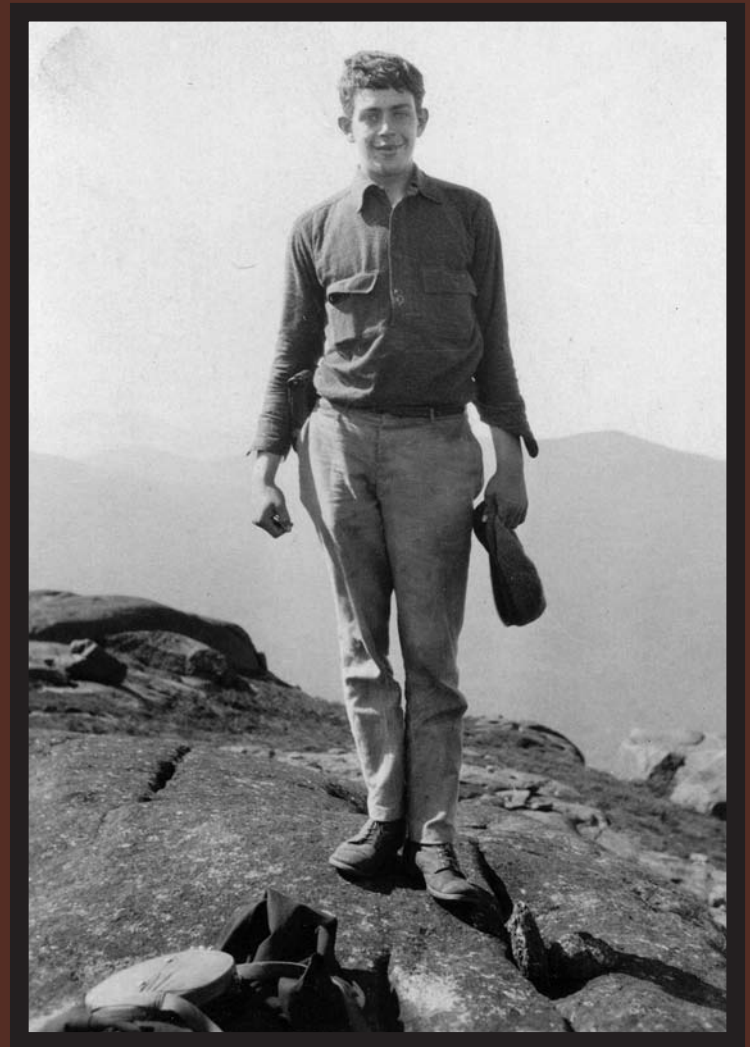


Wilderness Advocate

By Phil Brown

Adirondack history is full of colorful characters: Noah John Rondeau, the hermit of Cold River; Verplanck Colvin, the tireless 19th-century surveyor; Old Mountain Phelps, the sage of the High Peaks, and Apollos “Paul” Smith, the back-country businessman.

But few have been as influential as Bob Marshall, the legendary hiker and wilderness crusader.



Bob Marshall on the summit of Wright Peak (circa 1920)

Marshall left his name all over the map. You can't become an Adirondack Forty-Sixer without climbing 4,360-foot Mount Marshall, and if you do much hiking in the Rockies, you're sure to hear about the Bob Marshall Wilderness, which encompasses more than a million acres in Montana. South Dakotans send 4-H youth to Camp Bob Marshall in the Black Hills. And nestled in the Brooks Range of Alaska, north of the Arctic Circle, is a little jewel known as Marshall Lake.

We're not done yet. The Adirondack Council is pushing the state to create a 409,000-acre Bob Marshall Great Wilderness near Cranberry Lake in the western Adiron-

before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Louis Marshall loved the Adirondacks. At the 1894 state constitutional convention, he helped secure passage of the clause now known as Article 14, which mandates that state lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands," making them among the most protected lands on the planet. He also played an important role in establishing the state College of Forestry in Syracuse, which is now the College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF).

In 1900, Louis Marshall and friends purchased land

"We have come full circle: the Adirondacks inspired Bob Marshall, who founded The Wilderness Society, which hired Howard Zahniser, who wrote the definition of wilderness now used to protect the Adirondacks."



Bob enjoys breakfast at an Adirondack cabin.



George, James and Bob Marshall in the year before Bob died.

dacks. The Bob, as it's called, would be by far the largest Wilderness Area in the Adirondack Park.

So who was this guy who earned so many topographical tributes?

Bob Marshall was born in New York City on Jan. 2, 1901, the third of four children of Louis and Florence Marshall, both of whom were the offspring of German-Jewish immigrants. Louis Marshall was one of the most successful lawyers of his time, appearing many times

on Lower Saranac Lake, where they built six summer camps, dubbing the compound Knollwood. Though he grew up in New York City, Bob Marshall spent his boyhood summers at Knollwood. This was his introduction to the Adirondacks and to the joys of wilderness.

Among Adirondack hikers, Marshall is celebrated as the original Forty-Sixer—the first to climb all 46 of the

region's peaks above 4,000 feet. He was joined in this feat by his younger brother, George, and their guide, Herb Clark. Their first High Peak was Whiteface Mountain, which they climbed on Aug. 1, 1918, after crossing Lake Placid by motorboat. They completed the 46 with an ascent of Mount Emmons, in the remote Seward Range, on June 10, 1925. It's worth noting that the three climbed MacNaughton Mountain a few days later. Although not on the Forty-Sixer list, MacNaughton was later found to top 4,000 feet, so many people feel compelled to climb it as well. That means the Marshalls and Clark were not only the first Adirondack Forty-Sixers; they were the first Forty-Sevensers.

When the Marshalls began their quest, they thought there were only 42 High Peaks above 4,000 feet. After climbing these, Bob wrote a booklet called *The High Peaks of the Adirondacks*, which the fledgling Adirondack Mountain Club published in 1922. The booklet notes that most of the peaks lacked trails and had rarely, if ever, been climbed before. Marshall's favorite peak was Haystack, which sits across Panther Gorge from Mount Marcy, the state's highest summit. "It's a great thing these days to leave civilization for a while and return to nature," he wrote. "From Haystack you can look over thousands and thousands of acres, unblemished by

the works of man, perfect as made by nature."

Later surveys revealed that four of Marshall's 46 are below 4,000 feet, but the Adirondack Forty-Sixers still cleave to the original list. In the decade after 1925, only two people followed in the footsteps of the Marshalls and Clark. Since then, climbing the 46 has become an Adirondack tradition. Nearly 6,000 hikers have done it. Nowadays, hikers can follow marked trails or herd paths to all the summits.

Marshall did not limit his explorations to mountains. In 1920, he had enrolled in the state College of Forestry, the school his father helped found. After his sophomore year, he spent the summer at the college's forestry camp on Cranberry Lake. On weekends, he headed into the woods, often on his own, and wrote detailed accounts of his adventures. His goal was to visit as many ponds as possible. In all, he visited 94 ponds, and just as with the High Peaks, he ranked them all for their beauty.

He graduated in 1924, fourth in a class of 59. The next year, the *Journal of Forestry* published his first article in defense of wilderness, "Recreational Limitations to Silviculture in the Adirondacks." Whereas most foresters saw the woods as a source of timber, Marshall saw them as a recreational resource that ought to be protected. He likened a virgin forest to a museum, noting that society



Albert Einstein with State Senator John J. Dunnigan on Lake Flower in the Adirondacks in 1936.

In the summer of 1936, three years after renouncing his German citizenship, Albert Einstein brought his wife to Saranac Lake for the sake of her health. On August 7, Marshall had dinner with Einstein at his family camp at Knollwood on Lower Saranac Lake. The following is excerpted from his notes recounting the evening.

"...I called for Albert Einstein at the house where he was living in Saranac Lake village at five in the evening. We drove up to Knollwood and all went out in a row boat, Professor Einstein doing the paddling and I the rowing....I have seldom seen a person more delighted with the natural scenery than was Professor Einstein. Repeatedly he exclaimed about how different it was in America, where you could still see places which did not indicate the evidences of man...."

spends vast sums on museums and parks. "But there never was a museum that had a more interesting exhibit than this last remnant of the woods that were, nor a park that could compare with them in beauty." This is a theme he developed and refined in later writings, culminating in "The Problem of the Wilderness," his most famous article in favor of preservation.

Marshall went on to earn a master's degree in forestry from Harvard and a doctorate in plant physiology from Johns Hopkins University. He worked, at different times, for the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In both agencies, he pushed for wilderness preservation. In 1932, for example, he compiled a list of 38 large, roadless areas that he thought should be protected in their primitive state. When this inventory was updated four years later, it included three tracts in the Adirondacks: the High Peaks, the Cranberry Lake region and the West Canada Lakes region. As a result of Marshall's work, the federal government protected more of its forestlands.

In 1929, Marshall traveled to Wiseman, Alaska, a tiny prospecting community north of the Arctic Circle. The ostensible reason for the trip was to study the rate of tree growth at the northern timberline, but the real reason was to find adventure. During his two-month stay,

he explored the uncharted Brooks Range. He returned to Wiseman the following summer and stayed for a year. Out of this visit came his best-selling book, *Arctic Village*, a sociological portrait of the frontier community.

Marshall shared the royalties from *Arctic Village*, which was a Literary Guild selection, with the residents of Wiseman. In his second book, *The People's Forests*, Marshall argued that the federal government should nationalize timberlands to save them from corporate logging. In a chapter titled "Forests and Human Happiness," he made a case for preserving woodlands to provide people an escape from a crowded world. In his view, the forest offered "the highest type of recreational and esthetic enjoyment."

Marshall returned to the Adirondacks and set a record (later broken) by climbing 13 High Peaks and one lesser summit in a single day, ascending 13,600 feet. In a remarkable coincidence, he met another ardent advocate of wilderness, Paul Schaefer, atop Mount Marcy that day. Schaefer was taking photographs to use in a campaign against an amendment to the state constitution that would have allowed the construction of cabins in the Forest Preserve. Upon learning of the proposed amendment, Marshall became incensed and started pacing back and forth. "We simply must band together,"

...Sailing is his favorite diversion. He says that he has never gone in for any sort of athletics except for sailing. He never dances. He always needs at least eight hours of sleep...

...Some of his views were especially interesting. Here are a few verbatim statements he made:

'It's wonderful how many foolish things you must try in order to find one good idea.'

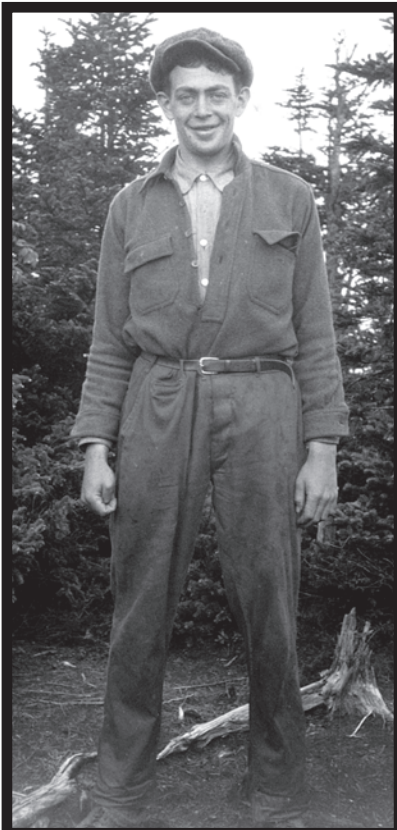
'Only when a man is attacked can you tell how modest he is.'

'After all, scientists get our bread and butter from society, so we owe it to society to let it know a little of what we are doing.'

'If there is anything in which President Roosevelt is an expert, it is getting elected....'



The interior of Knollwood, the Marshall family camp on Lower Saranac Lake.



"We feel the indomitable spirit of Bob Marshall with us constantly, still lighting on every front where wilderness values are threatened."

Sigurd Olson

he told Schaefer, "all of us who love the wilderness."

A few years later, Marshall and several colleagues formed The Wilderness Society, which became one of the nation's most effective voices for preservation. Long after Marshall's death, The Wilderness Society's executive secretary, Howard Zahniser, wrote the Wilderness Act, which President Lyndon Johnson signed in 1964. Zahniser, who worked on the law at his Adirondack cabin, defined wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." This is the same definition found in the Adirondack

Park State Land Master Plan. So we have come full circle: the Adirondacks inspired Bob Marshall, who founded The Wilderness Society, which hired Howard Zahniser, who wrote the definition of wilderness now used to protect the Adirondacks.

The founders of The Wilderness Society regarded the construction of roads as one of the biggest threats to wild lands and resisted calls to open up wilderness to the motoring public. In Marshall's view, once a road is built through a wilderness area, it ceases to be a wilderness area.

When the state Conservation Department proposed constructing truck trails in the Forest Preserve, in order to speed access to forest fires, Marshall argued against the idea. He lost the debate, and the truck trails were built (and are used today as hiking trails). In an article published posthumously, he expresses dismay at seeing the truck trail along Calkins Creek near the Seward

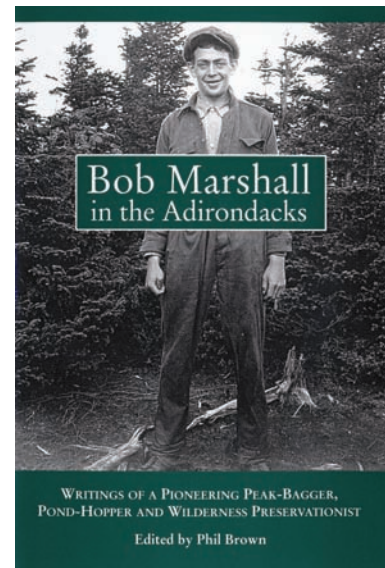
Range, where he had hiked and camped as a young man. "The tire tracks which blot out the footprints of the deer seem to symbolize the twentieth century which has come to steal from the primeval one of its last remaining interests."

On Nov. 10, 1939, Marshall boarded a train headed to New York City to visit relatives. He was found dead in his sleeper car the next morning, apparently of heart failure. He was 38. The death of such a young man, especially one as vigorous as Bob, shocked all who knew him. The next year the federal government designated the Bob Marshall Wilderness in his honor.

A bachelor, Marshall left virtually all of his \$1.5 million estate to three causes dear to his heart: socialism, civil liberties and wilderness preservation. He gave money to only one individual: \$10,000 to his old friend and guide, Herb Clark. To the rest of us, he bequeathed an enthusiasm for wilderness that continues to inspire hikers and conservationists around the world.

Phil Brown is the editor of the *Adirondack Explorer*, a news magazine about outdoor recreation and wilderness preservation.

In partnership with the Adirondack Council, Phil Brown recently published Bob Marshall in the Adirondacks: Writings of a Pioneering Peak-Bagger, Pond-Hopper and Wilderness Preservationist. The book collects nearly 40 of Marshall's Adirondack writings and contains more than 60 photos, many taken of or by Marshall. The photos



on these pages were drawn from the book. Bob Marshall in the Adirondacks can be purchased in stores or on the Web at www.adirondackcouncil.org.