

## Then & Now – Summit House I – 1870 - 1883 Top of Wachusett Mountain



“Little by little after the first sighting of the Wachusett Mountain by Governor Winthrop and his party in 1632, and the discovery of a path leading west in 1648, called the Bay Path Branch, the trip to the mountain widened from footpath, to bridleway, to cart-track, and wagon road, carrying successive families of colonists in the direction of Wachusett. This was once King Philip’s land, and in the winter of 1676 his tribes kindled their signal fires on the crest of Wachusett to announce their up-coming attack. Descending and following the path to Lancaster, all settlers were killed and every homestead burned, leading to the capture of Mary Rowlandson, who was eventually ransomed at Redemption Rock.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Mountain Use and Exploration**

Other than individual people and Native Americans, who decided to explore Wachusett Mountain, the first use of the mountain came when a small group of scientists built a station to be used for topographical survey and mapping purposes. The first scientist in this effort was Simeon Borden 1829-30, and he used the Coast Survey Road, which was later renamed the Mountain House Trail to access the top of the mountain.



**Early Lookout with Telescope 1**

## Summit House I

Some of the other known early explorers were Mrs. John Rice of Princeton who reached the summit on horse back in 1825, Phineas Gregory of Princeton who took an ox cart to the top, and W. G. Morse who in 1866 set up a small sales stand to sell cigars and candy bars. By 1870, Mr. Morse had built the first Summit House out of wood he hauled to the mountaintop and stone found there, this brought an increased number of visitors to the mountaintop.



**Summit House I - Before Expansion**

In 1874 the Wachusett Company was incorporated, and they built a hotel addition to the original stone building and a toll road to the summit. Once this was accomplished, they built a barn for carriage horses, and a bowling alley. A toll of 25 cents was collected as people arrived at the summit. The original toll road up is an integral part of the current down road.

Many people were known to have ridden to near the top and tied up their wagon or horse and walked the rest of the way to avoid paying the toll.

Please feel free to write us, if you have any questions or information to offer at:

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1870 Wachusett Mt. Before Road to Summit Was Built



**Summit House I - After Expansion With Barn**



**Summit House I - After Expansion**