

## **Chapter 10: Section History and Archives**

### **Why Keep a Section Archives?**

The Green Mountain Club has a history dating back to 1910.. Many of the Club's sections have been in existence for nearly as long. Section history is an important part of GMC history. Knowledge and understanding of our shared past helps bind the Club and its sections together. Old-timers like to reminisce on their experiences in earlier years. Newcomers like to learn more about the section and its past.

An understanding of the past can have practical applications as well. Sometimes funding and permitting decisions revolve around documented historic use of land or structures. This is especially important as the GMC takes on the responsibility of land ownership and stewardship.

Over the years, section leadership runs through many hands. It is easy for records and artifacts to get lost, either because their historic significance was not recognized at the time or because people moved on or passed away. It is important for sections to establish a procedure for saving materials for the future.

Sections can play a vital role in preserving our common link to the past. As we make an effort now to save records and artifacts, future historians will have a better understanding of the history of the GMC and its sections.

### **Who Should Keep a Section Archives?**

Ideally, sections appoint a section historian or archivist. Alternatively, a section leader, such as the secretary, may take on this function. Another option may be to seek out volunteers who are interested in sharing the responsibilities of organizing the section's archives. The main requirement is that those who do this job are willing to commit time and energy to preserving the section's past.

### **Section Historian or Archivist: Roles and Responsibilities**

The section historian or archivist has two major roles. First, he or she is responsible for collecting and organizing records and artifacts. Secondly, he or she should establish a procedure for saving new materials as they are created. Some of the specific duties of a section historian may include:

- Collecting and organizing materials that document the section's past.
- Establishing a system of organizing the archives and passing it on to future historians.
- Establishing a system to save documents as they are being created, while keeping in mind that paper documents are still the best proven medium for permanent storage.
- Learning about and following accepted archival methods for the preservation of materials, including the use of archival (acid-free) supplies.

- Periodically requesting historic items through the section newsletter and at section gatherings.
- Encouraging and facilitating the writing of a section history.
- Stimulating interest in section history through newsletter articles, displays, and presentations.

### **What Should Be Included in the Section Archives?**

The history of a section is found in many media, from the hiking boots of a founding member to the minutes of section annual meetings. Well-preserved and identified photographs are a valuable source of historical information. Here are some examples of materials that can be included in a section archives:

- Founding documents, bylaws (including amendments), and other legal documents.
- Minutes of meetings, agendas, treasurer's reports, officer and membership lists, and other administrative records.
- Newsletters, outing calendars, press releases, and newspaper clippings.
- Photographs, slides, videos, etc. Where possible, identify the images with dates, locations, and names, using archival writing instruments..
- Awards, dedications (?), and other special recognition of the section and its members.
- Trail maps.

### **Where to Find Historic Information about a Section**

Historic information about the section can be found through many sources:

- Section leaders, officers, and members, especially those who have been active for a long time and are interested in section history, and past section historians.
- Section newsletters and the *Long Trail News*.
- Long Trail guidebooks and other GMC publications.
- For many sections, a wealth of historical information is found at the Vermont Historical Society Library which houses the GMC archives, the Vermont State Library which has the state newspapers, and the University of Vermont, Bailey/Howe Library, Special Collections Department.

Remember that section history is being created all the time. Documents and artifacts saved today will not have to be tracked down in the future!

### **Where to Keep Section Archives**

Storing and preserving a section's archives is a challenge. Space is always at a premium, time takes its toll, and people move on. Ideally, the section should find a safe, long-term location for its archives. If the archives must be moved, try to ensure that the collection is kept together and that section officers and other members know the location. Especially valuable items may be sent to the Vermont Historical Society Library or to the GMC office.

### **How to Drum up Interest in Section History**

Use section history to keep it alive! Display documents and artifacts at meetings and public events. Make scrapbooks available for members to look at and laugh at. Provide forums for older members to share their stories with newer members.

Display section history on the section web site. For one example, look at [www.gmcmontpelier.org/archives/index.htm](http://www.gmcmontpelier.org/archives/index.htm)

Most importantly, continue to build the section's archives and ensure that it is passed on safely to future generations.