

Moosilauke: Many-Sided Mountain

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“I have beheld the Mountain on all sides,” wrote a visitor to Moosilauke. Generations of naturalists, hikers, and Dartmouth students have beheld Moosilauke on all sides, too.

Often called “Dartmouth’s mountain,” it is much more than that. For many, Moosilauke is their first experience of a mountain summit. Trails cross Moosilauke in every direction, reaching the broad, bald summit above treeline that offers 360° views of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. Slides, waterfalls, and mountain flora bring variety to a visitor’s experience of Moosilauke in all seasons. Moosilauke also bears the traces of long human involvement in its history, from trails to carriage roads to cabins and summit buildings. The mountain itself, too, has inspired its visitors.

This exhibit was curated by Daniel Abosso, Librarian (Baker-Berry Library) and Elaina Vitale, Librarian (Biomedical Libraries). The poster was designed by Sam Milnes, Collection Management Assistant (Rauner Special Collections Library). The exhibit is on display in the Class of 1965 Galleries in Rauner Library from January 27th through March 17th 16th, 2025. Download a pdf of the exhibition handlist or printable version of the exhibition poster designed by Sam Milnes.

*The exhibit is divided into three cases. **Case 1**, “Dartmouth’s Mountain,” has items about how Dartmouth acquired about 4,500 acres of the mountain, the Ravine Lodge, and DOC/First Year Trips. **Case 2** is devoted to the mountain itself and has items showing the view from the summit, summit structures, and the natural environment. **Case 3** focuses on stories, poetry, and illustrations inspired by Moosilauke.*

Case 1: “Dartmouth’s Mountain”

Dartmouth owns just under 4,600 acres of Mt. Moosilauke. The summit was donated to the College in 1920. The area that includes the Ravine Lodge was purchased in 1933. Three additional tracts of land were acquired with help of Pennington Haile ‘24 in 1965 and 1979, bringing the College’s ownership to just about one quarter of the mountain. Dartmouth’s presence on Moosilauke has included everything from biology courses to skiing and, of some infamy, first year trips.

Mt. Moosilauke Acquisition Map, 1973. John Brown Papers, MS-1011, Box 92, Folder 1.

This map shows the parts of Mt. Moosilauke Dartmouth had acquired by 1973. The College acquired a further 2,375 acres in 1979.

Trailhead, 1982. Photographic Files – “Cabin and Trail 1”.

This trail sign, pictured here in 1982, boldly proclaims that the trails are “Property of Dartmouth College.” The trails running through Dartmouth’s land have always been open to the public.

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Plaque honoring Pennington Haile, alumnus of the Class of 1924. Photographic Files – “Mount Moosilauke 1”.

Ravine Lodge Sample Menus, ca 1970s. DO-1, Box 6181, Folder 71.

Visitors to the Ravine Lodge could expect affordable, gourmet meals for breakfast and dinner. Draft menus from the '70s include such epicurean delights as beef bourguignon, steak, barbecued pig, along with accompanying sides, drinks, and desserts. Modern visitors to the Ravine Lodge from May to November know such hospitality will await them at the Lodge (whether they have summited or simply driven in for dinner!).

Moosilauke Ravine Lodge Account Book, 1961 Season. DO-1, Box 6181, Folder 71.

The collection contains a number of Ravine Lodge and Tip-Top House account books. The Lodge staff recorded the number of guests, alumni status, weather, and anything notable about the guests' stay (eg, success of Doc Benton ghost story recountings or guest temperament). Honeymooners abound! *[open to page 58-59]*

Moosilauke Ravine Lodge Brochures [undated, 1940s]. MS-1061, Box 2, Folder 51.

Promotional material for the Ravine Lodge promises “You’ll Remember Moosilauke,” and always stresses the reasonable Ravine Lodge rates (all meals inclusive, at the time anywhere from \$3.50-\$5.50). Dartmouth lore posits that competitive downhill skiing was introduced to the US on Moosilauke and the original Ravine Lodge was opened in the late 1930s to provide a destination for competitive skiing. The modern Lodge, built in 2017, now serves hikers, naturalists, students, and locals alike (still with very reasonable rates). *[open one to inner contents]*

Cabin and Trail Program, ca. 1952. MS-1061, Box 2, Folder 14.

The DOC (Dartmouth Outing Club) Cabin and Trail program for undergraduates, founded in 1920, was intended to maintain DOC's facilities. In this overview of the program, Professor Donald Bartlett writes, “[w]hen Cabin and Trail is healthy, the DOC is healthy, and when the DOC is in good health there isn't too much wrong with the College that can't be repaired, burnt, or buried.”

“Dartmouth Out of Doors,” [undated]. MS-1061, Box 2, Folder 60.

Outdoor activities have long been a part of the Dartmouth experience. This map shows many of the places frequented by the Dartmouth community, from Lake Mascoma in the south to Franconia Notch in the north.

“Dartmouth at Moosilauke,” [undated]. MS-1061, Box 2, Folder 60.

This undated map shows trails and structures on Moosilauke, some of which are long gone. Today, with fewer structures and trails, Moosilauke has a somewhat wilder feel.

Case 2: Moosilauke

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Moosilauke encompasses over 40,000 acres, but it is the nearly 100 acres of alpine tundra – the “above tree line” area – that most visitors to Moosilauke love most. At the summit on a clear day, people have a magnificent view of Moosilauke’s broad sprawl, the White, Green, and Adirondack mountain ranges, and beyond. On the ground too there is something to see: the ruins of summit buildings.

East & West View from Moosilauke, [1910]. MS-1061, Box 2, Folder 1.

The 4,802’ summit of Moosilauke offers a sweeping 360° view of mountains in neighboring New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and New York. This print, based on an 1884 drawing, was made for a report on the value of fire lookout stations in 1910. Should you be so fortunate to summit Moosilauke on a clear day, you will find that the tenth highest peak in New Hampshire affords mighty views of your surroundings.

Moosilauke Postcard, [undated]. MS-1005, Box 15, Folder 3.

Diptych postcard showing the eastern view of New Hampshire’s White Mountains from Moosilauke. The heights above treeline and the panoramic view from the summit have clearly enchanted visitors throughout Moosilauke’s history. Lucky the recipient of this undated two-piece postcard.

Moosilauke Postcard, 1912. MS-1005, Box 15, Folder 3.

This view from South Peak shows the carriage road leading to the summit.

Woodworth Family at Tip Top House [undated, original 1902]. MS-1005, Box 15, Folder 2.

Captioned “The two houses put under one roof in 1902” by Grace Woodworth Hill, this photograph shows the Tip Top House on the summit of Moosilauke. Built in 1860, the building offered respite to generations of visitors.

Remains of the Tip Top House on the summit of Moosilauke, 1942. Photographic Files – “Mount Moosilauke 1”.

Modern visitors to the summit will find only the foundation stones of the Tip Top House. A presumed lightning strike in 1942 burned it to the ground.

Tip Top House Guest Registers, 1872-1889. Codex 872414.

Case 3: [Inspired by Moosilauke]

Such is the looming presence and experience of visiting Moosilauke that traveling the trails and to the summit have inspired countless dramatic writings and art—including, but not limited to, poems, a ghost story, and even a dance. Why is it that Moosilauke has captured and continues to capture the imagination of so many visitors over the years, especially compared to other White Mountain peaks?

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The Doc Benton Ghost Story [undated]. MS-1061, Box 2, Folder 35.

It is said that no trip to Moosilauke is complete without a retelling of the Doc Benton ghost story. This seven-page mimeographed version includes stage notes for the teller - "(SCREAM FROM KITCHEN)" - lighting and sound direction, and notes for maintaining story originality.

Handkerchief–Moosilauke [undated]. MS-1005, Box 15, Folder 28.

One of the many traditions at the Ravine Lodge is dancing along to "Salty Dog Rag," or, as this colorful handkerchief declares, "salty doggin'." First introduced at the Ravine Lodge in 1972, the rag song and traveling dance are still enjoyed by students and alumni alike.

Miscellaneous Material, the Tall Spruce of JOBILDUNK [undated]. DO-1, Box 6181, Folder 36.

"HARK! Chip-Chop, Chip-Chop, Chip-Chop crash swish-snap-crash, and silence again..." This article draft (perhaps authored by C. Ross McKenney, famed DOC coach of outdoor survival) poetically plunges the reader into the sights and sounds of the felling of spruce in Jobildunk Ravine to build the Jobildunk cabin.

A Tip-Top Experience on Moosilauke, [1899]. D.C. History F41.6 .M6 W4.

A magazine piece in the April 1899 issue of Granite Monthly: a New Hampshire magazine inspired by Ellen Webster's week-long stay in Tip-Top House, describing the accommodations, flora and fauna, views, weather, and history of Moosilauke. Webster also notes on the heights of Moosilauke the presence of a "ribby, black cow that supplied the table with an abundance of rich milk." [*open to pages 200-201*]

Notebook (Grace Hill), sketch [undated]. MS-1005, Box 15, Folder 24.

Pencil sketch of the two former Tip Top Houses and barn with the sun in the background. Such is the vantage point that even the sun looks small on Moosilauke!

Moosilauke! After the Ice. The Moosilauke Reader, volume 4, eds. Robert W. Averill, Kris Pastoriza, 2023.

More than most mountains in the Whites, Moosilauke has inspired many books. Robert W. Averill '72, the "Dean of Moosilauke Studies," has published many books on the history of Moosilauke and its visitors.

Sophia Scull '25, print photograph

Like the students pictured in this fine photograph by Sophia Scull ('25), generations of hikers have found their way to the summit.

Frederick C. Cowper, The Symbolic Mountain, Moosilauke, 1907. Broadside 907578.

Cowper's poem on Moosilauke is a fine specimen of poetry in the sublime mode. Many visitors to Moosilauke in the 19th and early 20th century expressed in verse the feelings the mountain evoked in them.