



## Two Mountain Lodges

No. 36

Sophia University has two mountain lodges, one in Koumi-chō, Nagano prefecture, and the other in Minakami-chō, Gunma prefecture. The former is the Yatsugatake Lodge, constructed largely by members of the Mountain Climbing Club in 1935. The latter is the Hōdaigi Lodge, built by members of the Wandervogel Club in 1963. Both owe their existence to students' commitment and labor.



The Yatsugatake Mountain Lodge  
 (photo taken 1943)

### 1. The Yatsugatake Lodge

Plans for the Yatsugatake Lodge began in 1932 when members of the Mountain Climbing Club decided that they wanted to have their own base for climbing expeditions. From the operator of an inn at Inagoyu hot springs they learned of a site about two hours hike from the Inagoyu bus stop, which was in turn about fifty minutes from the Koumi railway station. The site, 1,600 meters high, was in a meadow surrounded by white birch forests. The students borrowed the money for the project from the university; for the design they turned to Brother Ignatius Gropper, a German architect and member of the Society of Jesus who had come to Japan in 1930 to oversee the construction of the university's Building No. 1. To build the lodge, the students used the timber from larch trees that had been felled to make a nearby ski run. They hauled the wood from the lumber lot at the mountain foot up to the site for the lodge, and to provide insulation, they covered the inside of the walls with felt. At the time, European-style log cabins of this sort were still unusual, and according to the magazine *Log House Plan* (25 May 1991), the Sophia Yatsugatake Lodge may be the oldest extant example in Japan. The first floor had a wood-burning stove, so it was warm even in winter. The upheavals brought by the Second World War subsequently made it difficult for the Mountain Climbing Club to continue to maintain the lodge and to return the money advanced by the university for its construction. The university thus took over responsibility for its upkeep and administration.

The wood-burning stove stands in the middle of the lodge's first floor, and situated around it are a dining table, kitchen, cupboard, and a four-mat room for sleeping. The area around the stove's chimney is open up to the roof, and the sleeping rooms on the second floor are located on the four sides of this open area. Appropriate for a university mountain lodge, someone has etched the words from Goethe's

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Members of the Wandervogel Club carrying materials to build the Hōdaigi Lodge (summer 1963)

“Wanderer’s Nightsong” on the wall of one of the sleeping rooms with a hot poker. It is said that the person who did this was one of the club members who built the hut. He later studied abroad in Germany, where he was when the war broke out, and he carved the words to the poem on the wall in memory of what he had experienced at that time.

## 2. Hōdaigi Lodge

The Sophia Wandervogel Club was formed in 1957. From the start, inspired by the example of the Mountain Climbing Club, the members hoped to build their own mountain lodge. In 1962



The original Hōdaigi Lodge (completed November 1963). The first story was made of stone and the second story was covered with aluminum siding.

they chose a site midway up the southern slope of Mt. Hotaka in Minakami-chō, Gunma prefecture. The site had also been considered as a possibility at the time the Yatsugatake Lodge was planned. To build the lodge the students organized work camps. The spring of 1963—the fiftieth anniversary of the university’s founding—after clearing the snow, the students used bars and picks to move boulders and level the ground. They hauled large quantities of sand, cement, and rocks to the site. In the fortieth anniversary issue of the club’s bulletin, *Habataki* (1998), those who had taken part in the summer work camp wrote that the physical demands were more than

“tough”; they were “harsh,” and some members even left the club. To raise the necessary funds to build the lodge, the members took part-time jobs at construction sites and organized movie showings and concerts in an “explosion of youthful energy.”

Having put so much effort into the project, the members were overjoyed when on 23 November 1963, the Hōdaigi Lodge, sheathed in silver aluminum siding, was finished. Sugii Masanaga, one of the initial members, later wrote in the bulletin that he remembered wondering if there had ever been such a beautiful mountain lodge before. But problems with moisture condensation arose with the aluminum siding, and to make things worse, a typhoon badly damaged the second floor. Consequently, in 1982, a new, two-story wooden lodge was built, funded by the university. The first floor has a kitchen, living room, flush toilet, and shower, while sleeping rooms are located on the second floor. The university has assumed responsibility for the administration of this new lodge, from which one has a fine view of Mt. Tanigawa.



The present Hōdaigi Lodge (photo taken 2009)