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A morning hike and exploring 'Beyond Granite'

Mar 28, 2014



Mount Welch summit from Mount Dickey. (ED PARSONS PHOTO)

On Tuesday of this week, I went west and did
 Welch/Dickey near Waterville. I was down from
 to see the new exhibit at the Museum of the W
 called "Beyond Granite: The Geology of Adver

The combination of a moderate hike and visit t
 and I recommend it, especially those who live





Doing this combination in the past, I first climbed Rattlesnake Mountain in Rumney, a perfect moderate 2.5 mile loop, with great views out over the Baker River valley.

But there are not too many hikes like an early morning foray around the snow covered Welch/Dickey loop on a sunny day. It is easy to be engrossed in the varied landscape bathed in early morning light, and be surprised that the hike is actually 4.4 miles long. It doesn't feel it.

I was too late for a sunrise hike, but when I pulled into the parking lot for Welch/Dickey, there was no cars. Donning foot traction I headed up the right hand trail to Welch Mountain. In 1.3 miles, I reached the fantastic first lookout, a flat open ledge facing southeast towards Sandwich Dome with the Mad River valley directly below. A fun loving group had built a snowman there. I clothed him with my hat, gloves and ice axe, which I had brought for a walking stick, and snapped a photo.

I continued towards the steeper slope of Welch Mountain. The condition of the trail was probably the easiest it is at any time of year — a deep path of packed down powder with no ice or roots (of course one shouldn't take that as a current conditions report as things change fast, and a great place online to look for current trail conditions is at newenglandtrailconditions.com).

Soon, I was at one of my favorite places in New England. The view east back towards the summit of nearby mountains of Sandwich Notch and the Squam Range is very striking, and can be captured on my Nikon Cookpix camera.



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The long walk down the west ridge of Dickey is always a pleasure, traversing wide flat ledges and walking next to the drop off into the ravine between the peaks, before entering the woods and descending to your car.

Twenty minutes after finishing I was in Plymouth and had to wait for the Museum of the White Mountains to open at 10 a.m. I didn't know what to expect with this new exhibit. On my previous visits there, the emphasis was 19th century White Mountain Art. As soon as I entered the exhibit room, I was engrossed.

The curator of the new exhibit is Sarah Garlick, a science writer, educator and adventurer from North Conway who previously wrote a book called "Flakes, Jugs, and Splitters: a Rock Climber's Guide to Geology." Holding a Masters degree in geology from the University of Wyoming, she had previously developed a traveling exhibit for the museum called "To the Extremes: The Geology of Adventure in the White Mountains," which was on display both at a geology conference at the Mount Washington Hotel and the Mount Washington Observatory facility before traveling around the state.

Educating and stimulating an interest in White Mountain geology amongst those who ski, hike and climb in the White Mountains-- as well as anyone with an interest — is the emphasis in this exhibit as well, and on a much larger scale.

Garlick collaborated with many, including the new New England geologists Dykstra Eusden, Brian Wilson contributed expertise and resources. Garlick created many of the visual feasts, including graphics that melded hundred and perhaps thousands of images



Cannon Cliff, Mount Washington's east side, and the Franconia Ridge. Remarks from the geologists pointed out features on these. Surette also created a great film conveying the spirit of the exhibit that can be viewed in a small screening room.

Surficial geology expert Brian Fowler of Madison helped firm up the concept of the exhibit with others, and contributed a collection of large rocks, each labeled with age, location and type (a hefty rock taken from the summit of Mount Washington years ago has interesting worm-like white veins of Andalucites — formed during metamorphism of an old sea bed, when the original minerals melted and recombined).



An interactive exhibit using Surette's gigapixel photos allows individual visitors to zoom in on details. On the big Cannon Cliff photo, I found some climbers on the Whitney/Gilman Ridge and to the north beneath where the Old Man used to be. There were probably more.

An amazing color illustration of a super continent (either Pangea or Gonwaland, I'm not sure which), showed that at one time, the location of Boston was right next to Morocco, and Newfoundland was cozy with Portugal!

The museum director Cathy Amidon joined me... exhibit is not crowded at all in the large exhibit... exhibits there-- from Peter Limmer's original U... England Ski Museum, to many photos of climb... of Patricia Herr's daughters finishing the 4000... geology integrated into everything else to keep

