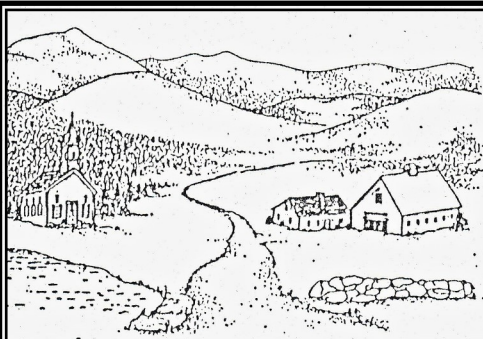




Chatham Times

Past and Present

Tour of Little Chatham Road

Based on information given by Doug Burnell

The fifty people gathered at the Chatham/Conway Town Line on Little Chatham Road on October 10 were in for a treat: a beautiful day, a pleasant walk, safe social distancing, and a wealth of local history. Doug Burnell, President of the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, surveyor, and conserved-woodland owner of 850 acres in Fryeburg, Conway and Chatham on Little Chatham Road, led our tour, starting with pre-colonial years.

This area was originally hunting grounds for the Pequawket people, whose main village was in Fryeburg overlooking the intervals where they planted corn.

The early European settlers in Fryeburg were searching for streams which would make good mill sites. At that time, the line between the Province of New Hampshire and the Massachusetts Bay Colony's District of Maine was not well defined. Nathan Ames, an original grantee of Fryeburg, probably did not know that his mill site, nearly on the shore of Lower Kimball Pond on the outlet of Upper Kimball (originally called Governor's, then Webb Pond) was in Chatham, N.H. But there he built his water-powered sawmill and settled in a log cabin overlooking it in the early 1760s.

Benning Wentworth, Royal Governor of New Hampshire, reserved to himself a farm of about 500 acres encompassing Governor's Pond and the southeast corner of his 1767 grant of Chatham. In 1773, the Proprietors of Conway granted to Thomas Merrill, Esq. a second-division lot in the northeast corner of town. An original proprietor himself and settler in the more civilized west part of town, Merrill was the Proprietors' clerk, and this grant was, in part, meant to compensate him for his secretarial services.

Originally, there was just Nathan Ames' bridle path from Fryeburg, probably following Pequawket hunting trails along the ridge, through this area to the ponds. Around 1802 the Little Chatham Road was laid out in all three towns at four rods wide, an indication of its importance as a main thoroughfare.

Meanwhile, a grist mill was built on that same stream between the ponds, and in 1810 Captain Jonah Hill built a carding mill. A dam was built at the outlet of the upper pond to control the water flow to the mills. A community of small farms settled back along Little Chatham Road (earlier known as the Ridge Road). The sheets of wool from the mill were farmed out to the local women to spin and weave into cloth. The fulling and dying of the cloth next took place back at the mill; then it was returned to the women to make clothing.

The Ridge Road was the main route from Fryeburg into Chatham, as the Green Hill Road did not then extend through. The road over Hurricane Mountain was just a cart path, crossing the low watershed divide south of Webb Pond and connecting to the Ridge Road, allowing cartloads of wool to be carried from Bartlett and Jackson to the carding mill.



Westward view from the Charles Woodruff place on Little Chatham Road, around 1880

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Notes from the President

Again, we so appreciate many people for their help with various projects, and their support of our activities and our mission. Everyone gives as time and talents allow. Some of our big accomplishments this fall have been painting the exterior of our schoolhouse. It looks great! More painting will continue next year. We have been organizing our collection. And we have set up a “store” in our classroom which has been open on Friday mornings. We will open by appointment Saturday mornings in December. The hottest items in the store are the two new books by David Crouse and the Chatham bumper stickers and magnets.

We also received donations of an evergreen wreath, a cut-your-own Christmas tree, and a little red wagon. We put these items in three limited raffles. Call to see if tickets are still available for the wagon. The drawing will be held December 19.

We have had four of our veterans remembered on pavers at our Veterans' Memorial: Samuel Phipps, American Revolution; Osborne Anderson: Civil War; Raymond Curtis, WWII; and Roger Barnes, Vietnam. Thank you to their sponsors!

We continue to receive requests for information about Chatham's past. These inquiries keep pushing me to learn more! I am now on a mission to learn about the granite quarrying on Baldface. Please let us know if you have any information about that chapter of our past.

I am also collecting fishing stories for an article in the spring newsletter. How has fishing changed over the years, due to dams being built, beavers.... Any stories from the game warden's point of view!?! Smelting, No Ketchum Pond trips or expeditions to Mountain Pond, ice fishing, favorite fishing holes....

We have begun posting puzzles, stories, and coloring pages on our website,



www.chathamhistoricalnh.org, under Pages for Kids of All Ages. We'd love ideas for more pages. We'd also love to hear feedback – are these pages fun and interesting?

With the holiday season upon us, are there members of your family who'd appreciate a gift membership in our Historical Society? New annual memberships purchased this December will be good until May of 2022!

Enjoy the holidays. Be well. Get some fresh air daily!

Jeanne Eastman

Wish List

Past editions of the 'Little Deer Dispatch.'
Short stories of your fishing expeditions in Chatham for our next newsletter

Right—this Red Wagon for the limited raffle could be yours!



In 1817, Edward Shirley and Jonathan Hardy, who had settled on Merrill's grant in Conway along the Ridge Road, petitioned the town for their land to be annexed to Chatham. They wrote that their land was “adjoined by a large tract of boggy land in Fryeburg, totally unfit for settling upon, and of broken mountains [equally] as unfit, which places them a large distance from the inhabitants, public meetings, and schools [of Conway].” The signatories of Chatham voted that they “know of no opposition against them annexing” these farms to Chatham. In 1823, Conway voted *not* to disannex the land from their town. However, the NH legislature approved the Act to Disannex and Annex, thereby adding these farms to Chatham. Thus Little Chatham was officially extended farther south.

Along the Fryeburg section of the Ridge Road there are no cellar holes, this area consisting of back woodlots of the intervale farms along the West Fryeburg Road. The Conway section has only one cellar hole, the former house of Christopher Hill. And as our tour headed north from the Chatham/Conway line, we stopped at several cellar holes and stonewalls, evidence of homesteads (some primitive - small, with round, rough stones; and some more well-to-do with cut stones and large hearth mounds), a simple foundation of a schoolhouse, and a cattle pound where stray critters were kept until claimed. Early land owners in this area include Edward Shirley, Albion Wyman, Charles Woodruff, Jonathan Hardy, Philip Hunt, and Hiram Stevens.

After the Civil War the population in Chatham began dropping. Doug Burnell's grandfather, Walter H. Burnell, grew up in Hiram, Maine, where his father had a wood-turning mill on Hancock Brook. Walter later owned mills in Conway. Through his contacts with wood suppliers for the mills, and then living on Green Hill Road with his second wife, Esther Hill Leighton, he made a hobby of buying up land along the Little Chatham Road, involving 30 different deeds and 50 years in time. This “Ridge Group,” is the land of cellar holes and stonewalls, once farmland but now forest, that Doug inherited and has protected with a conservation easement.

It is so interesting to imagine the vibrant community that existed here 150 years ago. Doug has done a wonderful job researching boundary lines and transfer of ownership over the years, and has more to do once Covid restrictions on access to old records are lifted. We are also trying to discover more as we read and transcribe the diaries of Jonah Hill starting with 1872.



Gary Banhart gave some history of his house and his early experiences on Little Chatham Road.

Is Chatham on the Map?

(Being an election year, this letter to the editor in 1962 seems appropriate to reprint. It was by Ester P. York, school teacher from Chatham.)

Politically, NO! People who live here pay poll taxes so they can fish and drive automobiles. If they happen to be farmers, retired people, or can leave their work for a few minutes in the middle of the day, they can vote, also. However, the good old days when people paid poll taxes so they could vote, have become a thing of the past for many working people who live in this town.

The voting hours 10a.m. to 3p.m. may be helpful to those counting the votes, but they are unfair to working citizens who are qualified and anxious to vote. They are unfair to every candidate running for a public office. Sometimes the difference in votes might mean a different winner in the primaries or at election time.

Once there were five voters who arrived at the same time to vote in the primaries but all five were too late. Primaries had closed at 3p.m.! How many others were too late I do not know.

In this 1962 election, something happened for which any town or citizen, cannot be proud. Chatham has five qualified teachers, who are teaching this year. These teachers are expected to teach their pupils that it is the privilege and duty of every qualified citizen to vote. At least three of these five teachers could not reinforce their teaching by the powerful example of

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Historic Election Celebrations in Chatham & Stow

Sources: David Crouse, Cold River Chronicles Facebook Page, Frank Eastman

Election of 1896, McKinley (R) vs. Bryan (D)

In the presidential election of 1896, Republican William McKinley of Ohio defeated Democrat William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska in what has been called one of the most dramatic and complex races in American history.

A news item headed “Stowe (sic), Me,” published in the White Mountain Reporter; North Conway, NH; on November 12, 1896, reads as follows: “The Republicans of Stowe and Chatham celebrated the election of McKinley by firing the cannon in different parts of the town Friday night. Saturday night they hauled it to the top of Creeper Mountain. With a big bonfire and sky rockets they kept the jubilation going until eleven o’clock. Quite a delegation was present from Fryeburg Harbor. The young Republicans gave a torchlight procession.”

The cannon mentioned was probably the brass Civil War cannon given to Chatham. Frank Eastman remembers this cannon when it sat near the Chatham Town House. At that time (1930s) its wheels were set in concrete. Probably after what happened after the election of 1896, town officials decided to make it impossible for revelers to move the old cannon. Beside the cannon was a small pyramid of cannon balls and the caisson. During World War Two, the cannon was sold for scrap metal to help the war effort.

Evans Notch Road

Election of 1912 or 1916, a story that David Crouse remembers his father, Rodney, telling about his grandfather, Guy Crouse:

In either the 1912 or 1916 presidential election, the first returns that reached the Cold River Valley indicated that the Republican candidate had won; so that night a contingent of staunch Chatham and Stow Republicans, including Guy's father-in-law, Walter P. McKeen, drove "around the square" [the road that loops from Stow Corner north up the Stow road toward North Chatham, then back through Chatham Center to Stow Corner], shooting off guns in celebration of the Republican victory over Democrat, Woodrow Wilson.

The next day, however, news revealed that Wilson was in fact the winner. That night, to even the score, some of the valley's staunch Democrats, including Guy Crouse, went up to Walter McKeen's house, two miles or so north of Stow Corner, where they set off a few sticks of dynamite on a ledge outcrop, rattling Walter's windows and waking him up to the truth of the Democrat victory.



A Civil War cannon like this sat by the Chatham Town House

Letter to the Editor—Cont’d from page 3

voting themselves. How will this “Do as I say, and not as I do” affect our future citizens? I feel very strongly that our children and friends perform their patriotic duty of voting.

Candidates, these votes you are losing may be just the ones you need to win the office you desire.

Until voting days become holidays, or until voting hours are changed, don’t blame people for not voting – some CAN’T. Some have given up trying to vote because of the impossible hours, but there are those who are still fighting for the opportunity to vote which is the right of every qualified citizen in a democratic country.

Nearly 200 years ago our country fought a war because people believed in “No taxation without representation.” Today we find some families giving over \$1,000 a year to support our government, yet they cannot help choose those who will be spending the money. Is this “Taxation WITH representation!”

Believing it does not take as long to register votes in the smaller towns as it does in the cities, smaller town offices are allowed to stay open a shorter time. This is a wonderful idea IF the hours are chosen to accommodate the voters. The meaning of the law was not to serve the voters less efficiently, but to serve them just as efficiently in a shorter space of time.

Primaries and elections are for the voters – every one of them. It is the duty of every public official to make it possible for EVERY voter to vote.

Esther P. York, South Chatham, NH



Esther P. York

'Chance' On the Main Road in South Chatham

The sign on the weathered, deep brown wooden building read: "Open By Chance or Appointment."

Who wouldn't be curious to know the kind of person who kept such a shop? The contents of such a place? I was! The shelves of odds and ends on either side of the door gave a hint. I wanted to see the inside, but each time we walked or drove past, the door remained closed.

Closed and locked until one hot summer afternoon in the late 1980s.

We were summer folk, up from Connecticut and then from Vermont for two weeks every year. We started coming before the kids, in 1977, and then every summer for what became more than thirty years.

We stayed in the two old summer camp cabins from Dr. Day's time, behind the schoolhouse, across from the cemetery and Mrs. Hill's place on Lower Kimball. The weeks of vacation were always the same — idyllic. Perfect, clear water swimming, even if the water level was a bit low at times. Quiet, except for the welcome calls of the loons on the pond. Hot and full of adventure, even when or if the rain greyed the sky. No matter. On vacation we swam, hiked, bicycled, canoed. We were, after a year of waiting, on vacation in South Chatham.

On that summer afternoon, the sun and heat invited us to the town beach. We four walked the distance, just under a mile. We passed the schoolhouse, the cemetery, the empty houses along the west side of the road. Then, the two-story house set back from the pavement, and close-by, the mystery shed.

The door, *by chance*, was open.

The two adults couldn't pass this up. The kids, both under ten, indulged the parents. We walked into a second-hand shop. The dim light gave each object a look of sameness, old, dusty, waiting. In the back of the shed stood a late middle-aged man in a plaid, or was it checkered, shirt. Flannel? In the heat, probably not, but the look would have been right. Besides, tall pines shaded the place, so the cool air, a bit close but familiar, like an old friend or a missed distant relative, was welcome and pleasant.

We walked past tables of stuff and said hello. He was McAllister. He owned the place. We chatted some, about the heat, the horse flies, walking to the beach. But what Mr. McAllister really wanted to talk about was a tray of rock samples from Pennsylvania, the kind of samples you might buy as a souvenir after a tour of a mine or as a gift for a grandkid after a museum exhibit. He glowed when he spoke about the rocks and PA's mining history. The adults engaged in conversation; rocks were a shared interest, fun, easy to collect, along with their stories.

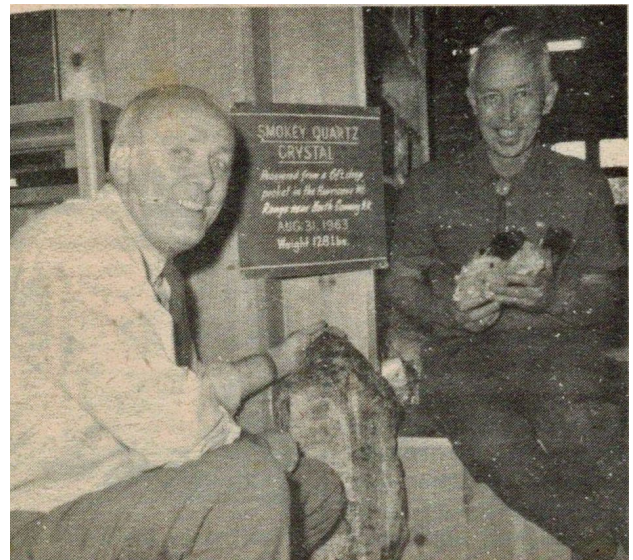
We listened to Mr. McAllister. Nodded. Said a few things. I think he could have gone on longer. I think he knew we were not there to buy anything. We'd left for the beach in bathing suits and flip-flops, towels around our necks. Not a wallet or a purse in sight.

We could have thought to make an appointment, and not leave the conversation, the next experience, to chance. But the kids were hot, and they wanted to swim. Looking back, I see a missed opportunity.

With my interest in thrift stores, junk shops, garage and tag and attic sales, I have seen many well-loved and used doilies and hammers and soup bowls. The memory of Mr. McAllister, the chance encounter at the shop, and his full embrace of the rocks and their history, is a treasure I keep safe in my memory.

B.K. Dall

16 November 2020



Les is pictured (l.) at one of the rock displays at the House of Color. Beside him, lower center, is what is believed to be one of the largest smokey quartz crystals in N. H. Such crystals range in size from microscopic to even larger than in this photo. A smaller one, weighing about two pounds and valued at \$12, is held by Orman McAllister (r.). He is in charge of the Lapidary and Mineral Department at House of Color. Orman has personally roamed, prospected and mapped many of the mountains in the "Notches" for some 35 years.

Donations

Cynthia & Orman McAllister – newspaper clipping to copy; **Jane & David McKenzie** – letters, photos, and articles relating to Rainbow Lodge to copy; **David Crouse** – his new book, History of the Town of Stow, Maine; **Albert and Jacky Stearns** – (on loan) a document citing William Spencer's Civil War duties and W. Spencer's ID bracelet; **Ann Landers** – two framed sketches by, and of, Janice Whipple, AMC Cold River Camp volunteer.

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Open Hours: by appointment

Please call or email.

We are happy to help you!

Sale Items

Limited Raffle: shiny-new little red wagon.

Only 50 tickets will be sold, \$5 each. Drawing December 19. If you'd like a ticket, call and/or mail ticket fee right away!

Schoolhouse store open by appointment,

Saturdays in December, 10-11:30 AM. Please call or email ahead – we are happy to open for you. Hot items are the new books by David Crouse; nature photography by John Rondeau and Fran West; books of a loon family on Lower Kimball Pond, by Fran West, and of a fox family at Fryeburg Fairgrounds, by Joe Shaw. Also crafts, Chatham bumper stickers and magnets, and more! Curbside delivery is available.

Membership Form

\$10.00 /person/year

Name	
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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

