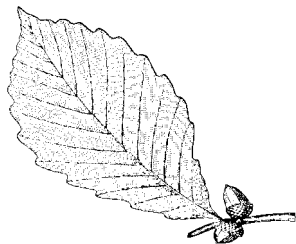




HIKING  
*the*  
JERSEY  
HIGHLANDS

*Wilderness in Your Back Yard*



G E O R G E P E T T Y

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

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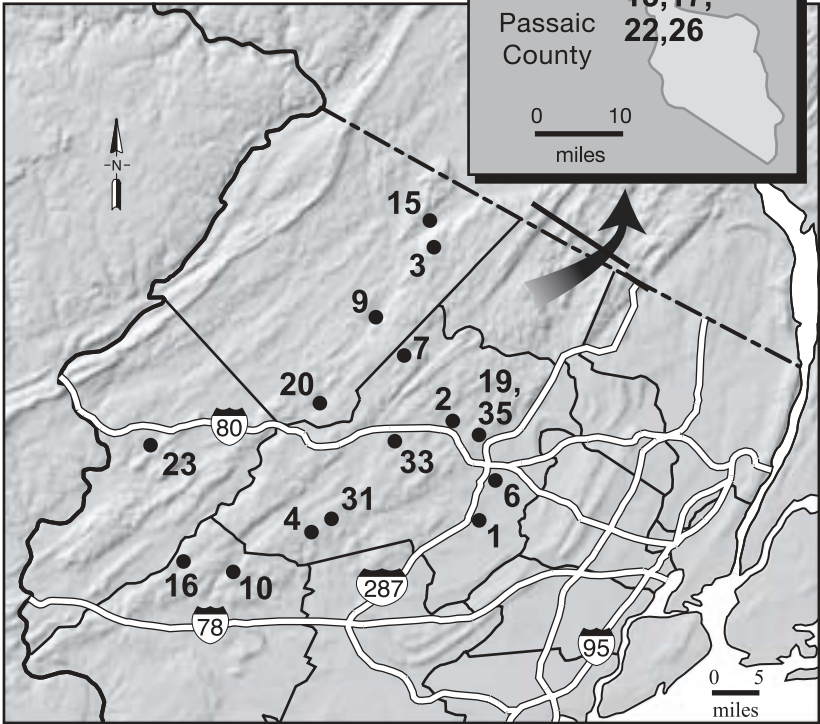
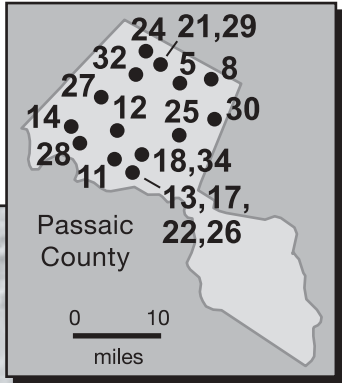


For Marilyn

*Sine qua non*

# New Jersey Highlands Hike Locator Map

NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY TRAIL CONFERENCE 1920



Rutgers Cartography 2006



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# Acknowledgments

First of all, I am most grateful to my Project Manager, Ruth Rosenthal, editor, grammarian, fact checker, and general supervisor who brought the many details of this book together. Ruth found expert readers for the introductory sections on geology, wildlife, and plants. She contacted all the field checkers and assembled their reports. She obtained the latest information from state and county park officials. She insisted on consistency of presentation in the text, the maps, and the pictures. All of these tasks are magnified for a first edition of a new book, where there is no template of an existing edition to follow. Her careful attention to detail, and her willingness to tackle all sorts of technicalities of contemporary computerized book production, raised the standards of this work far beyond what I could have achieved by myself.

I am also grateful to Daniel Chazin, Chair of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference Publications Committee, for sharing his encyclopedic knowledge of the trails, and for showing by his example just how careful a hike description should be.

Every one of the trails described in this book has been hiked by the author, but I was never alone. I always had with me my constant

companion in the woods and in my life, Marilyn Katz, who, when she wasn't walking beside me with her digital camera, was at the telephone making sure I got home safely. And I had with me my good friend and colleague from Montclair State University, Bob Whitney, an excellent photographer, who lugged his tripod and lenses through the Highlands to record my enthusiasm for wildflowers, rocks, and long views.

I must also express my appreciation for the professionalism and patience of our cartographer, Mike Siegel, staff cartographer for Rutgers, the State University, Department of Geography. Though he knew that every time I called or sent him an e-mail, I was bringing trouble, he always seemed glad to hear from me, and ready to produce the best maps possible.

When I began this project three years ago, I supposed I knew enough about hiking in the Jersey Highlands to complete it by myself. I had tramped the Farny Highlands as a youngster, walked Highlands trails with my own kids, and could write a list of 35 good Highlands hikes that I knew well from hiking each one several times. But that was not enough, not even close.

Trails change: they become eroded, and rerouted; trees grow and obscure viewpoints, new trails are built, new views become accessible, blaze forms are altered. To be complete and accurate, I should have hiked each trail two or three times in the past month. Obviously I needed help, and a lot of it.

I found help in generous supply among the experienced and dedicated hike leaders of local hiking clubs and organizations, and especially from the trail supervisors and maintainers of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. These men and women field-checked the drafts of my trail descriptions, took the papers with them into the woods, made detailed, up-to-date corrections, and opened my eyes to landmarks and trail features I had either missed or forgotten. They taught me a lesson, which, for someone who has always been a loner both in the woods and out of it, was very hard

to learn: a project like this cannot be an individual creation, it has to be the group effort of many skilled volunteers and observant trail walkers.

Every one of the hike descriptions in this book has been field-checked at least once, and some two or three times, to record trail improvements made while the manuscript was being written. The result is a collection of very complete and accurate hike descriptions, and though I am listed as author, the book is the work of this team of hikers who love the woods and ridges of the Jersey Highlands. They did their best to keep me straight, and if there are errors, they are my own entirely. The field-checkers are listed below in alphabetical order, but this hardly begins to thank them enough.

Field-checkers are from the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference unless otherwise noted.

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Alexander E. Gates, Professor of Earth and Environmental  
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Bob Moss, NYNJTC first New Jersey Supervisor, Highlands  
Trail

Glen Oleksak, NYNJTC current New Jersey Supervisor,  
Highlands Trail

John Myers, NYNJTC Land Acquisitions Director

I am very grateful to all of them.

—*George Petty*

## C H E S T N U T O A K



We chose the chestnut oak (*Quercus prinus* L.) to decorate the pages of this book not because it is the tallest, most noble tree in the New Jersey Highlands, but because we admire its strength and resilience. Unlike those of other Highlands oaks, the chestnut oak leaf is like that of the once common beautiful American chestnut, which, succumbing to a blight early in the last century, has disappeared from our forests.

The chestnut oak is a medium-sized tree, reaching a height of 50 to 70 feet, with a trunk diameter of 1 to 2 feet. The wood is heavy, tough, strong, and durable when in contact with soil. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the tree was logged extensively for construction lumber, railroad ties, posts, and fuel. Its thick, deeply-ridged bark resists fire and, was, in earlier times, a rich source of tannin for treating leather.

Also called “rock” oak, the tree thrives on dry rocky slopes at higher elevations, where it may be the dominant tree. It can regenerate from roots and stumps when cut or burned, and along Highlands trails, you will see many chestnut oaks with two or more trunks, “coppiced” trees, growing out of stumps left by loggers.

Although exposed on hilltops to long-term drought, wind, and weather, chestnut oaks persist when other species give up, though often becoming stunted and bent on thin-soiled rocky ridgetops, where small twisted trees may be a century old. The chestnut oak is an appropriate symbol of the New Jersey Highlands, which having survived the assaults of the nineteenth-century iron industry and the twentieth-century housing boom, are now, in the twenty-first century, capable of again becoming the wilderness in our back yard. For this hopeful possibility, we can thank courageous political leaders, visionary environmental organizations, dedicated citizens, and hikers like you who love Highlands trails.

EDGEWALKER

*for Marilyn*

In the city she was a steady-ender.  
For her playmates the turning rope  
opened to rhythmical joy;  
for her it threatened dirt and danger,  
scuffed shoes and torn skirt,  
her mother's pained silence;  
she grasped the loose end  
to keep it calm, and turning for others.

So many careful years—  
her spirit locked in a child's cabinet,  
until a surprise love smuggles her the key.  
Out she flies to a tall mountaintop,  
overlooking a river far below;  
bounds down over boulders  
to the last edge of the cliff,  
turns with one hand on her hat,  
waves with the other,  
her dark salted hair blowing in the wind,  
her new boots rock-scuffed and dirty,  
and laughing, shouts, "Take my picture!"

—George Petty