

100th Anniversary Series PART IV

The Social Evolution of the NHGRA



When the New Hampshire Goods Roads Association (NHGRA), also called the New Hampshire Good Roads League, was incorporated in 1904, its overall purpose was “the general improvement of the roads in New Hampshire,” as stated in the first copy of the organizational bylaws. Its focus throughout these years was primarily to advocate for federal funding of roads and bridges, and to facilitate information exchange during a period of significant highway and bridge construction in New Hampshire.

Little is known about the specific activities of the NHGRA prior to 1930, beyond its political role as an advocacy organization for the pub-

lic funding of road and bridge projects in the state. What was then the state Department of Highways (now the New Hampshire Department of Transportation) published a newsletter entitled the *New Hampshire Highways Bulletin* for some period of time in the 1920s and 1930s, which was the predecessor of what became *New Hampshire Highways*

magazine in 1946. From a review of the few New Hampshire Highways Bulletins we have in our archives, the organization seemed focused almost exclusively on providing updates about specific projects and the dissemination of technical information.

Post-war reorganization and growth

During the years of United States involvement in WWII (1941-1945), there was no significant new highway construction in the state, and maintenance was marginal. Consequently, there was little NHGRA activity of any kind for several years, and publication of the *New Hampshire Highways Bulletin* ceased. After the war ended in 1945, however, things began to happen quickly.

The first issue of *New Hampshire Highways* in the NHGRA archives is dated June 1946, and represents the

initial publication of a newly-revitalized organization. It is evident in this first publication, as well as in subsequent issues through the years, that NHGRA leadership valued and maintained its strong relationship with NHDOT, and worked closely with the state in meeting the shared goal of “keeping New Hampshire highways and bridges safe.” In some ways, the “post-war” NHGRA and its close relationship with NHDOT represents a very early example of a successful public/private partnership to accomplish common goals.

From a review of the early issues of *New Hampshire Highways*, it is clear that the initial goals of the post-1946 organization were focused upon helping both an industry and a highway system recover from several years of neglect. NHGRA and NHDOT worked closely together throughout the late 1940s to make

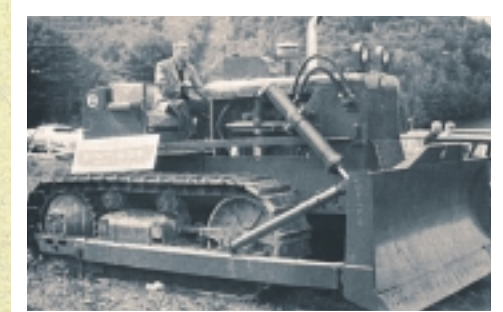


For fifty seven years, one of the social highlights of the NHGRA year has been the clambake, golf tournament, and equipment show. In celebration of our 100th Anniversary, and our 57th Annual Clambake, we are sharing with you a “scrapbook” of show photos from 1958, 1961, 1973, and 1981.



1958

Held at the Belknap Mountain Recreation Area on September 19, the 1958 gathering featured a golf tournament, horseshoe tournament, “clam chowder,” equipment show (14 exhibits), and 725 were in attendance. View taken from Clyde Everett Equipment Company’s Strato-Tower Aerial Platform.



A TD 20 Bulldozer was exhibited by R.C. Hazelton Co., Inc. George Strohrer is trying out the controls.

Passengers are being given last minute instructions before a ride in the Strato-Tower.



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needed repairs to “pre-war” roads and bridges. And, with the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President in 1952, and his campaign promise to create a national Interstate Highway System (see *New Hampshire Highways*, May/June 2004, page 26), the highway construction industry “exploded.” It was a great period to be involved in the highway and bridge construction industry in New Hampshire and the nation!

The association’s mission-driven imperatives – advocating for funding, and dissemination of information – were certainly not abandoned after WWII. Nevertheless, 1946 marks an important shift in NHGRA history. A new, more “social” organization began to rapidly evolve. The early post-war leadership of J. Harold Johnson (1944-1946), Arch McDonnell (1946-1947), Elwin Hodgins (1947-1948), Andrew Elliott (1948-1950), and J. Paul Griffin (1950-1952) helped create an organization that not only understood its political/advocacy role, but also the importance of providing social “networking” opportunities NHGRA members.

Getting social

The earliest historical account of a major social event sponsored by the NHGRA appeared in the July 1946 issue of *New Hampshire Highways* where an article about the “Ladies Day” social on June 29-30 at Wentworth by the Sea was included. The article states that this was the first “Ladies Day” to be held in “over five years,” suggesting that previous socials of this kind were sponsored by the NHGRA before the war. “Ladies Day,” which took a variety of forms, and held at a variety of locations over the next several decades, often featured a golf tournament and dinner/dance. “Ladies Day” became the NHGRA Fall Social in the 1980s, and the tradition continues today (see 2004 NHGRA Fall Social details on page 19).

The first NHGRA “clambake” was held in October of 1946, with a concurrent golf tournament. This event was described in the October 1946 issue of *New Hampshire Highways*, as the “fall meeting,” and was for “men only.” The “fall meeting” moved to the summer in the mid-1950s, and began to become known as the “NHGRA Clambake, Golf Tournament, and Equipment Show.”

If we read between the lines of the social events reported in *New Hampshire Highways* over the next several decades, “Ladies Day” was a more formal social event, and the “fall meeting” (the clambake, golf tournament, and equipment show) was primarily – if not exclusively – attended by men. Many of these early “men only” NHGRA social events also included horseshoe and softball tournaments. In reviewing back issues of *New Hampshire Highways*, it is clear that by the 1970s and 1980s, NHGRA social activities were fully integrated “coed” events, and women were assuming not only leadership roles in the NHGRA, but in New Hampshire’s construction industry.

1961



Held at the Belknap Mountain Recreation Area on August 14, the 1961 gathering featured a golf tournament (100 participants), equipment show (9 exhibits), and over 600 were in attendance.

ABOVE, TOP TO BOTTOM:
Exhibit by R.C. Hazelton, Inc., Manchester
Exhibit by The Bracken Company, Manchester
Jim Westhall (right) of WLNH interviewing Tom Graf about the Golf Tournament

THE SOCIAL EVOLUTION OF THE NHGRA (continued)

1981



Don Wilder with some of the 1,800 lobsters



(l-r) A.J. Pauquette, Bob Kelly, Linda Ladd, and T.A. Pauquette.

1973



Paul Swenson (left) presents Robert Casey with the Randolph K. Pike Trophy.



The 1981 event featured a clambake and golf tournament.



Ray Burton, Lou D'Allesandro, and John Sumnu



Jack McDevitt (center), and his crew