



COLVIN FIELD BOOK, 1885. INDIAN LAKE, HAMILTON COUNTY, NEW YORK.

In a special report to the Legislature, dated January 1891, the Sargent Commission recommended obtaining a state park in the Adirondacks of from 50 to 70 miles square. They recommended buying land instead of taking it by eminent domain. They wrote, “Nobody imagines that this commission, or any other representative of the State, can call an Adirondack Park into existence by the touch of a wand. Its formation must necessarily be progressive and the acquisition of lands gradual.”

On May 20, 1892, NYS Governor Roswell P. Flower signed the law creating a 2.8 million-acre Adirondack Park. The 1891 “blue line” was intended to delineate the boundary within which future forest preserve acquisitions should be focused.

Representatives at the 1894 Constitutional Convention, and voters in the general election that year, approved the “forever wild” clause, preventing timber cutting on state lands in the forest preserve.

The law establishing the Catskill Park was signed by Governor Benjamin B. Odell on April 15, 1904.

Over the years, the state has expanded both the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Today, they encompass more than six million acres, larger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, Grand Canyon and Great Smoky Mountain National Parks combined.

New York State continues the practice of purchasing land to protect natural resources and provide public recreation to this day.

VERNIER POCKET COMPASS, CIRCA 1900, W.&L.E. GURLEY, TROY, NEW YORK.



VISIT EXHIBIT AT NYS DEC, 625 BROADWAY, ALBANY, NY 12233



Department of
Environmental
Conservation



Birth of the
Blue Line

Birth of the “Blue Line”



COLVIN MAP, 1877, RAQUETTE LAKE, HAMILTON COUNTY, NEW YORK.

RECONNAISSANCE TRANSIT, 1914, W.&L.E. GURLEY, TROY, NEW YORK.

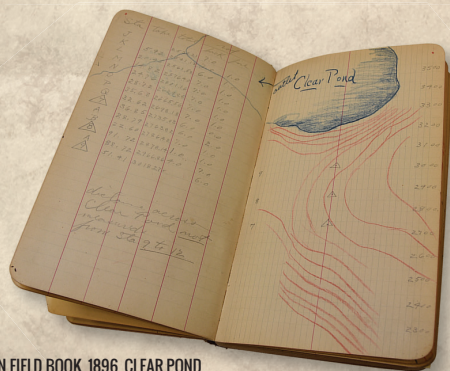
In the late 19th century,

the public became concerned about protection of the Adirondacks. Forest lands were being logged and abandoned, with taxes left unpaid. Erosion of denuded lands was muddying formerly pristine streams and lowering canal water levels.

In 1884, continuing impoverishment of the Adirondack's resources for private gain led the Legislature to appoint a three-member Commission, often referred to as the Sargent Commission, headed by Harvard University botanist Charles Sprague Sargent. The Legislature authorized the Sargent Commission to investigate the feasibility of establishing a state park in the Adirondack wilderness.

The Sargent Commission's work led to a series of maps based on surveys headed by legendary surveyor Verplanck Colvin. An 1884 map shows the remaining forest resources.

Largely following the Commission's recommendation, and partly due to the quick actions of Ulster County Assemblyman Cornelius Hardenburgh adding the Catskills to the legislation, Governor David B. Hill signed the



COLVIN FIELD BOOK, 1896, CLEAR POND, ESSEX & WARREN COUNTIES, NEW YORK.



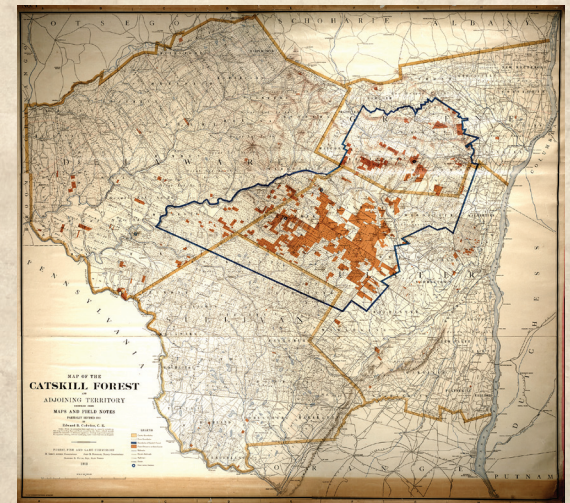
POCKET RAILROAD COMPASS WITH TELESCOPIC SIGHT ATTACHMENT, CIRCA 1884-1916, W.&L.E. GURLEY, TROY, NEW YORK.

law, on May 15, 1885, creating the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve. The law required that all state lands in eleven Adirondack and three Catskill counties "be forever kept as wild forest lands."

The Sargent Commission created two more historically significant maps of the Great Forest of Northern New York (the Adirondacks). The first (1890) shows forest preserve areas outlined in red, and the proposed park outlined in blue. The second (1891) shows a slightly different park proposal outlined in blue.



MAP OF THE ADIRONDACK PARK, 1891



CATSKILL MAP, 1911

Use of a "blue line" to depict the proposed park boundary was the genesis of the term "blue line." Today, "blue line" means the actual boundaries of the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. More than a century later, the blue ink on the original maps has darkened, appearing almost black.