

The Holyoke Range Collection

Holyoke Public Library History Room & Archives

Finding Aid for

**Holyoke Range Collection
(1850-present)
(HPLA 2011.02)**

For reference queries please contact

Archivist

**Holyoke Public Library
History Room & Archives
250 Chestnut Street
Holyoke, MA 01040**

Telephone: (413) 420-8107
www.holyokelibrary.org

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September 2011

Repository Information

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Abstract:

The Holyoke Range Collection consists of materials on the three mountains that make up the Holyoke Range. The mountains have been a source of inspiration, shelter, recreation and commerce since before the cities and towns around the range had been settled. The founders of the City of Holyoke relied on the trails and knowledge of the Native Americans in the region when they explored the area in 1640. Those trails now make up the Metacomet and Monadnock Trail. Summit houses on all three mountains were places of commerce and recreation from the mid-1800s into the 1930s. The Mt. Tom Ski Area and Summerside recreation facility and the Mountain Park amusement park were major attractions in the region for several decades. The Mt. Tom Golf club was located on the side of the mountain. Mt. Tom is also the site of more than one major military plane crash, including the crash of a B-17 in 1946. The site now has a memorial to the 25 servicemen who were killed in the crash. Two state parks protect the land and provide a place for visitors and residents to experience the views and natural landscape of the region. Also in the collection are original photographs, many newspaper articles, memorabilia, historical timelines and environmental studies.

Volume: (3.75 linear feet)

Acquisition: The collection was compiled of several smaller collections related to the Holyoke Range already on location at the Holyoke Public Library History Room & Archives. Some materials were given through donations.

Access: *Unrestricted*

Copyright: The researcher assumes full responsibility for conforming to the laws of copyright. Whenever possible, the Holyoke Public Library History Room & Archives staff will provide information about copyright owners and other restrictions. Legal determination ultimately rests with the researcher. Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with the Archivist.

Preferred Citation: Holyoke Range Collection HPLA2011.02 Holyoke Public Library and Holyoke History Room and Archives.

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Historical Sketch:

The origins of the Holyoke Range are tied to the formation of the Connecticut River Valley when the North American continent and the African Continent began to separate 400 - 500 million years ago. The basalt rock that constitutes the core of the mountains was created from volcanic lava that hardened 200 million years ago. The most recent natural formation of the range occurred as ice melted away nearly 10,000 years ago and left behind the sediments of sand, gravel and fertile farmland in the region. The Holyoke Range is one of the only ranges that runs east to west in the United States.

Tracks of the earliest creatures to inhabit the area can be found in and around the Holyoke Range. Some of the tracks are from the Mesozoic Period and some are from the Late Triassic Period that date back 230 million years. Tracks possibly from the Dilophosaurus, a meat eater about 10 to 12 feet tall, walked the range 180 million years ago. Other smaller creatures that were in the area are the Anchisauri and the Grallator Cuneatus.

The Iroquois Federation and the five tribes of the Connecticut Valley inhabited the area around the Holyoke Range. The Nonotuck Tribe and the Agawam Tribe lived closest to the mountains and farmed the area on both sides of the range. As settlers moved into the region disputes began to increase and in 1704 several raids occurred. In May the Mount Tom Junction settlements were raided and 19 settlers were killed. This raid coincided with the sacking of Deerfield and led to further disputes between the settlers and the Native Americans, who were being supported by the French.

The settlements around the Holyoke Range in the 1720s and 1730s were Springfield and Northampton and the region closest to the mountains on the East side was farmed by six families. It was called Ireland Parish and was separated from Springfield and later became the City of Holyoke in 1850. The area on the west side of the mountain was separated from Northampton and named Hadley.

The Eyrie House, the first of the summit houses on the range, was built on Mt. Nonotuck by William Street in 1861. The first floor contained a kitchen, a dining room and an office. The second floor contained a dance hall and a billiard room. On the third floor were 30 guest rooms. It attracted many visitors from the area and was a popular place to go until fire destroyed the structure on April 16, 1901.

The highest peak of the range was at the top of Mt. Tom and the Holyoke Street Railway company purchased the property and built an amusement park, their own summit house and a railway to access the facilities in the 1890s. (check dates). The first Summit House, built in June, 1897, attracted large crowds and even President McKinley

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in 1899. Fire destroyed the building in 1901. The railway company rebuilt a second summit house on a much grander scale to accommodate the number of visitors. Fire destroyed the second summit house in 1929. The popularity of the summit houses had waned with the increase use of the automobile and the third summit house was a basic steel structure and viewing platform.

Land on the mountain transferred from private ownership to state owned as the Mt. Tom State Reservation was established in 1903. During the depression era the Civilian Conservation Corps maintained and expanded the 1800 acres of park land for recreational use. Trails, viewing platforms, access roads, campsites and a log cabin for skiers and skaters were built. Park attendance peaked on Labor Day 1945 at 2000 visitors. The Park is currently maintained by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Several plane crashes have occurred along the range. The most notable was a B-17 Flying Fortress that crashed into Mt. Tom on July 9, 1946 killing 25 men from the Army, Navy and Coast Guard. The plane was traveling to Westover Air Force Base in heavy rain and fog when it crashed into the side of the mountain. The spot is now a memorial to the those who died in the crash.

The O'Connell and Sons Construction Company created the Mt. Tom Ski Area and Summerside recreation Park in 1952. The ski area provided winter and summer recreational activities for over 45 years before several unfavorable winters forced the business to close in 1998.

The Mt. Tom Quarry, one the more controversial businesses on the Holyoke Range, has a 100 year history on the mountain. The Holyoke Street Railway company opened the quarry in 1900 to mine rock for their trolley track system and it remained in operation under a variety of owners until it was shut down in 2000.

The Holyoke Range has been an important part of the region since creatures first started walking the trails 230 million years ago. Native Americans used the peaks for communication and defense. Settlers and residents of the cities and towns that emerged in the 1700s used the range for recreation and commerce. Mt Tom and Mt. Holyoke continue to be an important part of the lives of residents and the history of the Holyoke Range is constantly evolving.

Scope and Content Note:

The Holyoke Range Collection consists of materials on the three mountains that make up the Holyoke Range. The mountains have been a source of inspiration, shelter, recreation and commerce since before the cities and towns around the range had been

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settled. The founders of the City of Holyoke relied on the trails and knowledge of the Native Americans in the region when they explored the area in 1640. Summit houses on all three mountains were places of commerce and recreation in from the mid-1800s into the 1930s. There was once a ski area and summer recreation business and an amusement park that were major attractions in the region for several decades. Two state parks now protect the land and provide a place for visitors and residents to experience the views and natural landscape of the region. Also in the collection are original photographs, many newspaper articles, memorabilia, historical timelines and environmental studies.

Series Description

Series 1: Mt. Tom

The history of Mt. Tom goes back to the formation of the continents 200 million years ago and continues through the glacial formation of the mountains themselves. One of the attractions of the Holyoke Range are the numerous places where dinosaur footprints and impressions can be found. The Metacomet - Monadnock Trail traverses the Holyoke Range and two state parks now protect most of the area. This series contains information about the history, environment and recreation of the natural aspects of the range.

Series 2: Mt. Nonotuck - The Eyrie House 1861 - 1901

The Eyrie House consists of a small one folder collection of news clippings and copies of photographs that tell the story of the first of the hotels to be built on the summits of the Holyoke Range's mountain tops.

Series 3: Mt. Holyoke - Summit House and Skinner State Park 1821 - 2011

Mt. Holyoke was named by the founder of the City of Holyoke and continues to have a significant influence on the region despite being located across the Connecticut River from the rest of the Mt. Tom Range. This collection contains materials from the original summit house and hotel, built in 1821, trail maps, recreation guides, newspaper clippings and copies of photographs that show the view of the region that attracted visitors to its summit for centuries.

Series 4: Mt. Tom Railroad Company 1884 - 1937

The Mt. Tom Railroad Company, an extension of the Holyoke Street Railway, was the link from the City of Holyoke and the outlying region to the Summit House at the top of Mt. Tom. This collection contains news articles, photographs, original view books and historical timelines of the railroad operations and each of the three summit houses that were popular destinations from the 1890s to the 1930s. Most notable are the numerous accounts of President William McKinley's visit to the first Summit House on June 19, 1899.

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Series 5: Mt. Tom Golf Club 1898 - 1943

Joseph Wyckoff and the Mt. Tom Golf Club were a part of Mt. Tom where the present Wyckoff Country Club is currently located. This series contains one folder of photocopied newspaper articles from 1898 to 1943 and a box of original photographs of club members and famous golfers of the time who played at the Mt. Tom Golf Club.

Series 6: Mt. Tom Ski Area 1952 - 1998

Started in 1952 by the O'Connell and Sons Construction Company the ski area provided winter and summer recreational activities for over 45 years before several unfavorable winters forced the business to close. This series contains newspaper clippings, photographs, a timeline, original memorabilia, and copies of the newsletter published by the ski area.

Series 7: Mt. Tom Quarry

The Mt. Tom Quarry is one the more controversial businesses on the Holyoke Range. This series follows the 100 year history of the Quarry from when the Holyoke Street Railway company opened the quarry in 1900 to mine rock for their trolley track system to its closing in 2000. The series contains newspaper articles, some photographs and newsletters on both sides of the issues raised by the quarry.

Series 8: B-17 Crash July 9, 1946

This collection has information on the crash of the B-17 Bomber including transcripts of the Department of the Air Force account of the crash, a scrapbook of photographs centered around the memorial, dedication of the memorial materials from 1996, and a video tape on the crash and the memorial.

See also: Mountain Park Collection;

Holyoke Range Collection Series, Box and Folder List

Series 1: Mt. Tom

Box 1: 7 folders

Sub-Series 1: History and Time Line / folder 1

Sub-Series 2: Ecology and the Environment / folder 2

Sub-Series 3: M & M Trail Maps and Hiking Guides / folder 3

Sub-Series 4: Mt. Tom Newspaper clippings / folder 6

Sub-Series 5: Mt. Tom Range Commission Study 1994 / folder 7

Box 4: 1 folder

Sub-Series 6: Mt. Tom Exhibit Images 1990s

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Box 5: 4 CDs

Sub-Series 7: CDs

Mt. Tom Range - Produced by Robert Schwobe

History of Mt. Tom State Reservation - Produced by R. Schwobe 2005

President McKinley at the Mt. Tom Summit House - LC film 1899

Series 2: Mt. Nonotuck - The Eyrie House

Box 2: 1 folder

Sub-Series 1: Eyrie House 1861 - 1901 / folder 1

Box 5: 2 CDs

Sub-Series 2: 2 CDs

Mt. Nonotuck Road - Produced by Robert Schwobe 2006

The Eagle's Nest: the history of the Eyrie House Hotel - Produced by Robert Schwobe 2009

Series 3: Mt. Holyoke - Summit House and Skinner State Park

Box 2: 5 folders

Sub-Series 1: Mt. Holyoke Prospect House Exhibit Material / folder 2

Sub-Series 2: Summit House (materials) / folder 3

Sub-Series 3: Skinner State Park/ Summit House / folder 4

Sub-Series 4: Summit House Scrapbook / folder 5

Sub-Series 5: Skinner State Park Newspaper Clippings / folder 6

Series 4: Mt Tom Railroad Company

Box 3: 4 folders

Sub-Series 1: Mt. Tom Railroad Company 1884 - 1939 / folder 1

Sub-Series 2: Summit House #1 1897 - 1900 / folder 2

Sub-Series 3: Summit House #2 1901 - 1929 / folder 3

Sub-Series 4: Summit House #3 1929 - 1938 / folder 4

Box 4: No folders

Sub-Series 5: Mt. Tom Railroad Company Booklets 1901 - 1929

Series 5: Mt. Tom Golf Club

Box 3: 1 folder

Sub-Series 1: History of the Mt. Tom Golf Club / folder 5

Box 5: 1 folder

Sub-Series 2: Photographs 1910 - 1921 / folder 2

Series 6: Mt. Tom Ski Area

Box 3: 2 folders

Sub-Series 1: Ski Area and Summerside / folder 6

Sub-Series 2: Ski Area Newspaper clippings / folder 7

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Series 7: Mt. Tom Quarry

Box 1: 2 folders

Sub-Series 4: Mt. Tom Quarry / folder 4

Sub-Series 5: Mt. Tom Quarry Newspaper clippings / folder 5

Series 8: B-17 Crash July 9, 1946

Box 6: 1 folder, 1 scrapbook, 1 VHS tape, 1 bound report, photographs

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The Holyoke History Room and Archives, a department within the Holyoke Public Library, houses the Library's special collections. In accordance with the Holyoke Public Library's mission statement, the History Room staff provides free access to Holyoke's historical documents while preserving these fragile items from damage and theft. Housed within the Holyoke History Room and Archives are collections documenting the history of Holyoke, a city whose industrial developments during the 1860s and early 20th century played an influential role on the paper and textile industries both nationally and internationally.

The Holyoke Public Library History Room and Archives is available for public use 20 hours per week. None of the collections stored in either the History Room or the Archives are circulating. In addition, items stored in the Holyoke Public Library Archives are not accessible for browsing. However, they are available for use in the History Room and Archives. Given the fact that the Archivist is the only full time employee working with the Holyoke Public Library Archives, and as they are stored outside the reading room, patrons must request the use of these items ahead of time. Requests may be made via the phone, mail or email. Please provide the Archivist with as much information about your research needs as it will not only help in the retrieval of the records but will also help to preserve them. The History Room and Archives contact information can be found on the first page of this document. Walk-ins may be allowed to use these items provided there is a second attendant available. These items are not available for use if the Archivist is offsite. Please leave your name and number and requested items with the attendant and the Archivist will set up an appointment to allow these items to be used. You may use one box at a time and may use one folder at a time to prevent these items from getting out of order. Please put an "in use" slip in the

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