

**E**J. Dailey and Dick Wood trapped the Cold River region of the Adirondacks for two seasons starting in the fall of 1919. E.J. returned by himself to trap the 1930-1931 and 1936-1937 seasons, but he always said the best memories came from when they shared the cabin at Duck Hole. Dick, a born mountaineer from the Blue Ridge region of Virginia, was E.J.'s first partner on a wilderness trapline.

In late October 1919, they took a train to Lake Placid and then caught a truck ride south as far as the road would go. They walked the rest of the way in. There was no trail and the going was tough. E.J. would give most of the credit for finding Cold River to the Marble's lapel compasses pinned to both of their coats. The first

night they camped at Moose Pond. The next, they camped beside an unnamed stream and ate a brace of grouse E.J. had potted along the trail. They came provisioned for three weeks, and any game harvested might extend that stay.

They broke camp early the next morning but then had to hastily set up another camp in a downpour. It rained all day, and that night in the cold, damp tent, E.J., who liked to say that all he needed for an outing was a frying pan, a hunting knife and a rifle, had to admit that the alcohol stove and two small charcoal stoves that Dick had brought were mighty welcome.

The following day, they entered a stretch of country that had been lumbered. Deer sign was plentiful here, and that afternoon they found the log cabin by the headwaters of Cold River. The door was not locked, and when they stepped inside they found a box-style stove, a table with dishes, and two bunks built into the wall. It was obvious no one was staying there, so they settled in.



E.J. Dailey (left) and Dick Wood.

## E. J. Dailey & Dick Wood In the Adirondacks

By Scot Dahms

*"A hundred dollars was a small fortune in 1919. E.J. had traded five of his best blue-brown fishers for a new Ford Model T—and received \$25 in change."*

Hungry for something fresh after eating bacon every day, they decided to fish for trout in Cold River. E.J. suggested bacon for bait. But Dick stripped dead bark from the log on which they sat, exposing several fat grubs. They went to work on the log with knives and a belt axe and soon had a can full of live bait that caught a fine mess of trout.

The cabin had been built for a lumber company dam keeper, and the dilapidated dam still mostly held back the river. They also found an old road to

explore and followed it to another cabin that was not in as good condition as the first. There was evidence of another dam that had washed out here. They spent the night in the cabin, but the next day they returned to the cabin at Duck Hole.

Along the way, Dick shot a deer.

They spent the next week scouting around Duck Hole, found plenty of furbearer sign and were satisfied they had accomplished what they came to do.

Correctly assuming that the old road would be a better way out, they followed it to a lumber camp. The French Canadian boss said they could ship their traps to him, and he would keep them until they came back.

The week after Christmas, E.J., Dick, and Bill Wood—who had previously trapped fisher

with Dick—returned to trap the Cold River region. Fisher had peaked at \$100 the season before, and that would be the primary target. A hundred dollars was a small fortune in 1919. E.J. had traded five of his best blue-brown fishers for a new Ford Model T—and the seller gave him \$25 in change.

At the Santa Clara Lumber Company Office they joined a team headed back to the logging camp where they were told their traps were already waiting. They also acquired written permission to use the old dam keeper's cabin at Duck Hole.

After leaving the logging camp, they had to hike the remaining 6 miles through 5 feet of snow with 200 pounds loaded on a toboggan, three heavy packs on their backs, and three rifles.

They were exhausted after reaching the top of a steep range, and Dick decided to ride the toboggan down into the next valley. The toboggan started slowly. Then it picked up speed, and

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## E.J. Dailey & Dick Wood

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Dick disappeared in a cloud of snow.

E.J. and Bill scrambled down the mountain following the toboggan's trail, which ended at the edge of a ravine. E.J. peered over the ledge to see only Dick's fur cap. The toboggan and Dick were both buried in snow that had probably

saved him from injury. He did not sled down any more mountains.

They arrived at the cabin that evening and spent the next day putting things in order, catching a few fish through the ice, and cutting firewood.

After supper, they flipped a coin to determine where E.J. and Dick would trap. Bill had already said he would run a weasel line around the cabin, do most of the camp chores and cooking. He would also hunt fresh game meat.

Dick won the toss and chose a section extending down Cold River to the lower dam and Calkins Brook, then to Mountain Pond and back by way of Panther Peak and Otter Creek. E.J. chose a line down to Moose Pond, then to Slow Brook, and through a notch in the Sawtooth Range to Roaring Brook. He would come around Rock Pond and follow Cold River back to the cabin.

Both lines were two-day trips. E.J. found caves to use as overnight shelters, and Dick used the dilapidated cabin at the lower dam.

Poor weather kept them in the cabin most of January. Dick let his beard grow, but E.J. shaved each day, saying it provided him a great deal of satisfaction. Dick read each night in bed. He always brought the Bible and literary classics such as *Pilgrim's Progress* and Dante's *Inferno* when away from civilization. When E.J. wanted to sleep, he would snuff out Dick's candle with his six-shooter. When Dick had had enough of that, he emptied his .22 Colt Woodsman pistol into the wall over E.J.'s bunk. That stopped the candle business.

It snowed every day, and when his snowshoes had worn out, E.J. made a pair from barrel hoops and telephone wire so he could leave the Cold River camp. Bill went with him, but Dick stayed and continued to trap. Several weeks later, he met up with E.J. in St. Lawrence County, where they trapped some more.

The winter of 1920-1921, E.J. and Dick returned without Bill. Fisher pelts had dropped to fifty dollars, but still well worth catching.

The previous year, they had brought a .30/30 Winchester carbine and a .303 Savage rifle along with their .22 Colt Woodsman pistols. But they found they could shoot everything they wanted with

the belt guns. So, they omitted the rifles and packed extra traps.

One afternoon in early February, they left the cabin together, looking for fisher tracks. Before leaving, Dick had made a meat stew and placed the pot on a shelf to cool. They were both looking forward to digging into that stew when they came back.

They spent the night out, and the next day took a nice fisher from a snag. It was dark when they got back to the cabin, and their appetites were ravenous when they sat down to the awaited stew.

E.J. noticed Dick chewing hard, and when Dick spit out the piece and held it close to the candle, both men saw it was a mouse covered in gravy. Dick tossed the mouse aside, and they dug back into the stew.

E.J. trapped the Cold River area by himself the winter of 1930-1931. That season, marten could be kept November 10 to March 15, and there was no closed season on fisher.

In September 1936, E.J. again returned to the Cold River camp, this time following the same route he and Dick had taken the first time.

The State of New York had begun purchasing the land from private ownership, demolishing existing structures. E.J. was concerned that the cabin at Duck Hole had been destroyed. It was still standing though the porcupines had gnawed a few more holes in the logs. The stove pipes were still sound, and he gathered wood for a fire.

That night after E.J. extinguished the light so he could sleep, porcupines started gnawing on the cabin. He grabbed flashlight and pistol, opened the cabin door, and shot a pair of them.

Then he climbed back in the bunk for a peaceful night's sleep.

The state closed fisher and marten trapping from 1937 to 1941, and E.J. did not trap the Cold River again. But the summer of 1939, he made a last trip into Duck Hole. He took fishing equipment and enjoyed a week prospecting the area. This time, however, he found the cabin at Duck Hole had been leveled.

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This story is excerpted from *E.J. Dailey: The Last Adirondack Trapper 1889-1973* by Scot H. Dahms. For ordering information, see ad for book on page 54.

### TRAPLINE CALENDAR

November 2018						
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

#### Idaho

Idaho Trappers Association fur sales January 19 and March 9, Mountain Home Armory, Mountain Home, Idaho. Phone: Rusty Kramer (208) 870-3217.

#### Indiana

Indiana Fur Takers Chapter 7 fur sale February 16, LaGrange County Fairgrounds, LaGrange, Indiana. Phone: Gary Walchle (260) 463-1529 or Joby Morr (260) 242-4140.

#### Maine

Maine Trappers Association Central Maine Chapter fall fur auction December 16, Palmyra Community Center, Palmyra, Maine. Phone: Ted Perkins (207) 947-5109.

#### Michigan

Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association fur sales December 15, Jay's Sporting Goods, Clare, Michigan; February 16, Kalamazoo Expo Center, Kalamazoo; and March 16, Eaton County Fairgrounds, Charlotte, Michigan. Phone: Missi Martineau (269) 425-6024.

#### New York

Cattaraugus County Trappers Association meets fourth Monday of the month, Cattaraugus County Co-op Extension building, Ellicottville, New York. Phone: David Allen (716) 257-9045 or Brian Davis (716) 945-4223.

Rockland County Trappers Association will meet the first Tuesday each month at Christ Lutheran Church, Airmont, New York. Contact: Brandon Kafka (845) 558-5003; rocklandtrappers@gmail.com

Genesee Valley Trappers meet second Wednesday each month at the clubhouse, 4462 Co. Rd. 32, Honeoye, New York. Phone: Tom Miller (585) 229-4759.

Cortland County Trappers Association meets the third Sunday of each month, McGraw Sportsman's Club, McGraw, New York. Phone: Les Wedge (607) 749-3292.

St. Lawrence County Trappers Association meets the second Thursday each month except July and November, Lisbon Public Library, Lisbon, New York. Phone: Mark Kelley (315) 528-2953.

Independent Fur Harvesters Central New York meet second Thursday each month, Pratts Falls County Park, Manlius, New York. Phone: Mike Kraus (315) 672-3717.

Oswego County Trappers meet the first Tuesday each month, except July and November, Leatherstocking Club, New Haven, New York. Phone: Bruce Hyde (315) 342-6357 or (315) 591-3525.

Fulton Montgomery Fur Harvesters meet the last Monday of the month, Ephratah Rod & Gun Club, Ephratah, New York. Phone: Paul Johnson (315) 429-2969.

#### Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Trappers Association District 10 fur auction January 19, Stockertown Rod & Gun Club, Stockertown, Pennsylvania. Phone: Bob Counterman (610) 759-9203.

To list a trapper event, send three months in advance to: **FUR-FISH-GAME**, 2878 E. Main St., Columbus, OH 43209; [calendar@furfishgame.com](mailto:calendar@furfishgame.com)