

Important Places – The Second Hundred Years

Railroad/Teamsters

Dr. Thomas C. Durant completed the railroad from Saratoga to North Creek and established a stagecoach line through North River to the growing resort communities around Blue Mountain Lake.

The Adirondack Railway opened the Adirondack to tourists and economic development. The building itself is a simple rectangular, gable roofed building with the broad overhanging, strut supported roof associated with late 19th century railroad architecture. The exterior of this "stick style" building is covered with board and batten strips.

In 1871 the railroad was extended as far as the current Ordway Pond Road. The extension was used very little and was abandoned. Supplies for the Indian Lake/Blue Mountain Lake areas were "freighted" from North Creek through North River over dirt roads by lumber wagons in summer and sleighs in winter. These freight teamsters usually made three trips a week from Indian Lake to North Creek on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, returning on alternate days. The mail came in the same manner.

Railroad cars shipped out wood products, leather from the tannery, iron ore from the McIntyre Mines at Tahawus - and - brought in tourists and supplies for the various stores and boarding houses and hotels that grew up in the area and caused North Creek to thrive

On September 14, 1901, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt came to the station where he learned McKinley had died. The waiting train took him to Buffalo where he was sworn in as our 26th President. In the 1930's there was more depot history when ski trains brought hundreds of novice skiers to the station

It is a Registered in the National Registered Historical Place.

Schools

At the time of its creation, North Creek High was the high school for the surrounding towns that were, at the time, still using one room school houses up to eighth grade. On Nov. 28, 1814 the Town of Johnsburg was divided into four school districts. There is evidence that there were at least three schools in town before this, but this was the first time the exact bounds of each district were defined and a list of the taxable residents made. These four districts were split up through the years to finally make a total of twenty-one districts.

The numbers of these school districts are as they were up to the year of 1894. After that there were many changes made, some schools were closed or annexed to other districts.

All students in the surrounding towns went to North Creek High School to further their high school education. The towns included Warrensburg, Minerva, Hague, and Bolton. Back then, if you wanted an education past eighth grade, then North Creek was the place to go.

In 1946, they began building JCS, one of the first centralized schools. Sometime between 1948 and 1949 Johnsburg Central School opened its doors.

Barton Mines – Hooper

Frank Hooper was a mining engineer and his operations dominated mining in the early years. The first Hooper Mine was off Cleveland Road on the northeast side of Ruby Mountain in what was then Essex County. Mr. Hooper's home there was called Garnet Lodge. That mine operated from 1894 until 1904. The second Hooper Mine east of Thirteenth Lake, officially the North River Garnet Company replaced it and machinery and homes were moved from one site to the other beginning in 1904; it operated until April 1, 1928. The Hooper Mine site above Thirteenth Lake was a major industry in the early 1900s with machinery, engines, boilers, crushers and homes on 600 acres. The mine had a quarry, mill, office, two blacksmith shops, three dams for water, a boarding house and bunkhouse for 100 men, three barns for horses and cows, 25 homes for employees, a two-room school, and a store. Hooper's Thirteenth Lake mine investment came to over \$1,000,000. The Hoopers lived at Big Shanty. George Ringler ran the boarding house and the store and drew the garnet to the railroad. The abandoned open pit of the mine above Thirteenth Lake can be reached by a short walk from the end of Thirteenth Lake Road.

The Barton Mine was opened in 1878 on the northwest side of Gore Mountain. In the early days it was a hand operation but later became a large industry. This mine closed in 1984 but tours are open to visitors from the last week of June through Labor Day. Highwinds Inn is open on the site with rooms and meals and a fabulous view of the High Peaks. The JASCO Mineral Shop at the turn up Barton Mines Road is an interesting and informative fossil and mineral shop to visit. A fourth mine site is now operated by Barton Mines on Ruby Mountain up Thirteenth Lake Road.

Later the two companies joined together under the Barton Mines Corporation.

North Creek: Where Alpine Skiing Began in New York State

Towns in the Adirondack Park survive socially and economically primarily for two reasons. One is that their boundaries enclose a lot of taxable state land which allows a small population to afford basic services. The other reason is, along with state land, a township contains one or more stable businesses.

The latter reason perfectly describes the town of Johnsburg. Abundant state land and a combination of geographic anomalies provide both work for its residents and good business opportunities.

John Thurman opened the area to settlers in the late 1700s as a land speculation venture. Land speculation was not a big item here but local resources were attractive to investors and creative business people. Tanneries had a short life; heavy logging lasted longer and used the river to float soft wood logs to Glens Falls. In 1870 the Adirondack Railroad connected Johnsbury's people and businesses to the outside world. A mineralogist and a geologist each invented different techniques for separating the now famous Adirondack garnet from the native rock. This very hard red mineral exists only in a few deposits in the town of Johnsbury.

Mining and the remnant lumbering industries kept a reasonably robust economy growing in Johnsbury well into the post World War II era. Tourism had always been in the mix and in the 1930s a new winter tourist activity began to grow in Johnsbury.

Alpine skiing was invented in the Austrian Alps after World War I. Wealthy tourists brought it to the United States where it became popular in Woodstock, Vermont and in North Creek.

The wide open slopes forming the eastern foothills of Gore Mountain were perfect for trying out this exciting new winter sport. The railroad, now part of the D&H system sponsored ski trains from New York City and the Albany area beginning in 1934. These two elements combined to spawn the Alpine skiing industry in New York State.

Local business people learned of a contraption invented by a Vermonter which pulled skiers up a hill by rope. The village slopes soon had several independently owned rope tows operating. Skiers could also ride on buses and trucks to longer trails higher on Gore Mountain in the Barton Mines area. This was the famous "Ride Up Slide Down" way of trail skiing which was hugely popular.

It was on these long mountain trails that a skier rescue service was established. It is today's Ski Patrol.

World War II slowed the development of skiing and the ski trains stopped in 1939. After the war, the country was ready to have fun again. North Creek business people formed the North Creek Ski Corporation in 1946 and in January, 1947, a Constam tee-bar lift was in operation at the village slopes. The first mechanical lift in New York State had a vertical rise of about 900 feet and a system of trails each over a mile long. North Creek, the ski town, was born again. The ski trains didn't come back but new cars and better roads brought thousands of skiers back to the North Creek mountains.

In the 1950s New York State began to think about skiing on a grander scale. Averell Harriman, a great skier and founder of Sun Valley in Idaho, was governor. A 1960s constitutional amendment was accepted by the voters which allowed Gore Mountain Ski Center to be built. This multimillion dollar project opened for business in January, 1964.

The state legislature has wisely invested in Gore Mountain over the years and with good management, the area is now one of the leading ski centers in the Northeast. It employs a

substantial year round work force and during the six month ski season, the work force expands to make the ski center the largest employer in northern Warren County.

Today, Gore Mountain Ski Center is a catalyst for attracting new tourist venues (rafting, biking, and hiking) to Johnsbury. Another result related to the growth in the skiing industry has been the second and vacation home construction. The investment by Iowa/Pacific Railroad Corporation in the surrounding railroad infrastructure had to have been greatly influenced by the ski tourism potential.

Gore Mountain Ski Center is pulling North Creek and all the Johnsbury hamlets to an excellent position to grow into a major four season destination resort. Great mountains to play and live in, a great river to paddle, good schools, good neighbors. Geography has been good to Johnsburgers.

With Gore Mountain Ski Center at fifty years and growing, the town of Johnsbury is definitely the "sweet spot" for living, working and investing.