

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

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

The Green Mountain Club has a history dating back to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the Club's sections have been in existence for nearly as long. Section history is an important part of GMC history. A knowledge and understanding of our shared past helps to 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 our past can have practical applications as well. Sometimes funding and permitting decisions revolve around documented historic uses 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 is not recognized at the time, or because people move on or pass away. It is important for sections to establish an organized system 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 History and Create the Archives**

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

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

The section historian or archivist should have two major roles. First, he or she is responsible for collecting and organizing records and artifacts. Secondly, the section historian should establish a method 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 modern system (including computer filing) to save documents as they are created.
- Learning about and following established methods for preservation of materials.
- Periodically requesting historic items in section newsletters and 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 forms, from the hiking boots of a founding member to the minutes of section annual meetings. Well-preserved and documented photographs are a particularly good treasure of historical information. Here are some examples of materials that could be included in a section archives:

- Founding documents, bylaws (documenting changes over time), legal documents.
- Meeting minutes, treasurer's reports, leadership and membership lists, and other administrative records.
- Newsletters, outing calendars, and other public documents.

- Photographs, slides, videos, etc. Where possible, document the images with dates, locations, and names of people in the pictures.
- Awards, dedications, newspaper clippings, and other special recognition of the section and its members.
- Trail maps.

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

Historic information on the section can be found through several resources:

- Section leaders, presidents, treasurers, secretaries, and newsletter editors.
- Section members, especially those who have been active for a long time.
- Section newsletters and *Long Trail News*.
- Past section historians and archivists or members interested in section history.
- For many sections, a wealth of historical information is found at the Vermont Historical Society and the University of Vermont Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections Department.

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

#### **Where to Keep Archives and Section History**

Keeping and preserving a section's archives is a challenge. Space is always at a premium, time is always taking 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 new location. Especially valuable items may be sent to the Vermont Historical Society, the official repository of GMC archives, or to the GMC office for other appropriate storage.

#### **How to Continue Section History Once It Is Compiled**

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

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