

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS Colloquy

March 2001
Volume 2 • Number 1

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At Icewater Spring Shelter in 13 inches of snow, 1941.

Early Photographers of the Great Smoky Mountains

Much of the valuable historical record of human activity in the Great Smoky Mountains consists of photographs taken by settlers and early visitors to the mountains. Professional photographers James Thompson of Knoxville, Tennessee, and George Masa of Asheville, North Carolina, are the names most synonymous with early photography of the Smokies. Both men were hardy adventurers accustomed to climbing the uncharted peaks and venturing into the more remote regions of the mountains in search of subject matter for their lenses. Pictures taken by Thompson and Masa afforded the outside world some of the first images of what Horace Kephart once called "terra incognita." These images were later used extensively to persuade the United States Congress of the need to establish the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Other adventurers, particularly Dutch Roth, S.H. Essary, Paul Fink, Charles Grossman, E.E. Exline, Carlos Campbell, H.R. Duncan, Laura Thornburgh, and Harvey Broome explored the mountains and fortuitously

(continued on page 2)

Featured in this issue:

Photographer Dutch Roth

(All photographs in this issue are
by Roth, unless otherwise noted.)



Maddron Bald, 1947.

Great Smoky Mountains Colloquy
is a newsletter published by
The University of Tennessee
Libraries.

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took pictures of this last remnant of Appalachian pioneer culture. Their photographs, together with hundreds of portraits and incidental shots taken by the local mountaineers, constitute a corpus of nearly 25,000 known images that record early life, history, and socioeconomic conditions in the Great Smokies. Prints of many of these photographs now reside in the Sugarlands Visitor Center of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; others remain in various collections, public and private, throughout the Smoky Mountains region of East Tennessee and Western North Carolina. There are perhaps thousands more like these in private hands that remain essentially unknown to the outside world.

In this issue of the *Colloquy*, we feature images taken by Knoxvilleian Dutch Roth. The photographs appear courtesy of his daughter, Margaret Roth, of Pittman Center, Tennessee.



Rainbow Falls, winter of 1958.



(photo by Marshall Wilson)



*Clockwise from top:
Pancake toss; Roth's wife,
Mary Frances; Roth
(and friend)*

Albert Gordon "Dutch" Roth, 1890-1974

Dutch Roth, born September 20, 1890, in Knoxville, Tennessee, is recognized as one of the most prolific early photographers of the Greenbrier and Mount Le Conte sections of the Great Smoky Mountains. What began in 1913 as a diversion soon developed into a serious avocation as Roth perfected his penchant for photography while pursuing an enthusiasm for hiking the unexplored regions of the mountains. Roth worked exclusively with a Kodak 122 camera, and, often carrying a heavy tripod, would climb twenty to thirty feet up a tree or venture hundreds of yards off the trail to capture the landscape images for which he would later be noted. Roth remained an amateur photographer, and, consequently, his photographs were never highly distributed. Because of the frequency of his visits to the Smokies and his early association with the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, Roth left a valuable collection of images that illustrate the pioneer way of life in the Great Smoky Mountains before the advent of the Park.

Notable New Book on the Smokies

Harvey Broome. *Out Under the Sky of the Great Smokies: A Personal Journal*. Foreword by Michael Frome. University of Tennessee Press, 2001. 285 pages. (Originally published in 1975).

Who can read Harvey Broome's descriptions of hiking and camping in the early days of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park without wanting to immediately dust off the hiking boots and head into the mountains? Weather and terrain that would be daunting for most people were taken in stride by Broome, Knoxville lawyer and wilderness advocate. He wrote of a night in 1928 camping on Sugarland Mountain:

I tried to recall the second merciless night when the mercury dropped to 15° below zero and the trees cracked and popped throughout the night. There had been an awful loneliness as I stood my turn at the fire watching the ghostly trunks of the trees in the white light of a half moon. I thought of the water which froze in our canteen—of my oiled boots which were turned to iron stiffness by the cold—of the apples which froze solid....It was a savage night, but one I would not mind redoing with the right companion. (p. 79-80)

Throughout many years of wet sleeping bags and waist-high snowdrifts, Broome maintained his love for the mountains and his devotion to wilderness experiences.

Intermixed with Broome's hiking and camping stories is a profound awe and respect for the mountains accompanied by the awareness that preserving the Smokies and other wild areas was an uphill battle. In connection with his Wilderness Society work, Broome wrote, "How can people be persuaded that there is something of priceless worth to the human spirit in the very existence of tracts of the primeval, which they have never seen or experienced?" (p. 39) Fortunately for us, Broome and his colleagues accepted the challenge presented by keeping the wilderness intact for future generations.

As an added bonus, this edition of *Out Under the Sky of the Great Smokies* has a new foreword by Michael Frome, well-known environmental writer. Frome places the journal in context, fleshing out details of Broome's life and his Wilderness Society work with personal reminiscences of Broome. Frome calls *Out Under the Sky of the Great Smokies* a "timeless work."



Top: Climbing Alum Cave Bluff, 1931 (top to bottom: Carl Boger, Harvey Broome, Herbert Hunze). Bottom: Camping out below Gregory Bald, 1931. Roth took this photo on a timed exposure. Roth is second from right; Harvey Broome, far right.

Spotlight on a Regional Collection: Pack Memorial Library, Asheville

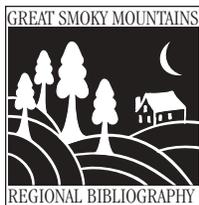
While on a mountain fishing trip in 1899, Dr. Chase Ambler of Asheville proposed to his friend Judge William R. Day that they begin a movement to establish a national park in the Great Smokies. Thus began the long tradition of Asheville citizens as supporters of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

As part of that tradition, the Pack Memorial Library of the Asheville-Buncombe Library System holds photographs and manuscripts relating to the Smokies region. The extensive Pack Memorial Library Photographic Collection is organized by subject with the Smokies photographs indexed

under various headings including those for Great Smoky Mountains National Park, mountains, Native Americans, and dams. The library staff is currently identifying and organizing the photographs by George Masa, the noted Smokies photographer. The collection also includes a scrapbook with photographs of Masa. The library's Kephart collection includes correspondence, notes, and clippings by and about Horace Kephart, including correspondence with George Masa. In addition to the photographic and Kephart collections, the Pack Library has rare books, maps, a postcard collection, and a clipping file on the Smokies region.

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