

WONALANCET OUT DOOR CLUB

Newsletter



April, 2013

CARING FOR THE SANDWICH RANGE SINCE 1892

THREE AND A HALF POETS

“I grew up in this town, my poetry was born between the hill and the river, it took its voice from the rain, and like the timber, it steeped itself in the forests.”
Pablo Neruda

I. DANA STEELE

Sandwich Range Yakfest

Oh sure, they appear silent -
But would you believe it?
Mountains are fairly chatty.
Some can really yak it up.
You can't hear 'em -
Nor can I, to tell the truth;

But I can begin to guess what they're sayin' -
Not that I'm a "mountain whisperer" or anything;
I just take a wild stab at it.

Chocorua (bit of a motormouth): "Did I ever
tell ya 'bout that Indian fella being chased
by other fellas -- from Tamworth, I think -- up toward
my summit? He scaled a rock near my peak, cussed
out the other fellas, then jumped off?"

Paugus: "Only every day. Why don't you give it a rest?
Now everybody thinks I'm a little runt of a
mountain, but try me. I'll have your tongue hanging out."

Passaconaway: "Speak softly and carry steep
trails up your shapely sides. If you
do venture off them, you'll find yourself
lost in my Sandwich Range Wilderness Area. Ho ho ho."

Whiteface: "I can't help it if I'm the best looking thing
in creation. People love my pale puss. You should too!

What's more postcard-perfect than a shot of me
taken from Whiteface Intervale? Sublime!"

Sandwich Dome: "I'm a bit forgotten, what with
dwelling near these so-called 'supermountains',
but I just want to say: I love living in paradise!"

Israel: "Don't forget about me! I'm Sandwich Range -- aren't I?"

Tripyramid (Sandwich Range neighbor):
"Hey, let's have some peace and quiet around here!"

“Poetry heals the wounds inflicted by reason.” Novalis

THE WOODPECKER TRICK

If you're out traipsing alone
in a wood you thought your own
and you hear a branch snap
much as you think your neck might sound
in slightly more careless circumstances
You may wish to make yourself scarce
but you're not the chameleon you once were
Your rabbit days have long since passed
and you don't want to be stuck with words -
So now's the time for the woodpecker trick
Duck behind the thickest tree around
(an old rock maple works best for this)
and keep the trunk dead between you and the company
A woodpecker keeps on pecking as he moves around
but you don't let out a single peep
You're like the tree that falls alone
deep in the woods with nobody near
out of sight and sound. You simply don't exist.

GREAT HILL FIRE TOWER

It's best here in deep evening
The sun barely set over Sandwich Dome
The hills' light purple turns dark
Lights wink on in Tamworth Village
A star starts to shine, then two -
Constellations take shape, they move
On their vast journey towards the dim West light
Where lie the hills I can't yet name
Between the Ossipees and the Sandwich Range
Here is the universe's silent spot
The heart takes shape, starts to reach -
Toward nine I come down from the tower
Make my way over rocks to the trail
I keep an ear out for snapping branches
Like most sane men I'm afraid of ghosts
I still don't bring a flashlight here
I know the way home by heart

II. JON WOLSTON

Flying Fur

As I stepped dripping
from the drink,
I chanced to spy
a startled mink.

I stood astride
his customed path
and set ablaze
his short-haired wrath.

He swaggered off
to look me over.
I caught him peering
through the clover.

His weaselly mug
and hot-dog size
stared down my urban
virgin eyes.

I walked away
not valor-bound,
and he reclaimed
his hunting ground.

Path, What Path?

They say if you're lost
stay in one place--don't wander
through these dense June woods.

Do you want to sleep
till dawn on the pine needles?
That's no fun really.

Can he hear me call?
The lady slippers tell me
this ground's untraveled.

My brother shows up--
his boots unlaced, trail blazer
in the Vermont night.

Jon adds, "Thank God for cell phones."

This poem and "Fercroft" reprinted from "Paradise Root-Stock" "Flying Fur" reprinted from "The Poet's Touchstone"

Fercroft

Outside the white church,
viburnum erupts at dusk. . .
silently blooming
along the river
and the field across the road
and the dreamy grove.

Jon writes, "This poem describes one of those deliciously rare summer twilights in New Hampshire that last so long you can still make out colors and landscape so late into the evening that it starts to feel like a dream."

"Poetry is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal which the reader recognizes as his own." ~Salvatore Quasimodo

Breaking Through (a spring haiku)

The scrape of corn snow,
March winds in the deep woods---
the brilliant green moss.

Columbus Day in N.H. (a fall haiku)

Wood stove gone cold and
out on the lake, mercury--
a full moon ablaze.

*The only problem
with Haiku is that you just
get started and then*

Roger McGough

III. WALDEN S. (DENNY) MORTON

Denny writes that her girls and the Purves boys went up to Big Rock Cave, planning to spend the night, when they were teenagers. This poem is her version of what happened, "written up mostly for the entertainment of their children, now becoming teenagers". She had been regaling them with local Indian legends. Risky!

BIG ROCK CAVE

So dark, a black velvet sky...fresh, pine-y smelling,
we creep across damp needles, a spongy cushion underfoot...
moss slick and slippery...We reach out for cold dank walls of cave,
slabs of rock, shelter since earliest humans first came here.

We brought the three girls up here on a dare, to spend the night.
It's not a long hike from the valley floor ... there's
a stream just beyond for washing.

We had early summer supper together at the farm,
gathered up sleeping bags, old pillows, flashlights
and took off, into the hills. It is still, every movement makes a clatter.

They listen. We recite tales, we embroider fragmentary stories
the neighborhood tells about our missing Native Americans.
The events are ferocious, scalplings, fire, revenge killings, but
the girls swear they are not scared to sleep in the cave, with us.

I gather up half-burned sticks from previous campfires. I pocket a can of bear grease.
Bruce ties a pair of disintegrating khakis around his waist.
We leave the cave; promising to return soon.
The three girls look at us wide-eyed, white-faced, just like deer.

Behind another huge boulder not more than 50 feet away,
we begin our transformations. We strip down, rip the khakis into loincloths.
Each grabs a sooty stick and paints terrifying symbols all over.
We smear bear grease under our eyes. We smudge soot into deep circles.

We turn the whites of our eyes into headlights.
Now we stink. We weave helmets of brush and leaves.
We make swishing noises as we move in the dark.
We sound huge. Ted begins to chant in his deepest whisper.

Mark feels around for a hollow log to beat with a rock, drumming.
I try a high pitched shriek suitable for a crazy killer.
Bruce jumps up and down on all fours, a maddened gorilla.
Each breaks off a club and whacks trees.

We laugh hysterically at our prowess, then hush completely.
We make a large circle silently, we slither like shadows
through woods so we approach the cave from its other side.
The rock slabs are perpendicular, coming together like a wigwam.

We can see the flicker of campfire through the openings
between rocks. Barefoot and unheard, we sneak up the slippery sides
until three of us are on the peak of the stones. I am left below,
lie down flat on the ground so no one can see us.
I use hand signals to begin the attack.

The three girls still sit where we left them, next to the fire.
We see them jump and startle, as the breeze picks up
and some trees squeak. They look for our return where we left the campfire.
I sign the others: one, two, three
hunker down so firelight makes me just visible.

Kate announces she needs to pee,
begins to stand up.
I wave frantically.

Four of us shriek, leap down, chant and whack together.
The girls disappear immediately into the night. We hear them race
down the trail for home, hitting trees, falling over roots, crying and yelling.
They are completely gone in three minutes.

Silence.

Disconcerted, we gather around the fire.
Somehow, we figured they would laugh.
We mess around for a while, chanting, taking oaths, dancing,
but the heart has gone out of it. I take a few pictures
of our finery and designs...
We roll into the sleeping bags and dream about terrifying exploits.
In the morning sunlight, we go home.

A week later, we are all together again at the river, swimming.
The girls protest how we were mean, and we tell them how chicken were they.
I show our photos taken after they left; they are suitably impressed.
No one told a grownup anything so our friendships are intact.

Then, Kate leaves the photos in her blue jeans; her Mom finds them before the laundry.
Attila the Mom has found the evidence and she is furious.
“Willie, where are your clothes? Just what did you think you were doing up there?
Who are all these boys? I never would have believed that you, of all people, the oldest...”
Yadda yadda yadda...

As she fusses, it dawns
we are no longer children
who can play in a cave in the woods,

“A poem begins with a lump in the throat.” Robert Frost

A Sense of Place: New England

Ours is a newer England,
a place of the right size.

Hills roll down valleys at
perfect slope for horse or bike.

Sun shines soft on skin,
warms away the chill of dawn.

Bounty on a sensible scale...
small juicy Mac apples,

quarter-sized Purple Asters
twinkle in Fall's bright green.

Fields flood with Monarchs;
Moose follow deer herds.

Smell of woodsmoke lingers
in all the heavy jackets,

Boots a wet pile inside every door.
Books are stacked on tables.

It feels like it fits,
like a glove of the right size.

“It is the job of poetry to clean up our word-clogged reality by creating silences around things.” Stephen Mallarme

Spring Trails Report

The Wonalancet winter has been typical. We've accumulated a decent amount of snow and experienced a few bouts of cold air. The worst weather impact on the trails occurred last October when Hurricane Sandy blew through. Trails on ridge lines such as Sleeper and Rollins sustained a significant number of blowdowns. The section of Sleeper from the junction with Downes Brook to where the trail climbs to East Sleeper is a nearly impenetrable tangle of boles and branches.

Trailwork plans for the 2013 summer are still in flux. We have applied for a Recreational Trails Program(RTP) Grant to support a Trail Crew on the Dicey's Mill trail for 5 weeks. Our plan is to work on the section of Dicey's Mill from about 1 mile past the old mill site to the junction with the Rollins Trail. The trail climbs relatively steeply in this section. We plan to install rock steps similar to the rock work that Jed Talbot's Off the Beaten Path Crew installed on the Blueberry Ledge Trail. Our success in acquiring an RTP Grant will be the critical step for these plans.

As usual we'll host 4 Volunteer Trailwork days on:

Saturday May 18 (Spring Trails Day),
Saturday June 1 (National Trails Day),
Saturday July 20 (New Hampshire Trails Day), and
Saturday September 28 (National Public Lands Day).

We'll meet at the Ferncroft Parking Lot at 8:30AM on all our Trailwork Saturdays. Bring water, food, gloves, and clothing appropriate for the weather. Most of all, be prepared to spend a day outdoors deriving satisfaction from a job well done, and giving back to the trails in exchange for some of the pleasure they've given you.

We hope to hire some members of Jed Talbot's crew to deal with some specific Annual Maintenance Projects, cleaning up Sleeper is high on the list of these tasks. We received a couple of very generous donations last year which allowed us to extend the amount of time we were able to field this crew. If you want more information on any of our trail projects contact Jack 323-8913, jackw@g4com.com or Fred 284-6919.

WODC members responded to our call last season to perform more Wilderness Monitoring stints in the Sandwich Range Wilderness. Maintaining that wilderness environment and spiritual refuge requires dedication and effort on our part. Thanks to Doug McVicar, Andy Thompson, Evelyn MacKinnon, Fred Lavigne, and Jennifer Wiley for pitching in last year. We'll need volunteers again this season to spend a day monitoring the Wilderness for the values we all hold so dear. If you'd like to help, contact Jack at 323-8913, jackw@g4com.com.
Jack Waldron

**The W.O.D.C. Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, August 18 at 6:30PM in the Chapel.
There will be a Potluck in the Grove at 5:00PM.**

**and one more poem by one
more poet . . .**

Climbing to the Peaks

Do you remember when
You took my hand
To lead me to the peaks?
The trail held us prisoners
Between its thighs,
And we tripped over
Mud-caked roots
On the floor of the forest.
The air was still
And dark and wet;
Sweat poured out
As we panted up,
Over the flanks of the range.

Do you remember how
We came out of that forest,
With a rush of wind
On the meadow grasses?
We followed the cairns
Up, over the rocks
To where dwarf blueberries
Edged the stones that
Stretched to infinity
Along the great
Humped back
Of the ridge.

The peaks are always there,
But out of view.
They wait for us, even
Through the darkest hours
Down in the forest.

Do you remember
How hard it can be
Sometimes
To believe that the sun
Still shines up there,
Along the ridge?

I remember how
The peaks can seem
So far away,
That you can't even
Start to climb
Until someone
Takes your hand.

Susan Goldhor

*Apologies for inserting this poem that I wrote after first climbing some of the Presidentials. Put it down to editorial privilege. And keep in mind that you can prevent recurrences by submitting your own work to:
susangoldhor@comcast.net*

**“Poets are like baseball pitchers. Both have their moments. The intervals are the tough things.”
Robert Frost**

COMING IN NOVEMBER:

THE DARK SIDE ISSUE:

DEATH AND DECEPTION IN THE FOREST!

(MISS IT AT YOUR PERIL. READ IT AT YOUR RISK.)

SANDWICH RANGE BEATS PRESIDENTIALS IN U.S. MINT CONTEST FOR HANDSOMEST! (A WODC EXCLUSIVE BY DOUG MCVICAR)

Sure, I know; he's big. Huge. Tougher than granite and really cold. He's killed a lot of people; over a hundred at last count. But when the money was on the table, big old Mt. Washington lost out to our own Mt. Chocorua, the cleanly sculpted frontman of the Sandwich Range. The United States Mint chose Chocorua to be the image on the back of 176 million America the Beautiful quarters.

How did we go from the day back in 2008, when a coin-loving congressman from Delaware filed a bill directing the Mint to issue a series of quarters featuring national parks and forests, to this February 21st when thousands of freshly minted Mt. Chocorua quarters waited in the lobby, guarded by bank employees, while the coin was officially launched on the main stage at Plymouth State University with live appearances by the Governor, the White Mountain National Forest Supervisor, one of our congresswomen, the Acting Director of the US Mint, and the Plymouth Elementary School band?

Your Newsletter has the exclusive story.

Although many of us may not have noticed, the familiar eagle hasn't been on the back of a quarter for almost fifteen years. That was a big change since some form of eagle – soaring, crouching, cloud-riding, arrow- and olive-branch-clutching – had anchored the reverse of the quarter since the very first one was minted in 1796. Why the change?

Well, the change is all about *change*. Change isn't really money any more, at least not in the sense that a reasonable amount of it will buy anything. I remember when one quarter would buy a hamburger, or a copy of *Mad* magazine. When I was in college a draft beer was just one quarter, and a few drafts later another quarter left on the bar was a generous tip. Today credit cards are rapidly replacing cash. Sales clerks often can't count change. Even taxi cabs are taking plastic, and if you drive yourself you will find more and more parking meters accepting cards as well. It's a quicker, more portable, safer and better-documented system.

But the demise of cash has a cost also. The United States Mint – like mints down through history – is a profit center. Recently it has cost about 12 or 13 cents to produce a US quarter. The other 12 or 13 cents goes into the Treasury to reduce our deficit. This totals hundreds of millions of

dollars per year raised without taxes or borrowing. So Congress listened when coin collectors urged them to follow the lead of many other countries around the world – most notably Canada – that had redesigned their coinage to make it more beautiful and interesting. In 1999 the US Treasury launched the 50 State Quarters program. New Hampshire's quarter, issued in 2000, featured the Old Man of the Mountain. (Three years later the Old Man perished, but the coin lives on.)

The State Quarters program was highly popular with coin collectors, and made at least pseudo-collectors out of some 130 million others. Compared to just keeping the old eagle, the state quarters raised an additional 3 billion dollars. So after we ran out of states, we used the District of Columbia and the Territories. Now we've moved on to National Parks, National Forests, and other National sites, one per state, in the order they were created. The first was Hot Springs, Arkansas (1832). The WMNF is the sixteenth.

New Hampshire does have other places that might have been selected. The Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish preserves the home and studio of sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. It's both a shrine to the arts and a place of unique numismatic importance since many collectors and art critics believe Saint-Gaudens created America's most beautiful coin. By federal law, the site selection was made by the "Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and the governor." After they selected the WMNF, the question became how to best represent that vast realm in the tiny space on the back of a quarter.

An artists' competition produced five semifinal designs: big bully Mt. Washington; the rare, altitude-loving Bicknell's Thrush; a moose with Chocorua's famous profile in the background; a couple of deer with Chocorua's famous profile in the background; and the chosen design – Chocorua's famous profile right in the center, framed by birches. Treasury Secretary Geithner was officially responsible for final design selection, although it is hard to imagine he could have devoted much



*Forest Supervisor Tom Wagner addressing an audience of hundreds of people at the official WMNF Quarter Launch at Plymouth State University last February. He spoke movingly about the forest, the connection between land, landscape and landscape art – and the importance of all three to American history and to each citizen.
(Doug McVicar photo)*

time to it. My guess is the choice came down to the Acting Director of the US Mint melding a pot of input from the WMNF, Governor Lynch, the US Commission of Fine Arts, and the US Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee.

Of all these commentators, the members of the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee have the most expertise, and the fewest competing civic responsibilities. We know an unusual amount about their thinking because their record is an actual transcript, not just minutes. Discussion of the White Mountain semifinalists fills 15 pages. Committee members studied full-page drawings and struggled to envision a much smaller, 3D object. One member was seduced by the dreadfully clichéd moose, noting: "I talked to a couple of locals that actually went to school at Dartmouth and they immediately said oh, it's the moose. It's the moose." Fortunately most members kept their heads and stuck to aesthetics: the winning design, NH-02, showed "plenty of interesting negative space" and textures varied enough to give a sense of depth. A member judged that "it will coin up well."

The creator of NH-02 is Philadelphia artist Phebe Hemphill. After graduating from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, she worked at the famous Franklin Mint for many years, and also sculpted a large amount of freelance work. In 2006 she landed her dream job at the US Mint in Philadelphia and since that time has been the designer, sculptor – or both – for over forty coins and six official medals.

Phebe told me her mother was a camper and counselor at Camp Winnemont on Ossipee Lake back in the 1940s, and Phebe herself has visited the White Mountains and climbed Mt. Washington. But she has never climbed Mt. Chocorua, or been in the Sandwich Range. She created her winning design from stock photos provided by the WMNF. She told me she wishes she had time to visit Chocorua and explore its cultural connections before beginning her work. A personal relationship with the mountain could have affected the art. But her winning design was based entirely on aesthetic considerations, and not a whit on any rubbish about mountain rivalries. (Note that I'm paraphrasing here; Phebe is much too nice to use the word "rubbish".)

Still, from the historian's point of view, Chocorua was a good choice. As Prof. Robert McGrath has written, "In terms of the broader history of American art, no mountain has figured more prominently in the representation of the national landscape. Without exception, Chocorua has been more frequently depicted than any other peak." So, while it would have been remarkable, in a way, to have a coin with Washington on both the head and tail, the truth is that the unique figure of Chocorua, and all it suggests, was too powerful to resist. There was never really any contest. In fact, that "Mt. Washington" semifinal design wasn't actually Mt. Washington. It looked like some other mountain . . . or perhaps the Platonic form of a mountain – a mountain with a peak oddly resembling Chocorua's.



Artist Phebe Hemphill, shown working on another project, designed and sculpted the WMNF quarter. We caught up with Phebe shortly after she got back from a ceremony at the Capitol honoring Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, at which he received a Congressional Gold Medal she sculpted. (photo courtesy of US Mint)



*Shiny new Chocorua quarter posing with its model, about 5 miles away. (Doug McVicar photo) Come on, you didn't really expect them **both** to be in focus, did you?*



Editor's Ramble: Roger Scruton is one of England's most prolific and best known philosophers (which, I suppose, is akin to being on the "best known" list of hermits). Of his many books, the latest is *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet*. Its central thesis is that the greatest likelihood of protecting the planet won't come from global NGOs or legislative directives, but from small groups of people united by a "shared love for a shared place"; a love he calls "oikophilia" from the Greek word for household. Scruton tends to stir up a lot of controversy and his enemies like to refer to him and others who profess to love some shared place, as "oiks". And, since small rural places tend to arouse more oikophilia than big cities or suburbs, and since so few people today actually live in places that arouse such an intense shared love, critics have sometimes sneered at oikophilia as being largely for a mythical past or shared dream rather than for a real place. Well, we have such a place. Whether we actually live in Wonalancet or just spend vacations there, or even if we simply carry it in memory, the area radiating out from Ferncroft and surrounds comprises one of those shared places that inspires shared love in a pretty large group of people. I know because I'm one of them. Frankly, I'm amazed and awed by the intensity of my feelings for this place that none of us can ever own, but that owns us. When I'm away from Wonalancet, I read Mike's trail maps the way I read poetry. I envision the trails that I know -- the rocks, the brooks, the sandy or mossy bits, the steep parts, how the conifers change to hardwoods, the places where I always stop for lunch or once found mushrooms -- and I think about how many times I've been on them, over how many years and seasons; in snow and glare ice; when it was all mud and high water and slippery rocks; when it was dry and dusty scree; how trees fell and then slowly rotted away. The time I was locked in an MRI machine, I closed my eyes and pictured the mossiest part of the Kelley Brook trail. When I was told to imagine myself in the most peaceful place possible, it was lying in the grass by the brook in the Chapel grove. And when I write this, I know that I'm writing it for those of you who feel the way I do. It's a source of escalating joy to me -- the longer I know this shared place, the more I love it, and the more necessary it becomes to me, filling some basic need, like air or water. But we live in an era of habitat degradation. Last month, the voters of Tamworth removed a level of protection from the Ossipee Aquifer. They were encouraged to do so by a corporation determined to construct a motor raceway on the side of one of our surrounding mountains, whose plans and profits depended on that removal of wetlands protection. That this race course, if built, will pollute the Aquifer's water at some point, I have no doubt. That the roar of expensive engines, predicted to travel as far as Mt. Washington, will change the experience of hiking in wilderness I also do not doubt. But what took me by surprise was the level of pain and desolation I felt when I heard the results of this vote. It was like a knife to the heart. And this is the other side of oikophilia; the loss of what we love. I know that the trails will still be there. And I know that people will still love them and care for them, just as we love the forest that's only a remnant of what used to be. But we know what we're losing. Us oiks. **Susan Goldhor**



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