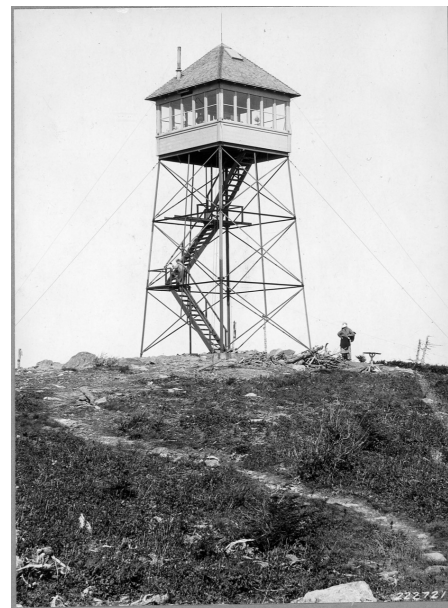




FIRE IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS



Aftermath of the Fire of 1903



Fire Tower on Carter Dome 1928

In celebration of the Appalachian Mountain Club Cold River Camp's 100th anniversary and the Chatham Historical Society's 30th anniversary, the two groups worked together to present the slide show, *Fire in the White Mountains*. It was presented by David Govatski on September 1st at the camp. Among all the fires over the years, there were two which threatened Chatham.

In 1903, when the **Wild River Fire** was burning, Chester Eastman wrote this in his diary:

June 3 It has been smoky...

June 4 It has been smoky. I have been fighting fire most of the day...

June 5 It has been very smoky & warmer today....

June 7 It has been warm & pleasant. The smoke cleared away this PM....

Besides noting the smoke, it appears that he continued with his farm work most days as the fire lapped at the top of Baldface just to the west.

Dave Govatski noted that in 1903, fires were fought by using whoever was available. Logging and mill crews were sent out to fight the fire. Training, equipment, communications, and strategy were absent. The crews used whatever tools they had.

Continued on Page 5

Notes from the President

We have had a wonderful and busy summer at CHS! Wow!

Thank you to all who have helped us with projects and events and to all who have enjoyed our events and our collection of Chatham artifacts and have contributed financially to our mission.

In addition to all that is mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, we have installed two granite benches by the Veterans' Memorial, and a granite pillar where our plaque, "NH State Registry of Historic Places," is in place in front of our schoolhouse. John & Lisa Lewis have installed two new pavers at the Memorial, and another one is in the process of being engraved. Check our website or call us to get a form for sponsoring a veteran and having a paver made. We'd love to have some of our "forgotten" veterans of the earlier wars remembered.

We are most grateful to Barbara Hill who has volunteered her time and expertise in helping us arrange the display cases in our museum, and for sharing with us other museum skills. I hope you will stop by to see our progress!

An archeologist from the US Forest Service has been in to research the story of the Eliphalet McKeen family that lived at the north end of Cold River Valley in the 1860's. We know a great tragedy struck that family in the winter of 1863 when five of the children died within a month. The four gravestones bearing their names circle an oak tree on a knoll that is now in the National Forest. I have been happy that we have information that is helpful, and looking forward to seeing what else she can uncover and conclude.

We have been awarded a grant from the Henney Historical Fund to purchase a scanner and a printer. We hope to be set up soon to make copies of historical documents that folks bring in to share with us, and to post more information on our website.

Dues are past due for the year. This is our very last cry for you to renew, if you haven't already. If you are not sure of your status, please send us an email, or call, to find out. We'd hate to lose you if you would like to continue supporting our organization and receiving the newsletter.

Our membership meetings are the 3rd Tuesday of most months, 6:30 PM. If you'd like to receive email or phone reminders of meetings, events, and/or work dates, please let us know. We love to have members involved in our activities.

We'd also love to hear from you if there is something you would like to see on our website, or in our newsletter. We are glad for all who share with us, and are happy also to share with you!

Jeanne Eastman

New Members

Laurie Waller
Kathleen McElveen
Alice Hill
Ann Loscocco
Lonni Lewis
Barbara Hill

Wish List

Push lawnmower in good condition
Mannequins
Person able to get an old manual typewriter back in working condition
Someone able to repair some old school desks and chairs

Recent Events

Ice Cream Social & Stories of Old Chatham

On August 16, we held an Ice Cream Social with ice cream made locally and donated by Bob Benes. It was such a fun and successful time that we might do it again next summer! The evening was then crowned with *Stories of Old Chatham*, told by Frank Eastman. Again, we hope this is just Volume 1 of Frank's stories that he will share with us- Frank focused on his years working for the State Highway Department here in Chatham—epic winter storms, tracks seen from the plow truck, neighbors, and a bit of family lore. Our classroom was full to capacity. The stories were video recorded by Mike Dana and we have DVD's for sale.



Frank Eastman

History Hike

On the last Saturday morning of August, the Chatham Historical Society joined with the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust to present a History Hike at the Leita Monroe Lucas Preserve just south of Hurricane Mountain Road. Timothy Wentworth Hill and his wife Asenath Harmon Hill moved to this Green Hill property around 1830. We saw what was likely the stone foundation and hearth of their primitive log cabin. According to their granddaughter, Idella Hill Clark, in her memories, "I remember! I remember!" written in 1953, "After a while, Grandpa was able to build the frame house." Due to logging at the site the remains of this house are hard to find, but a few stones piled in an unnatural way at the base of a small ridge, suggest that this might be the site of the house. Idella describes the house and family in wonderful detail. Stephen Wesley, the youngest son, took care of his parents at that house. "Dad had run out of housekeepers and he had to have help at home with grandma Hill, whose health was very poor." That is when he hired Ida May Woodruff who lived on Ridge Road (Little Chatham) and taught at the "little school in Chatham." Ida May soon became Stephen's wife, and their first four children were born in that house. In 1898 the Hills moved just down the road.

Maria and Thomas Dewing, impressionist painters of the early 1900's, bought the property and had a summer house built higher up the slope. Without the trees they had a beautiful view to the east, and gorgeous flower gardens, which Maria then painted. Part of the chimney and the old cookstove remain. The USVLT has used some of the old bricks to make a picnic spot where the concrete patio was. Signage, photos, and a new picnic table make the site a beautiful and educational resting spot for all.

Recently Leita, daughter of Ernest and Lillian (Smith) Monroe, and her husband, Barry Lucas, owned the land. Leita's grandmother, Mable Head Smith, and Maria Dewing were close friends. Some of the folks on the hike remembered visiting the Dewing House when Leita was a child playing at her grandmother's, camping out there with sisters and neighborhood children when the house was abandoned, and then coming across the house when it was in great disrepair. After Barry Lucas donated the property to the USVLT in memory of Leita (b. July 1933, d. May 2011), the falling-down remains of the once summer retreat were burned.

The trail is open to the public for hiking and enjoying!



Donation from Lonni Lewis, Hill Homestead, artist Florence Hill Pendexter Chase who lived here her first 4 years.

10th Annual Town Picnic

We had a good crowd of about 80 people for our Town Picnic on September 7th. An addition to the event this year was an exhibit about the Herbert and Claire Perry family. The family moved to Chatham in 1955. Claire served as Town Clerk and Tax collector for 30 years, as well as Secretary to the Selectmen and sold hunting and fishing licenses. Herbert served our country during WWII, Lawrence was a ditty bop translator in Alaska

Annual Town Picnic, cont'd

during the Vietnam era, and Dick is a veteran of the Vietnam War. Bill was Selectman for 12 years. Herbert and George were both on the budget Committee. Many thanks to the Perry family for sharing their photos with us.

Diane Scott and Burke Callen organized a doughnut eating contest. Each donut was hung by a string and had to be eaten with 'hands behind the back.' In the kids' division, Matt Gunther took first place and Taylor Gunther was second. In the adult division, Patrick Callen was first and Justin Fisher, second.

We had a 50-50 raffle drawing which was won by Jason Dietz. Over the summer we were selling raffle tickets for a painting by Ann Landers, with the winner drawn at the picnic. Thanks to Ann for the donation, and to all who purchased raffle tickets to support our Building Fund.

A lot of good eating and visiting were also enjoyed by everyone. It was a beautiful and fun afternoon.

Water at the School House

Have you ever wondered why the Chatham Center Schoolhouse was moved in 1954. In reading some interviews from our archives we found a clue! From an interview with Arthur Hill: "When I was Selectman (1940-1949), the Town wanted State help for schools. I was against it...I had a neighbor—every Town Meeting he got up and said how much money we were losing by not accepting state aid for the schools. I always got up and said when you accept state aid you're going to lose all the control of your schools. When I wouldn't run again, he accepted the Selectman's position. Got state aid for all the schools. Six years after, I was up the visiting. He says 'I've come to the conclusion you was right. We don't have a darn thing to say about how we run our schools...They come up and told us, you got to have three school rooms and three teachers. I says, "How come?" "Well, the State requires us." The only reason we're moving the schoolhouse: we've got to put in heat and toilets. Up on that knoll by the Town House, I don't know where you'd find any water. So we moved it.'".

At the expense of \$6940.99, the schoolhouse was moved, a basement constructed with oil heat, and water piped in from a well dug at the old parsonage across the road. (The Parsonage burned in 1939.)

From a 1996 interview with Harold Andrews, the water system did not always work well—the pipe at the bottom of the well would get covered with silt, and it was a long way for the pump to draw water. After the school closed in 1968, the water was not used. In 2001 Harold gave the Chatham Historical Society \$3000 for the purpose of getting water to the building again. He also sent a note with a description of the system that was installed in 1957. "Under the road was a 4-inch (sleeve) pipe so the road would not have to be dug up again to replace the water pipe. The pipe is one inch all the way with a 1 inch check valve in the well. I borrowed a post hole digger from Louville Emerson and tested between the library and the road and found layers of sand about three feet thick and layers of clay 6 to ten inches, down to about 20 feet deep. The parsonage had a well near where the schoolhouse well was dug."

This year was the summer to restore water to the schoolhouse! Thanks to Carl Perry for his time and experience, Steve Eastman for his assistance, Jeff Perry for the excavator, and L.A. Drew for trucking the excavator, as well as help from several others, the project was completed at \$3004! The well was dug out to make a bigger reservoir of water, new water line and electrical line were laid, a pump was positioned inside the well and the old sleeve under the road was right there as Harold said so we didn't need to dig up the road again! Currently, we have an outside faucet.

Fire in the White Mountains, cont'd Farther north in the Cold River Valley, the Andrews family could see the fire behind Baldface according to George Andrews. At the schoolhouse in Chatham Center, the smoke was so thick that

lamps had to be lit for the students to see, as Gertrude Johnson Haley and Everett Eastman remembered.

Fortunately, rains came in mid-June, ending the drought and greening up the forest. It was not until 1948, after the devastating **Brownfield Fire** in 1947, that the Saco Valley Fire Association was formed and fire-fighting equipment improved and standardized.

The **Basin Rim Fire** in 1963 was fought by many residents of Chatham including Frank Eastman, Jim Wilfong, and George Andrews. We will have more on this fire in a future newsletter.

Woodland & Roadside

Vol. II Boston, September 1, 1903 No. 3

White Mountain Forest Fires

People who have been into the eastern sections of the White Mountains this summer bring back frightful tales of the devastation of the forest fires which raged there in May and June. The Forestry Commissioners of New Hampshire in their last report declared that there had been no forest fires of any moment in their state for something like twenty years. They felt that the danger of disastrous fires in so well watered a country was very remote. The remote contingency arose this spring, however, and because the regions which chiefly suffered were not adequately patrolled and protected the State of New Hampshire is considerably poorer today, and the saddest fact is this, that it will be many generations before the damage can be repaired even in a small degree. It is stated that the Wild River Lumber company, one of the severest sufferers, has been wiped out. Certain it is that several square miles of its forests in the Wild River valley, lying in the towns of Jackson and Chatham and in Bean's Purchase, and stretching from the Carter-Moriah range on the west and north to Mts. Meader and Baldface on the east and south, lie today a blackened waste. Even the sparse scrub upon the almost naked summit of Baldface has been burned out, and on the slopes of the mountains in the timber the rocks are stripped clean of every vestige of moss and humus. It is a terrible study in black and white – burned trees standing black from root to topmost twig, and rocks left naked and glaring white.

After the fires came torrential rains. What was left of the former logging railroad of the Wild River Company was seized upon by the whirling waters and reduced to further chaos. On the steep slopes of the mountains, the guardian forests, with once dense canopy and spreading and clinging roots, were reduced by fire to an array of great sable bristles. The rains fell for days and washed out from every nook and cranny the very last particle of soil which the fire had overlooked. A winter's snows and winds will pile the debris over the rocks. The charred timber will slowly rot – very slowly, since the charring repels the elements and fungi and insects which assist in rapid decay – and so in time, if the waters be merciful and refrain from washing out the little grains as they fall, will soil again form.

And as to the cause of this fire. Many have been asked, and the reply is invariably, "Unknown." It is suspected by some that a spark from the locomotive of the logging train started it. This is denied by the company, it is said. Whatever the cause, the pertinent inquiry now should be: Were those forests properly safeguarded by an adequate patrol in that menacingly protracted drought? Although the lumber company is the direct loser, the State is also injured by the loss, and the people should have the right to make this inquiry, and the further right to compel a forest land owner to defend his property against fire. Very likely the State should pay a part of the cost of the patrol service, but it should likewise be obligatory upon the owner to do his part when his shortsightedness or avarice dictated economizing at this end. It is high time that the federal government carried out the scheme now afoot to take these mountain slopes and establish a forest reserve. The United States forest engineers have been in the mountains all summer making a survey with this end in view. It is to be hoped that Congress will delay no longer, but at its next session will push through the necessary acts to secure forever to rational treatment the forests of the Southern Appalachian Mountains and our own White Hill.

Board of Directors

President, Jeanne Eastman
Vice President, Sheryl Emery
Secretary, Ann Fargo
Treasurer, Beverly Aiman
Directors
Judy Bailey
Steve Eastman
Emily Fernald

Contact Info

1061 Main Road
Chatham, NH 03813
603-694-2099
chathamnhhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
www.chathamhistoricalnh.org

Museum is open Fridays
Noon-2 PM
Or by appointment

Gifts

Mrs. Roger Barnes—copies of Roger Barnes' mementos of the Vietnam War.

Jane Wilshusen & family—Notes on a 1990's visit with Louise Mann on growing up with Willie and Eldor Stone at farm that the Wilshusens now own.

Cora Grace Evans—Grace and Garland family history.

Roberta Chandler—permission to transcribe Millard Chandler's diaries, starting with 1932.



Carter Dome Horse Trail, horse hauling supplies 1927

Coming Events

November 16—Holiday Bazaar at the East Conway Community Hall, 9AM-2PM. We will have several local artists selling their work. We hope to have raffle items and lunch for sale. Come and get your shopping done early!

We are also thinking about having workshops and classes at our Schoolhouse. If you have a skill you'd like to share or one you would like to learn, please let us know. Some ideas so far—painting, wreath making, dried flower arrangements, photography, felting, rug braiding.

Dues are Due!

Our Society appreciates the support, financial and physical, of all our members. We couldn't do what we do without you! If you have not yet paid your dues for this year (\$10 per person per year, or \$100 for life) we hope that you will appreciate this reminder and renew your membership. Thank You!

Also Donations are gratefully accepted for :

General Building Fund
ADA Accessibility Project
Awards for High School Seniors

Veteran's Memorial-\$100 for pavers with a
veteran's name engraved

School Lessons

On June 7th, Mrs. Howard, a teacher in Livermore, Maine, in 1853, stopped by our schoolhouse, hoping to speak with the School Board about obtaining a teaching position here. Mrs. Howard was portrayed by Willi Irish of Washburn Norlands Living History Center, which specializes in bring history to life by role playing. Unfortunately, some Chatham scholars, in the spirit of role playing, played hooky that day. But the many scholars that filled our classroom had a taste of school in 1853, reciting poems with moral lessons from the reading books, and giving proper answers to questions in arithmetic. No one had to be sent to the woodshed nor rapped on the knuckles with the ferrule.

Check the website, www.Norlands.org, or call 207-287-4366 to learn about other programs that Norlands provides or to schedule a visit to the Center for an enjoyable step back in time.



Chatham School Memories

In a 2007 interview with Alfred Hanscom, Alfred remembered, “I spent sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at the Eastman School. This was taught by Alice and Susie Charles, both excellent teachers. They had a lot of books, so if I learned my lessons quickly, I could read all the books in the school while the others were getting their lessons. In back were a lot of softwood trees with low branches, and we would play tree tag across the branches, never touching the ground, just leaping from one tree to the other. Remarkably, there were never any broken necks or bones. We had a lot of fun doing that.

Then when I graduated from eighth grade, I went to Fryeburg Academy from 1939 to 1943. Nearly 100% of the fellows, upon graduation in 1943 went into the Service, World War II. In riding the school bus for four years, we knew all the households along the route. In my senior year, there was such a shortage of manpower due to the war, that Mister LaCasce, the Principal, drove the bus for a while, and then he got so busy he couldn’t do it. So from home, for three or four months of that year, I drove the bus myself, and that was fun.”

2019 Town Picnic



Lawrence, Dick and Bill Perry



Matt Gunther and John Callen, donut eating contest

News From the Treasurer

Good Day to all. I would like to introduce myself; my name is Beverly Aiman. I was elected as the Treasurer of the Chatham Historical Society this year. I have some very big shoes to fill following Doug MacPherson. It has been a very exciting start to my term—there have been an amazing number of membership renewals for a year or for life. We had an awesome raffle this year—a painting by Ann Landers of a barn located on Rt. 113. We raised a total of \$626.00, and the winning ticket was drawn at our annual picnic. The lucky winner was Laura Wood of Tyngsboro, MA.

In addition to our annual picnic, we had a tasty ice cream social, with all the goodies being donated. From the ice cream social we made \$150.00 and accepted \$50.00 in donations. Let's not forget Frank Eastman's talk about Chatham which was a great success; DVD's are on sale now for \$15.00

As people have been renewing their membership they have been adding extra for donations to our building fund, scholarship fund and general donations. I am very amazed at the generosity of our Society and grateful for your support of our Historical Society Home.

Enjoy this great fall weather!

Beverly Aiman

New Sale Items

DVD of Stories of Old Chatham, told by Frank Eastman \$15
Boot Jacks \$10
Antique Wooden Milk Crates \$10
Chatham History \$35
Coverlets \$50
T Shirts \$12
And more

In Memory

Diane Thuot, 73, of Chatham and her husband, Richard, d. June 25, 2019. Predeceased by her husband Richard. Survived by daughter Laurie Eastman and grandchildren Richard and Liana,

Membership Form

\$10.00 /person/year

Due by May 1

\$100.00 life member

Name	
Address	
Email	
Winter	
Dues	
Donation	
Building Fund	
Total	

