



Larry Anderson

Author of *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape)*

Photo courtesy of Larry Anderson

Larry Anderson, freelance writer and independent scholar is the author of two of the most authoritative books written about Benton MacKaye -- *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape)* and *Peculiar Work: Writing about Benton MacKaye, Conservation, Community*.

Anderson's experiences throughout his youth laid the groundwork for the books. He grew up in rural Massachusetts, a short distance from Benton MacKaye's home in Shirley, Massachusetts. Anderson never had the pleasure of meeting MacKaye, but like MacKaye, the simplistic, natural beauty of the surrounding countryside became indelibly etched in Anderson's mind and formed the basis for his life-long love for the outdoors.

Anderson graduated from Harvard with a degree in Anthropology – the same college where MacKaye spent his undergraduate and graduate years. Anderson was especially influenced by landscape historian J. B. Jackson's unique ways of observing the commonplace as well as the writings of American historian and "philosopher of technology" Lewis Mumford. At this time, Anderson also began to explore the northern New England countryside – as MacKaye had done decades before.

Anderson graduated at the height of the counterculture revolution – the 1960s-70s when the laid-back hippie lifestyle and environmentalism reigned supreme. Like many of this generation, the practicality of embarking on a traditional career was not a priority. Instead, he took a job in a sawmill. The return to life in a rural setting reminded him of the picturesque landscapes he so admired as a youth. It also heightened his awareness of the need to protect the environment.

"I learned a lot from the man who ran the sawmill, and his brother," Anderson recounted. "This was not book learning. They were good stewards of the lands and resources. More than once, as we were cutting down what looked to me like quite old trees, he mentioned that he had previously harvested similar trees on the same spot decades earlier. Thus, I learned something about the possibilities for sustainability resource uses and what can take place on the landscape during one person's lifetime."

Anderson soon found that keeping up with the 75-year-old logger was difficult – even for a fit young man in his 20s. Anderson left to become a journalist at a newspaper in rural Massachusetts.

Later, as a freelance writer, he was ready for a new endeavor. Given his life-long love of the outdoors, enthusiasm for protecting the environment and fascination with Benton MacKaye, Anderson was ready to delve into researching and writing about the life of Benton MacKaye – not as an historian writing about historical facts, but as a journalist describing and making

MacKaye's visionary concepts come alive, not only to scholars, but to inquisitive day hikers as well.

Anderson accomplished his goals. His research and descriptions are meticulous – as are the myriad of pictures of MacKaye's precisely detailed hand-drawn maps. In the book, Anderson lays out MacKaye's visions for the preservation and enjoyment of the environment -- many of these concepts can be identified today as: green spaces, the intrastate and interstate highway systems, designated wilderness areas protected from urban encroachment and the movement for environmental sustainability.

Anderson's first book, *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 2002. Available on [Amazon](#).

His second book, *Peculiar Work: Writing about Benton MacKaye, Conservation, Community* was published by Quicksand Chronicles in 2012. Available on [Amazon](#).

Going down a bit of a different path, his latest project is *The Sheriff's Tale: A Mostly True Chronicle of Early Las Vegas*).

--Larry Anderson

-- *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail*
(*Creating the North American Landscape*)

--Wikipedia