

Town Lines in New Hampshire

A question that has been asked of me on several occasions recently has been "What percentage of town lines are perambulated?" Until now, I have not known the answer, nor have I thought it particularly helpful to know. However, apparently many people think differently, so I have tried to dig to the bottom of the matter.

First, so you know how I arrived at these figures. (1) I counted as one line the entire distance between two towns, regardless of how many corners lie along that boundary. For example, the boundary separating Moultonborough and Tuftonborough starts out as a straight line running southwesterly, but then snakes through the lake between islands. The entire distance is called "one line" in my tabulation. (2) Lines include all boundaries that are more than a single point, regardless of the length. The line between Moultonborough and Alton also counts as one line, even though one map I have shows that it may only be a few yards in length, and lies entirely in Lake Winnepesaukee. (3) For the purpose of the stats, I have subtracted the boundaries that lie entirely in water. Even though the statute does not exclude those boundaries, to my knowledge we haven't had any recent attempts to walk on water.

I found that we have 624 distinct town lines. Of these, 589 run over land (at least in part). The List of the line is seven pages long.

I also went back through our index of Archives correspondence from 1996 to the 1st day of April, 2005, and found 132 perambulations. (Dr. Mevers writes a letter to each person submitting perambulations to show that we have received it).

Dividing the 132 perambulations by 111 months in between January 1996 and March 2005, we averaged 14 perambulations per year.

Dividing the average 14 perambulations annually by the 589 "perambulatable" lines derives 2.4% of the boundaries are perambulated annually.

Multiplying the 2.4% annual figure by the 7-year "cycle" would suggest that about 16-17% of town lines are perambulated in each seven year period.