

## NEW HAMPSHIRE - AN OUTDOOR RECREATION TREND LEADER<sup>1</sup>

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It seems appropriate (at least to me) that a national symposium focusing on trends in outdoor recreation be held in the Granite State; a state which has played historically a role in the evolution of a variety of recreation activities far out of proportion to its size and population. After all, outdoor recreation is more than 150 years old here in New Hampshire. Yet should I ask you to consider the field of outdoor recreation in a national perspective, I suspect that most of you would think of a great variety of people, places, activities, agencies and organizations far removed from the State of New Hampshire. In terms of history, you might think of the states of California and New York, of the Niagara Falls Reservation and the Catskill and Adirondack Parks, of the National Park Service and Sequoia and Yellowstone, of Stephen Mather and Frederick Law Olmstead and many others. In terms of activities, you might consider boating in Florida, surfing in Hawaii, wilderness travel in Alaska, dune buggies in California, scuba diving on the Gulf Coast and hang gliding in the Rockies or mountaineering in Washington State, (or perhaps volcano watching.) With an exception or two, we have all those activities here in New Hampshire as well, along with many others.

The phrase "outdoor recreation" has not been in common usage for very long, relatively speaking. And, there has been considerable debate and speculation as to its precise definition. We never really used the term widely until the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission Report brought the term forcefully to the public consciousness upon its release in 1962. In his essay "Conservation Ethic" from his book, A Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold discussed the complexities of defining outdoor recreation:

"Barring love and war, few enterprises are undertaken with such abandon, or by such diverse individuals, or with so paradoxical a mixture of appetite and altruism, as that group of avocations known as outdoor recreation".

He went on to say that,

"Recreation, however, is not the outdoors, but our reaction to it".

Well, no matter how we define it, it appears that outdoor recreation is here to stay. Here in New Hampshire we understand what Aldo Leopold is saying for we have been in this business for a long time. We have seen recreationists, or tourists, in all shapes and sizes engaging in a myriad of activities. We have fished them out of the water, located them in the deep woods, plucked them off cliffs, and carried them off the mountains. Yet tens of thousands have come year 'round for a century and a half in perfect safety in spite of themselves.

### BACKGROUND - HISTORICAL NEW HAMPSHIRE

It might be helpful to take a brief look at New Hampshire's colorful history first in order to establish a background for understanding the origins and evolution of outdoor recreation in this state. Scarcely 9,300 square miles in size, it is one of the nation's smallest states, yet it is endowed with such a variety of natural beauty that it has attracted visitors from far and wide since its earliest days of existence. It enjoys a lovely, albeit limited, coastline of about 18 miles in length. The Canadian Border lies northerly about 200 miles away. One can drive across its widest point between the states of Maine and Vermont in approximately two hours. Overall lies a wealth of hills and mountains, ponds and lakes, fields and forests. As our favorite poet, Robert Frost, said in his poem "New Hampshire":

"----Just specimens is all New Hampshire has,  
One each of everything as in a showcase  
Which naturally she doesn't care to sell----".

From sea level to the summit of Mt. Washington, our state does offer, indeed, something for almost all tastes in terms of natural attractions.

### EARLY SETTLEMENT

First settled in 1623 and briefly established as an independent province, then governed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony until 1741 when it became a separate royal province once again, New Hampshire has a long and glorious history, fascinating to

<sup>1</sup>Paper presented at the National Outdoor Recreation Trends Symposium, Durham, NH, April 20-23, 1980

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scholars and lay people alike. Time does not allow an in-depth review, obviously, but let us take a quick look at the evolution of the state.

The first settlers found a land heavily forested. Along the coastline were huge pine trees which, along with fishing, provided the colonists with their first industry; that of cutting the huge trees and shipping them to England to be used as masts for British merchantmen and men-o'-war. These trees ranged from 150 to 200 feet in length and were from three to six feet wide at the butt end. For more than a century, New Hampshire colonists worked at this trade until the large trees were gone and the British then looked to the Province of Maine as a source of masts.

The Colonists slowly pushed inland and settled further and further from the coast. Soon after the early settlers landed, some enterprising adventurers explored the interior reaches of the area; in fact one Darby Field, accompanied by two Indian guides, followed the banks of the Saco River to the Conway intervals and ascended Mt. Washington in 1642 -- my wife, incidentally, is a direct descendent of Darby Field. But in general, the settlers were slow to proceed into the northernmost reaches of the state because of the danger from Indians during the French and Indian Wars. It wasn't until after the Revolutionary War that settlement north of the White Mountains proceeded steadily. The famous raid by Rogers Rangers against the St. Francis Indian Village in Quebec in 1759 virtually eliminated the threat of raids by the Abnakis. Sadly, the Abnakis were virtually wiped out. They were one of several tribes of the Algonquin Nation which inhabited this area. Many of their colorful names linger on since many New Hampshire locations, rivers, lakes, and mountains bear names from their language, to wit: Piscataqua, Pemigewasset, Androscoggin, Ammonoosuc, Contoocook, Coos, Winnepesaukee, Kanasatka, Waukewan, Winnesquam, Wonalancet ---.

However, during the Revolution the threat of Indian raids into northern New Hampshire became real once again, when the fierce Mohawks of the Iroquois Nation sallied into the upper reaches of the Connecticut River Valley at the behest of the British.

Following the Revolution, towns and villages were developed all the way to the Canadian Border, although it was not until the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 that New Hampshire's border with the Province of Quebec was firmly established.

#### OUTDOOR RECREATION, ORIGINS

Even before New Hampshire's northernmost boundary was settled, newcomers were settling in ever-increasing numbers; some from states to the

south and some from other countries. As roads were constructed and railroads extended throughout the state, visitors began to appear.

Before the Revolution, circa 1769, Provincial Governor John Wentworth became enamored with the lovely scenery around Wolfeboro and built an extensive set of buildings overlooking the shores of Lake Wentworth, thus giving the town grounds for her slogan, "Wolfeboro, Oldest Resort Town in America". In a very real sense this could be called the beginning of summer resorts and vacation travel. I suspect that after riding in a carriage from Portsmouth to Wolfeboro over a rough, dusty and very primitive roadway, one would need a vacation!

Many English and American poets and artists during the period 1825 to 1850 discovered the scenic beauties of the state, and through their works spread the word far afield. Soon visitors began to appear in large numbers. Improved roads and an extensive railroad system saw resorts spring up all over the state. Hotels were quickly built during the 20-year period prior to the Civil War; soon after the War came the era of the Grand Hotel. These imposing structures brought visitors via carriage and railroad while management served lavish meals, and catered to every whim of their guests. Along with tourists came new activities for out-of-door enjoyment; hunting, fishing, horseback riding, sightseeing, boating, hiking, and later mountaineering -- all became popular. An extensive system of summer resorts along the coastline, in the various lake regions, and around the White Mountains was clearly established. Tourism continued to grow and to flourish all through the years with only brief periods of retrenchment during times of national crisis, such as the Great Depression and World War II.

One activity in particular New Hampshire can point to as an early trend leader is hiking. Earlier we noted Darby Field's first ascent of Mt. Washington in 1642. That unusual exploit (for the times) can scarcely be singled out as the beginning of hiking as a recreational activity in New Hampshire. That distinction lies in the completion of the Crawford Path from Crawford Notch to the summit of Mt. Washington in 1820 by Ethan Allen Crawford; today that trail is distinguished as the oldest continually-used foot trail in the Nation.

In 1876 the Appalachian Mountain Club was organized in Boston and promptly focused many of its activities in New Hampshire where many of its members built footpaths in the White Mountains. In 1888 the Club built its first mountain hut at Madison Springs, the forerunner of the hut system, which today numbers eight units plus an extensive headquarters in Pinkham Notch which is open year 'round to the public. Through efforts of the AMC, the U.S. Forest Service, and other groups, New Hampshire has established the greatest concentration of hiking

trails in the Country, a system which has been in existence since the mid 1930's. Today, hiking remains as one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the state with visitors coming from far and wide to enjoy this sport. Greatest concentration is on the White Mountain National Forest, as you would expect, one of the most heavily used forests in terms of recreational use nationwide.

#### CHRONOLOGY

Since time is limited, rather than expound at length about the chronology of various activities in detail, let me run through a list of landmark events in New Hampshire outdoor recreation with brief comments wherever appropriate:

- 1642 - First ascent of Mt. Washington, Darby Field
- 1769 - First summer resort, Governor John Wentworth built summer home in Wolfeboro
- 1820 - Crawford Path completed by Ethan Allen Crawford, oldest continually used trail in Nation
- 1853 - Construction of Tip Top House at the summit of Mt. Washington
- 1861 - Mt. Washington Carriage Road completed
- 1869 - Mt. Washington Cog Railroad completed
- 1888 - Madison Hut constructed at elevation 4,825', Madison-Adams Col
- 1901 - Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests organized; active through the years in contributing to public enjoyment of the outdoors
- 1909 - First Collegiate outing club; Dartmouth Outing Club organized
- 1911 - Weeks Act; permitted the creation of national forests east of the Mississippi River and White Mountain National Forest the first to be established.
- 1922 - Appalachian Trail efforts began; Benton MacKaye; New Hampshire trails instant part of Appalachian Trail
- 1931 - First ski school in United States at Pecketts-on-Sugar-Hill

1932 - First National Downhill Ski Championship held; at Mt. Moosilauke under the auspices of Dartmouth Outing Club at Ravine Lodge

- Completion of AMC Hut System; until Mizpah Hut in 1964, first and only Mountain Hut System in Nation

1933 - First National Intercollegiate Downhill Ski Championship, DOC at Mt. Moosilauke

1938 - First aerial passenger tramway in North America, Cannon Mtn., Franconia Notch State Park

- First major ski area in a state park system

1939 - First Inferno Race, Mt. Washington, won by Austrian Toni Matt in race from summit of Mt. Washington to Pinkham Notch - 4 miles - times still a record, 6 minutes, 29 seconds

1945 - Division of State Parks established as independent unit; broken away from Forestry Commission

1948 - Mt. Sunapee State Park established; second major ski area in state park system

1960 - First Private Campground Owners Association in Nation; evolved through instigation of state, co-produced Camping Guide for 20 years

1962 - First Private Campground Association to have a full-time executive director; promoted tourism; produced major camping show

1969 - Among leaders in dealing with snowmobile problems; first to lease private lands for public trails; liability insurance

#### MODERN ERA

This brings us to the so-called modern era which begins with the great outdoor recreation explosion of the early 1960's. (My definition). The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) Report had outlined for the Nation the trends and needs at local, state, and federal levels. Fortunately, many public and private organizations were already preparing for improved and expanded facilities at about the same time. Here in New Hampshire three agencies in particular were in the process of planning and constructing a variety of new facilities and services for the public; they were the U.S. Forest Service, the Division of State Parks, and the Appalachian

Mountain Club. Indeed, they have been in the forefront of trend setting in dealing with present and anticipated recreational problems.

The Forest Service instituted long range recreation planning while initiating construction of new campgrounds, picnic areas, back-country camping facilities, and so on. The Parks System had guided a recreation bond issue throughout the Legislature in 1961 and in the ensuing years built several new parks and improved facilities in general. The AMC began an ambitious program of improvement throughout the hut system and built a new facility on the side of Mt. Clinton named the Mizpah Hut. These agencies teamed up to institute many services and policies that could truly be called trend setting in the field of outdoor recreation. To list some of them:

#### White Mountain National Forest

- as one of the leading "recreation" forests in the Nation, the WMNF instituted comprehensive long-range planning with public involvement which gave great credence to all aspects of outdoor recreation through unit planning
- it took steps to protect scenic areas and unique natural resources on the Forest by imposing restrictions and controls
- it undertook a variety of research projects aimed at environmental impact and user behavior
- it has done a reasonably good job in achieving balance in terms of recreation and commercial needs between the "Wilderness" and "Multiple Use" controversy

#### Appalachian Mountain Club

- instituted guided hikes, alpine flower walks, etc. and found great public acceptance
- started mountain leadership workshops in order to improve leadership of guided groups, especially children's groups such as scouts, YMCA, church, and other groups
- initiated "carry in, carry out" program on WMNF which contributed greatly to cleaning up trails and campsites
- demonstrated that private organization can effectively help public sector meet needs of recreationists
- devised new trail maintenance and construction techniques that became model for other sections of the Country.

- hut system continued to be model for accommodating public in mountains with pluses and minuses in terms of environmental impact; experimented with different methods of dealing with these problems and worked closely with U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service

#### N.H. Division of State Parks

- historically park campgrounds were self-sufficient financially and charged more realistic prices than most others; first to charge differential rates; first to charge preferential rates based on site attractiveness
- demonstrated that state-operated ski areas could fulfill a need and not compete unfavorably with private areas
- held firm against intrusion of I-93 through Franconia Notch State Park; with aid of conservationists gained compromise which protected and improved park facilities and resources

To a great extent, the New Hampshire philosophy regarding the financing of park operations has been, "the user should pay", while at the same time the feeling was, and is, that capital projects which would benefit future users should be financed through general fund monies. Although this philosophy is now widely shared by other states, it has not always been so. In his book, The State Parks - Their Meaning in American Life, Freeman Tilden pointed out the following in 1962:

"In New Hampshire - fortunately this is almost the only instance of it - successive legislatures have insisted that the state parks "pay their way". Nature provided this state with some of the most thrilling and satisfying scenery in the Country; it has never been a problem to find suitable natural areas that measure up to the most exacting criteria of the ideal state park. Yet, the insistence upon self-support has forced a director of ability and discrimination to resort to "attractions" that are obviously incompatible with the grandeur of the parks.

To be fair, however, the reasons for this situation should be mentioned. New Hampshire was in the tourist business long before state parks were conceived. The same geological changes that made it, except for pockets of alluvium, a hardscrabble agricultural region endowed it with a beauty and significance that enabled it to count on income from visitors as a regular means of livelihood. Therefore, the feeling for state parks based upon cultural values - - - remained mostly in the imaginations of a few idealists".

We feel that New Hampshire has been a trend setter in terms of charging realistic rates for services rendered which would not put private operations offering similar services at a competitive disadvantage, while at the same time it has provided services which private enterprise has been either unable or unwilling to supply.

#### CONCLUSION

Today New Hampshire and the Nation face a most uncertain future. Many of our former guidelines, plans, policies, and services for outdoor recreation are archaic; perhaps even our philosophies as well. It is time for reevaluation; a time for sensitivity to the needs of our total constituency, a time for innovative thinking, and a time for commitment to dealing with an ever-changing society.

I feel confident that here in New Hampshire our institutions and our managers will continue to rise to the challenges of providing services and facilities in the field of outdoor recreation. We have the natural resources for it; we have a sound track record. In a sense New Hampshire has been a laboratory in this field, a microcosm of the national scene. I suspect we shall continue in some fashion to be a trend setter. The spirit of independence which we have inherited here has stood us in good stead. New Hampshire people have demonstrated resourcefulness and leadership when the need has arisen. As Robert Frost said:

"When I left Massachusetts years ago between two days, the reason why I sought New Hampshire, not Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, or Vermont was this: Where I was living then, New Hampshire offered the nearest boundary to escape across. I hadn't an illusion in my hand-bag about the people being better there than those I left behind. I thought they weren't. I thought they couldn't be. And yet they were ---".