

BAY-Hiking 8/14

HEADLINE: West Quarry Mountain: A journey of history and maps

1060 words

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There is a lot of history in the mountains around Belknap County and for my 10th hike I was lucky enough to get Dave Roberts to hike with me up West Quarry Mountain.

Dave spent months mapping the hiking trails around the Belknap Range, and the maps that can be purchased from the Gilford Public Library are the result of his hard work. It was nice and clear when we started out. We took a small road past Glidden Road on Route 11A to get onto the logging road I had first taken with Don Watson and Dr. Judith Silverberg to hike Mount Anna. This logging road eventually leads to the saddle between Rand, West Quarry and Anna. Anna is straight ahead on the trail. Rand is to the right and West Quarry is to the left. This road is a small but steady incline up to the saddle. The trail between West Quarry and Rand is part of the White Trail that leads through most of the Belknap Range.

Dave built this trail himself and said that he has not been on the trail for five or six years. The trail is fairly flat, and we got a chance to see some of the old equipment and remnants of the quarry operation that was here when the area was first settled. Small, smoothly shaped squares of granite can be found on the ground, and

Dave pointed out the side of the mountain that was mined. The side of the granite face is faceted with straight parts where the granite was removed. Rusted metal rods that were used to move the granite are still propped up against the rocks. A rusted tool used to wrap around the granite and hold it steady sits on a rock nearby. Near the site is a sign that gives a little history of the area.

Dave said that most of the granite was used locally and some of it was supposedly used to make cobblestones for the streets of Laconia. The train to Boston shipped some of the granite. Dave said he remembers his grandparents talking about the movement of the granite when he was a kid.

As we move on from the quarry site, we come to a fork in the trail and a sign that denotes two routes to go up the mountain. Dave said that the White Trail goes over some ledges and is a bit harder than the Blue Trail, which veers off to the left. He wanted to give people options to make it up to the top. Since I am not very surefooted on the trail, we decide to take the Blue Trail up to the top. This trail immediately starts as a fairly steep incline, and we gained altitude very quickly. As we walked, Dave moved deadfall and hacked branches from the trail to make it easy for people to go through.

On the way up, we talked a little about what motivated Dave to make the maps. He said that while he was working as a teacher of math and science he did a lot of hiking out in California and Colorado. When he retired, he wanted to hike around the

Belknaps. He found that there were no maps showing the different trails and decided to remedy the situation. He said it took him a little less than a year and during that time he had to learn about how to make maps. We finally climbed to almost the top where the trail flattens out considerably and makes its way around the summit. Dave said he made the trail like this so that hikers would be able to enjoy a view. Quarry does not have the vistas of some of the other mountains in the range, but there is one open area that looks out over the lake and the day is so clear that we can see all the way to Mount Monadnock about 60 miles away.

A five-minute hike takes us to the sign indicating the summit. Dave told me that really is not the true summit of West Quarry, and took me a little further into the middle of the mountain where there is the cairn indicating the summit. Surrounded by spruce trees we sit and I had a snack. Dave told me he really enjoys these woods because they are practically untouched since the Mayflower.

“It’s hard to believe that this was all grazing land at one time,” Dave said.

Farmers after the Industrial Revolution realized that the factories needed wool to make their cloth and so raised sheep on these mountains. Dave said that many farmers became rich by raising sheep. We decide to head back down the way we came and the walk definitely goes much faster. I am amazed at how easily Dave moves through the trail as we make our way down. We check out

some plants like Queen Anne's lace, fireweed, elderberry and hobblebush. He showed me some cat's hair moss, a plant with a hair-like top that can be pulled off and looks like an old woman's cap.

We admired an amazing view of Lake Winnepesaukee just off the logging road, and Dave said they probably cleared the area with the intention of selling the land so that someone could build a house. He said that at one point there were farms and houses back here and even showed me the remains of an old hunting camp. It is pretty easy to imagine, surrounded by all these woods, a team of horses pulling granite out of the quarry or a farmer tilling his fields.

The town of Gilford has been around for a long time and there is probably a lot that has been lost. It was really interesting to talk to Dave about what it used to be like. This was one of the quicker hikes I have taken. It only took us about three hours, round trip. Most of it was relatively flat, only getting somewhat steep near the end of the hike. This is a great hike for walking in the woods, but doesn't offer many views.

Danielle will continue to chronicle her 12-mountain goal throughout the summer. To get your own check-off list, maps, and other info about the Belknap Mountain Range, visit www.belknapsportsmensclub.com or email dwatsonmusic@hotmail.com.

CUTLINE (Hiking1)
DAVE ROBERTS, who built the West Quarry, trail looks

out over the mountains. Mount Monadnock, which is over 60 miles away, could be seen way off in the distance. (Danielle DeLisle – Gilford Steamer)

CUTLINE (Hiking2) THIS PAPER explains some of the history of the quarry. Notice the really square rocks holding this up. The quarry workers left these rocks after they had been broken off the granite face. (Danielle DeLisle – Gilford Steamer)