

Early in March 1923, at a Squaring Off Party given by the Green Mountain Club members living in Worcester to the members of the Worcester Chapter of the Appalachian Club, Club, the suggestion to form a Worcester Section of the Green Mountain Club was made, and a date was set for a meeting to act upon this suggestion.

On March 26, 1923, 22 local members met at the rooms of the Worcester County Extension Bureau. Mr. George F. E. Story outlined the plans for the suggested Worcester Section. That was a most enthusiastic meeting and eleven G.M.C.s were enrolled as Charter Members: Herbert M. Dockham, George F. E. Story, Alario Leauge, Dr. Gardner W. Cobb, Louis L. Bigelow, Eric P. Jackson, Joseph H. Frappier, Harold A. Stevens, Stanley Banfield, Frank A. Wilder, and Mrs. Kate Dockham. Mr. Dockham was elected President, Dr. Cobb Vice President and Mr. Jackson, Secretary Treasurer. Mr. Dockham served for three years, being succeeded by Mr. Story for two years. Annual dues were set at \$3.00, \$2.00 going to Vermont.

The first issue of Trail Signs, the regular bulletin of activities, appeared in early April prior to the first monthly meeting held on April 12, 1923. 35 members were present to hear Mr. Fred H. Tucker of Boston, Vice President of the Green Mountain Club, give "an enthusiastic and interesting talk about his experiences and of the possibilities in camping and climbing on the Long Trail." At an executive committee meeting on April 16th, "the location of a hut on the Worcester-Wachusett Trail was discussed and other possible locations were considered." A permanent camp or hut continued to be "much discussed" but "not until 1946 did this dream materialize."

The first recorded outing was on May 6th - an all day walk to Sutton and "descent into Purgatory" Chasm - it was suggested "that the hikers attend church on the way." On May 26, there was a moonlight hike to Wachusett, taking the "late car to Jefferson, see sunrise, etc." Fifteen other outings were scheduled during 1923 including two trips up Mt. Monadnock, one up Watatic Mountain, a "dog roast", husking bee, swimming party, historical outing, and a "pole field day." Sunday walks proved to be most popular, as is still so in 1970. Then now, several of the members were also members of the Appalachian Club and occasional joint outings of the two clubs were held. During the summer, a number of the members were up on the Long Trail.

The membership grew in leaps and bounds, on May 1, 44 were enrolled and by January 1, the Section had 76 members. The first annual meeting was held December 12, 1923 so that the officers terms would correspond to the calendar year. There was by then a collection of over 100 lantern slides, illustrating the Long Trail as well as local activities. These lantern slides are now in the attic of our present Camp on Cedar Meadows Pond in Leicester.

On February 22, 1924 Mt. Wachusett was climbed on snow shoes and this became a tradition. That year an outing was planned at Kent, Conn. with the New York Section. Many joint outings were held with New York, especially during the 30's and 40's. On the warmest night of 1925, another moonlight hike to Wachusett was held, reaching the summit in time for sunrise and breakfast. In February 1926, a winter sports carnival was held by the various outing clubs at Turkey Hill Polo Club. Because of a severe snow storm some of the events were cancelled. Sleighs were provided, but seven G.M.C.s, to be different, hiked some distance, two battling the storm for about twenty miles, while the other five fought through ten miles of cross-country. It was not reported whether these seven further participated in the days activities. An overnight moonlight climb was made on Mt. Monadnock in June. Social events crept into the 1926 picture. That was the year of the first Hollows'en Party, a tradition for many years, and of the first Christmas Party. The "old-fashioned Christmas" at the Camp was one of the highlights of 1969.

1926 saw the Long Trail completed from Hazen's Notch to Jay Peak, near the Canada Line, a distance of about ten miles, "completing the Trail after sixteen years of endeavor, making total length now 255.6 miles. The credit for this finishing touch is due to the Worcester Section, five members of which put in a weeks work, including its President, George Story, Herbert Dockham, its founder, Richard Dockham and Louis Bigelow."

Effective January 1, 1927, that portion of the dues sent to the parent Club was reduced from \$2.00 to 20¢, the remaining \$2.80 being used for "trail work by the Section." At a January meeting, the members were excited to learn of three girls planning to hike the LT from Massachusetts to the Canadian Line, from a member just returned from the annual meeting in Rutland. In March, Mortimer Proctor asked if the Section would maintain the Trail from Bureau's Notch to Jay Peak and it was voted to do so for one year. "Jay Peak Day" was held on June 26. 400 attended and 200 went up on the trail our Section had developed. The first Club trip to the Loag Trail Lodge (newly renamed) was taken over the July Fourth weekend and a stop was made at the home of President Cealidge in Plymouth. Later in 1927 the trail to Jay Peak was relinquished for the Wing Ski Trail on Stratton Mountain in southern Vermont, a change favored by Mr. Hess. That year \$50.00 was raised to help the sufferers of the Vermont Flood, Messrs. Bigelow and Story making several trips to Vermont with clothing.

In June 1928 it was voted to take over scouting the Trail north of Glastonbury, and at the November 14th meeting Mr. Bigelow reported on the STRATTON MOUNTAIN OUTING over the 12th of October. Trail blazed and cut from Glastonbury Mt. to Arlington Road, about ten miles. As usual, Bigelow, Deekhan and Story were on hand to "supervise the job." This report was signed by Pearl E. Clarke, Sec. pro. tem, Pearl's pro. tem, continued till 1954 - she's been Messary Life Member since 1946. 5 1/2 miles of this section of trail, south from Black Branch to Big Rock, was turned over in 1929 for maintenance to the boys of Camp Esajerog (Najerog). The boys maintained this section under the direction of Harold "Kid" Gore till his death in 1969. In February 1970, the whole section of Trail from Glastonbury to the road at Black Branch was taken over by the new Connecticut Section.

During the summer of 1929, Misses Agass and Olive Watkins, members, and two others hiked the full length of the Loag Trail from Massachusetts to Jay Peak. The Camp at Stratton Road was built in 1929. 2000' feet of lumber and other materials were carried in three miles on the trail. George Story and Louis Bigelow did the bossing and barred all women from the job. This was the beginning of the tradition that excluded women for forty years from our Loag Trail work parties - till the May 16th (1970) GAO Day on the Loag Trail when tradition was shattered by the presence of five girls. For a number of years participation even by males was by invitation only. The dedication ceremony took place on October 12, 1929 in a drizzling rain with 35 Section members and 14 Club Trustees present, and Camp Willis Hess was officially presented to the Green Mountain Club. The Camp had to wait till 1930 for a functioning stove, the original having been dropped in transit into a side brook and "left there." Though not yet our responsibility, the trail to Burr's Pond was cleared.

The first annual dinner meeting was held in 1931. The Coughlanwaga Shelter had been built that year by the Najerog boys. Walter and Nellie Cherry served strawberries and cream on June 25, 1932 after a picnic supper and the Strawberry Festival was initiated, an annual event second only in importance to the Sugaring Off. The tenth anniversary brought "many old timers" in 1933. The Section went on record at the 1933 annual meeting as opposed to the proposal to build a new highway over the Skyline of Vermont, a proposal which has been resurrected in recent years. In 1934 a Club Emblem, designed by Franklin Johnson, was adopted by the Worcester Section and then, by the parent Club. It was used by all Sections till replaced by the Emblem in 1962, though it did survive a challenge in 1936 by a design from Burlington. The small pin version of the emblem was developed in 1939 and in 1941, the rear window sticker, both having been conceived in Worcester.

The Club was saddened by the death of its President, Walter Cherry, in 1937. Nellie Cherry presented the Club with a gavel and block which was to have been a surprise gift to her husband and which had been made from a favorite cherry tree. It continues to be the Section President's official gavel. In August 1937 the new shelter on the west end of Stratton Pond (Stratton View) was reported ready for use. That same year, \$50.00 was contributed for the Cooper Memorial to be built on Killington Mountain. 1938 marked a peak of 150 members and was a year of cancellations when the woods were closed following the Great Hurricane in September. Some of our members started working for Uncle Sam in 1941. Every year took more and more till there were about twenty in the service at the end. The Hospitality Committee endeavored to keep in touch with each with cards, letters and boxes.

in 1942 Doctor Cobb offered the use of a cottage on his estate on Stonehouse Hill in Paxton as temporary (five years) local camp. In February 1943 it was voted to accept this offer. This was the time of "gas rationing" so good use was made of Camp Cobb and more of the local spots were explored for activities. In 1944 Louis Bigelow was made an Honorary Life Member. Also so honored were Herbert Dockham, Doctor Gardner Cobb and Pearle Clarke in 1946, and Joseph Frappier in 1950. By 1946 plans were underway for a new camp. Land was found in Holden and on September 21 it was voted to purchase this site. The eight defense bonds were sold and the proceeds applied towards the purchase of the property. After twenty three years of committees, investigations, discussions - sometimes heated - and votes, the Worcester Section at last had a local home. October saw the first work party, and 1947, 1948 and 1949 were years when most concentrated all efforts towards getting the local camp building in shape to be used. Camp Cobb was used till the five year option ran out. Everything was moved to the New Camp on April 23, 1948. Late that year an annex was added and was first used on New Years Day. The hard work of the men and the efforts of the women in raising most of the money made the project a success. \$664.16 was raised by "rummage sale, bean supper, sale and auction, food sales, sale of Knobby Kraft jewelry, collection of guest fees and the like."

These were years of much activity. A high point of membership of 159 was reached at the end of 1946. When the original list of End-to-Enders was published in 1955, not only were Bigelow and Story listed, but also four of our Amherst professors, Thayer, Van Meter, Vondell (all 1943) and French (1952). Also are three who are presently still active in our section, Fran Green (1944), Trueman Sanderson (1946) and Bob Vickstrom (1947). Five additional names have been added to the list in recent years, Bob Eumes, Betty and Dick Church, Mauri Wintturi and Sergius Wentzel.

July 14, 1955 the present By-Laws were adopted and on December 3, 1955 the Section was incorporated as The Green Mountain Club, Worcester Section, Inc. The New Camp was named Camp Clarke in 1954 in honor of Pearle. By the end of 1955 the mortgage had been reduced from \$900 to \$400. The Camp Committee report told of some remaining projects and suggested the care and consideration they had for the camp. In the night on August 10, 1956 Camp Clarke burned to the ground. The Section has never been quite the same since.

In the latter part of 1956 the present Camp was acquired. It is in a beautiful setting on Cedar Meadows Pond in Leicester. In recent years our activities have tended to be local. The Section President traditionally has open house at the Camp on New Years. For many years Jim Green has been our superlative sugarmaster at the Sugaring Off. We learned the art from George Story. Those who arise in time for the annual 6 AM birdwalk in May are treated to the greatest panozkees. The Appalachians Club is regularly invited for a swim and picnic outing with us at the Camp in June. Also in June are the Strawberry Festival and Auction. There have been regular fall hikes on the Metacomet Trail with the Pioneer Valley Section. For some years the Annual Dinner Meeting has been held in October. The final regular activity is the December Christmas Party. Throughout the year there are various other outings, very popular have been Mt. Wachusett climbs and moonlight chowder parties. Recently there has been a renewed interest in the more rugged hiking and climbing trips due to the addition of some new members with this sort of interest.

Our section of the Trail in the Stratton Mountain area has been regularly maintained by work parties in May and August led by Bob Eumes. We were very pleased when Bob was elected President of the parent Club for 1964-1965. We are presently working on plans for a relocation which would finally eliminate the stretch of the Arlington-West Stoneboro Road from our section, the Long Trail.

taken from the old records

Richard E Church