

**The Lady is a Tramp: The Integration of the Appalachian Mountain Club Hut  
System as a Distillation of the Women's Rights Movement**

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To Mum, for the language, and Pup, for the legs.  
And, eternally, to the women.

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## Introduction

The Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation organization in the United States. Among other projects, the Club operates a Hut System, a string of eight mountaintop hostels, across the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The Club opened its first shelter in 1888 on the shoulder of Mt. Madison, and the system grew to include seven other buildings of various sizes between 1901 and 1964. Since 1906, at least one person has continually worked as a caretaker in the huts. This job has evolved over the ages. At first, “care-keepers” were simply in charge of making sure hikers respected the shelter. Today, crews (or “croos”) of six to ten workers are responsible for maintaining the complex eco-friendly plumbing systems, hiking in fresh food and supplies twice a week, entertaining and ministering to the needs of overnight and daytime guests, cooking elaborate dinners for up to 100 hungry hikers, and participating in Search and Rescue missions should the need arise. Each summer, the AMC employs 50 workers to staff the huts, and the system can accommodate well over 300 guests per night. This is the only Hut System in the United States that operates on the same full-service basis as the system in the Alps, situating New Hampshire and its summits within a rich and historic alpine tradition.

I began working for the AMC when I was eighteen. Like many of the women I have since interviewed for this project, I started at the Pinkham Notch Visitor Center, the North Country headquarters of the Club, before graduating to the huts the following summer. Unlike my thesis subjects, no one questioned my trajectory because of my gender. Until 1973, the AMC hired only young men to staff its backcountry locations. Women worked in the Club’s education department, as trip leaders, and as frontcountry staff, but the huts were a man’s world, an idealized and constructed wilderness in which boys could reclaim and redefine their masculinity

away from feminine influences. As the physical landscape of the Hut System evolved between 1888 and 1964, so too did the croos, both in size and character. The change in size is not difficult to explain; as tourism increased in the White Mountains and the outdoor world in general, the huts saw a spike in visitors and larger croos were needed to provide for guests and protect the natural environment from careless hikers. The shift in character, however, is more difficult to pinpoint. Since the early days of the system, the caretaker and croo positions have required rugged individuals who do not mind living without modern comforts. Strength is a prerequisite, as workers carry in all the supplies necessary for running a hut on wooden packboards (Fig. 1). These supplies used to include propane tanks weighing 200 pounds when full, as well as building materials in addition to all the food necessary to feed themselves and guests. Restocking the huts depended entirely on human power until 1929 and the advent of the White Mountain Jackass Company, which provided pack mules to supplement the croo members (Fig. 2). Regardless, pack weights were still consistently heavy, and the building boom required some croo members to reportedly pack multiple times per day. Packing culture changed yet again in the early 1960s, when the AMC began using helicopters instead of donkeys to rebuild huts and fly in nonperishable goods at the beginning of each season. Helicopters lessened the need for “heavy packing,” and perhaps lessened the prevalence of the competitive atmosphere that had evolved around which croo member could pack the most weight in a single trip. Men who staffed the huts in the pre-helicopter era tend to look fondly upon the heartiness of their work, and often bemoan a perceived weakness in current croos who no longer carry the same weights. This “weakness” is, perhaps, gendered; because the AMC prohibited women from working in the system until the

mid-70s, women never experienced packing without the aid of helicopters, and were thus never a part of the same hearty tradition idealized in male croo memory.

Although women worked and explored in the White Mountains since the early 1800s, the huts evolved as a separate institution, one that in many ways functioned outside the realm of contemporary society but that reinforced the era's attitude regarding the inequality of women and men. When the hut system finally integrated in 1973, women had unofficially been working in the huts for generations, assisting brothers or boyfriends with maintenance and even packing supplies themselves. Although the huts were (and are) a small, relatively isolated community, the people who staffed them were not immune to the myriad social and political upheavals of the time, including the rebirth of feminism and the advent of the women's rights movement. The goals of this thesis are twofold. First, it aims to reclaim agency for the women who pushed for an integrated Hut System, creating opportunities in outdoor recreation and education for themselves and their successors. Second, it complicates the relationship between a national movement and its local offshoots by analyzing the actions taken by AMC women through the lens of the women's rights movement and exploring the ways in which the integration was and was not a "feminist" action.



The Hut System thrives on oral tradition. During my first night working at the Lakes of the Clouds Hut, the Assistant Hutmaster gathered the entire croo in our bunk room and told us a ghost story set in the hut's kitchen, a story that, I later discovered, had been circulating in the huts for years. Over the first week or so, I learned about Ben Campbell's famous hiking boots, Tony Macmillan's outrageous culinary creations, and the contested packing record held by either

Sid Havely or Willy Ashbrook. These tales inspired me and brought me into the fold of a community much larger than my role in it, but also sparked a question; where were the women? Until I began research for this thesis, I had never heard of any “legendary” hutwomen outside the context of their being someone’s friend or favorite Hutmaster. And yet, from looking at croo photographs hanging in the hut’s hallway or reading old logbooks, I knew women lived and worked and played in the same spaces. My own location within the system was proof.

The AMC has its own Library and Archives. It publishes the *Appalachia* journal, a premier source for mountaineering, natural, and Club history, and the huts themselves have an alumni group, the Old Hutmen Association, that runs a hut-centric publication called *The Resuscitator*. For a relatively small and specialized community, it is considerably well documented. During my first season in the huts, an Old Hutman (OH) named Bill Barrett explained to me the concept of Hutmen (F), or women who worked at Pinkham Notch and as backcountry caretakers with their husbands during World War II, before women officially started working in the huts in the 1970s. Fascinated, I began searching internal organization for more history. The “Timeline of AMC Huts” has this to say about the 70s:

1972: Carter Notch Hut opened for winter.

1973: Zealand Falls Hut opened for winter.

1979: Lonesome Lake Hut becomes home of first all-female hut croo.<sup>1</sup>

The Club’s official record of its own history makes no mention of its integration process, or the fact that it staffed its most desirable positions with only men for 84 years. Without this background, the all-female Lonesome Lake croo of 1979 reads as an interesting but inconsequential piece of trivia instead of the milestone of progress it actually represented. This is

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<sup>1</sup> “Timeline of AMC Huts,” Appalachian Mountain Club Online, <http://www.outdoors.org/lodging/huts/125thanniversary/amc-huts-timeline.cfm>

possibly an oversight, but it serves to undermine and erase the vital role women played in Club history. This thesis explores the series of actions taken by individuals that resulted in a bottom-up restructuring of a powerful and influential organization, and the conversations surrounding gender that complicate the definitions of feminist movements. The lack of official record substantiating this moment in history indicates an institutional narrative that does not claim credit for gender integration but rather, ignores it entirely. No wonder no women are legends.

Given the lack of material documenting the Hut System's integration, I wanted to provide the opportunity for women to tell their own story in their own voices. Of course, there is no universal female experience, in or outside of the huts, and this thesis does not aim to standardize or reduce the histories of hutwomen to a single, simplified thread. However, many of the women I interviewed confirmed and expanded upon each other's memories, building a linear and consistent narrative that reveals female action and the contested role of women within the Club in a way the timeline's oversight does not. Similarly, men and their memories play a vital role in this thesis, from those who were in charge of hut hiring during integration to those who worked to document this history in the decades after it unfolded. Men's memories of their time in the huts also figured heavily into the reconstructed narrative; when does nostalgia become an exclusionary and reactionary force, and how has the living memory of the Hut System developed over time to engage critically with gender, femininity and masculinity? However, women remain the central focus of this thesis, as it was their efforts, in conversation to some degree with principles and strategies of national women's rights movements, that affected change.

Interviews and internal AMC literature provided the main primary sources for my thesis. There are, of course, certain difficulties in working with accounts taken after the fact. Memory is

not always a reliable function, perhaps even less so within a community whose countless stories have been coopted, adapted, and transformed throughout the years until the trails were steeper, the weather more inclement, and the weights heavier than perhaps they were in truth. This problem is hardly specific to my thesis, but rather to the study of history at large. However, in no instance did an interviewee contradict something he or she had said in an earlier source.

Alexander McPhail wrote about the history of women in the AMC for the *Appalachia Bulletin* in 1984, and I interviewed the same men and women as he did, whenever possible, in order to provide continuity in the retelling. The subjects' stories in 2014 and 2015 matched their accounts from 1984. This continuity suggests a commitment to the narrative and indicates no intentional revision to serve a more contemporary set of social or political norms. A larger problem surrounds the lack of primary sources documenting men's reactions to gender integration, whether as members of the male-only system of the 1950s and 1960s or as contemporaries to the first women who worked in the huts. By the time McPhail published his piece, over a decade had elapsed since the initial integration, perhaps allowing time for anger or misunderstanding or frustration to soften, for men to grow used to the institutional shift. Modern conversations yielded similar warm reactions to the inclusion of women, with the exception of a few people described within. Perhaps the sharper confrontations and less amicable feelings are lost to history, or perhaps the transition was fairly smooth and gender ceased to be a contentious topic in the huts shortly after the acceptance of women. Regardless, the story contained in the thesis evolved over a relatively short period of time and remains the version recognized and agreed upon by the majority of players involved. While the AMC has yet to acknowledge the history of its integration in any official capacity, the community most directly affected—contemporary and

former hut croos—defined its own story. Memory functions as its own source in this thesis: how it has changed over time, how it has stayed the same, and how it shaped a community and its values. Memory, in a way, dictates truth.



There are challenges involved with grounding a local history in a larger societal context. I approached this thesis from a number of angles, beginning with the internal story of the actions women took to carve a place for themselves within the AMC. As mentioned above, the Club produces a prolific amount of self-referential literature, and also publishes works relevant to the history of the Club, the region, or key figures who interacted with both. I first aimed to situate my argument in the context of preexisting scholarship regarding women in the White Mountains and the development of a gender-neutral hiking culture, beginning in the 1800s. Julie Boardman's *When Women and Mountains Meet: Adventures in the White Mountains* provides detailed vignettes about characters, sometimes forgotten, who helped shape the social culture of the region. Boardman's book seeks to commemorate the oft-overlooked contributions of women in not only mountaineering and hiking but also establishing the tourism industry in New Hampshire. Her history is vast, encapsulating the decades between 1773 and 1991, but remains incomplete. In her introduction, Boardman explains, "I have not written much about contemporary women, primarily because I had difficulty evaluating the importance of their achievements."<sup>2</sup> She supports her concerns by citing the definitive text on hiking in the Northeast region, *Forest and Craig* by Guy and Laura Waterman. First published in 1994, *Forest and Craig* begins in the 1800s and continues through the 1980s; however, the authors believed that "when it

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<sup>2</sup> Julie Boardman, *When Women and Mountains Meet: Adventures in the White Mountains* (Etna, Appalachian Mountain Club Press, 2001), 4.

comes to events after about 1950, we grow skeptical of the ability of historians to form objective judgements.”<sup>3</sup> Despite Boardman’s allegiance to the text, the Watermans did mention the hut system integration, if briefly, calling it a “drastic” and “conspicuous” change.<sup>4</sup> Even here, the authors simply noted that “women joined AMC hut crews,” glossing over any specific actions and endowing the episode with an air of passivity.<sup>5</sup>

Significantly, Boardman’s history does include figures from the 1960s and 1970s, as well as hiking and conservation feats spearheaded by women into the 1990s. Her unwillingness to evaluate women in the decade between the conclusion of her book and when she published her work is understandable, but her failure to include a single mention of women who worked as Hutmen (F) in the 1940s or forced integration of the Hut System in the 1970s represents a tremendous oversight. Boardman did not set out to tell the story of women in mountaineering the world over, but in a small region in which the history of backpacking and conservation was shaped largely by the AMC. Her exclusion of the first hutwomen represents either its lack of discussion in academic circles, or a ruling on what is and what is not considered “important.”

Rebecca Brown’s *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering*, takes a broader focus, relaying stories from locations as varied as the Swiss Alps to the Himalaya. Brown, regarded as an authority on White Mountain history, argues in her book that “to a large extent, the women... were climbing mountains not to make a statement about women, but for the sheer joy and challenge of the ascent itself.”<sup>6</sup> She relies on journal entries and correspondences between

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Laura and Guy Waterman, *Forest and Crag: A History of Hiking, Trailblazing, and Adventure in the Northeast Mountains* (Boston, Appalachian Mountain Club Press, 1989), 592.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Brown, *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering* (Guilford, Appalachian Mountain Club Press, 2002), xii.

women engaging in typically male activities, citing pioneers who made first ascents, contributed to scouting exhibitions, and documented the natural history of the region. The women Brown studied continually interacted with contemporary conceptions of their gender, recognizing themselves as women but refusing to acknowledge differences between themselves and their male counterparts in any category but attire. Though Brown studied women who had an early association with the AMC and who worked as freelance naturalists for the Club, she, too, excluded the women who integrated the Hut System, ending her first chapter on “The Lady Trampers” of White Mountains in 1884 and the action of her chapter on “The Next Generation,” which focused largely on one figure, in 1960. Brown acknowledges that “women continued to have to prove themselves...and it was not as if the masculine world of mountaineering suddenly welcomed them with open arms,” but neglected to write about the women who changed the conversation, breaking into perhaps the most stalwart center of alpine fraternity in the country and removing gender as a necessary qualifier in the mountains.<sup>7</sup>

It is unsurprising that *Forest and Crag* dedicated so little space to the integration of the Hut System; at 928 pages, it is near encyclopedic in its amalgamation of natural regional history, yet the authors were not focusing, primarily or even secondarily, on the feats of women in particular. That both Boardman and Brown, in books dedicated to the barrier-breaking accomplishments of women that include a minimum of two chapters devoted specifically to women in the White Mountains, overlooked the huts integration process is both surprising and telling. Does women gaining access to the huts matter for hiking and mountaineering culture? The huts have come to represent, since the 1960s, the conversation surrounding who is allowed

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<sup>7</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 218.

to use the wilderness and in what ways. The inclusion of women in the Hut System marked a shift, in which women suddenly became more than just stewards of environmental conservation, diligent out of an inherent feminine virtue. The women studied by Boardman and Brown were all accomplished explorers, with bold ascents and daring rescues credited to their name. However, by forcing official recognition of their capability to *work* in the backcountry, the first generation of hutwomen gained and solidified an inalienable right to thrive without calling their gender into question. *When Women and Mountains Meet* and *Women on High* do very similar work and are excellent resources for discovering many forgotten histories of pioneering women who celebrated the natural world and their self-defined role in it. However, their exclusion of Hutmen (F) and the first generation of hutwomen sends the message that, in order for a history to be worth uncovering, it must focus on singular figures with quantitative achievements, instead of multiple women who independently engineered a more subtle cultural shift within the confines of a preexisting organization.

Because the Appalachian Mountain Club functions primarily as a conservation organization, this thesis also engages with several histories regarding the role of women in conservation, formally and informally, and asks how the definitions of womanhood and femininity as they relate to the environment have developed over time. Phoebe Kropp argues in her article “Wilderness Wives and Dishwashing Husbands: Comfort and the Domestic Arts of Camping in America, 1880-1910” that as early as the turn of the century, the idea of wilderness allowed men and women to explore reversed gender roles even in a time when anxiety over the closing of the frontier started to redefine American masculinity. She addresses the intersections between comfort and gendered work, and the notion of constructed wildernesses as

representative of a new type of civilization outside the bounds of society in which work became increasingly gender neutral. Nancy C. Unger complicates Kropp's argument in her work *Beyond Nature's Housekeepers: American Women in Environmental History*, recognizing that while women did enjoy a "loosening of the restrictions of female behavior and fashion," they retained the primary responsibility for domesticating camp and were required to "cede control to men" on many camping expeditions.<sup>8</sup>

The scope of Unger's work is more expansive; it details the progression of women who came to environmental activism or conservation out of concern for the future of their children, to the eventual intersection between environmentalism and feminism. Unger argues that women necessarily used domestic language to establish themselves as credible, nonthreatening voices in the public eye, but have always done more kinds of work than simply lobbying for environmental protection without understanding the scientific or political implications behind their actions. Many of the first women to work in the huts made earlier inroads to the AMC through the environmental education program and continued to act as stewards of the White Mountains even after they achieved equality within the system. Kropp's article and especially Unger's book provide vital contextual framing for the actions of early hutwomen, illuminating a precedent for female environmental activism but also highlighting the gap in scholarship regarding women who used their roles in conservation efforts to lobby for their own legislated equality.

As the primary narrative actions of this thesis occurred between 1970 and 1973 and concerned a group of women fighting discriminatory hiring policies, it became necessary to

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<sup>8</sup> Nancy C. Unger, *Beyond Nature's Housekeepers: American Women in Environmental History* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2012), 77.

explore the connection between the events that took place in the White Mountains and the national conversation regarding women's rights. Since this is a History thesis as opposed to Women and Gender Studies, I refrained, for the most part, from relying on highly theoretical texts; I felt a responsibility to engage with such material in a scholarly manner for which my selected course of study had not prepared me, so I looked elsewhere out of respect for the field. Instead, I rooted my analysis in several histories of "the women's rights movement," recognizing that there was never a single force which addressed the concerns of all women, and that several concurrent movements occupied overlapping but distinct intellectual territory. The grounding text, Ruth Rosen's *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*, incorporated Rosen's own experience as an activist in the 1960s into a larger conversation about the successes and pitfalls of various types of feminist action. While highly informative, Rosen's work often faces criticisms aimed at her narrow focus on the efforts of white, heterosexual, middle-class women. Despite this critique, Rosen's work informed my own; generally, hutmen and hutwomen are white, middle-class students with similar backgrounds to the main figures in Rosen's study. This thesis explores social change and agency primarily through the lens of white, cisgender, heterosexual women, and does not intend to speak for the scope of all other women not explicitly covered by this research. However, rooting the work of the hutwomen in a wider social context meant finding actors of similar persuasions, thus making Rosen's history invaluable for comparison and analysis. Regardless of the necessity for comparison, it is important for a historian to recognize the limits of his or her work. Joan

Wallach Scott explains, “if one grants that meanings are constructed through exclusions, one must acknowledge and take responsibility for the exclusions involved in one’s own project.”<sup>9</sup>

Although not a central source for this thesis, Scott’s *Gender and the Politics of History* provided essential framing language regarding gender and its employment by historians. Scott defines gender as “knowledge about sexual difference,” and knowledge as “understanding produced by cultures and societies of human relationships, in this case of those between men and women.”<sup>10</sup> She argues that the study of history forms the conversation about knowledge of sexual differences, in terms of what is and is not studied, the events “either so taken for granted or so outside customary practice that they are not usually a focus for historians’ attention.”<sup>11</sup> This definition helped to frame the original question of my thesis: why had no one addressed the Hut System’s integration in an official capacity? Scott, though indirectly, answered. She writes, “the subject of women has been either grafted onto other traditions or studied in isolation from them,” citing tensions between “history’s theoretical stance and feminism’s need for theory” as complicating factors in telling the academic stories of women.<sup>12</sup>

Employed in a similar manner, R.W. Connell’s *Masculinities* informed the discussion of shifting definitions of manhood that colored, among other things, the atmosphere of the huts throughout the mid-twentieth century. Connell’s work explores the history of the study of masculinity, as well as the advent of the male sex role. He argues that distinct gender roles date back to the late nineteenth-century, “when resistance to women’s emancipation was bolstered by

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<sup>9</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1999), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Scott, *Gender*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Scott, *Gender*, 16, 17.

a scientific doctrine of innate sex difference.”<sup>13</sup> He explains that though scientists have found very few inherent differences between mental capacities in men and women, that “masculinity and femininity are quite easily interpreted as...the products of social learning or ‘socialization.’”<sup>14</sup> This thesis, in some ways, examines the effects of community on the concepts of masculinity and femininity, interacting with what Connell calls socialization.

The women interviewed for this thesis never directly self-identified as feminists, yet their actions suggest a baseline familiarity with national women’s rights movements and the related strategies. While the women who integrated the huts shared certain demographic similarities with branches of the national movement, as explained above, I wanted to examine the ways in which movements affect and create culture. In their essay “Analytical Approaches to Social Movement Culture: The Culture of the Women’s Movement,” Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier argue that “all social movements, to varying degrees, produce culture.”<sup>15</sup> They focus on the concept of collective identity, which “arises out of challenging a group’s structural position, challenges dominant representations of the group, and valorizes the group’s essential differences through actions in every day life.”<sup>16</sup> Collective identity is useful in analyzing the actions would-be hutwomen took during the early 1970s. Though they perhaps never acted collectively, they did challenge masculine associations with the system and recognized their roles and individuals within a larger community.

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<sup>13</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier, “Analytical Approaches to Social Movement Culture: The Culture of the Women’s Movement,” in *Social Movements and Culture*, ed. Hank Johnston et al. (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 163.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor and Whittier, “Analytical Approaches,” 164.

In this thesis, I aim to examine the intersections of the above theoretical and historical themes as they relate to and complicate the story of Hut System integration. I explore the roles of hutwomen as possible feminists, conservationists, and the logical heirs of White Mountain tradition. I also look to contribute to existing scholarship surrounding the role of women in the outdoor community by focusing on a specific group who combined their love of nature with the struggle to obtain recognition of their rights in the decades before the rise of ecofeminism, when women were still considered agents of environmental progress through the lens of gendered domestic conceptions. Similarly, I examine the differences between national movements and their local counterparts, focusing on the ways in which hutwomen coopted certain facets of American feminism and rejected others, creating something that belonged, significantly and uniquely, to themselves.



I have divided this thesis into four chapters, moving chronologically and thematically from the mid-1800s through the 1980s. By establishing a precedent for non-gendered enjoyment of the outdoors, Chapter One examines the disconnect between a relatively accepting alpine community and the Hut System which, although it grew from the same roots, evolved as a highly masculine, closed environment. It also begins to explore the relationship between the AMC and its female employees, who occupied only frontcountry positions unless there was a shortage of able men, as during the Second World War. In Chapter Two, I discuss the particular brand of masculinity on display in the Hut System and examine the effects of nostalgia on progressive thought. I also delve into the roots of the feminist revival by investigating the perceived roles of women within American and AMC societies in the late 1950s and early 1960s and how these

roles were manipulated by society to prevent women from making progress socially and in the workforce, but also by women themselves to subvert the national conversation surrounding their worth. Chapter Three examines the relationship between the integration of the Hut System and the women's movement on a larger scale, situating hutwomen somewhere in between the feminists of the National Organization of Women, for example, and those who struck out to form their own female-only rural idylls. Finally, Chapter Four explores the restructuring of the huts community after the entry of women. It argues that women did not create a feminized space, but rather one devoid of gendered work implications, considering modes of dress, recreation, and labor as categories of evaluation. Throughout these four chapters, I analyze the Hut System through national trends in activism, discussions of masculinity and femininity, and patterns in female employment, concluding that the modern huts represent a feminist model that encourages equality of the sexes on a level that precludes gender from entering the conversation.



### **A Note on Language**

As with many small, long-lived communities, hut croos have developed their own language over the years. I have tried to use the widely-recognized iterations of their terms whenever possible, except when using slang to define the character of the Hut System, as with the usage of “croo” rather than “crew.” Hut-specific terms have been defined within the text whenever applicable.

## Chapter One: “Of Course I Can!”<sup>17</sup>

Women have contributed to the New England outdoor recreation community since its inception. Female hikers, explorers, and artists used language and self-definition to align themselves with men, leading to a relatively progressive group of mountaineers that valued skill and bravery over gender. The Appalachian Mountain Club was born of this tradition, encouraging female participation and supporting ventures made by women. However, the Hut System grew up separately, creating a masculine world within the White Mountains that looked and operated differently from its surroundings.

The Club included and relied on female labor, especially during World War II when a shortage of able men made room for women and their husbands to staff backcountry locations. In the frontcountry, women who worked at the Pinkham Notch Visitor Center helped to normalize gender relations, establishing a precedent for coeducational living in the mountains and continuing to engage with the exploratory spirit of the women who roamed before them. The various roles of Pinkham women served to illuminate a disconnect between the Club’s frontcountry and backcountry practices, suggesting that the huts operated as a separate sphere governed by masculine principles away from female influence.

### I. Laying the Groundwork

For centuries, the tops of New England mountains were respected as a distinct and sacred realm. The Abenaki and the Penobscot people in northern New England believed powerful gods

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<sup>17</sup> Popular wartime poster superimposed the slogan “Of course I can! I’m patriotic as can be—and ration points won’t worry me!” over an image of a beautiful housewife carrying jars of preserves. Dick Williams, 1944.

made homes on the summits, and avoided the climb out of religious deference.<sup>18</sup> European explorers such as Darby Field made daring ascents in the name of surveying, but these expeditions were uncommon. It was not until the early 1800s that hiking and mountaineering for pleasure arrived to North America, and women were ready to climb.

The conventions of the early nineteenth century frowned upon athletic and independent women, more so in America than in Europe. By 1838, two French women had summited Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps, and “a succession of strong and determined women clambered after them.”<sup>19</sup> They followed the routes laid by men, dressed in corsets, floor-length skirts, and dainty boots, and loved the thrill of the mountains as much as the male alpinists. Henriette d’Angeville, the second woman to summit Mont Blanc, explained the personal importance of her expedition:

It was not the puny fame of being the first woman to venture on such a journey that filled me with the exhilaration such projects always call forth; rather, it was the awareness of the spiritual well-being that would follow.<sup>20</sup>

She, and other female mountaineers, took solace and comfort in completing a climb, a feeling that many ladies found addictive.

In the United States, women caught inspiration from their European counterparts and from the men around them. Many women began a relationship with the White Mountains through tourism; they were cooks, servants, and inn keepers<sup>21</sup>. The most notable of these women

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<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Howe, *Not Without Peril: 150 Years of Misadventure on the Presidential Range of New Hampshire* (Guilford: Appalachian Mountain Club, 2009), 16.

<sup>19</sup> Rebecca A. Brown, *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering* (Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club, 2002), xi.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Julie Boardman, *When Women and Mountains Meet: Adventures in the White Mountains* (Etna, Durand Press, 2001), 35.

was Lucy Crawford, co-owner of the Old Moosehorn Tavern and eventual White Mountain historian. Lucy's husband, Ethan Allen Crawford, blazed a path from their inn to the summit of Mt. Washington over eight miles of unexplored terrain. Today, the Crawford Path is the oldest continually used and maintained hiking trail in the country. Aside from running an inn popular among hikers, Lucy was also one of the first women to summit Mt. Washington, the tallest peak in the Northeastern United States. While the first female ascent of the mountain occurred in 1821, Eliza, Harriet, and Abigail Austen left no record of their trip except for the notes Lucy had taken from her husband, who helped organize the hike. The sisters' success fueled Lucy's desire to climb, and she completed her first ascent in 1825.

While Lucy Crawford is certainly significant as an early woman hiker, her real contribution was her book, *History of the White Mountains, From the First Settlement of Upper Coos and Pequaket*, published in 1846. Less of a regional history than a narrative of her family, the book documents important details about life in the Mt. Washington Valley and memorializes legends that would have been lost to time without Lucy's record. Lucy is seldom mentioned in guests' descriptions of their stay at the Old Moosehorn Tavern, and her husband is without question the more notorious figure. However, Lucy's *History*, filled with her love for the mountains and those who inhabited them, captured the exploratory spirit of the era.

The boom of mountain tourism that characterized New England in the mid-19th century brought hordes of families to the White Mountains. While women still never hiked unaccompanied by men, girls like Lizzie Bourne were treated to mountain expeditions with their family members. Lizzie was the first known woman to perish on Mt. Washington, succumbing to the elements after a night spent outside. Had the weather been clear, Lizzie would have been able

to see the summit, and the shelter it offered, from the place where she died.<sup>22</sup> Notably, the party that recovered Lizzie's body contained an equal number of men and women. Lizzie Bourne was not a great, or even good, mountaineer; however, her presence near the summit of Mt.

Washington in 1855 illustrates an important point. The White Mountains were, slowly but surely, becoming more accessible to tourists of all skill levels, including women and young girls.

Lauded then and now as some of the most relevant explorers of their time, the Pychowska and Cook women wrote a new chapter for ladies hoping to break into the male-dominated world of "tramping." As early as 1872, the mother-daughter team of Lucia and Marian Pychowska and Lucia's sister Edith Cook began exploring and mapping the rugged summits of the White Mountains. Few established mountain trails existed, and the demand for accessibility brought on by the tourism boom required new routes to the summits. According to Rebecca Brown, women were particularly concerned with the environment, and their urgings "led to a significant portion of the region being conserved as a national forest...Women's outlook on nature and the outdoors helped shape an American sensibility about wilderness and its role in people's lives."<sup>23</sup> Lucia, Marian, and Edith used their skills in writing and translating, as well as art and botany, to bring the mysteries of the mountains into the public eye.<sup>24</sup>

When the Appalachian Mountain Club was founded in 1876 by Boston businessmen with a fervor for the outdoors, the Pychowskas and Edith Cook became avid members almost instantly. Women heavily attended the Club's trips, outnumbering men on bold overnight expeditions in the Northern Presidential Range and on Mt. Katahdin, regardless of the season.

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<sup>22</sup> Boardman, *Women and Mountains Meet*, 36.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 121.

<sup>24</sup> Boardman, *Women and Mountains Meet*, 58.

During this time, Lucia Pychowska established herself as an authority on New England ferns, and Marian followed in her mother's footsteps. Edith Cook published a report in *Appalachia* about the Club's first traverse of the Carter Range, which may have resulted in the construction of a permanent path.<sup>25</sup> For these women, the mountains represented freedom and the ability to define themselves. They described themselves as mountaineers, "loved the sense of exploration and discovery still very possible in their day" and "proudly threw themselves into the work of trail building alongside...other AMC men."<sup>26</sup> They identified as hikers (or "trampers" in White Mountain jargon of the day) as wholeheartedly as any men they encountered in their travels. Perhaps unknowingly, the Pychowska and Cook women echoed the sentiments of Henriette d'Angeville. They did not climb mountains to prove that women could do the work; to them, that was self-evident. They climbed because it connected them on a personal level to the natural world, as evidenced by the copious botanical records and landscape paintings they left behind.

In 1881, AMC founder Edward Pickering commissioned a new trail across the Twin Mountain Range, a remote section of wilderness featuring peaks covered in "unflankable bayonet-lines of shrubbery."<sup>27</sup> Augustus E. Scott, the Club's Councillor of Improvements, spearheaded the project, but no man was willing to join his surveying trip. However, three women answered his call: Charlotte Ricker, a journalist, Martha Whitman, a medical student and acclaimed White Mountain explorer, and Laura Porter, a doctor spending her summer in New Hampshire. Dressed in "perky hats in addition to their normal walking outfit of long skirt, tailored blouse, and jacket," these women set out with Pickering and two male packers on what

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<sup>25</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 124.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 125.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 129.

became an arduous journey.<sup>28</sup> Ricker had very little outdoor experience and lagged somewhat behind the rest of the group, but reveled in her accomplishment upon summiting her first peak:

...self is forgotten as we behold the marvelous mountains, the distant villages...the sparkling flow of the Ammonoosuc as it winds through its native valley...When we have reached the heights how quickly we forget the pain and toil and hardship which are concomitants of all upward journeying, and revel in the pure air and sunlight of the upper life.<sup>29</sup>

Ricker described the complicated dance between the pains and privileges of hiking, and took pride in herself as a mountaineer. Despite Ricker's early departure from the expedition, she finished the adventure with a sense of achievement. She wrote, "I have accomplished my undertaking and have not once whined 'I wish I had never come.'"<sup>30</sup>

This expedition's significance is two-fold. First, it established one of the more popular hiking trails in the White Mountains, and second, it marked an instance in which women had been among the very first of European descent to explore an untrammelled area. While Ricker did not complete the full traverse, both Whitman and Porter did, and all three women ventured where few men, according to the lack of response to Scott's call to action, dared to tread. By the early 1880s, women had established a firm place in the ranks of North American mountaineering.

The early twentieth century brought relaxed hiking fashion for women, allowing somewhat of a reprieve from the cumbersome floor-length skirts of the 1800s. The AMC advised women that "short skirts become a necessity," defining short as "a scant skirt reaching the tops of

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<sup>28</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 132.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

the boots”.<sup>31</sup> Aside from slightly less bulky attire, this era also saw a rise in women mastering other alpine sports like rock climbing. Margaret Helburn was most likely the first North American woman to rock climb, and she learned the trade in the White Mountains.<sup>32</sup> Her contemporary, Miriam O’Brien Underhill, was a well renowned female mountaineer who, in the winter of 1925, led a search party up Huntington Ravine, the steepest and most technical trail in the region, to rescue her lost brother.<sup>33</sup>

Between the 1830s and 1920s, more women than those named above explored, kept records, wrote poetry, and owned inns in the region. The women included here, however, were perhaps most influential in blazing the trail for the generations of women who sought employment in huts run by the Appalachian Mountain Club. From advocating for women mountaineers as Lucy Crawford did to identifying themselves as people who belonged in the outdoors discovering new peaks and forging footpaths as the Pychowskas did, these women contributed to a culture in which men expected to see women in the mountains, and while society still viewed their strength, agility and outdoorsmanship as remarkable, as somewhat of an anomaly, women continued to increase the prominence of their rolls. As the Second World War approached, women became more vital than ever in keeping the mountain tourism industry alive.

## II. Camping Culture and Gendered Work

Eastern women took to the wild in other locations than the White Mountains, and the emergence of a national fascination with camping culture between 1880 and 1910 troubled the

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<sup>31</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 128

<sup>32</sup> Boardman, *Women and Mountains Meet*, 94.

<sup>33</sup> Boardman, *Women and Mountains Meet*, 96.

notions of civilization and society as they applied to gender roles and ideas about the body.<sup>34</sup> In the late nineteenth century, camping was largely restricted to “upwardly-mobile, city-dwelling” men and women who “adopted a cultural taste for wilderness and nature appreciation, as well as political interests in conservation.”<sup>35</sup> This phenomenon, prompted perhaps by anxiety over Frederick Jackson Turner’s proclamation of a closed frontier in 1890, created an intellectual space in which the divides between society and wilderness became less clear. This conversation revolved around comfort, the ability to transform the camp into a domestic arena, all while challenging women’s roles in creating acceptable environments. Grace Mitchell was “accustomed to spending [her] vacations at a fashionable hotel in the typical Eastern summer resort,” but decided to accompany her husband on a camping trip in Montana for the summer of 1905. Mitchell’s reservations were less about leaving civilization and more about foregoing the physical comforts afforded by her life in New York, but she soon realized that she was in control of styling her campsite. She recalled, “Experiences of this kind are often referred to as rough, especially for women, but we certainly did not find them so. We had every comfort.”<sup>36</sup> For Mitchell, camping allowed her to blur the lines between civilization and the wild, creating something new and liberating in the process.

This era produced varying ideas of the true meaning of “camping,” and led to the middle-class invention of “roughing it.” Camping emerged as a sort of working vacation, a pastime available only to those with the right combination of leisure time and desire to engage in physical

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<sup>34</sup> Phoebe Kropp, “Wilderness Wives and Dishwashing Husbands: Comfort and the Domestic Arts of Camping in America, 1880-1910,” *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 1 (2009).

<sup>35</sup> Kropp, “Wilderness Wives,” 5.

<sup>36</sup> Kropp, “Wilderness Wives,” 6.

labor. Contemporary historian Roderick Nash believed the camping cult was “masochistic—in that it provided a chance to play the savage, accept punishment, struggle, and, hopefully triumph over the forces of raw nature.”<sup>37</sup> This sentiment illuminates the class restrictions of camping; in order to enjoy the “savagery” of nature, one must be able to return to comfortable, stable living conditions. Campers of the era scoffed at those who rented summer homes in the Adirondacks, preferring instead a tent or the open sky overhead at night. However, many campers believed in the necessity of some amenities, such as good bedding, a warm fire, and dry feet, reviling those who found hardship necessary as tenderfoots. This delicate balance between deprivation and luxury created a new environment, one that was not-quite society yet not entirely out of its bounds, in which women began to flourish as stewards of the outdoors and masters of their homesteads.

Both men and women enjoyed the physical act of making camp. In 1893, Charlotte Conover and her family set out for a journey through the Rocky Mountains. At camp, Conover hung curtains, laid out tablecloths, and made potato salad, while the men made tables and chairs and worked on general camp improvements. Conover’s male companion wrote, “There is, to most men, if they would only realize it, a real pleasure to be found in the very act of making a temporary home in the wilds comfortable and attractive.”<sup>38</sup> That a man openly delighted in the domestic acts of homemaking often attributed to women within the confines of civilization indicates that the wild provided a stage on which actors could try on different gender roles without the implications such actions would carry back home. Husbands even took up other

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<sup>37</sup> Kropp, “Wilderness Wives,” 9.

<sup>38</sup> Kropp, “Wilderness Wives,” 10

traditionally feminine acts while at camp, like washing dishes. The chance for men to perform these tasks in the wilderness raised awareness around housework; “camp made women’s typical labors more visible.”<sup>39</sup> A photograph published in *Outing* magazine in 1905 shows a man scrubbing dishes in a creek while his wife watches, amused. This tableau was acceptable in the context of wilderness, and the notion of a man performing women’s work in the woods “remained invisible in a way his taking up a station in the kitchen at home would not have.”<sup>40</sup>

While the outdoors provided spaces for women to claim independence and control over their lives, the idea of nature appealed to many turn of the century men who felt disconnected from their masculinity by urbanization and industrialization. Men’s occupations became less rurally focused, and “newly formed outdoor clubs provided reassurances of masculinity through the kinds of tests of male strength and endurance that were no longer part of everyday life.”<sup>41</sup> Membership in organizations like the AMC and the Sierra Club provided an outlet for tensions surrounding masculinity, and camping became a way for men to “recapture, however briefly, elements of the pioneer experience.”<sup>42</sup> While America was yet to see a full-blown masculinity crisis, “a preoccupation with male regeneration was well underway by the turn of the century,” manifesting itself in the cultivation of traditionally male characteristics such as aggression, passion, and combativeness, that were no longer as vital as they once were on the frontier.<sup>43</sup> A return to rugged living also framed national political conversations; in 1900, Theodore Roosevelt

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<sup>39</sup> Kropp, “Wilderness Wives,” 12.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Nancy C. Unger, *Beyond Nature’s Housekeepers: American Women in Environmental History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 77.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> K.A. Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960,” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 2000): 526.

gave a speech entitled “The Strenuous Life” in which he spoke against idleness and ease and lauded “those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual life.”<sup>44</sup> The speech targeted men and their sons, and invoked imagery of male health and strength to encourage its listeners to follow Roosevelt’s message. Roosevelt also greatly expanded the National Park System, working closely with the Sierra Club to protect the lands he loved. This era linked masculinity closely with a prowess and comfort in the outdoors.

Despite masculine language surrounding nature in the national imagination, the wilderness provided the space for men and women to act as a team, each as responsible for running camp as the other, in a way that traditional civilization at the turn of the twentieth century did not. The middle-class women vacationing in the West and their counterparts exploring the White Mountains in the East found liberation in the wilderness that their home lives lacked. For female campers, their vacations did not represent an escape from society, but rather a chance to remake it on their own terms, as equal partners with men in homesteading and homemaking. For female mountaineers, the wilds of New Hampshire and their opportunities through the AMC provided a landscape in which they could thrive as writers, painters, and explorers, and as the unquestioned equals of the men who hiked alongside them.

### **III. The AMC Hut System and World War II**

The first Appalachian Mountain Club Hut was built on Mount Madison in 1888 on a budget of \$700.<sup>45</sup> The original stone structure was small, damp, and unimpressive, but it

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<sup>44</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “The Strenuous Life,” (speech, Chicago, Illinois, April 10, 1899).

<sup>45</sup> “Timeline of AMC Huts,” Appalachian Mountain Club Online, <http://www.outdoors.org/lodging/huts/125thanniversary/amc-huts-timeline.cfm>

represented the first in what would become the oldest hut-to-hut hiking system in the country. The system was slow to grow, with small emergency structures and cabins built on Mount Washington and in Carter Notch in 1901 and 1914. Visitors to these huts received shelter and hot meals cooked by the caretakers, who would carry in fresh supplies on their backs using a packboard. In 1928, Joe Dodge became manager of the hut system, and under his leadership, the huts grew to resemble the modern operation. When Dodge took over, Madison Springs Hut had already been expanded to three buildings, including a dormitory for women. The log cabin at Carter Notch had been replaced with a stone structure, and the shelter on Mount Washington was rebuilt, expanded, and named Lakes of the Clouds.<sup>46</sup> Described as a “tough son of a bitch,” Dodge expanded the system to include five more huts over his 51 years of involvement with the club.<sup>47</sup> Tourism and hut visitations escalated drastically with the turn of the century, and by World War II, Dodge felt it necessary to increase the number of workers staffing each hut to keep up with the growing demand.

Until the War, all hut caretakers had been male; however, the draft engaged many of the eligible candidates and left the huts direly understaffed.<sup>48</sup> The lack of gender diversity in hut employment did not represent the clientele who frequented the huts; women’s bunkrooms and restrooms at Carter Notch and Lakes of the Clouds were “well used” as early as 1914, and Calista Harris recalled hiking through the White Mountains with an all-girls summer camp in 1918, noting “there were a lot of girls around the huts in those days.”<sup>49</sup> In 1927 on a trip to Lakes

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<sup>46</sup> “Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> James Gleason Bishop, “Meet Joe Dodge,” *New Hampshire Magazine*, November 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Alexander MacPhail, “Las Machas,” *Appalachia Bulletin* 50, no. 8 (1984): 13.

<sup>49</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 12.

of the Clouds, Calista met Slim Harris, who was there building a new women's dormitory. The two married, and their partnership became an important part of White Mountain history.

In the summer of 1945, at the height of the draft (and therefore male worker shortages) Joe Dodge asked Slim Harris to run Zealand Falls Hut for the season. Slim brought his wife Cal and their two children with him, and together they maintained the hut until Labor Day. Cal remembered, "I did all the housework, all the sweeping and picking up around the hut...Slim did most of the heavy cooking because I had never cooked for so many people before. Of course, [Slim] did all the packing."<sup>50</sup> Cal and Slim were not the first couple to run Zealand Falls. John and Jan Ellery worked there together in the summer of 1941, and Jan was often left alone when John took his days off, meaning she was in charge of cooking and caring for the guests. "I wasn't good at packing," Jan recalled, "so I used to finagle the guests into doing it for me...I always felt that it was like having company and I was doing the entertaining."<sup>51</sup> Bill and Florence Ashbrook also ran the hut during the summer of 1942. Bill had already worked in the huts for several seasons, and the gas rationing of the same year prevented many guests from visiting the huts, so he and Florence saw relatively few visitors. Florence never took to packing, but she loved to hike, and she and Bill traversed across the whole region.<sup>52</sup>

Because of the War, many of the huts' regular patrons were overseas, which meant there were fewer people in the mountains and they stayed for longer periods of time to rationalize the amount of gasoline needed to reach the trailheads. Cal remembered running into other hikers in the seldom-visited Pemigewasset Wilderness surrounding the hut:

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<sup>50</sup> Calista Harris oral history, Old Hutmen Association Collection.

<sup>51</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 13.

<sup>52</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 14.

They were startled...I don't think they were startled just because I was a woman. There were women doing things. Miriam Underhill always did things, and I always did. But there weren't too many people hiking at all and I think the Pemigewasset Wilderness had the fewest of all, certainly few women.<sup>53</sup>

Women hikers were, of course, not unheard of at the time, but Cal and the others were anomalies; they were allowed to work in the huts, and although they were rarely unsupervised, their routines began to resemble men's more closely throughout the course of the season. Cal eventually began cooking more stews and breakfasts for hut guests, and when she hiked, accomplished twenty or so miles over rough terrain at a fast pace in order to be home in time to help serve dinner.<sup>54</sup> While she never packed supplies, Cal worked hard and enjoyed the mountains, calling her summer "the most gorgeous thing anyone can imagine."

Perhaps even more remarkable than Calista Harris and the other wives who were the first women to work in the huts were the young women who ran the Pinkham Notch Hut during and after the War. When the troops came home, all of the backcountry huts reverted to all-male staffs, but Pinkham Notch was accessible by road and resembled a more traditional style of lodging, so women were allowed to keep their jobs. These girls, referred to as "Hutmen (F)," lived alongside the boys in staff housing and ran the Trading Post and lodge. Jane Atwood Black began working at Pinkham in October of 1945 and wrote about a very supportive environment within the AMC. "[Girls] never hesitated in contributing to the reinforcement of the colorful and sometimes outrageous behavior more or less expected of the crew," she remembered, citing her penchant for smoking out of "an elegant, black and white cigarette holder encircled midway with flashing

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<sup>53</sup> Harris oral history.

<sup>54</sup> Harris oral history.

rhinestones” while working behind the reception desk.<sup>55</sup> The young men and women who staffed Pinkham lived in a coed dormitory, and this arrangement sparked a camaraderie between the workers. “No one gave this arrangement a second thought,” according to Black, except “an individual unacquainted with the ways of Pinkham Notch.” This being 1945, some visitors were simply unfamiliar with the notion of boys and girls sharing the same rooms. One evening, a visitor “observed that several of the boys and girls were chasing each other around the T.P. and then dashing up the stairs and not reappearing.” This guest told a friend back home that he “really ought to spend a few days up at Pinkham, where you could have yourself quite a time.” Both men interpreted the staff living arrangements to imply a mountain brothel service, which Black and the rest of the crew found endlessly amusing.<sup>56</sup>

Black’s time at the Trading Post made her part of a team. Regardless of gender, everyone on the crew was united as a separate front, somehow different from and better than the guests that stayed in the Lodge. Called “goofers,” these guests were assumed to have less physical and mental prowess than the staff, and were often the subject of pranks. One worker named Gardener Campbell invented the Lakes of the Clouds Ferry, the “only mountain-climbing ferry on the North American continent,” and advertised it in all of the huts and in the Summit House on Mt. Washington.<sup>57</sup> Black also illustrated a series of battles between her crew and two Pinkham regulars nicknamed The Countess and G-String Annie. A “demanding and superior attitude toward the crew” made the pair prime targets for practical jokes, so one evening several staffers crept outside of the guests’ cabin and made a whole symphony of disruptive noises. Unsatisfied

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<sup>55</sup> Jane Atwood Black, “Hutmen F: Pinkham Notch Camp in the Forties pt 1,” *Appalachia Bulletin* 46, no. 3 (1987): 56.

<sup>56</sup> Black, “Hutmen F pt. 1,” 58.

<sup>57</sup> Black, “Hutmen F pt. 1,” 59.

with the brevity of their venture, a few passionate crew members lured The Countess to the Trading Post under the guise of accepting a phone call and dumped a bucket of water on her head before she stepped inside.<sup>58</sup>

During the 40s and 50s, plenty of women stayed at the AMC huts and lodges, and were treated no differently than their male counterparts. For a time during and just after World War II, it appeared as though the AMC facilities would continue along a progressive path of gender equality; men and women made the same wages, and in places like Pinkham Notch, were required to complete the same tasks, whether that be housekeeping, cooking, or entertaining. However, even as women began to break in to the AMC's mountain hospitality industry, there was still a discrepancy between those who worked in the huts, and those who did not. Barbara Blanchard, who started as Joe Dodge's secretary but soon became Hutmaster of Pinkham Notch, noted, "In those days, we still thought it was a man's world up there—that they ran the show [in the huts]." <sup>59</sup> Similarly, when hutmen returned from overseas, the AMC defaulted to status quo; although women continued to work at Pinkham, the huts reverted to an all-male atmosphere.

It is worth noting the types of people who applied to and were hired for AMC jobs. Hut positions were not lucrative; between 1946 and 1957, the average salary of a hutman was \$12 per week.<sup>60</sup> Employees were generally college students, willing to work for low wages in exchange for the adventure and glory that came with the job. At Pinkham, many positions were filled by college women, likely sisters, daughters, or wives of men who worked in the huts before them. For women, the job offered similarly low pay and few incentives, implying that most who could

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<sup>58</sup> Jane Atwood Black, "Hutmen F: Pinkham Notch Camp in the Forties pt. 2," *Appalachia Bulletin* 46, no. 4 (1987): 38.

<sup>59</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 14.

<sup>60</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 14.

afford such a position came from a middle or upper middle class background much like the families whose preferred pastime was camping. While there remained a clear divide in gender and in status between the men who worked in the backcountry and the women who staffed Pinkham Notch, most of the women “spent many of their days off hiking to the huts and working side by side with the hutmen.”<sup>61</sup>

As a whole, the United States experienced similar shifts in worker demographics due to the war. Between 1940 and 1945, the percentage of women over the age of 15 in the workforce increased from 28 to 34%; however, more than half of these women left the workforce by the end of the war.<sup>62</sup> It is difficult to paint a national picture of women laborers because states sent different percentages of men to fight, but women did continue to work in greater number after the War, perhaps due to a change in opportunities and information about available jobs. In the workforce as a whole, women’s wages were significantly lower than men’s, with the average skilled woman earning \$31.21 per week to the skilled man’s \$54.65. At the peak of the war, women comprised only 4% of the skilled labor force, which meant their opportunities to earn competitive wages were far fewer than men’s.<sup>63</sup> While women hired to work at Pinkham Notch during the war made very little money, so did the men who performed the same jobs.

The roles of women during wartime revealed a dual perception of femininity on the national level. In Rockford, Illinois, women worked in increasingly large numbers in the manufacturing field over the course of the war. Local posters depicted strong, independent

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<sup>61</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 14.

<sup>62</sup> Daron Acemoglu, David H. Autor, and David Lyle, “Women, War, and Wages: The Effect of Female Labor Supply on the Wage Structure at Midcentury,” *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 112, No. 3 (June 2004): p 497-551.

<sup>63</sup> Metropolitan State University of Denver. “Women In WWII.” msudenver.edu. <https://www.msudenver.edu/camphale/thewomensarmycorps/womenwwii/> (accessed December 2, 2014)

female workers, and department stores advertised “jeep suits” for the practical, industrial woman.<sup>64</sup> However, the town still valued traditional femininity. Women “needed to be mothers and wives...yet the nation also expected them to work and make money but not be so proud of this work that they would want to continue working after the war.”<sup>65</sup> Rockford company Woodward Governor necessarily hired women into male positions due to increased wartime demand, but this shift in gendered positions lasted only as long as the War, and soon women were relegated to secretarial jobs or pushed out of the workforce entirely. Even during the war, Rockford women were forbidden from working at the heaviest machines, emphasizing a public perception of female weakness.<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of women in the workforces in places like Rockford hardly broke the pattern of sexually discriminatory hiring; rather, it shifted practices to focus on the shortcomings of women in the workplace instead of forbidding them entirely. Like the AMC, Woodward Governor hired women to positions not commonly held by females in other parts of the country, but continued to rely on separation, of frontcountry women from hutmen and “weak” women from their traditional male counterparts in the factory, to maintain a status quo. Both companies tended to hire women related to former employees fighting overseas, suggesting that “ties to men remained an important part of temporarily shifting gender roles.”<sup>67</sup> Gains for working women during World War II were provisional, both in the AMC and other companies, despite a national dependence on female work to support a country at war.

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<sup>64</sup> Katie Sutrina, “The ‘Rosies’ of Rockford: Working Women in Two Rockford Companies in the Depression and World War II Eras,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 102 no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2009): 411.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Sutrina, “Rosies,” 413.

<sup>67</sup> Sutrina, “Rosies,” 414.

There is a complicated relationship between the history of women in the White Mountains and the Appalachian Mountain Club's hiring policies. Since the early 1800s, women have not only hiked and explored the region, but also created and sustained the thriving hospitality industry that made the advent of the hut system possible. Even this history disregards Native American women like Molly Ockett, a medicine woman, and Weetamo, female chief of the Pocasset, who traveled overland ministering to settlers and learning about the natural world.<sup>68</sup> Hiking and mountaineering in the White Mountains grew as a relatively gender neutral pastime; although society expected women to hike in certain outfits and discouraged female ascents in the early days, men like AMC founder Edward Pickering and surveyor Augustus E. Scott soon realized that the mountains do not discriminate based on gender. The huts, however, evolved outside of this context. Although there were enough female visitors as early as 1922 (and most likely earlier) to warrant a separate dormitory at Madison Springs Hut, and despite married women working as hut caretakers in the 1940s, and even with young women retaining their jobs at Pinkham Notch after the war, the huts would not officially integrate until 1973. The Club serviced female visitors from all walks of life at every facility, yet remained a male-dominated work environment. The women who worked or recreated in the mountains always felt like they belonged there, and it was the wartime generation of Hutmen (F) that "heralded the more profound changes to come."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Boardman, *Women and Mountains Meet*. (Like Boardman, I was unable to find more than speculation about either woman, but felt it necessary to include them at least briefly to avoid endorsing a complete whitewashing of the region's history.)

<sup>69</sup> MacPhail, "Las machas," 14.

## **Chapter Two: “An Outmoded Masculine Mystique”**

The 1950s, due to a lack of significant construction within the system, allowed time for the huts to develop a distinct, male-based culture. The huts became a place for young men to reclaim and redefine their masculinity, moving away from the decade’s consumerist, urban principles and harkening back to life on the frontier when worth was measured by survival and masculinity was synonymous with grit. Hutmen of the 50s and 60s look back on their seasons with intense sentimentality, and this nostalgia perhaps acted as a barrier against integration in the 1970s, whether it informed policy decisions or contributed to the general air of ambivalence surrounding women’s roles in the system.

Masculinity underwent a national redefining in the Cold War era, which encouraged reactionary policies towards women’s liberation, especially as it concerned their roles outside of the home. As hut positions grew in acclaim in the 1960s, hutmen became more aggressive in their treatment of guests. The environment within the system itself grew increasingly masculine, yet individual hutboys harbored no ill-will toward women who hiked or packed, unofficially, alongside them. In the face of a hyper-masculine Hut System, women found inroads to the AMC through educational opportunities, establishing themselves as committed conservationists and teachers.

American masculinity experienced another examination in the wake of the Vietnam War due to an overwhelming feeling of loss and disenfranchisement that distinguished the era. This alienation perhaps influenced the character of croos, creating at-once more removed and less macho communities. Women began to appear more frequently in the backcountry and

represented a shift away from the old closed societies of the huts towards spaces with an emphasis on education and inclusion. As the conversations regarding gender in the mountains continued to evolve, AMC women were poised by the end of the 1960s to advocate for their unfettered equality.

### **I. Nostalgia and Implicit Masculinity**

The end of World War II meant that families were no longer needed to care for the huts in the stead of able men, so women were once again limited to the confines of frontcountry work. However, the immediate post-war era ushered in a phase of construction and expansion for the system, beginning with additions to Lakes of the Clouds and Pinkham Notch in 1947 that made room for more guests and larger croos.<sup>70</sup> With the 1950s came a period of relative physical stasis; no further huts were constructed until the Mizpah Springs Hut in 1964, and the next serious renovation was not until 1962. The system was coming into its own, as guests began visiting the more popular huts like Lakes of the Clouds and Madison Springs in larger numbers, and running a hut had required a full croo for enough years that the position had earned a degree of esteem.

Many of the men who ran the huts in the 50s look back on this era with intense nostalgia. Larry Eleredge, who began working for the AMC in 1949 and spent the consecutive four summers as a hutboy, recalls his time in the huts as the ultimate proving ground, a test of character at once difficult and vivifying. For Eleredge, working in the huts was a formative experience. In a 2004 article for *The Resuscitator*, Eleredge wrote:

When I think of the White Mountains now, what I see is me,  
packing 150 pounds down from the summit to Lakes in the rain

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<sup>70</sup> "Timeline," Appalachian Mountain Club Online

and wind. And I find myself exulting in my ability to do it—to get the load down to Lakes, to pit my agility against the whimsical wind and not be blown over, to be soaking wet and enjoying it. In short what I liked about those summers was me in them, doing all the things that helped to shape me into somebody.<sup>71</sup>

Eleredge's memory illuminates two important factors at play. First, he reveled in packing heavy weights in inclement conditions, a task typically associated with masculinity, and one that embodied the macho tendencies of hutmen of his era. His ability to carry 150 pounds on his back set him apart from others outside of his job description, and marked the hutmen as essentially "other," as their own group locked in tradition. Second, Eleredge's piece represents wistful thinking that is inherently resistant to change; though Eleredge himself was perhaps not against the inclusion of women in his circle, the desire to preserve moments like the above for eternity, exactly as they are in the collective hutman's memory, provides a fierce opponent to progress. Eleredge later described the divide between "goofers" (regular hut guests) and hut croos past and present, in that the former does not understand why the latter continues to return to such a difficult and low-paying job. Said Eleredge, "...we couldn't wait to come back again the following summer. And—at least in my case—to wish that time would cease, eternal summer would prevail...and I would be the everlasting hutman."<sup>72</sup> This emphasis on the preservation of a moment perhaps illustrates why the AMC kept the hut system staffed by only men for so long; many hutboys grew up to work in higher positions within the Club, including on the Huts Committee which made important decisions regarding the system, and their memory of alpine summers was entirely fraternal.

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<sup>71</sup> Larry Eleredge, "Pumpits, Hummers and Hut Reports," *The Resuscitator* (2004): 13.

<sup>72</sup> Larry Eleredge, "Madison as it Was, Summer 1949-1950," *The Resuscitator* (2010): 4.

The 1950s bred a specific type of hutman. Joe Harrington described a scene from a childhood visit to Zealand Falls Hut, in which several croo members marched into the hut in the middle of lunch “with fair sized packs on, and not much else,” and in that moment, Harrington decided “the thing to be was a hutboy.”<sup>73</sup> He loved the theatrics, claiming, “hut types never were known for excessive modesty.” Croos loved showing off for and playing pranks on guests, which contributed to the fraternal atmosphere of the system; executing a difficult job well builds team morale, and making hard tasks look easy in front of uninitiated guests contributes to the sense of superiority hutmen began to cultivate as more tourists took to the hills. From 1942-1953, for example, croos at Galehead and Zealand would take turns packing a human skull (found at an abandoned logging camp) in a box labeled “fresh eggs” and asking guests to bring it to the other hut for an emergency resupply. The receiving croo would then open the box during dinner, to the shock and awe of many guests.<sup>74</sup> This air of otherness also extended to hiking preparations. Galehead Hutmaster Tom Caulkins remembered, “We didn’t have a map or a guidebook. Back then, hutmen didn’t need such things except to straighten out the Goofers.”<sup>75</sup> Of course, Caulkins and his party lost the trail, but were able to bushwhack their way to the hut. This reliance on skill and familiarity with the region is as common among hutmen today as it was in the 40s and 50s, and continues to separate those who staff the huts from those who do not. Larry Eleredge recalled spending time with the guests at the end of dinner service. “Once the chores were done in the evening,” he wrote, “we used to sit with the goofers and spin yarns with occasional bits of useful information included. How the goofers distinguished the one from the other I do not

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<sup>73</sup> Joe Harrington, “The Huts in the Fifties,” *The Resuscitator* (1995): 1.

<sup>74</sup> Henry W. Parker, “Galehead--1932-1999,” *The Resuscitator* (2000): 4.

<sup>75</sup> Parker, “Galehead,” 5.

know.”<sup>76</sup> The relationship between hutboys and guests is complicated. Guests often cause problems, such as wandering unprepared into dangerous terrain or trampling rare alpine flora, but hut jobs depend on visitation, and croo members tend to draw self esteem boosts from impressing a guest. Alexander MacPhail, who worked several seasons at Pinkham and in the huts beginning in 1961, described packing:

It became amusing that I would be panting up the trail complaining, swearing, hating it and when a group of people came down, particularly if there was a pretty girl in the group (or, better) a whole camp of pretty girls, I suddenly was standing straight, head up high, surging with adrenalin, and fairly sprinting up the trail.<sup>77</sup>

The 1950s was perhaps the last decade in which hutmen were not treated as celebrities. Guests still respected their hard work and looked up to them as athletic role models, but the huts had not yet become a widely known tourist destination. Hutmen of the 50s still packed heavy weights and, though different, the job was no easier than in later decades; they served three meals per day instead of the modern two, made to-go lunches for any guest who asked, and worked without the benefit of helicopters bringing in large food requisitions at the beginning of each season.<sup>78</sup> However, despite cultivating swagger for the benefit of guests, hutmen remained relatively quiet about certain physical accomplishments.

One such trial, the Hut Traverse, dates back to 1933 and requires ambitious hikers to walk or run from one end of the Hut System to another in a single, uninterrupted push. The route encompasses roughly 52 miles, with about 16,000 total feet of elevation gain, and challengers

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<sup>76</sup> Eleredge, “Madison as it Was,” 4.

<sup>77</sup> Alexander MacPhail, “The Famous (or Infamous) Hut Traverse,” *White Mountain Sojourn: A Natural History of the White Mountains of New Hampshire* (blog). August 28, 2010, <http://whitemountainsojourn.blogspot.com/2010/08/famous-or-infamous-hut-traverse.html>

<sup>78</sup> Harrington, “The Huts in the Fifties,” 2.

seek to accomplish their traverse in 24 hours or fewer. The first known hutmen to try it completed the hike in 23 hours and 15 minutes, and the next man to try wanted to finish faster. Thus, the Hut Traverse began in the spirit of breaking records, and was neither limited to AMC employees nor men alone. In his 1936 article for *Appalachia*, then-record holder Bert Malcolm questioned, “Why should not men and women get a thrill from using their strength just for the fun of it?”<sup>79</sup> However, the Hut Traverse was mainly executed by hut croos, and therefore men. Since croos were small until the late 50s, there is a gap of recorded traverses between the late 30s and 1958, when Chris Goetze’s well-publicized 16 hour and 14 minute run sparked a resurgence in the spirit of friendly competition.<sup>80</sup> A lack of recorded traverses does not necessarily indicate inaction, but rather speaks to the 1950s hutboy tendency to keep successes private. Alexander MacPhail cites George Hamilton (future Huts Manager), among others, as a 50s hutboy with incredible athletic accomplishments. He says they “didn’t publicize their trail running prowess but in private conversations blew my socks off with some of the times they made,” indicating that the prevalence of record keeping did not reemerge until the 1960s.<sup>81</sup> The fifties were an in-between for the system. Visitations increased, but not astronomically, and more remote huts were still often staffed by croos of two or three. A competitive atmosphere existed, but less so than it would in the coming years. Still, this era sparked intense feelings of loyalty from many hutmen that easily translated into nostalgia and a desire to preserve their version of hut life indefinitely.

The experiences of many hutmen in the late 40s and into the 50s coincided with the growing national obsession regarding masculinity. Building on turn of the century anxieties

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<sup>79</sup> H. L. Malcolm, “Breaking One’s Own Record,” *Appalachia*, December 1936, XXI, pages 189–194.

<sup>80</sup> Klaus Goetze, “Far and Fast,” *Appalachia*, December 1958, LXIII, pages 203–211.

<sup>81</sup> MacPhail, “Hut Traverse.”

regarding the “dangers of leisure, affluence, corporatization, feminine influence [and] the decline of rugged rural life,” political minds of the post-War era felt undermined and limited by the notion that a man must be a “husband-father-breadwinner” instead of his own independent entity.<sup>82</sup> In light of the looming Cold War, American masculinity carried the ideological burden of necessarily opposing totalitarianism, breaking away from the “softness” of mind and body that many feared would ruin the modern man. These concerns led to “an exaggerated cult of masculine toughness and virility” that the early hutboys physically manifested through action and attitude.<sup>83</sup> First, the job description restricted leisure time, a feared concept that precipitated working vacations such as camping and placed an increased value on strenuous occupations. Hut positions also required no small amount of strength, eliminating physical softness from the young men who took to the mountains. Similarly, it provided boys from wealthy or stable families with the ability to forego the comforts (and placating qualities) of affluence by “roughing it” in a constructed wilderness for the summer. The huts represented a space outside the confines of the rigorous academic institutions at which many of these young men were students; academics during this era were often considered “weaklings,” a characteristic of the “heightened anti-intellectual temper of the time” perpetuated by proponents of augmented masculinity.<sup>84</sup> Fear of domesticity, and therefore a female-dependent society, emerged on the national stage after World War II, creating anxiety about the potential of “weak men and helpless boys victimized by parasitic women and/or overbearing mothers.”<sup>85</sup> Beat Generation authors like

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<sup>82</sup> Cuordileone, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety,” 526.

<sup>83</sup> Cuordileone, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety,” 516.

<sup>84</sup> Cuordileone, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety,” 521.

<sup>85</sup> Cuordileone, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety,” 523.

Jack Kerouac presented alternatives to the traditional familial society, returning “the supposedly lost power of the white American man by doing away with the domestic space of the home as well as the gendered economy that governed it.”<sup>86</sup> Kerouac and others imagined a society in which father figures looked after young men, eliminating the customary need for wives and mothers. The huts functioned as an actualization of this masculine family; Hutmasters and Assistants looked out for other croo members, and employees created an environment which replicated the domestic while removing need for the feminine implications of homemaking by acting out their experiment in the backcountry, a playing field of role-reversal and masculine triumph accessed in both the national imagination and by men striking out on camping ventures. As Betty Friedan explained, “Men weren't really the enemy— they were fellow victims suffering from an outmoded masculine mystique that made them feel unnecessarily inadequate when there were no bears to kill.”<sup>87</sup> This is not to suggest that individual hutboys possessed an innate fear of or resentment for women; rather, the collective group perhaps defined their masculinity, and therefore their value, in a space devoid of feminine influence, resulting in stalwart opposition to the political and social changes in the Club’s pipeline. By the middle of the twentieth century, the Hut System embodied masculine virtues; it shaped high school boys into young men and created a place for croos to explore and perfect their traditional masculinity outside the sphere of their mothers’ influence.

Another explanation for the hyper-masculine environment of the huts during midcentury can be found in the “Father of the Hut System” himself. Joe Dodge brought the AMC’s

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<sup>86</sup> Victoria A. Elmwood, “The White Nomad and the New Masculine Family in Jack Kerouac’s ‘On the Road,’” *Western American Literature* 42, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 336.

<sup>87</sup> Jo Ann Levine, “Betty,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (April 1, 1974). Accessed March 11, 2015.

backcountry holdings from three relatively unrelated shelters to a chain of seven, just one shy of today's system. His resume reads like an imagined advertisement for 1950s malehood. Dodge rejected his family's successful business and the prestigious Phillips Andover Academy to serve as a radio operator in the Navy, struck out on his own and headed to New Hampshire with no assurance of employment, resupplied Pinkham Notch during the winter using nordic skis to tote 100 pounds on a 22 mile round trip, and constructed a mountain empire using sheer muscle and grit.<sup>88</sup> Dodge did whatever necessary to get the job done, and instilled the same values in his employees. He embodied the ideal masculinity of the time by taking matters into his own hands, insisting on rugged living, and building something tangible in the wilderness, asserting dominance over the forces of nature. Dodge urged his son to follow suit, instructing him, "Lead with your actions, and keep your damn mouth closed. You don't lead men with your mouth. You lead them by showing them you can do a better job at anything there is."<sup>89</sup> The emphasis on superiority and action implicit in Dodge's advice mirrors national sentiments regarding masculinity; men needed to be strong, to act instead of speaking, to rebel against the national feminization prompted by settled gender roles and over-education. Under Dodge's leadership, the Hut System developed as an intensely macho space reflecting the ongoing crisis in American masculinity but bearing little resemblance to the historical and contemporary genderless hiking culture of the White Mountains. The preservation of the Hut System as it existed in this moment was the preservation of idealized American manhood.

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<sup>88</sup> Bishop, "Meet Joe Dodge."

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

## II. The “Golden Age” of the Hut System

The Hut System and its workers in the 1960s looked very different from their earlier iterations, due in part to a National Geographic article authored by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. Joe Dodge retired in 1959 and George Hamilton took his place as Huts Manager. Hamilton had guided Douglas in 1959 on a three day trip through the huts, and the two had planned to meet again a year later to write a feature for National Geographic.<sup>90</sup> The final article ran for 35 pages and was accompanied by many stunning Kodachrome photographs that painted idyllic and sweeping images of the White Mountains and life in the huts. Reaching a national audience, the article generated a dramatic increase of visitors to the huts, to the extent that the club added its eighth and final structure in 1964 to accommodate the new throngs of guests.<sup>91</sup>

While the article focuses mostly on hiking trails, natural history, and the hutboys themselves, it acknowledges women in several ways. It gives credit to the “devoted band of AMC outdoorsmen and women [who] built and now maintain 354 miles of trail.”<sup>92</sup> It photographs several female guests staying in the huts outside the confines of a family.<sup>93</sup> It includes imagery of women and girls hiking, and of teenaged girls swimming in a waterfall with boys their own age.<sup>94</sup> It largely ignores the gendered hiring policies of the AMC, however,

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<sup>90</sup> George T. Hamilton, “Judge William O. Douglass visits the White Mountains,” *OH Association* (blog). <http://www.ohcrao.com/douglas1.cfm>

<sup>91</sup> “Timeline of AMC Huts,” Appalachian Mountain Club Online, <http://www.outdoors.org/lodging/huts/125thanniversary/amc-huts-timeline.cfm>

<sup>92</sup> William O. Douglas, “The Friendly Huts of the White Mountains,” *National Geographic* 120, No. 2 (1961): 208.

<sup>93</sup> Kathleen Revis, *Vacationers harmonize at Lakes of the Clouds*, 1961, photograph, *National Geographic*.

<sup>94</sup> Kathleen Revis, *Picking a way up Mt. Madison’s Osgood Trail and Shooting a waterfall*, 1961, photographs, *National Geographic*.

reflecting the social climate of the time. Women were allowed to hike and swim and socialize as hut guests, but the idea of them working in a rough, backcountry setting was not so much opposed as it was not even considered. When Douglas writes that the huts are “staffed by hand-picked high-school and college students,” their malehood is implicit.<sup>95</sup>

The increase of tourism in the early to mid 60s bolstered the masculine environment already developed within the system. The huts made the foreboding terrain of the White Mountains more accessible, and the National Geographic article induced “hordes of nice folks with more vacation time and more money than ever before” to take to the trails.<sup>96</sup> This increase, although beneficial for the Club’s bottom line, put tremendous pressure on both the hutmen and the natural environment. Croos “rapidly became overworked and frazzled beyond belief; the cute mountain hostels became increasingly hostile; the hutmen became more macho (or tried), cursed the crowds, and pined for the good old days.”<sup>97</sup> This irritation contributed to an even more closed system; before, hutboys had banded together against the guests in good fun, but the boom of “goofers” in the 60s created a more aggressive environment and with it a more aggressive hutboy.

However, there is little evidence to suggest that men working in the huts in this era disdained women AMC employees or begrudged them a chance to try their hand at hut work. In 1963, Karen Eberhardt and Valerie Bernard packed supplies into Carter Notch Hut to “express their sense of equality with the hutboys.”<sup>98</sup> Hutmen (F) at Pinkham had almost always hiked and

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<sup>95</sup> Douglas, “Friendly Huts,” 206.

<sup>96</sup> Alexander MacPhail, “Las Machas,” *Appalachia Bulletin* 50, No. 9 (1984): 18.

<sup>97</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 19.

<sup>98</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 19.

worked unofficially alongside the boys, and throughout the 60s croos would invite guests, usually counselors or participants from girls' camps, into the kitchen to fulfill the position of "Dip Queen," or dishwasher (Figure 3). The negative pushback against females overstepping their designated bounds seemed to come from the Club's administration, not the current hutboys themselves. In fact, by the late 60s, Eberhardt and Bernard's behavior was considered "too militant," and women looking to work in the huts or at Pinkham were told "not to bother applying."<sup>99</sup> Around the same time, the AMC began phasing women out of jobs at Pinkham. The end of the decade saw the stage set for change in many areas, the most drastic of which would be the internal push that women made to secure their own equality within the system.

Perhaps subtly, the American notion of white masculinity shifted again during the 60s and 70s as a result of the Vietnam War. Veterans of the War faced a new reality upon returning home, one primed by "a loss of power which had been an assumed privilege of white American manhood."<sup>100</sup> For citizens horrified by the violence of the era and the brand of politics represented by the conflict, rejecting American involvement in Vietnam meant rejecting the old standards of masculinity, creating an absence of national identity for veterans and students alike. Veterans occupied a complex position. They "were both part of the system...and excluded from it, ironically acting in history but muted...in the official discourse about that history."<sup>101</sup> In some ways, men returning from the War inhabited the same space as many women in American history. For example, the women of Rockford kept factories running and stimulated the local

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<sup>99</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 19.

<sup>100</sup> Tracy Karner, "Fathers, Sons, and Vietnam: Masculinity and Betrayal in the Life Narratives of Vietnam Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder," *American Studies* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 65.

<sup>101</sup> Karner, "Fathers, Sons, and Vietnam," 66.

economy during World War II, but were largely expelled from the labor force and prohibited from claiming their role in history when the War ended. Both groups, labeled by larger society as a product of a specific and liminal time, struggled to internalize their experiences in the face of constantly-shifting American gender ideals. Many veterans remembered their own veteran fathers as the pinnacle of manhood and were raised on the 1950s convictions of hyper-masculinity and its accompanying privileges. According to Tracy Karner, the 60s and 70s forced a redefinition of fatherhood, through “the assassination of the national father at one end...and the disgraced resignation...of the final father of the era,” compounded by the fact that Vietnam veterans were not met on the home front with the same status and reward as their WWII father heroes.<sup>102</sup>

It is possible that the huts of the 60s and 70s represented a post-Joe Dodge version of masculinity. Aggressive tendencies existed as a result of perceived threats to the hutman lifestyle by increased visitor activity, but given a larger cultural context, this withdrawal into the familiar makes sense. In light of pervasive discomfort and anger stemming from the Vietnam War, hutboys perhaps sought to fortify their own constructed society in the wilderness as a way to avoid the tumultuous American political climate and take comfort in the protection offered by completely controlling a domain. In the words of one Vietnam veteran, “nothing makes sense anymore.”<sup>103</sup> Perhaps, to young men growing up during a dangerous, disheartening era, preserving the huts did make sense. At the same time, veterans and protesters alike experienced deep feelings of alienation during and after the War, based in both a distrust of the national

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

government and the inability to rely on the old definition of manhood. The huts represented this wrinkle, too; as the system continued to develop and mature throughout the Vietnam era, hutmen relied less on the traditional definition of white masculinity that was predicated on a fear of women and building microsocieties without female assistance, and began making more room for women to thrive in the backcountry. A far cry from the system of the 1950s that functioned as a model for idealized contemporary American malehood, the huts of the 60s and 70s represented a shift, prompted by disillusionment with the national state of affairs, towards a gentler, more open environment.

### **III. Origins of Change**

Despite dwindling opportunities for women to become AMC employees in the late 60s, females found inroads through the fledgeling environmental education program. Slim and Calista Harris, remaining involved with the AMC after their wartime stint at Zealand Falls, became teachers-in-residence at Lakes of the Clouds in the early 60s, leading alpine flower walks for guests and “expos[ing] many hutmen to tundra botany for the first time.”<sup>104</sup> Before the Harrises, the education programs in the huts had consisted of hutmen teaching guests how to fold blankets, informing guests about the weather forecast, showing them how to make lunches, and providing trail information. While these were all useful practices, guests often left the mountains with little information about the natural world, and were therefore not equipped to protect it. The Club’s roots as a conservation organization necessitated more visible environmental education efforts, especially in light of the huts’ role in drawing more visitors to the White Mountains. In 1964,

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<sup>104</sup> John B. Nutter and W. Kent Olson, “Huts as Classrooms: A Memoir,” *The Resuscitator* (2013): 6.

Slim Harris wrote the text for the now-famous book *Mountain Flowers of New England*, which “significantly altered the ways in which AMC members and other readers thought about environmental issues.”<sup>105</sup> Miriam Underhill, still exploring the White Mountains four decades after her mountaineering feats made her regionally famous, supplied the color plates for the book, and Cal Harris continued teaching hut croos and guests about mountain wildlife until her death.

Other couples, like Wes and Sarah Tiffney, served as roving teachers, renamed Naturalists-in-Residence in 1967.<sup>106</sup> Brian and Betsy Fowler expanded a preexisting guided hikes program, and hired women to see the program through. As these “Range Walks” continued to grow, more and more female volunteers began leading nature-centered hikes for interested guests.<sup>107</sup> On display during this era was an interesting breakdown in the AMC’s policy of hiring women. The hut croo job description began changing; it “required less in the way of packing and more in the way of public relations.”<sup>108</sup> Even though few hutmen were successfully able to make this transition, the Club remained unwilling to try something new, to allow women, an entirely different and heretofore untapped segment of the population, to work in the huts. Instead, however, it utilized women in the public sphere, allowing them to educate guests and lead trips. This raises the question of gendered work. The Club, and to a certain extent the guests, viewed the duties associated with hut work—packing heavy weights and running unchecked through rugged mountain terrain—as inherently masculine. The croos themselves reveled in this

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<sup>105</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 6.

<sup>106</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 6.

<sup>107</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 6.

<sup>108</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 19.

masculinity as well. Teaching, however, was appropriate for women because teaching, the imparting of knowledge for the betterment and enlightenment of the masses, has always been women's work, if not at the very least gender-neutral. This harkens as far back as 1783, to the end of the Revolutionary War and the advent of Republican Motherhood; it was a woman's duty to raise educated children.<sup>109</sup> The idea of using women to further a cause was not strictly limited to the AMC during the 60s. Early in his presidency, John F. Kennedy established the President's Commission on the Status of Women, which he "cast...as part of the post-Sputnik Cold War effort to free women's talents for public service."<sup>110</sup> Kennedy created this commission as an alternative to supporting the Equal Rights Amendment, which would have constituted a contentious political play. Both within and outside of the Club, women faced institutions that sought to praise their virtue, but failed to support them if that virtue manifested itself in unacceptable ways. This is not meant to belittle the agency of women in creating revolutionary educational programs for a national organization, but rather to discuss the ways in which women were used, were allowed and expected to be revolutionary, as the AMC moved into the 1970s and began to rework its mission statement.

#### **IV. The 1970s and Radical Education**

Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing into the next decade, the outdoor world faced an ethical conundrum. More people than ever before were beginning to recreate outside, yet they remained uneducated about sustainable practices. The AMC, perhaps more than others, had a

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<sup>109</sup> "Women's Changing Roles as Citizens of a New Republic," *The History of Women and Education*, National Women's History Museum (web), [https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/education/1700s\\_2.htm](https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/education/1700s_2.htm) Jan. 28, 2015.

<sup>110</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York, Viking Press, 2000), 66.

personal stake in this problem; the Hut System invited and enabled increasing amounts of guests to visit the area, leading to higher waste production and emissions. This “backpacker boom” of the 70s forced outdoors clubs to begin living by their conservation principles. For the AMC, this meant making “education a core purpose of the greater Club.”<sup>111</sup> Under the then-Executive Director Tom Deans, volunteers teamed up to instate the Club’s new mission, which was “to use creatively AMC’s strategically situated assets and reach beyond them to benefit the mountains and improve the experiences of the hundreds of thousands who love the wilds.”<sup>112</sup> These volunteers believed that the Club had a social responsibility to enact change, coupled with the financial and political abilities to do so. By plunging the Club into the spotlight as an institution of progress and morality, these volunteers established a precedent by which the AMC would necessarily function in the coming decade.

Saundra and Mike Cohen, Vicki Van Steenberg, and Adele Joyes comprised the original “Ed. Squad,” led and fostered by John Nutter. This group sought to work with New England schools to bring students into the Huts and the White Mountains, and to develop a leadership workshop for teachers. They also designed a month-long summer clinic for teachers, which Saundra named Mountain Classroom. Today, this remains one of the Club’s most popular programs. Beginning in 1972, Nutter began recruiting volunteers from Wellesley College, an all-women’s institution. His recruits went on to be hut naturalists and Conservation Directors. Nutter recalled, “the college was an outstanding resource for AMC program development.”<sup>113</sup> This marks a striking parallel to the tendency of the Hut System to be staffed, historically, by

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<sup>111</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 7.

<sup>112</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 7.

<sup>113</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 8.

Dartmouth students, an institution that would not become co-educational until 1972. Again, the Club recognized the potential of female teachers, all while shutting women out of other employment opportunities.

The environmental education reform policies of the late 60s and early 70s marked a tide change for the AMC and, more specifically, the Hut System. These new programs were led by youth in their mid-twenties who felt passionately about preserving the natural world in light of its imminent destruction at the hands of increased traffic. By 1970, the same upper-middle class liberal arts students who had always supplied the huts with manpower were “steeped in militancy against the Vietnam War, racial inequality, sex discrimination, and environmental atrocities.”<sup>114</sup> By placing itself on the frontline in defense of environmental conservation, the Club had entered into the world of political activism. It had shown a willingness to use political capital to support change, and it could no longer afford to pick and choose which social causes it stood behind. Women, sensing an opportunity, were no longer willing to be relegated to the margins.

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<sup>114</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 19.

### Chapter Three: “The Personal is Political”<sup>115</sup>

Women continued to create opportunities for themselves in the AMC through the new environmental education programs. As the Club proceeded to move in a progressive direction, women became increasingly frustrated by their exclusion from the Hut System, leading Ken Olson to assign some women to the huts on a trial basis. Progress remained slow, however, and women became more vocal about their disappointment. They directed much of this anger towards the Huts Committee, which to them represented a body too far removed to retain authority. In the early 1970s, AMC women began using the language of national women’s movements to voice their complaints, creating a link between themselves and women acting in a larger capacity. As women gained more institutional rights in the nation, opponents returned to a critique of their sexuality: protect innocence, fear promiscuity. Women occupied a charged space during the 1970s; their virtue was used for the public good, but their agency remained highly in question.

In the summer of 1973, Olson assigned a handful of women to work an entire season in the huts. Despite stipulations predicated on gender, it appeared as if the system was moving towards a full, seamless integration. The fall of 1973 shattered this narrative, however, when the Huts Committee forbade a woman from working a season alone, without male supervision. The string of female actions that followed situates the story of Hut System integration alongside national women’s movements, evoking similarities in language and effort but retaining a uniquely local character that offered new criteria in determining what does and does not constitute a feminist movement.

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<sup>115</sup> Phrase popularized by Carol Hanisch in 1969 that came to embody the principles of second-wave feminism. Original authorship unknown.

## I. The Boiling Point and Feminist Connection

By the summer of 1970, the attitude in the Hut System mirrored the general malaise and anger of American youth in a pre-Watergate era. Environmentalists questioned the existence of the mountain hostelrys, “hutmen were joking about calling in air strikes on their own huts,” and policymakers approved funds for another rebuild of Lakes of the Clouds, which provided expansion without support for the education necessary to ease environmentalists and hutmen alike.<sup>116</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, a relatively small event evoked a swarm of response. Bruce Sloat, the current Huts Manager, caught two friends named Chris Nesbitt and Nancy Nutter swimming before work. Nesbitt was naked, Nutter was fully clothed. Sloat fired both of them, stating that Nancy “stretch[ed] the moral fiber of the AMC.”<sup>117</sup> Reactions were fierce; Sloat stepped down as Huts Manager, and the AMC also began to examine its hiring policy.

Women continued to apply for hut positions, and continued to receive rejections. However, applicants were promised jobs in the huts in the summer of 1972 or 1973.<sup>118</sup> In the eighty-four years since the inception of the Hut System, this was the first time that women could point to a concrete movement towards equal employment opportunities. Ken Olson, the Huts Manager, began sending women up to the huts for short stints on a trial basis, or allowing women to fill in if there was a shortage of men. Cathy Ferree spent six weeks working at Mizpah Springs Hut in 1971, and it appeared that the issue of hiring women could be settled without confrontation. This was not the case; even as Ferree worked at Mizpah, the Huts Committee vetoed a request from Olson that women be allowed to work regularly. The Club made no

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<sup>116</sup> Alexander MacPhail, “Las Machas part two,” *Appalachia Bulletin* 50, No. 9 (1984): 19.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

movement in 1972, either. It continued to hire women to work at Pinkham Notch, or as hiking guides or educators, and these women grew increasingly frustrated, unable to reconcile how a Huts Manager who supported moving women to the huts did not translate into tangible jobs.

As Bruce Sloat had made resoundingly clear when firing Nancy Nutter, the main concern of the AMC was sexual promiscuity. The Huts Committee, comprised entirely of men, many of whom had worked in the huts in the preceding decades, was concerned about coed habitation. Further complicating the issue was the difference in both lived experience and job description between Ken Olson and the Huts Committee. Olson worked five seasons in the huts between 1965 and 1968, helped develop and execute the Club's progressive education programs, and worked closely with hutmen every day, from hiring to checking up on croos' progress throughout the summer, making him the direct boss of everyone working within the system. The Huts Committee, based in Boston, was physically and ideologically removed from goings-on in the backcountry; comprised of people who grew up in the huts of the 1950s, their time living and breathing in the atmosphere of the system necessarily situated them in a social and political context separate from the one at hand, stressing the difference between their remembered experience and the political reality of the present. Olson, therefore, existed in the middle of two oppositional bodies (the Committee and women petitioning for employment) who had little if any direct communication with each other. In an entry in the Zealand Falls logbook from 1971, Cathy Ferree called into question the authority of the Huts' governing body. She wrote, "...if they had bothered to take the time to observe the operation of the hut perhaps they would have found most of their suspicions, doubts, and worries unfounded," suggesting that they were too far

removed from the situation to fairly hand down legislation.<sup>119</sup> Not only were some women offended by the double standard to which they were being held, but also they were insulted by the implication that their womanhood made them inherently less fit for the job. Ferree continued:

Wake up, Huts Committee! We women are good for much more than making babies and keeping house for 'hubby.' We too love the mountains and what ruggedness they offer and the people that are tuned into them. It is possible to find some (many) of us who could maturely handle the co-ed situation and who know and respect ourselves well enough to save you any embarrassment...We don't need you forbidding us access to the huts to keep us away from the sexual temptations provided by the hutboys. Have confidence in us.<sup>120</sup>

Whether consciously or not, Ferree's language mirrored the national dialogue around women's rights that began gaining traction in the mid-60s. In her seminal book *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan voiced a similar concern. She wrote, "I want something more than my husband and my children and my home,"<sup>121</sup> pioneering language that, based on Ferree's casual usage in 1971, worked its way into the national lexicon of women unsettled in their roles.

Women occupied a pedestaled, unrealistic position in the American imagination at this time; critics of women's liberation bemoaned the "erosion of American family life and praised those wives and mothers who were holding together the nation's...communities."<sup>122</sup> This national belief had political consequences for women trying to enter the workforce. In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, whose Title VII prohibited discriminatory employment practices on the bases of race, color, religion, national origin, and sex. Though Title VII had potential to

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<sup>119</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 20.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York, Viking Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>122</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 67.

empower women, activists quickly realized that the head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission considered sex discrimination a joke.<sup>123</sup> In 1965, *The Wall Street Journal* “asked its readers to imagine...a matronly-vice president lusting after her male secretary,” furthering the stereotype that women in positions of power would forfeit professional behavior for promiscuity, but that these women must necessarily be made sexless or undesirable by this power.<sup>124</sup> Women were required to operate within a volatile space, both at the national level and within the AMC. In the country, women were pillars of virtue capable of stimulating communal growth. In the Club, women were sought-after educators appreciated for their gentility. In both realms, women were forced to be sexless, powerless to defend their own rights, and faced heavy consequences for failing to adhere to their predetermined roles. When, six years after the passage of Title VII, the AMC had yet to begin hiring women on a regular basis, girls seeking hut employment refused to sit idly by any longer.

## II. Slow Changes and Engrained Concerns

After two years of testing the efficacy of assigning women to hut positions, Ken Olson decided to experiment on a wider scale. Beginning in the summer of 1973, Olson allowed several women to work a full season in the system. The women selected had spent at least one season already working for the Club, either at Pinkham or with the Guided Hikes program, meaning that no woman who had not already met the AMC behavioral standards was considered. The Club remained concerned about sexual misbehavior and refused to allow female crew to share a room

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<sup>123</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 73.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

with the men. Nancy Thomas, assigned that summer to the Lonesome Lake Hut, recalled receiving a mandate from higher-ups before beginning her stint: “We were told not to bother anyone and to be very careful to make sure that nobody thought we were sleeping in the croo room with the guys. We slept in a room in the lower bunkhouse.”<sup>125</sup> Thomas and her fellow female croo members were otherized from the start. They were placed at huts with easier pack trails, and they were expected to fulfill the same demands of the job without reaping the benefits of fraternal camaraderie that the position afforded to male employees. However, it was a start. Thomas remembers her first hut season with pride. “There was a great sense of adventure in being the first women in the huts. It was a period of change in the hut system and in society. Society was putting a great pressure on the Hut System.”<sup>126</sup>

In some ways, Thomas correctly identified the relationship between progressive society and private institutions of the era. In 1972, Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment and Title IX, which demanded equality in funding for men’s and women’s sports programs. The inception of *Ms.* Magazine allowed for female reporters on the floor at political conventions. By 1973, the Supreme Court supported women’s reproductive rights in the infamous *Roe v. Wade* case, and behemoth company AT&T “signed the largest job sex discrimination settlement...in the nation’s history.”<sup>127</sup> It appeared that the women’s movement was taking hold on a national level, and that the AMC would soon have to abandon outdated policies lest it risk forfeiting its political capital.

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<sup>125</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 21.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 89.

Despite rapid-fire successes for female equality, “a strong strain of resistance grew alongside the women’s movement,” and also colored the experiences of women in the huts.<sup>128</sup> During her time at Lonesome Lake, Thomas often packed as much weight as the males on her croo, averaging ninety or one hundred pounds per trip. This behavior earned her the descriptor of “too competitive.”<sup>129</sup> Especially in the early days, Olson was cautious about “heavy packing” and women engaging in it; he believed it fostered an unhealthily competitive environment. When women continued to pack equivalent loads to their male coworkers, Olson was “bugged” because to him, the women’s behavior was “unnecessary.”<sup>130</sup> For Thomas, however, heavy packing was not competitive for the sake of sport:

I loved packing...I felt that women had to prove they could carry their fair share on a regular basis. I didn’t feel any pressure to do it; rather, I felt it was an exciting challenge. I wanted to make sure our male counterparts didn’t do it all.<sup>131</sup>

Thomas’ quote is complicated. In the same breath, she describes the burden on women to perform well, but denies any external force pressuring her to pack faster or better. The practice of assigning women to the huts with the shortest pack trails suggests a lack of faith in their physical abilities, rendering Olson’s frustration with heavy packing absurd; these women were not acting competitively to further the machismo mythology surrounding croo positions, but rather packing as much weight as hutboys so that no higher-up could question their claim to the job. That Olson and others interpreted this behavior as aggressive, even threatening, illuminates yet another double-standard within the culture of the Club, as men were encouraged to pack ambitiously

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<sup>128</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 90.

<sup>129</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 21.

<sup>130</sup> W. Kent Olson, in discussion with the author, October 22, 2014.

<sup>131</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 21.

while women were scrutinized for the same behavior. Thomas also addresses the intra-croo dynamic by acknowledging the air of fairness that surrounds packing. By carrying a certain amount of weight, Thomas enabled herself to feel like part of the team, in the same way that men in the fifties and sixties had found meaning in their jobs through packing. This notion did not exclude women, nor did the tradition suffer for their inclusion. The Club did not alter the design of packboards to better fit female bodies, nor did they impose limits on how much a person could pack in a single trip. For Thomas and others, meeting the physical requirements of the job placed them within a communal context despite the external criticism.

### **III. Kicking Down the Door**

Thomas and the other select women spent the summer of 1973 in the huts without major incident. Olson intended to continue hiring women for the subsequent seasons, beginning by appointing Saundra Cohen to run Zealand Falls Hut for its fall season. Cohen began working with the Club in the education department, and therefore fit the typical profile for women hired at the time: a current employee who presented little risk of misbehavior. Olson assumed, however, that Cohen would share the caretaking position with her husband, while Cohen intended to run the hut alone. When this detail came to light, Olson revoked his job offer to Cohen. She remembers:

I asked him if it was because I was a woman. He said Yes—that's what I recollect. I don't think that was his personal view; I think that was a position he was forced to take. I was very upset about it. It was the first time I had encountered...discrimination, and for no apparent reason.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 21.

When directly asked decades later, Ken Olson explained why he could not offer Cohen the position. He pointed to the powerhouse Huts Committee, who was surprised by the speed of the decision, which they argued “had never been ripened as a policy issue.”<sup>133</sup> Although women began working in the huts on an experimental basis only a few months prior, the Committee’s confusion by the supposed speed of female integration demonstrated a misunderstanding of the situation. Not only had women been members of the AMC since 1879, and employees of the Club for nearly as long, but also for the women involved, this decision could not have unfolded any slower. At this point in time, the huts were staffed by high school and college-aged workers. If a woman in her sophomore year of college had applied for a huts position in 1970 and been told, as many were, to wait several more summers, she would likely be ineligible for the job, either physically or because she had earned a degree and started a career, by the time the restriction was lifted. Furthermore, the Committee’s opposition implied that they were being asked too quickly to confirm women’s equal rights, women’s personhood, by nature of the decision not moving through the appropriate political channels. For women that had never considered themselves unequal, this was an unacceptable stance.

After the Huts Committee overruled Olson’s decision to allow Cohen to work at Zealand Falls without a man present, Cohen met with a representative from the New Hampshire Human Rights Commission. Cohen’s lawyer determined that the Club’s hiring policies were, indeed, discriminatory, and set up a meeting with the Club’s legal representatives. “They had one session on the phone and then I was hired,” Cohen recalled.<sup>134</sup> The Commission complained that the

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<sup>133</sup> Olson, interview.

<sup>134</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 21.

AMC was “ignoring fifty percent of the labor pool in choosing people to work in the huts.”<sup>135</sup>

Olson, speaking to the political climate of the nation, said, “...We weren’t immune to it. So [there was also] what can fairly be described as militancy—not only among the women but among, I think, a lot of the men associated with the Hut System.”<sup>136</sup> Cohen remembers that she was operating “just at that point of change,” citing the admittance of women to high-profile universities, the growing power of second-wave feminism, and the political demonstrations taking place in Cambridge, MA, where she lived, as factors that informed her personal politics.<sup>137</sup>

The Chairman of the Huts Committee at the time was a man named Tom Martin, who received the summons from the NHHRC asking him to explain the Committee’s policy of discriminating against women. “The more we thought about it,” remembered Martin, “the more we realized we couldn’t explain it,” admitting there were no “bona fide occupational qualifications” that could justify excluding women across the board.<sup>138</sup> He encouraged his fellow committee members to embrace the decision as a welcome change, even though it had, to some extent, been required. Cohen emphasized that the members of the Committee were “not mean-spirited men,” but they were worried about her physical safety and the possibility of a sexual assault were she left alone in the backcountry.<sup>139</sup> Cohen was 27 years old and married at the time, and Olson describes this position by the Committee as “paternalistic;” rarely if ever were they

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Saundra Cohen, in discussion with the author, November 28, 2014.

<sup>138</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 21.

<sup>139</sup> Cohen, interview.

concerned to the same degree about the safety of male caretakers, suggesting an internalized belief, perhaps subconscious but still damaging, in the inherent inequality of men and women.<sup>140</sup>

The AMC's hiring policies were persistently traditional, trending towards outdated, in the context of the 1970s and the institutionalizing of gender equality that gained traction throughout the era. The Ivy League, a bastion of fraternal privilege, began admitting female scholars in the late 60s, even allowing co-residence. The Huts had an historical relationship with Dartmouth College, hiring many of its croos from the institution, and the Harvard Outing Club operated a small cabin on Mt. Washington. Although the institutions applied no direct pressure to the Club, to remain segregated by gender would make the AMC look archaic, which it could not afford while maintaining its reputation as a force of change in the outdoors world. Olson described the integration as "an idea whose time had come," admitting that the Club was "a little slow in the implementation."<sup>141</sup> Finally, women were fully recognized members of the decreasingly hyper-masculine AMC Hut System.

#### **IV. Exclusionary Policy**

The Huts were not the only sector in which the AMC practiced rarefied politics. Historically, the Club required a referral in order for a person to obtain member status. This practice dates to 1876 when the Club's purpose was largely scientific and founding members looked for specialists who could help document New England academically and artistically. The original constitution called for written letters of recommendation from at least two members

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<sup>140</sup> Olson, interview.

<sup>141</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 21.

before admission to the Club, which in theory assured an engaged and qualified body. By the 1970s, however, the AMC had expanded greatly and many considered the referral process archaic. Furthermore, as Ken Olson pointed out, the sponsorship policy “was inconsistent with the obligations of a tax exempt educational institution enjoying operating privileges on public land.”<sup>142</sup>

John Nutter and Ken Olson began mass producing pre-signed sponsorship letters and distributing them at locations in Boston and throughout the North Country. As membership applications flooded the AMC headquarters, some officials were upset at the prospect of abolishing barriers to Club inclusion. Aside from the idea of expanding the definition of membership to include more laypeople instead of experts, and letting go of a century-old tradition, officials pointed out that employees like Olson and Nutter “were not entitled to make policy.”<sup>143</sup>

The story of opening up membership runs parallel to the plight of women in the hut system. In both cases, officials resisted changing policy out of fear; that lenient membership qualifications would dilute the academic constituency, that unsupervised women would seduce their male coworkers. In each instance, a group of young, educated employees working on the frontline of the Club met opposition from Committees steeped in the organization’s conventions but removed from the everyday workings that necessitated updated policy. The Club did not change the membership by-law until 1978. It passed by a wide margin, although only three percent of all Club members voted. This issue of “democratizing the Club turned out to have

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<sup>142</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 7.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

been, at base, uncontroversial outside a small group of partisans.”<sup>144</sup> Ironically, the Club’s gender desegregation decision followed a very similar path. Just as officials took issue with Nutter and Olson striving to change Club policy as middle management employees, the Huts Committee believed the decision to hire women had not traveled through the appropriate political channels. Olson found himself in the thick of these two combustible issues within a short time of each other, indicating both the temperamental nature of Club politics in the 1970s and the importance of individual actors (including Sandra Cohen) in affecting change within this small community. Based on the low percentage of Club members that participated in the vote to expand membership, the issue was far less divisive than officials believed; similarly, the remembered experiences of many early female hut croo members suggests that after integration, their gender played an exceedingly small role in how they operated within the huts.<sup>145</sup> These two cases indicate that change was, in some ways, inevitable, and that only a small number of people, generally men in high-ranking Club positions, opposed the progressive policies for which players like Olson and Cohen advocated. Though the Huts historically were male-only in theory, women had contributed in practice to the space as wives, girlfriends, Pinkham employees, and friends, creating an environment in which croos were already somewhat accustomed to female presence, precipitating a change that felt almost predetermined. Both adjustments, however, still needed an impetus, despite being seen as logical advancements by the majority of players involved. In the same way that Nutter, Olson, and others felt that expanding membership was an obvious and

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<sup>144</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 8.

<sup>145</sup> Modern interviews with Sandra Cohen, Catherine Amidon, and Barbara Wagner, as well as MacPhail, “Las Machas.”

beneficial policy decision, women petitioning for unbridled access to the huts believed that if they were qualified for the job, their sex or sexuality should not factor into the discussion.

## **VI. Similarities and Differences in Sisterhood**

Though the women in the AMC shared ideological similarities with the women setting policies and affecting change on the national level, their interaction with localized feminism complicates the ways in which other women interpreted and owned the movement. The distinctions depend on two main criteria. First, the struggle for integration within the AMC was not publicized enough to draw support from national groups, nor did AMC women seek help from women's labor groups or feminist publications. Second, their goal was to achieve equal employment opportunities with men applying for the same positions and build a community in which men and women worked harmoniously together, rather than forging a female-only idyllic collective as a space separate from the male world. Hutmen did not engage with feminism in a traditional manner, but rather, adapted it to fit the unique characteristics of both their job and the community in which they participated.

Employment discrimination became increasingly visible in national corporations, such as Citizens Bank, throughout the 1970s. In 1976, nine women from Willmar, Minnesota filed charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission because their local branch hired a man at a salary of \$700 per month to a position that had neither been advertised nor offered to any women, yet the women making less money for the same work were required to train the new recruit.<sup>146</sup> Citizens Bank refused to comply with EEOC guidelines, so the women formed a small

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<sup>146</sup> Cheri Register, "When Women Went Public: Feminist Reforms in the 1970s," *Minnesota History* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 74.

union and contacted the National Labor Relations Board. The following year, eight women began a strike that continued for eighteen months and included women who “were initially wary of feminists,” as well as those already entrenched in the movement.<sup>147</sup> This instance illustrates common methods women employed while petitioning for equal rights, from filing complaints with the proper legal bodies to publishing their concerns in *Ms.* magazine to the more radical tactic of striking. However, many of the strikers lost their jobs due to their actions.

While women in the huts would most likely have been able to empathize with the plight of these women from Minnesota, theirs was not the same kind of feminism. The bank employees organized and used the established support systems of labor and feminist organizations to lend strength to their cause, and engaged in a highly publicized strike to raise awareness of their mistreatment. The AMC women relied on individual persistence and the support of a solitary local organization to gain entry; the entire proceeding occurred largely out of the public eye. The different brands of feminism put to use and their opposite results are perhaps due to the nature of each governing body in question; Citizen’s Bank, a national corporation, had more leniency in choosing its employees (especially before Title VII was strictly enforced) than did the AMC, a largely regional non-profit known for its progressive policies. The way in which women looking to work in the huts internalized and recreated feminist ideals differently than women on the national level, in this case with more success, validates the efficacy of local movements despite the isolated nature of their achievements.

Not every women’s movement in the 1970s concentrated on fixing the gender problems within modern American society. Some advocated creating separate societies altogether, such as

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

the founders and participants of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Since 1976, this week-long event has drawn thousands of women to rural Michigan to participate in communal living, discussions, and expressions of their femininity and sexuality. Like AMC women, festival-goers believe in their deep responsibility to the environment, considering themselves "land stewards" and striving to create an "ecology consciousness."<sup>148</sup> One festival attendee describes the goals of the female community in creating this space:

We go because festivals offer the possibility of what our lives *could* be like year-round if we lived each day in a matriarchy actively striving to eliminate racism and homophobia... while [living] tribally.<sup>149</sup>

The festival focuses on the uniqueness of womanhood, all while encouraging a diverse field of participants and relying on the uniting bond of sisterhood in a natural setting; the Salsa Soul Sisters, a group comprised of African American lesbians, perform nighttime rituals under the rising moon and all women regardless of race, sexuality, or spirituality, are encouraged to join.<sup>150</sup> The MWMF provides a separate, albeit temporary, community in which all women are created equal.

Environments like the MWMF and the National Women's Music Festival embody newer notions of "cultural feminism." Born out of radical feminism that found its roots in the Civil Rights and anti-war movements, cultural feminism tends to "creat[e] alternative institutions and stres[s] uniquely 'female' values" as a way to avoid "the debilitating effects of a lack of

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<sup>148</sup> Unger, *Beyond Nature's Housekeepers*, 164.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

victories” in the realm of public policy.<sup>151</sup> The creation of these communities demonstrates yet another way in which women interpreted feminism in the 1970s; rather than petition for equality in fundamentally unequal spaces, festival-goers constructed their own realities to celebrate all women, especially those who felt left behind by the mainstream movement, like lesbians and women of color. The intentional spelling of “womyn” indicates the desire for a total removal of men from sister-based places that women constructed as safe.

The communities of cultural feminism in the 70s share some similarities with their contemporary AMC hutwomen. Both groups operated in rural settings which their presence helped shape into miniature societies, and both groups interpreted national feminism in their own way, sometimes straying from the tenants of the accepted doctrine. Some festival goers and proponents of cultural feminism see their created environments as “the real world,” as a better way to live peacefully than toiling for equality in a flawed society.<sup>152</sup> This belief troubles the more mainstream notion of fighting for rights and recognition within established spaces, like the leaders of NOW or the women of Minnesota’s Citizen Bank did. It represents a departure from standardized women’s movement patterns, yet relies on the ideologies of female power, sisterhood, and equality vocalized and disseminated by national actors. As discussed above, AMC women acted politically but not collectively, incorporating the language of the national dialogues into their own lexicons but creating, effectively, their own syntax. However, these case studies illuminate one large difference. While cultural feminists created their own worlds without men, AMC women never wanted or felt the need to leave the company of their male

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<sup>151</sup> Suzanne Staggenborg, Donna Eder, and Lori Sudderth, “Women’s Culture and Social Change: Evidence from the National Women’s Music Festival,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 38 (1993-1994): 32.

<sup>152</sup> Kath Browne, “Beyond Rural Idylls: Imperfect lesbian utopias at Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival” *Journal of Rural Studies* 27 (2011): 13.

counterparts. They, from the early days of Marion Pychowska through Nancy Thomas and beyond, claimed an ownership to the same trails and ridges as men, refusing to settle for anything less than an environment they saw themselves as incontestably fit to inhabit. That AMC women strove for equal, not separate, aligns them with more traditional feminist pathways while maintaining a connection through the emphasis on nature and preservation to women who interpreted nationally-accepted beliefs in an alternative way.

## **VI. Hutwomen as Feminists**

In many ways, the gender desegregation of the system was significant in and of itself. According to Cohen, “there have always been women in the huts in the background,” including girlfriends of hutboys who slept in the huts and helped with the cooking and packing. Olson most likely knew this, and the Huts Committee most likely did not.<sup>153</sup> Sandra’s solo fall stint in 1973 marked the first time the Committee had to officially and publicly recognize women as capable employees without men present to oversee their actions or ensure their safety. But Cohen’s admission into the Hut System also represents the denouement of several tense years. Not quite a climax, but rather a diffusion. Lacking a lengthy legal proceeding or any public demonstrations of protest, this moment turned away from the political tactics implemented by many feminists at the time. However, Cohen’s efforts built on years of female frustration, and decades of harmonious co-educational work, at least in the frontcountry, fueled the validity of her appointment.

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<sup>153</sup> Cohen, interview.

From Nancy Nutter's firing to Cathy Ferree's impassioned logbook entry, AMC women in the early 1970s embodied the struggles their contemporary women fought against on the national level. The strategies employed by feminists working on a larger scale centered around building formal groups and support networks, like the National Organization for Women or feminist groups on college campuses that circulated literature, lobbied for legislation, or petitioned governmental bodies for recognition of women's rights. It is important to note that no such group existed amongst women seeking employment in the Hut System. They did not organize, nor did they write official statements together. However, they were excited by each others' successes, and looked forward to sharing the job with fellow women. Cohen described the women who were hired to work in the summer of 1974 as "dynamite" and "top-notch."<sup>154</sup> Even if they were not using the same tactics as the national feminist movement, many of these women used similar, if not identical, language. Ferree echoes Friedan. Cohen elucidates the women's movement complaint that discrimination based on sex was discrimination without justification. Furthermore, the national women's movement depended on the creation of small, interconnected communities for success. These included white southern women working for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee who were inspired by the influence black women held in their church groups and civic organizations, and northern students who used their privileged whiteness to draw media attention to important causes.<sup>155</sup>

In a similar way, women who sought huts employment made up one such small community, connected with external allies and older generations of women in a similar position.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 101.

While they perhaps did not act as formally as their national counterparts, they came from familiar backgrounds, knew the culture of the closed system in which they were operating, and aspired to a mutual goal. In the same way that feminists drew on the rich history of female resistance, from the suffragettes of the 1840s to the women who refused to leave the work force at the end of WWII to political figures like Eleanor Roosevelt who used her national visibility to shed light on female oppression, the women who pressed swiftly and successfully for hut employment operated within a similar historical framework. Just like American women in the broader sense, AMC women lived in the same type of environment as pioneers like Henriette d'Angeville and the Pychowska sisters, who never believed that their sex inhibited them from forming communities and coexisting harmoniously with men in the mountains. While the original Hutmen (F) working at Pinkham Notch did not push for hut employment, they provided an important precedent of non-gendered work within the AMC, proved themselves capable time and again of living in coed residences without inciting scandal, and skillfully navigated the challenges of the outdoor world. It was within this imagined community steeped in the tradition of female excellence and mutual support that Ferree's writing, Cohen's action, finally took hold.

The huts integration movement required less formal organization because it occurred on a small scale and concerned a relatively low number of players. In some ways, however, this local story distills and corroborates the ideals of the national movement. It involves women transitioning from a willingness to work in limiting frontcountry positions to an insistence upon a recognition of their personhood. These women, like housewives constrained to monotony, searched for something more substantial than what society, either American or AMC, offered them. Pioneers like Calista Harris recognized the accomplishments of women who preceded

them, building an informal network of female camaraderie. Resistance grew organically, and like the women who found their way to feminism through broader revolutionary channels like SNCC, the AMC women cultivated their taste for activism through environmentalism, anti-war sentiments, or simply living in a progressive place during a turbulent era. Although women like Thomas and Cohen found allies in particular men, including John Nutter and Ken Olson, it was ultimately a female-driven insistence, a total reclamation of agency, that finally precipitated change.

Cohen's decision to seek legal action was an important turning point in women's struggle for equality within the Club, and came at a time when Helen Reddy's anthem "I Am Woman" topped the charts and Congress allowed the first female page in the House of Representatives.<sup>156</sup> Women, through decades of dedicated work, finally began to see progress in the public arena despite private, closed institutions lagging behind the wave of reform. The AMC was one such institution; with no specific external pressure, the Club considered its hiring policies an internal issue, one that their position as a relatively closed group with a heavily vetted membership allowed them to manage without external input. By involving the New Hampshire Human Rights Commission, Cohen dispelled this illusion, threatening to drag an unflattering policy inconsistent with the Club's progressive preachings into the public domain. As a lawyer and the head of the Huts Committee, Tom Martin realized the Club would suffer a defeat in court, so the threat of trial ultimately contributed greatly to the Committee's decision to include women in the backcountry.<sup>157</sup> While Cohen and others like her may not have self-identified as feminists,

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<sup>156</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, xxiii.

<sup>157</sup> Olson, interview.

actions like this illuminate how the strategies of the national movement permeated the consciousness of everyday women, and the ways in which the tactics of broader feminism were distilled and interpreted to fit the needs of local groups seeking change.

Whether or not these women intentionally followed the roadmap of national feminism is uncertain. However, the similarities in community, language, and action indicate a relationship between the two movements. Pinpointing a direct correlation between organizations like NOW and the women operating in the more isolated sphere of rural New Hampshire is difficult, but as early as 1970, the women's liberation movement was so pervasive in American culture that it is not out of the question to believe that women like Thomas, experiencing sexual discrimination and also actively petitioning for environmental protection and other social change, would be aware of and adapt the movement for their own needs. In 1970, NOW organized the "Women's Strike for Equality," an event in which thousands of women across the nation participated. Some retraced the historical route of suffragettes in New York City, some refused to make dinner or iron clothes, and some simply wore a button in solidarity. Women who would not have self-identified as feminists began relying on the work of national organizations, the lauded power of "sisterhood," to right the wrongs of sex discrimination. In New York City, "radical feminists, high school girls, mothers with strollers, suburban matrons, domestics, and office workers joined elderly suffragists dressed in traditional white" in a show of solidarity for all women.<sup>158</sup> After the march, CBS took a national poll and discovered that four out of five people over the age of eighteen either read about or were aware of the women's liberation movement.<sup>159</sup> The march was

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<sup>158</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 93.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

a unifying event for women across the country. It is not outrageous to think the college-educated, socially aware women who sought hut employment and eventually changed the AMC's hiring policies in the early 70s belonged to the large percentage of Americans over eighteen who knew about feminism, who experienced the development of a national sisterhood, and decided to apply those beliefs and practices to their own oppressive situation.

Furthermore, the AMC women necessarily developed their own "movement," much like women on a national scale, from within the boundaries of an already socially aware society that refused to take their complaints seriously. Buoyed by the "indescribable but palpable spirit of the time [that] was affecting much of the college youth," AMC men and women flocked to the aid of the environment and developed educational programming targeted at underprivileged children in the same way that many students found their way to activism under the broader shawl of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>160</sup> Just as the liberal, intelligent men running the AMC either dismissed female efficacy or felt compelled to negotiate with other male cohorts in positions of power regarding the fate of women looking to move up through the ranks of the Club, the national male Civil Rights leaders often degraded and ignored not only the plight of women, but women themselves. For women on the national scale, "ridicule and humiliation" spurred the creation of their own movement, and AMC women were left with little choice but to fight for themselves when their protests fell on deaf ears.<sup>161</sup>

These movements are similar, but more than coincidence ties them together. The Women's Strike for Equality focused on three main demands, one of which was equal

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<sup>160</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 94.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

opportunity in employment and education. Many feminists did not want to corrupt the power dynamic and recast men in the roles women were often forced to play, but rather to create the opportunity for qualified women to enjoy the same benefits as qualified men. Women in the huts operated within the same context; coed crews allowed for deep friendships, and the women looking for hut employment never wanted to displace their male coworkers. In both cases, the struggle boiled down to a conflict between a larger social hierarchy believing that women were inherently lesser, or at least different, and women insisting that they should be afforded the right to success, to the pursuit of happiness held sacred among American ideals. By 1970, the national network of women was strong enough to communicate, plan, and execute a demonstration involving hundreds of thousands in cities across the country. Hut women came from liberal arts institutions and cities like Cambridge, MA that were awash in that aforementioned unnameable spirit of the time. Sisterhood was infectious, especially for those who needed it. While the women's rights movement was almost certainly unaware of the local, specific struggle occurring in the White Mountains, it was the same struggle writ large.

## Chapter Four: “You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby.”<sup>162</sup>

Moving into the late 70s and continuing into the 1980s, the Hut System absorbed and complicated national trends. As women became officially recognized members of the hut community and more prevalent to the everyday workings of the system, the space they shared with men developed a new identity, one neither feminine nor entirely masculine. While outside groups sometimes struggled to recognize the reality of female croo members, croos themselves adapted quickly, for the most part, building an internal society in which gender was not a necessary topic of discussion. Nostalgia continued to color the political and social opinions of individual members of the AMC, especially those who remembered their time in the huts through an all-male lens, but the Club publicly supported its integration and continued to act in a manner that matched its progressive ideals.

The early 1980s saw a national trend of women seeking more skill-based and higher-paying employment opportunities, with varying degrees of success. However, even as the career trajectories of many women looking to gain entry to male-dominated fields stagnated due to lingering de facto discrimination, women within the AMC continued to make strides, accessing leadership roles in the huts and beyond. By the mid-1980s, the need for action spurred by the previous decade’s discriminatory policies was no longer at the forefront of croos’ minds. The voices of descent, though loud, dwindled as the Club moved away from the memory of segregated croos and embraced the notion of female workers. Before long, gender ceased to be a prominent topic of conversation, even for the women who pushed for their equality.

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<sup>162</sup>Virginia Slims advertisement, aimed at women activists and feminists, 1968.

A culture of environmental activism grew up among hutwomen that ran parallel to larger female-oriented conservation movements, incorporating elements of women's rights practices to create a hybrid breed of political and social awareness. While women traditionally fought for the environment out of love for their children and used the language of domesticity to reinforce their rights within the public sphere, hutgirls worked to protect the natural world of their own accord, evoking independence and genderless action instead of highly feminized thought. In this way, hutwomen represent a somewhat unique community, one in which a group of women within a conservation organization employed radical thought and language to not only emancipate themselves but also to fight for other causes, such as environmental protection.

### **I. Moving Forward**

Almost immediately after the legal non-event that saw Sandra Cohen running Zealand Falls Hut for the fall of 1973, the Club seemed to forget that it had ever forbade women from working in the backcountry. Liz Shultis, who ran Zealand in 1974 with an all-male croo, remembered a smooth transition. "I didn't experience any sexism," she recalled. "There was a lot of enthusiasm. People would say things such as 'It's about time,' or 'It's so nice to have a woman in the huts.'"<sup>163</sup> Similarly, the Huts Committee's concerns regarding scandalous activities occurring in the croo room turned out to be largely unfounded. Cohen explains, "The co-ed hut croos worked together very harmoniously. But it was a brother-sister kind of thing...The mixed croos actually inhibited romantic activity."<sup>164</sup> These croos, though technically a new breed and a

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<sup>163</sup> Alexander MacPhail, "Las Machas part three," *Appalachia Bulletin* 50, No. 10 (1984): 16.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

ways away from the fraternal organizations of the fifties and sixties, still lived within the shadow of tradition dictated by their predecessors. Each hut came complete with its own legacy, populated by the memories of the men who became legends on its surrounding trails. Many huts kept records of physical feats such as heaviest pack weights at the fastest speeds, as “relics from an era of all-male competitiveness” that ended up putting pressure on new hutwomen to perform to a certain standard (Fig. 4).<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, croos in the mid-70s were more casual than ever before, and certain Old Hutmen felt threatened by the men as well as the women, citing a lack of concern for tradition as alarming.<sup>166</sup>

In some ways, the older generation was correct to mourn the loss of tradition. They loved the huts and the specific culture that developed in their alpine community, and worried that their remembered lifestyle, a place they felt they belonged, would disappear. The shift in hiring policies that brought women into this culture also necessitated a diversification of applicants’ backgrounds. Managers began putting less emphasis on an applicant’s ties to the Hut System and started looking for people with top-notch customer service and social skills. In the process, croo members became friendlier and more receptive to guests, but were often not as familiar with the mountains or the system itself.<sup>167</sup> However, the Old Hutmen were potentially more threatened by the growing number of female employees, as it meant fewer jobs for their demographic and a looser grip on the direction of the system. Proportionally, more women were hired than men from the applicant pool because women were, at the time, seen as better suited for the new demands of the job, the elements requiring more than physical ability.

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<sup>165</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 17.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> MacPhail, “Las Machas,” 18.

Men hired during this era were also expected to play a more interactive role with guests. There was no division of male and female labor within the Huts; both men and women cooked, packed, ran educational programming, cleaned, and acted as stewards of their environment. The so-called “backpacker boom” of the 1970s brought with it a harsh stripping of the alpine landscape, and the huts provided centralized locations that eased the trammeling of delicate ecological sites. Because of this shift in definition of the huts from hardy shelter to educational center, hutmen and hutwomen necessarily adapted their job description to meet the growing environmental and social demands placed on them by an ever-growing visitor population. In 1974, *Backpacker Magazine* writer Daniel Ford visited Greenleaf Hut and immediately noticed the obvious changes in hut staffing. He met Mike Schintzer, the Hutmaster, a Harvard University student who looked like the stereotypical AMC hutboy, but was surprised by Schintzer’s companion, a Dartmouth student named Judy Greer. Ford wrote:

Yes, both Dartmouth and the AMC Hut System—those high-water marks of Yankee male-chauvinist-pig society—have gone coeducational. What’s more, the Greenleaf hutmaster last summer was Nancy Thomas, one of the first women to break the all-male ranks of the hut system.<sup>168</sup>

In a national publication, Ford made casual yet condemning reference to the Club’s tired, abolished hiring policies in an article whose main purpose was to laud and celebrate the social growth of the system into a true protector of the natural world. Ford marks the coeducational shift among the positive changes, citing the immaturity of the 1950s high school-aged croo members and the fading of the pervasive anti-guest atmosphere from the system. He explained that modern croos were staffed by mostly college students, many of whom majored in natural

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<sup>168</sup> Daniel Ford, “The Hut People of the White Mountains,” *Backpacker Magazine*, Spring 1975, 36.

sciences because of the Club's blooming education programs, and put the rarefied atmosphere and croos' sense of pride in context: in 1974, the Hut System had between 12 and 15 openings for 300 applicants.<sup>169</sup>

Hutmen and hutwomen did more than provide nature walks and demonstrations for guests, however. At Greenleaf in 1973-74, croos were on the forefront of tangible environmental conservation efforts. These included an anemometer mounted on the roof to measure if the wind provided enough speed and consistency to help power the hut, a composting system for kitchen scraps, and a contained human waste processing system as opposed to wasteful flush toilets and harmful leeching fields. These methods were a far cry from burning garbage or throwing it into "Gaboons," large pits dug near the hut and covered with lye and lime, both of which were incredibly harmful to the environment and prevented short term solutions to longterm problems<sup>170</sup>. Even though women no longer needed to fight for their employment, they and their male coworkers applied that same spirit of change and revolutionary thought to new elements of their jobs.

Ford also discussed packing, ever-fascinating to hut guests and journalists alike. He mentioned the strenuousness of the task, citing the twelve pound wooden frame "handcrafted at Pinkham Notch Camp...for no commercial frame would do the job these boards are expected to perform," and pointed out that the minimum weight croo members were expected to carry was seventy-five pounds. He continued, "Sometimes the load is 95 or 100 pounds, and it makes no difference if the packer is female. She is expected to carry the upbound freight, and she does."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> MacPhail, "Las Machas," 20.

<sup>171</sup> Ford, "Hut People," 37.

There is nothing inherently wrong about Ford mentioning the abilities of female packers. His words were meant to support the notion of equality that developed in the integrated hut system, but by calling attention to the strength of hutwomen, Ford marks them as other. The necessity to point out the capabilities of women is an almost too-enthusiastic defense; it suggests that Ford and others, in 1974, recognized women were different from men even when executing the same tasks. The distinction simultaneously defends the merits of women and suggests a subtle disbelief in the reality of the new, officially endorsed equality. Ford's comment converses with America's history of debasing women's physical abilities in the workforce, recalling women who were prohibited from operating heavy machinery during World War II despite a shortage of men. But Ford also complicates this narrative; his recognition of female strength helps dispel the notion that packing was men's work, even though his reflexive defense of the women suggests that their place in the huts was not yet completely normalized to outsiders.

Despite the continually complicated conversations taking place in venues where women's rights had been officially recognized but not necessarily adopted by the public, the huts seemed to take the fire out of some of these interactions, at least internally. In 1976, Daniel Ford returned to the White Mountains, chronicling his trip in *The Country Northward*. On several occasions, Ford interacted with croos working in the huts three years after gender desegregation. He spent time at Carter Notch Hut, encountering Hutmaster Carolyn McManus, who presided over two male and one female croo members. Staffer Dave Hazan told Ford about Carolyn's propensity for packing propane tanks, explaining, "They only weigh 200 pounds. Empty, they weigh a hundred pounds, so then she carries them two at a time."<sup>172</sup> Hazan relayed this

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<sup>172</sup> Daniel Ford, *The Country Northward* (Somersworth, New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1976), 180.

information in a nonchalant manner, mentioning it only because a guest had asked. He could have taken credit for the feat himself, but instead chose to recognize his Hutmaster. This is significant because it represents part of the system that had not been lost or diluted over time; in the 50s and 60s, male croos deferred to their male Hutmasters as a sign of respect and admiration, and in 1976 Hazan deferred to McManus for the same reasons with no regard for her gender. He later described a dangerous rock climbing expedition that the two of them had undertaken, suggesting that neither the outrageous feats of hut croos nor their propensity to weave exaggerated stories for rapt guests had disintegrated with the initiation of women into the system.<sup>173</sup> Hazan and McManus' friendship illustrates a sentiment expressed by former hut croo member Barbara Wagner in a recent interview. She explained that she benefitted from entering the system at a time when people were comfortable enough that her gender "didn't need to be a topic of conversation."<sup>174</sup> Shortly after desegregation, the Hut System began to regain the tranquility that had characterized it before the turbulent 70s.

## II. Old Competition, New Womanhood

However, not all women felt accepted in the system, even by their own croos. Catherine Amidon began working in the huts in 1977 at Lakes of the Clouds and recalled an at-times hostile environment. "The competition with men was ferocious," she explained, citing a propensity for the older boys on her croo to call the rookies weak.<sup>175</sup> Amidon began packing into the huts unofficially at age 14 and giving after dinner programs to guests the following year. She

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<sup>173</sup> Ford, *Northward*, 181.

<sup>174</sup> Barbara Wagner, in discussion with the author, February 9, 2015.

<sup>175</sup> Catherine Amidon, in discussion with the author, November 29, 2014.

was the third generation in her family to work in the huts, but remembers her time as having a culture of “heartiness and toughness” that lent itself to intra-croo competition and “power raids,” or taking coveted objects from other huts by force, that sometimes ended in real injury. Amidon also felt as though women were never part of the “clique of cool guys” that dominated the social scene of the system.<sup>176</sup> Amidon’s remembered experiences raise an important point. The entrance of women into the Hut System had not created a feminized space, as many Old Hutmen feared. Instead, it necessitated a dialogue shift, redirected the conversation so that the huts were no longer referred to in gendered terms. The women who demanded employment opportunities in the early 70s did so with a full understanding that their presence in the huts would not alter the physical space, nor did they strive to soften or reevaluate the cultural space. They argued for equality without itemizing new terms or insisting upon female-friendly structures; they wanted the same huts as the boys, the same trails, and the same tools of the trade. Perhaps the backlash that Amidon experienced was a reaction to the reality that women could, in fact, use the same packboards as men, or perhaps it was an isolated incident that boiled down to clashing personalities. Regardless, it demonstrates that despite the dissipation of a strictly fraternal atmosphere in the huts, masculinity still manifested itself, whether it be in informal groups that set the tone for the season’s social activities, or the perceived need to pack a roundtrip of ten miles and cook dinner for the guests on the same day without complaint, as Amidon did during her second season at Galehead Hut.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

The lingering presence of behavior traditionally linked with masculinity could help explain why early hutwomen did not consider themselves feminists. Sandra Cohen recognized the cultural importance of second wave feminism, but did not formally align herself with the movement, and Catherine Amidon, just sixteen when she began her first official hut season, believed she was too young at the time to internalize what the label meant. Barbara Wagner, who worked for the AMC beginning in 1976, insisted that she “never felt like [her gender] had to be a huge deal in [her] choices or aspirations,” and that she was more focused on being the best at her job than breaking down institutional barriers.<sup>178</sup> Huts positions are relatively self-selecting; one must be strong and agile, willing to endure limited contact to the world outside the woods, and able to thrive without modern conveniences. Women did not attempt to change these criteria, or to make the huts more accessible to women in terms of facilities, lower pack weights, or a less competitive spirit. Wagner’s emphasis on succeeding at her job insinuates no lack of competitive behavior from female croo members. Amidon’s early introduction to the ways of hut life indicates that women were not only capable of doing the work, but also actually doing it before anyone officially recognized them as capable. They thought of themselves as hutpeople first and women second, which served to differentiate them from the national women calling for universal sisterhood and also limited the change in internal huts society, even after integration.

Perhaps because of its location within a still-masculine space, womanhood expanded its definition in the huts. Amidon explained, “We were able to do things in the huts that we weren’t able to do in our hometowns.”<sup>179</sup> Revolutions sexual, political, and cultural had ushered out the

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<sup>178</sup> Wagner, interview.

<sup>179</sup> Amidon, interview.

strictness and repressive nature of much of 1950s American society, creating a common assumption even in men's writing "that women were finally now politically, personally, and *sexually* emancipated."<sup>180</sup> However true or untrue that perception was for American women, the huts represented, as they always had, a removal from the mainstream, where one could try out new ideas and identities with little risk involved. Whether a hutwoman excelled in the kitchen or in packing propane tanks held far less significance in the backcountry than in traditional society; similar to the turn of the century husbands who washed dishes at camp, hut women could experiment with varying "gendered" tasks that lost those associations because their male coworkers did them, too. As long as women in the huts excelled at something, helping to keep the job both mythic and coveted, the associated "gender" of the task was irrelevant. When women entered the huts and began packing alongside men, men did not find or develop another "masculine" task to set them apart. Hut work did not masculinize women, nor did it feminize men when women shared the tasks. The degendering of work for both men and women and the subsequent disruption of the previous hyper-masculine culture did not make the huts inherently more feminine; rather, it created a space in which all people could engage in work as simply work without attached connotations. Women, and men, could represent themselves in the huts in a variety of ways, and whether those ways were traditionally masculine or feminine did not matter because crews made their own rules, built their own society that inherently complicated gender roles by nature of its unique demands. Women were not restricted to feminized bodies, as backcountry emphasis rests on strength rather than beauty, and were able to represent themselves as they wanted.

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<sup>180</sup> Cuordileone, "Politics in an Age of Anxiety," 527.

The outdoor nature of this job, predicated on physical labor and therefore requiring less delicate or decorative clothing, foregrounded fashion trends that were already beginning in wider society. In 1971, a woman told an Iowa feminist journal about the experience of cutting her hair. She wrote,

So now when I look in the mirror I see a person who really doesn't look like a girl. She doesn't look like a boy. Really, what she looks like hasn't been labeled yet. She looks like ME.<sup>181</sup>

For many women, long hair and traditionally feminine attire were restrictive, especially to active lifestyles. Feminists began to forego miniskirts and high heels for boots, jeans, and button-up shirts, shifting towards a more masculine or androgynous style. Some women weaponized their fashion in an attempt to “reject gender binaries that strictly separated masculine and feminine roles,” while others protested against a “culture that defined women by how they looked.”<sup>182</sup> Still other women found no harm in dressing in a more traditionally feminine manner. One self-described feminist said of makeup, “It’s fun as long as it’s not controlling you. Clothes should be an extension of yourself.”<sup>183</sup> Despite the political debates that threatened to further split the many branches of the feminist movement, by the early 1970s it was increasingly clear that the conversation surrounding women’s fashion should highlight a woman’s choice to create her own style and identity, whether it be masculine or feminine or a combination of both. One activist, after switching back to more traditional women’s clothing, said, “I am not masculine *or* feminine, or masculine *and* feminine; I am a person with myriad characteristics. Now, at thirty-

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<sup>181</sup> Betty Luther Hillman, “‘The Clothes I Wear Help Me to Know My Own Power’: The Politics of Gender Presentation in the Era of Women’s Liberation,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 34, no. 2 (2013): 155.

<sup>182</sup> Hillman, “The Clothes I Wear,” 157.

<sup>183</sup> Hillman, “The Clothes I Wear,” 163.

one, I wear jeans and yellow ruffled dresses, too.”<sup>184</sup> Some feminists began to see themselves as containing elements of both sexes, and using diverse patterns of dress to express this discovery.

Clothing in the huts, and in hiking culture in general, has a varied history. In camping guidebooks from the late 1800s, women “insisted that wearing practical clothing should not have to mean the abandonment of fashion or femininity,” but also rejected the notion that women should be constrained by layers of long skirts and tight corsets in the interest of preserving their modesty.<sup>185</sup> These early campers enjoyed the fashions associated with their womanhood, and disliked wearing oversized men’s clothing from surplus stores, so they created their own styles, tailored to their bodies but including luxuries like deep pockets that many women’s outfits lacked.<sup>186</sup> The Pychowska women, pioneers of the early AMC, often hiked in modified skirts and bloomers and found themselves the envy of other backcountry women of the time.<sup>187</sup> Women like Jane Atwood Black who lived at Pinkham Notch in the 1940s wore flannels and work pants, just like their male counterparts.<sup>188</sup> The 1961 National Geographic article about the Hut System shows images of various women in jean shirts, flannels, or wool pants, which mirrored the attire of hutboys and male hikers alike. Unsurprisingly, then, the 1970s saw hutwomen wearing styles that fit the job, but that also incorporated elements of personal preference. Some women wore skirts, others hiked in button-up shirts and loose-fitting shorts (Fig. 5).

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<sup>184</sup> Hillman, “The Clothes I Wear,” 168.

<sup>185</sup> Kropp, “Wilderness Wives,” 19.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Brown, *Women on High*, 132.

<sup>188</sup> Black, “Hutmen F,” 57.

To a certain degree, men of the 60s and 70s underwent similar stylistic changes, especially those involved in counterculture movements. Trends like “long hair on men...and unisex clothing...challenged previously established norms of gendered dress,” offering proof that more similarities between men and women existed than formerly thought.<sup>189</sup> The huts allowed further experimentation. As Joe Harrington pointed out in his article for *The Resuscitator*, hutboys loved to hike in minimal clothing, including kilts, very short jean shorts, and no shirts (Fig. 6). Hutmen and, after their admission hutwomen, were fond of costumes and elaborate attire, a tradition that continues today. Men and women alike wore dresses, or dressed up like pirates, or cobbled together the most unconventional and mismatched outfits possible in the interest of fun and bringing lightness to a sometimes challenging job (Fig. 7 & 8).

While somewhat corresponding trends pervaded larger American culture, the hut croos of the late 70s and early 1980s acted less as cognizant agents of change in the movement against mutually exclusive gender politics and more as teenagers and college students living life without adult supervision, experimenting with identity on the most basic level, and contributing to the age-old current of tradition that set hut croos apart from visitors and guests. That both men and women participated in these clothing-based escapades further suggests a degendering of the huts; neither was constricted to a certain style of dress, and the only limitations were based on function as opposed to norms. There was a focus on self-expression and youthful fun that left no room for concerns, at least within croos themselves, about who was inhabiting the formerly hyper-masculine space of the huts. Certain traditions born from the macho era of the 40s and 50s still helped to characterize the Hut System, and the presence of women workers did not necessarily

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<sup>189</sup> Hillman, “The Clothes I Wear,” 156.

undermine the masculine environment as much as help to complicate and redefine existing notions of masculinity.

### III. A Final Glass Ceiling

Despite the internal shift in culture that updated attitudes within the closed environment of the Hut System, women still faced threats and prejudice from those outside the small sphere of influence they exercised in the mountains. After women began working in the huts, Ken Olson received a letter from a woman who formerly worked at Pinkham Notch informing him of female menstrual cycles, citing them as a reason why women did not belong working in the system.<sup>190</sup> Similarly, the AMC held a Christmas reunion every year at its headquarters in Boston. Hutmen (F) were barred from attending, and the only women present were wives of Old Hutmen. In 1971, however, Hutmen (F) were invited to the meetings, prompting a few OH to sever their ties and refuse to attend another reunion.<sup>191</sup> At one such meeting, Olson reported overhearing some former male croo members grumbling about “goddamn women,” suggesting that the congenial feelings surrounding hut integration were not shared by the entirety of the Club, especially not those who had either worked before integration or who had grown accustomed to the fraternal nature of the gatherings.<sup>192</sup>

However, the contemporary Club leadership was intent on moving away from the hostile, unwelcoming environment associated with the hyper-masculine days of the 50s and 60s. Catherine Amidon suspects this accounted for a lowering of the median age of hut croos during

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<sup>190</sup> Olson, interview.

<sup>191</sup> McPhail, “Las Machas pt 3,” 18.

<sup>192</sup> Olson, interview.

her 1977 season; three of her fellow croo members were 16, which was unusual for the time, and the Huts Manager perhaps thought that younger boys were less susceptible to macho behavior. As the decade drew to a close, the Club's leadership positions began to reflect these ideals as well. A continuing focus on education policies, as well as a desire to enhance the guest experience, caused open positions to attract applicants who had few if any previous ties to the AMC, further diffusing the sense of fraternal, closed practices prevalent throughout the previous decades.<sup>193</sup>

In 1982, the Club found itself with an unoccupied Huts Manager position. Among the applicants was Barbara Wagner, and she was hired as the first female Huts Manager in the Club's history. The search committee was looking for someone with educational and huts experience, and Wagner, having worked two summers at Zealand Falls Hut before becoming an Education Coordinator, met the criteria.<sup>194</sup> The Club announced Wagner's promotion at their Winter Reunion, and at least one couple left "in disgust" upon realizing that the System's new manager was a woman.<sup>195</sup> Wagner's appointment represents a fundamental split between the New and Old Guards forming at the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s. The current employees, including Club leadership, strove to hire the best person for the position regardless of gender, while some Old Hutmen (and women) were deeply upset and uprooted by Wagner's womanhood.

The Appalachian Mountain Club is comprised of far more departments than just the ones governing the huts, but the Hut System has always represented the Club's most visible, and therefore most scrutinized, effort. From employing the huts to "diffus[e] knowledge via visitor

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<sup>193</sup> Wagner, interview.

<sup>194</sup> McPhail, "Las Machas pt 3," 19.

<sup>195</sup> Olson, interview.

contact” and improve environmental relations during the late 1960s to using the huts as a stage on which to explore the complicated facets of gender relations and discrimination during the 1970s, Club leaders grew progressively more contemporary in their treatment of their responsibilities as educators, organization heads, and advocates for their membership.<sup>196</sup> When the Club put a woman in charge of its most public and profitable branch and stood behind their decision to do so despite pushback from its own membership, it moved to separate itself from the culture of “cronyism, nepotism, and favoritism” that darkened its reputation as a politically trustworthy and viable organization.<sup>197</sup> This is not to suggest that the act of publicly supporting a female official put an end to de facto intolerance that certainly lingered within the Club’s body, but rather to illustrate a separation between the Club’s official policies and the opinions of individual men and women associated with the AMC. Wagner wrote, “I’ve experienced both phenomenal resistance and phenomenal support from former hutpeople,” further explaining the fundamental divide between those two camps:

I think any resentment directed to me as a woman comes from those people who remember when all the huts were staffed by men and who liked that all-male thing. They’re the kind of people who also like fraternities and other all-male activities.<sup>198</sup>

The decade between Sandra Cohen’s solo stint as caretaker and Barbara Wagner’s appointment as Huts Manager saw fundamental changes to the Club and the Hut System, and while not every woman in the huts had the same welcoming experience, by 1982 the negativity and resistance were more residual than active. The same people who had protested women croo members in the

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<sup>196</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 7.

<sup>197</sup> McPhail, “Las Machas pt 3,” 17.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

first place likely still objected to a female Huts Manager, but their complaints became less relevant as the decade ended. Instead, new hutmen and women entered the system every summer, and soon after 1973, few had ever worked on a gender-segregated croo. The same sense of nostalgia still remained; Wagner spoke of her “remarkable relationships” and the “general patina of being on a croo” with the same reverence with which 50s hutmen remembered their summers. The difference is that 1970s nostalgia through a 2015 lens evokes a more open, and therefore less harmful, collective memory.

The tendency of some men to cling to their fraternal roots was not isolated to the AMC. President Nixon, explaining why he would not appoint any women to the U.S. Supreme Court, said,

I don't think a woman should be in any government job whatsoever... mainly because they are erratic. And emotional. Men are erratic and emotional, too, but the point is a woman is more likely to be.<sup>199</sup>

Despite lingering stereotypes about the capability of women to work in high-powered positions, more women began looking for “careers,” rather than “jobs,” during the 1980s. Some historians attribute this to a shift in marriage age; as women married later, they had already formed a significant portion of their adult identity before finding a spouse, leading fewer to fulfill the traditional homemaker role.<sup>200</sup> Career women began to think of their work as a “fundamental aspect of their satisfaction in life and view their place of work as an integral part of their social world,” and many women had the ability to choose whether or not they wanted to participate in

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<sup>199</sup> Alice H. Eagly and Linda Carli, “Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership,” *Harvard Business Review* (August 2008): 1.

<sup>200</sup> Claudia Goldin, “The Quiet Revolution that Transformed Women’s Employment, Education, and Family,” *NBER Working Paper Series* (January 2006): 2.

the labor force, adding an enticing element of freedom and agency to entering the work world.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, the increasing availability of college education allowed women to pursue degrees which led to more financially beneficial opportunities.

Female participation in male fields like engineering began to grow in the late 70s and early 80s, with 10% of bachelor's degrees in the field earned by women.<sup>202</sup> As engineering shifted from hands-on construction projects to small-scale design and computer work, women found that they were accepted more openly into the discipline, as the new iterations had not yet had time to develop a masculine reputation.<sup>203</sup> However, women entering the engineering workplace did not always make a seamless transition. Despite earning a degree and breaking out of the predetermined sphere of typically feminine jobs, women engineers were overwhelmingly confined to marketing, manufacturing, and analysis, as opposed to design or management, and felt isolated by the behavior of many of their male peers. One woman described a patronizing culture among older men in her business, explaining that they always treated her like their daughter, something "they don't do to the young male engineers."<sup>204</sup> Another woman noted that her male coworkers "[did not] like competition from females," and admitted to highlighting her femininity to survive in the workplace.<sup>205</sup>

While women nationally secured better career opportunities, a culture of resistance still existed. In many cases, the confrontation represented a change in the national conversation about

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<sup>201</sup> Goldin, "Quiet Revolution," 21.

<sup>202</sup> Judith S. McIlwee and J. Gregg Robinson, *Women in Engineering: Gender, Power, and Workplace Culture* (New York, State University of New York Press, 1992), 2.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> McIlwee and Robinson, *Women in Engineering*, 97.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

gender roles in the workplace. Young male engineers transitioned well into working alongside women because they had shared the same classrooms at coeducational colleges and universities.<sup>206</sup> Similarly, young hutboys increasingly accepted female croomates because they had never experienced the segregated world of their elders. In both cases, older men, steeped in the single-sex traditions of education and employment, insisted upon protesting the presence of women in spaces they claimed for their own, whether in subtle ways like teasing or patronizing in the workplaces, or through grander gestures such as walking out of the AMC's Winter Reunion. While it would be irresponsible to critique the national state of gendered employment against the atmosphere present in one seasonal branch of an organization, the AMC has continued to progress in creating gender-neutral environments, offering equal pay for equal work, and providing equal opportunities to perform that work. There is no pay gap in the Hut System, and the strains of resistance so visible throughout the 70s and into the 80s fade as the conversation, both national and internal, redirects. That there has not been another female Huts Manager since Barbara Wagner left the position in 1985 perhaps speaks to the wider culture of the AMC and the national market as a whole; in 2014, just 4.8% of Fortune 500 CEOs were women.<sup>207</sup> However, opposition to women within the Hut System itself continues to shrink as memories of fraternal bliss and exclusionary policy become just that.

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<sup>206</sup> McIlwee and Robinson, *Women in Engineering*, 79.

<sup>207</sup> Caroline Fairchild "Number of Fortune 500 women CEOs reaches historic high," *Fortune* (June 3, 2014).

#### IV. Activism and Ownership

As the Hut System began to regain equilibrium after the initial integration and the need for hutwomen to actively petition for their rights evaporated, croo members transferred their spirit of activism to other fields. As the Greenleaf Hut croo of 1974 demonstrated, hut employees remained committed to activism and protest in ways large and small, a trend that continued well into the 80s and 1990s. From figuring out new methods of harnessing wind power to creating more sustainable means of composting food scraps, croos worked internally to better their small patch of land. But their physical removal from everyday society did not imply an intellectual removal. Croos remained connected to current events, such as 1980's devastating Iran Hostage Crisis, protesting the event through showy displays of patriotism (Fig. 9). In 1986, Seabrook, NH completed construction of its single-reactor nuclear power plant, commonly referred to as Seabrook Station. The project was controversial from the start, with organized protests drawing thousands of citizens throughout the late 70s and into the years of construction whose concerns focused on environmental effects and better emergency evacuation planning.<sup>208</sup> The plant began testing shortly after its completed construction, and some croos of the time vocalized opposition by painting "No Nukes" on the side of the train depot in Crawford Notch, NH (Fig 10).

Conversations surrounding nuclear energy and waste in the late 70s and into the 80s spurred an examination of women's role in conservation politics. In the mid-70s, activists in Love Canal, New York discovered nearly twenty thousand tons of chemicals buried beneath land owned by the Niagara Falls School Board and linked them to the increasing number of medical

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<sup>208</sup> "11 sentenced in N-plant protest," *The Boston Globe* (September 9, 1976): 4.

problems like asthma and epilepsy developing in their community.<sup>209</sup> Women were the frontrunners of the protest movement; Lois Gibbs and Debbie Cerrillo formed the Love Canal Homeowners Association which organized demonstrations, wrote press releases, and circulated petitions. In America, women have long found agency through leading conservation movements, from those who supported early wilderness protection out of dedication to game hunting, to the Wellesley College students recruited to run the AMC's initial education efforts.<sup>210</sup> That women championed environmental movements rarely upset preconceived notions of gendered activism; throughout the Progressive Era and even into the 1980s, many Americans believed that "women's concerns about nature, even if they have eventual public appearance and impact, boil down to an obvious manifestation of natural protective instincts toward home and family."<sup>211</sup> In other words, a woman who advocated for the environment did not push the bounds of gender roles because she was exercising her power as a mother and as an educator of her family to keep the planet safe for her children. During the Love Canal crisis, women testified before a Senate committee, and one newspaper noted that the protest was driven by "housewives-turned-activists."<sup>212</sup> By pioneering an environmental movement, everyday women gained access to avenues of political life usually reserved for men. In the case of Love Canal and others, like the women who testified regarding new medical conditions their children developed after South Central Los Angeles built a waste incinerator, grassroots movements "revolved around women's desire to protect home and children;" these women spent much of their time working in the home

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<sup>209</sup> Rich Newman, "Making Environmental Politics: Women and Love Canal Activism," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1/2 (2001): 68.

<sup>210</sup> Unger, *Beyond Nature's Housekeepers*, 79.

<sup>211</sup> Catriona Sandilands, *Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), xiii.

<sup>212</sup> Newman, "Making Environmental Politics," 69.

and were therefore the most exposed to toxic particles.<sup>213</sup> Local initiatives allowed women to cultivate leadership roles and establish reputations as powerful, effective activists without troubling the preconceived notions regarding their gender and its connection to environmental movements.

Hutwomen complicated the relationship between women and environmentalism. Many, like Sandra Cohen, came to the Club because they preferred living near the wilderness to their more conventional occupations, and were drawn to conservation from a love of recreating in the outdoors rather than concern over toxic chemicals in their backyards.<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, hutwomen were typically young, without children or husbands, differentiating them from women who found a more traditional path to outdoors activism. Girls on the 1974 Greenleaf crew, for example, tinkered with anemometers and hiked up bales of hay for composting purposes not because of overwhelming domestic urges but because of a physical connection with the natural world and a curiosity to unlock its secrets.<sup>215</sup> Nancy Thomas did not relate her activist tendencies to her gender. She wrote:

A lot of changes happened because we were trying to change the world all at once...It had nothing to do with being female—the males were as much a part of it as we were.<sup>216</sup>

This suggests a departure from the normative thinking and its related language regarding women's activism that persisted into the 1980s. Whereas Ann Hillis, a Love Canal activist, introduced herself to a Senate subcommittee as “a wife, a mother,” Thomas and other hutpeople

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<sup>213</sup> Newman, “Making Environmental Politics,” 72.

<sup>214</sup> Cohen, interview.

<sup>215</sup> Ford, “Hut People,” 37.

<sup>216</sup> McPhail, “Las Machas,” 19.

identified themselves primarily as environmental stewards, drawn to activism not through gendered domestic politics but rather through a deeply positive connection with their natural surroundings.<sup>217</sup> Despite the important political gains made by Love Canal women, such as convincing the government to fine the chemical company responsible \$124.5 million and prompting Congress to establish a \$1.6 revenue source for superfund legislation, critics often dismissed the women as hysterical housewives due to their point of entry into the world of activism.<sup>218</sup> Hutwomen, acting both as independent agents without children and under the umbrella of a larger conservation organization, did not face the same doubts. The small-scale style of environmental activism employed by hutwomen beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the modern day represents an alternative history, one that helps dispel the myth that women only engage in environmental activism out of care for their families.

Not only did hutwomen upset the place of women in environmental movements, but they shared a peculiar relationship with feminist movements, both contemporary and future. Typically, women who came to environmental activism over concern for their families found empowerment through leadership roles, as with the largely female-run Save the Birds campaign of the 1930s. However, these women “used arguments based within the women’s traditional sphere to empower themselves.”<sup>219</sup> They did not use environmental activism to liberate themselves from gender roles, but instead reinforced these roles in order to gain credibility in the public eye. By the 1950s, in the Sierra Club and other well-known conservation organizations, “even women who had previously held office were routinely relegated to voluntary rather than

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<sup>217</sup> Newman, “Making Environmental Politics,” 76.

<sup>218</sup> Newman, “Making Environmental Politics,” 73.

<sup>219</sup> Unger, *Beyond Nature’s Housekeepers*, 135.

paid positions,” a trend the AMC represented by removing women caretakers from the huts.<sup>220</sup>

Women continued to push for conservation projects, and the women’s rights movement grew out of the hyper-masculinity of the 1950s, but the movement for desegregation in the Hut System constitutes a unique intersection of the two, where women in a conservation setting fought for equality using feminist techniques as opposed to reinforcing their domesticity to make their campaigns more palatable to the public. Demonstrated by Barbara Wagner’s insistence that her gender did not factor into her experience in the huts, Nancy Thomas’ explanation that her activism had nothing to do with being female, and the reluctance of any former hutwoman to identify with the feminist label, coupled with the college age of many hutgirls precluding them from motherhood, AMC women did not come to environmental activism because of their sense of familial obligation, and they did not recognize themselves as members of a feminist movement, yet they combined elements of both practices and created an environment in which women, on equal footing with men, could engage in conservation for a love of nature instead of a concern for family, even as the discourses surrounding Love Canal positioned female environmental activists squarely within the domestic realm.

The story of gender desegregation in the AMC Hut System converses with the historical roots of the conservation and feminist movements and engages with contemporary techniques and ideas from both, but combines elements from each to create something new: a community of women within a conservation organization who fought for their equality using the language of progress rather than domesticity. By limiting their interaction with gender as a political construction, hutwomen broadened the margins of accepted female activism and continued to

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<sup>220</sup> Unger, *Beyond Nature’s Housekeepers*, 141.

craft a community that captured national trends but transformed them into something shaped for the local level. Hutwomen's individual conservation efforts help to illuminate the importance of everyday women in supporting grassroots movements and actions and also represent a continued degendering of types of work that began in the AMC with women's inclusion in previously masculine spaces.

## Conclusion

In 2013, my roommate Sarah Sanford and I loaded our packboards with 70 pounds each and left the summit of Mt. Washington for the Lakes of the Clouds Hut (Fig. 11). A man hiking in the opposite direction stopped us in spite of the poor weather and asked, “Why are the boys making you do that?” Sarah looked at me, exasperated; this was not the first time a hiker, regardless of gender, had struggled to understand why two young women would spend their summers hauling supplies over uneven terrain. The hiker’s language functioned dually. First, he predicated his question on a fundamental difference between men and women. By asking why I, a girl, was engaging in physical labor, he evoked the timeworn, outdated notion that a woman’s place is in the home and a man’s is decidedly not. Second, the man brought up the issue of agency. His question assumed that I was unhappy with my task and that the young men I worked with necessarily held power over me as a young woman. No one made me do anything; I all but begged for the job during my interview. I began research for this project the following summer, and quickly realized that my frustrations were not original.

First, the agency. When describing this thesis, I often find myself explaining that women weren’t *allowed* to work in the huts until 1972, or that the AMC finally *let* women work in the huts after 84 years. But that is not the story. Though the AMC changed its laws that forbade women from working in the backcountry, it is entirely possible that the Club would have held on to its policies even longer were it not for the purposeful and determined work of the women who refused to accept inequitable treatment. Women pushed for change, they protested in their own ways, they continued to

hike and pack alongside the boys, and ultimately, they fomented change in the bylaws of the oldest conservation organization in the country.

The story of the Hut System's gender integration is not the ugliest account to come out of the tumultuous 1970s, but taking agency from the hands of the women erases a fundamental aspect of the Club's development and disconnects their struggle from that of women nationally. Agency is power, and isolation is weakness. While the tactics of hutwomen differed from women in national feminist movements, the groups walked the same path. To gloss over the history of women's actions in the huts rewrites the steps taken by the Club to preclude women from becoming employees and disregards the pointed language surrounding sex and sexuality used by Club officials to justify their discrimination. I began this project to complicate the male-centric narrative, the construction of a world that bore little relevance or resemblance to my own lived experiences within the system, perpetuated by a lack of recognition for hutwomen's accomplishments. As the project developed, however, it became increasingly clear that the story of huts integration has implications far beyond its localized roots.

A single women's rights movement never existed. Nor did a single Civil Rights Movement, nor a student movement. Middle-class women in the 1950s had needs and desires that differed from the post-sexual revolution women of the late 1960s, and women working on telephone switchboards faced different workplace discriminations and hazards than those working as fire wardens or lumber managers. This thesis does not begin to explore the complications of class and race within feminist movements, nor does it delve into the divide between the women's rights movement of NOW and the cultural

feminists of the mid-70s. But the 60s and 70s saw women from vastly different backgrounds laboring under the same institutionalized principle of their inequality with men, and resistance, small and large, took many forms. There were, of course, moments that united different factions of women, whether they identified as feminists or not, under the common banner of sisterhood, such as the Women's Strike for Equality in 1970.

Hyper-focus on this event and others like it provides a false view of a movement that was, by no means, singular; however, strains of female resistance, no matter the end goal, operated under the governing principle that women deserved full access and full rights as human beings, using similar language and, in many cases, similar tactics to accomplish their diverse sets of goals.

The history of women in the AMC from founding to present exemplifies the ways in which local movements can incorporate and complicate national ideas about feminism and womanhood. Self-definition is an important tenant of this thesis—women labeling themselves as hikers and explorers implies an internalization of power—and the women who worked for an integrated Hut System did not call themselves “feminists.” These women did not necessarily meet all the criteria of feminist activists at the national level; their efforts were not televised, they did not try to reach external organizations, and they did not publish a manifesto asserting their rights. Tellingly, their lack of personal identification with national strands of feminism suggests a certain level of genderless thinking among these women; they did not see themselves as feminists because they did not feel their womanhood should factor into the discussion.

Perhaps this stems from the rich history of women in the region defying gender roles not to prove a point but because they could not bear to remain indoors. When Miriam Underhill set out to rescue her brother in the winter of 1925, she was not acting as a woman with a political agenda, but rather as the human most qualified for the job. Edith Cook shortened her skirts in order to hike faster and farther, not to cause social outrage. And Nancy Thomas did not carry heavy loads to compete with the hutboys. She did it because she could. These women never considered their gender a setback or an “otherizing” factor, igniting frustrations when the men in charge of hiring struggled to move past their own views of womanhood and femininity.

As national feminist movements began to permeate an increasing number of small communities, however, AMC women began to adopt a similar attitude towards action and language. While they never unified as a single entity, women began to write in echoes of Betty Friedan and place their bodies into provocative spaces by packing into the huts despite the gendered implications of the task. They worked with the tools available to them. Logbooks became their *Ms.* and packing their protest. Just as national women realized they could not occupy a diminished place within the Civil Rights Movement, AMC women grew tired of their relegation to frontcountry positions on the basis of gender alone. Sandra Cohen’s legal action draws the strongest connection; though the AMC changed their policies without a trial, Cohen’s proactive behavior implies that she was aware of the laws in place to support her, aware that her exclusion from the system was based on gender, and not afraid to use the resources she could to encourage definitive change. This iteration of a women’s rights movement enacted in the North Country of

New Hampshire is owned by women who did not identify with feminists yet internalized their best practices and, as a loose collection of passionate individuals, ended de jure discrimination in an organization they cherished.

Clearly, these women were not afraid to unsettle the status quo, and they did not reject the feminist label because they believed in separate gender spheres like some of their female contemporaries. The national movement did influence their social and political lives; many were at least aware of second-wave feminism, and their implementation of similar strategies suggests an internalized understanding of feminist principles. The lack of labeling, then, points to not a dismissal of the national movement, but a recognition that the work they did in the White Mountains was different. Theirs was feminism played out on the local level, by a small group of key actors within a closed system, but their actions and triumphs were not isolated. Ken Olson and John Nutter argued that, with the advent of the naturalist and environmental education programs, “increasingly, the AMC was living what it taught.”<sup>221</sup> By the time the dust of integration settled and the Club was standing publicly behind its decision to appoint a woman to a high-ranking position, this was true. The work of Cohen and others helped establish the AMC, an organization with national political influence, as a model for gender neutrality by working tirelessly from the ground up. While these actions were linked to national movements, the AMC story highlights the plurality of factions that exist under the same umbrella. Hutwomen did not identify as feminists because their actions, though they

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<sup>221</sup> Nutter and Olson, “Huts as Classrooms,” 6.

functioned similarly, were more personal and specific to their needs. This was not the women's rights movement. It was their own.



The accomplishments of the first generation of hutwomen remain largely overlooked in the collective memory and official records of the AMC. The burying of female achievements is an affliction that plagues the study of history as a whole; women are made examples of, tokenized and reduced to concepts. In Advanced Placement United States History courses, Margaret Sanger defines all women's positions on contraception and Rosie the Riveter represents the universal female experience during World War II. Many college courses devote a week or two to women during the Revolutionary War or Antebellum unless it is a class specifically focused on women. This divide is striking; even courses that aim to trouble the master narrative of popular history struggle to incorporate women into the conversation without cordoning them into their own section of the curriculum, forcing them to be extraordinary in order to warrant inclusion. The original hutwomen were extraordinary in some ways, but they did not predicate their actions on a belief in their fundamental difference. They fought to work in the huts because they identified with everyone else who could do the job. There is a National Women's Day and a Women's History Month, the very existence of which implies that the rest of days, the rest of history, belong to men. In this light, the legacy of hutwomen becomes widely important. By not fighting for a system that favors women over men, or foregoing the system entirely and crafting a female-only equivalent, hutwomen asserted that history is not owned by one gender, and that the story is necessarily more

complicated than men and women operating with incompatible interests in separate spheres.

History inevitably tells of the great events and the people who engineered them, but those people came from somewhere and did not exist outside of a context. The story of Hutmen (F) and the eventual hutwomen interacts with and grounds the national women's movements in a local setting that both explains the proliferation of movement ideals and helps ordinary women see the role they played in reclaiming their place in history. By situating themselves as vital figures in a subtle campaign that redirected the path of a larger body while insisting that they operated with genderless intent, these women proved that the separation of history into gendered conversations is constructed and not reflective of actual interactions between men and women. While women own the story of Hut System integration, it would be reductive to call it a “women’s history.” It is, simply, history.



In 2014, seven out of eight Hutmasters were female, as were five out of eight Assistants. Modern hutwomen are, in some ways, inheritors of the roles played by women in the 1970s. Nancy Thomas’ complicated relationship with packing still rings true; hutwomen feel an obligation to prove that women are capable of doing the work, but receive no pressure from other members of their crew. As evidenced by my encounter relayed above, female strength and ability remain contested by the public. Guests marvel at the heavy loads packed by hutboys and hutgirls alike, but their awe becomes undermining when directed at women in a way it does not when men are the subject.

There is a heavier burden on women to succeed, to show no weakness, because guests rarely question whether or not men are fit for the task. This conundrum concerns the relationship with modern hutwomen to their 1970s counterparts, but also to feminist activists who experienced similar struggles on a wider scale. As Clare Boothe Luce wrote,

Because I am a woman, I must make unusual  
efforts to succeed. If I fail, no one will say,  
'She doesn't have what it takes.' They will say,  
'Women don't have what it takes.'<sup>222</sup>

However, hut croos have always considered guests as other, as a part of a separate community that shares space with their own but is primarily different. Unintentionally, and without changing very much about the landscape except their own presence in it, 1970s AMC women worked to turn the huts into one type of feminist model, in which men and women receive equal pay for equal work, mutually support one another, and collaborate on important projects. Just as not every community in the public world is accepting of all people, neither is every community in the mountains. Guest behavior does not always meet the accepted standards of intra-croo interactions, but the huts have developed into an ideal example of gender equality. Anyone capable of doing the work is more than welcome to try.

Modern croos inherited this space. For the upcoming summer of 2015, which marks the 100th anniversary of the Lakes of the Clouds Hut, women hold eight leadership positions—the same as men. The huts remain a relatively homogenous

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<sup>222</sup> Clare Boothe Luce, "What's Wrong with the American Press?" (speech, National Press Club, Washington, DC, April 21, 1960).

environment; most croo members attend East Coast liberal arts colleges and come from financially stable families, and diversity, as in the entire outdoor industry, remains minimal. In terms of gender equality, however, the system is reaching its stride, disregarding those outside communities with tangential relation for whom genderless spaces remain a contested topic. Rarely since working in the huts have I considered or questioned my own gender other than when someone outside the system has mentioned it. I am aware that the physical locations remain masculine spaces, not built for my body, but I and other women have learned to adapt and gain nothing less from our experience because of it. Modern hutwomen may not practice feminist actions, but it is because they no longer need to.

If the first hutwomen belong to the same narrative as those who conquered uncharted territory, both literal and figurative, before them, then modern hutwomen owe much to the efforts of their earlier incarnations. Those who pushed for integration built on the efforts of the early explorers but insisted upon continuing farther, on establishing for themselves a space in which no one could question their presence. While modern hutwomen stand on the work of those who came before them, there is, perhaps, nowhere left to climb. Based on continual perplexed reactions to women packing, the external fight is far from over. However, within the system, modern women are an unquestioned presence. Conversations regarding minor discriminations experienced at the hands of an errant hiker persist, but hutmen are as quick to recognize and admonish the gender bias as hutwomen, creating a supportive atmosphere in which equality is internalized and expected. Men and women alike work to correct and inform guests (and the occasional

Old Hutman) of the new hut standards, under which hutwomen are not analyzed as credits to their gender. Croos support each other's rights and celebrate each other's successes as friends and as people, and feminism as an undefined topic does linger around the edges of discussion. But because the original hutwomen hurdled over the gender barrier more than 50 years ago, the need for tangible action remains steadfastly in the rearview.



If a traveler finds herself near a hut kitchen around 7:30 on a summer night, she may be rewarded for her timing. If she peeks into the doorway or over the counter separating the kitchen from the dining room, she may notice several college students, some in Carhartt work pants, others in flowing skirts or ill-fitting costume pieces, huddling together after completing dinner service and placing their hands together in a pile. If she listens closely, she could just make out a chant over the chatter of guests scattered about the hut. A boy, the one who cooked dinner, breathes deeply and then suddenly yells, "What do we want?" His croo, in unison, responds, "A female president!" His turn again: "When do we want it?" And their reply, traveling up into the rafters and sticking to the remnants of conversations held in the same spaces by people who could have been them: "When the media accurately represents women in politics!"<sup>223</sup>

Feminism, as croos understand and deploy it, is alive and well in the Hut System.

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<sup>223</sup> Thank you to T. Scott Berkley and Erica Lehner for reminding me of the words to this cheer.

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## Appendix A: Images



Figure 1: Emily Leich packs supplies to the Lakes of the Clouds Hut, August 2013. Author's Collection.



Figure 2. "Donks" carry supplies. Courtesy of Appalachian Mountain Club Library and Archives.

Figure 3. A "Dip Queen" washes dishes at Lakes of the Clouds, 1960s. Courtesy The OH Association.



#### GREENLEAF HUT

##### CURRENT RECORDS

FASTEST TRIP down Bridle Path - time - 0:16:30 Jack Tracy - July 11, 1976

FASTEST TRIP up Bridle Path - time - 0:35:30 Dave Gustafson - August 10, 1976

BEERS ON DAZE OFF - 47 hooters each - time - 2 days Bill Blais and Dave Hall - 1976

RAIDS - 3 in one week - Croo 1976

LONGEST PACK TRIP - 105 lbs. - time 9:15:00 (nite bivouac) - Jack Tracy 1976

LATEST MEAL - corned beef - time - 7:00 p.m. Dave Gustafson 1976

MOST ABSURD VALLEY TRIP - Left hut 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, July 11, 1976, for bottle of "Jack Daniels" down Bridle Path (see above). Drove to N. Woodstock - Lincoln - Franconia - Littleton - Franconia (again) Information Booth - to Franconia Inn (no deal) to Flintlock Motel where Jack (the owner) gave him one free beer and a bottle of "Jenkins" bourbon. Back to pack-house. Up to hut in torrential rain and thumpers by 9:05 p.m. Time - 2:35:00 Jack Tracy 1976

FIFTH OF "JENKINS" BOURBON - time - 0:25:00 Dave Gustafson Bill Blais July 11, 1976 Jack Tracy

MOST POTS USED FOR "ONE-POT" MEAL - 14 pots, 8 mixing bowls, 5 trays, 2 casserole dishes Dave Gustafson 1976

MOST "LORNA DOONES" EATEN - 16 pks. Dave Gustafson Jack Tracy 1976

PACKING GAS BOMB to pump AND CHANGING CRAPPER - time - 0:30:00 - Bill Blais Jack Tracy July 19, 1976

FASTEST SOLO MEAL - time - 0:40:00 (complete) Aven Switzer July 17, 1976

HEAVIEST PACK TRIP - weight - 255 lbs. (to the pump shack with gas bomb) Bill Blais Jack Tracy July 19, 1976

Figure 4. Greenleaf Hut records, Summer 1976. Courtesy Sally Dinsmore Baldwin.



Figure 5. A female packer arrives at Lakes of the Clouds circa 1964, nine years before women officially worked in the huts. Courtesy Becky Fullerton.

Figure 6. Doug Dodd packs supplies while wearing a Kilt, 1969. Courtesy of Alexander McPhail.

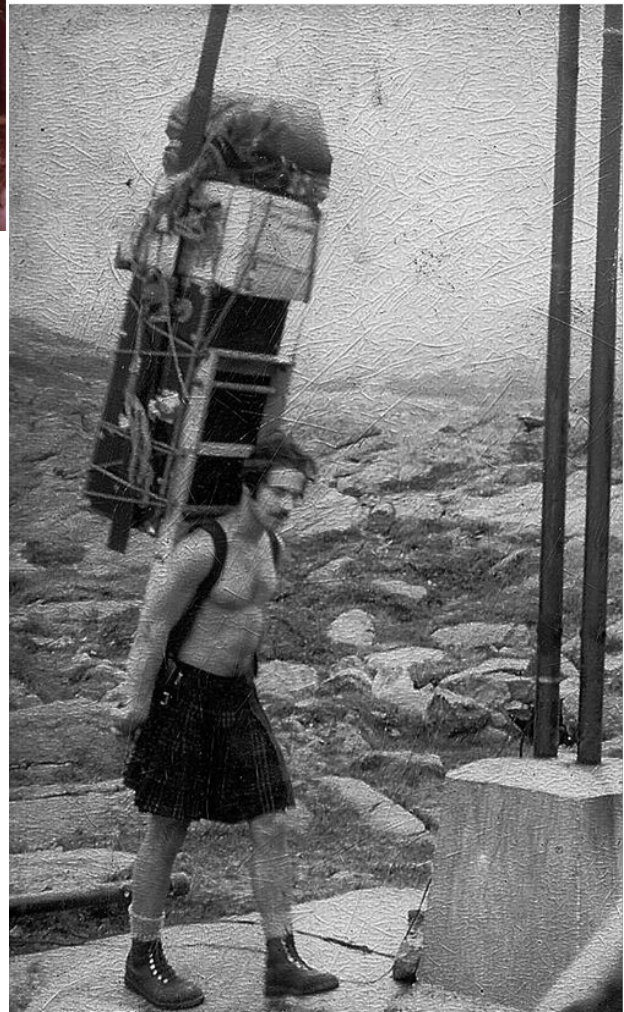




Figure 7. Hutboy dressed up, Lakes of the Clouds, 1978. Courtesy Jim Niver.



Figure 8. Hut Croo dressed as pirates, Lakes of the Clouds, 1978. Courtesy David Moore Huntley.



Figure 9. Greenleaf croo protests the Iran Hostage Crisis, 1980. Courtesy Jim Niver.

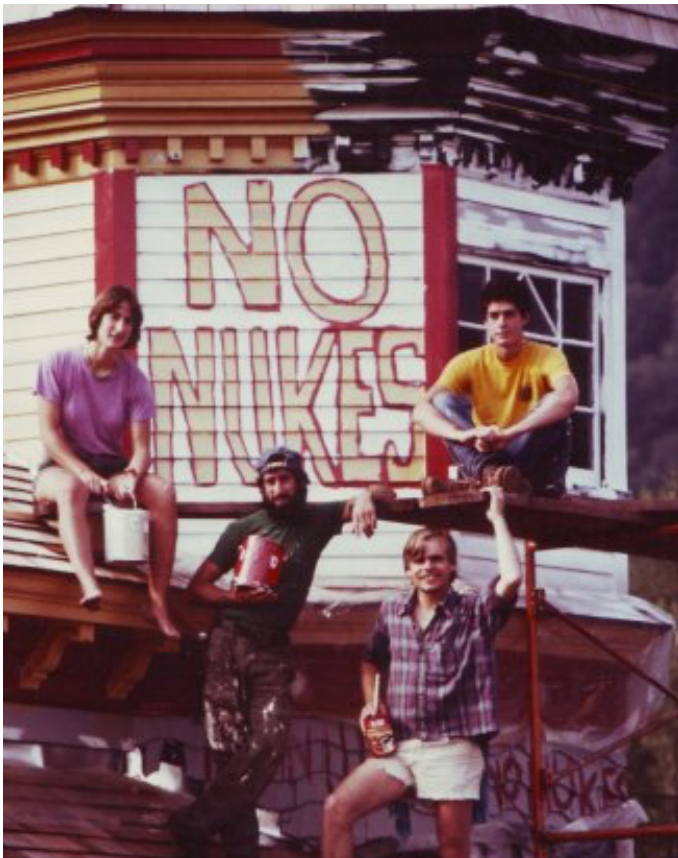


Figure 10. Croo members protest Seabrook Station nuclear testing, 1984. Courtesy Scott Macomber.



Figure 11. Grace Pezzella (left) and Sarah Sanford pack supplies down to Lakes of the Clouds, 2013. Author's collection.