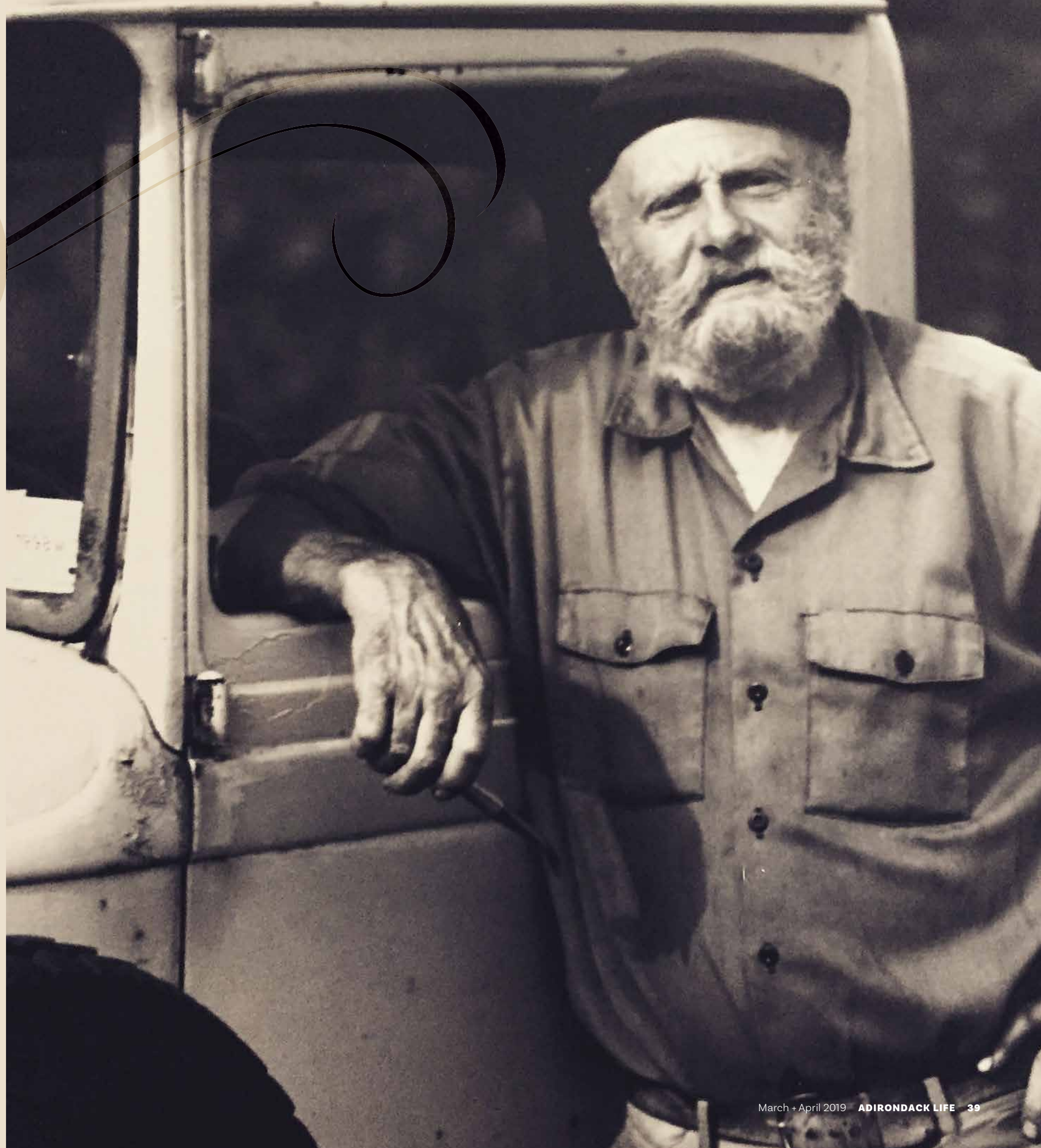


The Legend of Hawkeye

OLD CARS,
OLD MONEY
AND AN
ENDURING
MYSTERY

by *Niki Kourosky*





ONCE, NOT SO LONG AGO, a gearhead paradise lay hidden along the stretch of Route 86 near Donnelly's ice-cream stand. There, at a weathered farmstead, John "Hawkeye" Hawkinson spent a lifetime unearthing and rehabbing mechanical treasures. If you were lucky, you might find him outside, feeding his wild friends or holding court in a wicker chair. And if he was amenable, he might tell you a tale or show off his jaw-dropping vintage car and boat collection.

ride for the Jazz Age chauffeured set—was the only one ever made, referred to as a "one-off" in classic-car parlance. It was enough to bring old-auto fan-boy Wayne Carini, host of cable TV's *Chasing Classic Cars*, to marvel over its sculptural radiator shell, ornate door handles and braided running boards. The ultimate in barn finds hadn't been moved since 1974, but the engine still turned. Its iconic Minerva hood ornament had been carefully stored, as well as the inset clock from the backseat vanity and the owner's manual.

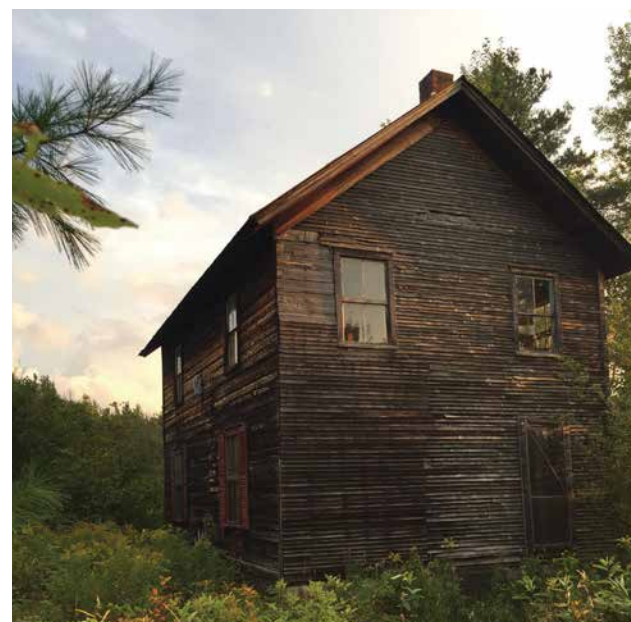
Despite that showpiece—which Carini bought from the estate for more than \$300,000—Hawkinson called his

At the time of his death, in 2016, Hawkinson had stashed more than 40 vehicles on his property, a 50-acre spread he referred to as his ranch.

At the time of his death, in 2016, Hawkinson had stashed more than 40 vehicles on his Saranac Lake property, a 50-acre spread he referred to as his ranch. The stockpile included a right-hand-drive 1924 Packard from Uruguay, a 1931 eight-cylinder Buick Model 57 with those snappy suicide doors, a 1933 REO Speedwagon that had trucked camp kids to trailheads and swimming holes, and—the queen of his collection—a one-of-a-kind, all-original 1930 Minerva with a Hibbard and Darrin body.

That's not one-of-a-kind in the figurative sense. Hawkinson's Paris-born convertible sedan—a posh

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: This 1928 Packard 443 Super Eight was one of John Hawkinson's everyday rides. His 1923 American LaFrance fire truck went back to its original garage—the Saranac Lake Fire Department—after his death. A 1933 REO Speedwagon formerly owned by Lone Pine boys' camp, on Osgood Pond. Hawkinson's homestead, in Saranac Lake. He favored cars and trucks from the late 1920s and early '30s; anything later, he said, was "junk." FACING PAGE: Portrait by Jon Chodat.



Photographs courtesy of Shane Ash, unless otherwise noted



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Hawkinson once drove his 1919 Mack Bulldog fire truck 300 miles in freezing temperatures. He saved this 1928 Packard roadster from a junkpile in the 1950s. The queen of Hawkinson's collection, an all-original 1930 Minerva with a Hibbard and Darrin body that sold for more than \$300,000. His 1930 Packard, a favorite touring car.

collection “go cars, not show cars,” says his longtime friend Eileen Jauch. These weren’t cherry-condition restorations; with Hawkinson, authenticity trumped glamour. But he kept many in running condition, and every one had a backstory. William A. Rockefeller once owned Hawkinson’s 1927 Buick speedster; there was a yellowed 1953 registration to prove it. His Linn tractor may have helped build the Veterans Memorial Highway up Whiteface (though there’s no paper trail on that), and its tracks still turned after 50 years in his care. He left a note in his red-and-black 1930 Packard touring car recording the mileage on its chassis at 500,000-plus. Hawkinson played a leading role in

some of the best yarns. Like the time, in 1961, he drove his open-cab 1919 Mack Bulldog 300 miles at a crawl, freezing to his seat along the way. He claimed he survived by grace of his raccoon-fur coat and ample brandy. Or the time he’d lined up more than a dozen vintage vehicles on his lawn and ran from one to the next starting them up, until they were all purring along. Or that he’d bought his Minerva in installments over 16 years, taking pieces of the car home as he made payments.

“Everyone you meet has a different Hawkeye story,” says Shane Ash, who spent months inventorying and selling Hawkinson’s collection for the estate. (His will stipulated that the proceeds

be split between the Adirondack Chapter of the Nature Conservancy and the New York Historical Society.)

The most interesting story may be the man himself. John Whitney Hawkinson arrived into privilege in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1932. “I wasn’t born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I was born with two,” Jauch remembers him saying. His mother was the granddaughter of Amos Whitney, a mechanical engineer and cofounder of Pratt & Whitney machine tool works. Hawkinson’s father was a creative dynamo who worked on movie sets, wrote nonfiction books and started Hawkinson Porcelain in the late 1930s, a short-lived line now prized by collectors.

The Adirondacks attracted Hawkinson early, during his time as a counselor at Lone Pine Camp, on Osgood Pond, and as a student at Paul Smith’s College in the 1950s. He settled here for good soon after, buying land and an old farmhouse that he moved on skids to his spread. The home had little insulation, no running water and minimal electricity. His nearest neighbor, Rollie Marshall, would lug a five-gallon bucket of water over every day.

“He lived on nothing,” says Canton-based boatbuilder Everett Smith, who met him in the 1970s selling hardware from the back of one of his Packard trucks. Though Hawkinson received some money from his family, he made ends meet peddling hard-to-find parts and as an authority on antique engines. “He had knowledge that almost nobody had anymore,” says Smith. “He was someone to call if the old Niagara wasn’t running.”

Though sometimes unwelcoming, Hawkinson could be charming and eager to share his knowledge. Showing up with a six-pack helped.

Hawkinson became a well-known and well-respected dealer in the antique car and boat world, but in the Saranac Lake region he was a legend, a familiar sight in an open-air cab with his old fur coat and a corncob pipe. His friend Jay Annis, of Saranac Lake’s Spencer Boatworks, remembers he had a regular route when he came into town—he knew just how far the gas in his reservoir would take him—and would often park at the Lake Flower boat launch and answer questions. “He drew so much attention everywhere he went,” says Eileen Jauch. “He was such a celebrity in the area with those cars.”

Hawkinson could be a dazzling conversationalist—he was well-read, he wrote poetry, played the piano, dabbled in languages and philosophy and photography. Those who knew him say he seemed to be from another, more refined time. But he was also the town curmudgeon, often unwelcoming and always unbending, caring not a fig for what people thought of his often raggedy appearance. He’d complain in the local newspaper about boat registrations and gun legislation and fluoridation. Once, irritated by the noise of nearby fireworks, he cranked his fire truck’s siren for so long that the police finally showed up. Another oft-told tale involves him scaring the hell out of a telephone man who’d come to install a phone line: insisting that the worker not make a mess by drilling into the wall, Hawkinson asked the fellow where he wanted the hole, then blasted the spot with his rifle. “He did everything on his own terms,” says Jauch.

Hawkinson never explained why he walked away from his family and their wealth, preferring to let the community fill in the blanks, which many were happy to do. A persistent rumor claimed he was a black sheep who’d been paid off to stay away, though his relationship with his family was more complicated than a clean break. He maintained a correspondence with his relatives, and they remembered him fondly at his memorial—his nephew left a beer alongside his ashes. And there were infrequent reunions, including a visit from his mother and father after he’d broken his leg. Jauch says they bought him a riding lawnmower to make his life easier; he refused to keep it. (Though he did save his parents’ old suitcase stuffed with remembrances, including a childhood slingshot.)

The hermit label didn’t quite fit, either. “He had very specific requirements of the society he was going to hang out with,” says Everett Smith. But he could be charming, eager to share his knowledge, his stories, his collections. Visiting with a six-pack of warm Heineken helped. And if you wanted to talk old engines or old times, well, sit right down.

“Introducing people to Hawkeye was interesting,” says Smith’s son, Emmett. “It would take people a long time to get him.” Even so, Hawkinson developed strong and lasting relationships with a wide cast of characters. *| Continued on page 68*

RENEW ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN
 REVEREND N WILD ANA WILSON

CREATING HEALTHY AND BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK

www.renewarchitecture.com
 315.262.0082
 7 Maple St., Potsdam NY

THE LEGEND OF HAWKEYE

Continued from page 43

A rejection of mass-production and blind materialism may come closest to Hawkinson's truth. In writings he left behind, he lamented an era of "too much of everything," advising, "Give away your wants and you will be the richest of all." Shane Ash, who bought Hawkinson's homestead in 2017, has become a caretaker of his photographs and writings. "He wasn't an angry old hermit," Ash says. "I think he had something to say to the world. He took great joy in simplicity."

And also in preservation. Hawkinson spent a lifetime sniffing out unwanted boats or vehicles and hauling them to his ranch. "He knew how totally precious they were," says Everett Smith. "It was a while before the rest of the world caught up to him." But along with those LaSalles and Pierce Arrows, Fay & Bowns and Chris-Crafts, his outbuildings

A rejection of blind materialism may come closest to Hawkinson's truth. In writings he left behind, he lamented an era of "too much of everything."

were stuffed with vintage microscopes, cameras, surveying equipment, pocket watches, pieces of beauty and quality from the golden age of industry. Hawkinson called the collection his museum, and he left notes in caches of artifacts, adding details and memories. "He was preserving a story for someone down the road," says Ash.

His personal legacy is harder to pin down, captured in the shifting snapshots of a thousand perceptions. "I think the whole community wanted to know him, what the real John was like. If there was such a person," says town raconteur Howard Riley. "He'd let you in just so far."

But some common threads remain. Friends remember Hawkinson as "remarkable," "philosophical," "complicated," "eccentric," "sentimental"—and, in the end, unknowable. "He allowed you to think things that may or may not have been true," says Ash. "He loved being a story, being a mystery." ▲

ADIRONDACK LIFE
Active Wear & Accessories



Orange ADT 99L
 Hunter BXF 02A

Baseball Caps
 100% cotton adjustable caps. Orange or hunter green with embroidered logo. \$18.95



Red Trillium
 Pottery medallion crafted by a local artisan hangs on an adjustable fabric cord. TRI 94R \$15.95



Cool Mint League of Women Boaters Shirt
 Popular 100% cotton garment-washed T-shirt. S, M, L and XL. CMT 41M \$18.95



Quarter Zip Fleece
 Heather forest multi-season sweater with embroidered logo. S, M, L & XL. DGG 79S \$79.95

For mail order please see insert card.
 800-328-4461
adironacklifestore.com



The Derry Queen

The making of a riverboat legend

BY NIKI KOUROFSKY

Google “floating picnic table” and it’s easy to fall into a rabbit hole, chasing one link after another to curiously and curiously contraptions. I stumbled onto one of those contraptions a couple of years ago as I noodled around on Pinterest.

“Hey, Derry, wouldn’t this be cool?” I asked my husband, thinking of our annual floats down a stretch of the Saranac River that runs from the Picketts Corners boat launch, in Saranac, to the Cadyville Beach.

He eyed the picture and quickly dismissed it. “That looks heavier than a dead minister,” he said. “And those industrial drums are expensive, you know.”

But I’ve never been one to let my husband’s opinions influence my decisions. So when I drew his name for our family’s homemade-gift exchange—which takes place the day after Thanksgiving, a tradition we’ve dubbed Thanks-mas—I knew exactly what to do.

I just didn’t know exactly how to do it.

The original version I’d found was basic, a smallish tabletop balanced in the center of four 55-gallon drums equipped with seats. It seemed doable, though my brother was skeptical of the physics, suspecting that a misplaced step onto one of the drums might make the whole thing tip and flip.

But I’ve never been one to let physics influence my decisions. Rather, it was physical comfort that changed my direction. That simple design would have required riders to dangle their legs into the water for the duration of a trip—not only potentially chilly on an Adirondack outing, but also a good way to get your tootsies whacked in unreliable river channels.

So I sketched out a second version—an almost full-sized picnic table stretched between two mini-decks—then turned my attention to Derry’s initial reservations.

Craig’s List and a quick trip to a used-drum peddler in Vermont solved the expense problem, but there was

still the matter of weight. I focused on materials, thinking that if I used mostly plywood, and two-by-twos instead of two-by-fours when possible, I’d shave off enough pounds to make the craft reasonably portable. My father, who I’d taken on as a consultant, had a better idea: make it in three sections that can be piled into the back of a pickup truck and then reassembled using eye bolts and crossbars.

That wasn’t his only genius idea—Dad is a master of pragmatic woodworking and the art of the shortcut. How do you get the specs for your picnic table? Measure the one outside. How do you find the angle for your braces? Guess. Then adjust with a miter saw until they fit. How do you ensure your decks fit two end-to-end drums snugly? Build them in place. Same goes for figuring up the space between decks. Without my father’s guidance, I never would have thought to bevel the edges of the plywood benches, but my splinter-free bottom is surely grateful.

We spit-balled solutions and add-ons in Dad’s cluttered workshop under the baleful gaze of a Leighton-Jones print (unfortunately, my father went through a sad clown phase in the 1970s and never fully recovered). Some brainstorming were simple—rails around the tabletop to allow for games of chance on the river, a tow-behind for a cooler—and some required trial and error. The rudder fell into the latter category, but Dad’s fond memories of Davy Crockett and the River Pirates led to an adjustable oar system on the stern. For propulsion, I settled on a Huck Finn-inspired pole; Dad suggested brackets along the length of one deck to hold it. For décor, I knew that only a jaunty red, white and blue would do, along with a hand-painted sign identifying *The Derry Queen* to fellow floaters. The moniker is a nod to one of my favorite movies, *The African Queen*, as well as the ice-cream joint, though my husband has pointed out that *The Queen Derry* would have been more regal.

After the big reveal at Thanksmas, we waited through months and months of winter to see if my magnum opus would actually float. The question was finally

Illustration by Mark Wilson

BRING YOUR VISION TO LIFE

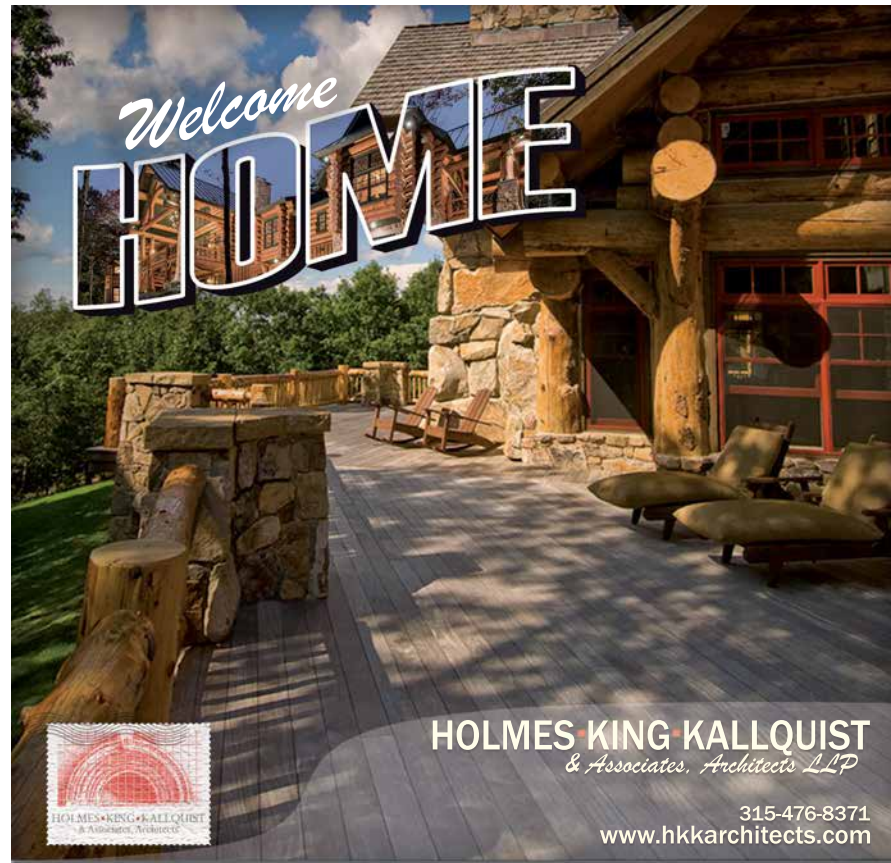


Schedule a personal design consultation with Dennis or Evan deJonghe and let us help you create an exquisite piece of custom jewelry.



deJonghe Original Jewelry • 470 Broadway, Saratoga Springs • 518-587-6422
dJoriginals.com

© 2019



Located at 575 North Salina Street, Syracuse NY 13208



DIY

answered during an early-season test run at the Cadyville Beach—*The Derry Queen* acquitted herself admirably, with passengers standing, sitting, even rocking back and forth while hanging off the edge. We scheduled the maiden voyage for mid-July.

It was a howling good time for my husband and me and a birthday-celebrating mate, except for a couple of kinks that will require adjustments. One surfaced after I dove in for a swim and didn't have the upper-body strength

At the early-season test run, *The Derry Queen* acquitted herself admirably, with passengers standing, sitting, even rocking back and forth while hanging off the edge.

to get myself back on the vessel. Derry eventually hauled me aboard, but not before I banged myself off the sides a time or two (earning an epic bruise I showed off to anyone who would look). The other hiccup was my miscalculation of a midsummer current's power. We'd have been on the river for days if Derry hadn't spent some time pushing us along as he swam behind his namesake.

That's all easily fixed. Derry found a boat ladder he'll attach before we set off again. And I'm in the process of getting a hull number so we can register the craft and legally use a non-Derry-powered motor. There was some debate over whether getting square with the law violated the spirit of a makeshift floating picnic table. But *The Derry Queen* tends to attract a lot of attention, making it hard to sail under the radar. Derry argued that he and his *Queen* could outrun the cops, if it ever came down to it. "They'd never take me," he said.

That would be a spectacle for the ages, but I'm still going to submit the paperwork. ▲

See photographs of *The Derry Queen* at www.adirondacklife.com beginning July 1.

SPONSOR A CHILD TO ATTEND SUMMER CAMP



Fun Activities!
Swimming • Hiking • Kayaking
Biking • Fishing • Sports

Donate Today
Contact Steve Gannon
315-797-2233 | www.cabvi.org



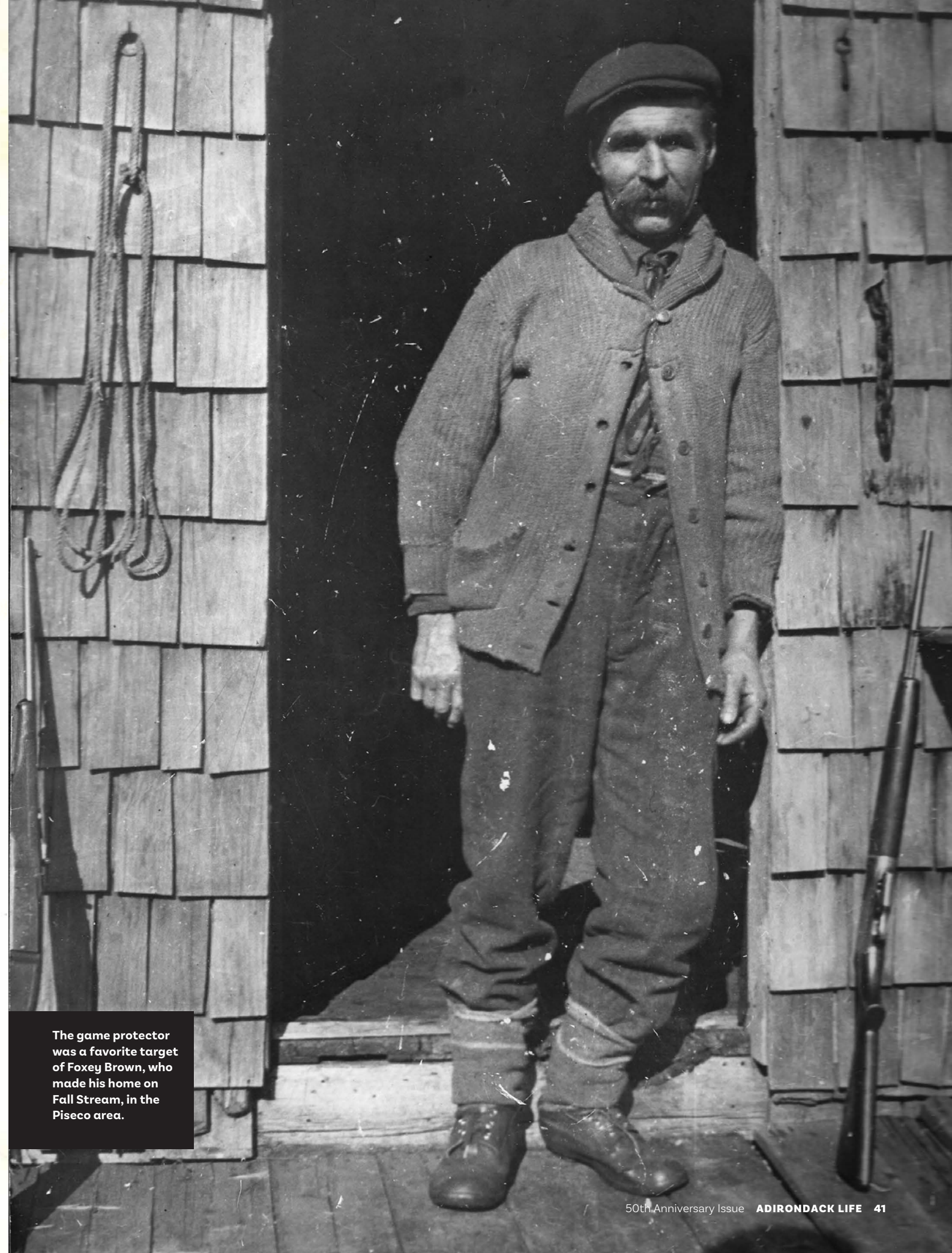
Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
live your vision

Camp Abilities-CABVI is a youth development program for children and teens that are blind or visually impaired.

A WHO'S WHO OF ADIRONDACK HERMITS

Tall tales and tumbledown
shacks, from Moses Follensby
to Bobcat Ranney

by Niki Kourofsky



The game protector
was a favorite target
of Foxey Brown, who
made his home on
Fall Stream, in the
Piseco area.

In 1852,

a group of surveyors surprised an old man living in a crude shelter near Herkimer County's Ice Cave Mountain. He ran off so quickly that they didn't see much more than a flash of the red patch on the bottom of his drawers. Ever heard of "Old Patch"? No? That's because any hermit worth his salt should remain widely unknown. It's part of the standard definition, avoiding society and all that. But our most storied hermit, Noah John Rondeau, didn't exactly shy away from company. And neither did many of the other self-reliant woodsmen who populate our regional mythology. So what transforms a run-of-the-mill squatter or early settler into a bona fide hermit in the popular imagination? Historian Maitland DeSormo said the key is eccentricity, though that doesn't always settle the question. Anne LaBastille lived alone in an off-the-grid cabin on Twitchell Lake for years, and she certainly thumbed her nose at societal norms, but she only ever attained the title of "hermit-like" in *The New York Times*. For an eccentric to truly break into hermitdom, he needs a promoter—an influencer, as the kids would say—to take up the tale: Alfred B. Street crafted a titillating backstory for Moses Follensby; Atwell Martin's old saws were memorialized by Reverend Byron-Curtiss and Harvey Dunham; Noah John Rondeau got his big break with a Conservation Department publicity campaign.

Following is a compilation of our biggest backwoods stars, though it's far from comprehensive. Counting up Adirondack hermits is a little like numbering pine needles on the forest floor, just as nailing down a set of their defining characteristics remains as elusive as Old Patch's backside disappearing into the woods.

Moses Folingsby/ Follensby/Follensbee

HERMITTED: Follensby Pond, from around 1820 to his death

CLAIM TO FAME: Doomed love and disappearing treasure

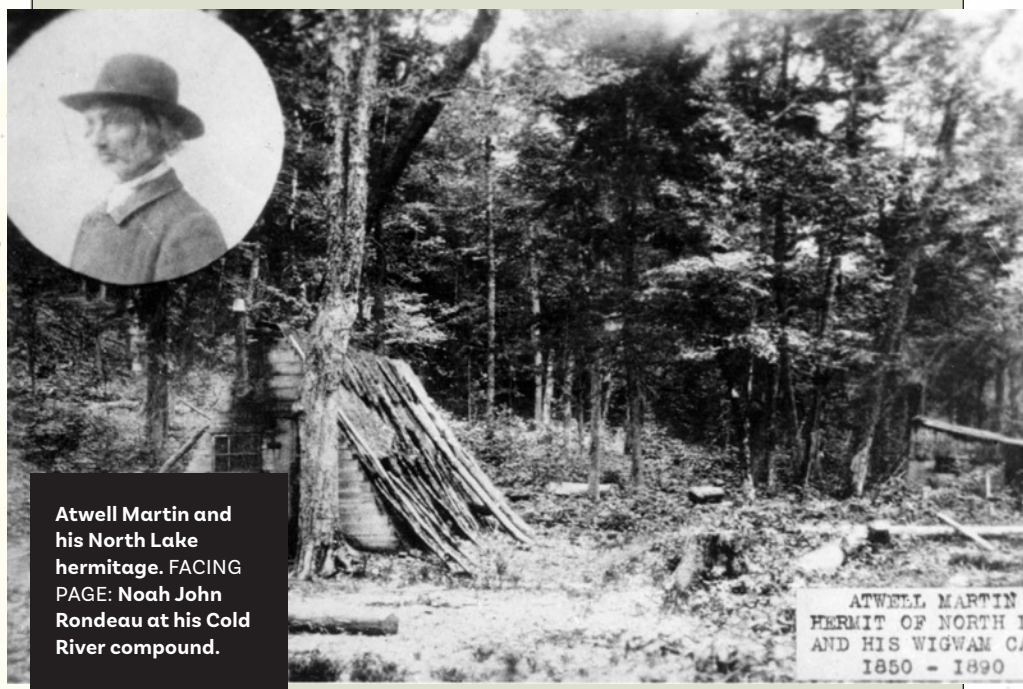
The life story of one of our earliest hermits has one of the more tenuous relationships with reality. His legend was born with Alfred B. Street, who, in *Woods and Waters: Or, The Saranacs and Racket* (1860), concocted a romantic tale of lost love and stolen riches: Captain Folingsby, "a strange, melancholy man" with highbrow manners, was found raving with fever by a trapper and hunter. The delirious man called on lords and generals and a woman named Georgiana, cursing her and an unnamed rogue. He pointed toward the fireplace before he died. In it, under a stone, the visiting pair found a British uniform and letters identifying the hermit as the son of an earl, along with golden and jeweled items. But when the two awoke the next morning, the cache was gone. In an 1869 essay, Joel T. Headley changed the story up a bit, giving out that Folingsby was a Napoleonic soldier whose sweetheart drove him to the wilderness by marrying his brother.

David Smith

HERMITTED: Stillwater, followed by Smith's Lake (now Lake Lila), circa 1820 to circa 1845

CLAIM TO FAME: Could hike dozens of miles, but couldn't chew his food properly

Charles E. Snyder, in an 1896 address to the Herkimer County Historical Society, laid out some possible motives for Smith's self-imposed isolation. One rumor was that he went into seclusion after the death of his fiancée; others argued that he'd cut and run "because his wife made it too interesting for him at home." The first account we have of Smith was crafted by Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, in 1877's *Historical Sketches of*



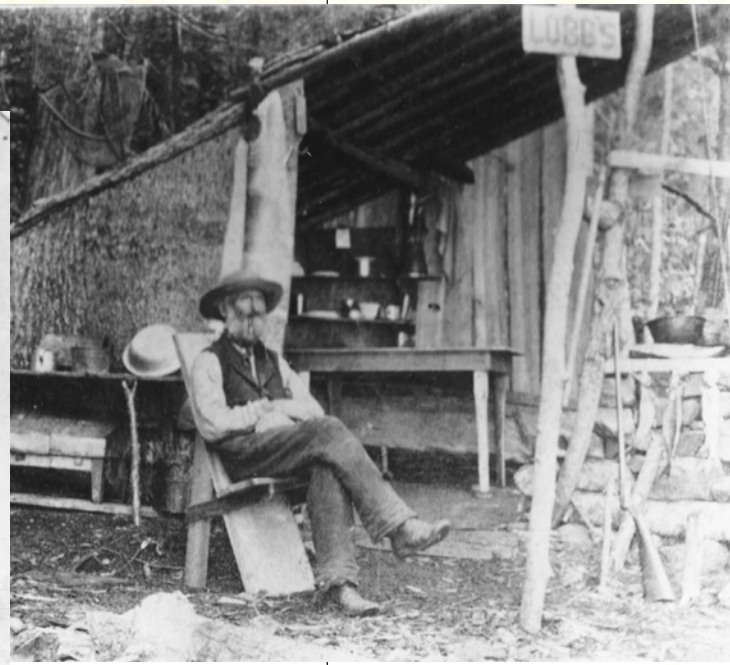
Atwell Martin and his North Lake hermitage. FACING PAGE: Noah John Rondeau at his Cold River compound.

Atwell Martin postcard and Noah John Rondeau photograph from Adirondack Experience. Page 41: Foxey Brown photograph courtesy of Fred and Cindy Adcock, Piseco Lake and Arletta (Images of America) and the Piseco Lake Historical Society





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Bobcat Ranney, near Bakers Mills. Piseco Lake's Old Lobb. French Louie, of West Canada Lake.



A-frame shack at the headwaters of the Black River, trapping, guiding and, later in life, tending the North Lake dam. Martin was famously superstitious (word was he nailed a dried weasel above his door—or stove, depending on the source—to keep the witches away), had a deep distrust for “wimmin,” and feuded with his neighbor, Kettle Jones, over a jacklight debacle. Legends about him are legion. He was supposed to have choked a whole wolf pack with his bare hands and to have killed a deer, a fish, a rabbit, three partridges and one raccoon with a single shot. Oh,

and he kicked Paul Bunyan’s butt in a ground-shaking throwdown. Martin died in 1889 after being carted out of the woods and deposited in the county poorhouse.

Old Lobb

HERMITTED: Piseco Lake, 1847 until his death, in 1891

CLAIM TO FAME: Invented the “Old Lobb” trout spoon

Outdoor columnist Mortimer Norton, who profiled Floyd Ferris Lobb,

explained that “a part of his youth ... was enlivened by a wife, but in some manner there arose adverse marital problems.” So Lobb set up housekeeping in a lean-to on Piseco Lake, trapping some and fishing regularly. He’d anchored a spruce pole in the deep water in front of his hut and baited the spot with pieces of minnows. When his boat was hitched to the pole, it was a snap to pull up a pack of lake trout. And that wasn’t his only energy-saving maneuver. Norton claims that when Lobb went wider afield on his fishing expeditions, he’d string his laundry

along behind the boat. In his later years, volunteers built him a snugger cabin and hung a “Lobbville” sign over the door. His champion trout spoon outlived him; the design was picked up by a Utica company after his death.

William Henry “Bill” Smith

HERMITTED: Near Bloomingdale, 1860s until his death, in 1906

CLAIM TO FAME: Floor-length beard Bill Smith made it clear that rumors of his death were greatly exaggerated. At least the ones that made the rounds in 1895, a decade before his actual demise. Seems a *New York Times* correspondent, starved for lively happenings in Saranac Lake, made the whole thing up, including pithy quotes and a drawing of the grave site. Newspapers around the region picked up the story and ran with it—some relying on a competing article in the *New York World* that added a few more colorful details—until Smith caught wind. His real story wasn’t all that newsworthy. He’d been a garden-variety lumberman and hotelier until his wife died, when he withdrew to his remote farm for good. But he didn’t shun attention; Smith welcomed curiosity-seekers to his cabin and even offered himself—and his impressive beard—as a dime-museum exhibit.

Bowen the Hermit

HERMITTED: Long Lake, 1850s until his death, in 1888

CLAIM TO FAME: Charcoal baron Though his portrait gives off a Charles Manson vibe, Bowen was said to be well-read and well-mannered. Little is known of him, except that he may have come from Canada and, according to Alfred Donaldson’s *A History of the Adirondacks* (1921), he was “considered an expert” at making charcoal, burying piles of wood and letting them burn for days. Donaldson also left us with this yarn: A local preacher was eager to save Bowen, who was an agnostic. Though

the hermit was stubborn in his beliefs, the preacher told him he would change his mind “when the hand of death was upon him.” So Bowen sent for the man from his deathbed, “to have the satisfaction of telling him that ... he had neither changed his mind nor lost his skepticism.”

Harney the Hermit

HERMITTED: Long Lake, 1860s to 1904

CLAIM TO FAME: Rumored to be a snappy dresser as a younger man; in his later years, not so much Harney’s real name was Larmie Fournier, a Canadian who left his wife and young children and disappeared into the woods. In 1961, amateur historian R. Rossman Lawrence typed up several oral histories starring Harney. Neighbors remembered that he spoke Parisian French and had been in the French navy. He’d kept himself afloat with a big garden and livestock, selling milk and produce to vacationers in the summertime. He also drove an oxcart for hotelier Mother Johnson at Raquette Falls and was a key player at her burial. Donaldson wrote that Harney lived in his shanty on Long Lake until he was “a very old man—and also a very dirty one.” His son came to fetch him home in 1904.

Alvah Dunning

HERMITTED: Raquette Lake and environs, circa 1865 until his death, in 1902

CLAIM TO FAME: Notorious jerk Dunning lit out for the wilderness because of a woman, too; he beat his wife so terribly that he was forced to vacate the Piseco Lake area. Though Donaldson reported that Dunning’s father was a pre-Revolutionary scout serving under Sir William Johnson, other accounts dismiss that ancestry as unsubstantiated. Sources do agree that Dunning was a precocious hunter and guide, leading his first foray into the wilderness as a preteen. Though he supported himself in the tourist trade, he’s credited with saying that if he had

his druthers, the “city dudes with velvet suits and pop-guns” would “stay out o’ my woods.” His most celebrated feud was with pulp-novelist Ned Buntline, of Blue Mountain Lake, which may or may not have included the sinking of Buntline’s boat and the killing of one of Dunning’s hounds. Dunning was exhibited at the 1902 Sportsmen’s Show in New York City; he died of asphyxiation in a hotel on the way home, thanks to one of those newfangled gas lamps.

John Henry Hill

HERMITTED: Phantom Island, Lake George, from 1870 to 1876

CLAIM TO FAME: Pre-Raphaelite artist of some note

Although Hill—a third-generation artist—had some success in New York City, he got a bit snippety about the public’s perceived indifference to his talents. He wrote in his diary that he decided “to take them at their word and cut clear ... and tend to my own business.” So he built a cabin on Phantom Island and spent his time painting and printing etchings on a press he’d hauled over the ice from Bolton Landing. Hill wasn’t all that happy when Seneca Ray Stoddard promoted him as a sightseeing-worthy curiosity in a 1875 guidebook. He became more ornery over time, shouting at the crowds that gawked at his island. This behavior would never do for the tourist trade; constables rounded him up in 1876 and sent him to an asylum. He was released, but never returned to Lake George.

French Louie

HERMITTED: Lewey Lake, then West Canada Lake, about 1873 until his death, in 1915

CLAIM TO FAME: Drunken shenanigans on his twice-yearly trips to town Louis Seymour, better known as French Louie, had a sprawling network of temporary camps throughout his trapping grounds—one was said to be little more than a hollow log, another a cave with a handily situated *Continued on page 95*

French Louie and Bobcat Ranney photographs from Adirondack Experience. Old Lobb photograph courtesy of Fred and Cindy Adcock. Piseco Lake and the Piseco Lake Historical Society

ADIRONDACK HERMITS
Continued from page 47

smoke hole—but his main residence boasted a cabin, extensive gardens and a menagerie of chickens, snakes (good for pest control) and a series of dogs. Twice a year he'd descend on the community of Newton's Corners (now Speculator) to sell his cache of furs and indulge in an epic bender. A hermit named Sam Seymour, purportedly from the same small town in Canada as Louie, lived on the opposite shore of Lewey Lake when the more famous Seymour first set up camp; there was some speculation that the two were brothers, though little evidence.

Dingle Dangle and Kettle Jones

HERMITTED: North Lake, Horn Lake and environs, tail end of the 19th century
CLAIMS TO FAME: Dingle Dangle claimed he'd discovered gold near Ice Cave Mountain; Kettle Jones was best known for his wild-berry brandy and boozy raccoon Dingle Dangle and Kettle—John R. and Owen Jones, respectively—were born into a large Welsh clan in Steuben. Dingle Dangle came to hermitting later in life; in earlier years he was a postmaster, painter and aspiring inventor. He concocted an “oily substance” to coat flies that always brought him “a fine mess of trout,” according to Howard Thomas, author of *Folklore from the Adirondack Foothills* (1958). Unfortunately, his love life was less successful, and so he joined the class of hermit whose failed courtships drove them from society. But he was a little too good at losing himself in the forest. Sometime after the turn of the century, he set off for a temporary camp on Snyder Lake and was never seen again.

Kettle had a shack a few miles from Atwell Martin's, and the two struck up an uneasy friendship that quickly soured. The breaking point was rumored to involve a jacklighting trip on South Lake, when Kettle shot at a deer but instead took down the lamp staff. Kettle's wild-berry brandy brought sportsmen from miles around, but his pet raccoon was perhaps its biggest fan—visiting hunters said the critter would

ALUTECH
shutter and shade solutions

- Stop Wind-Driven Rain
- Security
- Snow/Storm Protection
- Privacy
- Energy Savings
- Shading

Our aluminum roll shutter provides all weather protection!

Wellesley Island
BUILDING SUPPLY www.wibsshop.com
315-482-6600 44482 County Route 191, Fineview, NY
Open Monday-Friday 7-5 • Saturday 8-3 • Sunday 9-1

AESTHETICALLY PLEASING
ALL WEATHER PROTECTION

THE VILLAGE MERCANTILE
★ EST. 2011 ★
anything but general

THE GO-TO DESTINATION FOR ADIRONDACK MADE & INSPIRED GOODS.
Villagemerc.com

97 Main St., Saranac Lake, NY ↔ 518-354-8173

30 Years Experience
RAND HILL LAWNS, INC.
Commercial & Residential
518-563-8566
Call for estimate! Glenn R. Burdo
NYS Certified Lawn Care/Pesticide Applicator
www.RandHillLandscaping.net

- Hydroseeding
- Rolled Sod Installation
- Lawn Fertilizing
- Scott Professional Products
- Shrub Installation/Trimming
- Tree/Stump Removal
- Snow Removal/Sanding
- Retaining Walls
- Paver Sidewalks
- Spring/Fall Clean-ups
- Parking Lot Sweeping
- Property Maintenance
- Excavator Work

Our Customers Say it Best...
“Our Favorite Adirondack Emporium!”

Over 7,000 sq ft of rustic & farmhouse furniture, leather sofas & chairs, nature-inspired accents and the best mountain clothing, jewelry & accessories in the Park!

Here too you will find mattresses, sheets & down comforters, linens, rugs, artwork & custom made window treatments.

Everything you need to completely furnish your home or camp a little or a lot! Ask us about free interior service consultations.

Hudson River Trading Company

Near the historic train station overlooking the Hudson River in North Creek, NY
518.251.4461 • HudsonRiverTradingCo.com • Open 7 days

AdironJack Raquette Lake Collection

JACK GRECO
CUSTOM FURNITURE

Open until 8pm year-round!
7 Days Memorial Day–Columbus Day
Thurs.–Mon. Mid-October to Mid-May

161 State Rt. 28, Inlet, NY 13360
(315) 369-8240
1611 Scottsville Rd, Rochester, NY
(585) 328-3350 (585) 305-3578

NYS Largest Selection of Outdoor Poly & Rustic Hickory Furniture: www.JackGreco.com

ADIRONDACK LIFE HANDMADE WOODCRAFT

ADIRONDACK PARK CUTTING BOARD

Keep your kitchen local, from ingredients to tools. Handmade maple cutting board sealed with food-safe natural oils. **APC 83M \$34.95**

ADIRONDACK PARK TRAY

Handmade locally from beautiful clear pine and cherry, this cartographic carryall features our Adirondack Park map laminated on the water-resistant surface. Available only from Adirondack Life.

Choose southern or northern Adirondacks. Measures 21" x 12".
North PTN 21P
South PTS 99S **\$69.95**

For mail order please see insert card. 800.328.4461 • www.adirondacklifestore.com

HANDMADE WOOD SIGNS

ADIRONDACKS ADIRONDACKS

Adirondacks Sign
29.25" x 5.5"
Brown ADKB 22B
Green ADGK 55G **\$59.95**

Adirondack Rules Sign
11.25" x 22"
AGS 80G **\$79.95**

Welcome Sign
21.5" x 5.5"
WEL 55B **\$49.95**

WELCOME

Life is better in the Adirondacks
3.5" x 10.75"
BIT 67M **\$14.95**

LIFE IS BETTER IN THE ADIRONDACKS

ADIRONDACK HERMITS

dunk food in the brew before feasting. According to lore, Kettle sold his raccoon again and again—every time a buyer got it home, it'd run right back to Kettle and his hooch.

Foxy Brown

HERMITTED: On Fall Stream, north of Piseco, from 1890 to 1916

CLAIM TO FAME: Accused of murder Brown, a former railroad man whose real name was David Brennan, came to the Adirondacks from Boston after almost killing a man in a fight. For a quarter century he lived off the land, hunting, trapping and selling shingles he'd split. He was a cantankerous fellow, threatening visitors and taking shots at the game protector. Then, in 1916, he was hired as a guide but misplaced his employer. When the man's corpse surfaced, Brown didn't stick around to see how things would play out—he skedaddled to Syracuse. He was tried for murder in absentia and acquitted.

Ferdinand "Ferdie" Jennsen

HERMITTED: North of Tupper Lake, circa 1890s until his death, in 1947

CLAIM TO FAME: Man of strong opinions Lost love—what else?—drove Jennsen from his native Denmark to the depths of the Adirondacks, where he lived for more than 50 years in a little cabin of vertical logs. A visitor in the 1940s described Ferdie as an avid consumer of news (he listened regularly on a battery-powered radio) who was "extremely partisan with several pet phobias." At age 87, he died in the fire that leveled his home.

Noah John Rondeau

HERMITTED: Cold River Flow, 1929–1950

CLAIM TO FAME: Mr. Congeniality After decades of hagiographic articles, books and blogs, what's left to say about Noah John? Still, we can be forgiven a little hero worship—Rondeau lived out the fantasy of every barefooted boy and girl who ever packed up a handkerchief bindle and decamped to the back 40. He

ADIRONDACK HERMITS

settled into his hermitage, a six-hour walk from civilization, after running away from an overbearing father and then working as a barber and taking on odd jobs until he got good and sick of society. Not too sick, though. He was welcoming to hikers, and hammed for the public at sportsmen's shows. A 1946 *New York State Conservationist* article noted that he'd revert to "picturesque hermit talk if he thinks his hiker-visitor would be made any happier by it." The Big Blowdown of 1950 chased Rondeau out of his rustic spread; in his later years, he played Santa Claus at Wilmington's North Pole theme park.

Archie "Bobcat" Ranney

HERMITTED: Near Bakers Mills, from about 1934 to 1952

CLAIM TO FAME: A fondness for porcupine dinners

Ranney spent most of his life as a typesetter before ditching his wife and family in Binghamton to live with his dog in the hills around Bakers Mills. He's been called the Hermit of Tombstone Swamp or the Hermit of Dogtown, but he was no recluse; Ranney appeared at a sportsmen's show and entertained underprivileged city boys at a state police camp. He could also be relied on for entertaining letters to newspapers, including a folksy write-up about rattlesnake bounties in 1936: "Now they want thin-out them sassy reptiles over onto Tongue mountain so's them Noo York city fellers can gallivant around over them hills, a pickin posies." (Ranney dropped the backwoodsman bit in his thoughtful correspondence with Howard Zahniser, of the Wilderness Society.) Barney Fowler—who wrote about Ranney regularly in his *Camps and Trails* columns—described him as "a man of scraggly beard, long hair, raccoon cap" who was given to frequent banjo picking. In 1952, at age 80, he almost froze to death in his cabin, but managed to drag himself to a neighbor's home. The Associated Press reported that the scruffy, hard-of-hearing mountainman charmed the nurses at the hospital as he recovered. ▲

Nils Edward Luderowski Architect
Keene Valley, New York / 518.576.4446 / www.luderowskiarchitect.com
RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN IN AN ADIRONDACK VERNACULAR

ADK Surveying .com

ADIRONDACK SURVEYING
NORTHERN ADIRONDACK NEW YORK

APA SITE PLANS
BOUNDARY,
TOPOGRAPHIC,
SUBDIVISION,
and MORTGAGE
SURVEYS.

Call **518.946.7571**
Ralph Schissler, L.S. | Owner

SLEEP UNDER THE STARS
AND LET YOUR SPIRIT SOAR FREE.
—POSH PRIMITIVE
POSHPRIMITIVE@GMAIL.COM
WWW.POSHPRIMITIVE.COM

ADIRONDACK LIFE

Navy & Natural Classic Tote

BAG 65B
\$34.95

800-328-4461 adirondacklifestore.com

J & J Brown Garnet Studio

Adirondack garnet sterling silver pendant.

We offer a full range of custom-cut stones and jewelry, specializing in locally mined Adirondack garnet.

518-251-3368
www.garnetstudio.net
68 Casterline Rd., North River, NY 12856
Studio Hours: Friday through Monday