

RECOVERY #23

A Report on the activities of the Colvin Crew in and around the Town of Minerva, Essex County, N.Y. April 30 and May 1, 2011

Following last year's successful recovery to Polaris and Kettle Mountains (Recovery No. 20) we once again found ourselves following in the footsteps of our namesake and returning to the Northwood's Club (NWC) in search of the last two know points accessible through the club grounds. Without the generosity and support of fellow crewmembers Tom Peterson and the NWC, this recovery would not have been possible. The weekend's recovery was split into four separate trips:

Saturday:

1. A hike to the summit of Venison Mtn.
2. A hike along the former National Lead Co. RR tracks to North River.

Sunday:

1. A hike to the summit of Beaver Mtn. a.k.a. Apia Mtn.
2. A hike to the summit of Dunk Mtn.

A crew of sixteen dedicated followers expended a total of 16± hours over the course of the weekend.

-----A partial history of V. Colvin's Minerva activities: -----

Based solely upon the incomplete field notes that I have reviewed and Colvin's 1897 report to the state legislators for work performed in the year 1896, the following chronology can be arrived at:

Venison Mountain:

December 23 & 24, 1895. This is the earliest date that I am aware of for this peak. Based upon the unsigned field notes that appear to be written in V. Colvin's hand, horizontal & vertical angles are turned to fifteen

Report 1897. NEW YORK STATE LAND SURVEY. VERPLANCK COLVIN, SUPERINTENDENT. Plate No. 26.



Field Observatory: Signal Hill – Old Brewster Premises, Lake Placid

nearby peaks with many of the peaks still in need of thinning around their signals, (notably Dunk & Beaver). A reasonable conclusion can be reached that the station marks and signals were already in place at Venison, Dunk and Beaver (Apia) Mtn.

August 13, 16 & 20 – 27, 1897. Charles W. Comstock (observer) and Charles F. Wheaton (recorder) are spinning multiple sets of horizontal and vertical angles to the above-mentioned peaks utilizing the N.Y.S.S. 8 inch theodolite marked No. 1. They establish a camp near the summit and fill up three field books with readings.¹ An abstract of the *vertical* readings is prepared at a later date back in Albany by John E. McGrath (computer)².

¹ Field Books 92 and 95 labeled "1897 Horizontal Directions, Mahlon Hill, Venison Mt., Volumes 1 & 2" and Field Book 392 labeled "1897 Zenith distances, Mahlon Hill & Venison Mt."

² Bounded papers labeled "New York State Land Survey, Hon. Verplanck Colvin, Superintendent, Abstract of vertical angles, No. 47 measured at Mt. Venison by C. W. Comstock, assistant in August 1897".

July 26 - 28, 1898. An unknown crew is running levels between an existing benchmark (H2) located near “Wm. Kellogg’s” place on the Northwood’s Club Road and the summit of Venison Mtn. It takes them three days and 56 turns to reach the summit using the Gurley No. 1 instrument. Besides determining the elevation of the station mark, they also set four vertical benchmarks around the signal.³ The purpose of establishing an elevation on the station mark was to allow Colvin to utilize the vertical angles turned in 1897 to arrive at station heights (via trigonometric leveling) of the various mountain peaks. This would vastly reduce the man hours and time needed to conventionally determine their elevations.

Dunk Mountain:

January 1, 1896 “A signalman was sent to clear out some sight lines from the station on Dunk Mountain”⁴

Beaver Mountain. a.k.a. Apia Mountain

January 15, 1896. “was clear and cold, and the signal station called “Apia” in the twenty-sixth township, was visited and reconnaissance angles measured connecting this station with that last occupied on the township line. The westerly front of this mountain was at some time distant period swept clear of timber by fire; and, now the mountain appeared as a cone of ice or snow – capped by the signal. In the afternoon, a snowstorm setting in, again prevented work”.⁵

Recovery notes of the “Colvin Crew” -----

Saturday, April 30, 2011

A crew of fourteen assembled in front of the Peterson camp promptly at 9:00am. The Superintendent then informed them that due to the recent flooding we would not be allowed into the NWC until Sunday. A change of plans was then made to skip the scheduled trip to Dunk Mtn. and instead climb Venison Mtn. located directly behind Mr. Peterson’s camp. After a brief hike of an hour or so, the top was reached with NYSAPLS President, Patti Brooks leading the final assault upon the summit. Unfortunately, all that remained for us to view was the drill hole and associated leading, the bolt being long gone. However, secondary evidence of Colvin’s occupation awaited our discovery and within quick order they were found. These items consisted of two ringbolts with wire still attached and the four vertical benchmarks surrounding the station. Our two newest members, Steve Peterson and Andrew Coots were welcomed into the crew and given their coveted membership pin while standing over the mark. As the crew was leaving the summit, the Superintendent noticed an old clear



Patti Brooks, LS approaching the summit of Venison Mtn.



Venison Mtn. drill hole with leading

bottle buried in the ground in the vicinity of where Colvin’s camp was. After a brief hike back down the mountain to Mr. Peterson’s camp the crew enjoyed their lunch in the brilliant sunshine in front of the camp.

To round out the day, an afternoon hike was planned by the remaining thirteen members to follow the abandoned National Lead Co. RR tracks from their intersection with the Northwood’s Club Road down to the Hudson River and then on to North River. This represented a total distance of 4.75± miles. After a stop on the RR trestle high above the swollen Hudson River where a round of group pictures were taken, the Superintendent and three other crewmembers returned back to the Northwood’s Club Road where they shuttled the

³ Field Book 24.

⁴ Report of the Superintendent of the State Land Survey of the State of New York, transmitted to the Legislature March 9, 1897, Page 116

⁵ Ibid. Page 117.

vehicles down to North River. The crew pressed on under the leadership of Dave Ware viewing what the river guides call “bus stop” or “black hole”; it being a large hydraulic that the white water rafts go through on their trip down the river. As luck would have it, the vehicles arrived at the exact moment the crew emerged at the first road crossing. We soon found ourselves reunited and back at Mr. Peterson’s camp where it was time to start the evening’s refreshments and dinner. After a hearty potluck style dinner, the crew relaxed around the



Venison Mtn. B.M. No. 4, being “a knob and circle cut”

fireplace and soon slipped into spirited conversation on what ails the world. The highlight of the evening being a presentation by our “Northern Contingent”⁶ of an over 100 year old print depicting a US – Canadian border monument set in 1817⁷ and given to the Superintendent in recognition of his work performed on behalf of the “crew” over the years. Lights out by 10:30 pm.

Sunday May 1, 2011

The morning broke bright and promising. With the coming and goings of various members, we would number twelve for the day. We soon found ourselves carpooling for the drive into the

NWC where we would meet our guides/hosts for the day. In order to complete our mission of climbing two peaks in one day, the Superintendent split the group into two parties with one heading to Beaver Mountain and the other heading to Dunk Mountain. Paul Moulton (NWC caretaker) and his son Jesse Lane Moulton (age 11) would guide the Beaver Mountain team while Tom Callaghan (NWC member) would lead the Dunk Mountain group.

Dunk Mountain:

A team of five set off along a well-groomed trail for the first mile or so and then departed via bushwhack to the summit of Dunk Mountain. Upon reaching the summit, eyebolts with wire attached were quickly found and gave us a location to search closely. *Imagine the site a passerby would have seen, five grown men in the middle of the woods a long way from anywhere on their hands and knees peeling back a deep layer of moss, surely they must be mad.* In any event, we all held our breath in collective anticipation of revealing the long awaited bolt, only to be disappointed by finding an empty drill hole.⁸ With this dark cloud hanging above us, we placed a cairn of rocks over the mark and descended down to the Hudson River via bushwhack to Dunk Pond and then onto the trail leading downhill to the Hudson River where the swiftly flowing waters provided a suitable backdrop for lunch. By 2:00 pm we were back at the clubhouse and enjoying the splendid view of the high peaks from the front porch.



Dunk Mtn. drill hole and old nails



Beaver Mountain:

A team of ten assembled for this half bushwhack / half trail recovery. Originally, we had planned to access the base of the mountain via vehicle in an effort to shorten the hiking distance. However, with the heavy rains of the past week making the roads unfit for vehicle traffic, it would be a long hike from the clubhouse grounds to reach the summit. Upon reaching the base of the mountain, a steep climb ensued to the summit. The peak was found to be heavily wooded with a layer of snow and frozen duff to

⁶ Paul Miller and Rob Harris, Ontario Land Surveyors.

⁷ Now on loan to the Ranger School for display.

⁸ Having found nothing but drill holes in this area and with no mention of bolt numbers found in the field books for these points, I really have to question whether bolts were ever set.

work through. Their work would not be easy. After a careful and prolonged search of the summit area utilizing a metal detector, nothing was to be found other than a singular pointed rock. The crew then stopped for a short lunch break on a rock outcrop and enjoyed the view. By 4:30 pm or so they emerged from the woods into the clubhouse clearing and the trip was over.

Parting notes:

The dedication of our members continues to astound me. To find this many people willing to hike deep into the woods on the chance of uncovering a long lost point is simply incredible. Verplanck would be proud of our efforts in perpetuating his work. Unfortunately, just like most artists and their work, it usually isn't until long after they are gone that the public appreciates their work.

Respectfully Submitted,
James M. Vianna, LS
Superintendent, Colvin Crew



The mysterious stone on the summit of Beaver Mtn.



A rare U.S.G.S. BM found on club property:
Set by A. F. Krause in 1896 on a level run between the Indian Lake Bridge and Aiden Lair. It was then recovered in 1942 by S.E. Mitchell running from the Minerva Lodge (near intersection of Northwood's Club Rd. and Rt. 28) into the club and then on to the junction of the Indian River with the Hudson. The revised elevation in 1942 was 1,764.972'



Beaver Mtn. team:
L. to R. Jim Jennings, Jeff Storey, Jesse Moulton, Paul Moulton, Andrew Coots, Nathan Dunn, David Ware, Shirley Ware, Jim Schaller, Art Carpenter, Jim Vianna behind camera



The crew on the old R.R. trestle,
L. to R. Ricky Brooks, Patti Brooks, Art Carpenter, Steve Peterson, Rob Harris, Dave Ware, Jim Jennings, Jim Schaller, Andrew Coots, Nathan Dunn, Jeff Storey, Paul Miller, Jim Vianna behind camera

The COLVIN CREW is an honorable organization formed for the purpose of *perpetuating the Adirondack doings and dreams of that pioneer surveyor,*

VERPLANCK COLVIN

www.colvincrew.org