

Field and Stream

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By Harry V. Radford

The Adirondacks – Guides' Annual Meetings¹

Brown's Tract Guides

The annual meeting of the Brown's Tract Guides' Association was held in the historic Forge House, at Old Forge, Herkimer County (on January 14, 1904). Nearly fifty guides and as many associate members, several of the latter from distant cities, participated. It was held in the commodious office of the hotel, and as usual was an event of great interest and far-reaching importance to the cause of Adirondack game and forest preservation. . . . Indeed, so potent has become their influence for good within the area of Brown's Tract, and so great a dread have their activities inspired within the hearts of those who have no natural respect for game or forest codes, that it has become an acknowledged fact that lawlessness and game hoggerly in any of its loathsome phases is of far less frequency with this interesting corner of the Woods than in any other locality between the Mohawk and Canada line, or from Lake Ontario to Lake Champlain.

They use the power of their united influence in many ways. What good example, persuasion and education can accomplish they achieve—through their own scrupulous compliance with the letter and spirit of the law, through the distribution of printed literature and posted notices, by frequent letters to the press, and more especially, by inviting hundreds who are not guides or woodsmen to their annual assemblages, to listen to their wise discussions of the important subject of game and forest conservation. But they do not stop at mere words; whenever these are unavailing, the act, and they act with a vigor, fearlessness and singleness of purpose which is the despair of the lawless. Each man is a private detective in the interests of game protection, and a detective against whose vigilance, skill, courage and collected lawlessness finds it well nigh impossible to cope.

Recently, after repeated efforts, the Association has obtained the appointment of one of its own men—Ned Ball, a guide *sans peur et sans reproche*—as an official State Game Protector with full power to arrest violators of the law. Before Ball's appointment they had already expended hundreds of dollars of their own funds in salaries to different members of the Association who acted as private game and forest protective patrols or scouts. It was this little band of woodsmen, with its moderate means, that upon learning that one of the moose which the State had liberated had been shot, offered, within twenty-four hours of the killing had reached its officers, a reward of \$100 for information leading to the arrest of the culprit; and that when, later, four elk were shot down, and left in a huddle by some miserable brute in human form, to rot where they had fallen, immediately subscribed half a thousand dollars as a spur to his detection.

The Brown's Tract Guides' Association has hundreds of influential friends in every part of the State (many of them within the Legislative and in governmental office), and time and again it has

¹ Harry V. Radford, editor of the quarterly magazine "*Woods and Waters*," from 1898-1904 and manager of the Adirondack department of *Field and Stream*, attended the Adirondack Guides Association Meeting in Saranac the day before on January 13, 1904. The Association was formed eleven years ago. This article was also printed in its entirety in the Boonville Herald, "*Adirondacks: Brown's Tract Guides*," March 31, 1904, p. 6.

brought about the passage of progressive game laws which found their origin within the active minds of its own members. It works incessantly for the betterment of existing codes, and scarcely a winter passes in which it does not make its influence felt in the Legislature; and even the Governor himself has taken its representatives into his confidence and listened with attention to the sage advice of a committee of these woodsmen in the Capital in Albany.

The following officers were elected for the pursuing year: President Richard Crego, Boonville; Vice Presidents William Stell, White Lake Corners and Peter Rivette, Old Forge; secretary and treasurer, A. M. Church, Old Forge.

After the business meeting a member of the Association—Hon. H. D. Grant of Boonville, the much beloved veteran guide and boat builder, who is prouder to tell you that he is a woodsman and a guide than that he has served with distinction in the Legislature of his State—took the chair, and in his usual very happy manner introduced several speakers from beyond the Woods, among whom the writer had the honor of being numbered.

At nine o'clock p.m., the doors of the spacious dining room were thrown open and fully 400 or 500 persons, including it would seem, every man, woman, and child in the entire countryside for miles about the Fulton Chain, as well as scores of persons from cities and towns outside the Adirondacks—sat down to a very neatly, and, indeed a somewhat elaborately prepared feast, served at tables spread with the most immaculate linen and attended by the bright-eyed and well mannered sons and daughters of the sturdy guides. It was an event which did the Association's generosity the greatest credit. It was a banquet presented to the people "without money and without price," by their friends of the camp and trail. And it was a banquet such as none of us who had the good fortune to participate in will soon forget.

Transcribed by Town of Webb Historian Peg Masters, October 2009