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**Our Northeast Trip,
Part 2**

CONNECTING THE DOTS OF OUR NORTHEAST TRIP, Part 2

*By Robert Laford,
GWRRA #126196,
of Petersham, Massachusetts*



Rick (left) and I reach our ultimate destination—the Four Corners Memorial in Madawaska, Maine.

When we last left Robert Laford and his riding buddy, Rick Oliver, they had just spent their second night on the road with friends in Greenville, Maine. The next day, they were headed to their “connect the dots” destination of the Four Corners Memorial in Madawaska, Maine. Here is where their story resumes...

Meeting Mrs. Moose

Our third day of travel was to take us to the most northeastern town in the United States—Madawaska, Maine. As we left the Moosehead Lake area in Maine, we came across an area where not only are there “Moose Crossing” signs but flashing lights as well that accompany each sign. That’s due to the prevalence of past “car versus moose” interactions.

And, sure enough, we got a chance to see Mrs. Bulwinkle having her breakfast in a nearby marsh. We stopped to watch her for awhile, and we certainly appreciated that she was off the road and not in our path.

A bit farther up the road, the oncoming traffic was flashing its lights; we took that as a sign that a police officer was ahead. But we found none and, so, drew the conclusion that another moose must have been in the road but had departed before we passed.

Heading Farther North

We stopped for breakfast at Elaine’s Café in Milo. On their diner placemats was some information, from a historical perspective, of the community. We found that the river that runs through town was a major route a century ago for the logging industry to get their product to market. It told of the lives of the River Drivers, who would move the logging harvest down the river—a very dangerous and sometimes fatal job—for fourteen hours a day between April and June.

The multitude of truck traffic we had seen on the road the day before—with its loads of logs and lumber—are today’s “River Runners”, moving the product to market.

In Milo, we picked up Route 11 and followed that north all the way to the Canadian border. Traffic became light, and we were enjoying the solitude that we found on the road. There was an occasional vehicle, passing truck, or wave from a fellow rider as we worked our way north.

There is no doubt why Maine is called the “Pine Tree State”. The sweet fragrance of the pine forest greeted us along our ride. The conservation efforts of the logging industry were evident as well, and we saw a number of markers along the road that showed replanting dates of the renewable resource the pine forests provide.

Every now and then, through the curvy, forested route, Mount Katahdin played “peak”-a-boo with us as we caught a glimpse of his crown of clouds urging us to come closer.

North of Millinocket, the road turned to follow the east branch of the Penobscot River. As any good rider knows, squiggly lines on the map that follow a river are usually good motorcycle roads, and this route was no exception! The road climbed to a plateau that gave us an open view to Mt. Katahdin and the mountain range in Baxter State Park to our west. Mount Katahdin, which means “The Greatest Mountain”, is the highest mountain in Maine and was named by the Penobscots, the Native Americans who called the region home.

The road opened up and straightened out some as it moved away from the river valleys. It became this grand tarmac of ribbon, cutting through the countryside like a big carnival ride of ups and downs, lefts and rights. Each time we crested a ridge, we got a peek of ribbon off in the distance, just before we dipped down to the valley floor with a sweep left or right before climbing back to the next overlook. When the view opened up to the mountain range to the west, the mountains gave a boisterous greeting—with a gusty wind—to say hello.

Reaching Our Destination “Dot”

Route 11 ends in Fort Kent, Maine at the Canadian border. There, we picked up the very most northern end of Route 1. This is where Route 1 begins (or ends, depending on how you look at it) its journey down the Eastern Seaboard to Key West, some 2,377 miles south of where we were!

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Route 1 follows the Saint John River. The river is the dividing line between Maine and New Brunswick, and we were treated to the views of a couple of American Bald Eagles soaring along the river's route. They acted as sentries as they tended to their fishing duties.

Madawaska is the next town, and was the original goal for our adventure. Just north of the center of town, we pulled into the Four Corners Park (madawaskafourcorners.org). We were three days into our trip and had covered 880 miles (with 25 road hours) to reach this "dot" on our planned ride.

The Four Corners Park is significant to motorcyclists because Madawaska, and the park, comprise the most northeastern community in the United States and is one of the stops for the Southern California Motorcycle Association's "U.S.A. Four Corners Tour" (usa4corners.org). The other three corners are Key West, Florida, San Ysidro, California, and Blaine, Washington. Riders who want to complete this challenge must hit each of those spots within a 21-day timeframe.

The people of Madawaska built the park as a thank-you to the motorcycling community. This town is the only one of the four corners to have such a park and memorial for the riders.

It is a wonderful spot to visit, filled—in all the granite stones that have been purchased and dedicated by riders, families, and members of the community—with the memories of tour completers and other motorcyclists.

We were able to find several stones that were in place courtesy of some friends who had completed the "Four Corners Ride", and who had visited the park. Before we left, we picked up a form so we, too, could be a permanent part of the Four Corners Memorial by purchasing a granite stone.

Heading South Again

We continued down Route 1 into Caribou, Maine, where we were scheduled to meet up with more friends on our "connect the dots" ride.

Captain GB and our friends at the Caribou Fire Department were waiting for our arrival and visit. But before we stopped to say hello, we

decided it was time to stretch our legs and do a little in-town tour by foot.

We came across a couple of neighborhood kids who were selling some fresh vegetables in front of their house. I couldn't help but wonder if their mom knew they had raided her garden out back to gain a little spending money and help satisfy a couple of passing motorcyclists' hunger!

The guys at the fire station were happy to see us and to hear about our ride. Their hopes were that our visit would not be interrupted by any emergency calls, and that wish came true as we spent an evening of storytelling and friendship.

The next morning, as another dawn broke, it provided a beautiful view and welcoming sunshine. As we left Caribou and headed for the New Brunswick border, a large red-tailed hawk cautiously watched from his perch, overlooking the nearby farmlands, as we passed. We were riders and birds of prey alike—looking for breakfast!—and we remarked to each other about the crops that were glistening in the new day's sunshine. We believed that it was wheat filling the hillside and realized that the town's name, Plantation, was very appropriate!



Parked at a boardwalk in New Brunswick, along the Saint John River.

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Entering Canada

Our border crossing took us into Grand Falls, New Brunswick. The border agent offered a suggestion for breakfast, and we found the Hill Top Restaurant, which overlooks the falls and gorge, in the center of town. The falls set on the Saint John River, and afterward we followed the river throughout this fourth day of travel.

The falls and gorge offer a great view, even though the draught-like summer weather did not provide the large amount of water that the spring-time pictures in the visitor's center had shown. The falls are also home to the Grand Falls Generating Station, which provides electrical power by use of a hydroelectric dam.

Leaving the visitor's center, we could hear music and found that there was a local country band playing Jimmy Buffet tunes across the street at a farmers market. This was some local flavor that we couldn't pass up.

We browsed the foods and the artisans' works that were on display and came back to the bikes with apples, fudge, and home-baked double chocolate chip cookies. (We convinced ourselves that we got partial credit for the apples!)



*Welcomed back to Calais, Maine,
on the shores of the St. Croix River.*

We then found that there are two routes that follow the Saint John River south. One is Route 2, a limited access highway on the west side of the river, and the other is Route 105, which runs a rural course along the east side of the river. To paraphrase Robert Frost, we chose the road less-traveled, and that made all the difference!

Occasionally, the two roads would come into view of each other, and we could see those traveling in tandem on the multi-lane roadway at 110 kph. They seemed oblivious to the local treasures and beauty adjacent to the blur outside their windows.

Along the more leisurely route, we were allowed to take in the local flavor and color, including the world's longest covered bridge in Hartland, New Brunswick and a front yard of trees full of colorful bras and panties that announced an impending event—"Sarah's Bridal Shower".

Several communities along the Saint John have capitalized on the water resource that meanders through their towns and have built boardwalks to complement the river. A stroll down the boardwalk gave us a gander of the nearby fishermen to one side and the pedestrians visiting the shops on the other side of the street.

Another "Dot", Then Back South Again

Another "dot" on our route plan was a stop in Fredericton, New Brunswick to visit another friend. We met up with Hal, a fellow rider who would frequently leave New Brunswick on a Friday to meet up with fellow riders in Massachusetts for a Saturday ride.

As he joked now, however, that was "a few years ago, when his knees would allow the long miles for a ride with New England friends, then back home again to New Brunswick at the end of the weekend". Even though it was a short visit, it was time well-spent with a friend, as had been all our stops thus far.

We wanted to make the border back into Maine before the day's end, so we crossed from St. Stephen into Calais, where we found a place to bunk for the night on the shores of the St. Croix River.

The motel and cabin complex had a restaurant on-site, so we chose to

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put the bikes to bed for the night and enjoy a quiet evening on the water's edge. The tide was low when we first arrived, and our cabin had a long front yard full of smooth rocks that drew us to explore the shoreline.

By the time we called it a night, our footprints had all washed away and the stones were hidden by the rising tide.

The next morning, we decided to get on the road early and run the 100 miles between Calais and Bangor along the Airline Road before stopping for breakfast. The condition of the road was very good, but it was also very remote. The town lines were marked with numbers instead of names, like "Entering TWP 2."

The road's lonely character—with its distant mountains in view—combined with our first overcast morning and made us a bit melancholy. We knew we were headed to our last rendezvous with a friend that we had planned for this ride.

There were few others on the road on this early Sunday morning ride, but a lone rider passed us with a giant wave and a big, beaming smile. He snapped us out of our funk, reminding us that we were still on our bikes and still having an adventure.

Though our schedules did not allow us to, we would have liked to have followed the coastal roads south. For the first time on our entire trip, we instead jumped onto an interstate and headed to Down East Maine. Yet even that route—at highway speeds from Bangor and south to Portland—offered us great scenery and some glimmers of early fall colors in the trees on this late summer's ride.

We pulled off the highway about thirty miles north of that night's destination because we wanted to ride a bit of the coast from Portland to Wells, Maine. Just by chance, at the exit we took, there was a Delorme Maps office and visitor's center. We took a break to wander through their store and look at all the maps they had available. With the cracking open of a map, we started dreaming of future adventures.

The overcast clouds held their rain until we were about five miles out of Wells Beach. These were our first sprinkles since first hitting the road days earlier. Originally, we had planned to stop at the beach and walk the nearby jetty. But we changed our course when the rain grew steadier.

Our final night's stop was at our friends C & M's place in Wells. With a walk to nearby Mike's Clam Shack (on Route 1), we enjoyed our evening with fresh seafood and a couple of cold beverages. After all, our feet were up for the night and our bikes were covered from the rain.

Our trip's goals and "dots" to meet with our friends—plus our selected "waypoints"—had taken place over 1,600

miles and six days. Our final ride day was just for ourselves as we made our way back home to Massachusetts.

Last "Dot", Then Home!

Although our trip's initial goal was to meet up with very specific friends along our route, we had met many more friends along the way. After all, as motorcyclists, we always find a welcoming smile, wave, or handshake—and make friends—wherever our rolling tires lead us.

But before those tires led us all the way back home to park the bikes in our own garages, there was one final "dot" to connect to on our tour. That "dot" was a stop at the University of New Hampshire as we passed through Durham on Route 155A.

UNH has its own Dairy Bar, located at the train depot on campus. This student-run ice cream shop offers some of the most generous portions anywhere, and some very good ice cream at that! We made it a treat to reward ourselves for a successful trip.

Now it's time to start thinking about our next "connect the dots" ride; we're sure you're doing the same this winter. Hope you plan to see some fun and exciting friends, waypoints, and destinations along the way. We certainly do—wherever our next trip takes us! ●



The final "dot" on our trip—the Dairy Bar at the University of New Hampshire.

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