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Accommodations at the Edge of Wilderness: the Story of Hunt Farm and Lunksoos on the Penobscot River's East Branch

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**ACCOMMODATIONS AT THE EDGE OF
WILDERNESS**

**THE STORY OF HUNT FARM AND LUNKSOOS
ON THE PENOBSCOT RIVER'S EAST BRANCH**

JOHN W. NEFF

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DEDICATION

To the native peoples of Maine who for thousands of years used the watersheds of the Penobscot East Branch and Sebois Rivers and the Wassataquoik Stream as their highways, revered the land, and left us an honored heritage

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PREFACE

One of the most memorable moments of my life took place in 2006 when, with the dedicated assistance of Boston's venerable Appalachian Mountain Club Books, I was able to recount for the first time in my book *Katahdin: An Historic Journey* the astounding history of Katahdin, Maine's highest and most storied mountain peak and the wilderness area surrounding it. During the forty-five years before the book's publication I lived close enough to visit the mountain and its protective park many times. I often climbed to the summit, Baxter Peak. I backpacked and spent time in remote areas throughout the park. I was warmed by many an evening campfire and swam in cold waters. I saw storm clouds gather while crossing the great tableland. I came upon deer and moose as well as seeing both familiar and unfamiliar wildflowers. I heard the strange whispers often heard breaking the silence in the remote Northwest Basin. I felt the presence of the native people who revered the mountain and the gods whom they believed lived within the great massif. I was, in short, soon captivated by the wilderness treasures offered to all who visit these sacred precincts.

As those years unfolded I yearned to uncover the fascinating history of this vast area that is now Baxter State Park. That had not been done before, and it became the adventure of my life-time, after my retirement in 1993, to do that research myself and share it with those who love the mountain and the wilderness areas beyond it. Because of the sheer enormity of the task and the

limitations of publication, I soon realized I was not always able to tell the more lengthy stories of the many people and places that grace the stage of Katahdin history.

I had learned that native peoples used the East Branch of the Penobscot River as a major highway as they traveled through the area and across Maine's many watersheds. I also learned that many non-natives traveled to Katahdin from the east even more than from the south until the twentieth century. Time and publication restraints kept me from telling the full story of the eastern access to Katahdin. Some of those necessarily shortened stories are the ones I wish now to share with those who love the wild places on this earth and especially those who gain inspiration from the lands lying to the east of the Katahdin mountain massif.

My personal pilgrimages to Katahdin across the years had always brought me through the town of Millinocket and into Baxter State Park through its southern entrance on the south side of the mountain. In my research I discovered, however, that this southern access was only a twentieth century phenomenon. The few who did reach Katahdin before that time had to come by river travel either from Moosehead Lake or from Bangor and Mattawamkeag on the main branch of the Penobscot. Millinocket was not founded until 1900 when the Great Northern Paper Company began logging operations in the Penobscot West Branch watershed. In order to reach that

valuable timber, roads were built toward the mountain and it was not long before trails were cut to the summit – from Roaring Brook to Chimney Pond, from the great avalanche above Abol Brook, and from Katahdin Stream along the Hunt Spur. These trails remain today the primary access points to the peak.

The truth was, I soon discovered, that for most of the nineteenth century, access to Katahdin was from the east, from Sherman, Sherman Mills, Stacyville and even Patten. Why? We shall soon learn the answer to that important question in greater detail. Earlier, I learned only the bare outlines of this eastern approach to Katahdin, and now I am excited about telling that story in greater depth. It is an extraordinary tale, and I believe the reader will be captivated by it.

History takes many strange and unconventional twists and turns on occasion, so it is especially noteworthy that these lands east of Baxter State Park along the Penobscot East Branch are now largely conserved and protected by the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, proclaimed by President Barak Obama on August, 20, 2016.

The focus of our attention will be two remarkable farm inns established on the banks of the Penobscot East Branch where a ford allowed an easy crossing of

the river for loggers and their equipment as well as recreationists who were seeking to ascend Katahdin. As a result, this became the only way to reach Katahdin with relative comfort for most of the nineteenth century. I was drawn to these narratives because of the amazing human stories of the early pioneers who opened up the land, the loggers who sought to tap the riches of the great forests toward Katahdin, the academics who wished to unlock the physical scientific realities about the area, the hikers and climbers who wished to visit the hauntingly beautiful precincts of Katahdin, and finally the sportsmen who were thrilled to fish and hunt in this untrammelled wilderness area. Some like Henry David Thoreau, Theodore Roosevelt, and Frederic E. Church were well known. Most, of course, were lesser known but they, like most nineteenth century adventurers, wrote accounts of their adventures, later published in newspapers and journals. All made their mark on the stories we will tell.

Finally, I want so much to tell you the story of those who came to the East Branch and the valley of Wassataquoik Stream and who thus made their mark on the land now to be known as Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, a park with a great future as a protected natural resource.

Some Usage Notations:

1. "Katahdin" is the correct modern spelling for Maine's highest peak. In the distant past, the spelling was often "Ktaadn." Whenever the latter spelling is used in a quote I have left it as written in the source.

2. The reader may wonder why I have included so many quotes by those who wrote of their visits to the Hunt Farm and Lunksoos. I wanted the reader to hear their original words rather than attempting to paraphrase.

PRELUDE

SETTING THE STAGE

If, in the year 1830, you were to stand at the western edge of the newly settled hamlet of Stacyville, Maine, and look across the valley toward the setting sun, you would have been impressed by several distinctive features. First and foremost, you would not be able to miss the jagged features of Maine's highest mountain, Katahdin, rising from the level countryside to nearly a mile above sea level. Then your eye would surely notice the vast area of virgin timber stretching between you and the mountain in the distance. If you looked carefully you might catch some glimpses of the waters of the East Branch of Maine's mighty Penobscot River flowing through the valley. We are about to impart the extraordinary story of two farm inns, soon to be built on the banks of the river in the midst of that pristine valley. It is a story of boldness, perseverance, endurance, devotion, and stamina. Now, as this area has become part of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, it is a story that needs to be told.

First, however, we must go back a few years....

Our chronicle of the Hunt Farm and the Dacey Farm/Lunksoos sporting camps along the East Branch of Maine's Penobscot River begins with those historic post-American Revolutionary years of the 1780s and extends to the moment Maine achieved statehood in 1820. The English methodically colonized the New England coast and the Maritime Provinces in the seventeenth century, while the French colonized the St. Lawrence River lands from its mouth to the far inland backcountry of the Great Lakes. Separating these two relatively populated expanses was a broad area of wilderness seldom visited by the colonial Euro-Americans. Until the waning years of the eighteenth century, a vast unknown region lay north beyond the city of Bangor.

It is imperative for all to understand that for centuries our native brothers and sisters from many tribes utilized this "vast unknown" region for hunting and trapping, traveling up and down its rivers and streams, and moving easily between one and another of its great watersheds. As a result, temporary campsites were established, usually at the meeting point of rivers and streams or where waterway banks were low with springs located nearby. Pre-historic artifacts have been discovered at formal archaeological excavations as well as by amateurs on the surface. Native peoples lived in these regions for centuries and have bequeathed to us a belief that we all have a sacred place in the world and, in response, are expected to be sensitive to the life forces surrounding us and the sacred presence of the Great Spirit. We share an enormous legacy to steward and care for the creation with honor and respect.

While some settlers along the Atlantic coast in the post-Revolutionary years timidly explored these inland expanses, they were never the subject of serious exploration and survey by the loosely governed New England jurisdictions. At the close of the American Revolution the new United States of America found itself in possession of much of this area that soon became known as the District of Maine under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. At first, the exploration of the wild lands had to wait while more pressing issues of governance and survival were worked out by the Commonwealth in the 1780s. By the 1790s the Commonwealth was ready and eager to discern the nature of these hitherto largely inland regions.

The Commonwealth determined in 1792 to embark on a massive effort to map all of its villages and countrysides. The effort included a survey and mapping of its northern possessions in the District of Maine, beginning with the expansive Penobscot River watershed, the waters of which flowed through Bangor from the north. A survey expedition was subsequently authorized in 1793 by the Commonwealth's Land Committee. It would be led by Capt. Park Holland, a Revolutionary soldier, a Harvard graduate, and a highly experienced surveyor from Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. Joining him in leadership was Jonathan Maynard, also a Revolutionary soldier, a Harvard graduate, and a prominent citizen of Framingham, Massachusetts.

The expedition was charged with the task of surveying the Penobscot River from a spot just north of Bangor and to ascend the river's East Branch to an unnamed locale of lakes, later known as Matagamon. The two men were also directed to identify potential mill sites and make general botanical and geological observations. That was not all. They were further charged with laying out a boundary line six miles to the east and parallel to the East Branch to be reserved for "the Indians." The expedition left Boston on August 4, 1793 and sailed northeast to Bangor, arriving there on August 8.

Bangor at that time was becoming the gateway to the undeveloped lands to the north and the east. The first sawmill there had been built in 1772, and a city plan was created in 1784. The number of settlers began to increase, lured by the rich timber resources in the immense Penobscot River watershed. Soon sawmills, utilizing several falls along the river north of the city, were in place to mill the raw logs floating from the interior into quality and profitable lumber for faraway places. The finished product was then rafted to the waiting sailing ships at Bangor's busy waterfront.

After gathering together provisions, along with canoes and native guides, the group began to work its way north on the river. They passed Indian Island at Old Town, and finally reached the "great crotch" (as they named it), a point of land where the West and East Branches of the river join. This was the locale known to the natives as Nicatou where the village of Medway is located today.

There the expedition turned north and began to ascend the East Branch of the river. Somewhere a little north of today's Grindstone Falls, it was determined that Holland should return to Bangor in order to survey eastwards toward Passamaquoddy Bay before turning north again to rejoin the expedition. Maynard and the rest of the group continued north on the river.

On September 3, after noting an excellent mill site at today's Whetstone Falls, they reached the future site of the Hunt Farm. Of special interest to our story is Maynard's discovery there of a mile of a "mostly fine intervale" [a low-lying tract of land along a river] and an area of "shoal" [a shallow place]. Both of the descriptions would later be used as two of the special characteristics making the Hunt Farm an ideal location when it was eventually established in 1832. Could William H. Hunt have known of Maynard's description of this site when he arrived in Stacyville in 1832 to build his farm inn on the East Branch? It is entirely likely he well knew the information contained in that report and it governed his decision.

The expedition continued upriver and soon camped that night where a major stream entered from the west into the East Branch. They called it the "little crotch" and it most certainly was the mouth of today's Wassataquoik Stream. Over the days to come the expedition continued upriver, passing to the east of the future Dacey Farm/Lunksoos site, portaging a steep cataract known today as Grand Falls, passing and naming "Stair Case Falls" (today's Stair Falls), and

finally reaching three small lakes, the first of which Maynard named Otter Lake. A later dam was built in the 1880s, flooding all three of the lakes and creating one large lake known today as Grand Lake Matagamon.

The field notes mention a large settlement of Penobscots at Mattawamkeag but otherwise only occasional native encampments along the main stem of the river. No native presence was recorded along the East Branch. This then is indeed uncharted, unknown territory for non-natives, making the expedition's field notes all the more extraordinary. [Footnote 1]

Upon Maynard's return to Massachusetts after almost three months away, a carefully crafted map, based on Maynard's field notes, was created by then-renowned cartographer, Osgood Carlton. The map was published in 1795. Clearly shown is the six-mile wide strip of land reserved for "the indians" to the east of the river, intended to reach all the way from Old Town to Grand Lake Matagamon. Subsequent maps, however, in 1802 and shortly thereafter, show only the waterways, the reserved tribal land survey lines having been eliminated. Sadly, no explanation is given for the withdrawal of those reserved lands.

As the new century begins, five significant events will greatly influence the unfolding stories of the two solitary farms to be established in due time along this remarkable stretch of wild inland waterway. The first was the

achievement of statehood for Maine in 1820. After the American Revolutionary War the area we know as Maine today was known as the District of Maine under the authority of the State of Massachusetts. A strong wave of sentiment, however, by the residents living in the District in 1819, led to an act providing a way to separation from Massachusetts. A referendum supported the proposal and, after a Constitutional Convention drafted a Constitution, Maine was admitted as the twenty-third state on March 15, 1820. This unleashed additional efforts to explore and more fully map the interior lands that heretofore had been left largely blank on the charts.

The second significant event was the authorization of a Maine Boundary Commission by the new state that same year. The Commission's charge was first to set and mark a grand monument line from Maine's eastern border with Canada to its western border, also with Canada. Both British and American surveyors were to take part in the effort, and the Commission was to report back by 1825. The Commission was also charged with laying out new "townships" from that base line northward to the Canadian border and southward toward the already existing townships in more populated areas. Most of the townships were a little over six square miles (app. 24,000 acres) in size and were identified by a series of letters and numbers. As the survey moved from east to west it is important for our story to note that the Monument Line crossed the East Branch of the Penobscot in 1825, four and a half miles upriver from the future Hunt Farm site and just three miles upriver

from the future Dacey Farm/Lunksoos site. Even today both sites are located in the Township T 3 R 7 WELS [West of the Easterly Line of the State] on the monument grid. The survey was not totally completed until 1833, but its presence on these maps leads to the third significant event – the building of the Aroostook Road linking the southern and northern portions of the new State of Maine.

This undertaking called for extending the already existing road from Bangor to Mattawamkeag northward to Sherman. Before 1828 only a very crude, rough thoroughfare reached for about sixty miles north of Bangor as far as Mattawamkeag. That year a military outpost was established in Houlton to defend and guard against any possible British raids across the state's still vaguely drawn northern border. To more rapidly move troops and to supply the Houlton outpost, the United States Congress appropriated \$15,000 in 1828 to construct the so-called Military Road to Houlton. Construction began in 1829 and was completed in 1832.

About the same time the state also decided to build another road, the Aroostook Road, to branch off the Military Road at Molunkus seven miles north of Mattawamkeag. The new road would follow an earlier marked trail that was passable by horseback from Mattawamkeag to Patten. The construction line ran in a north-northwesterly direction and by 1831 reached the area of today's Benedicta and Sherman. The road later continued north to

Ashland and the northern areas of Aroostook County. Both of these roads were also intended to encourage settlement, homesteading, and logging at a time when so many New Englanders were migrating westward to the rich prairie lands being discovered there.

The establishment of these two road systems, especially the Aroostook Road, leads us to the fourth significant event to help us understand the unique roles of our two iconic farm inns along the Penobscot East Branch; that is, the settlement of the communities of Stacyville and Sherman. Good homestead conditions were found in the region where these communities took root. The soil was rich and water and lumber were plentiful. Whetstone Falls along the river was identified by a land survey as early as 1826 as an ideal site for mills. Though some early settlers may have arrived by 1830 or even before, the first known settler in Sherman was reported to be Alfred Cushman who began to clear his land in June of 1832. Others quickly followed. John Stacy, said to be first settler in Stacyville, began his homestead about the same time, and Foster Tracy soon erected his farm buildings in Stacyville. The latter two gentlemen will play an important part in the later years of our story. One of Stacyville's modern roads is the Siberia Road, so named because it felt just as cold and raw there sometimes as Russia's Siberia must have felt. Even today the road offers unobstructed, commanding views of Katahdin and the mountains north of Katahdin.

John James Audubon, one of America's most distinguished ornithologists, traveled with his family from Houlton down the Military Road in the Fall of 1832, and likely saw the great Katahdin massif to the west, perhaps most dramatically as he neared Mattawamkeag. He wrote on that occasion:

Mountains which you well know are indispensable in a beautiful landscape, reared their majestic crests in the distance. [Footnote 2]

Finally, the fifth significant event that contributes to the backdrop of our adventure was the building of a extremely rough path or winter road from the new settlement of Stacyville down to the Penobscot East Branch, a distance of some seven miles. It is difficult to know just when that road was started, but it is likely that the earliest settlers had by 1831 cast an eager eye westward and instinctively knew the value of the timber located along such a road. They would also have known the possibility of accessing the valuable timber across the river toward Maine's highest mountain, Katahdin. They knew the way to reach that rich resource was to cross the East Branch and build a road along the lengthy Wassataquoik Stream, the headwaters of which reached to the very heart of the mountain itself. These homesteaders also knew that such a road would make possible foot trails to Katahdin, a much more accessible route than reaching the mountain from its south side that required a long and arduous river trip by canoe. And so, to reach the river and the stream they must first build an access road to the river.

We must note again that the lands along the river were already frequented by our native brothers and sisters. Though never establishing permanent settlements here, they used the river and its tributary streams as their highways. There might have been seasonal settlement site at the mouth of the Wassataquoik, and they certainly fished the stream and the river. We must never forget their presence in these lands long before the settlers arrived, and we must remember how fervently they believed these lands to be sacred and worthy of preservation. In this realm of river and stream, hill and mountain, tree and flower, bear and deer they experienced the very heartbeat of the Great Spirit. May we also feel that same deep and abiding reverence as we share our story.

It was at this time that two adventurous pioneer homesteaders, William Harmon Hunt and Hiram Dacey, both from the town of Carthage in Franklin County, appear on the scene of our chronicle, eager to participate in a groundbreaking venture in Maine's immense north woods. The two farms they established became the focal point of access into the lands east of Katahdin. All the loggers who cut timber in the Wassataquoik watershed and almost all of the recreationists who visited the area crossed the river at these locations. All of them stayed at or passed by one or the other or both of these two places of accommodation and supply for nearly two centuries – a remarkable episode in Maine history.

I – THE PIONEERS ARRIVE – 1830-1845

An exceedingly noteworthy land transaction took place in Maine’s newly minted township T3 R7 in March, 1830, just five years after Maine’s Monument Line survey passed across the Penobscot East Branch. Edward Smith of Bangor had acquired from the state all or most of the township in that locale and decided in the late 1820s to sell his holdings. Four gentlemen from far away Gorham, Maine were led, at that time, to invest in the future of northern Maine and bought the tract. They were Nathaniel Merrill (“Yeoman”), James Smith (“Gentleman”), Elihu Baxter (“Physician”), and finally Charles Hunt (“Merchant”). Two of those buyers are singularly relevant to our story. [Footnote 1]

The first, Elihu Baxter, was a Gorham physician who earlier had practiced medicine in several remote Maine communities where he used a portion of his personal wealth to speculate in land acquisition, a common practice of the day. Elihu’s son was none other than James Phinney Baxter, noted Portland businessman, politician, and philanthropist. One of James Phinney’s sons was Percival Proctor Baxter, the very man who nearly a century later began his

own land acquisitions resulting in the preservation of the region surrounding Katahdin, Maine's highest mountain, and the creation of Baxter State Park. We might well ponder if Percival knew all about his grandfather's land acquisition when, so many years later in 1920, he and others in his hiking party stayed overnight at the Lunksoos Sporting Camp (the old Dacey Farm site) on their way to climb Katahdin. It would be the first of Percival's three known ascents of the mountain.

The second of the buyers of the T3 R7 township was Gorham merchant, Charles Bonapart Hunt. Charles came from a large family of at least five siblings, one of whom was William Harmon Hunt, who now enters the stage of our drama as the man who established the Hunt Farm. Their father, Capt. Carl Oliver Hunt, was originally from Milton, Massachusetts and served as a soldier in the American Revolution. He served for three years at Fort Ticonderoga in New York.

We do not know all the details about Charles' participation in the purchase of T3 R7 but the deed, dated March 6, 1830, conveys the whole township of 23,255 acres to the four buyers for the princely sum of \$2,781. William Harmon Hunt was eight years older than his brother Charles and had already established himself as a farmer in Maine's Carthage area, a strong agricultural community along the banks of the Androscoggin River. At the time of the land purchase in 1830 William was thirty-eight years old and married to Nizolla

Gould (or Goold). Their family included eight children and one on the way at that time.

Charles certainly must have talked with his older brother about the possibility of William pulling up stakes and pioneering a farm and inn at the T3 R7 site. In response, William himself may have begun to seriously consider the idea of moving to this much less populated locality to help open it up to settlement and exploration. Whatever the reason, William would likely have traveled north that same summer of 1830 to determine the possibilities of success there. He had several strong teenage sons to accompany him, and they all likely observed that the new Aroostook Road from Molunkus was nearing completion, enabling one to reach Stacyville more reasonably than before.

William must have been inspired by what he saw in the Stacyville/Sherman area that summer because the following year, in June of 1831, after a winter of conversation and negotiation, Charles Hunt of Gorham formally sold his portion of the T3 R7 tract to his brother William of Carthage for \$1,200 [Footnote 2]. Included in the sale was the river bend, the intervale land, the shoal (ford), as well as land north of the mouth of Wassataquoik Stream. All had been noted earlier in the 1793 Holland/Maynard survey. It was a strategic parcel, controlling entry to the timberlands surrounding the entire east side of Katahdin. A much later 1883 survey still clearly shows this "Hunt Lot", including all of these features.

William began to make plans to occupy the land on the east bank of the Penobscot East Branch, not far below the mouth of Wassataquoik Stream. He might well have also visited the Stacyville/Sherman area in 1831 to arrange for his arrival the following year. Part of those preparations was to enlist the assistance of his good friend Hiram Dacey, a fellow-farmer in Carthage, to join him in settling the new land. No deed evidence has yet been uncovered to show that Dacey ever purchased his land which lay one mile north of Hunt's on the river just above the mouth of Wassataquoik Stream and at the foot of Lookout Mt. We are left with the impression that Hunt may have remained the owner and Dacey simply rented his land from William. Until further evidence is discovered, we just don't know for sure. Indeed, these two sites appear, with one exception, never to have been owned by any of the timber owners who cleared the land, often to its detriment, for business profit. With the later exception of Ayer and Rogers in the 1890s the lands remained as personal holdings.

During his reconnaissance trips, William quickly discovered several significant values of the land he had bought from his brother. First, the early Stacyville/Sherman settlers, especially John Stacy, had likely laid out plans already for that first very rough road, at times described as a winter road, to lead west from the villages seven or more miles down to the river. The road would end at a shallow stretch where the river widened at a bend and could

be forded easily to provide access to the valuable timber in the enormous Wassataquoik Stream watershed toward Katahdin. This is certainly the same intervale spot where Jonathan Maynard had noted in his 1793 survey that the river widened and was shallow. Second, Hunt could utilize the roughed out road to bring in the supplies he needed to the new farm site, including horses to help clear the land. Hiram Dacey, of course, would use the same rough road to bring in his supplies as well. Third, the large bend in the river afforded excellent views both up and down the river, a distinct advantage. The key to success for the two farm sites, of course, was the emerging logging industry taking place along the road toward the river and which would eventually cross the river at the ford and continue up the Wassataquoik Valley.

Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, pre-eminent translator of Maine native languages, said that the lower portion of the East Branch, as well as the stream, were known as "Wassategwewick," meaning where the natives speared salmon in the clear rapid water. At times the spearing was also done by torchlight at night as well. [Footnote 3]

There is a remarkable story in Hunt family annals of how William and Hiram reached the sites where they would build their homes by traveling through Sherman to Patten, many miles north. They hauled their goods west from Patten to the Seboeis River where they descended to Grand Falls (Seboeis). There they built a raft and floated down the Seboeis below the falls into the

Penobscot East Branch, continuing down river to the sites they had selected. [Footnote 4] It could all be true, of course, but would have required herculean efforts to reach the remote areas west of Patten and would have involved a trek of some forty or more additional miles. The fact that the land bought by Charles Hunt and then sold to William was so much nearer to Stacyville and the prospect of a rough road from there to the river, leads us to prefer that access route. It is nonetheless a wonderful story that well expresses the tenacity, daring, and commitment of these two men to forge a new enterprise in an area where success was not entirely assured.

Another remarkable aspect of this unfolding saga is the fact that we have an extraordinary amount of information about the Hunt Farm and the Hunt family in the nineteenth century, but we have little to no information about the Dacey Farm or the Dacey family in the same period. No ancestry information, no deeds, almost nothing. There are some fragments of information that there were Daceys (spelled sometimes Dace, or even Daisey) in Carthage at that time but nothing that links that information to Hiram Dacey. Hopefully, further information about him and his family will be discovered someday. As noted above, we have a wealth of historical material about the Hunt family, preserved faithfully by the many Hunt family descendants who still live in the Stacyville/Sherman region.

And so, sometime in the late spring of 1832, William Harmon Hunt and Hiram Dacey arrived at the farm sites they had chosen and began clearing the land. They were alone, their families having remained in Carthage until adequate shelter could be erected. The two men managed to bring with them a large rip saw, enabling them to cut lumber for the erection of the farm buildings. Legend has it that Dacey built his log house without using a single iron nail, likely choosing to use the same wooden pegs employed today in post and beam construction - remarkable if true. We can be sure the two friends helped each other during the challenging months ahead. It is reported that Hunt employed men from the villages up the hill to help. It is also said he managed to clear one hundred acres for planting hay and corn, as well as cutting a full supply of boards for construction. The one hundred acre estimate might be a slight exaggeration because the slope of the land would not have provided quite that much bottom land for growing crops. The steeper slopes behind the farm, however, would have provided excellent grazing land.

A whimsical and entirely believable family report relates that the two men arrived with potato peelings in their pockets to use to start the growing season. Sometime late in the year 1833, after completing the construction of the first homesteads and a few necessary farm buildings, the two men returned to Carthage and brought their families to their new homes along the East Branch. The Hunt clan consisted of William's wife Nizolla and their nine children: Lois, Charles, John, William M., Sarah, Jane, Clarissa, Abigail, and

Oliver. Two additional children, Levi and Joseph would later be born at the new farmstead.

Another memory handed down by Hunt family descendants tells of the Hunt boys netting huge salmon from the river and toting them on their shoulders the seven or more miles by foot to Stacyville and Sherman to sell. It became a favorite activity of the children to catch the huge salmon as they swam by the farm on their way to spawn in the upriver lake country. When Henry David Thoreau passed the Hunt Farm years later as he canoed down the East Branch in 1857, he “noticed a seine here stretched on the bank, which probably had been used to catch salmon.” [Footnote 5]

What emerged in the following years was first and foremost a farm operation to provide the primary source of support for these stalwart pioneers and their families. Hunt could not have had much promise of success to begin with, but he took the gamble, worked hard, and the effort proved to be largely a success. The farms would eventually include crops such as potatoes, oats, and corn. The barns housed oxen, horses, and chickens. Deer and moose were hunted and served at the family dinner table. In addition, the goal would soon include providing for the needs of the loggers as they arrived to ford the river and begin their journey cutting timber up the Wassataquoik Valley into the very heart of Katahdin. The resulting logging camps were far from the established

villages and the farms were, for that reason, vital to supplying the needs of the loggers and their livestock.

What also materialized before long was a growing number of recreationists who were discovering the beauty and wonder of reaching Katahdin with far greater ease than was achievable on its West Branch side. These emerging farm inns provided a unique commercial operation serving both the logging industry as well as overnight accommodations for those seeking to find refreshment and renewal by visiting this vast mountainous and riverine wilderness area. The Hunt and Dacey farms became the key points of access to Katahdin country for the rest of the nineteenth century until the Great Northern Paper Company was founded in 1900 and its road system from Millinocket began to reach closer and closer to Katahdin on its south and southwestern side.

The initial role of the Hunt Farm was, of course, to serve the loggers, and this was certainly accomplished early on as the road from Stacyville to the river began to be minimally improved during the mid-1830s. Later, in 1839, William H. Hunt was the leader of a group of local citizens who petitioned the Penobscot County Commissioners to make extensive improvements to the rough road from the East Branch to the Aroostook Road in Sherman. This "County Road" proposal was intended to encourage homesteading and commerce along its length. Though it is not clear whether or not the major

improvements envisioned by the petitioners ever took place, some enhancements, even if minor, were likely made. The changes certainly hastened the start of logging across the river from the ford at Hunt's in the early 1840s. It is interesting that the present road from Stacyville to the Hunt Farm site follows the 1839 County Commissioner's survey layout

As the Hunt and Dacey farms developed they were more and more able to offer overnight accommodations to scientific expeditions authorized by the young state of Maine to explore these lands. The first such expedition was the 1837 arrival by river of Charles Thomas Jackson whose assignment was to carry out a geological reconnaissance of the public lands of Maine. Along with the Rev. William Clark Larrabee and eight others, the party had already explored Katahdin from its West Branch side and had made a notable late-season ascent of the mountain. Later, in October, the party began an exploration of the East Branch and the Seboeis/Aroostook River systems. Jackson's timing made the going very difficult due to some freezing of the waterways and late storms of chilling rain and snow. Of his overnight stay at the Hunt Farm, Jackson wrote:

Arrived at Mr. William Hunt's, twenty-four miles above Nickatou, and passed the night there. This gentleman has prepared for himself, at this place, a very good farm, on which he raises supplies of provisions for the lumber cutters. He has dwelt here five years, and has brought the soil into a good state of cultivation, and during the present summer has raised one hundred bushels of wheat, and an abundance of potatoes and hay.

[Footnote 6]

The second scientific expedition to stop at the Hunt Farm was in the spring of 1838. Led by Dr. Ezekial Holmes at the direction of Maine's State Board of Internal Improvements under the State Land Agent, the assignment was to explore and survey the territory of the Aroostook River north of the Penobscot watershed. They ascended the Penobscot by way of Mattawamkeag, continued up the East Branch to the lake at Matagamon and finally portaged over to the Aroostook River. A spring expedition was expected to provide a higher flow of water and also avoid the extremely cold weather Dr. Jackson had encountered the fall before. Holmes was to note geological and forest information, navigation features, potential dam, canal, and railway locations – quite comprehensive indeed. Dr. Holmes reported:

Here [at Whetstone Falls] is a very good situation for dams, and also a very good site for an inclined plane and railway around the falls, which I think would be the better way to surmount them. The portage is about a half a mile in length, over which we found it necessary to carry our cargo, but the boats were warped up over the rapids or falls.

From this you have a long reach of smooth water which affords very good boating. The country also improves in appearance, for, instead of the burnt trees and sterile rocks which mark much of the country for some miles below, a hard wood growth appears, patches of intervale show themselves, and the upland in the rear of them is evidently of a good quality. This appearance continues until you come to the mouth of the Wassataquoik, which enters the Penobscot on the west side. Around the mouth of the stream, is a large body of intervale land while on the opposite side on the east the land rises to a large swell covered with hard-wood. Two settlers, Messrs. Hunt and Dacey have got very good farms under cultivation here. They are at present the highest up of any on this branch of the Penobscot and are the last inhabitants the traveler finds as he proceeds up the river.

[Footnote 7]

By the early 1840s the loggers had advanced across the East Branch and up Wassataquoik Stream as far as Orin Falls using the new tote road that was slowly taking shape along the north bank of the stream toward the rich stands of timber in the watershed. At first, the tall giant white pine stands were cut, and, after they were harvested by the 1850s, other species as well as younger pines became the logger's targets. With this feverish commercial activity Hunt may have even developed his own cut lumber business. The farm flourished, and it was not long before recreational users also arrived to enjoy overnight accommodations at the Hunt Farm before crossing the river at the ford and starting their journey to Katahdin.

The stage is now set for some of the most prosperous years at the Hunt Farm to unfold.

II HUNT FARM – THE WAY TO KATAHDIN 1845 – 1880

The formidable Wassataquoik Tote Road continued its slow but steady advance up along the north bank of Wassataquoik Stream in the 1840s, resulting in increased logging in the watershed. As this occurred, the Hunt Farm became the focal point of the traffic crossing the East Branch at the ford. On the other hand, for reasons we may never fully understand, the Dacey Farm site almost disappears from the record until the early 1880s. It is likely that the farm continued to support the Dacey family as well as make a profit from the sale of supplies and food to the logging operations. It is hoped that more information will someday surface to fill this unwelcomed gap in our story.

After hikers were able to cross the river at the ford and continue their journey toward Katahdin, recreational use also began flowing through the Hunt Farm. It all began in 1845 when two gentlemen from the Boston area arrived, determined to climb Katahdin from its north side, something that had not been attempted before. Classmates at Harvard College, both belonged to very prominent Boston area families. Edward Everett Hale, grandson of the

legendary Revolutionary War hero, Nathan Hale, served as the pastor of several Massachusetts churches before becoming Chaplain of the United States Senate. He was an author of some note and wrote the classic *The Man Without a Country*. William Francis Channing, the son of William Ellery Channing, was a member of an influential family of authors, historians, and social reformers.

The two adventurers traveled by steamship from Boston to Bangor and then by stage to Mattawamkeag. There they engaged a guide who had been working as a logger along the Penobscot East Branch and had on several occasions climbed toward Katahdin from its north side. An engaging and lengthy account of their trip written by Hale was published in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* not long after they returned and later appeared in 1901 in the *Appalachian Mountain Club's Appalachia* journal. One of Hale's mentors, famed Harvard botanist, Dr. Asa Gray, asked Hale to bring back alpine zone plant specimens to add to Gray's vast collections at the college, a request Hale was happy to carry out.

The two men and their guide, Jack Jackins, were likely the first Katahdin-bound climbers to travel the relatively new Aroostook Road to Sherman. They stayed the night with the Lowell family and early the next morning headed through Stacyville and down the rough logging road toward the Hunt Farm. Hale described the experience:

... [we] walked to Hunt's [for] breakfast, through a drizzling shower and miserably wet roads. The position of Hunt's farm,

the only one in the township....is for picturesque beauty utterly unsurpassable. From a thick forest you came out upon a hillside to his clearing, grass and grain covered, sweeping down the hill to the river. The river here takes a long circuit, enclosing on the opposite side a noble piece of intervale covered with the richest growth of hardwood timber, whose varying and brilliant shades contrast with the more sombre evergreen growth of two or three fine mountains which rise immediately beyond. Hunt's house is just on the river opposite this forest peninsula. It is a large, rambling place, partly built of logs and partly of frame, holds communication with the settlements by the river and the road which we passed and is the last inhabited station of the loggers in this quarter. We remained here most of the day, our guide not arriving until quite late.

About two, however, we started on our journey up Wassataquoik River. By the road on the bank of that stream we were twenty miles from the foot of the mountain. Hunt's boatman took us up [the] Penobscot half a mile and set us on the north side of Wassataquoik, and we began to "travel." [Footnote 1]

There is no mention in Hale's account of their staying at the Hunt Farm upon their return from Katahdin, but it is reasonable to assume they did, and surely they were welcomed and provided the good food and calm rest for which the Hunt family was noted.

The following year, in the summer of 1846, a Congregational Church pastor from the frontier town of Ashland in Aroostook County arrived at the Hunt Farm on his memorable first trip to climb Katahdin. After graduating from the Bangor Theological Seminary in the spring of that year, the Rev. Marcus Rodman Keep traveled the Aroostook Road north to his new church in Ashland, and he caught a glimpse of the Katahdin massif to the west as he passed through Sherman. He would never forget that first sight of the mountain, and he vowed to return and climb it. True to his word, a few months

later Keep returned with his friend James Haines and stayed at the Hunt Farm on his way to Pamola Peak by way of the Wassataquoik Tote Road, Katahdin Lake, Avalanche Brook, and the East Slide avalanche. The following year, in 1847, he returned with a group of clergy friends, stayed again at the Hunt Farm, and ascended to the summit. After a long march in the rain on their return, they

...forded the Wassataquoik, and came out opposite Mr. Hunt's, whence the bateaux took us across the East Branch. This was a little past four o'clock p.m. Our appearance was far from beardless, our externals somewhat ragged and torn, and our appetites keen as a Damascus razor. "Mine host" and family received us most cordially, having felt some anxiety in our absence. They made us joyful around a full table of good things. On the day following...we passed to Mr. Cushman's, and on Thursday took conveyances for home

[Footnote 2]

Keep and his family and companions made many trips to the mountain over the years to come, usually availing themselves of the hospitality offered by the Hunts. Of special significance were his trek in 1848 to lay out and clear the first formal trail to Katahdin, the renown Keep Path, and his 1849 hike with a group of women, one of whom, his wife Hannah, would be the first woman to reach Katahdin's summit. In later years Keep became a much-desired guide for others seeking to reach Katahdin, often meeting his client parties at the Hunt Farm. He was the key person to open up Katahdin's east side for hikers wishing to ascend Maine's highest peak.

It is significant that the year of Marcus Keep's first Katahdin sojourn in 1846 was also the year Henry David Thoreau made his first trip to Maine's wilderness and climbed a little short of Katahdin's summit from its West Branch side. On Thoreau's third trip to Maine's north woods, in 1857, he canoed down Webster Stream, across Matagamon Lake and down the Penobscot East Branch, stopping briefly at the Hunt Farm. We will visit that experience at a later time.

A Botanical Survey of the state was authorized by the Maine legislature in 1847 and Dr. Aaron Young, the State Botanist, was appointed to lead it. James Cowan of Bangor was employed as the guide. Invited to join the expedition were Dr. George Thurber, the Rev. Ariel Chute, Dr. John DeLaski as well as several of Dr. Young's students. The expedition's assignment was to travel the Wassataquoik Valley in August and ascend Katahdin, making botanical observations and gathering specimens along the way. Thurber penned the following report of their visit to Hunt's:

From the road [at Stacyville] we had a fine view of Katahdin, lifting its bare head among the clouds. Having proceeded as far upon our journey as we could travel with a wagon, we stopped... at the residence of Mr. John Cram who, learning the object of our visit, rendered us, as also did Mrs. Cram, every assistance in their power.

We remained here for the night, and on Saturday morning,... leaving all articles not absolutely necessary, we loaded one of the horses with the heavier portions of our luggage, and each one taking a backload, we started through the woods for the residence of Mr. William Hunt. Our march was a very tedious one, the road being crossed by innumerable swamps and miry bogs is only passable for vehicles in the winter. It was now in

such wretched condition as to be almost impassable for our horse, and we were obliged frequently to unload him, and carry the luggage around the more difficult places.

We reached "Hunt's" as it is called by the lumbermen, in the middle of the afternoon.

This is the limit of civilization in this direction, and the point from which loggers and explorers date their departure into the forest. Mr. Hunt owns a large and productive farm, delightfully situated upon the East Branch of the Penobscot, and raises annually about one hundred tons of hay, and other produce in proportion.

For these he finds a ready market at his own door, from the lumbermen, who pass here in great numbers on their way to the lumber districts, and with whom he derives considerable trade in the way of supplies. Here, shut out from society, ten miles from any road, he commenced a new farm, and surmounted all difficulties, he has reared quite a numerous family and arrived at a competency sufficient to obtain for them all the necessaries and some of the luxuries of life. We passed the Sabbath here, and one of our party being a clergyman, at the request of Mr. Hunt, religious services were held which his family attended. There were many who preached in more pretending temples on that day, but none who had a more attentive audience.

Early Monday morning, the 23rd, we made preparations to resume our journey, which from here was to be on foot, and as we had to carry a week's provisions, cooking utensils, tent cloth, and boxes for specimens, besides our blankets, coats and other personal equipment, it took sometime to make up our packs and harness ourselves.... Being set across the East Branch, a walk of a mile brought us to the banks of the Wassataquoik (pronounced *Sattacook*), near its junction with the East Branch, where it was very shallow and rapid.

[Footnote 3]

About the party's time of arrival at the Hunt Farm, another member of the team, Dr. J. K. Laski, wrote:

...in the afternoon about three o'clock, [we] arrived at the farm of Mr. Hunt....Mr. Hunt has made himself here a productive farm.

He removed from the western part of this state, some ten or twelve years since, in the wilderness here, poor and with quite a family of children, the most of whom were too small to render him much assistance in making a new farm. In a few years, however, with much toil and privation, he was able to maintain his family; and by laying down most of the land he had cleared up to grass, he opened a sure way to prosperity, - the hay at this time in the immediate neighborhood of lumbering operations, commanded a much higher price than it could have done in any market town in the state. His oats and other grain obtained also a corresponding price; thus in a few years he was enabled to overcome all difficulties in making a good farm, and to possess all the conveniences of our best farmers.

He has erected a very large barn, clapboarded and finished in the best style, suitable for the accommodation of his host of teams.

He has also, a comfortable story and a half house, and convenient out-houses, etc. The most of the boards for these buildings were sawed on the ground by two men, with a "whip-saw," as we remember seeing in other parts of the country some twenty-years ago - very laborious to be sure, and expensive building by such means; but this was his only alternative - and necessity is the mother of *perseverance* as well as of *invention*. In the winter Mr. Hunt opens his house to travelers, as there is a good deal of passing to and fro on this route during this season of the year.

He has now a farm of 175 acres, 100 of it cleared, and he cut this year about 75 tons of hay, which sells readily at \$12.

Mr. Hunt is a shrewd business man - and like all yankee farmers knows how to *keep* as well as *get*, money, and for his honest industry and economy, deserves a fortune. Mrs. Hunt is an amiable woman; and seemed to feel very much the privations of society, schools, and especially religious privileges. The visit of a clergyman in these wilds is indeed like angel's visits, few and far between. Mr. Chute, by Mr. Hunt's request, exercised an excellent sermon....

On Monday morning the 23rd, we crossed the East Branch of the Penobscot, opposite Mr. Hunt's house, and followed the road made to a cleared field a mile distant. Mr. Cowan turned his horse out to pasture here; and crossing the Wassataquoik nearby, we immediately struck into the old

“supply” road, which pursues its route nearly parallel with this river, and quite to its source.

[Footnote 4]

After a very successful exploration of Katahdin, the party reached

the banks of the East Branch opposite Mr. Hunt’s, where, for the first time in a week, we saw evidences of civilization. We were soon seated at an excellent dinner, to which, notwithstanding the superfluous and at first quite awkward accompaniment of knives and forks, full justice was done, and it being too late to proceed further today, we passed the time in arranging our specimens for the journey home.

[Footnote 5]

Though a native of Maine, Elizabeth Oakes Smith was a resident of New York City where she was prominent in social circles as well as an ardent advocate of women’s rights and the abolition of slavery. In 1849 she launched a much heralded attempt to climb Katahdin only a few days before Marcus Keep’s wife Hannah became the first woman to reach the summit. Though Mrs. Smith implied she was the first woman to do so, it is clear from her otherwise inspiring and compelling account that she only reached Pamola Peak where she left a note. She was only one mile short of the summit, but bad weather halted her progress. Mrs. Smith did, however, stay at Hunts both at the beginning of the trek and upon the group’s return. Her account of those stays is quite engaging. She reports that after leaving Stacyville at the start of her trip

...the road turns sharply to the left and is simply a passage between the stumps of trees; where a marsh intervenes logs are laid transversely, making what is called a “gridiron road ” or

“corduroy turnpike,” or whatever a whimsical fancy may suggest but one of the most abominable modes of jostling and shaking human bodies you can conceive of. Mrs. M. and myself made ourselves not a little merry as our wagon in some cases jolted a quarter of a mile over these logs, throwing us into attitudes unconceived of by the Graces, and we certainly did rejoice when this mode of shaking was exchanged for the variety of a plunge over boulders, stumps, and immense roots of trees which shot across our path. But overhead the scene was magnificent – immense primeval trees shot up into the sky which was blue and serene, the singing of birds, the busy chatterings of the squirrels, and the shy movements of partridges darting across the road wrought a soothing and harmonious influence upon our spirits. Katahdin was before us, the wicked noisy world cast behind our backs, and nature seemed to spread forth her arms lovingly to receive us....

Four miles more brought us to “Hunt’s” the last house on the road....What “old Crawford” used to be to the White Hills, Hunt is to Katahdin. He has a fine thrifty farm with corn fields up into the side of a mountain, the east branch of the Penobscot flows by his door, with a green slope...down to the river brim. It is a wild picturesque spot, and beautiful withal – the river sweeps in graceful course, the mountains rise from the opposite side, and it is just that broken, Swiss kind of view so delightful to the eye of an Artist. Added to this the table was excellent, with hot cakes, salmon and other comforts to the traveler – the beds coarse but cleanly, the family obliging, and the reader will see that “Hunt’s” is by no means an undesirable place....The sun was warm, the air bland, and altogether Hunt’s farm wore an air of exceeding comfort....

[The next morning] a bateau propelled by Mr. M and our guide, carried us up the Penobscot a few miles into the Wassataquoik, a deep, rapid stream with water as clear and cold as crystal. We sang songs, and poured out libations to the mountain nymph, and the Genii Loci, as cheerful a party as ever passed this wild region – peculiar indeed we were, for women had never before penetrated thus far into this wilderness....

After an eight-day, fifty mile journey in the still largely uncharted wilderness, the party returned to the western shore of the East Branch, this time opposite Hunt Farm and

...when our bateau grated upon the sand, we were hailed by the Hunt family with delighted surprise at our spirited appearance. Here an excellent table tempted our wild wood appetites, and tidy beds invited to repose, but we could scarcely sleep [even] with doors and windows open. I thought I should suffocate - and would have made any sacrifice to be restored to our open camp and hemlock boughs. [Footnote 6]

Mrs. Oakes account ends here and is simply signed "A PILGRIM."

John Todd of Massachusetts arrived at the mouth of "Quasatquoik" (spearing river) in 1852 when he and his party landed their canoes and prepared their packs for a trek to Katahdin by the Keep Path. It was a challenging personal journey for them, but they did finally reach the summit. Though their canoes were stashed almost within sight of the Hunt and Dacey farms there is no mention of their stopping at either hostelry. Strange, indeed, that they did not apparently choose to take advantage of the nearby hospitality.

In the summer of that same year the Hunt Farm welcomed for the first time one of the most celebrated visitors to its hearth, Frederic Edwin Church, the distinguished American artist of the Hudson River School. Church had in the past taken painting vacations to Mount Desert Island where he enjoyed experiencing and painting the power and majesty of the sea. While there he heard glowing stories of Maine's interior wilderness, especially the beauty of the wild Katahdin mountain massif and its vast surroundings in the midst of a still largely unexplored territory. It was not long before Church wanted to see for himself. We do not have many details of this first trip, but we do know that

after ascending the Penobscot East Branch by canoe he stopped at the Hunt Farm before being led by a “squad” of local lumbermen to the summit of Katahdin. They followed Marcus Keep’s trail to Katahdin Lake, Avalanche Brook, and the East Slide avalanche leading to Pamola Peak and the Knife Edge. Church was so taken by this experience that in the fall of that year he returned to the area by way of Moosehead Lake to explore by canoe the Penobscot West Branch side of the mountain. Several paintings were created by him as a result of the inspiration of these trips.

We know Church returned to the East Branch and the Hunt Farm in 1855. The Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson noted in the account of his trip the same year that the “last previous visitor was Church, the artist who had just been spending some time there. None of us had ever seen him but we wished that he had stayed long enough to accompany and illustrate our march.”

[Footnote 7]

Church made several other trips in 1856 and 1876 by way of the West Branch route to Katahdin before he returned in 1877 for another trip to the East Branch side. This was one of his most renowned ventures because of the elaborate account by A. L. Holley, published the next year in *Scribner’s Monthly*. It is one of the classics in Kathadin literature. Four artist friends of Church accompanied him on this lengthy excursion and were given special nicknames for the trip. Sanford Gifford was named “Don Gifaro”, Horace

Robbins became “Herr Rubens”, Lockwood deForest was dubbed “DeWoods,” and finally Church was identified as “Don Cathedra.”

The party traveled overnight in an Eastern Railroad sleeping car from Boston to Bangor. The following morning, after reaching Mattawamkeag by rail, they changed to wagons for the journey north on the Aroostook Road to Sherman. There they stayed another night at an inn owned by William Harmon Hunt’s daughter, Sarah Hunt Boynton, and her husband Richard. The Holley account recalls the next day’s march from Sherman Corner:

On the bright morning of the 6th, we and our... baggage were packed into a four-horse springless wagon, with the running gear of a gun-carriage and the side-grating of a bear-cage. The significance of this construction soon became obvious. Upon driving some half-dozen miles to the east-ward, we suddenly rose upon a crest where Ktaadn and its retinue of lesser mountains burst upon our view – a revelation of grandeur and beauty all the more impressive because the previous scenery had been so tame. At noon, away out beyond the precincts of permanent habitation we had our first out-of-door dinner. [We then traveled] upon a road consisting of a slit cut through a dense forest, over a tract of stumps, mud, thinly corduroyed swamps, and granite boulders....it suddenly occurred to me that walking in the majestic woods was one of the most tranquilizing of human occupations, so I sauntered on alone. The forest was broken only by “the farm” or “Hunt’s,” where hay and vegetables were raised in the early lumbering days, now a temporary habitation. Here on the East Branch of the Penobscot, I found our party fishing without success, but canoeing with great satisfaction....

A canoe ride two miles up the East Branch was to me as delightful as it was novel. Our stalwart guide fairly lifted our larger “birch” with its four passengers over the shallower rapids. A short tramp through the forest brought us before

sundown to our first encampment on the...Wassataquoik....

[Footnote 8]

The cost of this sixteen-day, eleven-person trip to Katahdin was \$80.83, perhaps expensive at that time but quite a bargain in today's currency.

Church was so touched by his Katahdin visits he bought a fifty acre farm property on Millinocket Lake in 1878, built a log camp at the shore, and visited there many times before his death in 1900. He did not likely visit the Hunt Farm site again because by the 1860s the inn was no longer under Hunt family ownership and a state of slow decline had begun from which it never fully recovered. Many Frederic Edwin Church canvas masterpieces were inspired by his memorable journeys to these lands in the shadow of Katahdin. The world can be most grateful for his magnificent legacy.

Returning to the 1850s we have several stories to tell. The first is of William L. Jones' journey to Katahdin in 1853, a tale that reveals quite dramatically the difficulties encountered by those who traveled the still rough road from Stacyville to the Hunt Farm at that time. Written a full twenty years after the road had been initially roughed out, here is Jones' take on the matter:

...we left the turnpike road [Aroostook Road] and turned off to the left to go ten miles on a sort of supply road, as it is called, to the East Branch of the Penobscot, where Mr. Hunt keeps a sort of tavern. It soon began to rain and by the time we got to a house about half way in we were quite wet. We had to walk all the way and the horse hauled our provisions. Just about dark we found a

tree blown down across our path and as the woods were thick there was no getting around so we had to stop and chop it off twice in the rain. It was a tough rock maple. It soon got so dark and foggy that we could scarcely keep to the road, and when we saw a barn close to the road we thought we had got to Hunt's, but there was no house but a deserted log hut. We...had a good night's sleep [there and the next morning] we went on to Hunt's in a kind of drizzling rain for although it thundered heavily nearly all night it did not seem inclined to clear off. We put up our horse and got our dinner and then were set across the east branch in a batteau and then started off on foot with our packs on our backs in a pouring rain.

[Footnote 9]

This account also reveals that another farmstead may have been built in those early years somewhere between Stacyville and the Hunt Farm.

One of the most engaging accounts of a stay at the Hunt Farm during these mid-century years is that of the Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson who visited in 1855 with a party of five ladies from his Unitarian Church in Worcester, Massachusetts. Higginson was not only a good friend of Edward Everett Hale who climbed Katahdin's northern slopes in 1845, but he was a close friend of Henry David Thoreau as well. The three gathered frequently with other literary friends in a society known as the Worcester Circle.

Higginson was an ardent abolitionist and served in the Union Army in the Civil War during which he commanded the first black regiment in the hostilities. He later also served a term as president of Boston's Appalachian Mountain Club in the 1880s. His lengthy and quite entertaining account of his Katahdin venture was written as if penned by one of the ladies in the group rather than Higginson himself, and only many years later did he admit to authoring the

narrative. The following passages make special note of their Hunt Farm experience. They stopped first at John Stacy's inn in Stacyville where they passed a comfortable night. The account continues:

A few hours of the morning brought us to that desire of our hearts, Hunt's farm-house; and it proved as delightful a spot as we had fancied. It is the end of inhabited Maine in this direction, and an important place to the lumberers in the logging season. Here is a little green clearing on the high bank of the lovely East Branch (Penobscot) which here makes a bend round a point of forest; wooded mountains rise behind, hiding King Katahdin. The farm-house...was very small outside, and very large inside - the proper way to build a house; it is of logs, squared and boarded over, and it contains the most stupendous of kitchen fireplaces, and the cheeriest of hostesses....

After a good dinner, we left Hunt's with three cheers. Crossing the river in a bateau, we struck at once into the forest-path, that led to Katahdin! Fifty miles of forest and mountain were before us, including the return walk; but we had a cloudless sky, happy hearts, trustworthy companions, and comfortable shoes.... Mr. Hunt was to go with us a few miles, to convey our load as far as possible, in his little two-horse cart, or "jumper;" but the jumper soon jumped once too often, over a stone, and broke down. And the packs had to be shouldered....

Upon their return from an exciting ascent of Katahdin:

...we came to the East Branch once more, out into the open clearing, opposite Hunt's; and there lay the solid farm-house upon the bank, and there were the whole family out to see; and there was the batteau beached upon the sand and McClane waiting to paddle us over. In we sprang, the batteau was pushed from the shore, it traversed the swift black current, we were landed opposite, and our life in the woods was over.

I shall make short work of the remainder; how delighted good Mrs. Hunt was that we had done the jaunt more quickly than women had done it before; how strange it seemed to us to sit on chairs again, and use cups and saucers; how delicious were the breadcakes, and the potatoes, and the milk; how gay we all were, till we had to dance at least; how our only minstrel was a wild Irishman, who played and sang "The girl I left behind me,"

thrumming with his fingers a clattering accompaniment on a dust-pan; how we thought there never was such inspiriting music, and tired each other down with the wildest of Virginia reels before the great kitchen-hearth. This I never can describe, though it certainly was the wildest scene I ever witnessed, and seemed more like a highland *bothie* than anything in New England. Happily, in this case, the excitement was all teetotal, and came pure from the happiest of happy hearts. That night we slept as well as we could be expected to do, in real beds, and the next day we all went down the Penobscot in two bateaux, and were almost happier than on any previous day, paddled steadily along the smooth swift canal between drooping trees, seeing no human being except a silent man in a birch canoe, and two girls paddling across to their father's clearing. [Footnote 10]

In the year 1856 the Rev. Joseph Blake and several companions, including the Rev. Marcus Keep as their guide, journeyed to the Hunt Farm on Blake's second expedition to Katahdin, his first occurring in 1836 when he explored the south side of the mountain. A botanist at Bowdoin College, Blake wanted during this excursion to observe the flora of the region and to collect specimens. After spending the night at John Stacy's inn at Stacyville the group headed down the seven or so miles of the Swift Brook Road to

Hunt's, on the East Branch, the last house on the way to the mountain. Here we engaged a man to take us up the river, a short distance, to the mouth of the Wassataquoik, a fine but shallow river, on whose eastern bank our path lay for a few miles.

[Footnote 11]

It is apparent that Blake did not stay the night at Hunt's on this occasion and that may indicate the farm and inn was not open as regularly as in the past. A memorable occurrence on this trip is described by Blake later in his account of the expedition.

In making my way down this rugged precipitous descent [the

Chimney between Chimney Peak and Pamola] while stopped a moment on a grassy ledge, I made a discovery of great interest to me: I found a little plant, not new indeed to science, but one that has a place in our flora only in consequence of my detecting it that day on the side of that towering mass of rocks....The scientific name of the plant I found is *Saxifraga sterllaris* var *comos* [common name: Star-like Saxifrage]. It was never found before, I believe, south of Labrador.

[Footnote 12]

When the group crossed the East Branch on their return from Katahdin they once again passed Hunt's and spent the night and the following sabbath day at John Stacy's in Stacyville. Blake paid special tribute to Mrs. Stacy and their exemplary family living at the very edge of wilderness.

Just a year later, Henry David Thoreau, along with his friend Edward Hoar and their guide Joe Polis, stopped briefly at the Hunt Farm as they descended the East Branch by canoe in August, 1857. They had camped along the river overnight somewhere between the now abandoned Dacey Farm site and the less than thriving Hunt Farm site, perhaps positioning themselves for a climb to Katahdin by ascending the nearby Wassataquoik Tote Road. Thoreau noted that "Hunt's" was the last "house" for those who wished to ascend the mountain from the East Branch. He would have heard about Hunt's from his Boston friends, Hale and Channing, who stopped there twelve years earlier in 1845 on their way to Katahdin. It had been the plan for Thoreau and Hoar to take advantage of the trails in the area and climb the mountain, but alas, as he notes in his journal, "we omitted it" on account of the ailing, chafed feet of his friend. They intended the next day to stop at the Hunt Farm to purchase some

sugar but discovered the family had moved away and only several hired hands were at the site cutting hay.

[Footnote 13]

Though he does not mention it in his account of this trip, it is important to note Thoreau's likely deep disappointment that he could not finally realize his dream of climbing this incomparable peak. His experience of nearing the peak in 1846 had a profound influence upon his life and his thinking. He must have felt a deep loss as he pulled away from the bank of the river at Hunt's that August day, 1857.

After many early Katahdin east side explorers had already proposed a more developed road from the Stacyville area to Katahdin Lake and all the way to Chimney Pond, a specific plan emerged in 1856. In April of that year the Maine legislature authorized construction of such a road by creating the Katahdin Road Company. [Footnote 14] Shepherd Boody, an enterprising Bangor engineer, was put in charge. The J. W. Sewall Company of Old Town made its survey of the lands involved in 1858, and the survey team opted to climb to the summit of Katahdin first and survey eastward back to Stacyville. They left Patten by stage, wagon, and on foot on November 1, 1858 after dining at John Stacy's in Stacyville. They stayed overnight "at Morrill's," a location which certainly was the Hunt Farm. It is likely that a Mr. Morrill had been asked by the Hunt family to host the group at the farm inn because it was so late in the

year, a time when the farm might already have been closed. The next morning the survey team walked upriver on a rough path where they were rafted across to the north bank of the Wassataquoik. That may well have taken place at the Dacey Farm site, but there is no mention of the farm in the field notes.

The survey was completed but the road was never built, a victim of the lack of funding as well as the disruption caused by the gathering clouds of the great national civil strife to come all too soon. The actual survey line passed across the East Branch very near the site of the Dacey Farm and the future Lunksoos Sporting Camp.

In 1859 Colonel Luther B. Rogers of Patten was a timber owner during the area's white pine era. It was a time when old growth white pine was in great demand for ship masts as well as long high-quality cut boards. That year Rogers led a large group from Patten across the East Branch with John Stacy as their guide. They very likely crossed at Hunt's and followed the old Keep Path and other trails to Chimney Pond. This may have been Roger's first trip to Katahdin, the beginning of an exceedingly long association with the mountain and the region. He was the father of Lore A. Rogers, an 1887 climber of Katahdin at the age of twelve. The elder Rogers on this occasion identified Harriet Scribner as the first lady to actually enter the Great Basin. One light-hearted telling of this trip relates that

...in recognition of Mrs. Scribner's achievement, the group decided, as they gathered on Chimney Pond's shores, to

**nominate her for president of the United States in the next election. Further, so grateful were they for his leadership, they nominated Luther Rogers for vice president....There is no record of Mrs. Scribner receiving votes at [any party's next] national convention.
[Footnote 15]**

Another major scientific expedition reached the Hunt Farm in 1861. The Maine Scientific Survey Team was led by naturalist Ezekial Holmes and geologist Charles H. Hitchcock. They were assisted by several chemists and mineralogists, an entomologist, and a marine zoologist. Manly Hardy, father of Fannie Eckstorm Hardy, accompanied the group as guide and boatman. The expedition provided major scientific information of the state's natural resources.

The team left Bangor on August 7 and paddled and poled for several days up the Penobscot River into the East Branch. At some point, Hitchcock proposed the name "Matagamon River" for the East Branch, an idea later championed by Kaahdin explorer Charles Hamlin in the reports of his trips into the region. The name, however, never took hold. Hitchcock's party finally arrived at Whetstone Falls late one afternoon where they met their guide, the Rev. Marcus Keep, who was described as "a missionary to the heathen in these parts." They proceeded upriver and soon reached "Mr. Hunt's." Part of the team started right off toward Katahdin along Keep's still passable Keep Path while the others camped at the no-longer-occupied farm.

Hunts Farm is a great rendezvous for loggers in the winter time. Our stoves are out in the barn, the cook has his tent down by the

river bank, and we sleep on a huge spread laid out on the floor of the barroom, where the loggers have high times in the winter. [Footnote 16]

Upon the return of the summit party from Katahdin, Hitchcock himself reports that they were greeted with “abundant supplies of fresh salmon and partridges.” Though considerably exhausted by their accelerated trip they felt “rewarded by learning that we had completed our tour in the ‘shortest time on record.’ After resting over Sunday we were all ready to pursue our journey up the East Branch.” [Footnote 17]

Mindful that this journey occurred at the outbreak of the Civil War, Keep’s account of the group’s ascent of Katahdin includes these melancholy musings as they hiked up the Wassataquoik Valley:

In this stream the perpetual roar of waterfalls in the deep silence of the wilderness is the true song of nature, unmoved by any of the passing sounds of mechanical life. The song of the falling waters and warbling birds, and ever the moaning of continual winds, are all without the jarring sounds of violence and wrong, for the children of nature should on the wings of freedom and joy, they all join in the smiles of spring, and the sweet weather bird can sing her treble note with the deepest bass of the woodland; till the low moan of the winds sings the funeral dirge of the common sisterhood, and altogether lie down for their winter’s sleep in the arm of their common mother. To such sounds of harmony, and to such children of innocence, we turned away from the news of raging battles, to hear no more of them till our return. [Footnote 18]

Four days later they returned from Katahdin to Hunt’s where they thoroughly enjoyed again a fresh salmon and partridge stew prepared by those who had remained there earlier. Holmes spoke in his account of the expedition that the

soil in "Mr. Hunt's vicinity" was extremely fertile. They stayed the night, and in the morning the whole team was served a "mess" of baked beans, baked in a large iron pot in a huge hole dug in the ground. After cleaning up and packing, the survey headed north on the East Branch, some into the Allagash watershed and some into the Fish River and Aroostook County area. The account makes it clear that the Hunt Farm was no longer operating, at least in the summer.

In his report of this expedition, Hitchcock suggests the wisdom of establishing a good carriage road from the Hunt Farm to Chimney Pond and a good foot or bridle path from there to the summit. He felt the users would thus "find a trip to Mount Katahdin invigorating, and fraught with pleasure." Coming only five years after the Maine legislature authorized such a road, Hitchcock may well have been endorsing a road already planned but still languishing for want of financial support.

An interesting description of the Hunt Farm site appeared in the *Portland Daily Press*, in August, 1862.

The Hunt farm on the East Branch, has been so often described by visitors that it is a work of supererogation to again say that it is a little clearing, with one or two substantial structures on it. The house itself is made in two or three parts, each part being larger than that next to it on the south and this gives it the appearance of being a gigantic toy accordion, pulled out to its utmost extent. This house is the last building, with a woman in it, on the Penobscot river, and since there are females in the house, we of course find a flower garden in the front yard. It seems strange to thus see roses and honeysuckles in the midst of the woods, growing, perhaps, only a few rods from the primeval forest; and German astors growing within talking

distance of their American cousins. [Footnote 19]

In 1873 and again in 1874, Merritt C. Fernald and a botanist colleague visited the Hunt Farm on their way to Katahdin along the Keep Path. Fernald was at the time president of the teacher's college that later became the University of Maine. The two collected a large body of botanical specimens, measured the height of the mountain, and made other scientific observations. Who was their reliable guide? The indomitable John Stacy, of course.

Two enterprising gentlemen, Messrs. Lang and Jones, arrived at the Hunt Farm sometime in the mid-1870s with the wild idea of cutting a more reliable trail from the farm to the Great Basin. Though little is known about these ambitious visitors to the region, their ultimate goal was to guide parties to the increasingly popular Chimney Pond route to the summit of Katahdin. After clearing their trail they realized the need for more comfortable accommodations for their clients somewhere half-way between the Hunt Farm site and Chimney Pond. They built a set of crude log cabins on a small bluff at the southwest shore of Katahdin Lake. What excitement there must have been as these gentlemen crossed the East Branch with their building materials. Soon they were able to bring their clients by buckboard to stay overnight at the lakeside "camps" before guiding them to Chimney Pond the next day. Their trail crossed Sandy Stream on an early logging dam and then likely followed along Roaring Brook to the Basin Ponds and into the Great Basin.

Lang and Jones' clients passed through the Hunt Farm site during some of the lean years when the inn was not always open, and it was not long before their new camps fell on tough times as well. Eventually the whole operation closed and the cabins at Katahdin Lake were abandoned. The Lang and Jones Trail, however, survived for a few more years and was likely used by artist Frederic E. Church and his friends in 1877, future President Theodore Roosevelt in 1879, and both Professor Hamlin and Charles Witherle in their explorations in the 1880s.

Connecticut-born Thomas Sedgwick Steele - writer, painter, and sometime jeweler - pitched his tent near Hunt's farm in 1879 at the end of a memorable north woods canoe adventure that included a well documented trip down the East Branch. Steele was retracing Henry David Thoreau's famous 1857 canoe trek in Maine's vast wilderness. Though Steele's second canoe trip several years later did not include the East Branch, his two lengthy book accounts of the trips represent one of the earliest "Guidebooks" of the region, including a detailed map of northern Maine.

In his first book, *Canoe and Paddle*, published in 1880, Steele described his canoe trip down the East Branch to the area of the Hunt Farm. The party pitched their

...tents on the left [east] bank of the river near a place known as Hunt's farm. The solitary log-house and barn on Hunt's farm were erected some forty-three years ago, and are located on high ground at a picturesque bend of the Penobscot river. The house

outside is painted red, white-washed inside, with low ceilings....
 [A]n addition to the cultivation of land near the house, an attempt was made some seasons ago to press into tillage, as a melon patch, the side of an adjacent mountain, but the fruit as soon as it grew heavy and ripened, snapped its hold on the vines, rolled down the mountain side, and was crushed at its base. As can easily be seen, this elevated farm was not a success and now only the bright green foliage of a fresh growth of trees is left to tell the melancholy story. Mr. Dunn who, assisted by three other persons, takes care of the place, showed us many attentions, supplying us with fresh milk and sugar, and other delicacies that had been foreign to our fare at camp for many days.

The manufacture of birch canoes seemed to be one of the industries of the place, an immense one being then in process of building for the celebrated New York artist, Frederic E. Church Esq. This canoe was twenty-eight feet long, over four feet wide (midships) and when completed would weigh three hundred pounds. The artist has recently purchased four hundred acres of land on Millinocket Lake....and men were to leave this farm the following day to erect three substantial log camps [at the new Church farm].
 [Footnote 20]

Later Fannie Hardy Eckstorm strongly questioned the canoe building story, writing: "There isn't enough water to float such a leviathan - nor birch bark enough to make one of, and it would take a derrick to lift the thing." Who knows where the truth may lie.

Steele's reference to a Mr. Dunn assisting folks visiting the Hunt Farm site in 1879 is echoed in Charles A. J. Farrar's illustrated guidebooks that during the 1880s covered "the wilds of northern Maine." Here is his take on the matter:

...Passing the mouth of big and little Seboeis Rivers, you soon reach a clearing known as Hunt's Farm, the buildings of which were erected more than forty years ago. A Mr. Dunn has charge of the place, and will board you for a while, or furnish you with supplies if you wish.

The ascension of Mount Katahdin can be readily made from Hunt's Farm, an easy ride on horseback, landing you within two miles of the summit. In fact, it is much easier to ascend the mountain from here than from the West Branch. Hunt Mountain in this vicinity, twelve hundred feet high, affords a magnificent view of the surrounding country, and will well repay a clamber up its rocky sides.

[Footnote 21]

It is noteworthy that in the 1889 and 1890 editions of the Farrar guidebook the situation at the Hunt Farm site seemed to have changed dramatically, to such an extent, that one might question the full accuracy of the changes he suggested. He wrote in both editions for those years:

[A short distance below the Little Seboeis River you reach Patterson's on the left side of the river, - a distance of about four miles; from Patterson's to Wassataquoik Stream on the right is a mile more. Opposite Patterson's the road to Mount Ktaadn leaves the river and runs for several miles along Wassataquoik Stream. Half a mile below the mouth of the stream, on the [left] bank, is the Hunt Farm, the buildings on which were erected more than forty years ago. A good hotel, the Tourist's Retreat, is located here, and S. B. Gates, who has bought the place, is the proprietor. You can procure supplies here if you need them.

The ascension of Mount Ktaadn can be readily made from Hunt Farm, the present enterprising proprietor having built a good carriage road up the picturesque valley of the Wassataquoik, and past the beautiful Ktaadn Lake, within two miles of the summit. In fact, it is much easier to ascend the mountain from here than from the West Branch. Hunt Mountain, on the west side of the river, twelve hundred feet high, affords a magnificent view of the surrounding country, and will well repay a clamber up its rocky sides. Guides can be procured from the farm, if you don't wish to try it alone.

[Footnote 22]

These are the only two references to this major change at the Hunt site in the research sources. One wonders if the report might have reflected the owner's still-to-be-accomplished dreams rather than a reality already achieved.

The year 1879 saw the arrival of a future president of the United States, Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt. We do not know for certain where he crossed the East Branch, at the Dacey Farm site or the Hunt Farm site, but we know he crossed at one or the other on his way to climb Katahdin with his friend William “Bill” Sewall and Sewall’s nephew Will Dow. Roosevelt had been “sickly” growing up and was determined during his college years to overcome with vigorous outdoor challenges the health issues that plagued him. Long thought to be somewhat legendary, it turns out that during his climb to Katahdin’s summit “Teddy” did indeed lose one of his hiking boots while crossing a stream “at a riffle” (as he put it). He had to complete his climb wearing moccasins. The Katahdin adventure and his later visits to Maine had a profound influence on Roosevelt who throughout his subsequent career became one of the great champions of the American conservation movement.

The busy years when the Hunt Farm played a major role in providing support for the Wassataquoik Valley loggers as well as a notable parade of recreational and scientific users was now drawing to a close. William Harmon Hunt, sixty-two at the time, sold the farm in 1854 to his son William M. Hunt, then thirty-five. The sale included two lots of land of fifty-nine acres and eighty-eight acres for the sum of \$500. The sale was finalized twenty-two years after Hunt arrived at the site in 1832 and began to clear the land. He had decided to “retire” to a farm he had recently bought in Patten.

Hunt and his wife labored for over two decades to provide services to loggers and recreationists alike, and those years had taken their toll. Their ten year old son Oliver had been seriously affected by an outbreak of typhoid fever in 1842, a challenge for the whole family. William Harmon's wife Nizolla, died the same year at age fifty and William later remarried. Family stories record that William had served rum in the early years of this venture. As the years went by, however, he was either influenced by the many clergymen, notably the Rev. Marcus Keep, who stayed there, or he just worried that having drink on hand resulted in too many unwarranted experiences at the inn. One day he went to the storage area where the rum barrels were kept and smashed every one of them. From then on the Hunt Farm was declared a "dry hostel." After the sale in 1854 his son continued to run the farm, though its early success began now to slowly diminish. For a few years, both the father and mother often made the trek to the farm each summer to help the son run the inn.

It should be noted that Lyman and Irving O. Hunt, William H. Hunt's grandsons (sons of William M. Hunt), constructed a sporting camp on Nesowadnehunk Stream on Katahdin's southwest flank in the early 1890s. In the late 1890s they moved their operation upstream and built the famed Kidney Pond Camps, now a part of Baxter State Park. It was Irving O. Hunt who blazed and cut the Hunt Trail up Katahdin's Southwest Ridge to the summit. He said at the time that he wanted to build the trail for the "convenience" of their guests."

Sometime in the 1860s the Hunt Farm was sold to C. R. Patterson, and William M. Hunt purchased and moved to the old Cram Farm in Sherman, a farm that also took in guests at times. Not a great deal is known about the running of the Hunt Farm during much of the 1860s though Patterson seems to have continued to offer minimal services to those coming through on their way to Katahdin. We have already noted that the old farm was referred to as a “temporary habitation” at the time of Frederic E. Church’s visit with his artist friends in 1877.

A fitting tribute to the legacy of the Hunt family are these words by Marion Reed Kimball in 1975:

Today, to the westward of the old farm, Hunt Mountain looms as a foothill to mighty Katahdin and as a memorial to the family that...gave the name of “Hunt territory” to the lower East Branch of the Penobscot.
[Footnote 23]

An additional tribute is offered by J. Parker Huber in his celebrated work *The Wildest Country: Exploring Thoreau’s Maine*:

Surely such a famous inn deserves a permanent place in the literature of the Maine woods.
[Footnote 24]

All through the years, after the arrival of William Harmon Hunt and Hiram Dacey in 1832, there is little to no reference to the Dacey Farm. Sometimes it is only referred to as the Dacey Clearing or the “deserted” Dacey Clearing, implying that the farmhouse Dacey had built was no longer standing. The mystery of what happened there remains unrevealed to this day. What we do

know is that in 1880 the fortunes of the Hiram Dacey farm site upriver were about to change dramatically

III THE ASCENDANCY OF THE DACEY CLEARING 1880 - 1900

As the decade of the 1880s unfolded a number of major changes occurred which seriously impacted the unique role of the Hunt and Dacey farm sites for years to come. First , logging operations in the Wassataquoik Stream watershed penetrated further and further into the valuable timberlands to the very slopes of Katahdin itself. The daring log drives down the Wassataquoik's twenty-three dams at that time were in full operation. Logging up and down the East Branch of the Penobscot continued to increase as well during the waning years of the century.

Second, though it was never destined to be a smooth highway by any means, the road from Stacyville to the ford across the East Branch at the Hunt Farm improved enough that the loggers operating closer and closer to Katahdin were not as dependent on farms such as Hunt's and Dacey's to supply their needs. The importance of the inns to the industry waned while, at the same time, all the logging activity continued to obliterate the hiking trails from the

river to the Great Basin. One early 1880s report revealed that C. R. Patterson, then proprietor of the Dacey Farm site, became lost for days in the chaos of the blowdowns and bogs that had taken over the old trails from Katahdin Lake to Roaring Brook. Even the old Keep Path was continually compromised by nearby logging operations, resulting in the cutting of other trails to enable the foot traveler access to the riches of Katahdin.

Third, the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad finally reached Stacyville and Sherman Station in 1893, and that event brought major changes to the area. It became much easier to travel from Boston and Bangor as well as other heavily populated areas to Stacyville, stay one night there, and reach the East Branch the next day. This was a significant improvement from having to travel by stage from Mattawamkeag.

Finally, the availability for travel on the old Wassataquoik Tote Road as it moved closer and closer to Katahdin, brought a new surge of explorers, scientists, and recreationists to the east side of Katahdin. It is noteworthy that while the Hunt Farm was no longer able to provide the needed accommodations, the Dacey Farm site emerges as the place to stay on the way to Katahdin or traveling the East Branch by canoe. Though William H. Hunt sold his farm to his son William M. Hunt in 1854, and the son later sold the farm to C. R. Patterson sometime in the 1860s, the farm continued to operate

sporadically. By 1877, however, the site was described as only a “temporary habitation.”

A rather eventful transaction took place in 1881 when C. R. Patterson sold the Hunt Farm to Simon B. Gates. Gates was already the “gentlemanly” proprietor of hotels in Winn and Mattawamkeag and apparently saw a potential opportunity to restore the fortunes of the venerable farm inn on the bank of the East Branch. Gates began a program of restoration, and was reported by one observer to have built a “new house” at the site. One visitor reported later in the year that repairs had been made and a new “hotel” was planned. There are, however, only sketchy reports of any construction taking place and, in fact, Lore A. Rogers reported six years later that the farm had been abandoned and was falling into ruin. There is one report in 1890 that Gates was still operating, and one could get supplies there.

In the meantime, having sold the Hunt Farm, C. R. Patterson quickly began to develop the then-abandoned Dacey Clearing a little over a mile upriver. Since the site was deserted at the time, we may never know what happened to Hiram Dacey’s dream when he came there from Carthage with William H. Hunt almost fifty years before in 1832. Though Dacey’s original farmstead was likely built closer to the river bank where the land slightly bottoms out at the foot of Lunksoos Mountain, Patterson decided in 1881 to build his new inn slightly up the hill from the river where a stunning view of the upper slopes of

Katahdin could be attained. He named it the “East Branch House” at first, then later the “Patterson House.”

Not long after Patterson moved upriver and built the East Branch House, it was reported that he had built a “road” along the river between the old Dacey Clearing to the Hunt Farm site. Earlier Hiram Dacey likely accessed his original farm by a road that left the Swift Brook Road (later named Mountain Tote Road) coming down from Stacyville and angled behind the Hunt Farm, leading directly to his own farm. By 1881, that road might have been in disrepair and Patterson, wishing to bring his clients to his inn more comfortably and trouble free, decided to build the new road along the river to the Hunt Farm site and thence into the more easily maintainable road on up to Stacyville. This effort brought solid results as the new inn attracted a growing number of customers eager to fish and hunt or to journey to Katahdin.

About this time two very important explorers appeared on the scene. One, Dr. Charles Edward Hamlin, Professor of Chemistry and Natural History at Colby College and later professor of Geology and Geography at Harvard College, began his explorations of the Katahdin region in 1869. After first reaching the mountain from its West Branch side, Hamlin traveled by way of the Penobscot East Branch to Katahdin in 1879, 1880, and 1881, staying at Patterson’s each time. Hamlin published his seminal listing of “Routes to Ktaadn” in 1881 in the Appalachian Mountain Club’s journal *Appalachia*. One of those four routes

was the one from Sherman through Stacyville to the East Branch and along Wassataquoik Stream to the mountain. He noted that this route “requires special notice as being the one over which the tide of visitors that must soon set towards Ktaadn is destined to flow.” Hamlin describes his visit to the Hunt Farm site where

... a clearing was made as early as 1835, and a timber house erected for the entertainment of lumbermen, still called “the Hunt House” from its original proprietor long since departed. A logging-road begins on the opposite bank of the river and following it up a mile, crosses the Wassataquoik Stream, a branch of the Mattagamon* [Hamlin’s name for the Penobscot East Branch].

[Footnote 1]

[asterisk at bottom of page - “The reader will now encounter a second spelling of this word. *Matagamon* will continue (even to this day) to refer to the Matagamon Lake region, the headwaters of the Penobscot East Branch. *Mattagamon*, on the other hand, is a variant spelling (1) Hamlin preferred over the river’s more common name, and (2) the name of a new inn that would be built on the old Hunt Farm site in 1900 (see page ?)]

Note that Hamlin clearly indicates the road leading to the Wassataquoik Tote Road “began” on the bank opposite the Hunt Farm just as it had done in the early 1840s. Soon in his narrative, knowing the changes that had taken place at the Hunt Farm would result in uncertainty about finding accommodations there, he begins to advocate for the traveler to stay at Patterson’s instead.

...all the travel...to the mountain...has been turned over the rough road which Patterson has opened from Hunt’s to his own place and his house has been filled with wayfarers. As it is farther up the Mattagamon than the mouth of the Wassataquoik, a crossing of the river here saves one [from two water crossings]... a thing not to be regretted by visitors to Ktaadn....[Footnote 2]

The second major explorer to utilize the east side of Katahdin for many of his adventures was George H. Witherle, a maritime merchant and ship owner from Castine, Maine. Witherle made eleven trips to the Katahdin area between 1880 and 1901, an amazing record of adventure and discovery. Witherle used the East Branch route and stayed at Patterson's or its successor on at least six of those occasions. One Baxter State Park historian referred to Witherle's explorations in the region as "unsurpassed in the 19th century." It is Witherle who reported that, when he stayed at the new East Branch House in 1881 on his way to Katahdin, he revelled in the fine views of the mountain from the inn up the hill. He also noted that the inn's spring registered 52 degrees, a degree of coldness that has not changed to this day. Business was booming, and the new road to the Hunt site was nearing completion. Witherle and others also discovered that crossing the East Branch at Patterson's saved several miles of walking and some valuable time as well. All these prominent journeys to the east side of Katahdin came at a time when all the accommodations on the shores of the East Branch were centered at the old Dacey Clearing.

About this time an interesting travel twist was also discovered. Upon their return from climbing and exploring Katahdin, some parties began to arrange for canoes to be made available at Patterson's so they could "boat" down to Nicotou where they could then continue their journey home by buggy and later by train.

Two notable visits took place in 1887. The first was one of the early “August Camps” sponsored by Boston’s then relatively new Appalachian Mountain Club. To prepare for this large group, an advance party in 1886 under the leadership of Clarence Peavey of Stacyville scouted out a new route from the East Branch to Chimney Pond and built several shelters along the way as well. The next August, the AMC party of fifty followed the “wet and rough” road from Sherman and Stacyville and crossed the East Branch by buggy and boat at the ford at the Hunt Farm site. They traveled up the rugged, stoney Wassataquoik Tote Road through areas that had been recently devastated by a major fire along the lower Wassataquoik watershed. They veered off the logging road and followed the new trail cut by Peavey’s advance crew the year before. This came to be known as “The Appalachian Trail,” long before the iconic Appalachian Trail was built along the spine of the Appalachian mountain ridge from Georgia to Katahdin. The present International Appalachian Trail may overlap the old trail at some points east of Baxter State Park.

The second group visited the old Dacey site just hours after the Appalachian Mountain Club party had crossed the East Branch at Hunts. Lore A. Rogers, then only twelve years old, was the son of Luther B. Rogers who we have already noted first climbed Katahdin in 1859. The group traveled to the East Branch from Patten by way of the Happy Corner Road and, after some challenging forest trekking, arrived at the river at Patterson’s. The party of six included Lore’s older brother Edwin, three friends, and a dog. Patterson

helped the group cross the river and added a little advice and direction to help them on their arduous trip. Though not their intent, they followed the Appalachian Mountain Club party, seeing them only occasionally, until reaching Chimney Pond. On their return they crossed the river again at Patterson's and headed back to Happy Corner Road and home.

Two years later, in 1889, *Hubbard's Guide to Moosehead Lake and Northern Maine* was published in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In the description of his canoe trip down the East Branch of the Penobscot, Lucius Hubbard reported that relatively calm water was encountered below the mouth of the Seboeis River until it reaches "Patterson's on the left bank....From Patterson's it is three-quarters of a mile to the mouth of Wassataquoik Stream." After Hubbard paused to reflect on the native meaning of the name of the stream he continued:

Opposite Patterson's (the old Dacey farm) the road to Mt. Ktaadn leaves the river and runs for some distance along the Wassataquoik Stream. Three-quarters of a mile below the mouth of the stream on the opposite bank is the Hunt farm, formerly kept by Patterson, but recently bought by S. B. Gates. It is here that visitors to Ktaadn *used* [author's emphasis] to cross the river and take the road opposite, to the mouth of Wassataquoik Stream which they also had to cross.

[Footnote 3]

Though difficult to be certain, it was likely in 1890 or so that several other members of the Rogers family climbed Katahdin from their homes in Patten.

This trip, however, was unique. An account was written by Mary Barker

Rogers and her lengthy, delightful story of the trip appeared in an unidentified local paper the same year under the title "Climbing in Bloomers." Joining the thirty-seven year old Mary was her husband, Col. Luther B. Rogers, then fifty years old, and her son Edwin, then twenty. In all, the party consisted of seven gentlemen, one of whom was teamster, and three women, one of whom served as cook.

As the title Mary's story implies, the ladies started out wearing their heavy, long, almost ankle-length skirts typical at that time for outdoor wear. The mud encountered along the road that first day, however, led them soon enough to don shorter skirts. Mary did note that the "ladies, for the most part, kept themselves wrapped in their gossamers until beyond the pale of civilization."

They "endured" the terribly rough road from Stacyville, spent the night in their tents at the then-abandoned Hunt Farm site and crossed the East Branch at the ford just downstream from the old farm. They traveled by horse and buckboard as far as Katahdin Lake where they camped before continuing their trip by foot. After spending several days in the Great Basin, hiking the mountain several times and exploring the North Basin as well, they returned home, crossing the river by buckboard again at the ford. [Footnote 4] An interesting aspect of this trip is that the Roger's party chose not to cross the East Branch at the old Dacey Farm site upriver from the Hunt site. No doubt the ford at the Hunt site was still deemed safer to negotiate at that time.

The Patterson House at the Dacey site was at that time still being operated as an inn by C. R. Patterson, but just a year or so later, in 1891, the lumbering firm of Ayer and Rogers took over logging operations along Wassataquoik Stream and needed a location for their headquarters near to the new work locations. They leased and soon afterward purchased the Patterson House and established their office there. They continued to operate the inn, however, but soon changed its name to The East Branch House. Mary's husband, Luther B. Rogers of Patten, was a partner to Fred W. Ayers in this logging venture. Mary was a loyal supporter of her husband's logging ventures and frequently visited the facility from their home in Patten.

Luther B. Rogers, who first climbed Katahdin in 1859 and whose wife's ascent of the mountain we have just recounted, was the father of young Lore A. Rogers, the one who told the story of his 1887 adventure to Katahdin. Lore had a distinguished career as a dairy specialist for the U. S. Department of Agriculture and after retirement returned to Patten and helped found the celebrated Patten Lumbermen's Museum in his hometown. Another son, Edwin S. Rogers, followed his father into the lumber business in the Wassataquoik Valley and elsewhere.

The most exciting venture at the Dacey site in 1892 was certainly the inception of ferry service across the East Branch by the Rogers family,

providing a more convenient crossing of the river. The ferry was located not far below the sporting camp at the end of the old road to the Dacey Farm that came off the Swift Brook Road and veered behind the Hunt Farm, ending at the ferry. At first the ferry was a relatively simple affair, attached to a steel cable stretched across the river and secured to the base of large trees. Later, more elaborate ferries that could transport large parties, horses, and even wagons and buggies were created to accommodate the changing needs.

In her memoir entitled *Down East* Mary Barker Rogers describes some of the typical duties and challenges of the ferry operation. On one of her visits to the sporting camp, likely in the waning days of the nineteenth century, she observed:

The youngest children and I spent several days at the East Branch one autumn. We were always delighted with such an opportunity. The colors of the forest on the mountainside were a marvel, as if all the hot sunshine of the summer was concentrated and poured out in one last effort to fill the world with glory. Each sunrise and sunset was a magnificent spectacle – a combination of mountain grandeur and radiant shifting colors....

[One morning] I was on the piazza when the four tote teams wound down the hill to the ferry. In these days one sees only occasionally one of the loaded tote teams that used to be so common in the [flourishing] days of the lumber business, the roads through the forests, which were of the primitive kind, and the economy of horse flesh, the only motor power. Four horses to each team, weighing from fourteen to sixteen hundred each, was the rule. The wheels were built with the idea of combining the least weight with the greatest amount of strength. The body was buckboard style of double planks reinforced at the edges and set securely on the frame beneath which held the two sets of wheels together. There were no springs to the body but when a seat was used it had a wagon spring at each end.

These wagons, which were long, when loaded, carried approximately twenty-five hundred pounds. The height of the load depended on whether it was a light weight substance like pressed hay, or barrels of flour. In the present instance, each load was hay snugly packed from front to five feet high from the boards and securely lashed on with ropes. This was also a trick of the trade which only teamsters knew. I always wondered why the loads didn't go bottom-up in some places on the mountains or the wheels drop into a hole from which they could never be extricated. I concluded long ago that teamster's business is a trade in itself. Peter Sargerty was ahead. I could hear him say "Easy Rit, Mah Zole, what you trying to do." Then came Wes Crummett, Henry Blake and a man whose name I do not remember. Peter drove on to the ferry half hidden in the mist rising from the river.

The man who ran the ferry cast off the chains and began sculling them across. Before the last team was over the fog was gone and I saw the horses climbing the opposite bank and disappearing in the woods.

I glanced up over the mountain. The sun was just rising , tearing the clouds apart and the bare flanks of Katahdin were showing pearly pink in the first rays. [Footnote 5]

In 1893, the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad, affectionately known as the "B & A," was completed through the Millinocket area and north to a new rail station at Stacyville and another at Sherman. This had two significant impacts on travel to Katahdin. First, there was renewed interest in climbing the mountain from its south side because of the new railroad depots at South Twin Lake and Millinocket. Second, it made the East Branch of the Penobscot far more convenient to reach as well, a boon to those who wished to canoe, hunt, and fish along the East Branch and up its tributaries. Thus began, however, a very slow but steady shift of Katahdin travel away from the east side but not entirely yet. We will see more of how this unfolds as the twentieth

century begins. The presence of the new railroad station at Stacyville was especially important, bringing further growth to the old Dacey Farm site. A buckboard met the morning train to bring passengers, mail, and freight to the sporting camp and the ferry across the East Branch.

In an interesting 1894 update of Charles Edward Hamlin's "Routes to Ktaadn," Augustus C. Hamlin [no relation to Charles] continues to recommend staying at Patterson's. The latter Hamlin was a nephew of Hannibal Hamlin of Bangor, Maine, who in 1860 was elected Vice President of the United States under President Abraham Lincoln's administration. A Harvard graduate, Augustus served as a surgeon in the Civil War and later as Surgeon General of the State of Maine. He enjoyed success as an amateur mineralogist and a painter. In his account of the trail to Katahdin he reported:

The newly constructed railroad to Aroostook County now takes the traveler to Stacyville, where the Wassataquoik trails commence. And at this point a good hotel may be found to afford rest to the tourist while arranging for his trip into the forests beyond, and a magnificent view of the mountain, and the country to be traversed may be had if the sky is free from clouds. Although the summit is about twenty miles distant in a direct line as the bee flies, the trail, with its winding ways, is about twenty-eight miles in length before the main peak is reached.

The path for the seventeen miles is over the old roads used by the lumbermen for more than half a century, and affords comfortable riding to the tourist, either on horseback or on the primitive and elastic buckboard. Seven miles from the Stacyville station,...a comfortable camp may be found, kept by L. B. Rogers, who has charge of the extensive lumbering operations in the Wassataquoik regions. Here may be found also guides and canoes....In fact, it is the portal to all the hunting lands watered by the East Branch...and they may be affirmed to be the best in the State of Maine. The path crosses the river here by ford or ferry, and then winds along the

**banks of the Wassataquoik for ten miles.
[Footnote 6]**

Lucius Merrill, a member of the staff of the University of Maine's Agricultural Experiment Station and instructor of chemistry, geology and economic geology, visited the Katahdin region in 1894 for the second time, on this occasion with Lore A. Rogers who may have been his guide. Merrill stayed overnight at Madison Tracy's inn at Stacyville, and the next day the party traveled to the East Branch where he took several stunning photographs of the old Hunt Farm and the nearby ford across the river. The following morning the party crossed the river at the ford on the way to the Great Basin and Katahdin. The Hunt Farm at that time was still in a period of decline and was possibly even abandoned. Merrill's photographs, however, reveal that the buildings were still standing and the ford was still being used to reach the Wassataquoik. Merrill's photography during those two trips provides us with an impressive sense of travel along the Wassataquoik, life at the lumber camps, and the majesty of Maine's highest peak.

Seven years later, in 1901, Merrill's 1894 guide, Lore A. Rogers, made his own trip into the region once again, this time making one of the earliest visits to the vast and remote Klondike region west of Katahdin's Northwest Plateau. The pond Rogers explored within the Klondike he named "Merrill Pond" in honor of the state university scientist's important contributions to the

knowledge of the area. The name did not hold, however, and the pond is simply known today as “Klondike Pond.”

In 1895 Ayer and Rogers dismantled the East Branch House (later named Patterson House) and erected a new quite elaborate log sporting camp on the same site. They named it the Lunksoos Camps, an Algonquin native name for a wild beast or mountain lion, similar to a panther or a catamount, which was thought to terrorize the native peoples in the region at an earlier time. A few years later George Witherle was the first to mention that the name “Lunksoos” was being pronounced “Lunkasoo” by most of the local folk in the area. That is still true to this day. The new inn was intended to cater to hunters and fishermen as well as those heading to Katahdin, and it was operated as an adjunct to the lumber business. The new sporting camp boasted of an elaborate open stairway leading up its south wall to the roof. There a second open stairway ascended the roof to a fenced platform from which a magnificent view of Katahdin, fifteen miles to the west, could be enjoyed by the guests.

While all this construction was going on, two gentlemen from Massachusetts, Henry Richards and Fullerton Waldo, arrived one early September day to climb Katahdin. They affirmed the road in from Stacyville was still exceedingly rocky and narrow [nothing new about that]. They passed the “deserted Hunt Farm site on their way to “Patterson’s.” Again staying overnight on their

return, it took them a full three hours to reach Stacyville, thanks to that ever-challenging road. Some things never change.

Also in 1895, a large party from the University of Maine in Orono stayed at Lunksoos on their way to the Great Basin. They were botanist Francis L. Harvey and his son Le Roy Harvey, Elmer Merrill, and P. L. Piker. One of the Rogers brothers guided them along the new Rogers Trail into the Great Basin. Seven years later in 1902, Harvey's son Le Roy, then Professor of Natural History, would lead a group from the university to conduct the first major exploration of the Klondike and the Northwest Basin [See next chapter] They also stayed at Lunksoos.

This was a time when new trails to Katahdin had to be regularly built to replace trails that had been obliterated by lumbering activities and by the major fire that occurred in 1884. The Rogers Trail was one such effort. Lore Rogers's brother, Edwin, was a key player in developing this trail that connected parts of the older, now obliterated "Appalachian Trail," to trails directly to the Basin Ponds and Chimney Pond. In turn these trails were themselves all largely destroyed by the great fire of 1903.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Lunksoos Camp was said by one account to be a "model sporting camp" and obviously operating quite well

with more and more people attracted to the region. As we shall see, there was even a flicker of new life at the Hunt Farm site.

IV LUNKSOOS IN TIMES OF CHANGE 1900 - 1930

The new century ushered in a lengthy period of shifting trends in the region and those trends were mirrored at the Hunt and Lunksoos sites. It was a time when far-away forces caused the two enterprises to adapt and accommodate in a number of ways.

The logging industry was encountering a number of major changes.

Previously, logging companies relied on the rivers and streams to deliver their cuttings to the great log boom in Old Town for identification and processing.

When the Great Northern Paper Company plants in Millinocket and East Millinocket were built in 1900 and 1907 respectively, the logs were then intercepted and processed at the new plants. The company also began to build roads from Millinocket in all directions to harvest the vast forest resources of the now more accessible region nearby. As those roads advanced closer and closer to Katahdin along its West Branch side, the mountain became much easier to reach than ever before. This contributed to the gradual decline of traveling to Katahdin from the east. Though the trend was a moderate one at first, it was steady, especially during the early decades of the century. Even

access to matchless Katahdin Lake became easier from Millinocket as the Great Northern roads inched toward Avalanche and Roaring Brooks.

These developments also had a far-reaching effect on the trail system to Katahdin from the east. Extensive lumbering in the Wassataquoik watershed continued to result in the abandonment of trails to the mountain and the creation of new ones. Also, very serious fires in the watershed in 1903 and 1915 and a small one in 1923, hit the trail system especially hard and often eliminated trail use entirely. The fires eventually even forced logging to cease entirely in the Wassataquoik Valley. The region then began its slow return to wilderness until partly preserved by the creation of Baxter State Park and its prohibition of timber harvesting. This has been offset by a resumption of timber harvesting east of the park boundary by recent timber companies.

Myron Avery, who was deservedly credited for the creation and building of the Appalachian Trail into Maine, was also a devoted chronicler of the history of the Katahdin region. He ended his notable 1929 article in *Appalchia* entitled "The Story of the Wassataquoik: A Maine Epic," with these words:

The Wassataquoik of to-day presents a curious contrast. It is entirely deserted and abandoned. The growth of Millinocket to an imposing outpost of civilization, and the development of the Great Northern Paper Company's tote-road from Millinocket to the Basin Ponds has heightened its isolation by diverting from the east the usual travel to Katahdin. The spruce and pine of its glorious lumbering past are gone.

Bare rocks, a burned soil, a scraggly growth of "pople" and birch – the aftermath of the two terrific fires – an old field or two, ruined

dams and tumbling down camps and an over grown road are the mute and unconvincing records of its story. From the wilderness to a wilderness again, another life cycle of the Wassataquoik is complete. [Footnote 1]

By 1920 the only trail toward Katahdin from the east was the later abandoned Sandbank Trail that began at Whetstone Falls and ended at Katahdin Lake.

The trail was built by citizens of the Stacyville/Sherman area who wanted to be certain there was a scenic entry from the east if a park was ever created to preserve the Katahdin area.. It was never used extensively, and by 1950 was identified as “obscure” or “obliterated” on old trail maps.

Though there were still a number of scattered journeys to Katahdin undertaken in the early years of the new century, the clientele at Lunksoos and a new inn at the Hunt site would shift to those more interested in hunting and fishing than climbing Katahdin. The Lunksoos management claimed in 1900 that every hunting party member that fall season had secured their deer, in addition to some moose and even bears. In 1903, one fisherman asserted there were “no finer salmon waters in Maine than the Wassataquoik Stream.” This shift also included those now encouraged by the new Bangor and Aroostook Railroad publication *In The Maine Woods* to canoe the waters of the East Branch and camp along the way at tent sites or stay overnight at one or the other of the new sporting camps sprouting up along the river.

The stories of some of the folks who stayed at Lunksoos during the early decades of the century are quite intriguing and beg to be told. Arriving in Stacyville by train in July, 1900 were five members of the New England Botanical Club, led by Dr. George G. Kennedy of Harvard. Two early arrivals traveled by buckboard the first day over a

...little straggling road that leads from the station to the Post Office where we stopped a few moments at the brow of the hill [and] first saw the mountain in his grandeur. Here truly was a picture for an artist....In all our trip I recall no other view of or from the mountain equal in beauty to this one from the edge of Stacyville.

The road to Lunksoos was still very rough, forcing the group to walk much of the way. They found the "Hunt Place" deserted and desolate, and continuing upriver they discovered the

...cart-way along the edge of the river was rougher than the 'tote road' just passed, but...we had to submit to the pounding....The camp [Lunksoos] comprised a two-story frame house with a barn, and at a little distance a sylvan dormitory or hunter's lodge... containing eight or ten rooms. The woods were cleared away and a green but "stumpy" lawn sloped gently from the house to the river bank a few rods below. The thick forest bordering the opposite bank of the river was reflected in the smooth dark water....A wire cable with its primitive ferry boat, connecting the banks, added a picturesque feature to the landscape.
[Footnote 2]

The two early arrivals stayed overnight at Lunksoos that claimed at that time a capacity of twenty guests. They were joined in the morning by others, including Merritt Fernald of the University of Maine. After preparing their gear, the group departed for Katahdin the third day when, along with two buckboards, they were carried across the East Branch on the cable ferry. Their

guide was “Capt.” Edwin Rogers, the son of Luther B. After a ten-day exploration, featuring an extended stay at a rough temporary cabin dubbed “Camp Kennedy” at Chimney Pond in the Great Basin, the botanists returned in the rain to Lunksoos “which now seemed a most luxurious abiding place.” They departed the next day for Stacyville “through farewell torrents of rain, submerged forests and corduroy roads.” There the party dispersed “in the diverse directions in which pleasure and duty called.”

During the early years of the new century Boston artist, George H. Hollowell, found his way to the East Branch, Wassataquoik Stream, and Katahdin. Hollowell was fascinated by the physical challenges the loggers faced and recorded their hazardous lives with his camera and palette. He actually spent the winter of 1900-01 with the Ayer and Rogers lumbering operation. During that time he befriended Edwin Rogers so it is reasonable to assume he stayed overnight on occasion and perhaps for longer periods at the Lunksoos Camps, then owned and operated by Ayer and Rogers. One report recounted that Hollowell sought refuge at the camps in 1903 when he narrowly escaped being trapped by a fire in the Wassataquoik Valley. One of Hollowell’s most gripping paintings, *Wassataquoik River Drive* belongs to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C.

From 1900 to 1905 the Rogers family ran a series of ads in the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad’s new annual journal for sportsmen, *In the Maine Woods*.

The ads emphasized that the facility was the closest large camp to Katahdin, near beautiful Wassataquoik Stream trout fishing, and perfect for canoeing and hunting. They offered daily mail and buckboard service from the Patten rail station, as well as furnishing guides and saddle horses for adventures beyond the camps. One 1901 trip account reported that there is a “famous spring” at Lunksoos, a recommended stop for those canoeing down the East Branch. Luther B. Rogers and his son Edwin of “Stacyville or Patten” were listed as proprietors. An especially large ad in 1904 added to the amenities offered earlier: first-class service, a string of small overnight campsites along the Wassataquoik and a ferry across the East Branch. A *Maine Sportsman* trip account in 1903 boasted that Lunksoos had the only saddle trail into the Katahdin basin via Katahdin Lake, plus a comfortable camp at Chimney Pond.

... the pride of Mr. Rogers’ heart is his Mt. Katahdin trip, for which he has cut out and blazed a saddle trail through the woods to the great basin of Katahdin...to the timber line, [where] one is within an hour’s climb of the summit.... [Footnote 3]

Another 1903 visitor posted a short account of his stay with some friends at Lunksoos for a number of days of fishing. After describing the road into the camps as one

...supposed to be a good buckboard road, but which has such an amount of heavy teaming over it that it is never in comfortable condition and the ride over it has to be on horseback, if one would endure it with patience and the least possible amount of discomfort. The Rogers firm has decided to forsake this route to their resort, and will put into shape for their especial use the road to their camps via Patten, which is a few miles longer, but far preferable because it will be in so much better condition when

they want to use it, and will not be cut and gouged into impassability or nearly that, by the heavily loaded tote teams.
[Footnote 4]

This group then spent a number of “splendid” days fishing salmon, trout, pickerel, and black bass. They fished Big Spencer Brook, Big and Little Seboeis Rivers and other outlying lakes and ponds. This may well be the first record of a shift in the approach to Lunksoos away from Stacyville’s Swift Brook Road to a new unnamed “road” from the end of Patten’s Happy Corner Road.

As previously noted, Dr. Le Roy Harris Harvey, Professor of Natural History at the University of Maine in Orono, mounted a notable exploration of Katahdin’s Northwest Basin in 1902. He stayed at Lunksoos at the beginning of the trip and stopped there upon his return as well. He was accompanied by twelve others, most of them distinguished botanists from Maine to the Midwest.

The expedition departed from Stacyville on August 15, 1902 and arrived at Lunksoos in the afternoon. They organized their equipment and crossed the East Branch by ferry the next morning. They followed the Rogers Trail to Katahdin Lake, Sandy Stream Pond, and on to the South Basin. More than two weeks later they arrived back for a night at Lunksoos before returning to Stacyville. [Footnote 5] It is appropriate to take special note that the two remote lakes they discovered at the floor of the Northwest Basin were named by Harvey for two of the distinguished botanists in the party, Dr. Henry C.

Cowles and Dr. Bradley M. Davis, both of the Department of Botany at the University of Chicago.

The ads for Lunksoos in the Boston and Aroostook Railroad's annual publication *In the Maine Woods* suddenly disappear beginning in 1906, a strong indication that the great 1903 fire forced the Ayer and Rogers logging operation to discontinue, prompting the Rogers family to sell the camps. Records are sketchy at this point, but the camps appear to have been sold to Dr. Charles S. Adams of Boston about that time. After these early-1900s advertizing tidbits there were very few references to the Lunksoos Camps. No details about the purchase of the camps by Dr. Charles S. Adams. No trip accounts of any significance. There was a report that fire leveled the main lodge at the site in 1908, and an ad in 1910 reported a new building had been erected at the same location. That is about all that is known in the early decades of the 1900. We do know that the camps were eventually sold to Edward B. Draper sometime around 1919. Draper, a former official with the Ayer and Rogers logging business, later formed the Draper operation, one of the last major timber undertakings in the Wassataquoik Valley.

Once in a while the record of an astonishing climb of Katahdin is discovered, requiring one to stretch the usual rational possibilities to the limit. This is strikingly true of a remarkable 1912 ascent and descent that began at the Boston and Aroostook railroad station in Millinocket and ended at the B and A

railroad station in Stacyville. In June of that year, three Colby College professors began their odyssey by taking the train from Waterville to Millinocket and then walked the rest of the first two days to reach Abol Stream at the base of Katahdin's southern slope. They were guided only by a "diagram that Thoreau had made" after his 1846 partial ascent to just below the mountain's summit. They had borrowed the diagram from the Colby Library, but unfortunately there is no record of such a document existing today - so far at least.

After reaching the base of the Abol Slide [avalanche] the following day, the three climbed the steep trail and finally stood on the summit in the late morning. Visibility was clear at the time though clouds were beginning to gather. Whether by design or otherwise (the account does not reveal) the group descended "the other side" of the mountain. The account is not entirely clear at this point, but after passing a "body of water" [Katahdin Lake?] they eventually reached the famed Wassataquoik Valley logging tote road. Continuing their walk on the fifth day, the three spent a night under the stars near a lumberman's "bunkhouse" they had found. On the final day of their adventure they arrived at the west bank of the East Branch of the Penobscot River, calmly hailed the Lunksoos ferryman the loggers had told them to look for, and were carried across the river. The trip account, written by Professor Webster Chester, does not say how long or even if the group lingered at Lunksoos. After all, they had a train to catch in Stacyville. Off they headed up

the hill seven or more miles to the railroad station in time to catch the late afternoon train back home to Waterville.

The unique thing about this amazing traverse of the Katahdin massif is that no record is known, at least to this author, of such a lengthy trek in all the rich Katahdin area literature. There is, of course, one possible exception. Donn Fendler, the twelve-year-old boy “Lost on a Mountain in Maine” made a similar, but clearly unintentional, traverse of the massif and into the Wassataquoik Valley in August of 1939 before his rescue at exactly the same place our Colby professors crossed the East Branch. To follow such an itinerary of thirty or so miles as the crow flies, yet many more by primitive foot trails, even in this day of advanced equipment and light-weight gear, would test the very limits of endurance and fortitude. To have done it more than a century ago is indeed impressive. [Footnote 6]

William F. Dawson, a prominent member of Boston’s Appalachian Mountain Club and an avid photographer of the Katahdin region, traveled to the mountain in 1916 by way of the east side. He wrote that west of the railroad station at Stacyville

...one comes abruptly to the brow of the hill whence is seen what many call the finest view of Katahdin....Beyond the tilled land of the Aroostook potato farms, the forest hides the almost impassable ‘tote road’ that leads down to the Penobscot East Branch....

...the road leads thru the forest to the [Dr. James] Adams Camp at Lunksoos. If ever the Katahdin region is to be made

reasonably accessible, this way must be made into a road. At present it is a miscellaneous collection of boulders, swamp, corduroy and black flies....

...At Lunksoos a flat boat puts one across the East Branch which Hamlin tried so hard to have named the Mattagamon....
[Footnote7]

Buckboards and a litter or jumper [two poles carrying supplies and dragged behind a horse] transported the group's goods all the way to Chimney Pond. In the account of this trip in *Appalachia* in 1919, Dawson shared his belief that substantial public facilities should be built at Sandy Stream Pond, a perfect site for Swiss Chalet-type cottages. The suggestion included building a hotel to accommodate folks eager to reach Katahdin in comfort. This appears to be the last time anyone suggested building a road from the east to Sandy Stream and on to Chimney Pond.

On another rather special occasion, William Dawson, gave a rousing speech to the Maine Sportsmen's Fish and Game Association on January 20, 1920 in support of public preservation of Katahdin and its surrounding terrain. Just a year later Percival P. Baxter, then President of Maine's Senate, gave a similar speech to the same group to drum up support for his soon-to-be-introduced legislative proposal to establish a Mount Katahdin State Park.

It is perhaps providential then that, less than seven months after Dawson's spirited speech before the sportsmen's group, a circle of distinguished political friends should gather at Burton Howe's barn in Patten, Maine in

August of 1920, to begin their own historic odyssey to Katahdin. No mere recreationists. No curious botanists or geologists. No fishermen or hunters. No, this time Katahdin had lured a coterie of Maine Republican politicians who planned the trip while returning by train earlier in the summer from the National Republican Convention in Chicago. All of them had committed themselves to the protection of Katahdin, none quite as deeply as Percival Proctor Baxter of Portland who had first visited the area in 1903 with his father. He was, at the time of this trip, a member of Maine's House of Representatives, but in the Fall he would be elected to the Maine Senate and soon after win election as its Speaker. Three and a half weeks later, Maine's Governor Frederick H. Parkhurst died suddenly and, by the laws of the state, Baxter became the new governor

Joining Baxter on the fifth of August that summer were host Burton Howe, a Patten lumberman active in state politics; Charles P. Barnes, state legislator; Arthur G. Staples, editor of the *Lewiston Journal*; and Willis E. Parsons, Maine's Fish and Game Commissioner. They were joined by a host of other distinguished state-wide decision-makers as well as a number of support folks, including Roy Dudley, renowned guide to Katahdin and the principal planner of the trip details.* There may have been as many as twenty all

[asterisk at bottom of the page.

Roy Dudley is especially remembered for his service as a Fish and Game Warden at Katahdin's Chimney Pond Campground in the 1920s and 1930s before his untimely death in 1942. His great grand-daughter, also a descendant of William Harmon Hunt, lives today in Sherman, Maine not far from the Hunt Farm

site.

together. Their purpose was to personally experience traveling to and climbing Katahdin in order to strengthen the effort they shared to bring about some kind of preservation of this remarkable gem that Maine possessed.

The entourage left Burt Howe's barn in the afternoon to travel first by car to the end of Patten's Happy Corner Road where they could see in the clear afternoon sky the eventual goal of their adventure. Sometimes riding in buckboards, at times walking on foot, they made their way to the first-night's goal - Lunksoos Camps on the Penobscot East Branch. In his lengthy and stirring account of the trip, Arthur Staples described Lunksoos as "half way around the globe from a place called Hellandgone which is next door to nowhere." His account and two others that exist in the Katahdin literature provide remarkable, in-depth details about the undertaking and their individual experiences.

After an arduous afternoon trek, the group finally reached Lunksoos and were greeted warmly by caretaker Mike O'Leary and his dog "Boose." Members of the party were then directed to the refreshing water of the renown spring in front of the camps. Staples wrote that as he

...lay on the grass in the shadow of the trees and drank out of Mike O'Leary's spring, I was paid for all my sorrows, all of my pains and all of my disappointments on earth. I never again expect to taste anything like that first trickle down my gullet. It was colder than ice, sweeter than nectar and clearer than distilled dew. After this [all were] off for home brew. It was worth

walking to Lunksoos.
[Footnote 8]

The group had a very plentiful supper and a pleasant evening at the camps before trundling off to a much needed rest. They were awakened, however, at four a.m. to prepare for the next leg of their grand pilgrimage. After a hearty breakfast some, including Baxter and Staples, were set across the river by bateau powered by a gasoline motor while others crossed by horseback or by horsedrawn buckboard. After all had gathered on the far side of the river they began their long trek to Chimney Pond.

The adventure soon became, for all present, a mission to unlock the riches of a sacred precinct they firmly believed should be protected for the generations to follow. Many in this remarkable convoy did indeed reach Katahdin's summit, Percival Baxter being especially moved by his traverse of the famed Knife Edge. The die was thus cast, for Baxter's life and for the lives of his companions. Katahdin must be secured and safe-guarded.

Upon their return, the party recrossed the East Branch, had a mid-day dinner at Lunksoos, and headed back to Patten in the pouring rain, finally reaching Burt Howe's welcoming barn. After returning home Staples wrote of the Katahdin massif:

No mere sentimental thought inspires the desire...that this be owned by Maine and kept in its primitive state for our children.... They believe that it may be made into a preserve for fish and game against future ownership that might destroy its approaches, its scenic beauties and its use as a sanctuary for wild-life. They

think ahead to 2020....

All remain in my memory, and as I shut my eyes I can see the clouds...around Katahdin's tops and can hear again, the sighing winds telling of the countless ages in which they alone have known Katahdin. [Footnote 9]

Just one year later, in August of 1921, a member of that 1920 adventure, Willis E. Parsons, returned to inspect the initial boundary markings of the Katahdin Park Game Preserve. The designation formally promulgated later by the state legislature in 1923 banned hunting wild birds and animals but allowed fishing in the immediate area of Katahdin and its nearby peaks and basins. Roy Dudley also served as the guide for this group of state officials. An emerging preservation effort had begun to bear fruit.

The party assembled at Madison M. Tracy's farm in Stacyville and headed down the old tote road to the Hunt Farm site. Although the account of the trip by George C. Wing of Auburn is not very specific, it is obvious they spent the night at the Hunt location. The next morning the wagons and some of the horses crossed the East Branch on the ferry at Lunksoos, while Wing and some of the others crossed the river at the ford just below Hunt's and followed an old trail named the Gilpatric Trail. The two parties met at the Katahdin Lake Camps before heading to Chimney Pond. On their return, the party again followed the Gilpatric Trail to the East Branch, this time continuing past Hunt's to Lunksoos where they spent the night before returning to Stacyville. The fact that they by-passed Hunt's and went on to Lunksoos for that last

night, clearly indicates that the Mattagamom House at the Hunt site was either not operating at all or only marginally.

During or just before 1922, the much talked-about and beloved ferry operation across the East Branch at the Lunksoos Camps was terminated after forty years of service. The enterprise had grown through the years, at first carrying just adventurers and their simple climbing equipment, later carrying larger parties, later still carrying small buggies and their horses, and finally carrying large buckboards and their horses. As late as 1918 the ferry was described as a “large scow tethered to a steel cable and poled across the river.”

There is little doubt that the ferry was an extremely successful operation for those running the sporting camps at Lunksoos, especially after the rough side road directly to the ferry from the Swift Brook Road was improved, thus bypassing the Hunt Farm and the ford entirely. There is no indication in the records as to what caused the ferry service to shut down. It might have been due to the diminishment of lumbering activity in the Wassataquoik Valley after the fires. Surely the change from climbing Katahdin from its east side to its south side had its effect. Also, fewer desired to visit the upper reaches of the Wassataquoik Valley for fishing and hunting when so many lakes, ponds, rivers, and hunting grounds were available right near Lunksoos and a few other sporting camps along the river. Whatever the reasons, it marked the end of a noteworthy era in East Branch history.

E. B. Draper still owned the Lunksoos camps in 1923, but they might have remained closed that year and used only as a private camp. By 1924 the management of the camps passed to Harry P. Rodgerson, and in the new proprietor's first ad in *In the Maine Woods*, in a throw back to Arthur S. Staples' visit there with Percival Baxter in 1920, told his potential clients: "You should drink from our boiling [sic] spring. It will prolong your life." The Rodgerson ads continued until the early 1930s, so business must have been relatively good at that time. It was still named Lunksoos Camps, and the pronunciation "Lunkasoo" continued to creep into the local language.

Arthur H. Norton, then editor of *The Maine Naturalist*, and his three companions had an intriguing, very clear goal in mind when they arrived to stay at Lunksoos in August, 1925. They wanted to retrace the journeys of the many botanists, geologists and other scientists from John James Audubon's 1832 visit not far from Sherman right up through Hamlin's explorations which ended in 1900. Though it is clear that Norton was himself a botanist, that does not seem to figure significantly in this unique adventure. It was an ambitious campaign, taking them from Mattawamkeag to Stacyville, west to the Penobscot East Branch and upriver to Lunksoos. The second night they reached Tracy's Camps at Little Spring Brook north of Lunksoos, where they continued inland on horseback to Robar Brook, then along the upper reaches

of the old Wassataquoik Tote Road, and finally to a small “village” of cabins also run by Tracy at Russell Pond.

When Norton reached Stacyville at the beginning of his trip he reported:

...At Stacyville we were met by Harry Rodgerson...the host of Lunksoos, whither we were bound for the night; [on his rig] we took our seats and by a process now peculiar to the profession of registered guides, became his ‘sports’....

At Lunksoos we lodged for the night, in the commodious log structure far too large for a cabin, more nearly suited in size to the needs of a Viking lord; at meals we were sumptuously served by the fair young mother of seven rosy and tan cheeeked sons and daughters.

At night we were entertained by the deep toned sonorous hooting of a band of great horned owls followed by less deep though more complex hooting of barred owls, all moving southward along the timbered course of the river....

[In the morning]... while the dawn was still indistinct and gray, our host tip-toed in announcing in a hushed voice.... that a doe might be seen from our chamber windows, feeding on the farther bank of the river....

Early in the forenoon we were embarked upon the East Branch, in two canoes bound up river about twelve miles to Bark Camp Meadow.... [Footnote 10]

At the end of their trip they lodged again at Lunksoos and the next morning, instead of returning to Stacyville, they continued in their canoes down the East Branch past Hunt’s “when but shortly underway [a] guiding eagle appeared and led [us] on.” They likely ended their trip at Nicatou where the Penobscot River’s east and west branches meet, a day’s journey downriver. Nicatou has always been a special place of mingling waters for the native peoples during

their extensive inland journeys over the centuries before the English and the French began to penetrate Maine's inland areas in the eighteenth century. During the opening years of the nineteenth century, Nicatou was nearer to rail stations and auto roads for those returning from exploring the north woods. Even today Nicatou [Medway] is often the final stop for those canoeing the east and west branches of the great river.

During the two opening decades of the twentieth century, there was a flicker of new life at the Hunt Farm site. After years of neglect and abandonment, the older buildings at the site had deteriorated beyond repair and a fire in 1900 destroyed the old house and some of the attached buildings. That same year the Appalachian Mountain Club's journal *Appalachia* reported that a small hotel named the Mattagamon House was being built at the site. The owner, Madison M. Tracy of Stacyville, had been a major player in the history of access to Katahdin for quite a few years. In the late 1880s he co-founded what became the Katahdin Lake Wilderness Camps, cleared a trail in 1916 into the South Basin for the second Appalachian Mountain Club August Camp to the region, and then helped build the short-lived Sandbank Trail to Katahdin Lake in 1920. The Sandbank Trail was built by Stacyville and Sherman residents who wanted to be sure their towns would be selected as the starting points if any road were to be constructed into the areas being proposed at that time as a preserve or park – an interesting portent of a later twenty-first century development.

Ads began to appear in various publications of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad urging people to visit the new inn at the Hunt site. One ad in 1903 pictured a new two-story building with a wide front porch facing the river. The Mattagamon House was “charmingly located, roomy and well furnished; has the best of natural advantages, including ice-cold spring water...[and] will add new camps in 1903.” [Footnote 11]

Additional ads appear over the next few years with the cost listed at \$1.00 per person per night. The 1906 ad identified Joe Whittier as the proprietor and stated that as many as twenty-five persons could be accommodated each night. Sometime between 1906 and 1911 the inn management changed again, and a 1912 ad listed Irving E. [known affectionately as “Pud”] Palmer of Stacyville as the proprietor. The cost had risen fifty percent from \$1.00 to an immensely more expensive \$1.50 per day. That ad glowingly described all the streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds where great fishing was available and boasted the presence of “Big Game Moose and Deer for the taking. Our table can’t be Beaten....Best of references from People we have Pleased.”

A party of canoeists stayed at Lunksoos on their trip down the East Branch in 1910. After fishing along Wassataquoik Stream the next day they continued down the river. They reported the followings activity at the Hunt Farm site:

Not far from our campsite is the Hunt Farm, owned by Col. S. B. Gates, veteran landlord at Winn. It is now managed

by Irving Palmer who harvests hay there and cuts grass at the nearby Dacey Place [Lunksoos].

Col. Gates is making extensive improvements this season – new floors and new ceilings – seven rooms in all.... Called the Mattagamon House - it is a comfortable place for sportsmen and rusticators

[Footnote 12]

After 1915 the ads for the Mattagamon House cease, with one exception, a 1929 ad that portrayed “Lower Mattagamon” as “a group of houses on a high bank.” Records are very sparse about what might have happened to cause such a sudden change in fortunes. Artist Chris Huntington and his wife Charlotte, the authors of a short history of the Hunt Farm and Dacey/Lunksoos sites [Footnote 13] and the only detailed history of those sites before now, reported that “Pud” Palmer later [obviously after 1915] tore down the first Mattagamon House and built a second one at or near the same site. The Palmers later built a log cabin next to the new inn where they lived while running the hostelry. One may wonder also if the slow but steady erosion of the high river bank at that striking bend in the river may have forced the need of building further back from the edge of a very sharp drop to the river’s level.

During the early years of the twentieth century several additional sporting camps came into being along the East Branch, all of them extolling in their ads the remarkable opportunities in the region for hunting and fishing as well as, in a more limited way, access to Katahdin. All of them advertised more direct

access by horse and buggy from Stacyville, Sherman, and Patten, causing the old road into Hunt Farm to be used less and less. Charles McDonald's Bowlin Camps at Bowlin Falls was founded somewhere around 1895 roughly ten miles upriver from Lunksoos. The proprietors featured direct access from Patten and all the usual amenities and outdoor opportunities. Significantly, Bowlin Camps is the only public accommodation today along the East Branch south of Rt. 159 which extends from Patten to the northern entrance into Baxter State Park. The camps are still open all year round.

In 1901, the Little Spring Brook Camps were established where the brook enters into the East Branch eight or so miles above Lunksoos. Later, in the early 1920s, William F. Tracy and P. A. Tracy bought the camps in the early 1920s and renamed them the Hathorn Pond Camps. At that time, summer tourist railroad fares were \$22.05 from Boston and \$36 from New York City. Their ads touted access from Stacyville by saddle horse, canoe or buckboard, and they established a number of outlying camps to accommodate the fishermen. Later the camps were renamed the Wissattaquoik [sic] and Hathorn Pond Camps. They were open all year round and featured pack trips into Russell Pond and sites deeper into Katahdin territory. The camps were popular with the "sports" who were looking for more comfortable accommodations during their outdoor adventures. Bill Tracy later built and managed the Russell Pond Camps that became a part of Baxter State Park in 1950. The Matagamon Wilderness Camp just below the Matagamon Dam later

became an important part of the East Branch sporting camp picture. Though the Shin Pond Village Camps are not directly on the East Branch they have played and continue to play a major role in the region.

The arrival of the decade of the 1930s heralded again a number of subtle changes at our two iconic East Branch riverside settings. The Hunt Farm site reverted to its earlier time of slow decline as a commercial enterprise providing for the needs of the public. Lunksoos, though still an active sporting camp, entered a time when information became largely unavailable in providing us a full picture of its activities. There are, however, a number of events of great consequence in the future of these historically rich riverine localities.

V THE PAST RECEDES – A BRIGHT FUTURE UNFOLDS

1930 TO THE PRESENT

During the 1930s a gradual evolution began to take place at both the Hunt site and Lunksoos. The changes eventually affected the roles they would fulfill along the East Branch for the remainder of the twentieth century and beyond. We have already noted that the Mattagamom House at the Hunt site, after flourishing for a few years, had by the 1930s almost disappeared from the scene. It is likely that it experienced a slow, rather than a dramatic, decline. Chris Huntington reports that by the early 1940s the Mattagamom House was only a “shell”, still standing yet no longer receiving guests. For a time, “Pud” Palmer and his wife continued to occupy the log cabin to the side of the inn, but eventually the site was abandoned and the inn stood in disrepair.

The site itself, however, took on a semblance of new life for a short period beginning in 1944 when artist Carl Sprinchorn, along with his one-man support team, Nat Turner, occupied the old log cabin. Sprinchorn had earlier

struck up a strong friendship with Caleb Scribner, at that time not only the local Maine Fish and Game warden for the area but a rather good amateur artist in his own right. During Sprinchorn's prior art forays over a twenty-year period to Shin Pond and its nearby lumber camps, he and Scribner had often visited the old Hunt Farm site. One day his friend suggested to the artist that the site might be an ideal place for him to find inspiration for his artistic talents.

Born in Sweden, Sprinchorn studied art in New York City and was later urged to visit Maine by his mentor, artist Robert Henri. He was captivated by Maine – its landscapes, its people, and especially its logging industry. He accepted Scribner's invitation to spend the fall and winter of 1944 at the Hunt site. A local carpenter, trapper, and woodsman, Nat Turner, was engaged to fix up the old log cabin and to stay with Sprinchorn to take care of the necessary chores and cooking. This freed the artist to spend his days exploring the landscape and painting – both outdoors and indoors.

And so on September 2, 1944, Carl and Nat journeyed with their supplies on foot and wagon from Patten by way of the Happy Corner Road, and after canoeing their supplies down the river from Lunksoos, arrived at the log cabin. In the weeks and months to follow, Sprinchorn roamed along the East Branch and up the Wassataquoik Valley, completing quite a number of paintings, some on site and others completed indoors. After four months of

intense and inspired artistic endeavor he “left the woods,” as he put it, on New Year’s Day, 1945. The work he produced during this unique and challenging experience are among his finest.

[Footnote 1]

Nat continued to occupy the log cabin off and on for a number of years, but eventually the structure joined others on the site and fell into disrepair. A major spring freshet in 1949 seriously eroded the riverbank again and brought down a giant elm tree that had stood beside the buildings. The tree had been a prominent landmark for canoeists as long as anyone could remember. Its fall into the East Branch waters seemed to be an omen of the unrelenting decline and change taking place at the site. By the mid-1950s it was reported there was nothing left of the old farm and in the late 1950s Nat’s camp, the old Palmer log cabin, was also taken out by flood waters. Some recent research has revealed that the still eroding riverbank may have finally reached the area where the front steps of the storied farmhouse itself may have been located.

The Hunt Farm site continued its slow irreversible return to the forest and wilderness. Maine poet and author, Elizabeth Coatsworth, in one of her acclaimed poems entitled “This Green Field,” warns that a farm and pasture field requires someone to tend it, nurture it, care for it, and watch over it....

But let him turn, and it will slip
Into the thicket, like a deer.

[Footnote 2]

And so this celebrated farm, at the very edge of the eternally flowing waters of the East Branch of the Penobscot, slipped silently into the thicket like a deer, and so it remains.

A word is in order about the Fire Lookout on the summit of Deasey Mountain, roughly three miles upriver from the Lunksoos Camps and a mile west of the East Branch. The ground-level summit cabin was built in 1929 and had active lookout service until 1969. The all-important telephone line from Stacyville to the summit followed the Swift Brook Road to just below the Lunksoos Camps where it crossed the East Branch. It followed north on the west side of the river roughly three miles, until finally taking a more direct route for a mile to the Fire Warden's cabin and the summit. Ed Werler, Fire Warden at Deasey for three seasons in the mid-to late-1940s before becoming a Baxter State Park ranger, remembers that "working the line" (i.e., maintaining it) was a vital part of his duties. He had to be sure he could quickly report any fires to the state fire authorities through a relay station in Stacyville. Today the International Appalachian Trail crosses Deasey Mt. and members of the I.A.T. have restored the cabin from which one has an extraordinary view of Katahdin.

Lunksoos, quietly and without much fanfare, continued to enjoy a number of years of active life as one of only a few sporting camps along the river. As previously noted, ownership of Lunksoos had passed to Harry Rodgerson in

1924, but his last ad was in 1931. Sometime shortly thereafter ownership passed to Nelson and Lena McMoarn of Stacyville. It was the beginning of a lengthy, nearly twenty years, of successful and popular management of the camps.

Nelson had a garden in a field along the river below the camps, and one day in July, 1939 he was heading down to tend the garden when he heard a human voice across the river crying out. He said later that it almost sounded like a screech owl. He quickly spotted a young boy yelling at him for help. Realizing the boy's identity he ran back to the camps to alert his wife of the situation, then dashed back to the river to launch his canoe. On the opposite shore he found the gaunt emaciated figure of Donn Fendler looking at him out of hollowed eyes. The boy was so weak McMoarn had to carry him to his canoe before returning to the camps.

The twelve-year old boy had been separated from his father and other companions in a thick fog near the summit of Katahdin nine days earlier. Instead of waiting for rescuers to find him, Fendler wandered off the mountain into the Wassataquoik Stream watershed. Over the following nine days, weak and hungry, he followed an old logging road downstream. On that final day, he chose to follow an offshoot of the main logging road, and it brought him across and slightly downstream from Lunksoos, near where the old ferry used to cross the river.

McMoarn and his wife quickly radioed Fendler's family and those searching for him to share the good news that the boy had been found and was safe at Lunksoos. Across the years after his rescue Fendler movingly told the tale of his survival many times, especially to young people who were deeply touched by his story of faith and survival. Following a full and fruitful life, a much beloved Donn Fendler died in 2016 at the age of ninety. His story is one for the ages.

[Footnote 3]

For most of the following years, there is little information about the camps. No guest registers are known to exist, no short histories of the camps have surfaced, no accounts of visiting scientists are known. There are, in short, very few public records to help us gain a more intimate picture of life at the camps. We do know that sometime in the 1950s the McMoarns were no longer booking individual guests but were leasing the camps for private use by individuals and groups. Though Nelson died in 1956 the camps may have been passed on to one or more of his children. There is one report that in 1955 the old main lodge was intentionally burned to make way for a new lodge to be built at the same location.

Over the winter of 1968-69 the camps were sold to Roland Farmer and his wife of Sherman and they owned them for next twenty-three years. After their

tenure the ownerships over the ensuing years are, as near as can be determined:

1992 - Bought by Robert Chasse, a registered Maine Guide, and his wife Carolyn. They catered to hunters and added several buildings.

2001 - Bought by Lee and Jan Bertch. Lee was also a registered Maine Guide. Their primary focus was to serve hunters, but for a short time they advertised the camps as a fine snowmobile stop. They also added some cabins.

2009 - Bought by Bill and Sandy Todd of Florida. They bought the facilities sight unseen, but they did not regularly open them unless parties indicated their wish to come.

[Footnote 4]

In 2011 the camps and the 13.8 acres of land surrounding them were purchased by Roxanne Quimby in the name of her foundation, Elliotsville Plantation Inc. The camps became the management center for Quimby's ongoing efforts to establish a national park with her extensive holdings in the region on both sides of the East Branch. In 2016 the camps, along with some 87,000 acres of Quimby's land holdings on both sides of the East Branch, were donated to the United States government and designated by President Barak Obama's proclamation on August 24, 2016 as the new Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. [Footnote 5] An endowment fund was also established by the Quimby Foundation to provide ongoing support for the Monument. The Lunksoos camps continue to serve as the on-site management

center for the national monument and will likely have a very useful and fruitful life as the monument management plan unfolds in the years ahead.

The text of the 2016 Proclamation is a striking and lofty portrayal of the extraordinary features of the lands surrounding the two iconic locations where our story has taken place. That story, of course, begins with the native peoples who utilized the East Branch and its tributaries as their highways, enabling them to travel great distances across what is now the state of Maine. The story continues with the arrival of Messrs. Hunt and Dacey and the farms they built at their riverside wilderness tracts. The story includes the lumberjacks and river drivers of the great logging era. It moves on to include artists and authors, geologists and botanists, conservationists and wildlife researchers, recreationists and explorers - all of whom made extraordinary contributions to the richness of these woods and waters. Looking back to learn the history of places and people always provides insight and inspiration for living in the present.

It is curious that there was little controversy in the nineteenth century over the extreme timber cutting practices followed in the region. It was not until the twentieth century arrived that the American conservation movement began to take hold. East Branch and Katahdin visitor, President Theodore Roosevelt, along with John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and a host of others made their voices heard then on behalf of protection for the common good. Another

East Branch and Katahdin visitor, Percival P. Baxter had to battle the timber companies in the 1920s and 1930s to achieve protection for the 200,000+ acre Baxter State Park. The tension between conservationists and timber harvesting interests stood, for a time, in the way of Roxanne Quimby's effort to create a national park or monument surrounding much of the East Branch and its tributaries. Perhaps some day the two worthy goals of conservation and commercial usage of land will be able to co-exist side by side.

It was no fluke that in 1977 the U. S. Department of the Interior recognized the East Branch of the Penobscot and its two main tributaries, the Wassataquoik Stream and the Seboeis River, as worthy of designation as a Wild and Scenic River System. Though not yet formally designated as such, the declaration is significant. In addition, the great logging era has, for the most part, ended now and the forest is slowly recovering. The Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument will now preserve this magnificent heritage for the generations to follow. What began when two intrepid pioneers, William H. Hunt and Hiram Dacey, carved out their farmsteads in 1832 along the banks of the Penobscot East Branch will now bring joy and refreshment, along with physical and spiritual renewal, to those who visit these sacred locations.

What ultimately binds together all the subjects of our story is the great immense waterway that flows by these two places of accommodation at the edge of wilderness. The East Branch waters are a part of an extensive

watershed that has its beginning in Maine's great north woods including waters almost reaching to the state's western and eastern boundaries with Canada. From these far points the waters flow to the sea.

The actors in our story along the banks of the Penobscot East Branch were touched by the waters of Wassataquoik Stream flowing out of the northern slopes of the Katahdin massif. They were touched by the waters flowing past the narrow shores of Chesuncook Lake in the Allagash country, by the waters of Trout Brook north of Katahdin, and finally by the waters of the Seboeis River. These waterways were used by our native brothers and sisters as they moved from watershed to watershed across these lands. The waters later served as the conduits for moving timber to worldwide markets and still later they enabled the recreationists to penetrate into the mostly uninhabited north woods for joy and refreshment. Finally today these woods and waters will be protected. What a story. As we said at the start of our journey, it is a story of boldness, perseverance, endurance, devotion and stamina.

A story being told at last.

ENDNOTES

PRELUDE: SETTING THE STAGE

1 The expedition descriptions are taken from *Field Notes from the 1793 Commonwealth of Massachusetts's Survey of the Penobscot River Watershed*, authorized by the Commonwealth's Land Committee. The survey leaders were Parker Holland and Jonathan Maynard, the latter having written the field notes for the Penobscot East Branch.

2. Maria R. Audubon, *Audubon and His Journals* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1897), 391.

CHAPTER I THE PIONEERS ARRIVE 1930 - 1845

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2. The Penobscot County [ME] Registry of Deeds. Vol. 29, 180.

3. Myron H. Avery, "The Story of the Wassataquoik, A Maine Epic," *The Maine Naturalist*, September, 1929, 83 and 96.

4. From family materials provided by the descendants of William H. Hunt.

5. Henry D. Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, Edited by Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 284.

6. C. T. Jackson, *Second Annual Report of the Geology of Public Lands* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 22.

7. Ezekiel E. Holmes, *Report of an Exploration and Survey of the Territory on the Aroostook River* (Augusta: Smith & Robinson, Printers to the State, 1839), 10.

CHAPTER II HUNT FARM: THE WAY TO KATAHDIN 1845 - 1880

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2. John Springer, *Forest Life and Forest Trees* (Somersworth: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1971), 204-205.

3. George Thurber, "Notes of an Excursion to Mount Katahdin," *The Maine Naturalist*, December, 1926, 136 - 138.
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5. Thurber, "Notes of an Excursion," 151.
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10. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Going to Katahdin," *Putnam's Monthly*, Vol. xiv, September, 1856, 246 - 247 and 255 - 256.
11. Rev. Joseph Blake, "A Second Excursion to Mount Katahdin," *The Maine Naturalist*, June, 1926, 76.
12. Ibid, 81.
13. Henry D. Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, Edited by Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 283-284.
14. *State of Maine Acts and Resolves*, April 9, 1856.
15. John W. Neff, *Katahdin: An Historic Journey* (Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2006), 53-54.
16. "Penobscot East Branch in 1861. From the Diary and Letters of Alpheus Spring Packard," *Appalachia*, Vol. 28, No. 4, December, 1951, 420.
17. Charles H. Hitchcock, *Sixth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Maine Board of Agriculture*, "Geology of the Wild Lands" (Augusta: Stevens and Sayward, Printers to the State, 1861), 400.
18. "The Scientific Survey No. 5, Mount Katahdin," *Aroostook Times*, Vol. 2, No. 21, August 2, 1861, 2.

19. "Letter from the Backwoods of Maine," *Portland Daily Press*, August 22, 1862. [Source provided by Stanley Tag]
20. Thomas Sedgwick Steele, *Canoe and Paddle* (New York: Orange Judd Company, 1880), 129 – 130. Note also Steele's reference to Frederic E. Church's purchase of land on Millinocket Lake. As previously noted, Church bought fifty acres at \$2.00 per acre.
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CHAPTER III THE ASCENDANCY OF THE DACEY CLEARING 1880 – 1900

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2. *Ibid.*, 326.
3. Lucius Hubbard, *Hubbard's Guide to Moosehead Lake and Northern Maine* (Cambridge: By the Author, 1889), 142.
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5. Mary Barker Rogers, *Down East* (Self-published). Found in the collections of the Patten Lumbermens Museum, Patten, Maine. Courtesy, Rhonda Brophy, Director, 80 – 81.
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4. *Ibid.*, 171-172.
5. Le Roy Harris Harvey, "An Ecological Excursion to Mount Katahdin," *Rhodora*, Vol. 5, No. 50, February, 1903, 41.
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CHAPTER V THE PAST RECEDES – A BRIGHT FUTURE UNFOLDS

1930 TO THE PRESENT

- 1. The author is indebted to artist Chris Huntington and his wife Charlotte who have pledged themselves to keeping alive Carl Sprinchorn’s artistic legacy, especially through their occasional publication *Carl Sprinchorn News*.**
- 2. Elizabeth Coatsworth, *Country Poems* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1942), 4.**
- 3. Donn Fendler, *Lost on a Mountain in Maine* (Welles Publishing Company Inc., 1939)**
- 4. The author is indebted to Don Piktialis who was most helpful in piecing together many of the noted ownership changes.**
- 5. Barack Obama, “Presidential Proclamation – Establishment of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.” (Washington, D. C., August 24, 2016).**

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It did not seem necessary to record every source of hundreds of pieces of information employed while compiling this history of the Hunt Farm and the Dacey Farm/Lunksoos. Many of the sources can be found in the Endnotes to each chapter. It might be helpful, however, to list a few of the major sources where the reader may find more information if desired.

Books:

John W. Neff, *Katahdin: An Historic Journey* (Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2006).

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Maine Sportsman

The Maine Naturalist

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