

## Celebrating the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Weeks State Park Association

By Jay Perreault August 2018

### THE COÖS COUNTY DEMOCRAT

ESTABLISHED IN 1828 VOL. CXXVI NO. 27 WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 1981

## State budget woes close Weeks Park

### ***“State budget woes close Weeks Park”***

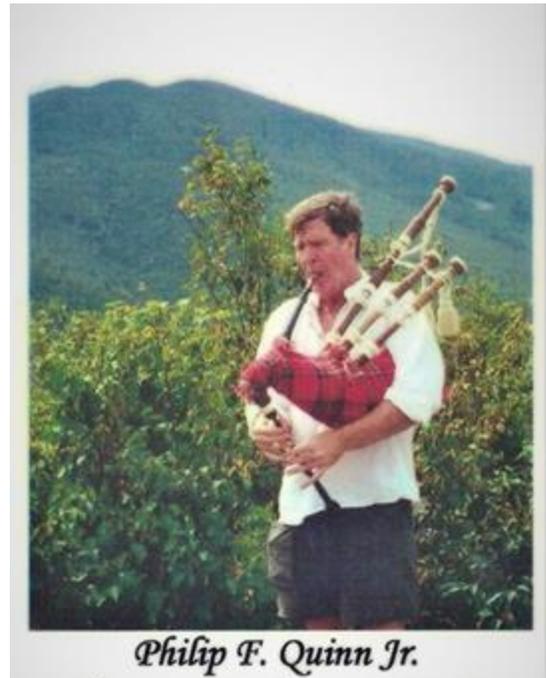
shouted the Coös County Democrat’s headline on July 8, 1981. Less than two months earlier, Governor Hugh Gallen had paid a visit to Lancaster and had sat down for an extensive interview with the Democrat. He mentioned that he had wanted to cut the State’s budget by 9% but the Legislature only granted him 2%. Some of the other issues of the day that he talked about were the expansion of Rockingham Park, the refurbishing of the Pontook Dam, the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant (a “colossal mistake” he declared) among others. But there was no hint of the coming budget cuts that were to be borne by the State Parks system. For, although the overall budget was cut by 2%, the Parks were forced to absorb a 20% reduction in expenditures.

It was an alarmed and upset Philip Quinn of Whitefield, who decided to fight the closure of the park he loved so much. He was put in touch with the Director of the Division of Parks, Paul F. Doherty. When Mr. Doherty was asked what might be done, he replied that unless there is a special session (of the Legislature) to appropriate more money, the park will be closed the next year as well because the budget covers two years. “There doesn’t appear to be anything we can do,” he said.

Philip Quinn had other ideas!

Just three weeks later, a follow up lead story in the Democrat declared: ***“Volunteers keep Weeks Park open”***

Philip Quinn had gathered a group of volunteers who would staff the park so that it might remain open. When asked about why he had organized this effort he said: “I’ve always liked to go there. I’d hate to see it closed for two years; there wouldn’t be much of a chance it would ever get reopened.”



*Philip F. Quinn Jr.*

He characterized his conversations with Parks Director, Paul Doherty, in this way: “Mr. Doherty was super helpful. I originally came from New York, and there, it would have taken two years to get anything accomplished. Here it only took two weeks. The people in the Parks Department seem to be on the wavelength to help the people, rather than get bogged down in bureaucracy.”

At first glance one might have been surprised that a Long Island furniture designer and stained glass artist with a shop in Whitefield, NH, and a long-time NH State civil servant from Gorham could come to an agreement to keep the Park open without the help of State employees.

Philip Quinn, by all accounts, was a man of many talents and interests with a passion for the outdoors and for hiking. He began playing the bagpipes around 50 years old. One of his favorite hikes was Mt. Lafayette which he hiked over a couple dozen times and upon ascending to the peak was known to play his bagpipes – its sounds floating on the breezes of the high elevations.

Paul Doherty turned out to be anything but the bureaucrat Weeks State Park lovers might have feared. He had been a Conservation Officer in Coös County for decades. There may never have been anyone his equal who had hiked, walked and patrolled such vast reaches of the Coös territory.

An agreement to keep Weeks Park open was quickly struck. Mr. Doherty would later lament that not enough visitors came to the park “which is a shame because it is a beautiful place with fantastic views.”

The formalizing of the Weeks State Park Association was accomplished in 1983. It's first President was Mrs. James (Fran) Lawrence, Vice President was Mrs. Robert Quay, Treasurer was John Joseffy and Secretary, was Mrs. Larry Connery.



Fran Lawrence couldn't have been a more perfect choice to commence the molding of a few volunteers into a first class organization that would promote and advocate for the park. She was the daughter of Sinclair Weeks (son of John Wingate Weeks) and Beatrice Dowse.

For many years she was an ardent advocate for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, becoming its first woman Trustee; and, ever the child of a renowned political family, a champion in the Republican Party and a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1964 and 1968.

Her daughter, Beatrice H. Edgar, said of her: "She had such style and flair and was able to get things done with such charm and grace that people were thrilled to work for her." Under her leadership the WSPA was on its way to excel. The accomplishments of those early years, first under Mrs. Lawrence until 1986 and then under subsequent talented and hard-working Presidents, Elsie Senuta, Joseph Cabaup, Mark MacDonald and David Govatski - were remarkable. Of particular note:

- Designation in October, 1985, of the Lodge at Weeks State Park as the John Wingate Weeks Historic Site listed in the National Register of Historic places
- In 1992, Mt. Prospect Fire Tower was added to the National Historic Lookout Register

- In 1995, WSPA sponsored the preparation of a professionally prepared Corridor Management Plan (updated this past year) for the road up Mt. Prospect - NH's first Scenic Byway

We also would like to honor one of our earliest and most stalwart supporters, Iris Baird, as Weeks State Park was one of her many passions. Iris was a woman of vision and intelligence and worked tirelessly to advance the cause of the park. It was she who proposed that the Association initiate and host an annual Interagency Meeting where all groups that have an interest in the park could work together in concert.

It's most appropriate, therefore, to dedicate a beautiful bench in her honor at the foot of her beloved Fire Tower for which she worked so hard to obtain entry into the National Historic Lookout Registry.



We are sincerely grateful and respectful of the vision, leadership and hard work of those who came before us and who have helped make this park such a vibrant, special place.