

A Cabin Time-Line

Background:

During the years 1973, 1974, and 1975, to increase the winter hiking experience, the club scheduled one or two trips during the winter to mountain cabins. Some of the cabins were privately owned (in one case by a club member) and others that were used belonged to the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. These trips were very successful and were enjoyed by all who participated.

Because of their success, the leadership of the club felt that it might be a good idea if the TATC had its own cabin. During the 1975 year this proposal was brought before the general membership and was approved by an overwhelming majority of members present." (this quote is from the opening paragraphs of an Oct., 1975 Preliminary Report-- printed in full elsewhere in this Cabin History section)

Subsequently, a Cabins Committee, under the leadership of Lance Lavenstein, was established, and a savings account was started by the Board of Directors with excess funds—this money to go toward the purchase or construction of a cabin.

What follows is a rough time line of important events as the club sought to acquire, or build, a cabin in the mountains of Virginia. This is the history (as it turned out) of what came to be called the Douglas Lee Putman Cabin, the TATC's very own:

Oct. 14, 1975 the Cabins Committee first met to "establish a plan for the acquisition of a cabin for the club members and public's use" (this was just 3 ½ years after the formation of the club itself).

1976 Jim Hall replaces Lance Lavenstein as Cabins Committee chairman.

Jan., 1977 Club President Jacque Jenkins announced an agreement with Wintergreen-- our club could make use of an old "run down" cabin on their property in the Laurel Springs area, near milepost 10 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. A couple of local men agreed to fix the place up (using materials the club provided) in return for being able to use the cabin for deer hunting. However, for a number of reasons (condition of the cabin, location, etc), the general membership voted to reject the offer.

Aug. 16, 1977 Jim Hall gave a report on the Maxie Campbell hunting cabin, along our section of the A.T., near Maupin Field lean-to. An arrangement was made with Mr. Campbell-- the club would use materials he provided to refurbish the vandalized, little used cabin. Our club wouldn't own the restored cabin, but would be allowed to use it. The general membership agreed to this at the Aug. meeting. It made no sense, however, to do any work until the forest service gated the old jeep road that went from Love Gap (on the Blue Ridge Parkway) 2 miles to the Maupin Field area; local hunters drove in on this rough road, and vandalism was a potential problem.

Dec., 1977 With the Love Gap fire road still ungated, out of the blue Club President Jacque Jenkins received a call from Mrs. Phyllis Putman, of Northern Virginia; she wished to build a memorial cabin in honor of her son, Douglas, who had passed away 4 months earlier in a car accident. Mrs. Putman was willing to donate up to \$20,000 to TATC for the project (she'd first proposed her offer to the PATC, in her area, but they'd rejected it). Someone at Wintergreen had given her Jacque's number.

July 19, 1978 Ray Levesque head of the Cabins Committee (1978—1982): after studying and investigating the matter for over two years, having had little success and finding few viable options, the Cabins Committee recommended that the club take Mrs. Putman up on her generous offer. The Club's Board agreed and, at the July general meeting, they presented a proposal to the membership to accept the offer. The membership voted 59 to 13—in favor of the proposal.

Sept. 1, 1978 TATC entered into a legal agreement with Mrs. Putman to accept her donation of \$15,000, this money going to purchase land previously scouted in Nelson County, Va., and for materials to build a cabin memorializing her son Douglas.

Jan. 3, 1979 TATC acquired title to the 15 acres of land where the cabin would be built—price: \$5,500.

Jan. 6th weekend, 1979 Construction begins, with work crews having to walk 3 miles to the cabin site, carrying tools and materials (the Blue Ridge Parkway was closed due to snow). Work trips would be scheduled once a month for the next several years; the names of the workers and what they accomplished each trip was recorded (not always legibly, and sometimes not all that completely) in the "Golden Book". Early off, Chuck Jesse used a bulldozer to clear or create the access road from the Blue Ridge Parkway, and to level the cabin site. Also first on the list of things to do-- create campsites, develop the spring, and build an outhouse.

Summer, 1979 The cabin's foundation was poured; the cinder block footers were put in place; much fill work was done-- all by hand (shovels and picks, buckets and wheelbarrows, a mortar box, with load after load of sand and mortar carted to the site).

Nov., 1979 The first stones were laid and mortared into place at all four corners of the cabin; doorways were framed and rocks gathered from the nearby woods.

March 1, 1980 Work trip cancelled, belatedly, Saturday morning because of record setting snow storm (this is the storm where a state of emergency was declared in Norfolk Saturday afternoon; people attending the circus at Scope were snowed in—not allowed to leave). About a dozen club members had driven Friday night to a campground 3 miles from the cabin, only to have to turn around and drive home thru the storm Saturday.

Spring, Summer, Fall 1980 The crews were so busy they didn't record much of the work done during this period—but it was mostly hauling rocks and materials, mixing mortar, and laying stones. The stone walls rose from ground level to above the windows—to "plate level". Also, heavy black locust logs (for the rafters, beams, and joists) were felled and hauled to the site, where they were eventually worked and cut to shape; scaffolding was erected for work higher up.

Oct. 9 - 18, 1981 After a spring and summer of continued rock and log work, during this nine night trip in Oct. the stone work at both ends of the cabin, including the main chimney, was finally completed, and the ugly scaffolding at either end removed. The ridgepole was put into place and the rafters started going up. A total of twenty six laborers made it happen. Before and after photographs attest to the tremendous amount of work that was accomplished during this productive trip.

Jan, 8—10th, 1982 Probably the coldest work trip of all: after a good day's work on Saturday, club members awoke Sunday morning at the tenting area to -8 temperatures, with a -43 wind chill and a dusting of snow. They quickly retreated to Shoney's in Waynesboro for breakfast, then headed home.

March, 1982 A freezing rain fell as workers carefully scrambled around on the scaffolding at the front of the cabin, hoisting and bolting the final rafters into place. Table salt was spread so that work could continue.

Bill Newsom becomes Cabin Committee chairman (1982—1992)

May 7, 1982 Cabin Dedication weekend! There were several extra trips and many long extra hours worked this spring to get the cabin as ready and as presentable as possible for the big day. Roof boards were carried in by hand and nailed into place; shutters and doors were assembled and prepared for installation. Park and Forest Service personnel attended the Dedication, as did Mrs. Putman and her two daughters, Deborah and Susan; approximately 87 people in all. A time capsule was put behind the cornerstone and mortared into place (among the items included was a list of names: 164 people who had worked on the cabin up to that point). A whole pig was slow roasted overnight for the Dedication lunch on Saturday.

Summer & Fall 1982 After almost 3 ½ years of construction, of camping out exposed to the elements, the loft floor was added, the roof above tar papered: we now had a dry and protected place to sleep-- inside the cabin! By Nov. all the security shutters and doors were installed; the cook stove (bought at a 2nd hand store in upstate N.Y., for about \$75) was hooked up to the just completed back chimney. We now had a working cabin, one we could lock up. At our request, Mrs. Putman made an additional donation of \$1,500, for materials.

March 5 & 6, 1983 Cabin broken into in late Feb.—minor damage, major insult. During the March work trip the shingling of the roof was completed, and the dirt floor leveled and readied for our first attempt at a floor—cement with 3 inch thick discs of black locust logs set into it.

Summer 1983 Floor work was finished. In Aug. the cabin was in good enough shape that rental use began, at \$2 per person per night. Gene and Mary Ann Krah, with 3 friends, were the first paying customers, the nights of 8/19 & 8/20. Bob Adkisson, Evelyn and Leigh Smith, and a friend stayed 2 nights the following weekend.

There would now be several years of finishing touches, mostly, of course, inside the cabin itself. The monthly work trips continued.

1984 Windows were installed, bunks were built, and much landscaping done (trails widened; rock walls built; boulders and stumps removed; the embankment behind the cabin cut back, stabilized with rocks and plants; flowers, ferns, red bud and white pine trees planted around the cabin). Donations from interested members were solicited to purchase the windows; small brass plaques recognize those who contributed.

1985 Besides much continued interior work (building more bunks, installing screens and cabinets, painting, closing off the eaves and insulating them), the front deck was added.

1986 Construction work on the BBQ pit (the outdoor cooking structure) began—a very lengthy and exacting effort, mostly done by Harold Crate. Otey Shelton, over a few years time, hauled in several loads of rocks from a mountaintop pasture in W.V.—for the BBQ pit, the patio

flagstones, and the inside face of the cabin's fireplace and hearth.

1987 The inside walls were plastered smooth and eventually painted white. Although the monthly work trips continued, the pace of the work eased off somewhat, and the trips were nearly as much for the fun and camaraderie as the work itself.

1988 Continued work on outdoor cooking area; repaired the floor (several of the wooden discs had worked themselves loose and needed to be mortared back into place).

May 13, 1989 10 year Anniversary Celebration of the beginning of construction of the cabin: speeches and a feast on site, with about 65 in attendance. Reese Lukei made a movie of the event.

1990—1993 Work on the outdoor cooking area continued and eventually drew to a close; more finishing touches, but now a lot of the work was simple maintenance stuff—cabin upkeep; we started training new members or first timers in how to take care of the place when they rented it. Bob Adkisson replaced Bill Newsom as both Cabin Committee chairman and rental officer (1992).

1994 Club President Bob Giffin spent months investigating and researching wood burning cook stoves, eventually presenting his recommendation to the Board. After some debate, it was decided to replace the small and inefficient cook stove with a larger, better one. It was driven in and installed in early 1995.

May, 1995 The old 'A'frame storage shed finally emptied, torn down, and everything packed out. A Sunday morning brunch at the cabin was hosted by Harold and Margaret Crate after a Sherando work weekend—an off and on occurrence, and a great way to show off the cabin to club members.

Sept. & Nov., 1995 In Sept. a small work crew tore out the old cabin floor; concrete rubble was used as fill for an expanded wood chopping area; tree rounds were split and used for cook stove firewood; several inches of dirt were removed from the floor area and used to cover the concrete rubble outside. Bob Giffin led two work trips to install a new tongue and groove floor. Steve Babor became new Cabin Committee Chairman (Bob Adkisson is co- chairman, and continues as rental officer).

Early Jan., 1996 A group of a half dozen TATC members was seriously snowed in at the cabin. Cut off from any communication with home and work, all but out of food, Tuesday afternoon they finally struggled thru hip deep snow (along the Parkway) to county road 814 and a ride into the valley (they'd planned to be home Sunday afternoon). Their 2 four wheel drive vehicles would be stranded and snowed in for another 10 days or so.

Jan. 26—28, 1996 Winter Maintenance / Orientation Trip: with icy conditions along the Blue Ridge Parkway (which was closed to traffic) Friday night, trip leader Steve Babor fell and suffered a compound fracture of his two lower leg bones, right at mile marker 18. He was fortunately being accompanied by 4 other club members, and within about 2 hours reached a hospital, where he spent the remainder of the weekend.

1998 Many dead oak trees along our access road were cut for firewood (the trees were killed by gypsy moths that had moved thru the area a few years earlier). Also, both on our property

and in the area, hemlock and dogwood trees had died off, victims of insects / disease. It was especially sad to lose all of the dogwood trees from around the cabin itself. This year we'd discovered an old section of a road and decided to clear and use it as a new route from the Parkway; this alternate route was farther from the White Rock Falls Trailhead sign, and was also much easier to maintain. This change had the added benefit of immediately cutting down on the number of outsiders who mistook our access road for the White Rock Falls Trail, thus increasing the privacy of the cabin.

June 17—20, 1999 With permission of the Park Service we were allowed to drive close to the cabin with shingles and tar paper; the cabin roof was resingled. In late July the job was fully completed.

Winter 2001 The railings in the loft area (various pieces of scrap wood nailed 'temporarily' into place years before) were finally replaced, over 3 work trips, with black locust saplings. Bob Giffin becomes head of the Cabin Committee; Bob Adkisson co-chair, and continues as rental officer.

June 19—23, 2002 Work on a new outhouse began; the original one (23 years old) was nearly full. Using an enzyme treatment had bought us a couple of extra years—much needed after the earlier, back to back expenses of the new floor and cook stove.

Spring, Summer, Fall 2003 Digging the huge pit continued thru the spring and was completed during the June 21st trip; that same weekend, the wood under-cribbing was put into place. Concrete slab was later poured and, by the Nov. work trip, the new outhouse was all but finished. The cabin committee requested donations to cover the costs of the outhouse, and over \$900 was received.

May 2004 An Anniversary Celebration at the cabin—marking 25 years since work began. The anniversary was on a Sherando trail-work weekend, and the cabin crew hosted a brunch on Sunday morning, which segued into recognizing 25 years of history, work, and camaraderie. 2 benches, with plaques, were dedicated in memory of the late Harold Crate, and in honor of his wife Margaret. Their contribution to the cabin project was 2nd to none. Soon after, Bob Giffin leaves as Cabin Committee Chair, replaced by Steve Babor; Bob Adkisson continues as co-chair and rental officer.

March—Sept. 2008 A dual member of both the TATC and the Old Dominion A.T. Club generously donated a gift of money to our club in memory of the late John Donovan (also a dual member); the money was used to buy materials for a picnic shelter at the cabin. Work began in March; several boys from a scout troop led by club member Wayne Mortimer helped greatly with hauling in material in May; in June, led by Bruce Julian, a tremendous amount of work was accomplished over a 4 day weekend; Aug. and Sept. work trips finished up the roof and trim work. The result: a great new addition to the cabin. A plaque honoring the memory of John Donovan would later be placed on the shelter.

Summer 2009 The Park Service creates an official (gravel) parking area at White Rock Gap, where club members leave their vehicles while staying at the cabin. A kiosk with maps is added a year later (many non-club members use the parking area as well, because the gap is a trailhead for both the White Rock Falls Trail and the White Rock Gap Trail).

March 2010 Steve Babor departs as Cabin Chairman, replaced by Bob Adkisson, with Greg

Hodges as co-chair. With no major work to be done, the number of maintenance / orientation trips settles in at about 4 per year. On average, about a dozen or so new club members attend a cabin work trip every year, learning to care for it and qualifying themselves to rent it on their own in the future.

Summer & Fall 2011 Multiple reports during this period of non-club members on our property, rock climbing (or 'bouldering') on the set of large rocks along our access road, about half way out to the Parkway. The following summer, with even more climbers on our land, we discovered that the area was listed and being promoted on a rock climbing web-site, where it was assumed the property was part of the National Forest. We got the web-site to change that, and forbade trespassing. That, and a waterproof sign at the rocks themselves, finally stemmed the tide. Some climbers have switched to the boulders in the hollow below our property, along the north fork of White Rock Creek.

Written by Bob Adkisson, May 1, 2013