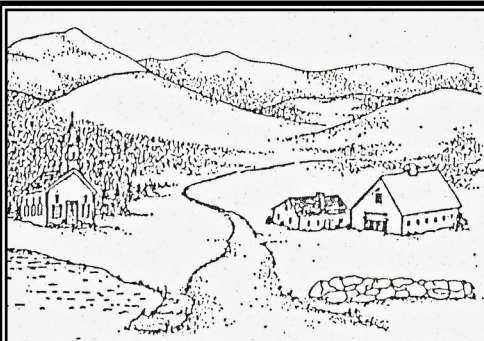




Chatham Times

Past and Present

A Year in the Life of Jonah Hill, Jr.

by Jeanne Eastman

This past winter I had the pleasure of meeting Jonah Hill, Jr. through his 1872 diary. He had been born in Chatham in 1810. His father, Jonah, was 88 in 1872 and living with him. His mother, Sally (Stimson) Hill had died in 1840, when her 13th child was 10 years old. Jonah, Jr. was the eldest child. His wife, Persis Ballard, had died in 1867. In 1872, his son Dana (born 1839) and his wife Emily Lang had three children, Fannie (born 1862), Fred (born 1864), and Frank (born 1867); and Jonah Jr.'s son, Benjamin Mead (born 1844) was unmarried.

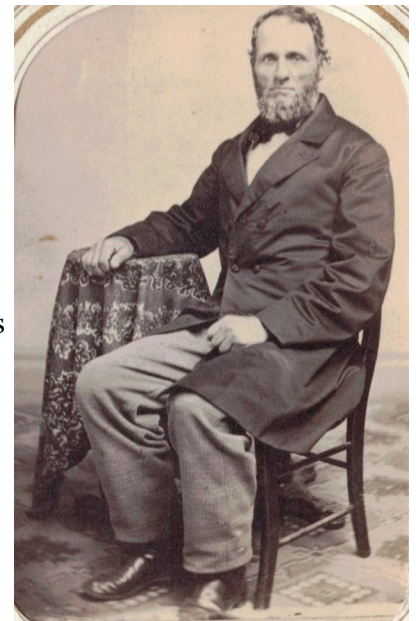
The main concerns of 1872 were not too different from today actually – extreme weather, politics, and sicknesses.

The year started off with a small pox outbreak. “A good deal of excitement prevails through the community....many have been vaccinated.....several cases and some deaths.”

In February, the selectmen met at the Hill home “for the purpose of warning town meeting.” March 2, “Caucus at Town House today. Nominated C Walker for Representative and the old board of Town Officers.” March 8, “Political pot boils furiously.” (“Tell me more, Mr. Hill,” I encouraged. But there were no more details.) March 9, “Democrats hold a caucus today. Have not ascertained who they will nominate.” March 11, “Politicians are busy with electioneering as it is the last day they have to work.” And March 12, “A full attendance at town meeting. Democrats had a majority of four for Gov. The Republicans elected all the town offices.” But that was not the end! March 12, “Understand that the Democrats intend to prosecute the Selectmen for malfeasance in office.”

During March, Jonah complained of a “troublesome cough” and later in the month “have troublesome cough and cold again.... everyone has it...all hands sick and the prospects look blue.”

Meanwhile, on March 15, Jonah recorded the weather as the “most uncomfortable day of the winter.” And on following days and weeks, the weather only got more uncomfortable. It seemed the sap would never run, although on April 18th, “All hands went to Thomas Smith's in evening to eat maple sugar.” Jonah “never went through town when there was so



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Notes from the President

Since Jonah Hill, Jr. would not divulge any more details about what was happening in Town politics in 1872, I checked in with the official records which are kept in a beautiful, ancient safe at the Town House. The townspeople were notified of the 1872 Town Meeting 'by posting up an attested copy [of meeting time and the warrant articles] at the Grist Mill of Edward Webb being a public place...' Again, I did not find the details that made Jonah say "The political pot boils." But it was interesting that at Town Meeting they passed over two articles: 'to see if the town will vote to raise money to repair the Town House'; and 'to take the sense of the town in relation to the laying out of one or more roads across the mountains to Bartlet (sic).' (See Page 7 for Jonah Hill's granddaughter's recollections.)

Judy Bailey and I have been spending time in the Chandler Cemetery preparing to put the information from the stones onto our website. Every time, I noticed something new. Not only do I wish I could meet these folks and the so many children!, but also I wondered 'where were the stones purchased and engraved?' and that some are very brief and some very wordy. We noticed the 'triple link chain' and the 'handshake' symbols of the Odd Fellows, and the "R" for the sister organization, the Rebekahs, as well as some beautiful verses. I think my favorite find was at the top of Abigail Chandler's stone: "IS IT RIGHT."

Welcome to our new members: Elwyn Wheaton, Andrea Wheaton, and Jo Radner. And we note with sadness the deaths of our friends and neighbors: Lyn Amidon who died suddenly (March 25) while doing the farm work she loved; and Ann Gilman Stocker, (April 18) who grew up in Stow and lived away but is buried with her grandparents, Olin and Ora Hanscom, at the Chatham Center Cemetery.

A special 'thank you' to Emily Fernald who is stepping down from her position as a Director. Emily will be missed after many years of helping with many things, especially fund raising. And a welcome to Alan Eastman who has been elected to serve as Director. Alan has a long history in

Chatham and the Cold River Valley on both sides of his family. We are grateful for Alan's willingness and excitement to serve!

If you have not yet paid your dues for 2021, we hope you will. Dues are \$10 per year, or \$100 for life.

I am so glad for all of our members who have the time to help us with specific projects and events throughout the year, and glad for those who support us financially.

Jeanne Eastman

Board of Directors

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Contact us : 1061 Main Road, Chatham,
NH 03813

chathamnhhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

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Open Hours: by appointment

Please call or email.

We are happy to help you!

little hay” as the winter showed no sign of yielding to spring.

Finally a thaw came. Jonah planted oats, potatoes, apple trees, and corn. His son, Dana, moved “booms of logs across to the lower end of the pond” where they were floated down Kimball Brook to Charles Pond and then on to the Saco River. The boys were fishing. On March 39, they caught “36 fine trout on Province Pond,” on April 3 “7 nice trout on Mountain Pond,” and on May 24th, friends “came from Conway to catch trout. Caught one hundred.”

Wool began to come into Jonah's carding mill, and throughout the summer he was carding the wool and fulling cloth when he wasn't tending his crops and animals, haying, and attending funerals, lectures at the schoolhouse, and political meetings.

The weather was sometimes very hot. June 6, “98 in the shade at 3 P.M. I have been to the Centre to meeting (church, via Robbins Hill Road). Sweat ran from the horses side to the ground.” But it turned into a very rainy season. June 10, “Such a wet time we have not had for years.” July 8, “commenced haying this morning. Thunder shower at noon. Rather poor beginning.” August 3, “slow hay weather.” August 11, “Heavy rain blew the fodder corn and down (sic) many apples.” August 13, “Cut oats and we fear will spoil.” August 17, “no such rainy season for several years. Much hay is spoiled and grain injured.” August 21, “not finished haying. The prospect is not good for doing so.” August 22, “longest spell of dull weather in years.” And the dull weather continued on as they harvested 44 bushels of oats, beans, picked cranberries on the bog, dug potatoes, and made cider.

Jonah paid attention to the politics in Maine too. On September 9, “Maine election today. A good deal of anxiety about the results.” For the National election on November 5, “went to town meeting. Many absent. Grant had 46 votes & Greely 38.” November 6, “Did not hear a word from election until evening when news came that Grant was all right.” (I had to check the internet to see what was going on with Grant and Greely. Oh, the politics! Oh, the turmoil in the country!)

Then winter was upon Chatham again. December 1, “Another very windy blustery day.... no one seems to be stirring. No meeting (church) and nothing to do....” December 20, “never knew so much snow on the ground at this time of the year.” December 23, “Another bleak and stormy day. No roads and no business of any amount being done.” December 24, “No teams (of horses, logging) in the woods.” Dec 28, “the wind blew a hurricane all day, and snow flew in clods & blocked the roads badly.” Dec 31, “this has been the coldest December I ever know, with the most snow and wind.”

1872 was certainly a hard year. I plan to meet up with Mr. Jonah Hill, Jr. again this next winter, and I am hoping that 1873 was a better year for all the farm families in Chatham. Those hardy folks give me hope that we'll make it through the challenging times of today.

Raffles & Auction Fundraisers

A special thanks to our talented local artists and crafters, who have created pieces of their work for the Chatham Historical Society to use as fundraisers.

We will start off the summer with some limited raffles. A maximum of 100 tickets will be sold for each item. Ticket sales end on the date specified (see chart), and the drawing will take place as soon as we collect all payments. Please fill out the chart and send it back, with payment and your contact info. We will fill out the tickets for you. If tickets are still available in the week before the deadline, we will send an email reminder and post their availability on Facebook.

The painting, 'Gateway to Chatham,' by Diane Scott will be auctioned on Facebook with the closing bid October 3, 6 PM. If you would like to participate in the online auction, but are not on Facebook, please call or send an email with your bid and we can keep in touch about how the bidding is progressing.

See page 6 for items and order form

History Hike

Langdon Location to Province Pond

by Jeanne Eastman, with contributions by David Crouse, Frank Eastman, George Perry, Ralph Guptill, and Rich Fargo

On a warm April 9th, Bev Aiman, Seth Pitman, Sue Crowley, and Jeanne Eastman set off to find some history between Chatham Center and Province Pond.

Langdon Brook, our starting point, is named for Reverend Dr. Samuel Langdon (1723-1797), who was granted a large tract of land at Chatham Center in 1772. He served as a Chaplain in the Revolutionary War, along with several of the men who settled their families on his grant – the Phipps, Cox, and Robinson Families. Langdon was president of Harvard College from 1774-1780. Langdon's land grant was managed by his son, Paul Langdon, who was the first preceptor at Fryeburg Academy, from 1792 to 1799.

The Langdon Brook Road, also called the Government Road, which crosses the brook and starts up the south side, was built in the 1930s by the Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) and/or the US Forest Service for access to the Chatham CCC Camp. (There may have been a primitive road before. Frank Eastman recalls stories of a bypass road so that squabbling neighbors wouldn't have to pass each other on the north side of the brook.) The road comes to the Old County Road, which connects with Toad Hill Road and is part of the ITS80 snowmobile trail. A right turn takes you to the Sunken Bridge or to Mountain Pond. We went straight ahead. The road is gated at a few places on USFS land.

On the right just after the junction with Old County Road, there is a maintained clearing with a cellar hole of round stones. This was the Binford Place, where Cyrus Binford settled with his family in the 1830s. His son, Joe Binford, inherited the property. Then it was sold to the Marshall Family, and then to the USFS in the 1930s. The house was burned. An apple tree remains behind the cellar hole. (Frank's father hunted from an old barn by an apple orchard across the road.)

Next, on the left, in the woods, we noticed some concrete slabs. These were the bases of the cabins for the CCC Camp from 1935 to 1939. There originally were more concrete slabs on the right side of the road, but those have been destroyed by logging operations over the years. We also discovered a fallen stone chimney where the kitchen had been. This camp was responsible for building the shelter at Province Pond, and the cabin at Mountain Pond. Plans for these men to build a road over the mountains to Jackson were canceled after the Hurricane of 1938 blew down so many trees in the area. (David Crouse)

A bit farther up the road we came to a clearing managed by the Forest Service. From here is a beautiful view to the north of Slope, Eastman, and South Baldface Mountains.

The road continued up toward Shaw Mountain, where there were logging camps in the late 1800s. Ralph Guptill's father, Walter, spent a winter at a logging camp on Shaw Mountain, where he was a teamster. He'd make one trip per day with his team of horses with a load of logs from Shaw Mountain to the bank of the Cold River where logs were piled for the spring log drive. (We wondered who Shaw was. In David Crouse's book, there is a Shaw family listed in Chatham Center. Perhaps they originally lived at the 'Shaw Pasture,' an area with stonewalls and a cellar hole that George Perry remembers down lower on the roadway.) The 1861 map shows William Coffin living way up on the side of Shaw.

Continued on Page 5

The roadway finally began a steep descent toward Province Pond. Huge boulders flanked the road. We could imagine, as is rumored, though no rock-solid evidence has been found, that settlers could have split these boulders to make foundations, bridges, and fences before the granite quarrying began on the ledges of South Baldface.

Shaw Mountain loomed on our right now. We could see ledges where a forest fire had burned three acres in the late 1990s. (Rich Fargo says the new growth around the ledges is now so thick it is impenetrable.) The Pond was visible through the trees, and eventually we cut through the woods to the small path that leads from the south end of the pond to a shelter at the north end. Seth rapped on the shelter roof to give any critters a chance to scurry out before we cornered them. And scurrying we did hear! But it was a fellow human adventurer having his lunch. He had ridden his bicycle over the same trail we had walked (we had seen his track in the patches of snow and mud). He was on a three-day adventure from Buckfield, Maine to Tuckerman's Ravine in Pinkham Notch where he would use the skis that were tied onto the bike. We had a lovely chat before we began our two-hour return hike back to our cars.

Province Pond can also be accessed from South Chatham. Though the pond existed naturally, a dam was built at the pond in 1960. In 2008 the dam was rebuilt and the shelter moved its current location.



Bev Aiman, Seth Pitman, Jeanne Eastman, Sue Crowley

Map of Chatham, NH, 1861



Raffle Items



1

2



3

4



5



6



7

8

Item	Last date to purchase ticket	Ticket price	# of tickets purchased	Total Cost
#1-Set of Adirondack chairs	July 3 rd	\$10		
#2-Photo-Fox Kit in Grass	July 18 th	\$5		
#3-Photo-Ermine	Aug 1 st	\$5		
#4-Painting on metal-Sunset Over Lower Kimball	Aug 15 th	\$5		
#5-Photo-Bear	Aug 29 th	\$5		
#6-Crocheted Afghan	Sept 11 th	\$5		
#7-Photo-Two Foxes	Sept 26 th	\$5		
#8-Painting-"Gateway to Chatham"	Oct 3 rd	Facebook Auction		
Total Purchase				

Name: _____

Email or Phone #: _____

Return to: Chatham Historical Society

1061 Main Road, Chatham, NH 03813



Upcoming Events

Saturday, June 26, 9 AM – History Hike at the old Andrews' homestead, 2427 Main Road, with history shared by George Andrews.

July – date TBD – granite cutting demonstration at CHS, 1061 Main Road.

Saturday, August 14, 6:30 PM – Ice Cream Social, 1061 Main Rd – Pre-ordered pints, ice cream sundaes, and your stories of challenges and silver linings in the Pandemic.

Saturday, September 11, Noon – Town Picnic, 1061 Main Rd. Bring a dish to share.

Saturday, October 2, 9 AM – Tour of Little Chatham Road, featuring Chatham Woods Camp by Denise Stanford, and the old mill sites at George Fernald's.

My Grandfather and His Family by Florrie Hill Lock, his granddaughter

March 1955

Without exception, my grandfather, Jonah Hill Jr. was the “most unforgettable character” I have ever known.

It is not possible for me to put into words what he meant, not only to his family, but to his neighbors and fellow townsmen; I can only tell something of his early life as it has been told to me; and his later years as I knew him.

He was the eldest son of Capt Jonah Hill and Sally Stimson. He was born in South Chatham, N.H. (1810) in a log cabin. In 1831 when he had reached the age of 21 years, he built the old Hill homestead, which has housed five generations of Hills, and at that time he became the head of the family. Capt. Jonah and wife lived with him until their deaths. Three of their children died in the old house and the others lived there until they went out into homes of their own.

As the oldest of the family he had no opportunity for a college education. He acquired what knowledge he could from the town schools; he attended Fryeburg Academy and for some time read law with Judge Langdon.

The carding mill was in operation just through the summer and early fall months. For many years he was a teacher and taught in the different schools around him during the fall and winter months. (By the way, my father, who was one of his pupils, claimed the distinction of being the one always disciplined for any misconduct that might occur in the school.)

My grandfather and my father enjoyed an argument and, in questions that came up, would take opposite sides; sometimes we thought for the sake of an argument. For instance, during a Lyceum debate the question was the “merits of a college course” against a “common school education.” My grandfather was all for the college course and my father against it. My grandfather spoke first stating his views in his usual sensible dignified manner. Then my father rose and told this story. “I know a young man who is about to graduate from college. A few weeks ago he came home on a little vacation. That night his mother had baked peas for supper and he informed her that the beans were very good. Now when a man has been in college four years and doesn't know beans from peas it doesn't speak too well for a college education.” The young man in question was his brother, Benjamin Mead, who graduated from Dartmouth College.

Besides his business, grandfather found time for many town offices, and to help organize and build the Congregational Church at Chatham. He was one of the charter members of that church. He also was a member of the N.H. Legislature a number of times.

These activities ended when he became blind in 1886. He lived for thirteen years after that and it was during these years that I knew him best.

He was always a great reader and that alone made his blindness harder to bear. He was never bitter about it however, and it was very seldom that he complained. Occasionally I have heard him say under his breath “Oh if I could only see.” We all read to him but as I seemed to have had more time than the others, I was the one he depended upon as far as reading was concerned. He liked to hear the news of the world, and the president's messages. Often he would ask for a chapter in the Bible. At other times he would say “Read, read anything.”

My grandfather died Dec 31, 1898. His mind, at that time, was as alert as it had ever been. When he went out of this life I knew that I had lost a friend and counselor who could never be replaced and one whom I never, never could forget.

It might be fitting to close these words about my grandfather by quoting from one of his obituaries: “Upon returning from the services for the late Jonah Hill, his friends and neighbors were heard to remark 'We have lost the best man Chatham ever raised.'”

Chatham Historical Society
1061 Main Road
Chatham, NH 03813

Donations are gratefully accepted for :

Award Fund for High School Seniors

Veterans' Memorial (\$100 for a paver with a veteran's name)

Chatham Historical Society is a non profit 501(c)3 charitable organization

Membership Form

\$10.00 /person/year

Name	
Address	
Email	
Winter	
Dues	
Donation	
Building Fund	
Total	