

Becoming a Conservationist – One Letter at a Time

By Ellen Apperson Brown

Many people know of John Apperson's accomplishments – leaving Dome Island to the Nature Conservancy, winning legislative battles to protect the forever wild clause of the NY Constitution, evicting squatters from state land, and rip-rapping island shorelines – but few people know much about what motivated him and what prepared him for his lifelong avocation. Fortunately, John Apperson left a substantial paper trail. His family letters and photographs were passed along to his nephew, my father, and all of his other correspondence and photographs were cared for by several loyal "associates" and are now housed in the Adirondack Research Library in Schenectady. Apperson did not start saving copies of his own correspondence until about 1910 (when he had access to a typewriter and carbon paper.) Over the next fifty years, however, John Apperson saved virtually all of the letters he received and made copies of all the letters he wrote, thus leaving a fascinating record of his relationships (with friends, family members, political allies, and foes) and of his emerging vision and philosophy.

The letters provide us with a valuable record of events in Apperson's life, but they also demonstrate his unique methods for getting things done. Apperson held no government or political office (like Pinchot) and had no interest in being a writer (like Muir, Marshall, or Leopold). He received no salary for his conservation work, but earned his living as an engineer at the General Electric Company. He was one of the original political activists, stirring up grass roots support for causes and winning admiration from key people with his intelligence, sincerity, tenacity and his remarkable knowledge of the facts. His story is significant in the history of conservation, but also as a testimony to good citizenship.

Frank Leonbrunno has written that Apperson was controversial, tough and unpopular with many of his contemporaries (*The Chronicle*, 2/27/1997.) Katherine O'Brien (*The Great & Gracious on Millionaire's Row*) described Apperson as one of those scientists, "interested in the forever wild theory; [who] suggested that the dam at Ticonderoga be removed ... a very unpopular suggestion. (Page 256)." As a young man, however, John Apperson did not have many enemies or inspire much distrust. He was, in fact, very likeable and made friends easily. It is interesting to look back now, so many decades later, and read some comments made by his friends.

Perhaps drawn by a touch of homesickness, Apperson made friends with a Presbyterian minister and his family. In December of 1903, the Rev. A. Russell

Stevenson writes, "We were all disappointed when we received word you could not come to dinner with us on Christmas Day," and closes with, "come and see us when you can and tell us of your Lake George trip." In another letter one week later, young Apperson is being thanked for making the Stevenson's son Alex a bobsled, and the Rev. says, "Hoping that you will continue to drop in on us frequently, for that was one of the pleasures the rest of us derived from the building of the Bob."

Young Alex writes Mr. Apperson a note a few weeks later to explain that he needs some help with the rails and the wiring (of an electric train) and that, "Father says I cannot do any wiring except when you are here." By April of 1904, the Stevensons were thanking Mr. Apperson for the bookcase he had made them, and in May there was a letter inviting him to come to dinner before taking the boys to the circus. By October of 1904 Russell Stevenson writes, "Somehow we are not seeing anything of you this fall. Mrs. Stevenson and I and the little boys often speak of you." Unfortunately, there is no record of the Stevenson boys maintaining their contact with Apperson, but they must have long remembered him.

Also in October of 1904, John received a post card from a woman at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. She may have been someone he knew from his hometown (Marion, Virginia.) They were well enough acquainted that she could tease him. The card shows a picture of the main academic building at the college and the message penned at the bottom is, "Back again, though I haven't 'sense enough to bail water.' I am highly indignant over that remark."

By 1908, Apperson and several other G.E. engineers were enthusiastically exploring a new sport together – skate sailing. There is a list with 35 names on it of individuals interested in ordering a set of sails, including spars, ferrules and rope. Apparently there were many evening sessions at 118 Park Avenue when three or four men would meet to assemble the sails. The Mohawk River was a convenient place to test their skates and sails, but in later years there were also many trips to Lake George. C. G. Rally, one of the enthusiasts, worked in the Power and Mining Commercial Department, and Apperson wrote to him, "I understand you are willing to use your influence again in behalf of those who wish to build sails and the following is a list of those we would like to obtain as quickly as possible." (December 20, 1911)

In 1912, Apperson wrote to Charles Scott, one of his former skate-sailing buddies, and asked him if he would be willing to sell his old skate sail. Mr. Scott replied, "YOU got me into the game and now I'm in, I stick. I would like to help you out and if I only get two days of skating a year I want that sail. Try someone else less enthusiastic." Among the names of those who ordered skate

sails in 1908 was that of D. Rushmore. David Rushmore was the senior engineer in the Power and Mining Engineering Department, thus John Apperson's boss. The enthusiasm for the out-of-doors and for winter sports seemed to cross over barriers of seniority in the work place.

Some of the young men who started out at G.E. with Apperson were transferred to other places. In 1913, Earl Fisher wrote to his old friend about "the sense of duty that you (Apperson) and Bart and Huston shared with and instilled into my being, in regard to Lake George camping." R. H. Dillon wrote back to Schenectady from El Paso, Texas, telling Apperson about the 300-mile overland journey he had made (across deserts and mountains of Mexico) to get the United States. A year or so later Apperson wrote his friend Dillon (by then living in St. Louis) and described life in Schenectady,

The skate sailing crowd are now filling my house again each night and the sail you built still represents the best class of workmanship, and yet we have difficulty in finding anyone who can stay within a reasonable distance of ice with a moderate wind. Of course we are not kicking or criticizing, because we have used it without permission and derived many good laughs from the performance; but it has occurred to me you might have lost your sentimental feelings for it by this time and would be willing to part with it for a sum of money... (Nov. 25, 1914)

Some of the documents among the Apperson papers remain mysterious. One example is an eight page typed account of a trip from Schenectady to the mountains near Utica. It is impossible to be sure how many went on the trip, what their names were, or which one decided to write the account. It is obvious that the characters in the story enjoyed the hardships (of black flies, mosquitoes, swamps, and steady rain.) Entitled *The Cruise of the Dirty Rovers*, there are some wonderful passages, such as this one about the insects,

Paddled about six miles from station, beautiful evening, passed Indian Point to "Insect Island" 7:00 P.M. where we made camp. Ideal location. Good lake water. Thousand of black flies and mosquitoes thirsting for blood. Evidently on the verge of starvation. Pitched camp and prepared grub and retired as soon as possible to prevent our speedy "demolition." ...Rested reasonably comfortable.

There was a list of provisions attached at the end of the manuscript, which included "Bread, Eggs, Milk (4 gallons), Condensed Milk, Bacon, Sugar, Maple Sugar, Fig Newtons, Beans, Butter, Rice, Soap, Coffee, Tea, Raisins, Prunes Pancake Flour, Cream of Wheat, Corn Meal, Apricots, Baking Powder, Matches, Fly Dope and Cold Cream." The formula for fly dope is also among the Apperson

papers, "50% Oil of Citronella, 20% Eucamphel (Pasteur), 15% Carbolate of Vaseline, 10% Oil of Tar, and 5% Pennyroyal. One portion of beeswax (white) to four portions of cocoa butter melted together should be mixed with the above in such proportions to give it the desired thickness."

There were some weekends when Apperson may not have been able to find anyone else willing to go along on an adventure, so he went alone. He met an old man named Dan Wadsworth while hiking in the mountains and took an interest in him and his family. In April of 1909, Dan Wadsworth's son (Seth) wrote to Apperson, "Dear Sir, We have just commenced making maple sugar so come as soon as you can for the sugar won't last long this year I think so come soon as you can. Bring your snowshoes for there is lots snow here yet, yours truly, Seth Wadsworth, Northville, NY"

The Wadsworth family probably reminded Apperson of the mountain families he had known in Southwest Virginia. Beyond the friendly interest Apperson took in Seth, he took steps to try to be of real assistance to Dan, the elderly father. Apperson was concerned that Dan owned no property and could thus be considered to be trespassing on state property. One solution might be to purchase a small piece of land for him:

Mr. Dan Wadsworth
Northville, NY
Dear Sir,

September 21, 1910

I want you to see a Mr. Grant who, Jack tells me, lives in Bleecker and owns the property where you leave your wagon at the Creek, and find out from him the best price you can purchase at least one acre on this side of the Creek, and possibly as much as 10 acres which could be located on either side for a garden, etc. I have in mind putting up some kind of a camp where you may want to stay. I understand I should not have to pay over \$5 an acre for this including a little timber for firewood.

Either you or I ought to own at least a small piece of ground in this locality since you may want to move and I think you really ought to be nearer civilization during the Winter, if you find that you could get this amount in this place for a reasonable sum. If I do get it, of course, it means a cabin where you are to spend the rest of your days if you like and where I will be able to run in and see you more frequently...

This letter shows how Apperson was thinking, as early as 1910. His concern for the old man led him to write letters to Commissioner Whipple (The State Forest, Fish and Game Commission) to see if the state could make allowance for special circumstances and permit the old man to stay in the woods. Dan was afraid that the state would tear his camp down. The responses

Apperson got were a bit disappointing. John K. Ward (the General Counsel) wrote, in September of 1909, to say ...

I have examined the conditions existing there with some care and am entirely unable to find out how a rumor was started that Wadsworth's camp was to be torn down as there have been no complaints in this department against Wadsworth and he seems to be a perfectly inoffensive, fair-minded old fellow who has lived in the woods all his life and wants to end his days there. He is doing no harm to anybody and while we have not given him any permission to stay on the land of the state, and this letter must not be construed as a permission for him to occupy lands of the state, yet, he is not doing any additional building and the forests and streams of the state are open to him and all other law abiding citizens to roam around in if it suits their fancy and so long as they do not commit any depredations there never has been any objections to their occupying such shelters as may be convenient to cover them and make them comfortable.

Apperson wrote the Commissioner again the following year, apparently offering some suggestions about the placement of observation stations. Commissioner Whipple himself responded, insisting that he and his staff knew what they were doing:

It is possible that considerable importance should be attached to your statement of the situation around Cat Head Mountain. It is also possible that our men have not selected the best point on which to place an observation station; yet today with a meeting of the fire superintendents in my office, the question was taken up and it is believed that the station on Cat Head Mountain will be of great service and is located in as good a position as it would be anywhere except on Blue Ridge.

So far as Wallace Mountain is concerned, any smoke arising from the opposite side would be seen from Cat Head.... I will undertake personally sometime to look over this particular section; yet those who have done so for the Department are experienced men and know pretty nearly what they are doing – men who are very familiar with that section.

Of course, I know nothing about your personal knowledge of it, how much you have tramped over the country but unless you are a very thorough woodsman and have been there a great deal, I would not want to venture very much on your real, accurate knowledge of the whole situation. At the same time, I thank you sincerely for the suggestion and will either make or have made another investigation of the matter and if the station can be improved by placing it somewhere else another year, we shall certainly do so. I want you to understand that we do most fully

appreciate the interest shown by you in writing this letter. That is what we want – co-operation.... very truly yours, J.S. Whipple (July 6, 1910)

It can be argued that this letter exchange helped Apperson to recognize how useful letters could be. They could serve multiple purposes. By asking about the placement of observation towers, he was able to find out if the commissioner and his staff were competent, courteous or reasonable in their responses. He also learned about the way they interpreted and enforced the law. This became valuable information as he began, soon thereafter, to take an interest in the illegal squatters on the islands of Lake George. This particular exchange also demonstrated how important it would be to know the facts, and to be very specific about the location, the geography and the scientific data. Letter writing became a tool that Apperson would use to find out about the caliber of people holding positions of power.

The evolution of Apperson's style can be clearly seen in this next example. By March 15, 1911, Apperson wrote to Commissioner Osborne, newly appointed, making a forceful and thoroughly researched suggestion regarding Seth Wadsworth and his father.

A number of office men, including myself, are frequently benefited by short camping trips into the Benson tract of the State Preserve and as these trips are made possible by trails kept open by Seth Wadsworth and his aged father, we are interested in a proposed suit against him for cutting firewood.

You will note from the map this clearing is very small and is the only one for several miles, making it particularly valuable in fighting fires and as a refuge. If this was good timber or on the outskirts of the Preserve, it would be difficult, but the cutting of a few scrub trees in this particular section is in reality a benefit.

A very beneficial arrangement, both to the State and those visiting this section, has existed for several years. This man lives in about the center of the track and travels west several miles to Silver Lake to take care of his father and goes north to visit one of his children and south to visit mother and when he can afford it, travels east for supplies. In this way the whole section is patrolled without expense to the State, fires being put out and food for the deer. This man has the welfare of this section at heart and this suit would not only be an injustice but [would] antagonize these people rather than continue their cooperation, would be poor economics and I am writing you personally with the hope that you will assist in seeing the spirit rather than the letter of the law enforced in this particular case.

Very truly yours,
J. S. Apperson

Power & Mining Engineering Department

Once Apperson got the notion in his head that letters could be effective, he got inspired to tackle many different problems that way. When he encountered difficulty with railroad personnel about transporting camping gear, he followed up his complaints to the D & H Railroad (General Manager – Mr. W. J. Mullin) by writing to the President of Abercrombie & Fitch in New York. Mr. Ezra Fitch must not have turned a deaf ear to Apperson's main argument, that the sporting goods establishment probably had many current and potential customers who would want to transport their gear on the D & H Railroad. Perhaps the store could remind the railroad about the growing interest in camping, and of the potential for increased ticket sales....

In the summer of 1913, Apperson wrote a letter to a new Conservation Commissioner, George E. Van Kennen, asking about lumber operations at Lake George.

Van Kennen's reply was discouraging but informative.

Your letter dated June 10th, 1913, to Wm. Sulzer, Governor of the State of New York, with respect to lumber operations in the vicinity of Lake George, was referred to this Commission for consideration.

We regret of course, that the owners of this property have undertaken lumber operations in that section, but I do not find that there is any provision in the law, giving the Conservation Commission jurisdiction over private lands outside of the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, with respect to lumber operations, except that in some towns that have jurisdiction with regard to topping lops.

In July Apperson spoke with the general traffic manager of the Delaware and Hudson Company to find out more about lumbering operations on Lake George and to inquire about the number of passengers who traveled each season. Mr. W. J. Mullin replied,

Referring to our interview of one day last week, relative to cutting of timber on Lake George and the number of visitors there each year: It is estimated by our Mr. Heard, General Passenger Agent, and Mr. Loomis, General Manager, Lake George Steamboat Co., that we handle about 150,000 passengers annually to points on or through Lake George. A great many of the passengers are through tourists, making the trip through both Lakes. Of course, in addition to this number, there are many who come to Lake George by auto. About 80% of our patrons to the Fort William Henry Hotel, at Lake George, last year, arrived by auto. It is also thought, if you will write Mr. A. L. Judson, of the Lake George Association, care Hotel Sagamore, on Lake George, he will take an active

interest in the subject you have in mind, and may be able to aid you with information. Mr. E. A. Knight, publisher of the "Lake George Mirror," also has some data in regard to the number of passengers to Lake George each season.

Yours very truly,
W. J. Mullin
General Traffic Manager

Curious about how the numbers of visitors to the National Parks compared to the numbers at Lake George, Apperson wrote to Yosemite National Park and got this reply,

Sir: July 22, 1913

In answer to your inquiry of the 16th inst., asking for the approximate number of people who visited this Park last year, beg to inform you that, according to the report of the former acting superintendent, for 1912, the number amounted to 10,884.

Very respectfully,
Wm. T. Littebrant
Major, First Cavalry, U.S.A.
Acting Superintendent, Yosemite Nat'l Park

One of Apperson's new initiatives that summer was to begin investigating the membership and philosophy of some of the large influential organizations, which were involved with conservation issues. He wrote the Camp Fire Club of America (New York City) and got this response:

Dear Sir: July 16, 1913

I have your letter of the 3rd instant.

In your letter you have raised several important questions and you are perfectly right in suggesting that there may be some abuse. On the broad proposition, however, we stand for the Resolution as passed, which is but carrying out the policy of Mr. Pinchot who first formulated this policy for us.

We have planned to meet these questions in the laws that will be necessary to carry out the constitutional provision, and it is there that a most careful supervision must be had.

I have been informed that many desirable campsites were monopolized under the old law. This can be met by provisions allowing only short-term lease or competitive bidding for leases. A provision providing for a short lease not renewable to the same parties would obviate the difficulty under the old system.

The proper care of the State forests renders necessary the removal of burned, dead, or down and matured timber. We believe that the State forests today can be and will be properly protected under a proper law.

With reference to the sale of lands outside of the park, this was advocated by the Forestry Department to enable the State to dispose of outlying parcels for the purpose of increasing the State holdings within the Blue Line by purchase with funds received from the sale of any such outlying lands.

I am not familiar with the matter of the Islands in Lake George and would be glad to get any information with regard to them as you can give me.

Yours very truly,
Marshall McLean.

(Among the Committee members listed on the letterhead were Gifford Pinchot and George D. Pratt)

It seems that Apperson made a concerted effort to learn about politics and legislation. By August of 1913 he received a hand-written note from someone who was teaching him the ropes in politics.

Dear App,

The conversations you had at Albany – as related by you – with these “conservation” people are very significant and leading directly to their vulnerable points of weakness and incompetence. They are mere puppets – I think your experience with data and obvious deductions should be put in the hands of Mr. Hennessey and I will be happy to help you frame up a modest expression of same. It’s a vital part of your present action it seems to me. (Signature Illegible)

In the fall of 1913, Apperson and his good friend Irving Langmuir went to Dartmouth College and joined its students in a climb up Mount Washington. The following spring many of the students wrote to express their enthusiasm for the adventure and to send copies of the photographs they had made. In March Apperson wrote to F.B. Sayre, the Assistant to the President at Williams College and encouraged them to promote more skiing and hiking, saying, “the benefit from this kind of outdoor activity is so genuine and far reaching in good results, we are anxious to encourage others wherever it is possible.” (March 20, 1913) Apperson and Langmuir both believed that competitive sports (such as down hill skiing, ski jumping and bobsledding) were undesirable since they promoted having winners and losers, and spectators. The best sports, accordingly, were those, which encouraged invigorating exercise, and fresh air while demanding each individual to make is own personal best effort. Skate sailing, ski sailing, canoeing and hiking were all sports, which did not demand that new highways, restaurants or hotels be built, and they all were non-competitive.

Frank Graham, Jr., describes the legislative battles waged in Albany during the years of 1911-1916 in his book, *The Adirondack Park*. "In 1911 a constitutional amendment was introduced in the Legislature to allow 3 percent of the total acreage in the Forest Preserve to be flooded for reservoirs... The amendment passed both houses that year, and again in 1913." (Graham, page 169) At the State Constitutional Convention of 1915, the President of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks (John G. Agar) "suggested that the time had come to let the State cut mature timber on the preserve and earn the attendant revenues. He also recommended the leasing of campsites on the preserve, and permitting water storage there by both the state and private power companies." (Ibid, page 170) Louis Marshall made a key speech in which he warned of the dangers of allowing any lumbering in the Forest preserve. "In November 1915, the voters rejected the new Constitution" (Ibid, page 171). "In November 1916, the voters approved the bond issue, and the Conservation Commission started to buy land." (Ibid, page 174)

The Apperson files do not give a complete picture of his activities during these years, but he was very active in a several key projects, including the removal of squatters from state lands and the protection of Lake George's islands through riprapping the shores. His interests brought him into contact with others of like mind and it was during this period that Apperson established a network of allies, a loose association that would become very effective at gathering information and influencing opinion. One of the most interesting allies was Warwick Carpenter, a member of the Conservation Commission. In a rare self-congratulatory letter written to Carpenter in 1916, Apperson tells about the riprapping efforts he has conducted at Lake George,

The rapid washing away of the islands in Lake George grows more noticeable each year, and I certainly was glad that your friendly effort to interest the D. & H. was successful as indicated in your letter of the 31st. The trees, which cannot stand for another season without some protection, should be rescued first. Some are lone trees on small, unnamed islands, yet much admired by many people and are essential to this wonderful scenery. ... Some places require large stones to prevent the receding boat waves from carrying away the soil, and actually help to build up the places by holding the debris which floats in and finally decays, forming soil for seed from which spring bushes and trees. I like to think that the D. & H. interest is more than merely commercial, and the State's efforts in this direction might be combined with theirs and such other contributions, which may be made toward protection against destruction from both natural and artificial causes....

The conservation work done by my friends would make too long a letter, but you might like to know that three hundred and eleven people

from twelve nations and twenty-seven different states, have been assisted at least once to visit a certain State island [Dollar Island], and each helped to save the place, some staying only a few hours and carrying only one stone, others brought several, and some contributed several boat loads each day during their two weeks vacation. Part of the gravel and stone was loaded on sleds and skis and towed over the ice for some distance with boats and rowboats. Aside from the pleasure and benefit to themselves, these people have preserved a much-needed harbor and camping spot for the general public.... (Apperson to Carpenter – 4/18/1916)

Apperson's activities riprapping shores at the lake brought him into contact with many of the wealthy landowners. By 1917, Apperson was concerned about the landslide that had occurred on Dome Island and wrote to the owner, Pliny Sexton, to offer to get some men to repair the shore. When Mr. Sexton did not respond, Apperson wrote to John Bolton Simpson (Sagamore Hotel) to get his opinion about whether to proceed with the repair. Simpson encouraged him in the idea and offered to help. William K. Bixby became a backer, too, and even offered to buy the island himself from Mr. Sexton.

I will be very glad to contribute the amount needed to finish the work on the west bank that you have started, and I will be one of a group of five or six to buy Dome Island if Mr. Sexton does not lease it for the use of the public. If such purchase was made I should favor giving the island to a board of trustees for the benefit of the town of Bolton.

Sincerely,
W.K. Bixby (10-14-17)

It is significant that Apperson, who owned no real estate property in 1917, was making proposals to landowners about how their lands should be maintained. Apperson was already wrestling with the problem of how to protect and preserve the natural beauty of the Narrows, of Tongue Mountain, and of Paradise Bay. He was already skeptical about state ownership, yet he became enthusiastic about the creation of a Lake George Park and fought hard for more than twelve years to have Lake George get included inside the Blue Line. The fundamental question which he struggled to resolve had to do with his distrust of government officials, his skepticism that laws are not so very permanent, and his understanding that land speculation and greed can result in the wealthy holding property for private use which should, instead, be accessible to the public.

It is ironic that Apperson found it necessary to purchase property at Lake George just when he was succeeding at evicting so many people from the State islands, and just when he was beginning to promote the idea that there should be a Lake George Park. He went about trying to persuade landowners to donate

their land to the State even though these individuals were generally taking very good care of the land they owned. He wrestled, too, with the fact that an individual cannot have much control over what would happen to his land when his heirs inherited it. Also, if property was in private hands, it could always be sold to someone else – someone who might put up unsightly buildings (or a Coney Island amusement park.) The battles he fought over Tongue Mountain, French Point, and the Narrows were waged at great personal cost. He put his friendship, his money and his reputation repeatedly on the line. He was engaged in a ferocious struggle against political forces, which were cloaked in secrecy, and sometimes his closest friends were in the line of fire.

In 1918, Apperson bought a small piece of property on Tongue Mountain so that he could have a place to store his boats and sleep over night in a shelter. In 1920 he and two others (Hall Roosevelt and Henry Dalton) purchased the Lake View Hotel property in Bolton. He and his friends eventually established a sort of colony of residents there, and his neighbors included Dr. Irving Langmuir, Dr. Katharine Blodgett, and Florence and Kilgore Christie. Many of the friendships he enjoyed during the early twenties lasted most of his lifetime. Probably his most remarkable and interesting relationships were with the women of the Loines family. The mother, Mary Loines, was fond of him and treated him almost like a member of the family. Hilda Loines became a sort of first lieutenant to Appy (she may have been the first to coin his nickname) and had a great deal of satisfaction in helping him wage his conservation battles. Sylvia, the youngest daughter, may have been the one woman John Apperson ever really considered marrying.

The Loines family was among the first to donate property to the State for the Lake George Park. When Al Smith was in his first term as governor and momentum was building for a Lake George Park, Robert Moses was already in a position of considerable power (and Al Smith's most trusted advisor.) One of Apperson's friends in Albany, Adalbert Moot, warned him that plans were being discussed to construct a highway around the edge of the Tongue Mountain peninsula. Apperson launched a counter attack (known ever after as the kidnapping of Al Smith.)

It is not clear whether Apperson knew in advance that Moses was the one behind the proposed highway, but the two men had a confrontation during the historic boat ride. Apperson tried to persuade Governor Smith that the highway would be too expensive if built along the steep and rocky shore. Moses was apparently taken off guard by Apperson's objections, and their showdown may have been one of Moses' rare defeats. Moses retaliated over the coming years by being rude to many of the landowners, by breaking promises and by withholding State funds when land was available for purchase at a fair price. (Robert Cato's biography of Robert Moses entitled, Robert Moses The Power

Broker; The Fall of New York City, explains Moses' four decades of abuse of power in New York City and New York State.) For many years to come, Moses pulled the strings while his subordinates dealt rudely and roughly with many of the wealthy landowners at Lake George.

The story of the Lake George Park, including any mention of Franklin D. Roosevelt or George Foster Peabody, must be left for another chapter. This is perhaps as good a stopping place as any in telling about John Apperson's use of letter writing to promote conservation causes. Letters served as a litmus test for judging the honesty of public officials and as a starting point for an exchange of ideas. Most letters Apperson wrote were crafted carefully, using logical arguments and convincing details. In the exchange of ideas with strangers and with old friends, Apperson was always thinking, both critically and creatively, and always eager to find solutions and new ways to "get things done." His correspondence reveals his great sense of humor and his considerable warmth and caring. Several letters in the files, like this excerpt from an "essay" written by R. H. Doherty in 1918, say much about how his friends admired him,

From an Essay on Apperson – August 18, 1918 – by R.H. Doherty

I am compelled ... to pay a tribute to this man's memory, who by a weird genius of marked Machiavellian tendency, and by unbounded perseverance and energy, has not only restored to their natural beauty certain islands which had been stolen and ravaged, but has wrung from reluctant law makers and administrators of the State appropriations to save certain islands which had been slowly washing away, and has saved them. Such achievements inspired, I believe, by a very genuine love of nature's out-of-doors, must not pass unsung, and I hope that these words may express my own sincere appreciation of them...

His love of adventure is unbounded. If he had lived in the sixth century, there is no doubt in my mind that King Arthur might have added immensely to the brilliant history of the Round table by enlisting this man, whose fame as a knight would surely have surpassed that of Sir Lancelot himself.

John Apperson's legacy is difficult to define, especially since his interests were so broad and far-reaching. Dome Island is the most easily recognized of his gifts to posterity, and we must all hope that The Nature Conservancy will continue to be a lasting and permanent solution for ensuring the island's future. His contributions to conservation are remarkable and deserve the attention of historians and environmentalists. Of even broader significance is the story of this one man's selfless contributions as a good citizen in a democracy. Much credit goes to him that the forever wild clause of the New York constitution still remains intact, almost one hundred years after John Apperson decided to protect it.