

Blue Mountain trailhead, Route 30 to Durant Lake trailhead, Route 28/30

Ski and Snowshoe Adventure

February 26, 2011

On a snowy February 26<sup>th</sup>, nine members of the Utica Tramp and Trail Club left cars at the Durant Lake Campsite parking lot on Route 28 and returned to the Blue Mountain trailhead. At 10:30 am, five skiers, led by Harold Pier, and four snowshoers, led by Deb Roberts, set out on the trail to Terrill Pond. About 4 inches of powder had fallen the night before and this lay on top of a two-foot base of frozen snow, providing easy kick, swift glide, and good control. As an added bonus, four members of the Iroquois Chapter ADK had skied out ahead of us, so we didn't even have to break trail.

The trail climbs moderately, skirting around the shoulder of Blue, and providing beautiful views through snow laden trees down a steep slope to the north. Deep snow prevented any of the many small stream crossings from being a problem. Shortly after crossing the road leading to the radio tower on Blue we began a long descent with steep pitches relieved by wonderful, moderate grades that we hoped would never end. One large blowdown blocked the trail near its terminus at Terrill pond, and shortly after that a certain amount of finesse was needed to avoid a large stump crowding our left. After a few falls we reached the Northville Placid Trail, turned south, and to our surprise encountered snowmobile tracks. The lean-to was occupied by a group of friendly snowmobilers who had brought in a massive pile of equipment and had spent the night warmed by a large wood stove they had placed in the lean-to. They invited us to cook our hot dogs on a huge bonfire they had built in the fireplace and then left, planning to return for another night. Nice as they were, I question whether they ought to be using the trail and the lean-to, which should be reserved for hikers.



After lunch and pictures of our group posing on the pond we skied its length, enjoying bright sunshine and marvelous views. Rejoining the trail we proceeded without incident to Route 28 where we were joined by two other skiers from Connecticut who needed a ride back to the Blue Mountain trailhead. Anyone who has skied this part of the trail can relate to the fun of its gentle ups and thrilling downs and the frozen beauty of the long vly on the left of the trail. There was one very small wet spot that iced up a couple of skis, but no evidence of the water problem reported earlier in the season. This eight mile trip has to have been the best of a memorable winter of cross country skiing.