



125 YEARS OF THE SIERRA CLUB

CLIMBING AND SKIING

Climbers from the High Trips were also achieving more difficult ascents in the Sierra and 1931 saw a major technological innovation that promised to change the nature of mountaineering. On the High Trip to northern Yosemite, Francis Farquhar, with Robert L. M. Underhill of the Appalachian Mountain Club, introduced the proper use of the climbing rope to Club mountaineers and they perfected its use, promoted safety in the sport, and raised the standards for technical climbing. By the mid-1930s they were pioneering routes up spires, walls, mountains, and towers previously thought unclimbable.



On the left is a young David Brower, who would eventually become the Sierra Club's first executive director. *photographer unknown, c. 1930s.*

literature about the exploration, enjoyment, and conservation of the Sierra. Under the editorship of Francis Farquhar it also became the premier American mountaineering journal.

In the 1930s some Club members began to debate the balance between wilderness recreation and technology. Celebrated photographer and Sierra Club board member Ansel Adams warned that *“the mountains are more to us than a mere proving ground of strength and alert skill. Rock climbing should be considered a thrilling means to a more important end.”* This matter of recreational philosophy was rooted in the beliefs of Muir. The purpose of climbing mountains, Muir had argued, was not simply to become a great athlete, but to *“get their good tidings”* and to gain insight from the experience.



Ansel Adams climbing. By Sierra Club Photographer Cedric Wright, c. 1930s.

Like climbing, ski technique underwent a revolution in the 1930s and the widespread enthusiasm for winter sports led the Club to build ski lodges and members devised skiing tests and the award of badges corresponding to various levels of proficiency.



Clair Tappaan Lodge. Photographer unknown

This lodge is named in honour of Clair Tappaan who served as the fifth president of the Sierra Club, from 1922 to 1924, and on its board of directors from 1912 until his death in November 1932. At the time of his death Sierra Club members were planning to build a ski lodge on Donner Pass in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of Northern California. The lodge opened on Christmas Eve, 1934.