

HUNTING CAMPS CONTINUE TO BECKON MEN WHOSE HUNTING DAYS ARE GONE 5/18/99

I like hunting camps. They are not to be confused with the camps or cottages clustered along every available foot of lake or river frontage. Many of those virtual palaces put our homes to shame.

Hunting camps, for the most part, are just that. They are refuges from the forces of nature and generally distinguished by their size and location.

To begin with, they are small in size, their structures dictated by the distance from or lack of roads. In short, transportation of primary building materials was difficult.

Most are tucked away in remote areas at the end of old foot trails or tote roads. They were built in old lumber camp clearing or at the edge of beaver flows. The only necessary was a spring or other source of good drinking water.

We live in an area rich in just such havens that are known to but a few. In an area that consists, for the most part, of state or public lands, they are by nature located on small tracts of cutover timberlands. Many are supported by groups of traditional North Country deer hunters.

I featured one such camp awhile back that a reader had a picture of and was curious about. The article and accompanying picture brought a response from its present owners and a neighboring camp owner. Its history and the background were particularly intriguing to me.

It was called Hamblin's Camp after the original owner and today is one of four camps in the Copper Creek Association. The other three are McDonald's, Chapman's, and the Bucktail. Bill Ward, an Old Forge local, has been a member of the Bucktail for years.

When the original article on Hamblin's appeared, he promised to show me around some of the other camps. We spent a day early this spring and did just that. They were all as I described in the beginning of this article.

The Bucktail members had been into the camp the previous weekend for their annual spring work party. Bill and some of the other members have had some health

problems and no longer hunt, but they still enjoy coming to camp and sharing in the camaraderie of camp life.

We had a perfect day for our outing and it had an aura of nostalgia for me taking me back many years to my father's camp, Bobolink. I full well appreciated the meaning the camps all represented to the members.

As we sat at the kitchen table in the Bucktail camp amid familiar surroundings of camp memorabilia, one such in particular caught my eye. It was a framed poem that conveyed the whole concept of what I have tried to describe.

To make a long story short, it says it in a way I never could. This one, at right, is for Bill Ward, Fred Beck and Tim Fitzgerald...