

## The Thrill of Discovery: Musings of a Corridor Monitor

“That monument marker was right here when I found it last year, I don’t see it?” Five minutes later I did find it without having to get out my hand saw, clippers, loppers, line ropes, tape measure and assorted digging instruments. I laughed. Previously I thought much of the fun of being a corridor monitor would be lost as soon as I located the monuments that dot the AT boundary lines at about 1000 foot intervals.

Finding monument markers is a bit like geocaching. The easiest monuments are affixed a top an aluminum post rising three to six inches above the ground and in a spot that make it forever findable. Of course bush grows, fallen debris hides, and moss camouflages. I smile as I think how naive I was.

On a lucky day I stub my toe on the under-the-leaves monuments that are pretty much flush or a little bit above ground before I ever get to cutting away brush, measuring and raking away leaves. For other monuments the surveyors got so excited that they could actually dig a hole that the top of the post ended up well under ground. I think they tried to compensate by digging out round the post. Often as not such posts are in a depression, but become buried as dirt falls back in.

My manual indicated some monuments are cemented on rocks. I thought finding these would be easy. Trouble is some of these rocks are buried and for others vegetable matter covers the monument. At first I forgot there are sides to rocks to consider. One day after I had gained some smarts about the surveyor’s wily ways I confidently removed a big root and dirt bed from a rock. Nothing. I tried several more in line with the one witness tree. Nothing. I gave up and moved on. On my return I climbed to the flat top of a seven foot high boulder to scope things out. I realized I was in line with the one witness tree. At my feet was the monument.

I remember my first trip. I was so impressed by the work of the monitor who abutted me. But then his work ended and I was on my own. I was excited when I found two of the three next monument's witness trees. I cut away the brush, but I couldn’t locate a monument. Finally I found it beneath some grasses under six inches of water. Two nearby beaver told me Dave Field, MATC Overseer of Lands, had a new corridor recruit and Dave encouraged them to give the new guy a little challenge.

The fun challenges continue. So I’m following the boundary line on a compass bearing because the blazes can’t be seen from one to the next. Simple enough except when I unknowingly pass a monument and the line changes direction. Even though I know the position and type of the three witness trees I missed them. Ok ,so I’m not blind, none of them are still standing. Now Mother Nature is really testing me. Since I know the distance between monuments I backtrack pacing off the distance from one monument then from the other. Bingo, I’m searching a small plot of ground.

One site I've been to three times and still haven’t found the pin. A smiling Dave Field assures me it is there and sends me a picture.

Of course as I find one monument and then move to another I got my loppers going to clean out the line of sight. On my second pass along the line I have simply painted and looked for any monument previously missed. In places where the first two steps are completed I walk the line with loppers and a had saw cleaning out any new deadfall and growth, and nailing up the official boundary line signs.

I love spending a day on my assignment. Moose, deer, martin, grouse, spruce hens and more appear. Vistas open up that I never expected. Unnamed waterfalls and mini ravines cross my path. The forest and swamps are dressed in their finest. The peace of the solitude is soothing, punctuated by the wind in the trees, the call of a loon, and the early evening hoot of the owl calling me back.

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The following are excerpts from trip reports Bill files with David Field, MATC Overseer of Lands.

Date: August 29 & 30, 2011

person hours worked in corridor – 8a.m. to 4 p.m. day 1; 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. day 2

Work – The blue blazed trail from Harrison's Pierce Pond Camps forks just before the camp's bridge over Pierce Pond Stream. I took that a short distance and across the little stream to where it intersected the red town boundary line. The yellow corridor markings also are evident here so I left their blue blazed trail to the AT and began to follow the yellow blazes.

As I moved along the corridor for the full extent of the day I brushed it out so there was a clear line of sight from blaze to blaze. While the blazes were bright for the first 100 yards they quickly dimmed, especially after the corridor line leaves the town line, and I needed to rely on my compass bearing. Once I get it brushed out and the monuments found it needs to be repainted. I photographed each monument I found.

The yellow blazes left the blue blazed trail heading at 268 degrees.

Monument 109-ME-1 – I located this monument. The three witness trees are cedar and healthy.

I continued on a compass bearing of 242.

Monument 109-ME-1A – I located this monument under a very large fallen tree trunk. I used a little mechanical advantage of a beech lever to move / break away the chunk of log on the monument. The witness trees are all in place and healthy.

I continued on a compass bearing of 242.

Monument 109-ME-1B – I located this monument buried under considerable muck and leaves mounted on a rock. It is in the bottom of a depression and will be covered up easily again. The witness trees are in place and healthy. The white birch witness tree is really a yellow birch.

I continued on a bearing of 242.

Monument 109-ME-2 – I located this monument and all witness trees are in good shape.

I continued on a bearing of 278.

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Date: November 11, 2011

Work

I was returning to put closure on the fall work I had done. The locations of monuments 109-ME-3, 109-ME-5A, 109-ME-46D, and 109-ME-46H I had found with the witness trees, but I hadn't revealed the monument. I had my big spade with me.

I hiked into Harrison's Camps. Water was running everywhere and high given the rain so the shovel was useful in pole vaulting a few drainages. I circled around the cove on the old AT to get to the boundary line which I followed.

109-ME-46D

I thought the monument was going to be under the nail I had discovered when I was previously there. That didn't turn out to be the case. I measured and re-measured and adjusted my lines several times. After about 40 minutes I finally dug deep enough in the right spot. It is at the base of a birch. The monument is mounted on a rock that is a foot or more below ground level. In fact it was below a layer of roots. I dug a sizable hole and lined it with rocks.

I continued along the boundary line.

109-ME-46H

On my previous journey I was digging in the right spot, but it took a regular shovel to get the depth and through the layer of roots. The monument is mounted on a rock about 15 inches under ground in front of an old stump. I lined the hole with rocks.

I retreated along the boundary line to about 100 yards beyond 109-ME-43 where I cut away from the line to follow the contour across the AT and on to the eastern boundary line intersecting it near 109-ME-4A. I moved south along the line.

109-ME-5A

On a previous visit I had located a hole which lined up with the witness trees. I needed the spade to open up the hole to reveal the monument which is rock mounted. I widened the hole considerably, but no rocks were readily available with which to line it.

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I angled off the contour to pick up at AT north which I left at the lean-to to go by Harrison's to get to the car. Since it was only 1:30 p.m., I drove down the haul road to pick up where I had left off at 109-ME-98B on my other section.

I set a bearing of 94 degrees. From here I began to brush out the boundary line. From the road to the first brook crossing the line was over grown. Once across the brook the line was reasonably clear and yellow paint fresh.

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Date of work: November 18, 2011

Work

My plan was to brush out the boundary line on the south side of the AT from monument 109-ME-97E, where I had stopped the last visit, to the Kennebec River.

An inch or more of snow dusted everything during the night and early morning hours. As I drove in snow squalls left me a little concerned about getting out later in the day if it amounted to anything. I parked at the little gravel pit just below the turn into Harrison's Pierce Pond Camps. Dressed in my yellow rain gear I set off down the boundary line with my trusty loppers, digging tools, line, compass and USGS map.

I wasn't sure how far I'd get so I set a return time of 3 p.m. giving me an hour plus of decent light to get back to the car at the end of the day. I also thought that if the snow amounted to more than two inches during the day I'd head back and get out. The squalls stopped mid morning and the sun was out late morning.

At monument 109-ME-97E I set a bearing of 126 degrees and proceeded.

109-ME-97D

I did not find this monument. I did find what might be the bearing tree. The nail had no washer and the blaze in which it was placed was completely closed; in a 4 inch beech. I observed no other witness trees. I scrapped the snow and first layer of leaves away along the line from the witness tree but uncovered nothing. When I have the actual maps from Dave I'll check again.

There are trees along this line that have more than one blaze on them. On the other lines multiple blazes usually signaled a witness tree.

I continued on the same bearing.

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Date of work: September 10, 2012

#### Work

The main objective was to paint while the weather is appropriate. Based on my painting time of the last trip I figured I had six hours worth of paint left. My plan was to finish painting the boundary section on the south side of the AT from Pierce Pond to the Kennebec, find two of the three monuments I hadn't found in that section and to then paint as much as I could on the N side headed S in reference to the AT. I wiped the paint containers clean with the brush at the end of six hours. The last 35 minutes of the day I brushed out a boundary line.

I parked at the small gravel pit on the corner below the driveway into Harrison's Pierce Pond Camps. The boundary cuts across the top of the pit at the back edge. I went down the skidder road to where it crosses the creek and intersects the boundary. Not far down the stream (200 feet) I picked up the old road and followed it to where the boundary intersects it. Here I followed my brushed line to 109-ME-97E.

At monument 109-ME-97E I set a bearing of 126 degrees and proceeded.

109-ME-97D. From 109-ME-97E I walked to the site where I had previously seen one presumed witness tree for 97D. As I approached the area I found another ash with nail and washer. After some measuring and then digging I uncovered the monument. It is pipe mounted and flush with the ground so it will again cover easily. Both ashes are fine as is the spruce witness tree, the nail in it is head high.

I continued on the same bearing at 7:10 a.m..

#### 109-ME-97A

At monument 109-ME-97B I began to count my paces. I calculated that monument 109-ME-97A would be at 415 paces. At 400 paces I began to look for old beeches and immediately saw one with a nail. The witness beech at 23' is standing but dead; the one at 32' is alive; the third is dead and laying on the ground with the nail showing. The monument is pipe mounted and is an inch above ground. At 7:55 a.m. I painted the witness trees and went back along the boundary to where I had stopped painting on the last trip.

#### Painting the boundary line

I started at 8:10 a.m. partway between 97A and 97B. At 8:55 I was just beyond 97C and had already used  $\frac{1}{2}$  a quart. At 11 a.m. I reached the car and had used nearly 2 quarts, more than I had anticipated.

I moved the car to the parking spot where the AT crosses the haul road.

At 11:15 a.m. I began to move south on the northern boundary painting as I went along. At 12:15 I had reached 109-ME-52. At 2:10 I ran out of paint about 100 yards beyond 109-ME-50. I left the end point at 2:25 and was at the car 35 minutes later via Harrison's.

I moved the car back to the same spot I had parked in for the morning. The loggers had moved in since I brushed out the line last fall and cut to the line from the road to the first stream crossing. I spent 35 minutes redoing the line of sight from the road to the stream.

Analysis for future painting:

From 11:15 to 2:10 I painted 5576 feet or about 1860' per hour

With 3 quarts of paint I did 11,665' of boundary line painting.

It takes about 3 hours on average to do a mile (5280') of boundary line painting.

Future work:

- cut line of sight to Kennebec on north side of AT – another 7,000+' to go.

- find 109-ME-96.

- have no paint left

- paint from ME-50 to ME-48 = 2987' (90 minutes to paint; 35 minutes to walk in 50 minutes to walk out; total time 3 hours.)

- paint the rest of the boundary lines.