

Remember When — Franconia around 1940

Excerpts from an interview in 1995 with the late Rosalind Smith Holt.

“I got my place in Franconia in 1939, in May from Roland Peabody, who was then director at the Tramway. In the next year I opened up my lodge [Ski Pines] and could take 12-15 skiers on weekends, all in bunk beds. I fed them dinner and breakfast but not lunches. I charged \$3.50. Lovett’s, which was the fancy place in those days, charged \$5.50. Charlie [Lovett] was a fabulous cook. You wouldn’t believe the prices things were in those days up here. I paid \$3,500 for this house with 3 acres. It already had the plumbing that it still has, two baths. I put heat into it.

When I opened up my ski place here, we had been staying down at Sel’s – Sel Hannah’s – and also with “Ma” Keen. She had a place on Main Street [Profile Road], not far from where the campground is now and she ran a lodge there and was famous for her food. We were down at Sel’s quite a bit – in ’39, the year Joan was born. Sat around evenings and were sociable – talked about skiing. Don’t think we even played cards. Talked about our plans and things that were going on. Of course the war was becoming a shadow over all our heads.

We had Phil Robertson who had his place down here [Hillwinds], started sort of as a bar. He and Dave Phelps got the license. We semi-volunteered on our own time to go down and help serve the people. No entertainment – we sang, sat around and made our own. Everyone pretty much knew everyone else.

We all had our little lodges and had guests, mostly on weekends, and every Wednesday Cannon had time trials. The gold, silver and bronze Cannons - when you said how long it would take you to go down the hill, and then you tried to ski to hit the time you said. We didn’t have so many trails up there then; we really only had one – the big wide Cannon Trail and then there was the Taft Trail. Of course the meets were held on the Taft Trail and most of us here in town got conscripted to go up and be flagmen in one thing or another connected with those races on Taft. The Hochgebirge Club ran the races there – so we were involved in that. I skied the trails at various times. We had guests weekends so during the week was our time to ski and be sociable among ourselves.

Jewell [interviewer]: Someone told me that Rachel Ball was involved in that when she was a teenager. She asked whether she could race. They said she could race at the end, and she did, and she did it in less time than any of the Dartmouth skiers.

I wouldn’t be surprised but hadn’t heard that story. Rachel Ball was my Friday and Saturday helper here at

that time. She was about 15 at that stage of affairs. Of course we had Dow Academy then with many of the skiers whom you’ve met around here. Some are still around – Norwood Ball and his brother are still here. The Sawyer boys are not here; they lived just down between here and the Wallace Hill Road. Their sister had a place across the road there – just a chimney now, or was until they put up the big motel. Dave Pfaelzar had a mink farm, his brother had a small lodge. His brother was lost in the war. The Herberts were around. Roger Peabody, of course, was in school here. He and Norwood were the older ones of the two local skiers. Bob was younger. Paul Rich Jr., he is gone, lost in the war. We had three from here that went and didn’t get back. Herb Brooks was another skier. The Brooks family had seven kids, lived over on Harvard Street. Alec Behr was here – he was a skier. Of course Sel was here. Polly was a very good skier. Bobby Clark was another one that was lost.

The church behind Dow had been made into a gym. That is where we played our basketball. We had a little town girls’ basketball team. Ruby Heath played and Rachel Ball’s sister Irene. We started it so the Dow girls would have someone to practice against because they used every girl at the school – had scarcely enough to make a team. We played with them. We were older – just out of college or that age – early 20’s, with or without children. Some had families. We played at Dow and also went around with the men’s team and played at Grange Halls and church places over in Vermont. There were other girls’ teams in other towns. We had a lot of fun doing it. There were never any dressing rooms for the women of course, so we dressed on the stage behind the curtain if you were lucky. We made ourselves little uniforms – red and white outfits.

We had where Bob Warden’s gas station is, Chuck Vintinner, who was head of the police, had that gas station. He and his wife lived up overhead. Across the way from there, not exactly where Kelly’s is, more where the florist place is now, was Aldrich’s Store which was a three-story building with store at the base of it and they lived up at the top. Where the Town Hall is now, and the clerk’s office to the right, that was where the post office was.

The Ski Club put on different things; the skiers were very sociable and of course the Ski Club put on the dances, partly to raise money for their own, so they could send their own skiers around here and there and the Franconia Ski Club to go to various meets.

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Recent Events:

- * In August, FAHC sponsored a most interesting talk by Steven Taylor on NH's one-room rural schools
- * Over Labor Day weekend, FAHC held a fall plant sale. Thank-you to everyone who made a purchase.
- * September 27/28 FAHC hosted the lunch counter at the Sugar Hill Autumn Celebration.

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Upcoming Event:

On October 8th FAHC will host a meeting of area historical societies with Meghan McPhaul speaking on the development of local skiing and Cannon Mountain.

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New Business: The museum will close for the season on Saturday, October 25. That is standard practice, but starting this year we will shut down the building for the winter, draining the pipes, thereby avoiding high monthly oil delivery bills.

Annual Meeting and Dinner

Wednesday November 12th
at the Dutch Treat

6:00 Meeting 6:30 Dinner

Members will vote to elect officers for the 2014-2015 season. The proposed slate is: Dot Wiggins President; Sue Rysanek VP; Phil Krill Treasurer; Nancy Heinemann Recording Secretary; Kay Whitcomb Corresponding Secretary; Barbara Holt Historian.

Dinner: \$30.00 per person (includes tax and tip).
Entrée choices: salmon, beef, chicken

Note: All drinks to be paid separately by recipient.

Please RSVP by November 5th by mailing your check, made out to Phil Krill, to Phil Krill, Box 136, Franconia NH 03580. Be sure to state your dinner choice.

Everyone is welcome!

Recent Donations — Thank You So Much !

Abbie Greenleaf Library — New Hampshire Troubadour magazines 1931-1951
Arthur Pease — 1900 Pease family photo; copies of Pease diary entries 1897-1899
J. Hill — signed copy *Franconia Notch History and Guide* by Sarah N. Welch
Brenda Aldrich — tobacco tin, antique shears and scraper
Shirl Holt — 1884 original copy of *Abenakis and English Dialogues* book
Anonymous — four old Franconia deeds
Tony & Ellen Ferrelli — addendum to Sarah N. Welch's will
Dinny Richmond — 2014 booklet *Profile Club, Inc.*
Peter Ainsworth — antique metal water dispenser
Ken Ford — several old tools and crate
Kay Whitcomb — old wooden & silver pens; Greenleaf's *The Complete Arithmetic* 1896; Easton voters checklist 1878-1923; several c. 1900 cookbooks
Eileen Ball — List of Franconia Postmasters

* Mission Statement of the Franconia Area Heritage Council *

To collect, preserve, interpret and display objects, papers, and taped recollections of the history of Franconia and surrounding towns, that are historical and cultural, that can be displayed or used in historical research, and that can be cared for under acceptable museum standards.

