

Mt. Laurel Skiers Club History



Mountain Laurel celebrated its 65th birthday in 2011 with a membership over 500. The club remains focused on Alpine and Cross Country skiing; supplemented with social, athletic, and civic activities throughout the year.

Immediately following World War II, The Connecticut Company started ski bus trips leaving Main and Gold Streets in Hartford on Sunday mornings. Since many of the skiers made this a regular event, they became quite friendly and began to look forward to the next trip together.

One Sunday in late February of 1946, the trip was cancelled because of rain. Later in the day the sun came out and the weather was beautiful. Frustratingly, it was later found out that it had snowed in the hills and the skiing had been excellent. The following week, when the group again gathered at Main and Gold Streets, they spontaneously began to plan how to arrange things so that trips would not be cancelled. Obviously, as long as the bus company ran the trips, they could cancel at any time. The only way to be sure of a trip was to charter a bus. In order to do this, the group had to organize and get enough people interested so they would not risk a loss on a charter.

On the way home from a gorgeous day of skiing in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, the bus driver gave one of the boys a book of transfers and all those on the bus wrote their addresses on the back of a transfer. Then this same boy, Bob Smith, went around town looking for a place to hold a meeting. When he finally located a small room at the old Italian-American Home on Pearl Street, he chose a night for a meeting and sent out cards to everyone, asking them to bring all their friends who were interested in skiing. In April of 1946 the first meeting was held. The first season for the club was 1946–47.

The first item of business was to elect officers, and Bob Smith was very logically elected President. He had even gone so far as to obtain a copy of the constitution and by-Laws of another large ski club in the area which was used as a pattern to draft a set of laws for the club.

Following the election of officers, the next item of business was naming the club. Since Connecticut is the Mountain Laurel State, the club decided to call itself the Mountain Laurel Skiers, using the shape of the flower as the club patch (a pink background with green lettering and skier).

The summer of 1946 was a very active one. It was soon evident that those interested in skiing also enjoyed other outdoor activities. Thus, the club planned frequent hikes and picnics during the first summer and fall.

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The 1946–47 ski season was a great one! There were bus trips every Sunday, plus three weekend trips, most of them filling two buses.

In 1951 the club moved from the Italian-American Home to the Hartford Saengerbund, where it remained until the hall was torn down. During that time, the Mountain Laurel Skiers grew from the original forty members to two hundred and fifty.

In 1963 the club moved to Turner Hall on Park Street where we remained until the spring of 1964. In the spring of 1964 the club moved to the Rockledge Country Club in West Hartford. In 1973 the club moved to Matarese's Restaurant in Newington (later known as Augustino's). 1987 saw a move to Marc Antony's in Hartford, and in 1991 the club moved its meetings to New Britain's Zabbara's Restaurant on the Stanley Golf Course. In 2009 Zabbara's lost the franchise to Jordan Catering. While the facilities were being remodeled, we met a few times at Angellino's in Wethersfield before returning to the newly reopened Whinstone Tavern at Stanley in April 2009.