

ACC Library history

BY SUZAN CHAMNEY

The establishment of a Club Library was part of the original Constitution of the Club set back in 1906 which was published in the 1907 *Canadian Alpine Journal*:

Item #16. A library or libraries shall be established where the publications of the Club and books, maps, photographs and works of art relating to mountain scenery shall be gathered together and filed for the use of its members.

In her first report, also recorded in the 1907 *CAJ*, Jean Parker, the Club's first librarian, stated that the Club's Library consisted of 17 donated volumes. Parker's report continued:

In addition, the Club purchased the first number of a series of monographs, called "Alpina Americana," to be published yearly by the American Alpine Club. Mr. Tom Wilson of Banff, himself a collector of Rocky Mountain literature, has kindly volunteered to keep watch for the acquisition of rare old books dealing with early history relating to the Canadian mountains.

It is perhaps worth noting that of the seventeen volumes forming the nucleus of the library, eight were written by our own members, and the Appalachian volumes also contain much matter contributed by members of our Club. We hope that the library will be augmented during the current year, by many valuable additions, and that the Club will enact some legislation by which these books may be made accessible to members, such as the establishment of a library building at a suitable point in the mountains.

The following year, the librarian reported that the Club then owned 42 books and 15 minor publications:

Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of the Club Library; and no reasonable opportunity should be lost, whereby we can obtain works of value dealing with mountains and mountaineering, on historical, scientific or aesthetic lines.

Also, the 1908 *CAJ* reported that the Club resolved to build a Club House in Banff, and 50 members promised to contribute \$10 each. The report continues:

A suitable site of three and a half acres on the side of Sulphur Mountain has been generously leased [to] us by the Dominion government; and we expect soon to have there a building worthy of the Club, which shall give us a new visibility and a home to our growing library. Such a Club House will be a headquarters at which to rally our members for alpine work in the mountains, and from which to organize camps at advantageous points; so that members may make up parties and go from one to the other at times suitable to them, finding good accommodation at each.

The library and reading room were established in the original Club House located on Sulphur Mountain in Banff and remained there until 1963 when the Club Library was moved into the Vancouver Public Library. According to Ted Hart, Whyte

Museum head archivist, this was, "likely due to uncertainties about the future of the Club House and the threat of fire."

In 1969 the agreement with the Vancouver Public Library was renewed for an additional three-year period. However, the Vancouver Library indicated that at the end of this agreement the ACC collection must be removed or turned over to the Vancouver Public Library. Not willing to give away its Library, the Club sought other options. They found it with the Peter Whyte Foundation (operator of the Archives of the Canadian Rockies), which had recently completed a new fireproof and climate-controlled library, archives and gallery building in Banff. In 1970 an agreement was reached that specified the collection be on loan, that it be available for reference purposes only, that it be kept in its own closed stack area separate from the Peter Whyte Foundation Archives' library, but that it be cared for and utilized in the same manner as the Archives' library, and that the Club appoint a librarian who, in consultation with the Archives' librarian, would be responsible for acquiring materials for the Library from the Club's funds. The agreement was to be for a minimum of five years beginning on March 1, 1971, with a renewal option for a second period of five years, during which it could be terminated upon one party giving the other 30 months' notice of its intention to do so. There was to be no financial consideration in this agreement. The ACC collection arrived at the Archives on March 5, 1971 and operated mainly under the supervision of Archives librarian Jean Finley and Club librarian Tony Daffern. It quickly experienced an increase in use by both Club members and the general public.

In 1981 the increasing costs of housing the collection resulted in the negotiation of a new agreement whereby the Club would pay the Peter Whyte Foundation for the facilities and services by levying a \$1 charge to each member of the Club, in addition to making up to \$500 available for conservation and repairs. This payment remained in place for two years before being unilaterally reduced to a flat fee of \$1,000 per year, which was paid by the Club for one year before being discontinued altogether. This resulted in a further series of negotiations, with a new agreement in 1986 stating the Club would be relieved of paying the annual fee, and in return would donate outright its entire archives and artefact collection to the (now) Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

The ACC Library has continued to grow in size under the auspices of Club librarians, research use of it has continued to increase, and the Whyte has continued to provide the professional services, research access and storage facilities envisaged. Over the years the Club's executive and management and the Whyte Museum expressed themselves as pleased with the 1986 arrangement, and no efforts were made to renew the Library agreement until about 2000 when pressures on the Whyte Museum's facilities, staff and other resources began to build.

In 2008 the Whyte Museum gave the Club notice that the Archives' library and storage areas were effectively full, impacting their ability to accept future donations, and therefore requested that the Club remove its Library from the museum by September 2010.

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