

IN E.J.'S FOOTSTEPS

TRACKING THE LEGENDARY TRAPPER'S HISTORY
IN THE NORTH WOODS.



BY SCOT H. DAHMS

As the search function on my vehicle radio kept looking for a station without luck, I was reminded of when I lived in Montana and drove between Glendive and Glasgow. I thought that not being able to get a radio station would only happen west of the Mississippi. I was wrong as I was in the Adirondacks of New York driving on Highway 2 west of Blue Ridge. Now, I could say that I had been in two places like that.

This trip was during the three years that I researched the legendary trapper, E.J. Dailey, in preparation for writing the book "E.J. Dailey: The Last Adirondack Trapper." As part of my research, I wanted to visit the areas where E.J. trapped and lived. The book is based on more than 500 references, with 300 being articles written by E.J. himself.

The measure of a human is not what a person writes about themselves, but what others write about them. For that reason, I included as many articles by others that

included experiences or knowledge they had about E.J.

Many of E.J.'s early activities were facilitated by the railroad. His first trip to the Cold River area was initiated by reaching the end of the railroad spur at Lake Placid, and then travelling by John Brown's grave as he traveled southwest. To tell the truth, I did not know where John Brown was buried until I read the article written by Dick Wood discussing their trip.

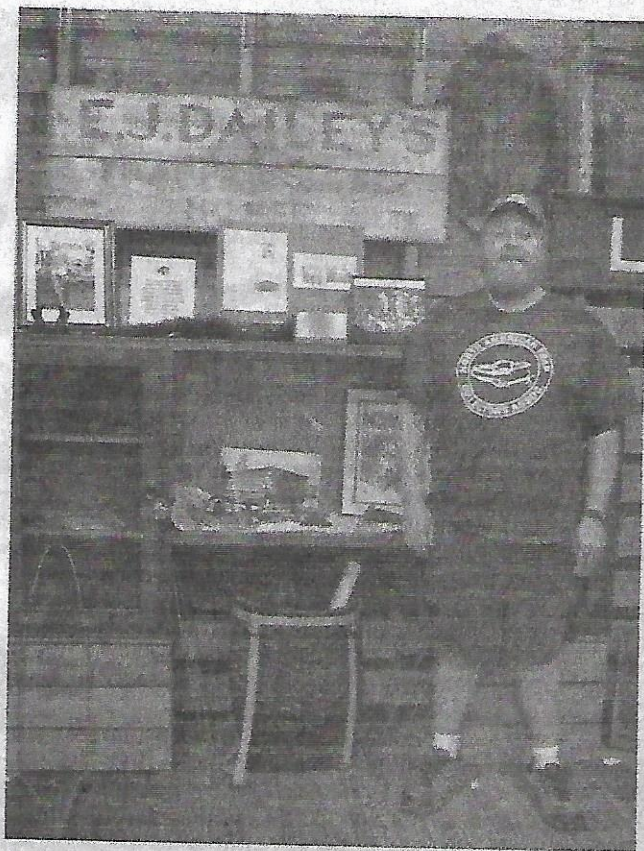
No one person and no one area influenced E.J. more than Dick at Cold River. One goal of my trip was to get as close to Duck Hole as possible. The cabin that E.J. and Dick utilized when they trapped Cold River, was by Duck Hole. I was

E.J. Dailey

The Last Adirondack Trapper
1889-1973



By Scot H. Dahms



not outfitted for, nor did I have the time to hike to Duck Hole, which was seven miles from the end of the road. I took Highway 25 north out of Winebrook Hills to get as close as I could by vehicle.

E.J. and Dick trapped together at Cold River during the 1919-1920 and 1920-1921 seasons. E.J. trapped the area by himself during the 1930-1931 and 1936-1937 seasons. The state of New York closed the fisher and marten seasons from 1937-1941. His last trip to Cold River was in the summer

of 1939. He took fishing equipment to catch food, and prospected the area. On this trip, he found that the cabin at Duck Hole had been destroyed by the state, which had bought the property.

One question that I was asked while writing the book was how could E.J. have written so many articles with all of the time that he spent trapping. Whenever he was not trapping, he was writing, as some articles included comments that he was writing them from a cabin or from his supply house. E.J.

also recycled articles, parts of stories, changed names, changed locations or modified previously published articles to create new stories.

From E.J.'s 300 articles that I read, more than 30 of them were either entirely about trapping at Cold River, or at least a section of the article included comments about Cold River. In some articles, Dick's name was changed to Bill, Jack or Casey. In other articles, the names of waterways, mountains and areas were changed.

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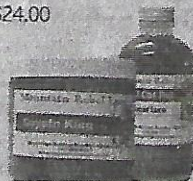
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E.J.'s first article about Cold River was published in May of 1920. The title was: "On a Backwoods Trapline." Several facts had been changed including saying that the location was in Canada, even though a photograph of the Cold River cabin was on the first page. One interesting note about this story was that the author was noted as E.J. Bailey, and under the photograph of the Cold River cabin, his name is noted as C.J. Dailey. E.J. changed some components of other articles frequently in the early 1920s. By the late 1920s and beyond, E.J. started calling people and landmarks by their true names for the most part — but not always.

My path headed back north to Ogdensburg, or more specifically, north of Flackville. On the way, I stopped at Jo Indian Pond. E.J. had a trapping cabin there and Dick had taken some photographs of E.J.'s cabin and catches. I knew that the chances of finding it still standing were slim to none, but stopped anyway.

An article in the May 2016 edition of the Watertown, New York, newspaper discussed E.J. and his old shop just north of Flackville. I thought that the town could not be that big, so it shouldn't have been too difficult to find his old shop. I was correct, as the town

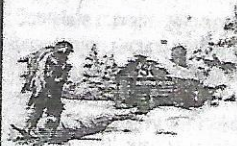
was only a small crossroads. I travelled north out of town and found his shop and old house. Both were in poor condition, without any upkeep for so many years. I was amazed that E.J. could run a fur buying and trap supply business out of such a small building, and interestingly enough, later learned that the building was actually a repurposed chicken coop.

After taking a few photographs, I continued north to Lisbon and the Train Depot Museum. "The Watertown News" story said that E.J.'s business sign was now in this museum. The museum had a small display with some traps, E.J.'s packbasket and some more recent articles written by E.J.

After this little side trip I headed home and was very satisfied with the information that I collected. I had been able to stop at several locations where E.J. had traveled, including Lake Placid, Jo Indian Pond, Flackville and near Duck Hole. I crossed several waterways that E.J. trapped, including the Oswegatchie, Raquette and Grass rivers. I learned some history about the area as well, including the importance of trains in the Adirondacks and John Brown's burial site. Most importantly, I was able to see the areas where E.J. had left his trailblazing footprints.



(If you are interested in my book, "E.J. Dailey: The Last Adirondack Trapper," email me at ranger1971@comcast.net.)



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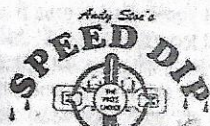


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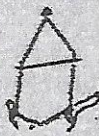
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