

A Notch Above the Rest

Thursday, November 8, 2012

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Outing Club 1934

Historical Notes from the New Hampshire Outing Club—Oldest Student Organization on Campus

The New Hampshire Outing Club is believed to be the oldest student-run organization on campus, formed in either 1911 or 1914; accounts differ but the mission of the club – to give UNH students the chance to enjoy the outdoors – remains the same.

Two cabins in the White Mountains owned by the club can be rented by both members and non-members. One of them, located in Franconia Notch, was first built in 1934.

During the winter of 1933, there had been talk of erecting the cabin on university grounds. When that notion was nixed, club members looked to Franconia Notch. George Parker, who was club president in 1933-1934, recounted the history of the project, beginning with a log entry on June 24, 1934 that noted, "The cook quit us so everyone had to get their own breakfast."

On July 17, 1934, Parker wrote: "Just 30 days ago, we arrived to start construction. The cabin is not complete but we must wait until fall before fixing up the interior, cutting a trail, and laying the water pipe." About 18 men were involved with the work. Materials came from all over the North Country, from Lisbon to Lincoln, Littleton to North Woodstock.

"A great accomplishment for the Outing Club and a worthy construction for beautiful Franconia Notch," Parker wrote.



OUTING CLUB CAMP ON MIDDLE PAWTUCKAWAY MOUNTAIN VIEW FROM CABIN CA. 1927

Once the cabin was complete, a log book was left onsite for visitors to record details of their stays. The UNH Archives and Special Collections has several of the books, including one from Jan. 1, 1946 through Jan. 3, 1947 whose cover reads, "Notes Payable and Bills Payable."

An entry on Jan. 7, 1946 reads, "This date, Lee Magoon, UNHOC '36, Will Bartlett, UNHOC '37, Ed Wyman, UNHOC '37 arrived at the cabin – first trip of the three in seven years. Magoon, wearing his coonskin cap with tail hanging down the back, was hailed—on passing through Durham en route – as the 'oldest living alumnus'.

"The old historic cabin log, which this crew started (Magoon and Wyman were in the original building party – the NW corner (which is now in need of jacking up) being placed on a pot of Wyman's baked beans, no other use for which could be found."

A sampling of later entries follows.

Jan. 8, 1946: “Went to Pinkham; climbed to the Bowl but found it too icy for decent skiing. Ran down the Sherburn Trail in fits and stops and set a new record for taking longer to ski down than to climb up. ‘Twas hell, friends.” – Ed Wyman, director of publicity, UNHOC ’37.

May 5, 1946: “If you’re going to write in this blessed book, write so we can read it.” – Unknown.

Nov. 2, 1946: “Outside in the darkness, rain is falling on man and mountains. Inside, all is cheer and gay song around a crackling log fire.” – Stephen Warner, one of a party of 18.

Fast-forwarding to the 1960s, someone recorded this single line: “Thanks. Great food. Fun.” Another entry reads, “Hace muy frio en esta casa. Habia muy mucho fiesta.” On Sept. 8, 1966, UNHOC members Paul Beane and Sandy Hislop overnighted at the cabin. “Heavy frost on the roof this morning. Improvements noticed. Someone did some darn good work.”

A later entry by an unknown visitor reads, “First Outing Club trip for me. Was wonderful...the wind, the frost, the white birches, mountain tops. Oh, the beauty.”

Today, the NHOC has nearly 600 members. Activities range from hiking New Hampshire’s 48 4,000-footers to cross-country and downhill skiing, biking, kayaking, ice climbing and, on campus, ultimate Frisbee and Capture the Flag. As many as five trips a weekend take place throughout the year.

For more information, visit <http://www.unh.edu/nhoc/>.

Originally published by:

UNH Today

Photos courtesy University Archives

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