

2016 Fall Run to Mt. Washington

By Peggy Howard – Pictures courtesy of Bruce Clarkson and Joe Howard



The Fall Run was held this year on the week end of September 9th in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The meeting place was at the Sleep Inn on Route 93, Exit 5 in Londonderry, NH. The group drove North on Rt 93 to North Woodstock NH and stopped at the Lost River Gorge to explore the caverns and waterfalls.



After some terrific views and steep climbing (some in very small spaces) we went back to our cars and continued north past Franconia Notch (location of NH's Old Man of the Mountain) to Bethlehem, NH. Our destination was the Hearthside Village Cottage Motel – our headquarters for the weekend.



The weather was clear with temperatures near 70 degrees so after we checked into our individual cabins everyone gathered on the lawn to socialize with snacks and drinks. Pizza was delivered for dinner. After we all sat by the large fireplace – someone even had marshmallows to roast. It was a great time.



Saturday morning, we had reservations to ride the first of its kind, world famous Cog Railway to the top of Mt. Washington, 6,288 ft above sea level. The mountain is notorious for its erratic weather. On the afternoon of April 12, 1934, the Mount Washington Observatory recorded a wind speed of 231 miles per hour at the summit, the world record for most of the 20th century, and still a record for measured wind speeds not involved with a tropical cyclone.

The story of the Cog Railway up Mt. Washington began in 1852 when, after becoming lost near the summit of Mount Washington, Sylvester Marsh knew that there had to be a better way for people to reach the highest mountain peak in the Northeast. Upon his return home, he immediately started working on a plan to build the world's first mountain-climbing cog railway. Marsh, a native of Campton, New Hampshire was considered by his contemporaries to be a creative and innovative thinker. However, upon first presenting his idea to members of the New Hampshire Legislature, they laughed at Sylvester Marsh and said that he "might as well build a railway to the Moon."

Undaunted, Marsh began the task of building his mountain climbing railway, along with inventors Herrick and Walter Aiken, a father-and-son team from Franklin, New Hampshire. The task was not an easy one, as equipment and materials had to be hauled by oxen for 25 miles to Bretton Woods, and then another six miles through thick forest to the base of Mount Washington. But on July 3, 1869, 'Old Peppersass' became the first cog-driven train to climb 6,288-foot Mount Washington.



For us it was an amazing experience going up a 22+ degree slope to the top, traversing the tree line to where there is only rock. The weather was very clear at the top and the views were all the way to Maine and Vermont. We had 90 minutes to explore and have lunch on the "top of the world". As we finished our time at the top, the weather started closing in with clouds and fog. Glad we were leaving and not just arriving.



Earlier when we were driving to the Cog Railway we saw dozens of Antique Cars driving past us. It was as if we had a car show going by us - all the early 1900 to 1930 vintage cars – millions of dollars driving by on the road. So after descending Mt. Washington, we decided to drive over to the Mt. Washington Grand Hotel to see the newly renovated icon and have some refreshments. We also heard that it was the host hotel for the vintage cars we saw. When we got there it was starting to rain and we could see the vintage cars returning to the hotel. We were able to go to where they parked and see some and talk to the owners.



On Sunday morning we left our cottages in Bethlehem, stopped for breakfast at a great restaurant in Franconia and then drove through the Franconia Notch on our way to Meredith, NH, located on Lake Winnepesaukee, for shopping in the town shops. This was followed by a great lunch at Hart's Turkey Farm Restaurant. After lunch, everyone headed home fully enjoying the NH weekend. Wonder what next year will bring?