

# the Colvin Crew - *in the News !*

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On Sept. 30 , 2001 , the Colvin Crew was featured in the Sunday edition of the **WATERTOWN DAILY TIMES :**

**“ History Hunters ”**

*“ Colvin’s Crew searches Peak - for a bolt , and a legacy ”*

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~ and ~

in the October - November - 2001 edition of the

**ADIRONDACK EXPLORER**

the Crew was again featured :

**“ On Colvin’s heels ”**

*“ Hiking club surveys the past ”*

# History Hunters

## 'Colvin's Crew' Searches For a Bolt, and a Legacy

**By John Golden**  
Times Staff Writer

A century has passed since Verplank Colvin, that obscure member of the New York State legislature and state legislator, completed one of his last jobs: to lead a state survey in the Adirondacks. In some of the pioneering work and remarkable achievements that consumed 20 years of Colvin's life and would have ultimately cemented the man known to be searched through the Adirondack Park.

Verplank Colvin's presence is not there still on mountain summits, in the woods, on rocky ledges and in the hills. But there is the Adirondack Park, the state's largest, which he helped create. The Adirondack Park, the state's largest, which he helped create. The Adirondack Park, the state's largest, which he helped create.



From the restored and relocated Trolley Mountain Fire Tower atop Cathedral Peak, Kerm E. Remele, right, points out area features, including Moosehead Mountain, to Colvin crew members Brian P. Donovan, left, and C. Lee Flickbohm.



At right, James W. Schaller measures the distance to the location where the crew hopes to find Verplank Colvin's bolt 299. At left, above J. Kern E. Remele and Brian P. Donovan look for pins associated with the bolt.



At right, James W. Schaller measures the distance to the location where the crew hopes to find Verplank Colvin's bolt 299. At left, above J. Kern E. Remele and Brian P. Donovan look for pins associated with the bolt.

**Supt. Kerm Remele – with Brian Donovan , and C. Lee Flickbohm – in the Ranger Tower .**

**Dave Ware cleans off Bolt No. 299 on Moosehead Mtn. after recovering it, while others search for iron ring bolts.**

**Jim Schaller with Topo Map, measuring the 85' from the Fire Tower to Bolt No. 299 (shown in other photo)**

**the Colvin Crew in the News!**

**On Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the Watertown Daily Times ran an illustrated story on our Recovery No.. 9 at the Ranger Tower, and on Moosehead Mountain – titled: “History Hunters” - “Colvin’s Crew Searches For a Bolt, and a Legacy” - The author was John Golden – and photos by Grant Currie - who both accompanied us on that Recovery .**

**G2 Sunday, September 30, 2001** **WATERTOWN DAILY TIMES**

## Colvin's Crew Searches Peak for a Bolt, and a Legacy

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The crew has grown to more than 100 members ranging from Alaska and California to Florida and New Hampshire.

They also hope to replicate parts of Mr. Colvin's annual or near annual survey reports to the state legislature, which are rescued from a pre-fabricated technical dossier by the surveyor's vivid descriptions of wilderness camp life and survey season and adventures. Colvin's writings "bring each the jaded public eye," said Kerm E. Remele, the Colvin Crew's 77-year-old leader and a retired professor of forestry and land surveying at the Ranger School.

For now, Colvin's Crew embarks on "recovery" of the survey bolts that marked the 19th-century crew's annual passages through the Adirondacks. When found, the bolts are photographed and recorded on videotape.

Do they succeed in their recovery mission?

"Sometimes we do, sometimes we don't," Kerm Remele said.

On Whiteface Mountain near Lake Placid and on Gore Mountain in Warren County, crews found only bolts in rocks where vandals had removed the Colvin bolts.

Last Sunday, a six-man recovery team gathered at the Ranger School for the group's 100th expedition. They were welcomed by Mr. Remele, whose crew title, "superintendent," was Verplank Colvin's title as the low-paid, and occasionally unpaid, head of the state survey.

"Looks like the crews going to be kind of this morning," said Mr. Remele, in his trademark uniform of khaki work shirt and paint-stained khaki pants over well-worn sneakers.

Superintendent Colvin also made do with his crew as state funding became more irregular in the later years of the survey. Beginning with crews of about 100 men in the 1870s, he later worked with teams of eight or less, according to Nick Webb in her 1996 book, "Footsteps Through the Adirondacks: The Verplank Colvin

Gen. Theodore Roosevelt that year abolished the office of Superintendent of the Adirondack Surveys. He did what another New York governor and future president, Grover Cleveland, first tried to do several years earlier: to end Colvin's work, which had with the state engineer and surveyor, Silas Seymour in his attempt to discredit and take over Mr. Colvin's work in the Adirondacks, called Verplank Colvin "a fat greedy politician," according to Colvin's biography.

Verplank Colvin was the victim of a scheme between engineers and surveyors," Kerm Remele said in the trail. In the 18th century there were still no formal educational requirements for surveyors, in contrast to the engineering profession with its European tradition. "Land surveying has always been a stepchild to engineering, in a way," Kerm Remele said.

By 1900, Colvin's Adirondack surveys had cost the state nearly \$254,000, according to Nick Webb. Mr. Colvin refused to turn over his equipment and records which state officials wanted before they would pay the \$6,457.22 he was still owed for his work.

At the base of Moosehead Mountain, Jim Schaller stepped on a backpack and with long-legged strides led the crew up a trail lined by loggers and former club members. Brian P. Donovan, a land surveyor in Canton, and former student of Mr. Remele at the Ranger School, strapped a machete to his belt. He, along with Kerm Remele and the crew guide, hung on passes from their necks.

"It's a double Forty-Six," Kerm Remele said of their crew guide. That is, he has climbed all 46 Adirondack peaks over 4,000 feet high and over 100 times.

"So, know, Verplank Colvin was a Forty-Six," Kerm Remele said, while the superintendent did oversee the mapping and measuring of all 46 peaks, starting with the highest Adirondack peak, Mount Marcy.

"It's not one either," said Mr. Remele. Before he taught at the Ranger School, he was no tiny sliver through an uncut and uncut

effective digging and clearing were back to back and back.

"It must be hard," Jim Schaller said, about 10 minutes into search. "The trouble is, most bolts were copper, nickel and brass metals that you can't get with a metal detector."

"We found that out not an mountains. We were getting all of false readings" from the iron ore deposits, which showed on Adirondack surveys and drawn from magnetic compasses.

Suddenly an excellent bellows turned a map from the woods' trail.

"Hey, Kerm! Over here!" Schaller shouted.

He and crew member Dave Ware had uncovered bolt 299 rock on the summit's south face.

"What damn luck," Jim Schaller said. "Here we were looking for (USGS) reference markers at fault Colvin's bolt."

On hands and knees, Dave Ware with a jackknife scraped away dirt from the bolt, about 2 inches in diameter and resembling a large nut and a raised edge.

"Excellent shape, Kerm," Jim Schaller said, scribbling with a therm on an unexcavated find.

"This one's broken in," he said at the bonding material between rock and bolt.

He read the bolt's inscription: "— 299 — 1889 — N.Y. Land Survey — V.C. Colvin-Sup."

"So suppose the USGS people recovered this in '62," Kerm Remele wondered. He turned the bolt on the recovered 10-year-old bolt.

In 1942, a crew was here to set potential reference bolt history team in a way whose course was certain, Jim Schaller said.

Colvin's crew, we might well apply here. We make a fast decision for that summit with which Colvin's Crew to have his Adirondack job.

"No course but be impressed the last and permanent bolts of the survey, whose inscription

**Jim Schaller and Brian Donovan study a Topo Map on the bushwhack up Moosehead Mountain.**



