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Boys Grow Up

A century of Camp Pasquaney's Long Walk

Andrew Riely



I GOT EXCITED ABOUT HIKING AT THE AGE OF 7 OR SO BECAUSE MY older brother did it, and he was taken with the sport because he went to a summer camp that devoted an inordinate number of its precious days to rambles in the White Mountains. At the end of the season, he was noticeably more purposeful and decisive. Being eight years my senior, anything my brother did seemed larger than life, and I envied his physical self-confidence.

In time, I, too, got to spend my summers at Camp Pasquaney, on a hillside above Newfound Lake. Founded in 1895 by a 32-year-old idealist named Edward S. Wilson, known at camp as Mr. Ned, it was one of many such institutions that flourished around the turn of the century. Today, the past is visible all over the land on which Wilson built his camp. Scores of boys have carved their initials into old buildings, and into the granite that is exposed wherever the thin soil has worn away. It's easy to identify which pairs date back to the early twentieth century; they are the ones that are nearly perfectly chiseled. When I walk around the old cabins, or dormitories as we call them, especially at night when kerosene lanterns light each entrance, I imagine the scene feels just as it did a century ago.

But sadly, although camps are scattered all over New England, few from the original period survive. Pasquaney is unusual in the current era of specialization and regimented scheduling. It remains single sex, and, for the most part, campers are free to choose from an array of sports and crafts during the twice-daily activity periods.

Important exceptions are the mandatory day hikes each week. Twelve-year-olds cut their teeth on small mountains such as Welch and Dickey, but by the end of the summer, those boys work their way up to an afternoon in the Franconias. Campers also go on five-day backpacking, canoeing, or trail maintenance expeditions.

By the fifth week, the boys have gotten into top shape, and this is when most of the 15- and 16-year-olds, some fifteen or twenty strong, go off on a six-day expedition called the Long Walk. On Monday morning, the rest of camp—until recently known as the Stay-at-Homes—give them a solemn sendoff at the director's house. The Long Walkers, after receiving a flag from Mr. Vinnie—Vin Broderick, the fifth director since Wilson—depart for the mountains in a yellow school bus. Over the next five days, they camp just

A group of campers makes the South Twin summit. MIKE HANRAHAN

south of Crawford Notch along Nancy Brook, emerging at dawn each day to sally forth into the surrounding peaks. By the end of the week, they will have hiked 70, 80, 90—even, in two remarkably ambitious years, more than 100—miles.

THE LONG WALK. IT IS PROBABLY AS FORMATIVE AN EXPERIENCE AS any I've had in my young life. Before a camper joins the expedition, he can only guess at the substance of the journey from his observations during the group's departure and return. As the Long Walk prepares to leave, its members are a bit nervous, self-conscious, and not entirely sure that they are up to the week's challenge. On the following Saturday, the remainder of the campers gather on the dining hall porch and strain to look downhill, hoping to be the first to glimpse the Long Walk as it files up the road in a long, straight line. A rush of excitement bubbles up among the onlookers when it appears, but no one wants to spoil the solemnity of the moment by speaking. The Long Walk forms a crescent facing the porch and bursts into song, as it has since around World War I, to whichever familiar tune its members have chosen. The words are original and detail where they've been and what they've seen. The faces on the Long Walkers are now tan, tired, and determined. Mr. Vinnie goes out to shake the hand of the leader and collect the flag from the youngest boy, who was responsible for maintaining it and ensuring its safe return. And then the quiet breaks, as the Long Walkers and everyone else excitedly buttonhole each other for stories about the week. Camp is full again, and a wave of energy washes through with the Long Walkers as they enter the dining hall and take their old seats.

Today, Pasquaney is full with about 95 campers and 20 counselors; in 1895, Wilson's enrollment measured 19 boys and 4 counselors, in addition to the director. In its basic elements, the camp has shifted little since the early days. Wilson, who had dropped out of medical school and eased into education through tutoring, modeled Pasquaney on Camp Asquam of nearby Squam Lake. Asquam's head, Winthrop Talbot, known fondly as "Dr. T.," invited the aspiring director to spend the summer of 1894 observing his camp's workings up close. As the historian Barksdale Maynard, a Pasquaney alumnus who has written extensively about Pasquaney and the early camping movement, points out in his 1994 master's thesis, *Chocorua, Asquam, Pasquaney: Where Summer Camps Began* (University of Delaware, 1994), Wilson "made no attempt to disguise the fact that Pasquaney imitated Asquam." Nearly every aspect of the

older camp, from the rustic architecture to wool uniforms to the distinctively structured schedule, was transferred to its cousin on Newfound Lake.

The routine emphasized a curious blend of responsibility, community, and freedom. The boys carried out chores necessary to the camp's upkeep during a morning duty period that followed breakfast. During the morning and afternoon activity periods, they might play baseball or tennis or go for a row before proceeding to a soak in the lake. On hot days, a rest period followed lunch, and at night, the entire camp gathered around a campfire to tell stories, listen to a reading, and sing. Sundays provided a break in the routine with morning chapel service and an afternoon Tree Talk given by a counselor on some topic of interest. These core elements of the schedule endure.

By late August, Wilson thought his charges sufficiently fit for a three-day outing to Mount Cardigan. Leaving four boys and one counselor behind, the camp body took a boat across Newfound Lake and walked nearly to the summit before stopping for the night. Each boy carried food and blankets; along the road, the group stopped at a pair of farmhouses to buy biscuits, doughnuts, and milk. A leg of lamb and roast of beef brought from camp were quickly dispatched, and, as the counselor Billy Rockwell later wrote home to his mother, "we fell back on the dozen two-pound cans of Armour's canned ox-tongue which we had in our packs."

The party kept a fire going all through the chilly night and climbed the summit at sunrise. Descending via Firescrew Mountain, a satellite peak of Mount Cardigan, the climbers caught a glimpse of the big ranges to the northeast, including Mount Washington. According to Rockwell, "We located carefully Tripyramid and the Sandwich Dome; we hope to climb these next year; they are sixty miles from camp." By evening, the group had tramped to Welton Falls, where the play of the waterfall made for a restful sleep. After stopping in Hebron for ginger water, the Long Trip, as the expedition was called—like so many other aspects of Pasquaney, Wilson had borrowed the name from Camp Asquam—returned to camp just in time to prepare for the arrival of parents and the end of camp.

The 1896 expedition covered much the same itinerary as that of the previous year. Maynard suggests that an epidemic of mumps may have led Wilson to cancel the more ambitious plans hatched atop Mount Cardigan the year before. By 1897, however, with a series of successful camping expeditions now accomplished, Wilson's confidence had grown. In early August, 8 counselors

and 22 campers (about three-quarters of the camp body) set out on a weeklong expedition to Mount Lafayette, a much more distant and formidable goal. To lighten packs, Wilson engaged a horse-drawn wagon to accompany the group.

Members of the Long Trip proceeded first to a fortifying lunch at the Pemigewasset House in Plymouth. They camped that night in West Thornton and then continued the next day all the way to Franconia Notch, pausing briefly to visit the Flume and the Pool. After setting up camp by the Profile House, the group was treated to another substantial dinner. The next morning, they began to climb Lafayette's flanks, presumably by the Old Bridle Path. It was a cold, windy climb, but the group persevered to the top. Maynard thinks it likely that upon the return to Plymouth, a father of two of the boys treated the group to a second dinner at the Pemigewasset House, thus initiating another enduring tradition—the Long Walk Dinner.

In 1898, the Long Trip scaled Mount Chocorua. The next year, the expedition, now renamed the Long Walk, perhaps to make it more distinctive to Pasquaney, set its sights upon the loftiest peak the Whites could offer: Mount Washington. Maynard writes of the expedition in *Nineteenth-Century Pasquaney* (a 200-page history filed at Camp Pasquaney, 1994):

It was in every respect an extraordinary walk, one that predicted the character of modern-day Long Walks in its use of mechanized transport to carry the walkers to a single fixed campsite from which they could climb several peaks. The walkers ascended five 4,000-foot mountains, a remarkable tally considering the first ten Long Walks visited only six different 4,000-footers. It was a grand experiment not soon to be repeated. Pasquaney would not climb Mt. Washington again for forty years.

The 1899 journey relied on rail to move the boys most of the way into the mountains. After walking to Plymouth, where according to Teddy Jackson, who would eventually take over the directorship when Wilson died in 1933, they enjoyed a “sumptuous dinner” at the Pemigewasset House. Jackson also noted that their meal was consumed to the music of a three-piece orchestra “played by young feminines.” After lunch, the train carried them to Fabyan's hotel, where they changed for the Crawford House—the stop for Crawford's lay at the head of the eponymous notch. In the morning, they began their

ascent of Mount Washington via the Bridle Path—now the Crawford Path. They moved swiftly, reaching the summit at 11:30, four hours after they set out. Dinner at the Summit House was followed by the descent; the Long Walk was off the mountain by 3 o'clock. The next three days involved shorter explorations into the Willey Range and to features of interest around the Notch such as the Frankenstein railroad trestle and Elephant Head. By late Saturday afternoon, the Long Walk was back at camp.

Despite the success of the 1899 trip, Wilson chose to moderate future Long Walks. From the turn of the century until 1939, he and his successor limited the Long Walk's destinations to peaks in the Lakes Region, Sandwich Range, Moosilauke, and, on three occasions, the Franconias. (In 1914, for the only time in the camp's history, a Long Walk did not depart Pasquaney, and in 1917, it reprised the shorter walks to Mount Cardigan of the first years.) Perhaps Wilson disliked the expense of the railroad or making the trip dependent on mechanized transport, or he may have wished to distinguish Pasquaney's endeavors from those of its cousin, Camp Asquam, where Long Trips routinely made use of modern transportation to gain access to the biggest mountains in the Whites. At Asquam, the entire camp went on the Long Trip, whereas Wilson began to reserve the Long Walk for older boys.



Mr. Ned, holding the Long Walk flag, leads the boys into Waterville from Campton. The 1904 Long Walk's destination was Sandwich Dome. CAMP PASQUANEY ARCHIVE

Thus, Rod Beebe, Sr., wrote in the 1906 *Pasquaney Annual*, “To be on the Long Walk is one of the most coveted honors of the Camp: even on the way up to Camp, one hears on all sides the second year campers saying, ‘I hope I make the Long Walk.’”

Why were these trips considered so integral to the camping experience? In part, early camp directors seem to have been content to rely on existing models for the camp season. As Wilson modeled Pasquaney on Asquam, Asquam was inspired by Camp Chocorua, another institution on Squam Lake that Maynard identifies as the spark to the “summer camp revolution.” Founded in 1881 by Ernest Balch, Chocorua’s director and benefactors had a knack for favorable publicity, though the camp itself only lasted nine years. Indeed, Asquam’s Long Trip, inspiration to Pasquaney’s Long Walk, was modeled on Chocorua’s “Long Cruise.”

Yet the emergence of these camps in the last two decades of the nineteenth century—by 1895, according to Maynard, eleven were operating—reflects the shifting dynamics of American society during the period, just as the nature of our contemporary camps provide insights into our own society. Maynard identifies the Civil War as “a great impetus, stimulating a desire among boys everywhere to tramp and camp like soldiers.” By the 1880s and 1890s, memory of the slaughter had subsided sufficiently that the war carried a whiff of romance and adventure. Indeed, the hierarchy and routine of early camps, as well as various trappings such as a bugler, would not have been out of place in the military.

The growth of the camping movement also reflected middle- and upper-class white anxieties about social evolution. Such ambivalences were nothing new in America, but the rapid changes in the cultural landscape wrought by industrialization, immigration, and urbanization during the second half of the nineteenth century challenged existing assumptions about race, class, and gender. The newly affluent middle class, still largely Anglo-Saxon in ethnicity, was particularly vulnerable to such fears. New transportation technologies provided a means of escape. In dense, ethnically diversifying cities, the development of the streetcar now allowed quick and affordable transport to and from downtown. Middle-class nostalgia for simplicity and community—the “rural ideal,” in the words of historian Sam Bass Warner, Jr.—fueled the growth of streetcar suburbs, which were informally segregated by class and ethnicity. The poorest inhabitants of cities, often recent immigrants, were left to occupy worn-out neighborhoods close to downtown.

Such shifts also reverberated at the regional scale. Mountain tourism in New England expanded dramatically after the Civil War, stimulating the construction of hundreds of rural hotels and boarding houses that catered to urbanites with growing leisure time. In many cases, women and children spent entire summers at these resorts, while working husbands joined them for shorter sojourns. Critics charged that such settings, despite their relative isolation, were still luxurious enough to inculcate idleness and fragility in boys. Wilson, Talbot, Balch, and others argued that the physical and mental challenges of camping could teach values of hard work, cooperation, and self-reliance, away from the well-intentioned but emasculating influence of female relatives.

These arguments resonated as new theories of masculinity began to supplant Gilded Age attitudes emphasizing the importance of decorum and restraint in male character. As Abigail Van Slyck asserts in her book *A Manufactured Wilderness* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006), “Middle-class men who may have once praised doting mothers for their maternal dedication increasingly accused them of coddling their sons and thus failing to develop in them the self-reliance that many critics believed had been the hallmark of earlier generations.” In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner read his paper, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” Though discredited by modern historians, many contemporaries found Turner’s conviction about the importance of the frontier to American democracy and vitality compelling. Turner’s assertion that the frontier had closed further stoked anxieties about manhood.

Thus, turn-of-the-century boys’ camps and particularly their expeditions into the outdoors were about much more than having fun or developing certain skills, though certainly both of these aspects of camping were essential to the overall experience. Van Slyck writes, “The solution lay in instituting a new kind of summer experience for boys, one that would remove them from the feminized home for some period of time and send them out into nature in the company of the right kind of men.” Closeness to nature and robust role models would instill strength and endurance, or, in Maynard’s words, using contemporary slang for a citified dandy, provide “a cure for the dude.”

The first verse of Pasquaney’s camp song, which Billy Rockwell composed during the first summer (the words largely endured, though the tune subsequently was changed), reveals the extent to which these young pioneers were themselves aware of the camp’s mission. First, it describes the

camp's physical location, evoking a rough but beautiful setting, followed by assurances of upstanding morality among its inhabitants.

Mid the mountains of rugged New Hampshire
Where the granite is screened by the pine,
On a hillside above Lake Pasquaney
A camp nestles in leafy sunshine.
Here everyone is a good fellow
We won't stand a cad nor a sneak,
Nor a camper who shirks his fair duty—
A liar, a dude, or a freak.

The song implicitly links proximity to nature with good character, but its emphasis, at least in this verse, is less on the virtues of living outdoors than the absence of undesirable traits.

Many of the same motives led to the development of girls' camps, but given conventional standards of femininity, such efforts were more controversial. In fact, the first girls' camps did not appear until after 1900. Early directors hoped to foster independence and self-sufficiency in young women, but as Van Slyck writes, "Even those who championed camping for girls were not interested in encouraging female campers to act like boys." Teaching gender roles was a priority for both boys' and girls' camps. Although there was plenty of overlap in activities, important distinctions emerged. Baseball, one of the quintessential pastimes at early boys' camps, valued for its potential to teach the virtues of community and even citizenship, was much more likely to be absent from girls' camps. Differentiation became more distinct during the 1920s, as girls' camps offered a greater range of crafts and developed formal programs in dance and singing. Camps instilled expectations for both genders in other, more subtle ways, as well. For example, most camps involved their campers in some aspect of cooking, but girls were more likely to take a hand in actually preparing a meal, whereas boys were often assigned to the washing up.

Despite these differences, girls' camps embraced camping and genuine exposure to the outdoors. At Camp Onaway, founded in 1912 and just up the road from Pasquaney, hiking was part of the program of activities from the beginning. In *Let Her Strong and Ageless Be* (Camp Onaway, 2011), a history of the camp's first hundred years, Helen Stokes Greven relates the local day hikes of the early years. Like so many female hikers of the era, the Onaway

girls disdained their heavy skirts, which they often removed once safely in the woods, continuing in their bloomers until just before they reemerged onto the road. After 1920, the camp introduced overnight canoeing trips, and in 1928, with the acquisition of a sturdy, if rebellious, truck, hiking parties began to venture further into the White Mountains. They scaled the range's highest peaks, often on multiday expeditions. Interestingly, like the Pasquaney boys, Onaway girls also composed an original song at the end of their trips.

Pasquaney is now the oldest continually operating camp in the country. Its forthright emphasis on character building sometimes seems old-fashioned, but to its alumni and campers, this remains one of its essential attributes. I have gone on the Long Walk five times, including two stints as its leader. In 2005, shortly after leading it for the first time, I gave my own Tree Talk on the value of hiking. At the time, I was unaware of its historical particulars, save for its longevity. Here is an excerpt:

Put simply, I think that Pasquaney's basic mission is to make boys think about being men. When I first experienced Long Walk's prodigious mileage, complicated planning, and urgency for selflessness, I felt a lot older and, as clichéd as it may sound, a lot more manly. . . .

As painfully earnest as the words were, I believed in them, as I still do. The expedition's mission persists, but its form has changed in some significant ways. By the late 1930s, the old model of walking directly to a peak was beginning to break down as the automobile made country roads unsafe and unpleasant for pedestrians. Training for the Long Walk became increasingly arduous, causing some older campers to eschew it for the comforts of the hillside. The expedition began to lose prestige. A shake-up was needed, and in 1939, a counselor named Phil Tyler provided it in the guise of honoring an old camp precedent. That year, for the first time since 1899, the Long Walk's goal was Mount Washington. Rather than simply walking along roads, climbing the peak, and returning the same way, Tyler first led the group on challenging treks across the Sandwich Range and Bear Mountain. He relied on a truck to move his Long Walkers up to the Dolly Copp Campground and then led them on a two-day traverse of the Presidential Range, stopping at the Appalachian Mountain Club's Lakes of the Clouds Hut at night. The party returned most of the way to Pasquaney again by truck. Tyler thus restored an air of adventure to the trip, while establishing an important precedent: the use of modern transportation.

Subsequent Long Walks made the most of Tyler's example. Despite a necessary regression because of the Second World War, the Long Walk plumbed new areas in the Pemigewasset during the late 1940s. In 1950, it began to camp regularly by the Inn Unique—now the Notchland Inn—south of Crawford Notch. Charles Platt III, a longtime leader of the Long Walk, explains in his 1977 study of the expedition that public campgrounds had become too crowded, and the AMC huts were too expensive. Pasquaney needed a campsite of its own and here, in the heart of the White Mountains, a myriad of challenging hikes was close at hand. In 1958, the camp trustees bought six acres from the Inn Unique along Nancy Brook. This land, which hosts only a few tent platforms, is now known to Pasquanians as Notchpost, and it has provided the Long Walk with a permanent base ever since.

In many ways, the early camps were essentially utopian societies in their conscious efforts to build a virtuous society through isolation and serious attention to physical and moral growth. The Long Walk is a microcosm of this inclination—a utopia within a utopia. Like all such communities, success has a lot to do with the interplay of personalities. Weather is another key factor that the group cannot control at all. Sometimes a week of rain depresses morale, or it can knit a group together in the face of a further challenge. (The log for Saturday, August 5, 1950, the last day of the Long Walk, begins, “It didn’t rain.”) In 2005, on our Monday hike up Mount Adams, we endured some of the strongest winds I can remember encountering in the Whites. Though it never actually rained, the clouds engulfed us. We were on the upper reaches of the Air Line trail, close to the summit, when my group stopped to shelter from the wind and catch its breath (each Long Walk splits into separate units of five or six on the trail to avoid overwhelming other hikers). The wind was so strong that I could almost see it stripping the heat generated by our exertions from our bodies. We gave up the push to the top and headed down to Madison Hut, disappointed but safely out of the gale.

Some groups might have complained about the decision, but by this point in the summer, the boys knew the stakes and were supportive. We did scamper up Mount Madison, and the next day, a zone of high pressure rolled in, giving us a sparkling day to scramble across the Twins and Bonds. Wednesday, we were up at 5 A.M., scarfing down muffins and bananas on the ride to hike Imp Trail. Two memories from that day stick with me—a 15-year-old camper named Brian Young had an asthma attack early on in the hike, but he calmly waited for it to subside. We slowed our pace when we got back on the trail,

and he was in fine shape by the time we made the main ridge of the Carters. Meanwhile, a counselor named Mike Hanrahan, whose ankles bothered him the entire week, was hurting as we made the steep descent into Carter Notch. We had planned to go up and over the Wildcats, but it was quite clear that a strategic retreat down the Nineteen-Mile Brook Trail might be the wiser course. Mike would have none of it. He grit his teeth and pushed over the mountain, thus inspiring the rest of the Long Walk with his fortitude. To some, this may seem foolish, but one lesson I learned on that expedition was the importance of context. Conditions were much more favorable than they had been on Monday. It was a warm day, early in the afternoon. The Wildcats are tough peaks, but they are not remote. Mike finished the hike and demonstrated to the boys the importance of perseverance and belief in one's self.

The rest of the trip went swimmingly. Thursday's hike over Tripyramid, Whiteface, and Passaconaway mountains was far easier than I remembered it from when I did it on my first Long Walk in 1998. A good night's sleep had restored Mike's ankles, and indeed, the entire group gained confidence each day. On Friday, we looked up from the Caps Ridge trailhead to see a bank of lenticular clouds covering Mount Jefferson's summit, inspiring a flood of curiosity and wonder among the boys. We had another fine day to gambol across the Presidentials, hitting Mounts Clay, Washington, Monroe, and Eisenhower. Legs were strong and spirits high; groups cheered back and forth to each other along the ridge as the final trailhead grew closer and closer. We spent much of those last couple of days figuring out our Long Walk song, which we eventually sang to classic rock hits by Billy Joel and Bon Jovi. Under Hanrahan's direction, we practiced it diligently while breaking camp on Saturday and before and after our celebratory duck dinner at the Inn on Newfound Lake. After we sang our ditty to the camp before dinner, I remember Mr. Vinnie informing me that, while not the most melodious song he had heard on such an occasion, it was certainly the loudest he could remember.

I went back to Pasquaney last June to gather background material for this article; inevitably, I fell into conversation about the Long Walk with various counselors I ran into. Jim MacDougall, a recent graduate of Colby College, led the Long Walk for the second time in July, and we spent a little time discussing ideas for hikes, particularly the merits of a long descent from Mount Washington along the Davis Path. I'm sure I'll be having such conversations as long as I'm visiting Pasquaney.



Catching a break Thursday on the Mount Whiteface summit. The boys had started that morning on the Tripyramids and came across the Kate Sleeper Trail. ANDREW RIELY

What the Long Walk does, as Mr. Ned seemed to know, is to make boys feel good about their physical well-being. American males are barraged with propaganda about their fulfillment through physical strength. With that self-confidence assured, they can embrace their true selves, exploring whatever pursuits—social, intellectual, emotional, artistic, or athletic—interest them most.

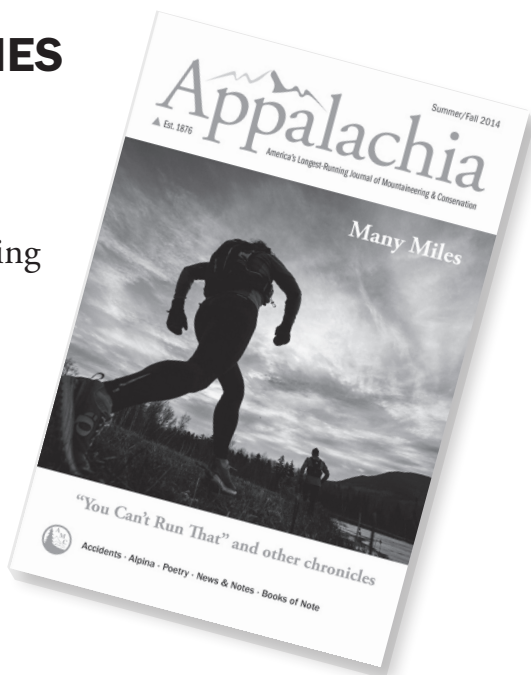
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