

LINDEN PLACE

MANSION SCULPTURE GARDENS BALLROOM

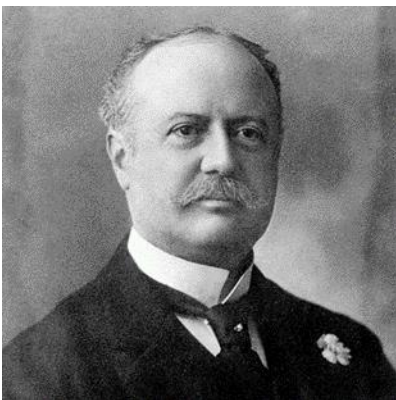


STORIES SERIES Over two hundred years of history are tucked into the corners of this house and hidden among its fascinating families. Here is Story #8.

From time to time this series will share stories of the Linden Place mansion and the people and events connected to its history. We hope that you will enjoy the diversion and learn a little history about the families, the house, and its neighborhood.



“Talk of mysteries! — Think of our life in nature, — daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, — rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! The solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we?” —The Maine Woods, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)



Samuel Pomeroy Colt would be celebrating his 171st birthday this week of 2023. Whether you think of him as a Gilded Age Industrialist, a shrewd and savvy businessman, or a Robber Baron, he lived a truly remarkable, sometimes flamboyant, and always interesting life, January 10, 1852 – August 13, 1921. Whether represented by his brownstone in New York, or his house in Providence, or his jaunts to Europe, or his luxurious (and expensive) automobiles, his patronage of artists like Rodin, his philanthropy, there is no question that his life was multifaceted, complicated, and lived with exuberance. He had one special place, though – one place away from the city, away from the stress, away from the office, that he loved. It was seasonal, so most likely he

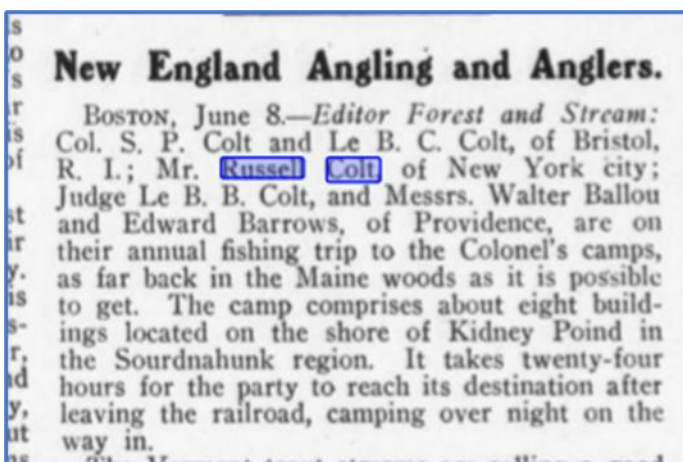
never spent a birthday there, but imagination tells us that when the first of the year rolled around, he was deep into planning his summer jaunts to his camp retreat on Kidney Pond in Maine.

About ten years ago I took up flyfishing. Now, before you get a vision in your head of my standing like Brad Pitt making the fly skip and dance while staying upright in a raging stream as depicted in the amazing movie “A River Runs Through It” I am not, and will never be, that accomplished. But I’ve caught my fair share. Thoughts of winter and snow usually make me turn towards researching a location for my next spring tug-of-war with fish. But very rarely does my research contain an unexpected story of an Ethel Barrymore piano and a Samuel Pomeroy Colt bowling alley in my chosen fishing camp destination.

You can imagine my surprise when I came across a blog post on the website of Quimby’s Lodge in Vermont, a potential vacation spot for me. “Tales of Fish and Family”, written by a woman who appears to be about my age, contains this: “My passion for fly-fishing began at age 10 in a remote place called Kidney Pond Lodge and Camps in the shadow of Mt. Katahdin in northern Maine where my parents and I went for numerous summers.” She went on to lament the fact that Kidney Pond Lodge was no longer the mystical place she remembered from her youth – “a place that contained a huge ten point moose head on the wall above Ethel Barrymore’s upright piano.....and on the shelf, a large, original bowling bowl with three finger holes.....and 12 foot long rectangular tables in the dining room whose table tops came from Samuel Colt’s private bowling alley, which was part of Kidney Pond’s history from the late 1800s.” (i)

She was delighted that she had found Quimby Country Camps and Resort in Averill, Maine (ii) to continue her vacations with family - now including her grandchildren – and went on with her story - but my mind stopped cold at Kidney Pond and Samuel Colt.

Google maps will tell you that a drive by automobile from the Bristol, RI area to Kidney Pond in Baxter State Park in Maine is about 450 miles and will take you nine to ten hours – depending on the traffic you hit when going through Providence and Boston. It’s 295 miles to Bangor, another 70 to Millinocket/Norcross, then another 90 to the camp. On paved roads. With rest stops and gas stations. Can you imagine that trip in the late 1800s/early 1900s? By train, by horse and wagon and cart, by canoe. And even if you eventually owned a new-fangled automobile, were there any new-fangled roads through the woods? Why would anyone at that time take on the challenge of that type of travel? In 1908 Fannie Fern Andrews writes of her adventure to Kidney Pond in *The New England Magazine*. She takes the 10 pm sleeper train from Boston, arrives at the South Twin House at 6 am, freshens up and has breakfast, gets on the 10 am steamer in Norcross, at 12 noon crosses various lakes into the West Branch region, then transfers to a canoe, then has a carry, then a 3 pm rest stop at a camp along the way, then back to the canoe, and then a three-mile hike to arrive at Kidney Pond by dusk. (iii)



Pictured here is one description of another trek from 1907. AFTER the long railroad trip, it takes another 24 hours to get to Kidney Pond – and on the way, an overnight stay in another camp is required. More on that pit stop later in this story.

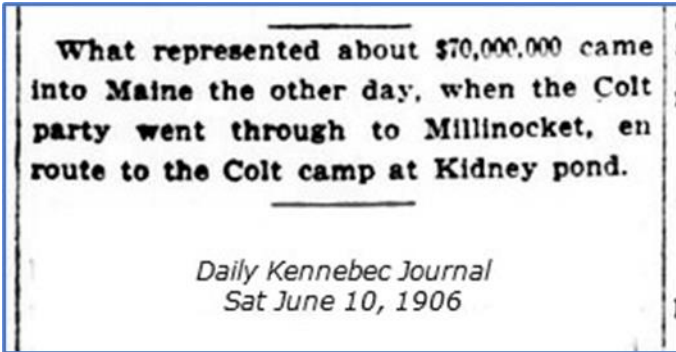
In 2002 Frank H. Sleeper wrote a book called “Baxter State Park and the Allagash River.” His research shows that the “Colt Complex” was started around 1885, occupying a point that jutted into the pond “nor far from where Kidney Pond Camps would be built later on.” By 1909 the Kidney Pond Camps establishment would be

advertising in the magazine “Into The Maine Woods” published by the railroad: “Enjoy a delightful trip up the beautiful West Branch of the Penobscot River to the mouth of Sourdnhunk Stream, and then make your way three miles to Kidney Pond.....enjoy cozy camps, the best of beds, and the best of table fare.” But those were

not the amenities in earlier days, whether at Kidney Pond Camp or at the Colt Complex. The Camp Phoenix Centennial Committee traced the origins of their camp near Kidney Lake, and early ads touted the “unchartered wilderness, wild rivers, virgin forests, and Maine lumberjacks, river drivers and guides who rival the western cowboy in character and legend.” (iv) The “wealthy rusticators” seeking physical and spiritual health came up to this area in droves, encouraged by the writings of Henry David Thoreau and having been inspired by the paintings of men like Thomas Cole and Frederick Church of the Hudson River School.

The northern forest had an unspoiled, health promoting, mythical quality in the late 1800s. Summer months in the cities saw outbreaks of many communicable diseases. The wealthy went to places like the Maine woods to promote both spiritual and physical health.

Henry David Thoreau and his party climbed Mt. Katahdin, close to Kidney Pond, in September of 1846. Young



Theodore Roosevelt did the same in 1878, with his guide Bill Sewall. The Appalachian Mountain Club established its first camp there in 1877, its second at Chimney Pond in 1916, and its third at Kidney Pond in 1925.

In typical understated Maine dry prose, wealthy rusticators Samuel Pomeroy Colt and his guests were described here, in the Daily Kennebec Journal, June 10, 1906.

But now we come to the memory of the writer of “Tales of Fish and Family” that I came across. An Ethel Barrymore upright piano? Tables made from a bowling alley? Bowling balls? Remnants of the Colt Camp? How did that happen?

In Edmund Ware Smith’s “Upriver and Down, Stories from the Maine Woods” he writes: “Many years ago, the Colt family, into which Ethel Barrymore had married, built a camp on a pine-clad point on Kidney Pond. Miss

Barrymore liked bowling, so they had an alley installed.....In the early 1900s the Colts sold their camp, alley and all, and the new owner moved it across the ice to the north shore of the pond. That was the beginning of Kidney Pond Camps. Host to fishermen for half a century, the camp has reached a peak of tasteful development under the direction of its present owner, Charles Liscomb.” (v)

In Frank Sleeper’s book on Baxter State Park he writes: “Not far away (from the Kidney Ponds camp area of 1900) on Colt Point, which jutted into Kidney Pond, the Colt family had its private camps.....the Colt establishment became a splendid place after Ethel Barrymore married one of the Colts. Two bowling alleys were placed there because Ethel liked



The cabin on the left belonged to Colonel Colt at the Colt complex on Kidney Pond in 1912. It takes a little imagination to see the Barrymores there. The complex was started in 1885. It ended up with a grand piano, English china, Waterford crystal, and sterling silver with the Colt crest on it.

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Baxter State Park and the Allagash River
by Frank H. Sleeper

to bowl. John and Lionel Barrymore went there often, possible to partake of the contents of the wine cellar, heavily weighed in favor of champagne.....there was Prohibition in Maine. The Barrymores evaded it.” (vi) Now, Mr. Sleeper reports that the camp ended up with a *grand* piano. Our “Tales of Fish and Family” author

remembers it as an *upright*. But she remembers the bowling lane tabletops, and posted a picture of one of the bowling balls still on the shelf of the Kidney Pond Camp “library” building.

Over and over again it was reported in the Bristol Phoenix that Mr. Colt was on his way to his camp in Maine. There are dozens of articles from 1905 to 1921 that detail his departures – and returns. Some contain a full list of guests; others are simply a brief notice. In late October of 1905 it was reported that Colt’s private secretary Mr. Merton A. Cheeseman had shot a deer. In early November it was reported that the dressed deer, all 300 pounds of it, had arrived safe and sound in Bristol. In June of 1915 the guest list accompanying Mr. Colt totaled 15 names – and was made very clear that once the party reached Norcross, Maine, they had another 35 miles to go, by canoe, up the Penobscot. But nowhere in the local paper was there a mention of the Barrymores at the camp.



Ethel Barrymore married Russell Colt, son of Samuel Pomeroy Colt, in March of 1909. When reading her autobiography, *Memories*, you get the distinct feeling that she and her father-in-law liked each other very much. When her first child was born, “Colonel” Colt asked if she would name the baby after his Uncle Samuel, the inventor of the Colt revolver. Even though he himself was named after his uncle, everyone called him Pomeroy or Pom. “I said I would be delighted,” Ethel writes, “and two months later there was a wonderful baptism in the cathedral.” (vii) Ethel and Russell had rented the August Belmont Jr. house on 34th Street in New York, close to the theater district. She installed a telephone in her dressing room so she could call Nurse Frings and check on the baby. She confided in Colonel Colt that she thought it would be better to live in the country – but Russell was against the idea. She writes that Colonel Colt said to

her: “You find a place and I will give it to you.” (viii) Russell didn’t like the house she picked out, on Taylor’s Lane in Mamaroneck. But Colonel Colt went to look the place over and said that “I could have a desk in a real estate office if I wanted one because I had picked out a really marvelous piece of property.” (ix) Later that summer Colonel Colt gave her an “unbirthday” present of a new car – a De Dion-Bouton, “with a hood that stretched out half a block in front of me.” (x) But interestingly, nowhere in her autobiography does she mention Kidney Pond, or her love of bowling, or visits to the camp.

Now, as to that overnight stay in another camp on the way to the Colt Complex on Kidney Pond.....it turns out that one Charles C. Garland was the postmaster and the proprietor of the Debsconeag Fish and Game Club from around 1900 until he sold the place in 1910. The camp consisted of a main building with a porch on three sides, a two-story house for cooking and eating, several sleeping lodges and a bunkhouse for the guides. They charged \$50 a year membership and \$1 a day to rent a lodge. In 1901, through the connections of one of the regulars, Teddy Roosevelt, VP, became an honorary member. Garland eventually sold the camp to Herbert M. Howe. His ownership ended around 1916. It was later owned by Eugene Hale in the 1920s. The local *Kennebec Journal* reported in 1905 that Colonel Colt and his guests, coming via the river on their way to Kidney Pond, arrived at Howe’s camp and paused to stay overnight and refresh before continuing their arduous journey. (xi) Mr. Howe was related to Colonel Colt through his mother Theodora’s side of the family. Abigail and Mark Anthony DeWolf married in 1744; daughter Abigail was born in 1753 and married Perley Howe. They had two sons, John “The Squire” Howe whose son was Mark Anthony DeWolf Howe, “The Bishop”; and George Howe. “The Bishop” had

three wives, 18 children, and 31 grandchildren. One of those grandchildren was the author of "Mount Hope, A New England Chronicle" – George Howe.

In the 1950s Kidney Pond Camp was run as a concession under the supervision of the State of Maine and was

Art Mead has deserted Moosehead Lake after 40 years. Guess he finally has it fished out! He has transferred his affections to Kidney Pond in Baxter State Park—"An excellent, comfortable fishing and bird-watching camp operated by Charlie Lipscomb '31. Fly fishing only. You eat your meals off Ethel Barrymore's Bowling Alley!"
Wop Deyo has again taken up bluefishing seriously. He reports a 10½ pound catch (all in one fish!) and asks if any of you can top him.
Princeton Alumni Weekly
9.20.1966

run by the Norris family. You can see a snippet here that appeared in the 1966 Princeton Alumni Weekly. Charlie Liscomb, class of 1931, who ran the place for a while, is credited with the idea of cutting up the bowling alleys to be used as tabletops. But they lost the concession in 1987. In the 1990s, Kidney Pond Camp was offered for sale to Harold Colt of Hartford, CT, a member of the family on the Christopher Colt/Samuel Colt side. He decided against acquiring it, and eventually Kidney Pond Camp went back to the control of the state. (xii) You can book a cabin today – and

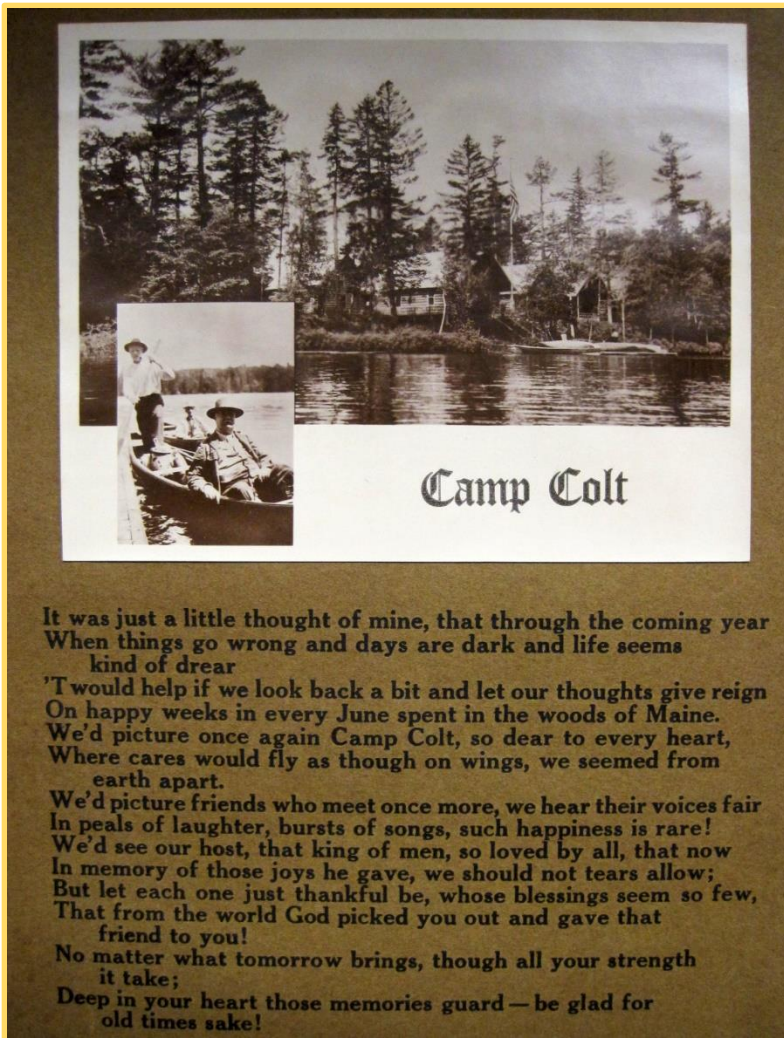
enjoy a meal on Ethel Barrymore's bowling alley tables, or read a book in the camp library, built from some of the logs and lumber from Colt Point.



Kidney Pond Camp Lodge Library and dining room – note the "bowling alley" tabletops. The Colt Camp was sold in 1926 and lumber and materials were floated to Kidney Pond Camp.



Here's a few of those rusticators, thanks to a photo from the collection of Claire Benson – we have no details of when it was taken, or who each person might be (except for Mr. Colt, in the white shirt), but they certainly are sporting their sartorial camp wardrobe.



Samuel Pomeroy Colt made his last visit to Colt Camp in the summer of 1921. The Bristol Phoenix reported he came back exhausted from the trip and was confined to his home at the end of July. On August 5th he suffered a stroke, and on August 15th he passed away at his beloved Linden Place, with his brother and two sons at his side. MIT, Columbia Law, RI General Assembly, RI Attorney General, President of the Industrial Trust Company which he founded in 1897, President and then Chairman of the Board of the United States Rubber Company which he grew to \$75 million in capital and 20,000 employees, board member to over 40 companies, patron of the arts, philanthropist. He lay in state at Linden Place the morning of August 16th and his funeral was at St Michael's Church at 3 pm that day. Thousands of residents lined the streets to watch the cortege pass. Harvey Firestone was there, as was Augustus O. Bourn, who served as the 36th Governor of RI from 1883-1885. (xiii) It was his National Rubber Company which formed the seed of the cartel eventually run by Colt.

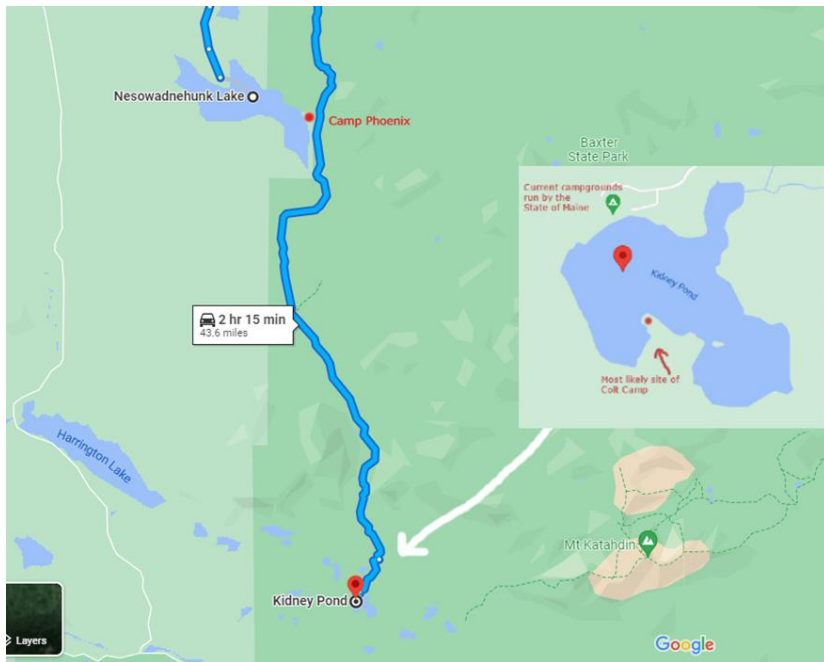
Who knows? Colt and I may even have shared

the fisherman's ode on our way to a favorite spot: "God give me strength to catch a fish, So big that even I, When telling of it afterwards, Have no need to lie." This verse on his Christmas Card certainly summed up the special place that the Colt Camp had in his heart:

***It was just a little thought of mine that through the coming year
 When things go wrong and days are dark and life seems kind of drear
 T'would help if we look back a bit and let our thoughts give reign
 On happy weeks in every June spent in the woods of Maine.***

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This article is written by Lynn Smith, volunteer and board member. Although not a trained historian, Lynn makes every effort to ensure that the information in the article is as accurate as possible. As always, suggestions, comments, corrections and input are welcomed.



Camp Phoenix to Kidney Pond

Insert shows Kidney Pond Campsite now run by the State of Maine and Baxter State Park

Red dot on the promontory of land jutting into Kidney Pond is most probably the site of Colt Camp

Mt. Katahdin, Maine

At 5,268 feet it is the highest point in Maine; it is widely known as one of the most difficult peaks along the Appalachian Trail

ENDNOTES

- i* **Tales of Fish and Family**, author uncited, <https://quimbycountry.com/in-the-news/tales-of-fish-and-family/>
- ii* Averill is on the Vermont/Canadian border, about 187 km southeast of Montreal and 123 miles northeast of Burlington. It's about a three hour drive from the Manchester, NH airport.
- iii* **The Charms of Kidney Pond**, by Fannie Fern Andrews, *New England Magazine*, Volume 38, 1908
- iv* **Baxter State Park and the Allagash River**. Frank H. Sleeper. Acadia Press, 2002
- v* **UpRiver and Down, Stories from The Maine Woods**. Edmund Ware Smith. Holt Rinehart, 1959
- vi* **Baxter State Park and the Allagash River**. Frank H. Sleeper
- vii* **Memories**, by Ethel Barrymore. Harper and Brothers 1955
- viii* *Ibid*, page 171.
- ix* *Ibid*, page 173
- x* *Ibid*, page 174
- xi* **Within Kathadin's Realm** by William H. Geller, 2018. Maine History Document. Digital Commons@UMaine
- xii* **Baxter State Park and the Allagash River**. Frank H. Sleeper. Acadia Press, 2002.
- xiii* **Bristol Phoenix** June 26, 1921; August 5, 1921; August 16, 1921