THE COLLEGE GRANT

By Dr. John M. Gile '87

The map of New Hampshire shows a township in the north-easterly part of the State bearing the name "Dartmouth College Grant". The settlers and lumbermen of the surrounding country refer to it simply as "The College", while officers of the College who have to do with it usually refer to it as "The Grant".

This land, the property of Dartmouth College, was granted by the State to the College in June, 1807. It contains something over forty square miles or approximately 27,000 acres. Its eastern boundary is the line between the States of Maine and New Hampshire; on the south is Wentworth's Location; on the west, Dix's and Gilmanton and Atkinson Academy Grant; and on the north, Gilmanton and Atkinson Academy Grant.

The Dead Diamond River flows through its entire length from north to south, about a mile and a half from its eastern border; the Swift Diamond River from west to east, about a mile from its southern border, entering the Dead at the southeast corner of the Grant. In addition to these two main streams, the Little Dead Diamond near the north end and the Lamb Valley Brook in the middle of the Grant flow easterly into the Dead Diamond; and the Four Mile Brook near the westerly border flows southerly into the Swift Diamond. Each of these with the aid of driving dams is capable of floating lumber.

The Dead Diamond is for the most part a slow-flowing stream and capable of navigation with canoes or bateaux for the entire length of the Grant, while the Swift Diamond is large enough for floating timber without the aid of driving dams. The valleys of these several streams are relatively narrow and the intervening mountain ridges to a maximum height of between two and three thousand feet in height.

Soon after the College acquired possession of this property, certain lots of 100 acres each were surveyed and set aside as settlers' lots, so-called. Three of these were leased on long terms as was so much of college land in other localities. In recent years these leases have been bought up by the College so that the tract now stands without liens or incumbrances.
On these original leased lots, farms had been cleared which are still under cultivation and are leased by the College from year to year. The lessees conduct them both as farms and as sporting camps for hunting and fishing parties. Near the center of the Grant from north to south is another farm with buildings that was cleared and brought into cultivation when large lumbering operations were being carried on about 35 years ago. This farm is under annual rental to the Brown Company, now operating on the property.

Aside from these clearings, amounting in all to less than 200 acres, the entire tract is in forest. The type of growth is that common to the northern New Hampshire latitude. Spruce and fir with a relatively small amount of pine and a little hemlock and cedar are the varieties that thus far have a ready market value. There is, however, on the tract a large amount of hard wood, birch, beech and maple, some of this, particularly the yellow birch, being of very fine quality and large growth; and if one goes into the market to buy such lumber for flooring or other finishing purposes and finds that it will cost him from $150 to $200 per M., he will wonder why the statement is made that this hard wood
stumpage is of little present value. The reason is due to the location of this stumpage, 40 miles or more from the railroad, and this hard wood will not float. Hence past the very entrance to the Grant and in view of the superior quality of much of this timber and the rapid depletion of such growth in more accessible places,

the streams that afford the cheapest transportation possible for the soft wood are of no value in moving the hard. A good motor truck road, however, leads it should soon find a profitable market. So well-watered is the Grant by the streams referred to that there is probably not over a three mile haul on any part.
of the tract to deliver the soft wood to the bank of a stream and from there the cost of delivery to the mills at Berlin is estimated at not over a dollar per cord, although the distance is all the way from 40 to 50 miles.

In the early years of the college ownership of this tract, its value was evidently thought of in terms of land for agricultural purposes rather than as timber. "The best offer yet made the College is ten cents per acre, provided the College would ensure it forever against taxation." Here evidently the value, if there was any, was supposed to be in the land as land, the timber on it doubtless being considered a liability rather than an asset.

As late as 1853 an appraisal made by one John M. Wilson valued the timber at only $8,000 and land suitable for tillage and exclusive of the timber on it at $4,500. This same man writing to the Trustees twenty five years later concerning a survey he was making for them again emphasized the excellent quality of the land in the river valleys for settlement purposes.

Previous to 1888 no large cuttings had ever been made on the Grant. It had evidently been cruised more or less for

Diamond Peaks
mast pines in the earlier days, probably as early as the colonial period. Some such cutting had also been done after the college ownership. Massive trunks that show the mark of the axe in felling may still be found here and there scattered over the tract, which for some reason did not prove to be of a quality worth removing, although they lie on the ground today with sound wood as soon as you cut through the sap rot. Some scale by the College was very complete. The old-time jobbers of that region certainly tell weird tales of the amount of lumber that was taken out as compared with the amount recorded. Subleases by Van Dyke finally resulted in a long drawn out controversy between the College and the International Paper Company, the settlement of which was on the whole rather favorable to the College, and the final settlement terminated the lease somewhat before the full twenty years had expired.

Following this, cutting ceased except for small amounts cut or jobbed by the College during the time that Mr. Ayres was acting as forester on the property between 1905 and 1912.

At the present time extensive cutting is again being carried out on this property, a type of cutting that is being somewhat severely criticised by many people interested in forest conservation. This cut is being made through a sale to the Brown Lumber Company of all the merchantable soft wood on the Grant. A statement for the reasons for this action on the part of the Trustees is due to the Alumni.

In 1918-19 the spruce and fir in the river valleys were badly attacked by the Spruce Bud Moth, killing a large amount of the timber of these valley areas, most of this dead timber being rather small but still of merchantable size. Although dead, it was still suitable for pulp if
promptly cut before rot had set in. Salvage of this dead timber seemed highly desirable. On the other hand, the fact that the tract is forty miles from the railroad makes the cost of undertaking operations very great and a small cut cannot be made with financial success in view of this great overhead charge. Hence it became a matter of either losing all the dead timber or of making a larger cut in order to realize anything from it. In addition to this, the spruce and fir are fairly evenly divided and the from a single camp no larger area can be economically cut when taking the fir alone than when taking both fir and spruce. For the greatest economy and the greatest saving of timber the only feasible method was to cut the whole.

Further, it may be said that the timber market in northern New Hampshire is a pulp market rather than a saw log market, also much of the area must be cut into four foot wood because of the small streams out of which it has to be floated. Like any other farming propo-

![Fire Ranger's Cabin](image)

fir is a tree of not nearly as long life as the spruce. Hence there was a large amount of fir over the entire area that had reached maturity and when fir has reached maturity, heart rot promptly sets in and deterioration rapidly takes place, the trees beginning to blow down from the weakening at the center. For the same reason of the great overhead charge, it is financially impossible to scatter camps all over the tract and take out only the fir, which will probably run about 25 to 30 per cent of the entire soft timber on the property. The cost of establishing the camp for a small cut is just as great as for a full cut, since sition it would appear to be good judgment to raise the crop that has the best market; hence the pulp crop for this area is the desirable crop to raise.

In addition to this, the price of lumber in 1920 was the highest that had ever been known and to take advantage of that market seemed the wise thing.

On these several grounds the Trustees made the decision to sell and the cut is now going on, this being the second winter of the present operation, and it will probably require about four years more to complete it. Should present conditions prevail in the future, the handling
of the Grant as a pulp raising industry will doubtless continue to be wise. Such a crop can be harvested on a given tract about once in forty years, while a larger timber growth will require from 75 to 100 years.

The Trustees are not making this statement in the way of an apology, since the matter was decided upon after most careful study and consideration and with the definite advice of our agent, Dart Wentworth, a man of long and wide experience in the lumber game and who has proven exceedingly valuable to the Board in every move that has been made in connection with this property and to whom the Trustees feel that they owe a large debt of gratitude.

Another possible source of future revenue from the Grant lies in the streams that have been referred to. Just below the junction of the Dead and Swift Diamonds the water flows as a tumultuous rapid through a deep gorge with very precipitous walls. A dam placed at this point would make a storage reservoir of no small importance. It would make a pond the entire length of the valley of the Dead Diamond and about three miles up the Swift, and would impound about seven billion cubic feet of water. With the rapid development of such storage enterprises, it seems not improbable that it will be called for before many years.

Thus far we have dealt merely with the utilitarian and financial side of this property but my personal memories see it as a great pleasure ground of adventure and romance. The glistering streams are Van Lyke’s “Little Rivers”, the Herculean tasks of the lumbermen that remove whole forests from their age-old stumps and guide them through boiling rapids to the distant mills are material for an epic. For me the lumber cruisers and wandering trappers are Daniel Boone and his hardy band and for me Robin Hood and his merry men flit through the moonlit forest glades.

As one approaches the Grant along the highway just across the Maine border there is a single glimpse of the valley of the Dead Diamond seen through “the peaks” that is so alluring one is tempted to enter and see what the reality is.

If you yield to the temptation, as soon as you have passed through the lower farm, you will find very primitive nature. Of larger animal life the bear, the deer and the Canada lynx still roam their ancient trails and all the smaller fur bearers are here, for even the beaver, long absent, are now returning, and on this township alone are four active colonies behind their newly built dams. One is in the great swamp, one on Four Mile Brook, one in Lamb Valley and one on the south branch of the Little Dead west of Hell Gate.

On a bright June morning walk up the winding trail by the “Swift”. The cock grouse are drumming on their logs, deer spring from cover beside the trail, and in the dancing water the trout are rising.

Float in your canoe at evening down the “Dead”, from the deep eddies at the bends, the big ones with a great surge come to the fly, and you smell “the wood smoke at twilight” when camp is made.

In crisp autumn the long hard wood ridges and the bounding deer invite you. The pursuit is toilsome but the reward sufficient, and as the brief day draws to
its quick close the great trophy is loaded into the canoe by the "hunters' rock", then the steady swish of the paddles until you see the lights of the "Peak's" camp and you pull in and unload below the old trip boom, and it is night, the moon is rising and the "Diamond peaks" are silhouetted sharp like giant tusks against its yellow light and the glow from the camp windows invites you.

Such pictures are my memories of the Grant.

From whatever standpoint we view it, this property is of great interest to all Dartmouth men and, though it may have had but little monetary value when granted, it was nevertheless an earnest on the part of the State of its interest in the College and stands as a permanent bond between them.