

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received 02 1981

date entered 02 1981

## 1. Name

historic TIP-TOP HOUSE

and/or common TIP-TOP HOUSE

## 2. Location

street & number Mt. Washington State Park  
Summit of Mount Washington \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Sargent's Purchase \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district Second

state New Hampshire code 33 county Coos code 007

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name State of New Hampshire  
Department of Resources and Economic Development

street &amp; number Box #856

city, town Concord \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state New Hampshire 03301

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Coos County Registry of Deeds  
Coos County Courthouse

street &amp; number PO Box #286, 148 Main Street

city, town Lancaster \_\_\_\_\_ state New Hampshire 03584

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title (N.H.) State Land Record has this property been determined eligible?  yes  nodate June 4, 1964 (Treasurer's Book 11, page 86)  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records New Hampshire State Treasury

city, town Concord \_\_\_\_\_ state New Hampshire 03301

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Tip-Top House, located beside the true summit of 6,288 foot Mount Washington, New Hampshire, today is a 1½ story 84'x28' rectangular structure of rough native stone and wood-frame. Built and opened for public use in 1853 by a group of Lancaster, New Hampshire citizens, it has served its several managements and their guests in a variety of ways: hotel, dining room, print shop of America's first mountain-top newspaper (Among the Clouds), observatory, employees' quarters and office. Most recently, it has served as the construction office of a contractor building the new Sherman Adams Summit House nearby.

The site of the Tip-Top House is on the peak of one of the most rugged mountains in North America, the high point of the White Mountains' Presidential Range and of a seven square mile alpine zone whose harsh climate and unique flora closely relate to those of Labrador some 600 miles further north. The summit plateau, relatively flat, is composed of rough, angular blocks of granite--pieces of which were used for building the six-foot-high exterior walls of the Tip-Top House.

The Tip-Top House has experienced numerous alterations within its thick stone walls since 1853. Until 1861, it was a one-story building with a low-pitched roof which served as an observation deck, permitting patrons an unobstructed view in good weather of five New England states, Canada, and the Atlantic Ocean. In 1861, the lessee added a second half-story under a gabled roof with "roof windows" (a form of skylight), to increase the number of overnight bedrooms available. For a few years after 1898, an observatory tower was added to the west end of the building, but it was later removed. A disastrous fire in June 1908 destroyed the adjacent Summit House and other nearby buildings, but not the Tip-Top House. Once again it returned to its earlier role as a mountain hotel until 1915, when it became an adjunct to the new Summit House. Later in 1915 the Tip-Top House itself was victim of a fire, and the interior was gutted. The wooden-frame portions of the Tip-Top House were rebuilt within the existing stone walls, and its exterior has been modified only slightly since then.

The sharply-pitched gabled roof of the Tip-Top House is covered with wood shingles; it rises from the top of the battered fieldstone rubble walls (which are laid with deeply-recessed joints, to give the appearance of mortarless construction). The ridge runs east and west, parallel to the longitudinal walls, and the lower portion of the southern slope is punctuated by eight irregularly-spaced diamond-shaped fixed skylights or "roof windows." On the north slope, only two of the roof windows remain beside a long wood-shingled shed dormer with eight randomly-spaced 6-light fixed sash. Also on the north slope, a small, single-flue brick stove chimney protrudes from the main roof, just above its junction with the dormer and about 1/3 of the distance between the west gable and the eastern one.

The stone sidewalls are pierced by 5 squarish random openings for small-paned window sash on the south side, and by 4 window openings--plus what may have been 2 additional openings, now infilled with the same stone as used for the walls--on the north side. The west (gable) end wall is of wood frame, covered with wood shingles. An entrance door is located near the southern corner; the stoop is recessed approximately two feet below the existing grade, to provide access to the lower level of the building. At the upper level, a door-like opening is centered below the gable and flanked on the east side by a window.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) recreation
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

**Specific dates** 1853, 1861, 1916      **Builder/Architect** Samuel F. Spaulding, Joseph S. Hall et al, Lancaster, N.H.

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The summit of Mount Washington, New Hampshire--the highest peak in the northeastern United States--is world-famous for the severity of its weather, which has been cited by meteorologists and mountaineers as being worse than at any other location except for the higher Alaskan mountains or the Antarctic. Mt. Washington was the first major American peak to be climbed (in 1642) by a Caucasian, Darby Field. For over a century and a half it has been a major attraction for scientists in many fields and for tourists from all over the globe. The U.S. Signal Service maintained a year-round weather station there from 1871 to 1887, and a summer station from 1887 to 1892. A more recent permanent, full-time observatory has been operated continuously since 1932 by the non-profit The Mount Washington Observatory, Inc. It was on the summit of Mt. Washington that the world's highest recorded wind velocity (231 miles per hour) occurred in April 1934.

The Tip-Top House on Mount Washington is the oldest existing building at the Summit, having survived since 1853 the vicious storms, winds, and fires that destroyed other structures there. Other early mountain-top buildings on adjacent White Mountains peaks were also lost to fire and weather, and none predating the Tip-Top House exist today.

The Tip-Top House has provided hospitality and many uses to thousands of persons during its lifetime, and is structurally sound enough to do so for another century. As the oldest existing building at the top of a major North American peak, it is indeed a historic structure, one which is annually seen by a steady stream of visitors who come by Cog Railroad, by Auto Road (Carriage Road), or over the many miles of foot trails on the highest peak in New Hampshire.

Despite changes in roof configurations, internal partitions and interior finishes, the unusual fortress-like stone walls of the Tip-Top House have remained intact over the years--maintaining both the structure's visual distinctiveness and its historical continuity. The modifications which have occurred have contributed to, rather than diminished, its character, as all were made in response to changing perceptions, needs, and values about the relationship between Americans and their natural environment. The evolution of the Tip-Top House reflects important currents in 19th and early 20th century regional cultural and economic history: burgeoning appreciation of the natural environment (especially "natural wonders" such as mountain summits and scenic vistas); interest in scientific studies of natural phenomena; the values of hearty physical exercise and the idealized outdoor life; and the economic importance of recreation and tourism, which reinvigorated local economies devastated by the post-Civil-War westward exodus and the resultant decline of Yankee hillfarm agriculture and rural industry. Changing patterns of ownership and use of the Tip-Top House also reflect the development from private entrepreneurship through non-profit educational and scientific involvement to an increasing state governmental role in the management and operation of outdoor recreation facilities, as well as in the conservation of sites with high environmental and symbolic values for the public.

Thus uniquely and justifiably the Tip-Top House merits official recognition and listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation Sheet #2

# 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED  
ACRANGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Mt. Washington, N.H.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A 

1	9	3	1	6	1	2	0	4	9	0	4	3	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet #3

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

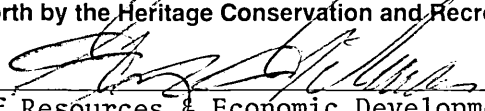
name/title	C. Francis Belcher, Archivist and Consultant		
organization	Appalachian Mountain Club	date	June 12, 1981
street & number	5 Joy Street	telephone	617-523-0636
city or town	Boston	state	Massachusetts 02108

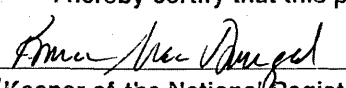
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national     state     local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature   
 Commissioner, NH Department of Resources & Economic Development  
 title NH State Historic Preservation Officer      date December 2, 1981

For HCRS use only  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
      date 1/11/82  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Attest:      date  
 Chief of Registration

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET #1-DESCRIPTION    ITEM NUMBER 7    PAGE 2

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Below the opening is a small platform, supported by diagonal braces and reached by wooden ships' ladders attached to the side of the building. The ends of the stone sidewalls are exposed, and the wood shingle siding is scribed around them. The east (gable) end wall is formed by a continuation of the stone sidewalls at the lower level, and by a wood-frame gable covered with wood shingles, above. A door opening is centered in the stone wall; above are two openings for 6/6 window sash--a third opening on the southern side of the gable, for a window which would have made the arrangement symmetrical, has been shingled over. The entranceway also appears to have been modified: reduced in size from what may have been a double-width door opening. This change was made at the time a one-story stone and wood-frame passageway (similar in appearance to the Tip-Top House, but with a flat roof) linking the Tip-Top House and the former Summit House was removed, in the mid-20th century. All detailing is simple, consisting of sawn planks without added moulding or other decorative treatment.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

MAJOR  
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

CONTINUATION SHEET #2-REFERENCES ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

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- Anderson, Leon W. Highest White Mountains peak offers new tourist mecca.  
Concord, New Hampshire: New Hampshire Liquor Commission, 1980.
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World". By Dr. Charles F. Brooks. 194-202.  
-A.M.C. White Mountain Guides. 22 editions 1907 - 1979. Several Editors.
- Burt, F. Allen. The Story of Mt. Washington. University Press of New England,  
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Boston, Mass. 1911.
- Burt, Frank H. Mt. Washington, Boston, Mass., 1904. 24-29.
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- Kilbourne, Frederick W. Chronicles of the White Mountains. Houghton Mifflin Co.  
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1974. 69-70, 73, 93, 96.
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74-76.
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TRANSMITTER  
BUILDING

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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DATE ENTERED	JAN 11 1982

VERBAL  
BOUNDARY

CONTINUATION SHEET #3-DESCRIPTION      ITEM NUMBER    10      PAGE    1

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

A portion of land recorded in the Coos County Registry of Deeds at Book 481, Page 209 by deed dated April 21, 1964 and recorded June 4, 1964, as defined by existing survey bounds, triangulation discs and concrete monuments on the northerly, westerly, and southerly sides; and on the easterly side by a line twenty (20'-0") from the exterior wall of the building and parallel to it, running to points of intersection with existing survey bounds, as shown on the sketch map.

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Continuation sheet #4- SKETCH MAP

Item number

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