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President's Report

This will be my final missive as President of the Adirondack 46ers. The old adage—Time Flies—applies here; it seems like just yesterday that I started this endeavor. The take-aways from my tenure are two fold:

1. keep an open mind; and
2. always realize that there is more to learn.

I feel that as a group we have evolved with the times. We are a much bigger club than we were even five years ago thanks to back-to-back record number of finishers ove multiple years. But I still feel that we retain some of our original character. I've said it before and I will say it again—I think that, for a lot of folks, becoming a 46er these days is just as exciting as it was 50 years ago. The sense of wonder and adventure is still to be found out there among the rocks, streams, trees, and mud.

I leave you in capable hands as our group moves into the future. And while there are unknowns there to challenge us, I'm sure that, as a group, we will rise to the occasion as we have done in the past. Sometimes the path that we trod is not clear—it goes down, around, and then up over a false summit or two before finally becoming apparent.

Climbing the 46 can sometimes be controversial (such as choosing to hike during mud season). It is important to keep an open mind to change, to listen to, and work with our partners such as the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Adirondack Mountain Club. Collaboration helps us convey a unified message of Leave No Trace, best practices regarding group size, disposal of waste, et cetera.

It is important to remain ever vigilant to help protect the mountains that we have all come to love so dearly. I have enjoyed my time as president, but now it is time for me to step back, to let others take a turn at the front of the line, but I am not going away. I certainly plan to join a few trail crew outings in the upcoming years. As Grace used to end her letters to corresponding hikers—Good Climbing!

Brian Hoody #4410W

The membership of the Adirondack Forty-Sixers Inc. consists of hikers who have climbed to the summits of the 46 major peaks of the Adirondacks. The club is dedicated to protection of the Adirondack environment, to education in Adirondack wilderness ethics, and to participation in work projects in cooperation with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to meet these objectives. The views expressed by contributors to this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Adirondack Forty-Sixers, Inc.

The Great Adirondack Pass

By Don Seauvageau

"The famous Indian Pass is probably the most remarkable gorge in this country, if not in the world. . .

I had expected, from paintings I had seen of this Pass, that I was to walk almost on a level into a huge gap between two mountains, and look up on the precipices that toppled heaven high above me. But here was a world of rocks, overgrown with trees and moss—over and under and between which we were compelled to crawl and dive and work our way with so much exertion and care, that the strongest soon began to be exhausted."

—Joel T. Headley, 1849, *The Adirondack; or, Life in the Woods*

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Adirondacks had become a favorite destination for the adventuresome tourist. No two natural wonders of the region were more intriguing than the highest peak in New York State, Mount Marcy, and the Indian Pass. The iron works at McIntyre, which became the hamlet of Adirondac in 1848, had become the central base camp for visitors to the region. Accommodations were available there, as well as provisions and local guides. Joel Headley stayed there and did summit Marcy two days before taking on the Pass. Accompanying the chapter of his 1849 book *The Adirondack; or, Life in the Woods* describing the Indian Pass visit he included a sketch which he maintained to be the most "correct an idea of it." (See Figure 1)

Interestingly, the sketch was titled 'Adirondack Pass' and in a later chapter while camping along the shore of Lake Henderson Headley refers to the gorge as Adirondack Pass. So which was it, Indian or Adirondack? Inquiring minds want to know.

I pulled my trusty Donaldson, *A History of the Adirondacks*, off the shelf to seek the answer. Sure enough, on Page 164 of Volume I, "The Indian Pass, or the Adirondack Pass as it was formerly sometimes called, is a stupendous gorge between two mountains, Wallface and McIntyre¹, lying a short distance

Figure 1. 1849 Headley Ingham sketch, page 69.



Indian Pass from Henderson Lake 2017. Photo credit: Don Seauvageau

northeast of Lake Henderson.” Mystery solved. And yet, it did not explain the Why.

The First Reference to the Gorge

In October 14, 1826, David Henderson wrote to his father-in-law Archibald McIntyre of New York City, one of the most often quoted historical letters² from the Adirondack region. He had been presented a piece of iron ore by

The un-capitalized reference to this geological feature as “a notch” clearly indicates he did know of a common local name. Notch was a typical regional term³ for a pass, as in the still-existing Wilmington Notch. The exploration party stayed in the notch traveling to the ore beds and on their return to North Elba. This is the only documented passage by this route related to the development of the ore beds at the head waters of the Hudson River. By 1828, an act had been

In pursuit of his duties, he made an ascent of Whiteface that year and then, according to William Redfield, a prominent scientist of the time and unofficial survey member:

proceeded southward through the remarkable Notch, or pass, which is described in Emmons Report, and which is situated about five miles north from McIntyre.

From the text of the Emmons Report to

The precipice which we measured, and over which we looked, is from one station 1,200 feet high. Taking its height from another station it is 1,000 feet. This precipice extends about a mile, though it does not preserve this great elevation the whole distance. This is probably the greatest natural curiosity in the State except Niagara Falls; it is well worthy a visit by lovers of magnificent scenery.

For the 1837 survey, Ebenezer returned to the High Peaks, this time visiting the McIntyre region. This survey had several historical accomplishments, including discovery of the highest source of the Hudson River. From Redfield’s report:

At 8.40 A.M. we arrived at the head of the stream on the summit of this elevated pass, which here forms a beautiful and open mountain meadow, with the ridges of the two adjacent mountains rising in an easy slope from its sides. From this little meadow, which lies within the present limits of the town of Keene, the main branch of the Hudson and a fork of the east branch of the Au Sable commence their descending course in opposite directions, for different and far distant points of the Atlantic Ocean. The elevation of this spot proves by our observations to be more than four thousand seven hundred feet⁵ above tide water.

The first recorded ascent of New York’s highest peak was on August 5, 1837 when Emmons’ party⁶ climbed, as reported by Redfield:

til we reached the open surface of the mountain, covered only with mosses and small alpine plants, and at 10 A.M. the summit of the High Peak of Essex was beneath our feet.

On the spot, Emmons named the peak Mount Marcy in honor of then New York Governor William Learned Marcy.

On August 8, the party ascended Mt. McIntyre from Avalanche Lake. They returned to the settlement (the McIntyre iron works) via “The Notch” after descending Mt. McIntyre to the north until they reached the AuSable River. In his report of this trip, Emmons states, “From the summit of McIntyre the Notch, or as it is now called, the Indian Pass, is S. 85° W.” Eleven years after David Henderson first came through

the Notch, it was being referred to locally as Indian Pass. The report was the first known published use of this name.

Ebenezer Emmons wrote his second report pertaining to the 1837 exploration of the Second Geological District to the State Legislature on February 15, 1838. It was, and still is, one of the most significant documents ever written on the High Peak region. Following are some of the more interesting quotes:

Marcy. Its true bearing from the Dial mountain is N. 66° 36’ W. The bearing of White Face from Mount McIntyre, on the magnetic meridian is N. 20° E.

3. Arguably the most famous passage in the report was naming the Adirondacks.

The cluster of mountains in the neighborhood of the Upper Hudson and AuSable rivers, I proposed to call the Adirondack



Wallface from Indian Pass. Photo credit: Justine Mosher # 7207W

the young Native American brave Lewis Elijah Benedict while encamped at North Elba looking for a long lost vein of silver. Henderson, recognizing the value of such a rich ore, employed Lewis to take him to the source. First, however, true to his mission, Henderson spent four days searching for the silver.

On Friday morning we all started with the Indian for the ore bed—our course to a notch in the South mountains where the river AuSable has its source. After a fatiguing journey we arrived at the notch—as wild a place as I ever saw.

passed by the state legislature to create a road from Cedar Point⁴ passing through the iron works property on toward the Black River to the west. This became the primary route to the mining operation.

The Ebenezer Emmons Geological Surveys 1836–1842

Fast forward to 1836, the first year of the newly created State Geological Survey. Ebenezer Emmons had been appointed the head geologist for the Second District, which included the High Peak region of the state.

the legislature February 1, 1837:

The Notch here mentioned, is an immense gorge, or chasm, furnishing a pass through these high mountains. . . . The fall of the north branch of the Hudson from the Notch to the Newcomb Iron Works, is 1,130 feet. The fall of the Hudson from this place to tide water is not far from 2,109; making the whole fall of the north branch of the Hudson, from its source in the Notch to tide water, 3,239 feet.

He ascended Wallface on the west side of the Notch:

1. Explanation of why Mount Marcy was named such:

As this tour of exploration was made by gentlemen who were in the discharge of their duties to the State, and under the direction of the present Executive, whose interest in the survey has been expressed both by public recommendation and private counsel and advice, it was thought that a more appropriate name could not be conferred on the highest summit of this group than Mount Marcy.

2. Bearings were taken from the top of Marcy and McIntyre was named:

Another remarkable mountain, bearing N. 47° W. was named Mount McIntyre. It was supposed to rank next in height to Mount

Group, a name by which a well-known tribe of Indians who once hunted here may be commemorated.

It appears from historical records that the Adirondacks or Algonquin, in early times, held all the country north of the Mohawk.

4. Elevation of the highest source of the Hudson River:

Highest source of the Hudson and AuSable Rivers, 4,747 feet.

Charles Ingham was on the 1837 geological survey as the expedition artist. In those pre-photography days, the artist would record events or scenery on the spot using a sketch pad and making notes as to



Figure 2. View of Indian Pass from the Ingham Emmons Report. Reprinted with permission from the Adirondack Experience.



Figure 3. The Great Adirondack Pass by Ingham Emmons. Reprinted with permission from the Adirondack Experience.

the colors seen. Later in their studios, they would create their oil painted masterpieces. Several of Ingham's sketches were included in Emmons' report of February 1838. They were, for many, the first views of the magnificent newly-named Adirondack region. Plate Number 2 in the report was titled "View of the Indian Pass" (See Figure 2). If it looks

familiar that is because Headley used the sketch with the title "Adirondack Pass" in his 1849 book.

It was two years before Charles Ingham's famous oil painting "The Great Adirondack Pass: Painted on the spot" (see Figure 3)⁷ went public. Travelers and artists first saw it exhibited at the National Academy of Design

in 1839. It was obviously not "painted on the spot." No artist carried a full case of oil paints, a canvas the 48" X 40" size of this painting or an easel on a ten-day tramp through the wildness. Let alone would there have been the time to stop, set up, paint the scene and then wait for the oils to dry before continuing on the tramp. After an arduous trek, during which he was reported to have fainted, Ingham executed this painting "on the spot" in his studio from the sketch included in the Emmons report. Ingham knew the name of the Pass so the use of Adirondack in the title was no doubt to capitalize on the growing use of the term for the High Peaks region. It had only been a year since *Adirondacks* first appeared in popular print but by early 1839 two new state corporations already existed bearing the name: the Adirondack Railroad Company and Adirondack Iron and Steel, which were both founded by the owners of the McIntyre mine. Whether Ebenezer had anything to do with the title of the painting is unknown but he did jump on the band wagon. In his 1842 "Geology of New York. Part Two" which were excerpts from his 1837 survey, he had a section entitled "Adirondack Pass."

In the midst of the mountains of Essex County, at the source of one of the main branches of the Hudson river, there is a deep narrow gorge, which has been denominated the Adirondack Pass. In its general character, it is in keeping with what appears on all sides where this feldspathic mass is the predominant rock, except that the scale on which this gorge has been formed is far larger and more magnificent.

From the description that followed in the report, there was no doubt it was the Indian Pass.

To summarize, Emmons had used the names "The Notch" (1837), "Indian Pass" (1838) and "Adirondack Pass" (1842) for the same gorge. Headley was familiar with these reports since he used Ingham's sketch and used both the old Indian Pass and the "new" Adirondack Pass in his book.

There was at least one holdout for the Notch nomenclature. In June, 1844 after the British actor, William Macready, visited McIntyre with Henderson's friend David C. Colden⁸ he wrote to his wife that, "I went with Henderson and Colden, and two attendants (guides), on our excursion to one of the grand passes of this wild region

—called the Notch... The Pass, or glen, we went to see, exceeds in beauty and grandeur any other that I have chanced to look upon."

David Henderson, in a letter a few days later, states, "On Wednesday morning we went to the Notch, and roamed about there through the caves etc., and camped in the Notch all night." Henderson still held on to his old belief, probably until his accidental death the next year.

References Later in the Nineteenth Century

Numerous explorers of the region visited the Pass in the middle of the century and wrote of their experiences. Most notable were Richard Henry Dana Jr. of *Two Years Before the Mast* fame in 1849 and T. Addison Richards, a well-known travelogue writer of the time in the early 1850s. The most notable attractions in the area for both authors were first Mount Marcy and secondly the Indian Pass.

In the late 1850s, the iron works at Adirondac shut down. However, visitors to the region could still find welcome in the village by the lone caretaker, Robert Hunter, and his family. And visitors did continue to come. Every written account from them referred to the Indian Pass. In his 1868 account of traveling to the four principle gorges⁹ in the Adirondacks, Alfred Street, author and State Librarian, titled his book *Indian Pass* in recognition of this most famous natural attraction.

The Nineteenth Century Guide Books

The first popular guidebook by W. H. H. Murray in 1869 does not mention the High Peaks region as a "section of the wilderness to visit" so it appears unlikely Murray personally visited.

However, in 1872, E. R. Wallace published a more complete guide to the Adirondack region: *Descriptive Guide to the Adirondacks*. On Page 383, he states, "The Adirondack or Indian Pass, 5 m. N.E. of the Iron Works, is more readily accessible from this locality than from any other habitable point." This is perhaps the last mention of Adirondack Pass in literature. Accompanying the guide is a sketch of "Indian Pass from Lake Henderson" (See Figure 4).

In 1873, Seneca Ray Stoddard came out with his *The Adirondacks Illustrated* which

included a chapter on Indian Pass and the following advice: "Does it pay to go through Indian Pass? I answer a thousand times yes." These are two of the most enduring guidebooks published in the latter part of the century.

Indian Pass

More than a century later the Adirondack Pass has faded into history. Despite concerted efforts by the state geologist and Charles Ingham's popular painting, the name did not stick and the Pass reverted back to earlier times. A likely explanation is the name was never adopted by the local inhabitants. The guides were the common thread. John Cheney, "the mighty hunter," was a guide for Emmons on his first ascent of Mount Marcy and the climb over McIntyre to the Pass. The next month, September 1837, Cheney was C. Fenno Hoffman's guide on his failed attempt to summit Marcy and also an overnight trip to the Indian Pass. In a section of his book *Wild Scenes at the Sources of the Hudson* titled "A Rough Tramp" Hoffman describes the "walk to the Indian Pass."

John Cheney had come to the heart of the mountains in 1830 from Ticonderoga because that town had become too crowded. As a hunter and a trapper in the region, he knew the Native Americans Lewis Elijah of iron ore fame and his father Sabael, the first resident of Long Lake. Sabael first came to the area through the Indian Pass in 1762¹⁰ and

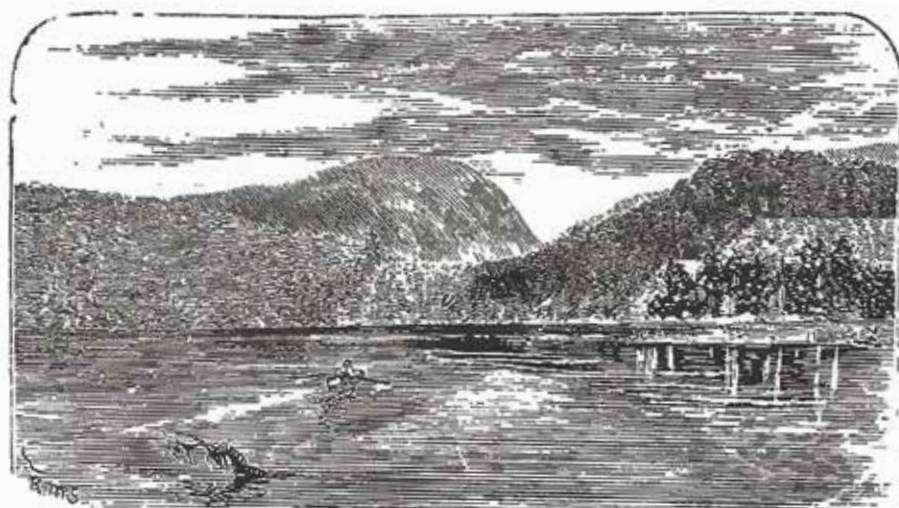
his son had escorted the 1826 Henderson party through this pass. This party was the first known white men to pass that way. Henderson commented in his October 1826 letter that Elijah was the first Indian seen in North Elba for three years. It was a different story on the south side of the High Peaks. Native American guides were well known but, with the exception of Mitchel Sabattis, rarely mentioned in the writings of the day. It is known that Elijah guided Farrand Benedict, the Vermont professor, on his exploration of the High Peaks since he (Elijah) ultimately adopted Benedict as his last name. It is also likely Elijah was one of the nameless guides accompanying Emmons on the first ascent of Marcy in 1837.

After traversing the Pass, Sabael traveled down the Hudson and up the Indian River to Indian Lake to become its first settler and providing the name for these features. It is only logical that the local community would also know the Pass as "Indian." The guides for the most part being non-literate woodsmen would have never read the articles written about Adirondack Pass and only referred to it by their regional name while escorting the "sports."

Today, the deserted village of Adirondac, later known as Upper Works, is still the starting point for exploration of the High Peaks. From that trailhead, both Mount Marcy and Indian Pass may be accessed. The legacy lives on. ■

NOTES

1. This peak is now known as Algonquin. At 5,112 feet elevation, it is the second highest peak in the Adirondacks. Credit for the change of name is given to Verplanck Colvin where it first appeared in the 1886 report table of altitudes.
2. The entire original letter is preserved at the research library of the Adirondack Experience in Blue Mountain Lake.
3. The separation between mountains is referred to by numerous regional terms including: notch, pass, divide, hollow, crotch, etc.
4. Now Port Henry.
5. Their actual measurement was 4,747 feet. Lake Tear of the Clouds is the highest pond and romantic source of the Hudson but at 4,295 feet elevation is nearly 500 feet lower than the source of the Opalescent River.
6. Included Emmons, William Redfield, Archibald McIntyre, David Henderson, James Hall, Charles Ingham, Mr. Strong, Professors Miller and Torrey, Emmons Jr. and five guides. John Cheney is the only guide mentioned by name.
7. The painting was given to Archibald McIntyre, the principal of the iron works bearing his name. It is now at The Adirondack Experience—The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake.
8. David C. Colden of Jersey City, New Jersey, is the name sake of the mountain and the lake. Emmons named the peak McMartin in honor of Duncan McMartin one of the original mine owners but, ultimately, Colden stuck.
9. Indian Pass, Panther Gorge, Clove or Notch of Whiteface and "the gorge between Dial (now Nippletop) and Dix's Peak" now Hunter's Pass.
10. The chapter on Mount Colden in Russell Carson's book *Peaks and People of the Adirondacks*, 1927 begins with a short history of Sabael on Pages 36-37.



INDIAN PASS, FROM HENDERSON LAKE.

Figure 4. Indian Pass from the Henderson Wallace guidebook.