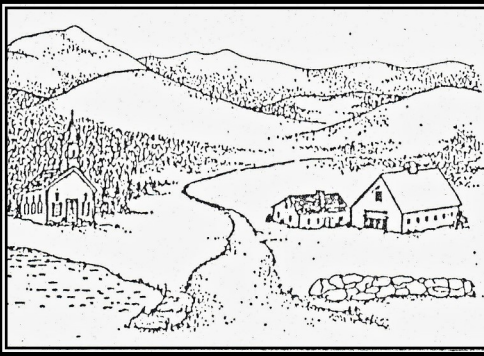




Chatham Times

Past and Present

Hunting History in Chatham,

by Jeanne Eastman,

with contributions by Frank Eastman, Barbara Eastman George Perry, George Andrews, Alan Eastman, Nate Hutchins, and Doug Beaton



Photo of White-tailed deer, by Bob Crowley, who does his game hunting and shooting with a camera

Hunting has a long history in Chatham. Over the years, much has changed due to changes in laws, habitat, and society.

It used to be that most every farm had a small apple orchard. Even three or four trees constituted an orchard. Twenty trees was a large orchard. The orchards were a great draw for wild game, such as partridge and deer. George Perry recalls hunting partridge in the orchards along Butter Hill Road, Toad Hill, and Rollins Pasture. Early mornings in October would be cold, and the partridges would stand up on the stone walls to catch the heat of the rising sun. George and his brothers could easily get their limit of six partridges each per day.

Once the farmhouses were abandoned, the apple orchards began to grow up with other trees that shaded out the apple trees. Bears, who had been leery when people lived nearby, began to climb the trees to eat apples, and would break branches. Frank remembers planting pine trees in the Meaders' apple orchard. Later, logging operations for pine would destroy any remaining apple trees. So the deer changed their habits of movement, and the hunters followed suit.

New predators and competitors have affected the game populations. Nelson Eastman spotted the first coyote in Chatham in the Hanscom field in 1971. With the increase in coyotes, it is dangerous for partridges to sit on the stone walls warming themselves. The moose population expanded here around the same time, and competed with deer for browse. In 1969, Claire Perry tagged 113 legal deer during the November hunting season. Ten years later, she tagged 30 deer. After Perry retired from Town Office, no one in Chatham was willing to post the bond necessary to sell licenses and tag deer.

Back when logging was done with oxen and horses, a by-product was habitat for rabbits (snowshoe hares) and other game. Choppers (who felled the trees with axes and cross saws) felled a row of trees in one direction and chopped the branches off. Then they'd set over and fell the trees in the opposite direction, so the branches would lie on the branch pile left previously. This left a great windrow of brush where rabbits could hide from coyotes and hawks. The cleared scout roads between the brush piles would, within a few years, grow up to blackberries and raspberries and hardwood shoots, making great feeding areas close to the sheltering brush piles. George remembers hunting rabbits with his beagle, Bonnie. Over a hunting season from October to March in the 1960s, he and his brothers might shoot 200 – 250 rabbits, a great help in feeding their large family.

Today, with 80% of Chatham owned by the US Forest Service, much more of the land is mature forest. Current logging practices often include chipping the branches, thereby

Continued on page 3

Notes from the President

This has been a fun newsletter to put together with information contributed by so many people. If we have missed any history or viewpoints relating to hunting in Chatham, please kindly let us know.

Also, thanks to Pam Katz who had been recording information from the Green Hill Cemetery and updating our records on our Chatham cemeteries, to Ann and Rich Fargo for continuing with the painting of our schoolhouse, to Cathy Stone of Lovell Historical Society for brightening up our old photos, to Deanna Morris and Barbara Hill for helping with all sorts of computer challenges, to Sue Crowley and Scott Aiman for getting our new flower bed ready for spring, to Barbara Eastman for continuing to catalog donations as they come in, and to Judy Eastman for making the wreath for our raffle.

Welcome to our new members: Barbara Andrews Hale, Alina Gagne, and Dale Ranta. We have other returning members and some Annual Members who have committed to Life Membership. Thanks to you all for your interest and encouragement!

We welcome anyone who would like to help us with our mission to save, preserve, and share our Chatham history. Our schoolhouse is currently open Friday mornings for work projects, but I am willing to be open at a different time if that works better. We'd love help with displays, with scanning, with research, with organizing.

We hope you'll include shopping at our sales room this holiday season and beyond. We have new Chatham t-shirts in and will get more as orders come in. We also have books, locally made cutting boards, note cards, coverlets, knitted dish towels and more.

May you enjoy happy holidays and a healthy, productive winter!

Jeanne Eastman

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Open Hours: Fridays 10 AM – Noon
or by appointment;
Please call or email.
We are happy to help you!

Donations

Lincoln Garland – a wooden shoulder yoke made and used by Bill Stone

Sheryl Emery – a wooden form for darning mittens;

Jan Levesque – a poster for The Great Saco River Canoe Race sponsored by Chatham Woods Camp

Libby Hill – personal articles from the Civil War.

And thanks to all who have made monetary donations!

removing the shelter that rabbits need. The USFS plan for the forest includes periodic small clear cuts which, within a couple years, result in dense new growth that makes good habitat for game.

Also, society has changed. This land was originally hunting grounds for the Pequawket people of the Fryeburg area. The first Europeans to settle here hunted and trapped to feed and clothe themselves and to protect their small farms. Animal skins kept people warm when sleeping in unheated, uninsulated bed chambers, traveling in open sleighs, and working outdoors. Into the mid-1900s there was a bounty on bears, as well as hedgehogs (porcupines), bobcats, and other animals deemed dangerous or a nuisance. In 1951, Urban Andrews was commissioned to provide a 250-pound bear to the "fabulous Cafe Nino, Inc. in New York." George Andrews remembers checking traps for bobcat on the backside of Baldface with his Uncle Urban every day. Eventually more humane traps were invented, and then synthetic materials were developed to keep folks warm. Fashion changed as people had more choices about what to eat and what to wear.

Chatham has gradually become less rural. An easy trip to the grocery store makes people less reliant on farms, gardens, and the natural surroundings. But there are still those who hunt. Alan Eastman says, "I started hunting at 10 years old, tagging along behind one of the best hunters I have ever known, my dad. Because my father loved hunting in Evan's Notch, it also became my favorite place to hunt. I love being out in the woods, man against nature. Whether I am successful or not I would go hunting the rest of my life as long as I am able, even if I knew I would never harvest another deer! In this area, if you are successful, you have done well. I do love to eat the meat but it isn't all about feeding myself and my family. I was fortunate this year to have taken two adult males and am donating the majority of one to the local food pantry."

Another hunter, Nate Hutchins says, "Early on I mostly rode with my Dad on the dirt roads looking for deer on days with poor weather - too rainy or windy to hunt." When he was twelve he could carry his own rifle, hunting within sight of his dad, usually on Peaked Hill Road or Robbins Ridge. After taking Hunter Safety he got his own license and hunted on his own. He says, "I hunt mostly for the love of being outdoors. I also really enjoy the camaraderie of hunting with family, the tradition of hunting for sustenance, going places in the woods that perhaps very few people have been, learning the behavior of different animals, and most importantly you might spend the whole day without thinking about work or what's happening in the outside world."

Doug Beaton, who has come to his camp in North Chatham during hunting season since 1960, says, "It's not about shooting a deer anymore. I love to be in the woods. This week I saw a bear and two cubs, and a doe." That gave him all he wanted!

These three hunters feel that the deer population is doing well, and that the Forest Service is managing the forests well with clear cuts that soon grow into perfect habitat for the deer and moose. The animals, the forest management, and the pleasure of time out in the woods are also enjoyed by those who hunt and shoot with cameras.

In Memory

Our sympathy to those who have lost loved ones:

Linda Wright, 81; passed away October 29. Linda and her husband, Al, bought the Stow Corner Store in 1981 and made a reputation for pastries and large ice cream cones.

Jane Wilshusen, 89; passed away November 2. Jane had enjoyed being with her family at Twillingate Farm, North Chatham, for parts of every year since 1955.

Wish List

School Books that would have been used in a one-room schoolhouse.

A mannequin to display veterans' uniforms (\$340)

Photos and memories of Harold Briggs' Auction Barn and Roller Skating Rink

A Game Warden's Perspective

Henry Mock, who worked as Game Warden in Chatham for 13 years beginning in 1965, has the record for the largest number of deer jackers caught of any Warden: 55. About half of those cases were in North Chatham. Mock's prime spot to park his vehicle was in the pine trees beside the Chandler Cemetery.

One night, about 11 PM, he was there and stepped out of his vehicle toward the road when he saw a big buck cross the road going west into the Wardwell's field. A car was coming north, slowed down, and backed into the cemetery so its headlights shown into the field. A man from the back seat got out, opened the trunk, got his rifle which had a scope. Mock was only 15 feet from him and could see every detail. The deer, tired of waiting, jumped the snow fence. The friends in the front seat call, "Shoot him, shoot him!" "I can't see him," said the guy, because the shadows from the snow fence hid the deer. He got back in the car with the loaded rifle, and the car headed back south. At which point, Mock followed them and made the arrest; the only crime was a loaded rifle in the vehicle. Mock always carried handcuffs and a firearm, but he never had the need to use them in all his years in the field. He had the man with the rifle sit in the front seat with him, and the other two men followed in their car the 25 miles to the police station in North Conway.

Another year on opening day of deer season, Mock was patrolling. He stopped a local vehicle to check (today a warden would need a reason to stop a vehicle) and found a loaded rifle which he confiscated to show to the judge. (Today photos would be taken of the firearm and the ammunition, but the gun would not be taken. This change came about after an owner sued when his valuable gun was returned with a scratch on it, he claimed.) Tears fell as the Chatham hunter sobbed, "Don't take my Betsy!"

Another time, patrolling in North Chatham, Mock got a call on his radio. Usually the only way he could get reception was to back up to the garage at the Boy Scout Cabin (the Brickett Place at the base of Evan's Notch) until the whip antenna touched the overhanging tin roof. A warden from Portsmouth had information on guys hunting on East Branch (of the Saco, in Bartlett). Mock went down to Chandler Farm to use their phone. As he turned in, three cars with Maine plates passed going north. As he knocked on the door, he heard three shots up by the cemetery. As the door opened, Mock told the man (probably Norris Hill), "I'll be right back." Up at the cemetery Mock found eight or nine men and a fawn that had been shot from the lead car. Mock used his calm diplomatic and detective ways to make the arrests without using his firearm or handcuffs.

Mock's favorite snack on his long nights in Chatham: bologna sandwich, oreo cookies, and coffee. In addition to remembering the details of so many days and nights patrolling in Chatham, on Saturday mornings Mock still recalls Clair Perry's kitchen, where he made his weekly stop to pickup the deer registration numbers; "it smelled so good, of beans and rolls baking". Besides serving as Town Clerk's office, the Perry kitchen was a tagging station for deer, and hunting and fishing licenses were sold there.

A History Hike Speckled Mountain & Blueberry Ridge

Steve and I set out to hike Speckled Mountain while the foliage was still at its peak. Our 1969 guide to the White Mountains promised great views in all directions from the top, and unlimited views of the Cold River Valley coming down Blueberry Ridge.

We started at the Brickett Place at the base of Evan's Notch in Stow, Maine. This was originally the home of John and Catherine Brickett who settled here in the early 1800s. The family first lived in a wooden cabin and then built this brick house probably around 1852. In 1918, the house and property were acquired by the US Forest Service, and the house was used as a Ranger Station. In the 1930s it was headquarters for the Civil Conservation Corps while they were building the Evan's Notch Road. Later it was leased to the Appalachian Mountain Club and used in its Hut System; then it was leased to the Boy Scouts of America and used as a bunkhouse. In 1982 the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Continued on page 6



Philip Eastman (1902-1926) shot a 21-point buck in 1916 from the kitchen steps in N.Chatham. His grandson, Woody Eastman, recalls his great-aunt, Fannie Eastman Chandler Hill (1909-1971), saying the meat was as "tough as leather."

The Norway (Oxford, ME) Advertiser, December 23, 1921

[NOTE: The following was edited by David Crouse to correct several obvious typographical errors and add minor punctuation.]

OLD BILL SAYS

Dear Editor: I saw in the Boston Post an account of the shooting accident here in Stow which said, "Farmer killed by deer hunters," now I want to write this out so that every man in Oxford County can understand it and just how it happened and I don't know of a better medium than the Advertiser.

I happen to be the father of Sidney Sanborn, one of the boys that was there, and he explained this to me so plain that I want every one in Oxford County to read this:

Harold Eastman, Erville Fernald and Sidney Sanborn left my house Sunday night, Nov. 27th and went up to the brick house at Shell pond and camped so to get a good start Monday morning. None of them were farmers and they were all chums hunting for deer. Harold was the oldest of the three.

Harold wore a hunting shirt just the color of a deer, in fact he, as well, put a deer skin on his back and had gone hunting in it as far as looks went. We tried to have him leave it at our house and wear a dark mackinaw, but he only laughed at us, and we tried to have him put something red on his cap, but no go.

The next morning the boys tried to have him leave the shirt at the brick house before they started out but he just laughed at them. All I blame Sidney and Erville for is going into the woods on a dark stormy day with him if he was determined to wear such a thing.

Well, they started out and it was snowing hard and they struck a track where two deer had gone along. Harold told Sidney to work off to the right and Erville to the left while he followed on the track. Pretty soon they jumped the deer and Harold fired at one and hit him, but the deer kept on going till it tried to run by Sid, and he dropped him. The boys dressed the deer off and left him laying there in the

snow and started after the other deer. Erville on the right this time and Sid on the left, while Harold followed the track as before. Now here is a point I want your readers to consider. Erville was the youngest boy in the lot, and he probably never fired a rifle a dozen times in the woods in his life, and the last thing Harold had said to him was "If you see any part of that deer, you plug it."

Well, the boys kept along till the deer started to circle and Harold, instead of following on the track as he agreed, left the track and cut in across to the left where Sid was, and they both hustled along and hit the track some distance ahead of Erville in thick spruces with limbs to the ground. Erville kept along, not knowing Harold had left the track, until he came on this track where the deer circled, and not seeing any man's track he supposed of course that he was ahead of Harold. Then he kept a sharp lookout ahead, expecting to see the deer any minute, as the deer didn't jump till they walked right onto them, it was snowing so hard.

Erville saw this spot between the branches of this spruce tree and did what 90 out of 100 would have done under the same circumstances. He fired and hit Harold, who stood within a foot of Sidney, only Sid was behind the spruce, and all Erville could see was this little spot that looked like a deer, which was the hunting shirt of Harold. Harold dropped and Sid dropped too and shouted. Then he went to Harold, but Harold did not live but two or three minutes, conscious about half a minute.

Well, the boys did what they could by placing the body under a spruce tree and started for help. They were back in the woods four miles from the stone house at Shell pond on what is called Ham Mountain in Batchelders Grant. The boys came out to Wellington Chandler's and telephoned the authorities, then Sid went back after the body with the help he had got. The shooting was at eleven o'clock, and they got the body out to the stone house between five and six that night. Erville Fernald is no more to blame than he would be if Harold had committed suicide. Harold set his trap and deliberately walked into it.

Harold was 27, Sidney, 19, and Erville 18 years old. It was a sad thing, and the less said about it the better. They were all chums, and all anyone can call it was an accident.

-Old Bill, Stow, Maine

Usually the Forest Service opens the house during the weekends from Memorial Day through Columbus Day, but it has been closed during the pandemic. Jim Coogan, employed by the USFS, has set up in the open-air garage this past summer to provide information to hikers and tourists.

We climbed the Bickford Brook trail, which is probably named for Moses Bickford who owned land in this area and later lived with his son, Horatio Bickford at what is now 1101 Stow Road. (David Crouse, History of the Town of Stow, Maine) Ed Jones wrote in his book, Edifying, that in the early 1950s there was no road up Speckled. At some point a road was built, and a warden could drive almost to the top to be the lookout in the fire tower. David Govatski told me that a lookout tower had been built in the 1920s, and in 1942 it had been improved to a steel tower. Millard Chandler's 1963 diary mentions hauling a stone crusher up Speckled for the Forest Service, when the road was being improved.

On this trail we soon saw where the old road came in on the left, and then the trail and road were one. In places it was dug into the hillside, a "dugway," and zig-zags back and forth to avoid pitches too steep for a vehicle. The trail is maintained by the Chatham Trails Association, with the USFS assisting when needed. We crossed into the "Wilderness Area." Here the culverts have been removed. Trail signs have no paint and no mileages to the destinations. Any trail work has to be done without motorized tools. We passed a very large oak tree blowdown. Deanna Morris and her crewmates on the USFS's trail crew had spent a whole day last summer with a crosscut saw and peavey clearing a section of the double trunks, each 2-feet in diameter, where they crossed the trail.

Before the last steep pitch to the summit, there was an almost flat area. Jim Wilfong remembers two small



cabins here. In one the warden slept and waited out lightening storms; tools were kept in the other. Jim remembers hiking Speckled Mountain when the warden invited him up to the tower and showed him how to triangulate to pinpoint where any column of smoke signaled the start of a forest fire. The view was magnificent: beyond Pleasant Mountain and Kearsarge, both of which also had fire towers.

After passing north of the summit of Ames Mountain in Batchelder's Grant, Steve and I reached the summit of Speckled Mountain, which is in Stoneham. There was no fire tower; it had been removed by helicopter just before the mountain received its "Wilderness" designation in 1990. Only the four concrete bases remain. We had a beautiful view of the colorful mountains to the north, but could see nothing but the spruce trees ten feet in front of us to the south.

A friendly Gray Jay came right over to collect the fee for picnicking there. Gray Jays live in more arctic regions than our common Blue Jay. A crumb of corn bread from each of us was sufficient and he went on to check the other humans who were enjoying the view before they headed down the Red Rock Trail on the northern

slope and the Cold Brook Trail to the east.

Steve and I headed down the Blueberry Ridge Trail. The solitude was nice. But the views!?! Being a wilderness area, no cutting is allowed except for a narrow corridor along the trail. There were only two small windows where we could see the colorful foliage just to the west. Millard Chandler's 1942 diary, June 25th, reports, "Al & I cleared Blueberry Ridge & Bickford Slides Trails; and his 1958 diary mentions Aubrey Graves logging on Blueberry and Speckled Mountains, on logging roads put in for C.N. Brown. When we reached the Ledges overlooking the Cold River Valley, we did enjoy a great view, where the roof of our barn through the saddle between Big Deer and Little Deer was the only sign of civilization. Then it was down the very steep Blueberry Mountain Trail, across the Bickford Slides in the stream, and back to the Brickett Place.



Lunch Break in tower on Speckled

Veterans Spotlight: Micajah Fife

Micajah Fife was born in Chatham in 1840, the son of Moses and Eliza (Wyman) Fife. He enlisted in NH Co. B, 17 Inf. Reg. on September 17, 1862, and on April 16, 1863 transferred to NH Co. C, 2 Inf. Reg. He fought at Chancellorsville, Virginia on May 3, 1863, and at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on July 2, 1863. He was missing in battle at Gettysburg, “but gained from missing.” He was discharged September 10, 1863.

William Sanborn of Stow, Maine wrote in his column, *Old Bill Says*, in The Norway Advertiser on March 2, 1928, “At the battle of Gettysburg, Micajah Fife, Orrin Heath, Charles Weeks, and Elmore Fife had got hold of a chicken and had their fire all built, chicken ready to roast, when they were ordered to fall in and march double quick to support a battery at the Peach Orchard. Charles Weeks was overcome by the heat and was never heard from again, reported missing. Orrin Heath was wounded and carried off the field, and they told me they never saw their chicken again.”

Micajah was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), which was a fraternal organization formed in 1866 of veterans of the Union Army, Union Navy, and Marines who served in the Civil War. It was founded on the principles of “fraternity, charity, loyalty,” formed first for camaraderie and later for political power. The G.A.R. became among the first organized advocacy groups in American politics, supporting voting rights for black veterans, promoting patriotic education, helping to make Memorial Day a national holiday, lobbying the United States Congress to establish regular veterans' pensions, and supporting Republican candidates.

Micajah Fife married Mary Ames of Chatham, and they had one child. Micajah was a farmer in North Chatham, and also served for many years as postmaster and Justice of the Peace. He died in 1925 and is buried at the Chandler Cemetery in North Chatham.

Micajah Fife has recently been sponsored and will be remembered with an engraved paver at our Chatham Veterans' Memorial.



GAR Micajah Fife Gravestone

Three Deer

by D. Jean Eastman, 1998

*I watched these deer cavorting with glee.
A car passing by stopped to see.
They ran down the field to beat the band.
Soon they came racing back again.
They seemed to be playing in the dew,
A sight for me that was certainly new.*

*I wondered if they'd found a “weed”
To make them so happy (they were
indeed!).
I've lived in this valley 66 years
And enjoy the wildlife (whatever it is).
Be it foxes, bear, moose, or deer,
Nothing brings me so much cheer.
I'd like to try for 66 more
With sights like that outside my door.*

Chatham Historical Society
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