

## **The Tahawus Club and Mount Marcy Climb**

Theodore and Edith and all the children were now in one place, on vacation. MacNaughton Cottage was a beehive of activity with clothes hanging everywhere drying. The children never seemed to be able to stay out of the river behind the cottage.

*“Thursday, September 12. Started in pouring rain after lunch and walked to Colden camp, where we spent the night . . . Theodore, Ethel, Kermit, Miss Young, Mr. MacNaughton, the two Robinson boys, and myself. We all enjoyed it greatly. There are two comfortable little log houses to sleep in with big fires.”*<sup>1</sup>

The two Robinson boys were Beverley (born 1876) and Herman (born 1878), two Harvard graduates (both class of 1898) from New York. Herman earned his law degree and passed the bar in 1900 and Beverley received his law degree from Columbia in 1901.<sup>2</sup> According to his Find A Grave listing, Herman served in the cavalry during the Spanish American War but not with the “Rough Riders.” Beverley was a member of the Tahawus Club.

Five guides were hired to carry the entourage’s gear to camp. Noah LaCasse, Thomas Benham and Ed Dimick stayed in camp with Roosevelt Party. Two guides, George Thillow and Fred Bars, carried supplies as far as the Flowed Lands and then returned to the Club.<sup>3</sup>

*“Friday, September 13. Still raining. The men went up Marcy. And after seeing beautiful Avalanche Lake, we started for the hotel. On the way, we met a guide (Harrison Hall) who told our man that he had a telegram for one of the Marcy party.”*<sup>4</sup>

Guide Ed Dimick, “our man,” returned with the family to the Club. At this time, Dimick told Harrison Hall about the rest of the party’s plan to climb Mt. Marcy. This was critical information to Hall which gave him the path Roosevelt was on, since the Club path to Marcy lead past Lake Tear of the Clouds.<sup>5</sup>

Roosevelt with guide Noah LaCasse, James MacNaughton, Beverley and Herman Robinson,<sup>6</sup> left Lake Colden at 9:00 AM to climb Mt. Marcy, the highest peak in New York state. They reached the summit at 11:52 A.M. The weather was less than ideal, with only one break in the clouds, so they descended back down the 1,000 feet to Lake Tear of the Clouds for lunch. This remote pond is the highest pond source of the Hudson River. As they ate their sandwiches, at 2:00 PM, Roosevelt saw below him in the trees, Club guide Harrison Hall approaching, running, clutching the first dispatches informing the Colonel of McKinley’s worsening condition.<sup>7</sup>

Footnote to history. At this point guide Thomas Benham, by name, disappears from history. Noah LaCasse does not mention him going back to the club with the family or joining the party for the Mt. Marcy climb. Two references to guides, plural, one by Noah LaCasse in 1932 and one by Edith Roosevelt in 1933, indicate it was likely Benham joined the Mt. Marcy expedition.<sup>8</sup>

The Mount Marcy party left for the club immediately on receiving the dispatches, and arrived at 5:15 PM.<sup>9</sup>

“The very first words the President spoke on reaching the house were to Mrs. Roosevelt, asking if any further messages had been received... Nothing further had been learned from Buffalo.”<sup>10</sup>

Roosevelt made arrangements to leave in the morning with his family, had a light meal wrote messages to send to Tahawus for William Loeb, and then retired to the MacNaughton cottage to rest. He was keenly aware of not wanting to seem too anxious about gaining the presidency through McKinley’s death. He told Edith about 9:00 PM, “I’m not going unless I’m really needed.”<sup>11</sup>

That plan all changed as Edith notes in her diary for September 13<sup>th</sup>:

“Further news which came, but eleven or twelve when we were in bed. He went at once to North Creek where a train was waiting.”

Footnote to history: The chain of communication in 1901 between the Tahawus Club and the rest of the world was lengthy and unreliable. The dispatches concerning McKinley’s failing health had reached North Creek at approximately 8:00 AM on the 13<sup>th</sup>. This was the end of the railroad line and the telegraph. The messages were then telephoned to the Lower Works Club house at Tahawus on Blue Ridge Road, ten miles south of the Tahawus Club house at the Upper Works, where the Roosevelts were staying. The telephone messages were written down by Michael Breen, manager of the Lower Works Club House. These hand written messages were then transported by horse and wagon to the Upper Works Club house. Therefore, the 8:00 dispatches from North Creek did not reach the Tahawus Club at Upper Works until approximately 10:00 AM. Harrison Hall packed his gear and a lunch, leaving the club at 10:30 AM. Hall delivered the hand written messages to Roosevelt at Lake Tear of the Cloud at 2:00 P.M. In total then, it took six hours for the North Creek dispatches to be delivered to the VP.

Sources:

1. Boera, A. Richard, edited; *The Edith Kermit Roosevelt Diaries*, Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal, Page 5
2. *Guide to the Robinson Family Papers*, Time Line Page 2
3. Radford, Field and Stream, January 1902, Volume 6, Issue 11, Pages 648

4. Edith Diary, Page 5
5. Radford's Field and Stream article quotes Noah LaCasse that the party left their lunches at Tear of the Clouds on their way up to the summit of Marcy.
6. In 1933 Edith Roosevelt stated "in the morning my elder boy, my husband, and two young friends who were with us, and the guides, went up to the top of Mount Marcy." . Masten, *The Tahawus Club*, Page 69. The Theodore mentioned in her diary on September 11<sup>th</sup>, seems to be Theodore Junior since he appears to have been on the climb, even though LaCasse does not mention him. Note too, the reference to "the guides."
7. Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 1979, Page 741 states the party arrived at the lake at 1:25 P.M. and unpacked their lunch; Beverley Robinson reported in the Club Registry 1901 that Hall arrived at 2:00 P.M.; Noah LaCasse in the Radford article Page 649, stated that Hall arrived at 1:25 P.M. A good example of how two eyewitnesses to an event perceive things differently.
8. Masten, *The Tahawus Club*, Pages 68-70
9. Beverley in the Tahawus Club registry. Noah LaCasse notes the time as "half-past five" in the Radford article Page 649
10. Radford article Page 649
11. Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex*, Page 574

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