan, a large smoked ham, potatoes, salt pork, and some bread. As a high school student, Ralph often returned to these same areas by paddling across Pemadumcook Lake to the Stephen J. Chamberlain camp at the mouth of Nahmakanta Stream.

After Francis sold the camp to the Boyntons, he moved up the deadwater to the prominent point the loggers called, Prentiss Point, between the two beaches. In 1894, he built the camp that he operated through at least 1916. One of his hunting guests in September 1895 was Bert Haynes whom Francis knew as a boy and who a month previous built Buckhorn Camps on Middle Jo-Mary Lake. A sport of Francis’s in 1905, George A. Phillips, described the log camp as one with a balcony across the front, office and living room, dining room and kitchen, and many bedrooms. As a part of the operation, Francis had an outlying camp on Hurd Pond’s southwest side below Trail Brook and one in the Klondike. Sports reached the Klondike log camp by a trail that followed Katahdin Stream and then passed through Witherle Ravine. Francis

77 this specific information came from Sandy Haynes and Eckstorm, Fanny Hardy. “Governor of the Tribe of Penobscot: Joe Francis, A Famous . . .” Forest and Stream 86, no. 10 (October 1916): 1188, 1200.

may have shared this camp with Peter W. Ranco, who guided for Francis and advertised a camp (c. 1900) six miles from the mouth of Abol Stream with no specific location.

As a trapper, Francis had a number of small camps supporting his trap lines. One December day in 1900 when he and Joseph were attending to their traps, they were in an area with no camp so that night they built a big fire next to a huge rock. Eventually they curled up near the hot rock and fire. During the night with the fire still going, the huge rock exploded with some of it landing on Francis. Orson could not remove the rock and had to go for help. Francis was laid up for some time after that. He had at least one other narrow escape while trapping. One winter evening, he left his friends in camp and walked out onto the Debsconeag Deadwater ice carrying a load of traps that he planned to set. He broke through the ice and realizing his impending fate, shed the traps, took off his cap and put it on the ice to mark the spot for those who would come looking, and then with hands in soaked mittens and arms outstretched he reached out over the solid ice so they would freeze to it keeping his head above the water and his body from being taken by the current and began to call for help. Those at the camp heard his call and saved him.

In addition to trapping and running his camp, Francis was the mail carrier for Charles C. Garland, postmaster and proprietor of the Debsconeag Fish and Game Club camp on First Debsconeag Lake. The post office opened in 1901 and likely closed in 1910 when Garland sold to Herbert M. Howe. Francis took out and brought back the mail on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays when he met the steamer at Ambajejus Lake. He also served as a deputy fire warden for the area being appointed for the first time in 1913. At that time, Francis shared the guiding with his son-in-law so that he could tend to forest fires when needed.

79 *The Maine Sportsman*, Editor (Joe Francis), 8, no. 88 (December 1900): 91.

80 see Eckstorm footnote 77
Francis appears to have operated his camp up until he died on July 19, 1916. In 1913, when he and his son-in-law guided a group in the area, the guests used the Debsconeag Lake Outing Club camps, and their families used the camp on the deadwater.\textsuperscript{81} The 1918 GNP lease record listed all Francis’s camps as abandoned by 1917, and the James Sewall Company’s 1921 survey listed Francis’s Debsconeag camp in poor condition, suggesting that no one took it over.\textsuperscript{82}

The second camp on the deadwater was that of Francis’s son-in-law, Joseph Dennis, who married Clara Francis. Dennis’s camp was upstream on the point next to the where the West Branch of the Penobscot River flows into the deadwater.\textsuperscript{83} He was using the camp as early as 1899 and perhaps 1898 when he and his father-in-law advertised as guides.\textsuperscript{84} Both families were at the camps in the summers. Francis enjoyed time with his granddaughter and grandson. One day while picnicking with them on one the deadwater’s islands, the children discovered a baby moose, and Dennis’s young daughter picked it up.\textsuperscript{85} The moose did not mind the attention. When Dennis closed his operation is also unknown, but Clara died of breast cancer two years after her father died, and the camp was not in the 1918 GNP lease records. In the 1920s and until he died in 1932, Dennis guided primarily for the Hannas at Hurd Pond and Fred Pitman at Pockwockamus Deadwater, and some for the camp proprietors at Daicey and Kidney ponds.\textsuperscript{86} Dennis’s guiding included leading groups up Mount Katahdin. In his last years of life, Dennis could often be found at Pitman’s just up-river. Apparently no one ever took over his camp

\textsuperscript{81} Thomas, William S. “Two Weeks Under King Katahdin.” \textit{Forest and Stream}, 81 (August 2, 1913): 229.

\textsuperscript{82} Sewall, James W. Field Explorations for Township T2R9, 1921

\textsuperscript{83} information from Ralph Boynton

\textsuperscript{84} advertised in \textit{In the Maine Woods}

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{The Maine Sportsman}, Editor, 10 no. 111 (October 1902), p.33.

\textsuperscript{86} conversations with Roy Douglas Nelson Jr.
because Ralph Boynton never heard his father say much about the camp, and Ralph does not remember a standing camp from the late 1940s.

Initially travelers to the camps on Debsconeag Deadwater, First and Second Debsconeag lakes, Hurd Pond, and Pockwockamus Deadwater came upriver. By 1900, a rough winter logging tote road from Millinocket Station reached as far as Pockwockamus Stream. At some point, it became good enough so that some traveled over land and canoed the stream west through Compass and River ponds to the West Branch at Pockwockamus Deadwater. Those with camps on Pockwockamus Deadwater simply paddled across the river to their camps. Those going to Hurd Pond before 1934 used the tote road from the Pockwockamus Deadwater ferry landing to Hurd Pond. After the 1934 fire and until the mid-1940s, the Boyingtons at Hurd Pond went up the river a short distance, took the tote road to Hale Pond, paddled across, and walked over the ridge to Hurd Pond. Those going to the Debsconeag area paddled downstream to the head of Debsconeag Falls where they portaged on the south side and then either paddled across to the camps on the deadwater or down the deadwater and through the thoroughfare into First Debsconeag Lake to the camps. When GNP opened the tote road into the Debsconeag Deadwater in 1943, it became the access point to the Debsconeag lakes and Hurd Pond. The Boyingtons paddled across to the mouth of Hurd Brook, went up the tote road to the pond, and boated across.

**At First and Second Debsconeag Lakes**

From the Francis, Boynton, and Dennis camps, the guides paddled west across the deadwater, around the large island and through a golden sand thoroughfare into First Debsconeag Lake (First Lake). John Way’s 1874 guidebook was silent on canoeing in the Debsconeag lakes chain. Lucius Hubbard’s guidebooks (1879–1893) did not mention the route through the Debsconeag

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87 conversations with Roy Douglas Nelson, Jr, Ralph Boynton, Bill Boyington
Lakes to either Pemadumcook Lake or Nahmakanta Lake. Charles C. Garland and Fred Clifford in their publications (1900–1910) provided notes on traveling through the Debsconeag watershed, but not above Fourth Lake. Generally, those going to Third and Fourth Lakes went via Pemadumcook Lake and those headed to First Debsconeag Lake traveled up the West Branch of the Penobscot River.

The early backcountry paddlers and chroniclers such as Henry David Thoreau (1846) and Fanny Hardy Eckstorm (1889) stayed on the West Branch and did not use the Debsconeag Deadwater to Pemadumcook Lake to North Twin Dam route. In April 1894, Bela Fowles and Prescott H. Vose came through the Debsconeag Lakes from Pemadumcook where Fowles had a camp on Porus Island. They camped one night on Third Lake and another night on Second Lake where they used an abandoned log cabin. Whether it was a logging camp or trapper’s camp is unknown. They did note that deer had been sleeping in the lower berths of the cabin. After carrying through to First Lake, they paddled up the West Branch. George Witherle, on his return from Mount Katahdin in 1899, traveled through First, Second and Third lakes and portaged to the head of Pemadumcook Lake at Nahmakanta Stream but left no notes.

In 1900, Garland opened the Debsconeag Outing Club, which by 1903 he renamed the Debsconeag Fish and Game Club on First Lake. He built at the lake’s northeast

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88 Garland wrote yearly promotional brochures for the Debsconeag Outing Club and Clifford wrote pieces that appeared in *In the Maine Woods*.

89 Vose, Prescott H. “Katahdin in ’94.” *Appalachia* 15, no. 7 (June 1949).

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

corner near the ridgetop, 150 vertical feet above the lake. The location afforded views of the lake and Mount Katahdin. The camp had a main building with a porch on three sides, a two-story house for cooking and eating, several sleeping lodges, and a guide’s camp about 150 feet from the lake. Beginning in 1901, Garland had some kind of an arrangement with Pearl S. Willey, proprietor of the South Twin House, which included Garland’s guests departing the train at South Twin House and Willey ferrying them to the head of Ambajejus Lake where one of his guides met them and paddled them up the river to the camp. Bunag Ranco from Indian Island was Garland’s personal guide, and Joseph Dennis and Joe Francis served as guides for the camp’s guests.

Garland also established outlying camps on Hurd Pond (three), the West Branch near Abol Stream, partway up Mount Katahdin, and Rainbow Lake’s southeast corner (1901). His guests went to Rainbow Lake via canoe through Second Lake to its west end and walked along the valley brook to Big Beaver Pond and over the ridge to the lake. Early activity at the camp was sufficient to require the camp be staffed with a manager for the summers and increase the number of buildings.

While Garland was a student at the University of Maine, he had spent time in the area. After graduating and a work stint in the Midwest where he developed a health problem, he returned to the Maine woods as suggested by his doctors. His personal health likely influenced

the health and family emphasis in his camp advertising. Charles, his wife Caroline, and son
Phillip opened the year-round operation as a private club, but also served the general public as a
way to gain memberships. The cost of a membership was $50. Members stayed at the camp for
$1 per day and nonmembers for $2 per day. Camp services included an official U.S. Post Office,
a darkroom for camera buffs, and a pulley system for getting baggage from the wharf to the main
lodge. The water system was a bucket on a pulley line that ran from the lodge at the top of the
ridge to the lake. Two of Garland’s first-year guests included the fourth Assistant Postmaster
General, Joseph L. Bristow and his family, and the chief of the appointing division of the Post
Office, Carter B. Keen, and his wife.

Garland or someone from his club’s membership appears to have had Washington, D.C.,
connections. At the club’s 1901 annual meeting, it elected Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, at the
time the vice president of the United States, as an honorary member and issued an invitation to
visit. He accepted, but had to cancel his planned July 1901 trip at the last minute. The camp
was also an official U.S. Weather Bureau Station.

About 1910, Garland sold to Herbert M. Howe who advertised Howe’s Debsconeag
Camps in 1911 and 1912 as open year-round. Whether he used the branch camps and for how
long is unknown. Howe’s ownership ended by 1916. However, even though the 1918 GNP lease
listed no leaseholder, guides Joe Francis and Joseph Dennis, and John Farrington used the camp
into the 1920s. Eugene O. Hale and Fred Pitman advertised an outlying camp on First
Debsconeag Lake in 1921 and 1922, and although they gave no location, it was probably Howe’s

92 The New York Times, April 28, 1901, “Col. Roosevelt to Visit Maine

93 Information in this paragraph came in part from In the Maine Woods and Ralph Boynton
sporting camp. No guide on the river would let some excellently built camp sit idle or waste money by building another camp on the lake.

Hale, perhaps at the urging of Samuel P. Colt, who had a camp on Kidney Pond, may have looked after the camp after Howe closed the camp. Beginning in 1905, Colt always brought his guests to his camp at Kidney Pond via the river, passing through Hale’s camps at the Passamagamet carry, and stayed a night at the Debsconeag camp.94 Colt’s last trip, due to his death, was in 1921.

Herbert M. Howe may have been the person by such a name who died in 1916 and was related to Colt through his mother’s side of the family (DeWolf). Howe was a Philadelphia physician for a time and then managed family holdings, and had a farm and a home in Bristol, Rhode Island. The Howe family, including Herbert’s much younger brother Wallis and his wife Mary L. Howe, were frequent guests of Colt. Mary loved the yearly June trip that included a stay at Garland’s on the way to and from Kidney Pond. They would have known that Garland was going to give up the operation. Wanting to retain the camp as their stopping point, Howe perhaps purchased the lease and hired one of the guides on the river, perhaps Hale to be caretaker. The Colts and Howes only came in June, so the camp could have been available at other times. Howe and Colt were close friends and had much in common. They both raised Guernsey cows, liked being on the water, hunted, were adventurous, and had a friendly competitiveness. Howe’s grandson, DeWolf Fulton, indicated that his grandfather’s owning of the camp fit his nature and interests.95

94 Samuel Colt personal papers University of Rhode Island Robert Carothers Library
95 conversations with DeWolfe Fulton
The last year any of the Colts family made a sojourn up the river is unknown, but LeBaron, Colt’s brother and co-leader of the trips, died in 1924, and the family sold Colt’s Kidney Pond camp in 1926. By 1939, the roofs of Howe’s Debsconeag Camps had fallen in, and one cabin had a substantial tree growing up through it.96

Peter J. McPheters of Millinocket knew of the old Howe camp and the deteriorating conditions and wanted to restore some of the structures. He approached Charlie Glaster, GNP’s woods superintendent in the area, with a request to work on and use them as a private camp. The affirmative response included the understanding that he did not need a lease if in exchange he looked after the dam tender’s camp at Passamagamet Falls and reported any breaks in the booms he noticed while traveling to and from camp. McPheters restored the guide’s camp and the arrangement held until 1959 when he signed a formal lease, which the family continues to hold. GNP burned what was left of the old structures on the ridge in the late 1950s. Pete (the son), along with Chuck Harris, still looks after the tender’s camp at Passamagamet Falls. As a young boy, Pete and others in the area took ice from the nearby ice caves on First Lake for their camps’ refrigerators. His children did the same until The Nature Conservancy purchased the property in 2002.

In the 1940s, the White Fish Club, a group of local fishermen, fixed up an old lumber camp just up the portage path to Second Lake on the north side of the stream. In the fall of the year when the white fish migrated up the stream to spawn, Pete McPheters was there with his dad and other men thrashing around in the brush with railroad lanterns and getting cut up by the brush and fish spines. Doug Farquhar, whose father was also a member, remembers less brush.

96 from conversations with Peter J. McPheters
when netting white fish at the thoroughfare into First Lake. Such netting was legal until about 1959.

On Second Debsconeag Lake, no one ever established a sporting camp. However, it was a link in a route for those fishing Big Minister Pond. The 1905 edition of the yearly Bangor and Aroostook Railroad publication, *In the Maine Woods* has a description of the hike to Big Minister Pond via its outlet stream. The waterfall near the lake was still pristine. The raft of logs that fishermen poled and fished from was in poor condition. When the first adventurer may have camped on Second Lake at the mouth of the outlet stream from Big Minster Pond is unknown. The Robert (Bob) Robinson family of Twin Pine Cabins on Millinocket Lake had a small A-frame camp immediately west of the inlet from Big Minister Pond about 200 feet from shore in the late 1900s, but it was removed by 2007. Fishermen and canoeists have continued to use the site and the path to the pond.97

Those who fished, hunted, and worked in the woods of the Millinocket region knew the watershed well and often traveled to it.98 Perhaps one attraction until the late 1940s was the sluice between First and Second Debsconeag lakes. As a very young boy in the early 1940s, Ray Campbell went down the sluice in a canoe; for him the ride was scary and frightening. John (Jack) Hale took the same canoe ride with his father Rex in 1941 or 1942 when he was six or seven years old. His father told him to keep his hands in the canoe; he felt terror. The Girl Scout Camp on nearby Lower Togue Pond regularly sent campers through the area on a canoeing loop. From 1946 to 1950, Janet Pease was one of those campers. The young women went to Ambajejus Lake where they paddled across the lake and up the West Branch. At the Debsconeag

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97 conversations with James Robinson

98 information in this paragraph is from conversations with Ray Campbell, Jack Hale, and Janet Pease.
Deadwater, they opened and closed booms to get through to the sand beaches at the mouth of First Debsconeag Lake where they stopped for lunch. Sometimes they continued on through First, Second, and Third Debsconeag lakes to Pemadumcook Lake and back around Ambajejus Point to where they started. They never saw anyone else.

**At Hurd Pond**

At the west end of the Debsconeag Deadwater, Joe Francis, Seldon J. McPheters, and others headed for Hurd Pond used a tote road along the west edge of the pond’s outlet stream. Sports at Charles C. Garland’s on First Debsconeag Lake went over the ridge to the cove above the dam on the west side where they used canoes to reach each of the three branch camps. One was on the west side on the point to the north of the Trail Brook inlet, and another was on the shore west of the brook form Little Hurd Pond. The third, near the dam on the east side, was perhaps the site of a logging camp. Garland was using the three camps by 1903, but in 1918, GNP listed them as abandoned.

Francis was on the west shore point opposite the big island in the 1890s. McPheters, who first listed his camp in 1893–1894, may have been on the south side of Trail Brook near the pond’s edge where Harry L. Cypher’s map and stationary of 1944 showed an outlying camp. About 1916, Arthur E. Chadbourne, proprietor of the then Ambajejus House, built a camp on the largest island. At some point, perhaps about 1920 or earlier, Sammy N. Smith had a wood frame with canvas cover lean-to camp not far above the outlet on the west shore.

Chadbourne named the island camp Lucy Cabin, and that name stuck until it was struck by lightning in 2006. Folks talked about its use as a honeymoon getaway. The day it burned,

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99 a Garland map in his 1903 brochure, “A Word from The Maine Woods”

100 conversations with Richard Sleeper
the son of the leaseholder, Richard Sleeper, and his wife had just arrived at the boat landing when they saw smoke coming from the island. By the time they reached the island, all they could do was save the other camp and the island forest. They did not rebuild the camp, but did retain the lease for the island and the other camp, which Roy Nelson Sr., Walter Dickey, and Clinton Boyington built in the 1920s for the Hanna family. According to local thinking, they may have taken apart one of the Garland camps, hauled it to the island, and rebuilt it. The Hannas named it Roy Camp.

Lucy H. Wheeler of Bangor held the lease for Lucy Camp in 1918. She was the wife of Dr. William H. Simmons, who died in October 1920. Dr. Simmons was a well-known surgeon in Bangor and one of the founders of what evolved into the Eastern Maine Medical Center. He was also a founding member (1893) of the Maine Sportsmen’s Fish and Game Association. Lucy probably gave up the lease in 1930 when the Hannas signed a lease for the island, its structures, and the nearby tiny island with no structures. Roy Douglas (Doug) Nelson Jr. learned from his parents, who worked for the area’s camps that everyone on Hurd Pond knew each other and were friends, and he heard them talk of Lucy and the doctor.

In 1920, the Hanna family of Cleveland, Ohio, used a camp on the predominant east side point, which they reached via the tote road from Pockwockamus Deadwater. The camp probably belonged to Katahdin View Camps on Pockwockamus Deadwater. A year later, the Hannas began building additional structures on the point. The Hannas renewed this lease in 1926 and again in 1930. In addition to this lease, the family held one issued several years earlier for another camp on Pockwockamus Deadwater.

101 conversations with Roy Douglas Nelson, Jr.

102 information regarding the Hanna family and their presence on the pond was from conversations with Bill Boyington, Richard Sleeper, and Roy Douglas Nelson, Jr.
The Hannas built a number of new buildings and made improvements in the existing structure. Some of the logs for the buildings probably came from one of the pond’s remaining Garland camps. The buildings included an icehouse, guides camp, kitchen, dining room, two-story boathouse, and buildings with signage that read Point Camp, Lucy Cabin, Roy Camp, Little Guest Cabin, Canoe House, and Workshop. They spared no expense in having well-appointed buildings and furnishings. The lumber for at least some of the work came across the Pockwockamus Deadwater and over the tote road to the pond. The family’s large barge, used for a variety of purposes, now rests on the bottom of the camp’s cove where it is still visible.

The Hanna family was that of the famous industrialist and Republican National Committee operative Marcus A Hanna. The Hannas typically came to the pond for August and September. On the back of the camp’s doors are the dates and visitors’ names. Before the family arrived, their house staff and guides prepared the camps. They brought out the linen and silver stored in trunks, filled the pantry, brought in firewood, put ice in the refrigerators, and took the canoes, boats, and sailboats out of storage. The family enjoyed having fun other than just fishing and hunting. They raced their two sloops around the lake, danced on one of the barges (built at the lake) as a band or orchestra played on the other, and pulled the arm on a slot machine on rainy days.

After Howard Hanna, who was a grandson of Marcus A. Hanna (1837-1904) and ran the camp for his family, died racing cars in Europe in late 1931, family interest began to wane. They came the next three seasons, but in 1934 life for the Hannas and their guides, Roy Nelson Sr., Dickey, and Boyington changed abruptly when a forest fire, which started less than a mile away near a logging camp to the east, fanned into an inferno. Before it reached Hurd Pond, the wind shifted and drove it back and across the river. About this time, the Hannas decided to give up the
camp and their initial desire was to split the operation among the guides who had severed them over the years. By that time, Ralph R. Boyington, who had been working on the railroad, had died in an accident and the others, except Clinton Boyington, had no interest. The renewed 1935 lease with a Hanna signature made it possible for Clinton to run them as a sporting camp. Some of the Hannas returned the following couple years.

In October 1941, the Hanna family transferred the camp lease and all contents to the Boyingtons, who held the lease until February 1952. Clinton developed many clients and with his family ran a successful operation. He, his wife Virgie, two daughters Alta and Lorraine, and son Bill, lived in the guide’s camp year round. As the children reached middle school years, Virgie insisted on proper schooling and moved to town during the school year. For two young women, growing up in the Maine woods among lumbermen had its challenges and fun. Alta carried a gun in her canoe and once fired it to ward off lumberjacks. To make a little money, she caught and sold bait to the sports. She also loved the logging horses whose chains she could hear clinking as they walked the tote road up the east side of Hurd Pond to their hovel at about the halfway point between the pond and Rainbow Lake.

The war years were difficult ones for business, but the Boyingtons survived. In 1950, they received permission to sublease the camp to Roger Holt of the Holt Flying Service in Greenville. He took over the lease in 1952, but did not have the success he wanted. In 1957, he needed money and asked GNP to buy the camp, but the company declined the offer. During the five years that it took him to find a buyer, he used the camp infrequently and the property deteriorated. The guide’s camp burned. Holt tore down the boathouse and sold the silver, linens, paintings, and all other contents.
After the Boyingtons sold, their children sought to maintain their connection to the pond. Alta and her husband Goodsill Peters built a lean-to in the late 1960s without a lease on the west side point above Trail Brook, perhaps near the site of the old Garland camp. Later, they obtained a lease and transformed the lean-to into a camp. At the same time, Alta’s youngest sibling Bill and his family built at the north end of the pond west of the mouth of the stream from Little Hurd Pond and likely near the site of another old Garland camp. Bill’s children renovated the camp in the 1990s. The families have retained the camps.

In April 1962, Raymond Rauch took over the Roger Holt lease as a noncommercial establishment and with associate Lonnie “Colonel” Temple, began to restore the Hanna camp to its former grandeur. The men were executives of the Government Person Mutual Life Insurance Company and entertained clients, friends, and employees at the camp. The Colonel, retired from the air force, had many air force friends whom he also invited for visits. A floatplane flew guests, as well as the laundry, to and from the camp. For a few years, Rauch and Temple ran a summer program that brought in newspaper delivery boys for three- to four-day visits. The boys arrived by floatplane, and at the end of the dock, each boy had a newspaper box that contained the latest issue of his paper. As a young teenager, Richard Sleeper worked for the camp and took the young campers to Daisey Pond where they fished from homemade rafts. His father knew Rauch, and when he needed help for something, Sleeper’s dad rounded up some of the neighborhood boys and took them up to the camp. Sleeper, who did some guiding for the camp, knows a Rolex watch rests someplace on the bottom of Daisey Pond. During these years, no one used the island camps.

In the early 1970s, friends of Rauch and the Colonel learned of their interest in selling and began fighting over to whom the camp should be sold. Early one morning during the fall
1974 deer season, Lloyd Robinson with his friend Andy Pease landed his floatplane at the camp. The Colonel and some air force friends were there, but not out hunting, as they had had no luck the past few days. Within the next thirty minutes, Robinson shot a ten-point buck and returned to show it off. During that visit, Robinson, knowing the camp was for sale, made an offer that the Colonel accepted. Folks think he did that to end the bickering of his friends.

Sleeper’s attachment to the area resurfaced when he was in his late 20s, so he contracted Robinson to see if he might do some work for him at the camp. In exchange for his work, Robinson let him use the island camp. Robinson’s uncle also liked the island camp and Sleeper had him stay when he wanted. The uncle used to hide money around the inside of the camp as a way to thank Sleeper. In the meantime, Sleeper began to restore the island camps.

Robinson sold the camp in 1989 to Sleeper’s father, Mitchell Sleeper. Since then, Richard Sleeper has carefully preserved the structures in the tradition of the Hanna and Boyington families. Some allege that the spirit of Clinton Boyington still rests in the camp on the point. One winter night, Sleeper and a friend stayed at the camp. They got settled and had a fire going. Periodically, the curtains moved with no apparent draft, and they felt like they were being watched. The situation spooked the friend, so they left.

Wesley Harnish had a tent platform that he used from the 1940s perhaps into the 1960s on the east side of the stream from Hurd Pond at the opening to Debsconeag Deadwater. He drove to the Debsconeag Deadwater and used a boat to reach his camp. Harnish was a quiet person who kept to himself and moved around this area squatting in old camps or setting up his own. He bought his supplies from Elmer Woodworth’s store at Ambajejus dike, and Shorty

103 conversations with Andy Pease
104 conversations with Shorty Budreau
Budreau, who was working for Woodworth in the early 1940s, used to help Harnish with his goods. When Harnish left the area is unknown.

Guides and trappers moving up through Hurd Pond to Little Hurd Pond used an old tote road on the north side of the connecting stream. One unknown person had a small camp at the edge of a pool under some large hemlocks not far below Little Hurd Pond. The rubble has old as well as more modern day artifacts. A Little Hurd Pond tent camp, reached by boat or float plane, was tucked into a tiny protected cove with a small flat area at the base of the steep hillside at the north end. When it was first used is unknown. The area’s last camp construction was the Maine Appalachian Trail Club lean-to in 1959; it was above the large deadwaters upstream from Hurd Pond.

At Daisey Pond

The Sammy N. Smith family traveled to Hurd Pond and then took the tote road up along the south side of Trail Brook and continued west a short distance over the height of land to Daisey Pond. The pond was either a year-round or summer home of the family. Sammy’s parents Eugene Henry and Adilea Smith moved to Norcross in 1897, and Sammy and his father trapped and had numerous trapping camps in the region. Sammy married Elsie M. Powers in 1904 and they had five children. The oldest, Nelson, was working at the GNP mill when Walter R. Boynton, whose family had a camp at nearby Debsconeag Deadwater, worked for him on a summer job. They became friends, and Nelson shared stories with Walter Boynton about living and growing up at Daisey Pond until about 1925 when he moved to town to work at the mill.

105 information in this paragraph based on on-site explorations by Bill Geller

106 conversations with Ralph Boynton
Exactly when and where the Smiths built the home at Daisey Pond is unknown. Some type of camp was once on the south side of the pond just east of the outlet on a slight rise in the land.\textsuperscript{107} Given the family lived here year-round some years; it is likely that they had a garden, at the least a horse, and likely other animals. The nature of the land at the outlet would have precluded a garden and farm area. The only seemingly possible place for a farm area is a couple hundred feet away from the southeast corner of the pond, the one place that is devoid of rock and reasonably flat with drainage.\textsuperscript{108}

**At Debsconeag Falls**

Sammy N. Smith and others heading farther upriver paddled from the mouth of the stream from Hurd Pond to the foot of Wheelbarrow Pitch at the head of Debsconeag Deadwater. At times, they could pole up the pitch, but a wheelbarrow was at the carry to help move the dunnage. After a short paddle, they reached the foot of Debsconeag Falls, and they portaged on the south side. The camp they passed about 250 feet up the portage trail was likely a part of river driving watch system. According to Claude L. Seale who visited the area, Joseph Dennis was living just above Wheelbarrow Pitch in the 1920s and early 1930s.\textsuperscript{109} The old watch camp may have been his home, and he may have been performing the watchman’s duties as his father-in-law had. Sometime in the early 1930s, Clinton Boyington knew the person at the camp and used to talk regularly to him by phone from Hurd Pond in the winter.\textsuperscript{110} He did not answer one winter day, so Clinton snowshoed over. The person was alive, but had gone stir crazy. Folks blamed it on the

\textsuperscript{107} conversations with Doug Farquhar
\textsuperscript{108} based on Geller on-site exploration
\textsuperscript{109} conversations with David Little
\textsuperscript{110} conversations with Roy Douglas Nelson, Jr.
constant roar of the falls. The person might have been Dennis. Ralph R. Boynton, who roamed the area in the 1960s, observed that the camp had a small barn with barbwire defining a browsing area behind it.

Sports looking across the pitch to the north bank could see the drive camp. GNP used the remaining camp, a cook camp, until 1970 when Northeastern University took it over on a lease and built some sleeping quarters. Groups of students came to stay at the facility and canoe in the area. Some of them canoed over to Pete McPheters’s camp on First Debsconeag Lake to ask questions and visit the ice cave.¹¹¹ The many young women attracted the attention of the area’s young men who were among those who often frequented the area’s beaches. The area lore is that the property caretaker began to drive away the local folks. One night in the late 1980s, the facility mysteriously burned. The university gave up the lease, and the Maine Bureau of Public Lands purchased the lease, extended the acreage to include Little Omaha Beach, and set up the campsites, which they continue to manage.

**At Pockwockamus Deadwater**

At the top of Debsconeag Falls, guides paddled either counterclockwise around what they called Moon Island into the Frozen Ocean and up the north side of Camp Island or up the south channel passing Camp Island opposite the mouth of the tiny stream from Mud Pond. From the earliest days, this area had a number of trappers’ camps. In 1898, an unknown hunter had a bark camp structure, typical of the crudeness of them. In 1932, a James Sewall Company survey indicated a number camps were standing but of no value.¹¹² Some years later, just off the channel on the south side of the islands at the foot of the deadwater and downstream from the flow from Mud Pond.

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¹¹¹ conversations with Peter J. McPeters and Ralph Boyington

¹¹² Sewall, James W. Field Explorations for Township T2R10, 1932.
Pond was the Boyingtons’ trapper camp, a scalar’s shack that the Boyingtons moved to the site. GNP burned it in 1960s. In the same general area, but north of Mud Pond flow was a tiny hunting camp, which once belonged to Goodsill Peters. Norman Wade of East Millinocket took over a camp on Camp Island his father put up presumably after World War II and used it into the 1970s. As most trapper camps, their owners had no lease.

Emerging from either channel at the head of Camp Island, sports observed an open tranquil river with just a few scattered narrow islands, the upper portion of Pockwockamus Deadwater. The only sporting camp ever on this stretch of river, Katahdin View Camps, was nearly opposite Pockwockamus Stream, which flows into the river from River Pond. A.D. Turner, an artist from New York City, built and occupied the apparent first camp on the site in 1896. William Gannett, who was with him at the site in August 1897, noted that Turner had a jolly yell to canoers passing by: “wackamus, wackamus, Palace Pockwockamus, never go by without stopping to talk to us.” Benjamin C. Harris, who in 1894 was guiding out of Brownville, built another camp at the site in 1898. A year later, Harris married, and in 1900, he and his wife Thankie lived winters in Brownville where they had their first child in 1902. He sold the camp (c. 1905) to their guest William H. Gannett, who wanted the camp to remain open as a commercial sporting camp. Frank E. Tuck and Wilmont Davis managed the camp for Gannett, and a year later bought the complex with the exception of one camp that Gannett retained. By 1915, Davis had apparently bought out Tuck, and advertisements listed them under W. H. Davis & Son. Wilmont, his wife Anne M., and son Waldo came to Millinocket in 1900 for the logging

113 conversations with Shorty Budreau

114 *The Maine Sportsman*, September 1897, p.16 and “Pockwockamus Camp,” 6, no. 64 (December 1898): 5.

115 *The Maine Sportsman*, Editor, 13, no. 156 (August 1903): 259, and Editor, 12, no. 145 (September 1905): 277.
opportunities. Wilmont sold his leases in 1916 to Fred and Margaret Pitman whom he had encouraged to move to the area. Fred was previously an engineer on the Canadian and Pacific Railroad and around 1906 was guiding for the Philbrook farm and from Schoodic Lake. Fred had done some guiding for Wilmont in prior years.

Fred Pitman’s lease on the river was for a plot of land 200 feet deep with 1,000 feet of river frontage. The camp had a main lodge that paralleled the river and seven sleeping cabins that stretched away from the river and faced Mount Katahdin. A long boardwalk made of split timber connected them. The Pitmans had fourteen buildings. The route to the camp during many of the Pitman years was by buckboard via the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road from Millinocket to the north side of Compass Pond and then by canoe through Compass and River ponds and Pockwockamus Stream to the river and the camp. By 1930, Pitman had a garage north of Compass Pond just beyond the turn to the Togue ponds. He kept Davis’s branch camp at Foss and Knowlton Pond and had another at an unconfirmed First Debsconeag Lake location, perhaps the old Debsconeag Fish and Game Club camp.

Some referred to the camp as the Pitman farm, but others may have thought of it as Pitman’s tavern. The Pitmans kept a large garden that supplied their operation and that of the camps at Hurd, Kidney, and Daicey ponds. Their milk cow grazed across the river in a swale with good grass. In the early evenings, folks in the area and their guests congregated in the main building. As a young boy, Doug Nelson liked to listen to the conversation of as many as thirty people sitting in overstuffed chairs and enjoying their nightly cocktails. These people included such notable individuals as L. L. Bean, and members of the Hanna, Gannett, and Roosevelt families.

\[116\] information concerning the Pitman era came from Roy Douglas Nelson, Jr.
In close proximity to Pitman’s camp were three other camps. Just above Pitman’s was a single camp made of silver cedar that Davis probably built between 1907 and 1915 for the Marcus A. Hanna family. The camp’s logs were unpeeled cedar and the children, including Doug Nelson, liked the feel of the white cedar bark. Below Pitman’s camps was William Gannett’s. His camp may have been the original Katahdin View Camp built by Turner. Gannett took a ten-year lease in 1914, which suggests the previous lease could have been issued in 1904. Gannett became a member of the Maine Sportsmen’s Fish and Game Association in 1909; an organization Davis had helped found in 1893. Nelson believes that this camp predated the Pitman structures because the logs of the walls always looked much older.

Next to Gannett’s camp was the Roy D. Nelson Sr. camp, which Nelson built soon after returning from World War I. Nelson met Davis when Nelson was visiting the annual Boston Sportsman’s Show at which Davis had a booth. He convinced Nelson to come north to Norcross about 1910–1912 and work and guide for him. In 1920, Roy married Mary Gillooly, a sister of Pitman’s wife and well-known logging camp cook. In front of the Nelson camp was a rock crib dock where the cable ferry crossed from just above the outlet of River Pond.

The Gannetts were likely well acquainted with Garrett Schneck, president of GNP, given the cost of their lease reflected preferential treatment. Both were significant business leaders in Maine with Gannett in publishing and Schneck in newsprint paper. The Gannetts and Hannas could have known each other through either their publishing businesses or their respective participation in the National Republican Party. The Hanna family gave more than $100,000 to Theodore Roosevelt’s presidential campaign. Guy Gannett’s wife, Anne, was an assistant secretary at the 1920 Republican National Convention. The Hanna five-year lease was also an exception. These two families are perhaps responsible for bringing members of the Theodore
Roosevelt family to the camps. Whether they had anything to do with influencing Roosevelt to accept an invitation to visit and be an honorary member of the Debsconeag Fish and Game Club, on First Debsconeag Lake, is unknown.

Life on the deadwater changed abruptly in 1934. Pitman was in Millinocket the day of the 1934 forest fire, renewing his insurance which he had let lapse for a month. The call for the fire came from Trout Mountain fire tower. Doug Nelson took the call, quickly gave it to his mother, and went to find his dad. They went up the tote road toward Hurd Pond and soon came upon the fire that was too big for them to handle. At first, the wind blew the fire toward Hurd Pond, but it soon shifted in the direction of Pitman’s camp. Doug helped Clint Boyington sink about twenty canoes with rocks, but that was all they had time to save. No one was ever sure how the fire started. Some thought the cause might have been ashes from the pipe of the old teamster who worked between the river and Rainbow Lake. Others thought that sparks from the tote sled runners set the fire.

None of the families rebuilt after the fire. The Nelsons moved to Chesuncook Village. Gannett told Pitman he would help him rebuild, but Pitman knew the end of an era was near because he had the only set of camps left on the river. Instead of rebuilding, the Pitmans moved to Moosehead Lake to care for the Gannett’s Forest Park camp. About 1941, Pitman returned to the area to manage Katahdin Stream Campground in Baxter State Park. He took over from Doug’s grandparents, John and Annie O’Connor, who as friends of Percival Baxter, were the first caretakers beginning in 1934. Pitman retired in 1954.

Some years later on the north side of Pockwockamus Deadwater, Rod Marshall paddled up through River Pond to the north edge where he had a small, perhaps 16 feet by 20 feet, camp that may have once been a part of a logging camp. When Rod first started using the camp is
unknown, but it was after the 1934 fire that consumed the site and before 1955. He used it until GNP destroyed it in the late 1960s when they relocated the road to Abol Bridge through the camp’s yard.  

At Abol and Katahdin Streams

Any guide taking sports upriver paddled the rest of the deadwater to the foot of Pockwockamus Falls, carried on the west side, poled and paddled to Abol Falls, carried on the west side, and paddled against a stiff current to what the guides called Abol Point on the river’s west shore opposite the mouths of Abol and Katahdin streams.

The earliest camp (1894) at Abol Point was that of Sabat Shea, a guide and trapper living in Old Town. He may have shared the camp with Peter W. Ranco, also of Old Town and adopted son and grandnephew of Joe Polis, Henry David Thoreau’s fabled guide in 1857. Both these guides and their sports left the river here for various points in the Katahdin area. Before 1899, Ranco’s clients used tents or bark trapper’s camps. He guided rugged sports interested in trophy moose, deer, and caribou. In 1899, he finally built a traditional log camp, a six-mile walk from Abol Point. No account reveals the exact location, but to hunt such animals in an area undisturbed by loggers meant following Katahdin Stream through Witherle Ravine into the Klondike. By 1901, Ranco had stopped advertising, but he was still guiding for proprietors such as Francis. Ranco perhaps shared this camp with his friend Francis who guided the Edward Smith party into a camp in the Klondike in the winter of 1905.

117 conversations with Doug Farquhar and Shorty Budreau
118 Editor, “Maine’s Antlered Game,” The Maine Sportsman 2, no. 14 (October 1894): 12.
119 The Maine Sportsman, January 1899, August 1899, September 1899
period, Francis had a log shelter on the northeast, Klondike side, of The Owl near a brook that
drained from between The Owl and Barren Mountain. Whether Ranco rebuilt Francis’s log
shelter or built at another location is unknown, as is how long either one or both the camps
operated or what became of them. In addition to guiding, Ranco was a lumberman, basket
manufacturer, and representative of the Penobscot Tribe to the Maine state legislature in 1913
and 1917.

Guides for Charles C. Garland reached Abol Point via a trail from the main camp to Hurd
Pond outlet where they paddled to the cove on the north side and then walked to the point. A
Garland crew built the club’s branch camp here about 1902 and another partway up Abol Slide at
2,200 feet elevation in about 1904. The slide camp fell into disrepair perhaps because Bert
Haynes and Frank Sewall built a fire warden’s camp above it at about the 2,850-foot elevation,
and sports were welcome to stay there.

Opposite Abol Point on a knoll on the west side of the mouth of Katahdin Stream near
the West Branch of the Penobscot River, an unknown person built a camp before 1930 given
dates carved in the walls. In 1934, the Crawfords, proprietors of Togue Pond Camps, took a
lease on the land and the camp. Their route to the camp was via tote roads with a short walk.
They retained the camp’s lease when they sold Togue Pond Camps in 1942. At some point
during the Crawford ownership, Roy Flynt made the camp his home, and he lived there until

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122 Garland promotional brochures

123 conversations with Sandy Haynes and Neff, John W. *Katahdin: An Historic Journey*. Boston:

124 exploration by Geller
about 1957.125 Flynt was a part of the group who had hung out at Pitman’s camp and was familiar with the area. In June 1920, Flynt led a group into the Collins’s Camp Uno at Rainbow Lake.126 He took another group up Mount Katahdin in the winter of 1922 and was in the Jo-Mary Lakes area in the 1940s.127 Flynt was in the newspaper business in the Augusta, Maine, area before coming north to be managing editor of the *Millinocket Herald Tribune* in at least 1947. By about 1957, Flynt was in poor health, so Doug Nelson and Earl (Junior) York Jr., proprietor of nearby Twin Pine Camps at Daicey Pond, convinced and helped Flynt to move out. Sometime in the next twelve years, the Crawfords sold the camp to Norman Savage, and H. Ivan McPheters rented it until about 1975 when he bought it.128 During the 1977 forest fire, McPheters successfully saved the camp by throwing water on it. His son, Peter W., inherited the lease.

At Abol Point, the view of Mount Katahdin, one of a number of good views in the area, made the point’s general area a popular camping spot for those who wanted to climb the mountain. Some people around 1905 camped in the area for three weeks.129 Travel notes of others indicate multiple parties camped in the area at one time. Joe Francis indicated that August was generally a busy month and that in 1912 as many as thirty canoes a day might pass his camps downriver at the deadwater.130 The popularity of the area began to diminish as the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road emerged as a sometimes-passable buckboard route beginning about 1910 and other routes up Mount Katahdin developed.

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125 conversations with Tony York and Roy Douglas Nelson, Jr.
126 Daily Kennebec Journal, June 22, 1920, p.2
127 In the Maine Woods, 1924 (1922 climb)
128 conversations with Peter W. McPheters
129 derived from travel accounts as in *The Maine Sportsman*, September 1905
130 account in unknown newspaper
At Foss and Knowlton Pond

Joe Francis and Joseph Dennis paddled sports about a mile above Abol Point into the mouth of the stream from Foss and Knowlton Pond where they left the canoes. Here, they walked the tote road, in some places on log work over the stream in the narrow, steep-sided ravine. From the mouth of the pond, they paddled to the southwest corner to a camp Francis probably built. He guided the same party to the camp in 1897 or 1898, again in 1903, and ten years later when they stopped at Wilmont A. Davis’s camp on Pockwockamus Deadwater to say hello. If Davis did not eventually take over the lease, then Fred Pitman did, and one of them built a second structure. One of the Pitman structures of the 1920s was a roughly 20- by 20-foot cabin with steep, pitched roof, a big roof overhanging the front porch with a view of Mount Katahdin, and the trail to Lost Pond, a short paddle across the pond.

No one ever disclosed the exact location of this branch camp or what became of the camp after the fire 1934. Doug Nelson, nephew of Pitman, visited the camp in 1939 with his father coming on the trail direct from Katahdin Stream Campground. He cannot remember the precise location other than the pond was to the left of the trail, and the camp was between the trail and the pond. That recollection matches the 1927 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Mount Katahdin map that shows the trail along the brook crossing near the outlet and following the south edge of the pond to two buildings two-thirds of the way down the shore. These are presumed to be the branch camp. It appears that the larger of the two buildings fell into disrepair or burned some time before the mid-1950s. After that, those who grew up in the area such as Tony York, Peter W. McPheters, and Doug Farquhar only remember a small warden’s camp in the same general area.

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132 based on a photograph of the structure in *The Maine Sportsman*
location. Pitman did work for the Maine Forest Service in this area and may have continued to use it in that role. In the early 1960s, the warden’s camp was still standing, but by 1990, the roof had fallen in and Baxter State Park Authority burned it.

Other guides on their way upriver, such as Francis’s contemporary Maurice York, headed to the mouth of Nesowadnehunk Stream, paddled past the mouth of the stream from Foss and Knowlton Pond and then the site of Robert Gibson’s 1836 logging farm on the north side of the river. No one apparently took over the site for a camp until Maurice’s cousin’s son, Earl (Junior) York Jr., built a camp on the intervale in 1942–1943. When Baxter State Park Authority took over the York family owned camps at Daicey Pond, Junior’s family retained this one. At the time the Yorks built, it was still obvious that the area had once been a field, but the only remaining sign of the old farm was a rocked-lined root cellar with dirt-covered roof.

At Nesowadnehunk Stream

(A detailed history of the operations of each of the commercial camps in the Nesowadnehunk Valley can be found in John Neff’s Katahdin: An Historic Journey.)

Joining Maurice York in traveling the river from Abol Point to Nesowadnehunk Stream in the late 1890s and early 1900s were three other camp owners: the McLains, the Hunt brothers, and the Colt brothers. They pulled into shore just upriver of Nesowadnehunk Stream after a nine-to ten-hour trip from the head of Ambajejus Lake. These men and others on Nesowadnehunk Stream had a horse pen at the landing, but they rarely left horses here to pasture for long, given the bear population.

York went up the tote road on the west side of the stream to Toll Dam where he crossed and went over the slight rise to his Twin Pine Camps on Daicey Pond. Irving O. and Lyman Hunt

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133 conversations with Tony York
had a camp on Millinocket Lake in the 1890s, but left that to build their Nesowadnehunk Stream camp a half-mile up the tote road at what loggers called Indian Pitch about 1898. By 1899, they were building what became known as Kidney Pond Camps. They advertised both camps through 1903, but future advertisements did not reference the camp on the stream. Until at least 1907–1908, the Hunts provided a horse-drawn wagon ride for their guests and the McLains of Camp Phoenix much farther up the valley at Nesowadnehunk Lake. Camp Phoenix guests typically stayed a night at the Hunts’ Indian Pitch camp. The next day, the wagon, with Loch Cummings as teamster in 1899, transported them up along the stream’s edge to the Hunts’ camps at Kidney Pond. After lunch, they went on to Camp Phoenix. In the first years, the Hunts and York divided the sportsmen coming to the area.

The Indian Pitch camp likely fell into disuse after about 1908 when Charles A. Daisey, who bought Camp Phoenix from Albert McLain and his son Will in 1904, began to use the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road to bring some of his guests from Millinocket to camp. He worked diligently for the next thirty years to keep this road passable by buckboard. While the Hunts and the Yorks transitioned to this same travel route, Samuel Colt had his guides continue to bring guests to his Kidney Pond camp via the river route.

Samuel and LeBaron Colt may have been the first of these men to have a camp in the area. Maine oral history indicates that Samuel moved from a camp Lewey Ketchum built at Nahmakanta Lake about 1872 to one at Kidney Pond, also built by Ketchum, about 1890. The Colt brothers’ first documented trip (1897) into the general area was a six-week trip from

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134 from *In the Maine Woods*

Greenville to Norcross with two friends and no guide.\textsuperscript{136} Pictures show they stopped at Ketchum’s cousin’s camp, Joe Francis’s camp, on the Debsconeag Deadwater, and climbed Mount Katahdin with guide Joseph Dennis, whom they met at the camp. Upriver, they appeared to be operating on no particular timeline. If climbing Mount Katahdin was not preplanned and given they had a guidebook and maps, then they would have stopped at Abol Point and made their climb. Lucius Hubbard’s 1893 guide was the most up-to date one and recommended climbing Mount Katahdin from Abol Point, but it listed no guides or camps on the river, nor did his earlier ones, the only ones covering this area of Maine. Instead, the Colt party continued down river another eight plus miles to Francis’s camp. Assuming Ketchum had guided them on earlier trips, they would have likely known about his cousin’s camp and his guiding of parties on Mount Katahdin, and purposely stopped there.

Unfortunately, the journal kept by LeBaron is missing the written pages for the days on the West Branch between Ripogenus Dam and Norcross. If they had a camp at Kidney Pond, then they would have left the river by foot on the tote road at the mouth of Nesowadnehunk Stream for the hike in. The stature of and oral history surrounding Ketchum makes it most likely that he built some kind of a simple structure for them on the pond sometime in the 1890s. It could have been after their 1897 trip.

Samuel Colt’s financial records indicated he and LeBaron were at Kidney Pond yearly beginning in 1905. Between April and June 1, 1905, Norcross guide Robert McDougall, as foreman ($3 per day), and fourteen other guides ($2 per day per man)—George Farris (47 days), Alvah Daisey (45 days), Ben York (17 days), Frank York (47 days), Walter Dickey (38 days), Melvin H. Scott (54 days), Frank Haskell (26.5 days), Ben York (43.5 days), William Perry (53

\textsuperscript{136} Samuel Colt Papers University of Rhode Island Robert Carothers Library
days), Maurice York (48.5 days), William W. Fowler (18.5 days), Charles A. Daisey ($332.15), Charles Hale (43 days), Allan Daisey (43 days)—built a number of finely crafted structures for the brothers at Kidney Pond. The total cost was $2,276.21 for the first year and an estimated $1,600 the following year. McDougall, who guided out of Norcross beginning about 1898, knew Ketchum, who called for his Nahmakanta Lake camp’s supplies at Norcross and probably used McDougall as a guide. For some reason, Ketchum was not able to be part of the crew.

The Colt brothers and their Rhode Island guests typically came for three weeks in early June. From 1905 through 1921, they took the overnight train from Boston to Norcross ($172 round-trip for sixteen in 1905) where they arrived in the morning and had breakfast at the Norcross House ($10). The 1905 party had a two-hour steamer ride ($16) to the head of Ambajejus Lake and Seldon J. and Lizzie McPheters’s Camp Wellington where they had lunch ($8). In the afternoon, guides Henry Francis, George Ayer, William (Will) McLain, Charles A. Hale, Robert McDougall, Charles A. Daisey, Allan Daisey, and Ben York, took the Colt party upriver to Charles C. Garland’s Debsconeag Fish and Game Club on First Debsconeag Lake to spend the night ($25). The next day, the guides ($2 per day) paddled the party upriver to the mouth of Nesowadnehunk Stream. A teamster, Will McLain, met the party and toted the party’s luggage to Kidney Pond ($5). For the return, the Colt party spent the night at Garland’s ($25), stopped at McPheters’s camp the next day for lunch ($8), and got to Norcross in the afternoon and stayed the night at Norcross House ($35). While at camp, Perry was the cook and Scott was his assistant (each at $2/day). They purchased food and supplies at Fowler’s store in Norcross ($110.25). The total cost of the 1905 trip was $711.60. Once the camps were built, Robert McDougall looked after them through 1922, a year after Samuel died.
On the west side of the river opposite the mouth of Nesowadnehunk Stream, Roy Bradeen, Ernest T. Mayo, Melvin H. Scott, and Edmund Perault (Edward Perrow), all guides, built some camp structures without the aid of horses in 1920. They included a lean-to for the guides, a sleeping camp, and an open-sided, covered cooking and eating area. By about 1928, Bradeen probably bought out his partners for the camp became know as “Bradeen’s West Branch Camp.” With the opening of the Appalachian Trail (AT) in 1934, the Bradeen camp offered shelter for hikers who depended on the presence of a GNP river watchman for a boat ride across the river. From 1934 to 1938, the AT route went up the west side of the river from the Nesowadnehunk Dam site to Horserace Brook where it turned west to follow logging roads to Rainbow Lake’s north shore.

In 1924, Roy Bradeen added to his sporting camp operations when he and Fred Clifford purchased Kidney Pond Camps from Irving Hunt. Bradeen expanded again 1926 when he bought Colt’s camp. Clifford left the partnership by 1928 to build his own sporting camp at Rainbow Lake, and Roy and his new wife Laura continued to run their camps on the river and at Kidney Pond. Bradeen drowned in 1937 and Laura continued to run all the camps until she sold them all in 1945, to the Doxsees, and they sold to Don and Val Kennedy in the early 1950s. The Kennedys sold the river camp to Francis and Blanch Cyr. Francis, a game warden out of Millinocket, sold to Judge McGuinnes, who sold to a Brewer group of four headed by Henry Chaison in 1973. Five years later, the group sold to Paul Allen, who sold the river camp to present owners Bob and Pat Vadas in 1986. The current main camp and its stove are the originals. The Vadas replaced the sill logs with the help of their neighbors the Yorks, put on a new metal roof, and moved the original privy away from the river and converted it to a tool shed.

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137 Vadas, Patricia, “Stories and Folklore from the Millinocket Region,” University of Maine Folk Life Center; and conversations with Tony York and Bob Vadas
The Vadas rebuilt the other two buildings in 1990–1991, preserving the beams and wood that contained carving and written messages.

John Farrington was another of the 1920s guides who paddled the West Branch into the landing at the mouth of Nesowadnehunk Stream, but he did so to start his carry around Nesowadnehunk Falls. Farrington guided folks into Ripogenus Lake to Frost Pond. Before about 1928, no one had a camp on this upper section of river. Above the falls, Farrington paddled the deadwater to the foot of Horserace Rapids where he pulled out on the south side to begin the 1.5-mile carry. Here in 1928 he probably encountered Walter R. Lakeman, who was building Clifford’s Rainbow Lake Camps’ river camp on the nearby logan. The camp was advertised as a Bradeen river camp in the 1930s, which suggests that Fred Clifford, who held the lease, was willing to share the camp with the Bradeens who had been his former partner at Kidney Pond Camps. How long this cooperative arrangement lasted is unknown, but Laura Bradeen sold Kidney Pond Camps in 1945. Clifford died in 1945, but the camp continued to be part of the Rainbow Lake Camps’ lease through 1958 when Halson (Junior) W. and Ida Richards sold all but the river camp. How long they held the lease is unknown, but in 1975, the leaseholder for the river camp was Charles J. and Betty Lipscomb, former owners of Kidney Pond Camps. They sold the river camp to Charles and Ruth Norris, who in 1986 sold to Edward S. Douglass et al. of Bucksport. The state of Maine purchased the lease in 1990, and the camp is still in use.138

John Farrington passed two other active camps on the Nesowadnehunk Deadwater beginning in 1934. One camp was on the north side of the river opposite the Clifford’s Rainbow Lake Camps’ cabin. This camp was either a camp of Charles A. Daisey or Reginald Crawford, both of whom had a camp some place on the Nesowadnehunk Deadwater. The driver’s path or

138 lease record provided by Matt LaRoche, State of Maine Superintendent of the Allagash Waterway
old road from Nesowadnehunk Stream up along the north side of the river could have provided an alternative to canoeing to the camp. Erv Marston and his dad stayed at the small poorly maintained camp opposite the Lakeman built camp, in 1947–1948. The location of any other camp is unknown as is when Daisey and Crawford each gave up his lease.

**At the Big Eddy**

John Farrington had his sports back on the river at the head of Big Ambejackmockamus Falls for about a mile of paddling and poling before reaching the carry at the foot of Little Ambejackmockamus Falls. Above the falls, it was another mile of poling and paddling to the Big Eddy, the beginning of the portage to Ripogenus Lake. As guides had done for years, he probably set up camp for his sports away from the drive camps and after an early evening meal, portaged one of the canoes over the three-mile carry to Ripogenus Lake while his sports relaxed. Until about 1953, fishermen hiked the carry from Ripogenus Dam to Carry Pond and down to the Big Eddy to fish. The journey changed in 1953 with a drivable road from the dam to Abol Point. GNP burned the last of the Big Eddy’s logging and drive camps in 1958, and the site became a Maine State Forest Service Campground.

In 1967, Peter and Bunny Pray of Millinocket took over the campground lease opening each year in the spring, closing in the fall, and catering mainly to fishermen. Peter grew up in the area having moved to Ripogenus Dam in 1953 when his father, an electrician, worked at the McKay Power Station. As a young adult, Peter worked the log drives at Ripogenus Dam and Nesowadnehunk Lake Dam before going to the Millinocket mill.

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139 conversations with Erv Marston and *In the Maine Woods* advertising provided information for this paragraph

140 conversations with Peter Pray who provided the history of this area
From about 1953 through 1960, Peter Pray fished from log rafts at ponds such as Horserace and Rocky. The river, choked with pulpwood, brought in a lot of feed, but made it difficult to land the large fish. He and other fishermen had to be wary of sudden fluctuations in water levels, but with the completion of the road to Ripogenus Dam, the dam tender drove down the road and blew a siren announcing a water release.

The log drivers who came through the campground were always cooperative and generally present only for a day as they picked the rear of the drive in late summer or early fall. The campground grew to eighty-eight sites, twenty-three outhouses, showers, and the amenities campers came to expect over time. Pray had a fisherman’s trail in the early years to Rocky and Horserace ponds and maintained boats at Chesuncook Pond and the old Chesuncook Dam site. The Prays sold the campground in 2000 to the Chewonki Foundation. Fishermen still flock to the campground and fish the Big Eddy.

At Ripogenus Lake Outlet

John Farrington’s view at the end of the carry at Ripogenus Lake after 1917 was not much different than that of those who came before him for more than one hundred years. The 1917 dam enlarged the lake, but did not change the location of the carry’s end point; it simply moved it higher up the cove’s gentle sloping hillside. His carry from the top of the rise west of the dam to the lake was now a road. The only sporting camp on the lake, which had been a complex of six buildings on the south shore near the town line, Ripogenus Lake Camps, run by Reginald C. Thomas (1903 to c. 1910) and then Ralph Bisbee, ceased operations by 1917 when it was flooded out by the impoundment of the new dam and not reestablished.141 Forty years later

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141 from advertising in *In the Maine Woods* and *The Maine Sportsman*, Editor, “A Trip to Ripogenous,” 12 no. 133 (September 1904): 275.
Peter’s parents, Lewie and Evelyn Pray, founded Pray’s Cottages & Country Store at Ripogenus Dam. Evelyn ran the camps year-round while Lewie worked at the power station. Their cottages were what had been the homes of the eight families involved in running the power station. In the winter, the Prays catered to ice fishermen, loggers, and logging truckers’ families. Along with the cottages, the Prays reopened the old GNP store in 1956 and served those traveling west from Millinocket to Greenville on the recently completed (1953) road from Abol Bridge. In May 1960, Lewie died in a boating accident on a return trip from Chesuncook Village. Evelyn Pray continued to run the camps until about 1977 when her son Charles and his wife Nancy took over the operation. In 2009, they closed the operation, the last of the sporting camps on the river between the dam and Nicatou.