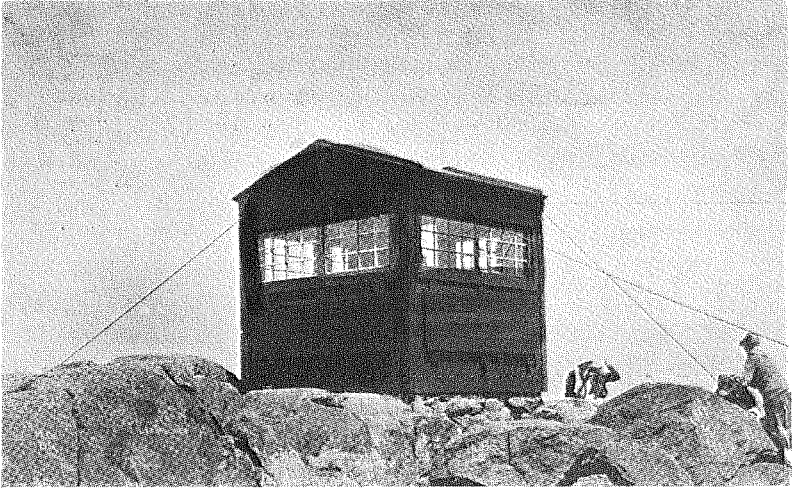


CHAPTER XI

RECREATION

MOUNT MONADNOCK

Recreation facilities in Jaffrey make the town an attractive one for year-round living and are inducements for tourists and recreation seekers to sojourn here for longer or shorter periods. Not least among the natural attraction is Mt. Monadnock itself, with several well marked trails to its 3,165 foot summit (above



TIP TOP HOUSE, MOUNT MONADNOCK

sea level), and the several recreation areas at its base. Thousands who visit it return again and again, for there is a soul satisfying majesty about the mountain. In the affections of Jaffrey's greatest benefactor and world traveler, Jules Clinton Durant, Monadnock held first place. In his world travels he saw thousands of mountains, but to him Monadnock was the grandest of them all.

For many years the "tip-top house" on its summit, silhouetted against the skyline, was visible for miles around. It was built in 1914 as a fire observatory or "look-out station" by the State of New Hampshire Forestry Commission, and served its purpose until 1928. It was visited by tens of thousands of mountain climbers, many of them from distant places and lands. In

1928 it was replaced by a stone cabin built into a niche or recess in the summit ledge or rock, with only its roof and windows slightly above the surrounding ledge. During its twenty-eight year history many thousands more Monadnock climbers visited it annually. Periodical repairs to the roof and walls were made, even as late as 1953, three years prior to its reconstruction.

Buffeted by the four winds and the gales of twenty-eight winters, its reconstruction became a matter of necessity in 1956. The New Hampshire Recreation Division, whose task the rebuilding was, was faced by the problem of getting the necessary materials for the project from the base of operations at the old Half Way House site to the summit, up a narrow and precipitous White Arrow Trail. The challenge was accepted by five young members of the Monadnock State Park Staff, Peter Davis, William C. Royce, Daniel Shattuck, Jr., David Shattuck, and Gerald DeGrandpre. All still under twenty-five years of age, strong and enthusiastic, they kept the pre-cut lumber and supplies moving up the mountain side, Indian file fashion, making the trips to the summit from forty minutes to two and a half hours. The elapsed time depended on the type of loads carried. Estimates placed the weight of the lumber carried at 2400 pounds and the other materials, including tools and equipment, at two hundred pounds. The Jaffrey quintet was assisted by Carl Berry's men, Edmund Peron and Leo Martel, both of Suncook, New Hampshire. Berry himself, who directed the project, hailed from Hooksett, New Hampshire. Peron and Martel brought the lumber to the old Half Way House site by truck over the old "toll road." There it was cut to size for the ten by fourteen foot building by a portable generator powered saw.

The claim that Mt. Monadnock is the most climbed mountain in the Northeast appears to be well founded, as the following statistics indicate. Records kept during its open season, May to November, reveal that the registered attendance at the Monadnock State Park was 18,910 in 1948; 23,048 in 1952; 55,786 in 1962; and 65,455 in 1969. Thousands of climbers more took the other trails to its summit and many climbed the mountain when the park was closed. The total number of climbers in 1969 is estimated to be near 80,000.

The lure of the mountain has attracted visitors during the winter and spring seasons as well, when it is officially closed, and many have learned to their chagrin the risks and dangers involved in such an adventure. Over the years search and rescue parties

have made headlines in the area press and even in the metropolitan newspapers. Included among them during the last decade may be listed the following headlines:

November 17, 1960: "Night Traps Family on Mountain."

December 14, 1961: "More Men Lost on Mt. Monadnock. Winchendon Pair Object of All-night Search."

October 18, 1962: "Three Teen-age Girls Found Shortly After Midnight."

August 15, 1963: "Nine Year Old Cambridge Youth Spends Night on Mountain."

April 23, 1964: "Boy Scouts Spend 28 Hours on Ice-encrusted Peak."

December 5, 1964: "Three Massachusetts Hikers Spend Night on Ice Covered Pumpelly Ridge."

On New Year's Day in 1965, three Massachusetts hikers, who disregarded the closed entrance gate and personal warning, scaled the icy slopes and reached the summit with much difficulty, but in making their descent, one of the group, Lionel Sylvester of Watertown, Massachusetts, slid off an icy cliff and landed in a ravine eighty feet below. Thirteen hours later a half dozen men, including a doctor and Conservation Officer Kenneth Warren of Peterborough, who undertook the mercy mission and risked their own lives in a treacherous midnight descent on a "frozen waterfall" trail, carried the victim down the mountain on a stretcher. The victim was a twenty-one year old law student, over six feet tall. Seriously wounded, he was rushed to a Massachusetts hospital for treatment.

Fires on the Mountain have occurred at various times. The most recent great fire started on Sunday, October 18, 1953, which resulted in about two hundred acres of beautiful mountain forest at 2,200 feet elevation being burned. The fire, which was believed to have been caused by a carelessly thrown cigarette in the leaves and underbrush, was not discovered until the following morning by which time it had made much headway over the difficult terrain. At night it was visible over a wide area. It was restrained by the efforts of hundreds of fire fighters and finally, three days and nights later, it was pronounced under control and out by the end of the week. About one half of the burned area was owned by the State of New Hampshire and the other half by the Town of Jaffrey and the Society for the Protection

of New Hampshire Forests. Today the trails are carefully checked after a busy day and camping on the Mountain itself is not permitted.

Attempts to commercialize the Mountain have been made at times. The most recent one was in the 1940's and resulted in the formation of The Society to Protect Mt. Monadnock in 1945 by friends of the mountain. At this time a move to build a radio tower, living quarters, and a road to the summit was contemplated by outside interests. The friends of Mt. Monadnock rallied their forces and the move was abandoned. The new association raised \$28,000.00 for the purchase of the Half Way House property. Most of this land has been turned over to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the exception being the area immediately around the Half Way House site and the road leading to it.

On the night of April 13, 1954, the Half Way House was destroyed in a spectacular fire seen for miles. It was closed at the time. The Toll Road leading to it and the Half Way House had been maintained by Professor Willem Pinard of Boston University. Following the destruction of the Half Way House, a picnic area and parking lot, and a small shelter or cabin were maintained by Professor Willem Pinard and after his retirement by David K. Shattuck of Jaffrey. The shelter has now been taken down, and the "Toll Road" leading to it has been closed to vehicular traffic. The original purpose of the road was to transport guests to the Half Way House, but with the house now gone, in 1968 the trustees of The Association to Protect Mt. Monadnock petitioned the Public Utilities Commission for its closing after a public hearing on the matter. Since it was not a public highway, its maintenance had become a financial problem. Today it can be hiked to the trails up the Mountain at its end.

In 1968 a committee was formed with representatives from The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the Department of Resources and Economic Development of the State, and individuals interested in the Mountain. The purpose of this committee is to study the optimum use versus the maximum use for Monadnock, with emphasis on better planning and management of the public holdings.

The annual conference was held on September 14, 1968, at the Old Meeting House at Jaffrey Center. Per Nylen, landscape archi-

tect, summarized the purposes of the study committee at that time as follows:

“Monadnock seems to suffer from the fact that it is unusual in quality to attract a tremendous amount of interest and not remote enough in location to be offered normal protection of distance from great populations.

“Monadnock lies on the perimeter of the megalopolis and attracts more than 75% of its visitors from outside the State of New Hampshire.

“In order to plan for the future of the mountain it must be kept in mind that it is a fixed quantity. Population will continue to grow but the area of the top of the mountain will be the same.

“Monadnock should be given a priority in the general plan for management or resources in the State and its use controlled to conform with its value and uniqueness.”

It is in this interest that The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests in association with the State Parks, will in July, 1970, open an ecological center at the entrance to the White Dot Trail. At the proposed center information will be made available, lectures will be given on the ecology of the mountain, and an all-out effort to ease the litter problem of the trails will be made.

MONADNOCK STATE PARK

Formerly known locally as the Poole Reservation on Mt. Monadnock and the Monadnock Reservoir area, Monadnock State Park is today greatly expanded in both facilities and area. It is easily accessible by the road built in 1921-22 by the late Joel H. Poole in memory of his son, Arthur Eugene Poole, who died in 1912. The road essentially follows the old long abandoned road to the Joseph Mead farm laid out in 1803. For its land area Monadnock State Park owes most of its preservation to the generosity of the Poole family, who owned and operated The Ark for many years as a hotel business. The picnic area and parking lot at the end of the road were also built at Mr. Poole's expense, and in 1933 a cabin was built by his widow, completing his wishes for a reservation.

When The Ark property was sold in 1929 his widow and her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Arthur E. Poole, offered the lower slopes on

the Mountain at reasonable terms so that they might be added to the Reservation.

The Civilian Conservation Corps developed most of the base area in 1934 and 1935, enhancing the park's picnic facilities by building shelters and a circuit road. Today these facilities have been expanded to accommodate up to 10,000 campers annually and the Park, taxed to its capacity, can handle up to 4,000 picnickers and hikers a day.

During the Monadnock fire in 1953 the shelter at the Monadnock State Park and the Park were the base of operations for the fire fighters.

MONADNOCK RECREATION AREA, INC.

Whatever type of recreational activity their guests may have in mind, the chances are that their wishes will be fulfilled at Monadnock Recreation Area, Inc., a winter and summer resort operated at the base of Mt. Monadnock by Peter B. Davis and George H. Bolles of Jaffrey. Davis and Bolles are cousins and grandsons of the late George R. Brown of Jaffrey. Besides his interests in the resort area, Davis operates one of the largest farms in Jaffrey, raising purebred Ayrshire heifers. Both are enterprising young men who are teaming their energies to create one of the region's most varied and best equipped recreation spots.

They bought the property in January, 1969, from Edwin Bernstein, who in 1946 had acquired it from the Isaac Sprague family and converted the former summer home and farm into a resort hotel known as Birchtoft Lodge. Immediately after purchasing the property, Davis and Bolles launched upon an active program of enlarging and improving existing facilities and adding new ones.

The recreation area is located on two hundred acres of mountain land, and includes a 12-acre pond, Gilson Pond, and two beaches on Thorndike Lake. There is a private trail to the summit of Mt. Monadnock and mountain paths and trails and wilderness camping are also available for the adventurous. Several cabins and cottages, and a large lodge with bunk rooms, recreation halls, lounge area, and kitchen complete the layout. The scene has changed considerably from the 1930's when Sprague's registered Guernsey cattle roamed some of those sloping acres!

Monadnock Recreation Area, Inc., is a winter and summer re-

sort offering lodge facilities, skiing, ice skating, snowmobiling, tobogganing, mountain climbing, fishing, boating, sailing, water skiing, tennis, camping facilities, and planned recreational activities. Its location is five miles from the main shopping center of the town, but many convenience groceries and supplies may be purchased at the area.

Monadnock Recreation Area has 125 camp sites, most of which are equipped with water and electric hookups and sewage disposal services. The fame of the area is already far-flung; with guests from Israel, Mexico City, and other distant places having already enjoyed its pure mountain air and recreational facilities. Weekend guests, and those who come for shorter or longer periods, and even year around guests, are accommodated on a reservation basis.

EMERALD ACRES

With a shimmering pond visible through a pine grove for a backdrop, Emerald Acres has become a popular campground. Operated by Elphege and Dorothy (Baker) Christian and located within a quarter-mile walking distance of the shopping district, it is an ideal place for relaxation and camping for those who wish to be near to the main stream of life yet far enough away to enjoy the peace and quiet of the country. It is located off Ridgecrest Road on the shores of Cheshire Pond, with a beach for swimming, and many camp sites for overnight or longer stays. In the seven years that the Christians have been operating the campground they have found, that, once visited, people return again and again to enjoy the facilities, where even their children may do things on their own. Individual fireplaces, picnic tables, and electric hookups and modern sanitation services enhance family camping here.

Most of the campers are families from all the New England States, but even world travelers from England, Scotland, and New Zealand have been accommodated. A special treat and attraction for the children are the ducks that swim all day in the pond and many a loaf of bread has disappeared "when mother's back was turned." The place has already reached popularity as far as the Midwest and some Ohioans report that their vacation would not be complete without a stop to enjoy the near primitive way of living, the birds and the frogs. The pond teems with bass, horned pout, perch, and pickerel and gives the campers an

opportunity to try their luck "for the big one." Here one may relax in the lap of Nature, day-dreaming, or go boating.

The Christians, who live at the end of Ridgecrest Road, had dreams for years of building a camp and tent ground, and after acquiring the entire point they started the clearing of the site and opened Emerald Acres in 1963, deriving the name from the greenness of the pine trees there. All the work was done by hand, from fireplaces to picnic tables, the old fashioned way without the aid of power tools. The campground is open from April 1 to November 1.



EMERALD ACRES