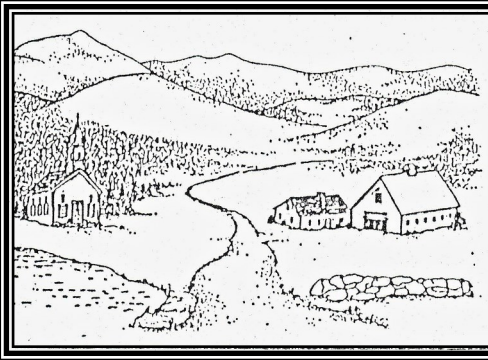
Issue 140 June 2024



Chatham Times Past and Present

Tragedy on Baldface

By Angus Percy Andrews

In 1952, when I was 14 and had some time off from a summer job, I hitchhiked from my home in Greenville to my grandparents' farm in the Cold River Valley, a short walk from the house my father had built. It was at that time a summer rental occupied by a family from Brookline, Massachusetts: the Harrisons. I would get to know them a bit over the next few days. In the process, I even got a peek at some of the insides of the house where I was born.

House built by Angus Irvine Andrews

The father, "Fred" (Alfred Frederick) Harrison was a successful salesman for the Hood Rubber Company, which at that time made a lot of rubber goods. He and his wife Edith were married the same year as my parents (1933), and they had three children. That summer "Freddie" was 15, Marcia 12, and Caroline 6. They owned a large white Mercury sedan, roomy enough that they could invite me to come along on some family outings. Mr. Harrison referred to his family as "the happy Harrisons," and they were like something from a situation comedy on television, always keeping a lively, friendly and entertaining discussion going among all family members. I had never known anything like them before.

South Baldface Ledges from Bicknell Ridge

The local Post Office (actually just part of a room in a local farmhouse) was about a mile away, so Freddie and I sometimes walked there and back to pick up the Harrisons' mail, along with the mail for my grandparents. Freddie even thought up a game to make the walk more interesting: He would carry me on his back from one telephone pole to the next and I would return the favor to the telephone pole beyond that. (That idea died after the first quarter mile.) Freddie was also able to borrow the Mercury so we could drive to the Cold River swimming hole at Heald's Bridge for a night swim. (The Cold River was aptly named.)

The Harrisons planned to drive back to Massachusetts on August 15—after Mr. Harrison and Freddie climbed Baldface Mountain together

Continued on page 4

Notes from the President

We have been holding busy and fun Open Hours on Tuesday mornings. Thanks to regular volunteers, Gail Calomb and Beverly Aiman, for helping me with our work. We have had several visitors coming to share information, to find information, and to just look around.

Thanks to Sheryl Emery for taking charge of our chili sales at Nate and Kate's Maple Sunday. Thanks to volunteers who cooked and were on hand to serve the generous customers.

Our April History Hike was led by Genevieve Everett, an Archaeological Technician for the White Mountain National Forest. We explored several cellar holes and learned of the families identified as living here on the 1861 map of Chatham.

Members of CHS hiked in the White Mountain National Forest to explore cellar holes

Many people brought beautiful, old quilts to share at our May NH Humanities program on Historic Quilts with Pam Weeks. You can see some of these quilts on our website.

Welcome to our new members: David Allen (Life), Andrew Dietz (Life), Karen Dietz, and Robert Dietz.

We appreciate your support and interest. We couldn't do so much without you! And we hope to see you at our summer programs and events.

Jeanne Eastman

Board of Directors

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Contact Us

1061 Main Road, Chatham, NH 03813
chathamnhhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
www.chathamhistoricalnh.org

Board Meetings

April – October, 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 PM

Open Hours

Tuesdays 9 – Noon
We look forward to seeing you!

The Peddler's Pack

a bundle of news from the neighbors over the years

Harry Walker's column, "From the Hill," in the Norway Advertiser Democrat, October 23, 1985; "...the restored peddler's wagon (on exhibit at Fryeburg Fair was) used for years by Henry Rosenbloom to peddle dry goods to farm families in Fryeburg, Stow, Conway, Lovell, Chatham, Sweden, and Stoneham. My brothers and I were always excited to see Henry's high wagon with the gold lettering on its sides coming up the road toward our house at Stow Corner. We always had the jolly little peddler to dinner and my mom usually bought things, from needles and thread to yard goods and maybe a dress. Henry also offered lace-trimmed corsets (Wow!). $1.48. Mom passed them up. Too fancy, even worn underneath, for our little town of Stow.**"**

Sally Whitaker: "My father, Dick Reynolds worked at the Cold River CCC Camp. He was the office clerk. On days off the men went to Fryeburg. There he met my mother at Sid's Cafe, where she was working, and they eventually married. Later he drove the Cushman's Bakery truck making door-to-door sales in Chatham, Stow, and all the surrounding towns. I rode with him once, and he said, 'Never forget, these people are the salt of the earth.'"

Idella (Hill) Clark, writing about her mother, **Ida May (Woodruff) Hill** (1871-1926): "When we children were growing and the burdens of life became so heavy for mother that she hardly knew which way to turn, she would say to our father, 'Wesley, I am completely tired out. Harness up old Tony. I have got to go over and see Em Hill.' She would go and spend the day or afternoon and come back rested in body and refreshed in spirit, smiling and happy, telling us of tea and cake she had with Em, bits of gossip, a new recipe or pattern and always some cookies, apples or something which Em had sent to us children...."

Kathleen (Emerson) Fuller: "I was in the 4th grade when the Chatham Center School closed. I was the only one in my grade. I remember sitting facing the file cabinets (so as not to be distracted by everything else going on), with headphones, listening to phonics. I remember putting bean seeds in soil in plastic bags on the window sills and watching them grow."

Donations

Thank you so much for your generous support!

Sue Crowley: Fryeburg, Maine; An Illustrated History; **George Fernald Estate**: a collection of maps, deeds, Town Reports, letters; **Karl Limmer**: a 1852 coal-powered steam iron; **Sally Whitaker**: a newsletter, "Cold River Ripple" 1936, of the CCC 152 Co. which was located at the base of Evan's Notch and was responsible, in part, for building the road through the Notch; **Greg Thurston**: family photos and information; **Sandra Layne Greenleaf**: slides of the Basin construction to copy; **John Rondeau**: translating slides and glass negatives to digital photos. Monetary donations: **Karen Grammo, Susan Logan,** and **Valley-wide Property Management** (in memory of Elwyn Wheaton); **Sue Crowley** (in memory of Bob Crowley; **Julie Hoyt** (in memory of Barbara Eastman); **Cynthia McAllister**; **Kate Kane**; **June Kelley**; **Jacky Stearns**; **John Hastings**; **Robert Dietz**; **Mary & Stephen Lilley; Deborah Emerson**.

the day before. I had climbed Baldface Mountain before with my Uncle Urban, and I offered to come along as their guide. We planned to be dropped off by Mrs. Harrison at the trailhead near the Post Office, hike up the mountain, eat our packed lunch at the top, and be picked up at the trailhead at 4PM. My uncle Loren Andrews loaned Mr. Harrison his 22-caliber semi-automatic pistol for protection from the bears (and maybe for some plinking).

It was a sunny and pleasant day, just right for a hike in the shade of the trees. But Mr. Harrison was a smoker and had to make frequent stops to catch his breath. It got cooler as we climbed in altitude, and a good breeze was blowing when we came out of the trees and onto the granite face of the mountain. The hike up had been slower than planned and it was well past lunchtime when we got to the top. After lunch we strolled about a bit and did some plinking with the pistol, then noticed the shadow of the mountain creeping across the valley below and watched as the white Mercury came down the highway to pick us up at the trail head. Mr. Harrison took out his camera and told Freddie and me to pose on the rock pile at the summit while he found the right stone to level the camera for a time-delay photo of all of us together at the peak. Freddie was already in position on one side of the rock pile as I walked around to the other side, when there was a “pop” sound behind me and Freddie lept off the rock pile and screamed “Dad” as he raced to his father. Mr. Harrison looked ashen-face and was holding his stomach as he slowly maneuvered to sit down, saying something to the effect that the pistol fell out of its holster and the bullet went through his abdomen. He did not panic, but began to discuss what we must do next.

Freddie was eager to run down the mountain to get help, but Mr. Harrison was concerned that there was no marked trail above treeline and Freddie might get lost. I offered to run down, and began to do so immediately. After I had run a few hundred yards and was approaching treeline I spotted somebody off in the distance picking blueberries and approached him. It was Millard Chandler from the farm nearest to that of my grandparents. I told him what had happened and he said he would gather up the friend who had come berry picking with him and head up to the top. Then he helped me locate the break in the scrub spruce below marking the trail down.

Trail and North Chatham from South Baldface

Millard was the only person I saw all the way down, but I did hear what sounded like a group of girls splashing about as I ran within earshot of Emerald Pool. At the bottom of the trail I took a cutoff that led directly to the Walton Charles farm (also the Post Office), and told them what had happened. They were just about to sit down for dinner, but immediately went to the crank telephone to raise a volunteer rescue party. I left the Charles' farm and walked north up Highway 113 to my uncle Urban’s cottage. On the way I saw Millard’s son John driving fast toward the trailhead as part of the rescue party. My uncle Harold came by my uncle Urban’s place just after I got there. His wife (my Aunt Winnie) was an RN, so she could help in the rescue effort.

Continued on page 5

Much of the entire valley gathered together at the trailhead to organize and execute a plan to get Mr. Harrison down off that mountain and to Memorial Hospital in Conway. A bit weary after my run down the mountain, I did little but answer questions for the rest of the evening. I did not sleep much that night at my grandparents' house.

I had missed the Harrison women waiting at the trailhead when I took the shortcut to the Charles' place, and would not see them until the next morning. By then, Mr. Harrison had been transported off the mountain in the dark and to the hospital before midnight.

Despite what medical attention he got there, Mr. Harrison expired shortly after midnight. He was 44 years old. The bullet had perforated his stomach and shattered his spleen, causing great loss of blood.

Mrs. Harrison, Freddie, Marcia and Caroline had been swept along with the rescue party to the hospital and stayed up all night, finally making the arrangements to drive back to their home in Brookline and bring Mr. Harrison's body back for burial. They stopped by my grandparents' farm on their way, looking stressed beyond belief from their night-long ordeal. It was for me the most sorrowful time I have ever experienced in my life. It had to be much worse for them.

I made many more visits to the Andrews' farm in Chatham until it was sold in the year 2000, but I never hiked up Baldface Mountain again. There are just too many bad memories associated with the place.

Mountains from South Baldface

Milliard Chandler's Diary, 1952

August 14 – Fair, sunny, warm. I went blueberrying up Baldface, got my pack full & just ready to come home when Bud Andrews came down, said a man had been shot. I saw Mike Shirley & Les Lester just below me, so told them. We three went to top of Mt., made stretcher, brot him to first ball, built fire and waited for help. When it came with stretcher he was brot down to Williams'. Got down at 12 PM same day.

August 15 - Fair, hot. About 20 or 25 volunteers gathered at Chatham Station at 9:30 to divide into crews and go to height of land on six trails & down Baldface in search of 13 yr. old Charlotte Cook who had been missing since Wed. (now was Fri.) We didn't find her, but she was found around 2 PM by the East Branch. We got Harrison's dog down from Mt & I got my deer rope and pail of berrys. Some lame & tired tonite. Lost six lbs. since yesterday morn. Mr. Harrison passed away after reaching hospital.

Kaitlyn Sakash's Essay

*in her application for the **Barbara Eastman Memorial Award***

Nature has been one of the most comforting and inspiring aspects of my childhood. I have spent hours wandering through the woods around my house or taking pictures of the flora and fauna around our yard. This love of the environment has given me one of my greatest connections to Chatham, as I am fortunate enough to live in a place surrounded by the White Mountain National Forest.

Two years ago, my dad and I made it our goal to find the largest clearing that we had seen on the mountains from my grandmother's backyard. We had many failed attempts, but during the winter, after hours of uphill snowshoeing through fresh, heavy snow with no trail, we reached our goal. The clearing was filled with thorn bushes the size of small trees but we were able to slowly make our way through it until we reached the highest point. Since the clearing was on the side of a mountain, the place where we stopped to rest provided us with a view that spanned miles. We started a small fire with materials from the nearby woods and heated up a leftover lunch of steak and vegetables. After eating, we sat in silence for a long time. I remember this moment well as it was one of the most peaceful moments of my life. Our surroundings were silent aside from the breeze winding its way through the hemlocks and pines behind us. The world was entirely still, and the view of the snow covered fields and mountains before us provoked feelings of pure wonder and peace. The air was cold but refreshing and the idea that we were surrounded by nothing but nature for miles was both calming and exhilarating. Eventually, we began to make our way back down the mountain towards home, but the sense of tranquility and wonder stayed with me for the rest of the day.

Another common occurrence in my life, aside from wandering the woods, has been enjoying movie nights with my grandmother who lives next door. Chatham has been her home for a long time, and one of the greatest benefits of my family moving back here from Pennsylvania has been living so close to her. Our movie nights often consist of long conversations, gaming, and an eventual movie viewing with endless sarcastic commentary. However, one evening last summer my grandmother and I decided to forgo the movie and spend our time sitting in her backyard. My grandmother's house has an incredible view of Kearsarge and the surrounding mountains which overlook an expansive bog and a mossy brook, allowing for the perfect view of the sunset on a clear night. Unlike my experience in the clearing with my dad, this setting was far from silent. The air was filled with the sound of crickets and other bugs, along with birds singing from the trees. My favorite bird that resides in Chatham, the Hermit Thrush, was one of the most prominent sounds as it sang its melancholy and peaceful melody. The air was warm but the cool breeze from the bog created the perfect temperature. The setting sun painted the sky with many shades of red and orange, and its rays slanted through the trees and across the yard, adding to the beautiful and calming view. My grandmother and I sat out there for hours until it had gone fully dark, doing nothing but talking and enjoying our natural surroundings.

These two memories illustrate the significance that Chatham's natural environment has had throughout my childhood. This home has given me ways to find peace, wonder, and release at any time in my day to day life, simply through going outside and experiencing the familiarity and comfort that nature provides. When I leave for college, I will greatly miss the incredible place that I have been so fortunate to grow up in. However, this sadness over leaving has helped show me how much I have grown to love and appreciate my home over the years. I know that I will always have a home to return to that can provide me with the same passion and tranquility that has inspired me throughout my childhood in Chatham.

Congratulations, Kaitlyn, on your graduation and on receiving this award!

In Memory

Our deep sympathy to the families of these loved ones:

Elwyn Wheaton, 62; passed away April 19. Elwyn spent time growing up with his grandparents, Mildred and Loren Andrews, in Chatham before his family moved to Chatham. He ran a moose-touring business, North Conway Moose Safari. He loved live music. He was a member of CHS.

Raffles

We have several nice raffle prizes:

1) **The Science of Watching, the Art of Seeing, and the Power of Nature Absorption,** written by Chatham naturalist, Chris Lewey, with his sisters;

2) **Goldie's Christmas Wish, One Doe's Ambition in a Buck's World**, by Chatham author, Jim Calomb (perfect for 2nd-3rd grade readers) with accompanying coloring book & crayons;

3) **three vanilla-bean-scented soy candles in Chatham mugs** (the mugs can be used to beverages after the candles have burned), made by Cara Down;

4) **a choice of two homemade pies** by local cooks;

5) **a collection of 12 jigsaw puzzles** with nature scenes, with 100, 300, and 500 pieces;

6) **a $25 gift card to Stow Corner Store**;

7) **a 2025 calendar with local photographs from our archives**.

Thank you to those who have donated these prizes! The drawings will be at our Town Picnic on September 7th. You'll find tickets tucked into the newsletter. When you send back your tickets with a check ($1 per ticket, or 6 for $5), please circle on each ticket which prize you are hoping to win. The prizes can be seen at our website, www.chathamhistoricalnh.org.

Upcoming Events

June 23, 6 PM: Local Native Americans, with Tom McLaughlin, at our schoolhouse.

Aug 11, 8 AM to 1 PM Fundraiser - We will be selling food, Chatham goods, and raffle tickets at the Summer Bazaar at Fryeburg Fair's campground across from the main entrance.

August 23, 6 PM Ice Cream Social and Local Stories from the Past with Jim Wilfong, at our schoolhouse. $4 per ice cream sundae.

September 7, 1 PM Town Picnic at our schoolhouse. Please bring a dish to share. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and soft drinks will be provided. Raffle drawings at 3 PM.

Chatham Historical Society
1061 Main Road
Chatham, NH 03813

Dues and Donations

Chatham Historical Society is a non-profit 501(C)3 Charitable Organization
1061 Maine Road, Chatham, NH 03813

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