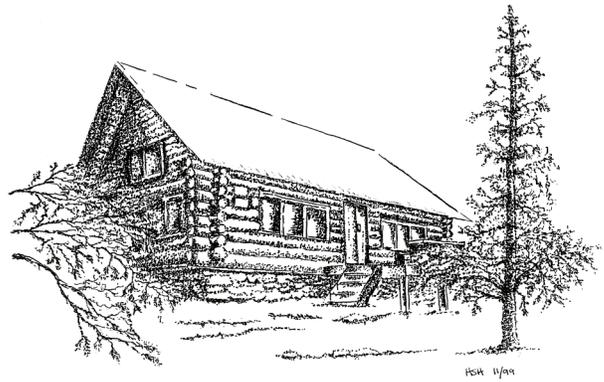


RIDGE LINES



GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB
BURLINGTON SECTION

www.naturecompass.org/gmcburlington

THE SHELTER ISSUE

FALL – WINTER 2005

There are nearly six dozen overnight sites along the Long Trail. In this issue, read some history about these sites. Meet two current shelter caretakers and share the memories of a woman who worked as Bolton Lodge caretaker back in the 1970's. Find out the answers to last issue's Peak Bagger's Quiz. And, of course, read about upcoming activities and outings.

Shelters, Camps and Lodges Defined: There are places for tent camping along the LT, but most of the overnight sites are structures that provide a place for hikers to get out of wind, rain and snow. In general, *shelters* are three-sided lean-tos with open fronts. *Camps* are often enclosed and have doors and glazed windows. There are also some larger enclosed buildings along the Trail in heavy-use areas; these are the Long Trail *lodges*. The Burlington Section is responsible for four lodges, two shelters and one tenting area.

History of Taft Lodge: The drawing used in the masthead of Ridge Lines is a sketch of the old **Taft Lodge**. Taft Lodge is the oldest and largest shelter in the Long Trail system and is on the State Register of Historic Sites. It's probably the most frequently visited shelter in Vermont – both by overnighters and by large numbers of day hikers heading up from Smuggler's Notch to the highest point of Vermont (Mt. Mansfield's Chin). Taft Lodge was first built in 1920 to meet the needs of people who came to Vermont's mountains to escape worries about World War I. Elihu Taft, a Burlington lawyer and judge, provided the funding. The first Taft Lodge had a lot of amenities including a good wood stove, warm army blankets, tents for use by overflow crowds, and even some dishes and cookware. More than 1500 hikers visited the Lodge between 1920 and 1926.

During the thirties and forties, heavy snows and rotting logs resulted in significant damage to Taft Lodge. Volunteers replaced rotting timbers, pulled the Lodge back to an upright position, and anchored it to the mountain with strong cables.

Taft Lodge needed further extensive repairs in the early sixties. Members of the Long Trail Patrol stayed at the Lodge for three weeks and replaced some of the bottom logs, repaired the leaky roof, rebuilt bunks, and made a new outhouse. (The Long Trail Patrol is the Green Mountain Club's professional trail crew.)

Taft Lodge was completely rebuilt in the 1990's. A landing area was cleared so Vermont National Guard helicopters could deliver some of the materials to the site. Volunteers Fred Gilbert and John Bennett took up residence on site, living in tents all summer long, working sixteen-hour days themselves as well as organizing crews of other volunteers. Fred and John finally packed up tents and tools and hiked down off the mountain in September 1996. The new Taft Lodge has sleeping space for twenty-four, a built-in closet for the caretaker's belongings, and a sturdy metal roof. It's also got more headroom than most Long Trail shelters.

Burlington Section member Daan Zwick has been an important part of Taft Lodge's history. Daan's involvement with the Lodge started in the summer of 1930, when he and his sister slept out under a ledge on the mountainside while his dad played cards with the Lodge caretaker. Later, Daan was caretaker from 1938 to 1940. During the repairs that were needed in the 1930's, Daan sometimes carried as much as 120 pounds of tools and roofing materials across the Mt. Mansfield ridge line and down the Profanity Trail. He continued to be a significant part of Taft Lodge history when he donated the funding for the latest reconstruction.

You can read more about the history of Burlington Section's overnight sites on page 7 of this issue, and in the January 2006 issue.

A Conversation with Caretakers Annaliese and Kelly

During the hiking season, the Green Mountain Club has live-in caretakers at many shelters, to greet visitors, help with emergencies, and educate hikers about safety and good wilderness ethics. The program is partially funded by a small overnight use fee at the shelters that have caretakers.

Annaliese Hesse and Kelly Walsh are both first-year GMC caretakers. Annaliese has worked mostly at Battell Shelter on Mt. Abraham, while Kelly has been at Montclair Glen Lodge and at Lula Tye, Little Rock Pond and Stratton Pond Shelters. Like all of the shelter caretakers, Annaliese and Kelly have also spent time as summit caretakers and have helped out with trail maintenance, privy care, and other tasks. Both women emphasized that a caretaker's job is never boring.

Annaliese: "Hikers are always really curious about the privy work. They can't believe we actually take the stuff out of the composting privies or that we have to stir it regularly. There's always a lot of jokes and, you know, 'ugh' and 'eeeyew'. But most people are really interested."

Kelly: "There are a lot of unexpected parts of the job, things you'd never predict!" She described one project that involved carrying out the rusted old roof of the Cowles Cove Shelter in the Huntington Gap area. Three caretakers hiked up to the Shelter and then worked at bending and stomping the three pieces of roof to make flat parcels that would be easier to carry. While they were doing this, a thunderstorm blew up and the women had to wait it out in the shelter. They had expected to hike up and down in a few hours, and they weren't sure how much bulk they'd be carrying on the return trip, so they hadn't brought extra clothes. All they had were rough burlap sacks to wrap around the sharp edges of the roof pieces. As the temperature dropped, the caretakers huddled in the open lean-to and then had the great idea of using their burlap sacks. "We each curled up in little balls, each one of us inside a bag until the storm passed."

Caretakers hear about extra projects in a variety of ways. Sometimes a fellow GMC worker will hike in to a shelter to request additional muscle power for something that has to be done along the trail. Sometimes it's possible to communicate with GMC headquarters and field staff by radios or cell phones. If the project isn't an immediate priority, caretakers may find "help wanted" e-mail waiting for them when they check their mail on their days off.

One unexpected challenge for Kelly and Annaliese was finding good places near the trail heads where their cars would be safe five days a week, June through October. Annaliese went door to door in the Lincoln Gap area, introducing herself to neighbors. She finally made an arrangement to park her car in a family's driveway whenever she was at Battell Shelter. "I feel that my car's a lot safer than it would be at the trail head, and the people whose driveway I'm using said it's been nice having a car there because it makes it look like someone's always home."

Kelly and Annaliese estimated that they each met over a thousand visitors this summer, including individuals and groups who stayed overnight at shelters and hikers they talked with on the Long Trail's summits.

Annaliese: "You can really interact with a lot of people in one afternoon on a summit such as Mt. Abe or Camels Hump or Mansfield – *hundreds* sometimes. And then there's the whole different kind of interaction you have with people who stay nights at the shelters. They're your guests and you're host and tutor and guide all in one."

Kelly: "The hikers who come to a shelter are pretty diverse. There are some people who'll hang out till noon, talking and relaxing and just enjoying themselves. They'll plan to get back on the trail after lunch and go five miles or so before stopping at the next shelter for the night. Then other people are driven to do as much as thirty miles a day. They're up at dawn and they're still munching their breakfast as they head off down the trail."

Annaliese: "There's also a lot of difference between day hikers and thru-hikers. For one thing, day hikers are really good at giving you food. I got a pizza yesterday, up there on the mountain, the first time *that's* ever happened."

Kelly: "We keep wanting to put up a sign: Don't feed the animals, but please feed the caretaker!"

Annaliese: "But the *thru-hikers* are always hungry."

Kelly: "They've been living on Ramen and water. They just about go nuts for a piece of fresh fruit. I gave one group of LT thru-hikers apples and chocolate. They finished their hike all the way to the Canadian border and then they came back to GMC headquarters in Waterbury Center and dropped off a thank-you gift of apples and chocolate for me!"

A Conversation with Caretakers Annaliese and Kelly – cont.

In the past, shelter caretakers sometimes experienced poorly-prepared and poorly-chaperoned groups of young hikers. Now, the GMC has a Group Outreach Specialist who works full-time during the hiking season. The Club actively reaches out to educate organizations that bring groups to the mountains – and the effort seems to be paying off. Both Annaliese and Kelly had excellent experiences with groups this summer.

Annaliese: “Most of the campers and counselors have been incredibly well-informed. They contacted GMC first, they knew about fragile vegetation on the mountain tops, and they showed a lot of respect for the woods and the trails. They also showed respect for my job and what we’re trying to do. The leaders really liked it when I’d introduce myself to the group and tell them a little about the shelter and talk with them about bear hangs, the wash pit, water sources, and so on.”

Both women have had some hikers come into shelters with their pets, but both of them emphasized that Long Trail hiking is really hard on dogs. There are sections of open rock that frighten some dogs and can damage pads and toenails. Some hikers have had to carry their dogs up and down steep ladders. And there’s always the chance of meeting up with a porcupine. In addition, dogs who are very mellow at home often get disoriented and nervous sleeping in new places every night with lots of strangers around. Kelly and Annaliese recommended that hikers know their dogs very well before taking them hiking, try short hikes first, and be sure to bring a leash to use on the fragile alpine summits.

Annaliese and Kelly have discovered that each shelter has its own unique feeling. Some are very old, and it’s the feeling of history that makes them special.

Kelly: “It’s fun to be in one of the more historic shelters and have some older hikers come by and hear them start reminiscing about staying in that shelter way before I was born.”

Others shelters are brand-new and sometimes even fancy.

Kelly: “Stratton Pond Shelter in the southern part of the state is really beautiful. It’s got plenty of good bunks plus a great sleeping loft for extra people. There’s also a covered picnic area.”

Annaliese and Kelly said they’ve thoroughly enjoyed their summer with Vermont’s hikers and campers. They’ll be staying through October. Then Kelly will be working, though she’s not sure where yet. “On my days off, I’m doing résumés.” Annaliese is planning a road trip with a lot of camping and hiking out West. “I’ve had such a great time here in Vermont that it’s just made me want to see what other places have to offer.”

Memories from Bolton Lodge: Peg Whitson of Burlington was caretaker at Bolton Lodge over thirty years ago. Here’s part of a letter that first appeared in *Ridge Lines* in March 1975.

It’s gone, much too quickly. It was not a spectacular summer, like a raft trip in the Grand Canyon. It was a summer of peace and people and sharing. A summer of feeling no need for spending or television or loud parties. I missed ice cold drinks and a good reading light – nothing more.

I have met over 800 people, only nine of whom I wouldn’t welcome back. Are people different on the trail or does a different sort of person use the trail? ... I was angry only once. Never depressed, except when I thought about the end. A perfect balance of delicious solitude and plenty of good company. It was a summer of hard physical labor coupled with complete relaxation beside a campfire or a secluded swimming hole. I have a renewed faith in the human race, especially young people. There was no generation gap.

And more than all of this, I feel I have served my guests well. More appreciation I have never received! I’ve learned to be generous with what I have. I’ve given food, stove, candles and time. I have received in return more food, more money, more fuel, and best of all so much goodwill.

The following people have joined the Burlington Section over the last few months.

WELCOME!

Stephanie Biros, Jim Boger and Mary Swenson, Victor Brenner, Robert Chaperon, Stephen and Eileen Cohen, Meghan E. Cox, Cynthia Cullum, Robert Cushman, Matt Ekstrom, Michael and Dana Engel, Jeffrey H. Gauthier, Steven Goodman, Eric and Christina Griffin, Peter and Jackie Hawks, Douglas Hogel, Timothy King, Justin and Carolyn Kunz, John G. Jaeger, John G. Kourtras, Susan Kuklis and S. Driver, Sam Maron, Glen Marshall, Gail and Ken Martin, Deborah and Stephen Mayfield, Thomas McCabe, Bruce McGeoch, Ursula McVeigh, Andrew O’Brien, Cynthia O’Hara, Lauren V. Parker, Andrew Rosacker, Stephanie Harrison Rudeski, Elizabeth Scott, Kerry Shea, Mary Spayne, Sallie Wager, Laura Williams

Answers to the Peak Bagger's Quiz

The July issue of Ridge Lines included seven questions about Vermont's summits.

**And the winner is ...
Linda Evans of Underhill!!**

Linda also provided a memorable "peak experience":

A few years ago we were hiking a section of the Long Trail around the Killington area. There was a lot of trail magic in the air, being the Fourth of July weekend. First we met a young couple coming down from the summit with wide smiles on their faces. He had just proposed marriage to her; she had accepted. There was a shiny diamond ring on her finger and an empty bottle of champagne between the two of them.

The second bit of magic was the firework display from the top of Killington. In spite of the swarming black flies and chilling temperatures, we stayed until nightfall. We were rewarded with the spectacular set of fireworks: a 360° view of the many surrounding towns' displays. It was a Fourth of July I'll never forget, especially as it was in the wake of September 11, 2001.

Here are the answers to the quiz:

1 – When seen from the Underhill side, what is the ridgeline of Vermont's highest mountain supposed to resemble?

The ridgeline of Mt. Mansfield is said to resemble the profile of a man's face, as if he's lying on his back looking at the sky. From south to north, the features are his forehead, nose, upper lip, lower lip, chin and (further down, off the ridgeline) his Adam's apple.

2 – Where are the alarmingly-named Hell Brook and Profanity Trails?

They're on the Stowe side of Mt. Mansfield. The Profanity Trail drops steeply from the Chin to Taft Lodge. The Hell Brook Trail down into Smugglers Notch is even more precipitous. (The *Long Trail Guide* suggests that hikers avoid using Hell Brook Trail when they're descending.)

3 – Another name for Camels Hump is the _ Lion.

Explorer Samuel de Champlain named the mountain *Le Lion Couchant* (the reclining lion), which became the Couching Lion in English. Native Americans called the peak Tawabodi-e-wadso, or "mountain like a seat". On a 1798 map, Ira Allen used the label "Camel's Rump"; this indelicate name was changed in 1830.

4 – Place the mountains listed on page 1 of the July issue in order according to height.

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Mount Mansfield | 4393 feet |
| Killington Peak | 4235 feet |
| Camels Hump and Mt. Ellen | Both 4083 feet |
| Mt. Abraham | 4006 feet |

5 – What four Vermont mountains have summit caretakers during the busy hiking season?

There are caretakers on Mansfield, Camels Hump, Mt. Abe and Stratton Mountain.

6 – What is Frenchman's Pile and what does it commemorate?

Frenchman's Pile is a tall cairn (pile of rocks) on Mt. Mansfield. There's some difference of opinion about what it commemorates, but most agree that it was put up to mark the place where a hiker was struck by lightning and killed many years ago. (It's certain that electrical storms on the exposed ridgeline are very dangerous. When a storm threatens, hikers should take shelter by leaving the ridgeline and heading down a side trail.)

7 – Which is highest: Mt. Mansfield's Chin, Forehead, Nose or Adam's Apple?

At 4393 feet, The Chin is the highest point in Vermont.

We are saddened to learn of the death of Travis Moulton this summer. Travis was very active in the Burlington Section from the time he was 15 until he left the area for college. Many of us have good memories of him. If you have a memory you'd like to share, send it in for inclusion in the January Ridge Lines.

More history of the Burlington Section's lodges

Taylor Lodge is in Nebraska Notch, a deep cleft between the Forehead part of Mt. Mansfield and neighboring Mt. Dewey. The trail to the Lodge starts where you sign in at the end of Stevensville Road in Underhill. Taylor Lodge was first built in 1926 and was originally named "Nebraska Notch Lodge". It burned in 1951 after a group of boys tried to keep themselves warm by burning mattresses. A new log cabin was built and named after J.P. Taylor, the founder of the Green Mountain Club. On a cold, foggy, rainy October day, seventy-four volunteers had a "shower" for the new Lodge, hiking up through Nebraska Notch with frying pans, pots, axes, saws, pails, brooms, dustpans, and other items that used to be standard equipment in many Long Trail shelters.

Taylor Lodge again burned to the ground in September 1977, possibly because a departing hiker had left an unattended fire going in the wood stove. A third Lodge was completed the next year, featuring an open front porch with an enclosed bunkroom (and no wood stove!).

Taylor Lodge was seriously vandalized in 1981. The wire bunks were pulled apart and piled on the floor to make a bed for a fire, with the tables, benches and bunks used for fuel. Although the fire burned through the floor, it didn't destroy the building.

For many years, Taylor Lodge was the site of the annual Oyster Stew Suppers, a mid-winter moonlit ritual that sometimes took place at temperatures considerably below zero. The tradition started when Don Remick, a UVM senior and member of the Burlington Section Outing Committee, suggested that there should be a new and crazy activity, "like eating oysters on the mountain". In addition to hot oyster stew, participants ate homemade pies. They often stuffed a lot of oakum into their backpacks to keep the pies from tipping over during the hike. Then, while they were waiting for the oyster stew to heat up, they could make good use of their time by packing the oakum into the chinks between the logs in the walls.

Taylor Lodge has been the site of other note-worthy culinary events in its long history. In 1941, a hiker tried to heat up a can of baked beans by putting it inside the stovepipe. He neglected to punch a hole in the can and ended up wearing most of his supper. Another hiker tried the same thing with a can of corn; this attempt created a rocket that trailed a stream of corn over a considerable distance.

(Historical information is from the *Long Trail Guide* and from *Green Mountain Club Long Trail System Shelter History*, an amazing labor of love completed in 1999 by Paul and Joanne Woodward of the CT Section.)