

Marshall Family Intro

Forever Wild Day 2014

Presented by John Ernst – Council board member

Today we celebrate and honor the contributions of the Marshall family to the Adirondacks and to wilderness, here and across the country.

As we commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the 1964 federal Wilderness Act this summer, it is important for us to remember that the entire American ideal of Wilderness preservation has deep roots right here in the Adirondack Park.

It is also important for us to remember the contributions of great Adirondack conservationists who made it possible for the Adirondack Park to embody more than 1 million acres of roadless, motor-free Wilderness.

Today we will celebrate one family in particular, whose members have made outstanding contributions to the Adirondack Park, to Adirondack and American Wilderness preservation and to the Adirondack Council. Remarkably, a member of this family has held a seat on the Adirondack Council's board of directors almost since the organization was founded in 1975.

I am happy to say that five generations of the Marshall Family have served the Adirondack Park and supported the Adirondack Council. One member of that 5th generation serves on the Council's board today.

We gather today to honor the Marshall family's commitment and contributions to the Adirondack Park, to Wilderness preservation and to the principle of "Forever Wild."

The federal Wilderness Act was written here half a century ago, just south of where we are now, in a cabin in the Warren County Town of Johnsburg.

As early as the 1840s, writers, philosophers and artists called upon New York to protect the vanishing Adirondack wilderness for future generations. The region had become a refuge for those who sought respite from the noise, pollution and overcrowded conditions of their home cities.

After the Civil War, easier transportation via new railroads meant more people could come to enjoy the park's wild places. It also meant lumbering could reach places where it had not been possible before. Much of the park's forest began to fall.

Tensions grew between those who felt the Adirondacks were only as valuable as the timber they produced and those who felt that the Adirondack wilderness was far more

valuable as a healthy, intact landscape protecting clean water and wildlife for everyone.

By 1886, conservation leaders persuaded the state to create the Adirondack Forest Preserve. The Legislature passed a law requiring that this new preserve remain “forever wild.”

Two Adirondack enthusiasts were watching these developments very carefully. Louis and Florence Marshall resided in New York City but spent summers in the Adirondacks, where they would later build with five friends a great camp known as Knollwood on Lower Saranac Lake. Their children James, Ruth, Bob, and Georges shared their parents’ love for the wildness of the Adirondacks.

In 1892, Gov. Roswell Flower signed a bill creating the Adirondack Park. But he also signed legislation repealing the “forever wild” legislative Forest Preserve protections.

Right away, conservationists took action. Louis Marshall wasted no time in drafting a new article of the New York State Constitution, to be named the Forever Wild Clause. He captured, in two elegant sentences, the basic formula for wilderness anywhere in the world:

The lands of the state now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, will be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.

It was overwhelmingly approved at the 1894 Constitutional Convention. That bold stroke changed everything. No longer could state officials change the “forever wild” status of a single acre of public land without the consent of the voters. Over time, the preserve grew and prospered.

Meanwhile, Louis and Florence watched their children grow and develop strong connections to the big, deep woods of the Adirondack Park. George, James, Bob and Ruth hiked, canoed and fished throughout the park. Along with family guide Herb Clark, George and Bob became the first people to climb all 46 Adirondack High Peaks.

While climbing one of those peaks, Bob encountered another Adirondack wilderness enthusiast, Paul Schaefer of Niskayuna. The two became fast friends and agreed on the spot that an organization was needed to fight for Wilderness across America. By 1935, that organization would become The Wilderness Society, which Bob and his brothers founded, along with Aldo Leopold and others.

Bob would go on to serve as Chief of the Division of Recreation and Public Lands for the U.S. Forest Service, where he drafted the nation's first regulations for the management of 16 roadless areas he had helped to establish while directing the forestry program for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He died too young in 1939, but he left a legacy that will be appreciated for generations to come.

George and James Marshall carried on the legacy long after Bob's passing. In addition to co-founding The Wilderness Society. Both were also involved in the state's decision to create a formal Wilderness protection system in New York that would set aside certain areas of the Adirondack Forest Preserve as roadless, motor-free zones forever. Today, more than 1.2 million acres of the Adirondack Park are protected in 17 separate wilderness areas.

By 1970, James Marshall had helped to establish another great environmental institution, the Natural Resources Defense Council. Within just a few years, he turned his attentions to an advocacy organization just getting started in his Adirondack Park.

In May of 1975, a group of advocates joined forces to create the Adirondack Council. Since that first meeting in New York City, a member of the Marshall family has served on the Adirondack Council's board of directors (I especially want to recognize Ellen Marshall Scholle, an Adirondack Council director from 1994 – 2003 and her granddaughter Liza Cowan, beginning her 11th year on the Council Board today.) James's experience as a lawyer, writer and political activist helped to shape the organization's mission and goals. He and George continued to be advisors to the organization until their passing.

Children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of James and George are here with us today. Through service, generosity, music and more, they continue the legacy of the generations before them, protecting and promoting wild places that nourish and sustain us in the Adirondacks and beyond.

I especially want to recognize Ellen Marshall Scholle – dear friend, Adirondack Council board member from 1994-2003, a true champion and benefactor of wilderness.

One of Ellen's greatest gifts is the continued involvement of her family, and most particularly, her granddaughter Liza Cowan, who has brought youth, energy and rigorous intelligence to the Adirondack Council board. This year Liza is finishing her first year of what we hope will be a second nine-year term.

As we pause today to recall how grateful we are for the Adirondack Park, Adirondack wilderness areas and Adirondack communities we all love, we remember those who gave so generously of their time, money and expertise to make it happen and to those that continue the important work of conservation today.

Please join me in presenting the Adirondack Council's 2014 Conservationist of the Year Award to the Marshall Family. Could Ellen, Liza and Roger please come up? And could other members of the Marshall family please stand and be recognized?

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