

STORIES OF THE ADIRONDACKS

In our effort to showcase the many personal stories of the Adirondacks and to highlight the various ways in which they are told, we present the final section: Stories of the Adirondacks.

Though more informal storytelling than typical academic articles, these concluding essays are rooted in history and demonstrate our commitment to welcoming a broad spectrum of perspectives from our contributors. The materials and sources used to write these essays can be found after each.

FOR THE LOVE OF ISLAND CAMPING

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A version of this essay appears in the March-April 2018 issue of Adirondack, the magazine of the Adirondack Mountain Club.

Lake George, a beautiful 32 mile-long body of water along the eastern border of New York State, is remembered in American history as a famous battleground during the French and Indian War, and later, during the American Revolution. Less familiar to historians, however, is the fact that Lake George became the center of a protracted twentieth-century battle, pitting those who wished to protect and preserve the natural scenery against those with ties to logging interests and other commercial development.

Because of the efforts of a few determined people, Tongue Mountain, Paradise Bay, Black Mountain Point, and the islands in the Narrows now belong to the State and are protected by New York's constitution. However, the facts behind this story have remained hidden from sight until recently, when the Kelly Adirondack Center at Union College completed a huge archival project, organizing the papers of two important conservationists – John S. Apperson, Jr. (1878-1963) and Paul Schaefer (1908-1996) – allowing researchers access to thousands of documents. The letters, both copies received and carbon copies of letters sent, reveal many fascinating details about New York's early preservation movement.

The idea of preserving the beautiful mid-section of Lake George developed from among a group of outdoor enthusiasts from Schenectady, led by Apperson. They discovered the joys of island camping – of cooking over an open fire, trying out winter sports like skiing and unfamiliar ones like skate-sailing, and paddling a canoe in gale force winds. They were

ISLAND CAMPING IN THE NARROWS OF LAKE GEORGE, WARREN CO.,
ADIRONDACK PARK & FOREST PRESERVE, NY

confronted, however, by evidence that the idyllic scenery was under threat by logging, illegal squatters, and erosion of soil caused by high water. They just could not ignore the problems, but decided, instead, to find solutions. Here is a partial list of their action items to protect the landscape:

1. Investigate operations of the dam (International Paper Company) and learn the facts about high water and other details in legal records, etc.
2. Take pictures to convince others about the damage to island shores by erosion.
3. Start hauling rocks and building walls around the islands to protect them from erosion (technique called rip-rapping).
4. Gather evidence of illegal logging, find out who owns the land, and try to get the state to purchase the lots in question.
5. Study the law regarding squatters on state islands and shores.
6. Attend legislative sessions, find allies and legal experts, and make speeches.
7. Try and persuade lawmakers to appropriate money for rip-rapping and for the purchase of land (e.g., Tongue Mountain).
8. Get to know the wealthy landowners at Lake George and find out which of them are interested in preservation.
9. Start promoting the idea of a Lake George Park.
10. Join clubs and other organizations, such as the Lake George Association and try to influence the officers to help protect the islands.

Apperson, who arrived in Schenectady in 1900, soon became passionate about promoting sports and recreation among his new colleagues at GE. Once the enthusiastic outdoorsmen started camping and skate-sailing at Lake George, they were intrigued by the idea of becoming watchdogs and protectors. Apperson, who had worked for several years as the foreman of a branch railroad in Virginia, had the practical skills necessary for building rock walls around the islands at Lake George. It wasn't long before he introduced his friends to this challenging new "sport" of protecting the shores of his favorite islands, by hauling rocks and boulders from the mainland, and building protective rock walls to prevent erosion of the soil. Their efforts eventually expanded to removing squatters, taking photographs, publishing pamphlets, forming non-profit organizations, writing letters, giving speeches, and recruiting influential people to the cause.

Over the years, many of Apperson's friends and associates moved from Schenectady and were replaced with others. Some of those who left kept in touch with Apperson, came back for visits, and even occasionally brought along their wives and children. These letters reveal on-going relationships with friends who had moved away yet who could carry on the conservation work in new communities and organizations. They illustrate how Apperson managed to develop such an extensive political organization – a sort of preservation lobby – capable of

disseminating educational material and drumming up support for the preservationist cause. By the 1930s, Apperson had joined many clubs and civic organizations and formed many alliances with leading politicians and state officials. He had also earned a bad reputation in certain circles, especially among those with ties to commercial forestry. Tracing the connections between these friends, organizations, and ideas can help provide the context within which an environmental movement began.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, many of the employees at GE were eager to get away from the office or laboratory and have an adventure outdoors. They were curious to find out about the exotic winter sport known as skate-sailing. They started by making short trips to frozen ponds, lakes, and rivers a reasonable distance from Schenectady. All that was needed was a pair of skates and a homemade sail on a frame. Since there were no companies providing this sort of equipment, these sportsmen (about 35 of them) put in orders for spars, ferrules, and rope, and learned how to design and construct their very own sails. They held many evening and weekend sessions at 118 Park Avenue, Apperson's boarding house, where they would meet to design, sew, and assemble sails.

In 1912, Apperson wrote to Charles Scott, one of his former skate-sailing buddies, asking him if he would be willing to sell his old skate-sail. Mr. Scott replied, "YOU got me into the game and now I'm in, I stick. I would like to help you out and if I only get two days of skating a year I want that sail. Try someone else less enthusiastic" [*Charles Scott to John Apperson, 1912*]. Among the names of those who ordered a skate-sail in 1908 was that of David Rushmore, who was John Apperson's boss. The enthusiasm for the out-of-doors and for winter sports seemed to transcend barriers of seniority in the workplace.

In 1913, Earl Fisher, Apperson's former colleague, sent a letter to his old friend describing his recent trip to Lake George. It captures the sense of challenge he experienced trying to paddle a canoe in a gale-force wind.

Holy Mackerel! How it can blow on Lake George! Don't let anyone ever convince you that it can't! The first week it blew like blazes when a person would like to go up (or rather down) to Fort Ticonderoga, and by Jiminy when a person would like to go back why it just naturally up and blows in the opposite direction. Mark Twain, I think it was, dwelt humorously upon "the damned perversity of inanimate things!" The wind is probably the most doggoned perverse of 'em all! Friday night it blew so hard and there was such a sea running below French Point that it was necessary to turn back, trusting to luck that the wind would let up a little on the morrow. It was worse! Heaps worse! So there was nothing to do but buck it, down along the east shore, crossing from the mainland into the lea of Long Island and at the south end crossing again to the west shore. A loaded canoe would never have lived crossing the Northwest Bay.

Fisher was eager to report back to Apperson about his recent trip to Philadelphia, where he attended a racing event sponsored by the American Canoe Association. He had some important conversations with top officers about the legislation being proposed in Albany.

At the A.C.A. . . racing meet held at Philadelphia on Labor Day, while the old campers, Commodores, Governors, and racing men were gathered round the campfire, I got up and unburdened my little say in regard to this new bill or amendment, or whatever it is. The older men were immediately interested, and Mr. Lansing Quick, the President of the Board of Governors (not meaning to impress y^runderstand) asked if he could secure a copy of this bill, or amendment or whatever, and so forth. He is the one man who could set more wheels a^rturning than anyone else in the A.C.A. – were he properly interested and informed. I took the stand upon this question one night at a club meeting. Before I knew where I was at they had overwhelmed me with unanswerable questions and completely knocked the question from under me, simply because I hadn't enough data with which to knock 'em down.

[Earl Fisher to John Apperson, 1913]

Also in 1913, R. H. Dillon wrote back to Schenectady from El Paso, Texas, telling Apperson about the 300-mile journey he had made across deserts and mountains of Mexico to get back to the United States. A year or so later Apperson replied to his friend Dillon (who then lived in St. Louis) and described life in Schenectady.

The skate sailing crowd are (sic) now filling my house again each night and the sail you built still represents the best class of workmanship, and yet we have difficulty in finding anyone who can stay within a reasonable distance of ice with a moderate wind. Of course, we are not kicking or criticizing, because we have used it without permission and derived many good laughs from the performance; but it has occurred to me that you might have lost your sentimental feelings for it by this time and would be willing to part with it for a sum of money...

[John Apperson to R. H. Dillon, November 25, 1914]

Much like John Muir and Robert Marshall, who were both avid hikers, Apperson had amazing stamina and energy, and he delighted in climbing the highest peaks on skis in the dead of winter. One of his best friends, starting in 1910, was the brilliant scientist, Dr. Irving Langmuir, another enthusiastic outdoorsman who had learned to ski in the Alps. Langmuir participated in the island camping and rip-rapping of shores, and he purchased camps in Turtle Bay and in Huddle Bay as part of a mutual effort to develop “preservation communities” of like-minded people who agreed on certain restrictions on the use of the land.

The Schenectady Conservation Commission appointed Apperson to represent them at special legislative hearings in Albany, which gave him a chance to meet many key individuals who were leading the conservation debates. In August of 1913, he received this hand-written note from someone (unnamed) who began teaching him the ropes in politics:

Dear App,

The conversations you had at Albany – as related by you – with these “conservation” people are very significant and leading directly to their vulnerable points of weakness and incompetence. They are mere puppets – I think your experience with data and obvious deductions should be put in the hands of Mr. Hennessey and I will be happy to help you frame up a modest expression of same. It is a vital part of your present action it seems to me. [Signature illegible]

[Unknown author to John Apperson, 1913]

Eventually Apperson's circle of friends included state senators, lawyers, and officers of many powerful clubs and organizations. He learned about the law from Louis Marshall, who was the leading authority on New York's constitutional protections for the forests. Marshall must have planted the notion in Apperson's mind that the wild places in the Adirondack Park belong to all of New York's citizens and not just the wealthy elites. While in Albany, Apperson also made friends with Senators Adalbert Moot and Elwood Rabenold, as well as with Assemblyman Al Smith, who later became Governor of New York.

In 1915, Apperson gave a talk in Albany opposing the leasing of campsites. He was undoubtedly delighted to get this complimentary letter from William T. Hornaday, one of the most influential advocates for wildlife.

New York Ecological Park, New York

July 28, 1915

Dear Mr. Apperson:

I congratulate you most heartily on having won your fight against the leasing of camp sites in the Adirondacks. That victory I regard as wholly yours. If you had not started the campaign, and kept it up in the masterful manner which you did, beyond all question there would have gone into the constitution something providing for the leasing of camp grounds. The people who hereafter will enjoy the freedom of the campsites of the Adirondacks, unhampered and unafraid of restrictions and limitations that might be imposed by those who are exploiting the Adirondacks for commercial purposes, will need to thank you for the freedom that they will enjoy!

In due course of time, when the constitution is made up without any leasing provision, you can rest from your labors, and enjoy the contemplation of the laurels that you have so splendidly won. This is not flattery; and it is not saying any too much. Knowing the circumstances as I do, I am able to speak with absolute certainty of being correct.

I shall duly record the fact that the leasing of camp sites was prevented by the far-sightedness, good generalship and love-of-the-open in the Adirondacks of J.S. Apperson of Schenectady, New York!

Yours very truly, W. T. Hornaday

[William T. Hornaday to John Apperson, 1915]

Apperson kept this letter in his bank vault, as a valuable record of his success.

He established a network of allies – friends who could become very effective at gathering information and influencing opinion. One of the most interesting allies was Warwick Carpenter, Secretary of the Conservation Commission. As early as 1916, Apperson described to Carpenter the rip-rapping efforts he had conducted at Lake George:

... *The conservation work done by my friends would make too long a letter, but you might like to know that three hundred and eleven people from twelve nations and twenty-seven different states, have been assisted at least once to visit a certain State island [Dollar Island], and each helped to save the place, some staying only a few hours and carrying only one stone, others brought several, and some contributed several boat-loads each day during their two weeks' vacation. Part of the gravel and stone was loaded on sleds and skis and towed over the ice for some distance with boats and rowboats. Aside from the pleasure and benefit to themselves, these people have preserved a much-needed harbor and camping spot for the general public...*

[John Apperson to Warwick Carpenter, April 18, 1916]

Carpenter visited Lake George several times and began writing articles in *The Conservationist*, publishing some of Apperson's photographs of skate-sailing classes, and telling of the engineer's efforts to protect the islands.

Apperson's activities rip-rapping shores at the lake also brought him into contact with many of the wealthy landowners. In 1917, Apperson thanked an Episcopal clergyman for his help securing an appropriation of \$10,000.

Dr. E. M. Stires
5th Avenue & 53rd Street; New York
Dear Dr. Stires:

May 24, 1917

The Governor signed my Lake George bill yesterday, appropriating ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for protecting the State islands and I want you to know that I appreciate your efforts with Senator Mills. With best regards, I remain, Sincerely yours, JSA

[John Apperson to Ernest Stires, 1917]

That same year, Apperson became concerned about a landslide that had occurred on the shores of Dome Island and wrote to the owner, Pliny Sexton, to offer to find some men to repair the shore. When Mr. Sexton did not respond, Apperson wrote to John Bolton Simpson, manager at the Sagamore Hotel, to get his opinion about whether to proceed with the repair. Simpson encouraged him in the idea and offered to help. William K. Bixby became a backer, too, and even offered to buy the island himself from Mr. Sexton.

I will be very glad to contribute the amount needed to finish the work on the west bank that you have started, and I will be one of a group of five or six to buy Dome Island if Mr. Sexton does not lease it for the use of the public. If such purchase was made I should favor giving the island to a board of trustees for the benefit of the town of Bolton.

Sincerely, W. K. Bixby (10-14-17)

[William K. Bixby to John Apperson, 1917]

In late summer of 1918, Apperson and his friend Robert Doherty spent a weekend camping on Dollar Island and thought back on all their accomplishments. Together they had supervised the repair to shorelines of several islands and had tidied them up so that the state could start offering them for use by campers. Here is an excerpt from an essay written by Doherty that weekend:

I am compelled to pay a tribute to this man's memory, who by a weird genius of marked Machiavellian tendency, and by unbounded perseverance and energy, had not only restored to the natural beauty certain islands which had been stolen and ravaged, but had wrung from law makers and administrators of the State appropriations to save certain islands which had been slowly washing away, and has saved them. Such achievements inspired, I believe, by a very genuine love of nature's out-of-doors, must not pass unsung, and I hope that these words may express my own sincere appreciation of them...

His love of adventure is unbounded. If he had lived in the sixth century, there is no doubt in my mind that King Arthur might have added immensely to the brilliant history of the Round Table by enlisting this man, whose fame as a knight would surely have surpassed that of Sir Lancelot himself.

[R.H. Doherty, "Tribute to John Apperson," 1918]

Doherty went on to have an impressive career. First, in 1918, he became assistant to Charles Steinmetz. After Steinmetz died in 1923, Doherty became one of GE's consulting engineers and taught in the test program. He left GE during the Great Depression to become a dean at Yale University's School of Engineering and Applied Science. Eventually, in 1936, he became President of the Carnegie Institute (now known as Carnegie Mellon).

Another of the wealthy landowners was George O. Knapp, who owned about eight miles of shoreline on the east side of the lake, including Paradise Bay and Black Mountain Point. Apperson's dream for a Lake George Park would be to include the Narrows and the Eastern shore under state ownership, but it wasn't going to be easy to persuade Knapp to let go of his property. Apperson feared that George Knapp's son, William, was interested in commercial logging. In 1919, he poured out his thoughts in a long letter.

Dear Mr. Knapp:

Oct. 20, 1919

The major part of my original undertaking at Lake George is near completion, and I wish to express my sincere appreciation of your assistance.

Forty-three islands have been repaired, and the Conservation Commission has now agreed to protect the remaining twenty-two that need attention. A large portion of the stone was moved over the ice for less than half the estimated cost, but your barge, recently returned, was necessary to our success. The disputed titles to seventeen islands have been decided, making this public land available to the public and greatly improving the human relations in the neighborhood. These islands have also been cleaned up: the unsightly buildings removed, and the debris used for filling low spots and back or protection walls. The sanitary and camping conditions have been greatly improved by closets and fireplaces, and more such structures are needed. A survey and map of each island has been completed, and several hundred trees planted. The ugly hole that was growing larger each year in Dome Island, ruining the symmetry, has been repaired, and the spot is growing back to the original shape.

...Your dock at Pearl Point was utilized by an increasing number of campers this summer and was greatly appreciated. Very few campers have motorboats and Northwest Bay makes Bolton a long way off in rough weather. The fresh milk and vegetables from your farm made camp life highly beneficial to several hundred, tired people.

...Hoping you are enjoying good health and that I may again have the pleasure of seeing you at the lake. I remain, with best regards

Sincerely yours, JS Apperson

[John Apperson to George O. Knapp, 1919]

In 1920, Apperson started looking for property in Bolton Landing, where he could store his boats and equipment. He had heard that a German millionaire (Beckers) was trying to buy up all the prime land in Huddle Bay, and that he intended to clear cut the trees and build a mansion on top of Barber Mountain. From Apperson's perspective, that sort of development would have ruined the peaceful, rustic atmosphere of Bolton Landing. When he heard about the Lake View Hotel coming on the market, at a price way beyond his own means, he persuaded two others to make a joint purchase. G. Hall Roosevelt (brother of Eleanor Roosevelt) and William Dalton agreed to put up the money, dividing up the land in three parcels, and effectively preventing Beckers from extending his property any further south along Route 9N.

In July of 1921, Apperson found a wonderful way to celebrate his new "camp" in Huddle Bay. He persuaded his neighbors (the Roosevelts and the Daltons) to help host a regatta for the American Canoe Association with over 100 competitors. Their wives and children stayed in the old hotel buildings and erecting tents all over the grounds.

Also in 1921, Apperson stayed in touch with Warwick Carpenter, who had uncovered evidence of illegal logging in the high peaks and stirred up a hornet's nest. Carpenter lost his job but not before publishing an important document: a Memorial that described the problems he had found.

Apperson and Carpenter were both founding members of the Adirondack Mountain Club, and they hoped this new organization would take a strong stand about conservation issues. They were disappointed, however, that the new Conservation Committee – knowing that many of the club's officers had ties to the forestry industry – rejected Carpenter's report. Apperson took the opportunity to deliver his own minority report, defending Carpenter, and speaking out against the notion that state officials were the only ones qualified to make decisions about making land purchases. He argued,

...The second main reason advanced by the majority of the Committee against Mr. Carpenter's motion is that the State authorities should be given an entirely free hand in the conduct of land acquisition. The majority report says 'The men best qualified to judge regarding these matters are the experts on the ground, the Conservation Commissioner, the Land Board, the Superintendent of State Forests, all of whom pass on each project.' ...The minority of your Committee is unable to accept this view. We are not living in an age when it is believed that the King can do no wrong. Our entire system of government is founded upon the theory that the citizens of the State shall inform themselves accurately regarding the conduct of public affairs and if they do not approve of them, will take proper action to change their course. We are not living in an era of the divine right of Kings but rather in one of the referendum and recall.

Apperson ended his comments by thanking the club for publishing a book by young Robert Marshall about climbing the highest peaks in the Adirondacks.

[Warwick Carpenter papers – Adirondack Museum]

In 1923, Mary Loines, a widow who owned hundreds of acres in Northwest Bay, turned to Apperson for advice. He helped persuade her to donate a big parcel on Tongue Mountain to the State as the first step toward the creation of a Lake George Park.

In Albany, Robert Moses, who later became famous for building parks and parkways (Long Island and Niagara Falls), was already taking control of the reins of power in Al Smith's administration and arguing in favor of building highways and recreational facilities. An historic confrontation took place in August, 1923, when Apperson, tipped off by a phone call from Senator Rabenold, learned of Moses' plans to build a highway around the rocky cliffs of Tongue Mountain. In an incident often referred to as "kidnapping the governor," Apperson arranged to take Gov. Smith, Moses, and several dignitaries out for a scenic cruise on the lake. He took them past Dome Island and over to the tip of Tongue Mountain, allowing everyone to see the site of the proposed parkway, which was extremely steep and rocky. Apperson offered them estimates for the cost of constructing such a highway and mentioned an alternate plan – routing the parkway much further west using an existing roadway.

Al Smith took sides with Apperson and blocked the proposed project, a defeat which certainly must have angered Robert Moses. He retaliated over the coming years by being rude to many of the landowners at Lake George, by breaking promises, and by withholding state funds when land was available for purchase at a fair price. [*Robert Moses, the Power Broker; The Fall of New York City*, by Robert A. Caro, 1975]

Mary Loines' daughters, Hilda and Sylvia, took an active interest in Apperson's efforts to create a Lake George Park, supplying him with names and addresses of potential allies and even making speeches on his behalf. In 1923, soon after the kidnapping incident, mentioned above, Sylvia Loines stepped into the local controversy when she submitted an editorial to the *Lake George Mirror* that criticized the discourteous behavior of many members of the Lake George Association (LGA). Other letters to the editor followed – many of them criticizing Sylvia and the Loines family – prompting George Foster Peabody to write one in her defense. A heated political battle over Lake George erupted that year as people who owned property at Lake George debated the issues and took sides in the conflict.

Apperson's friends kept up with the news and heard about the battles raging over Tongue Mountain. Here is a letter from Bill Books, who had just returned from a visit to Turtle Bay:

William J. Books, M.D., New York City

June 25th, 1925

Dear Appy:

In sacred memory of all the flap jacks, cold ducks, whippoorwills through the night, Rattlesnake Bill, black flies, mosquitoes, and numerous delightful days and nights at your shack, where is that road going to run over Tongue Mountain. The Narrows is one of the last undefiled spots in the East. It seems like a crime to invade the quiet and beauty with a State road that can serve no great purpose to anyone. The beauty is down in the heart of things – you can't see a thing from up on top, so why spend all that jack on a State road. Let 'em paddle up the Lake in canoes if they want to see something beautiful. But for the love of Pete tell 'em that road is all a mistake.

With all good wishes, I hope we'll have you with us for a couple meals at least on "As You Were" on the 4th, and three or four nights in the open if you can get away that long. Come up whenever you can, we'll be looking for you. Cordially, Bill Books

[William J. Books to John Apperson, 1925]

Apperson hoped the State would purchase all of Tongue Mountain, thus preventing the construction of roads and highways, and serve as a further deterrence to those who wanted to cut down the trees and build gas stations. The state was slow to act, so Apperson had to devise creative strategies. He purchased a lot in Northwest Bay and held it for several years until the state could find the money to make the purchase. He also raised money for a

memorial fund as a tribute to George Foster Peabody (at French Point) that encouraged GE to sell its parcel to the state and established a memorial park. He purchased Dome Island in 1939 in hopes of eventually turning it over to the state or to some other organization that could protect it – in perpetuity. By 1956, he had found that perfect organization for such an endeavor – the Nature Conservancy.

In Huddle Bay, Apperson had a long philosophical disagreement with William and Ida Dalton over their plans to build an elegant mansion on the central portion of the old hotel property. Appy was worried that the Daltons and their five sons would introduce the wrong sort of crowd – with lots of cars, boats, and social gatherings – thus destroying the peaceful neighborhood. William and Ida eventually sold out, and Irving Langmuir helped find neighbors, including Dr. Edith Clarke and Dr. Katherine Blodgett, who were willing to agree to some mutually beneficial restrictions. Apperson spelled out the terms of their agreement:

It is understood and agreed that you will place restrictions on each sub-lot which you sell in accord with the above, and also upon a similar sub-lot which you will reserve for yourself.

The object of these restrictions shall be:

- 1. To prevent commercial use of the land*
- 2. To make and maintain the land in a state which will be of greatest benefit to the six people concerned (collectively) but not for commercial profit.*
- 3. To preserve the land as a forest area (except parts already cleared)*
- 4. To prevent real estate development*

[John Apperson to Irving Langmuir, 1928]

During the 1920s, Apperson and his friends continued to enjoy skate-sailing in the Narrows. Turtle Bay served as their base of operations; eight of them owned small lots there and signed an agreement much like the one in Huddle Bay. This model for land ownership – with mutually agreeable restrictions on land-use – paved the way for the work of land conservancies today.

A source of affirmation and encouragement came from his interesting relationship with George Foster Peabody, a leading philanthropist who was sympathetic with his idea of creating a Lake George Park. Peabody was close to Franklin D. Roosevelt, and sent him this copy of his letter to FDR.

Dear Governor,

December 29, 1929

...I also enclose Apperson's comeback – I think he is right about Whiteface – but that also was due to American Legion folly – I am sure that is the most dangerous organization in the USA and therefore in the world.

As to the Lake Placid Bob-sled – I think A has not talked it over with Dewey. I am confident A is a most valuable citizen and I hope you can now and again let him report in detail of matters at Lake George especially – I think he is right in his understanding of the way money has used the politicians – I am glad that soon Charles Osborne can deal with the true inwardness of some things in that very important State Department.

Faithfully, George Foster Peabody

[George Foster Peabody to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1929]

By 1930, Apperson had tapped into a powerful source of political strength by recruiting women (many of whom were graduates of women's colleges and members of influential clubs and women's organizations) to help defeat several amendments to the constitution (known as the Hewitt or Reforestation amendment and the Recreation or Closed Cabin amendment.) These progressive women were eager to exercise their new voting privileges and explore their political power. Apperson provided them with pamphlets and coached them on the finer points of the issues, and it wasn't long before these women began writing editorials and testifying before legislative hearings. They helped turn the tide in the Constitutional Convention of 1934 by defeating the Closed Cabin Amendment and upholding the constitutional protections for the forests, thus preventing commercialization of the Adirondack Park.

Ethel Dreier, president of the New York City Women's Club, agreed to write an editorial about the Hewitt Amendment. She apparently made Apperson's acquaintance through her son, Ted Dreier, who was an engineer at GE and one of Apperson's close friends. In April, 1930, Ted wrote a letter to congratulate his mother for having her editorial published, in the *New York Times*!

Dearest Mother,

Schenectady, 4-2-30

We read your letter in the *New York Times* today and think it perfectly wonderful! Oh, Mother, you are so grand! It comes at a very opportune time and is a tremendous help. Appy was thrilled with it and is getting ever so many copies to send all over.

If we can only keep a few guns going. So often our shots are so far between as to be very ineffective. Is there anybody else you know of we could "educate" and get to help us? I wonder if Aunt Minni [?] and the Women's Trade Union League could help?

We'll have to go after that other bill hard. We have been so busy with the Hewitt Bill that the other one is slipping by almost without opposition. I think they hope we will be so busy with this one that we won't have time for both.

Hastily with much love – From Ted

[Ted Dreier Papers, Black Mountain College Archives, WNC Historic Resources]

Later that month, just a few days after the Hewitt bill was passed (a defeat for Apperson's team of supporters), Ethel Dreier wrote to Apperson and encouraged him to find cause for celebration by saying:

Certainly, even the people of NY City now know that they have a forest preserve, and will be more ready to respond to an appeal for its protection next time. I don't think we'll have as hard a time with the Porter-Breton Amendment.

[Ethel Dreier to John Apperson, April 1930]

Another very effective spokesman for the cause was Irving Langmuir, a leading research scientist at GE and enthusiastic supporter of Apperson's causes at Lake George. Langmuir wrote a letter to William Howard, Superintendent of State Forests, objecting to the State's policies particularly on the Eastern shore.

My dear Mr. Howard:

April 17, 1930

Your letter of April 11th is astonishing to me, revealing as it does that the State's failure to acquire the Paradise Bay and Black Mountain lands is not due to a lack of funds, but is due to a policy of your Department.

I am also surprised at your statement that – "The Public enjoy substantially the same use of this property as though it were State land." As you know, camping, hunting and fishing are the principal forms of recreation in that neighborhood and all three are prohibited at present within this area.

The central portion of Lake George for a distance of 8 miles along both shores is unique in its wild beauty, combined with its accessibility by water and trail from the State-owned camp sites and from the great number of camps, homes and hotels situated along 70 miles of lake shore. The purchase by the State of Tongue Mountain Peninsula with part of the funds you refer to, which lands lie wholly on the western side of the lake, has established half of a natural Lake George Park. Without the second half on the eastern shore the wild beauty of the whole Park is jeopardized.

[Irving Langmuir to William Howard, 1930]

By 1931, some of Apperson's closest friends, including Ted Dreier and Robert Doherty, had moved away. Imagine his delight to meet Vincent and Paul Schaefer, who both shared an interest in hiking and in promoting wilderness causes. Here is comment from a letter Paul Schaefer wrote soon after his first meeting with John Apperson:

...My greatest regret at this time is that my business takes so much of my time and I cannot devote what I want to the idea. When night comes, I am usually pretty tired and admittedly not always shipshape to get out and see people. However, regardless how busy we are or will be you can count on me to help with distribution – whether widespread or not.

...At any rate, you will keep me in mind when you want some work done. We consider it a privilege to walk behind you fighters for the wilderness, ready and eager to carry the torch Colvin of '72 lit.

In all sincerity, Paul A. Schaefer

[Paul Schaefer to John Apperson, 1931]

Years later, one of Apperson's protégés, Almy Coggeshall, wrote a personal memoir and tried to explain Apperson's philosophy, saying...

Forever wild was a thorn in the side of the lumber interests, the land developers, and the hydro-electric interests who wanted the freedom to cut down trees wherever they pleased.

So Appy made himself into a one-man Sierra Club to oppose all efforts to amend or to weaken the laws that declared the Adirondacks to be forever wild.

Paul Schaefer and Almy Coggeshall represent a younger generation of hikers and campers who acquired some of the leadership responsibilities from the man they so admired. Coggeshall described his first memories of John Apperson...

...So the last two years I had in high school, I would walk down to Appy's house evenings and listen to a group of men talk on how they were going to turn the State Conservation Department around, or what State Senators could be trusted to vote for certain measures... As I sat there and heard these men discuss their battle plans, I began to perceive that these seemingly ordinary men had power. They could influence government. They could get things done. They could shape the source of future events.

I recall one night when I got home and was going to bed, it suddenly came to me that if these men who had ordinary jobs and lived ordinary lives could have power in the real world, why I could have power, too; I could be a person of consequence! Wow! I could aspire to a life that could make a difference!

[Almy Coggeshall, Memoir, 1990s – Author's Collection]

ABOUT THE SOURCES

In 1999, Brown spent a week in Schenectady at the Adirondack Research Library (ARL; then on Roland Drive in Niskayuna) making photocopies of letters in the files. She returned with them to her home in North Carolina and began working on an Apperson biography. Over the years, she has collected family documents and done extensive reading about the people and places mentioned in the letters. The letters quoted here are almost all taken from archives in the ARL, now housed in the Kelly Adirondack Center at Union College. Brown has also uncovered other archival sources, such as the Ted Dreier papers, Black Mountain College, now housed in Asheville at the WNC Historic Resources Office, and the Warwick Carpenter files in the Adirondack Museum.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Brown has done extensive reading about the Adirondacks, and especially appreciates the two important volumes she cited, Robert Caro's biography of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker*, and Frank Graham's important work, *The Adirondack Park: A Political History*. She owns copies of books about Lake George (by Frank Leonbrunno and Bill Gates) and a large collection of biographies of Apperson's contemporaries, including William K. Bixby and Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ellen Apperson Brown was born in Schenectady, where her father and her great-uncle worked for GE. Her family moved several times – to Erie, PA and to Charlotte, NC – but always came back to Lake George for summer vacations. Realizing how powerful a legacy she has inherited, she accepted the challenge of researching and writing a biography of her great uncle. She has three masters level degrees, including one in history from Virginia Tech, and regularly attends conferences, gives talks, and writes articles for various Adirondack publications. In 2017, Brown authored a book featuring Apperson's early photographs, *John Apperson's Lake George* (Arcadia Publishers).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

To learn about specific battles, friends, and allies, visit the following links:

<http://www.appersonassociates.com>

<http://www.vahistoryexchange.com/family-histories/apperson-family>

<http://www.adirondackalmanack.com/author/ebrown>

<http://www.adirondackactivism.com>