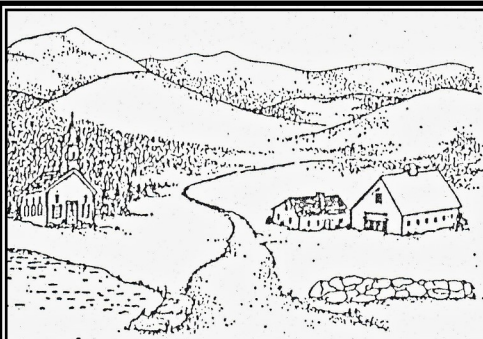




Chatham Times

Past and Present

Local Artists Help with Fundraising



John Rondeau waiting for morning visitors

We have had a wonderful summer of fundraising fueled by local artists. With in-person events and gatherings canceled due to the pandemic, we went virtual, with auctions and raffles through Facebook, our website, and email. Thanks to Bill Perry for managing everything happening on Facebook, and to Margaret Lunn for keeping our website up to date!

We thank John Rondeau, who donated nine nature photographs, four of which were sold in auctions on Facebook. Many thanks (and congratulations) also to the top bidders, Andrea Wheaton, Chris Perry, Dale McClure, and Cindy Lawrence, as well as to all who bid and to those who pledged additional monetary donations.

John Rondeau was a third-generation mechanic in Woodstock, CT. He has always loved nature, and 25 years ago he took up photography. He and his wife, Lisa, hiked all of the 4000-foot mountains in NH, and began looking for a secluded cabin to buy. In 2008 they found the right one! In 2016, John sold out of the mechanic business, and moved here full time to enjoy nature and photograph his wild, native neighbors.

Thanks to Silas Eastman, who made four Adirondack chairs for us. We held a limited raffle on Facebook of two chairs. Tickets sold out in four hours. Congratulations to Chuck Wilcox, the happy winner. To give more members and folks a

chance, another limited raffle was held for two more chairs. At press time, the winner had not yet been drawn.

Silas Eastman took up a hammer at a very early age, working with spare lumber from his father's, Steve, mill and any bucket of nails he could find in the barn. At six years old, he designed and built his first picnic table. At Fryeburg Academy, any spare moments were spent in the wood-working shop where his projects were getting more complex. At Colby College he was a studio art major. He continues to work on his dream of making furniture and functional art.

A local artist of another flavor, Bob Benes, helped us out with our Virtual Ice Cream Social by donating 100 pints of ice cream which were pre-sold for curbside pickup at our schoolhouse. Over the years, Bob has had ice cream shops in West Ossipee, Fryeburg, and East Conway, and last summer he opened a roadside ice cream shed (open by chance!) at his house in Stow. Over the years Bob has also built several simple, beautiful houses, and claims he has built his final one, where he has now resided for seven years.

We currently have an old-fashioned raffle underway. Actually it is five raffles in one. (Cont'd on page 5)



Silas Eastman, 6 years old, at his picnic table

Notes from the President

Despite the trying times this summer with the Pandemic and social-distancing and the cancellation of so many normal activities, I feel that a lot of good has happened. At the Chatham Historical Society, I have seen us become very creative in our fundraising efforts and our meetings. I have been so impressed by the generosity of people at our auctions and raffles, some even buying tickets to benefit others in our community. Our meetings have taken place outdoors, physically-distant but socially-close, and full of good ideas and good feelings. We have had several members volunteer to help us update our cemetery records. We have had people agreeing to write articles for our newsletter and for the 'Stories of Old Chatham' portion of our virtual Ice Cream Social, and sharing historical information in interviews.

We would love to receive old-fashioned letters, or emails, from our members sharing your connections to Chatham; no letters will be shared or published without your permission. Here is my connection: *Steve's family moved to Chatham in 1796. His grandfather sold the farm in 1917, and Steve bought a portion of the original farm back when he was fresh out of college. I married into Chatham 29 years ago. Our boys were born here at home. Does that make them natives?? I think it was Sim Charles who said, "Just because a cat has her kittens in the oven, that doesn't make them muffins!"*

I'd also like to share that we have received a grant from the Henney Historical Fund. This will be used to purchase plastic sleeves to preserve and organize our collection of photographs, and to purchase a hard-drive backup system for our computer.

I hope you'll check our website, www.chathamhistoricalnh.org to enjoy some Chatham history. We have plans to continue expanding the site, with pages for 'kids of all ages', cemetery records, and a store. We welcome your help in executing these plans – we need creative, youthful minds as well as minds (and nimble fingers) that like entering data on a computer. You can help from the comfort of your own home! Please get in touch if you'd like to know more about how you could help.

Thank you all for your support!

Jeanne Eastman

Board of Directors

President, Jeanne Eastman
Vice President, Sheryl Emery
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NH 03813
chathamnhhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
www.chathamhistoricalnh.org
603-307-0783

Open Hours: by appointment
Please call or email.
We are happy to help you!

Donations

Emily Fernald - Books: History & Memories of N Fryeburg, ME & Fryeburg Harbor, by Diane Jones; and Union Hall, Home of Mountain-View Grange, East Conway.

Judy Bailey – an old pocket watch found at Royce House by a metal-detector hobbyist.

George & Sandy Apthorpe – Letters and Post-cards from Abbie Weeks

Ricky Eastman, Dale Eastman, George Fernald – monetary donations

And many others who have added monetary donations in with their dues.

Our Old House - by Joy Voter

We always knew we wanted an old house. The character and the stories held within the walls of an old house aren't something that can be replicated in new construction. It's the accumulation of years, boards beaten by the sun and rain and wind. It's births and deaths and marriages and the patterns of ordinary days in between them. The history of a home cannot be separated from the history of the people who built it, inhabited it, made it their own. And so it was, that when we fell in love with the character of our 200 year old home, it naturally led us to be curious about the people who had called it home before we did. Whose feet wore those depressions in the old wood floors, after centuries of heels hitting the same spot while stepping over the thresholds? Who was it that bent over the open fireplace, cooking supper for her family in a steaming kettle, suspended by the iron arm that is still present today in our fireplace? Who wore himself out day after day shaping and placing these giant hewn beams by hand, constructing this home the hard way to put a roof over his family's head?



Voter House

We've wondered about these things for the 9 years that we've owned this beautiful, quirky, character-filled home. But, given the dynamics of our household, we never really made time to pursue answers to our questions. One of the strange gifts the Covid Crisis has given us is time to pursue the things that would otherwise get passed by in favor of more "urgent" things. So, in the early days of the shutdown, we started digging into old records. Micah took on the registry of deeds, tracing the property ownership back as far as he could, providing me with names of former inhabitants. Armed with the names and dates he provided, I began looking for the matching names within the US Census records, along with the South Chatham Cemetery, where many of them are buried.

As of 1820, as far back as we've managed to get (so far), it appears that Joseph H. Gordon, son of Hugh and Gordon of Stow, lived here with his wife Mary/Polly Dresser and their 7 children. Whether they build it or bought it we don't know. By the 1830 census they had 9 children. The ell was not here yet, so the house would have consisted of only the main cape portion, meaning a maximum of 1,500 square feet for 11 people. No insulation, single pane windows, a "kitchen" consisting of the aforementioned arm over the open fire; a brick oven, and an out-house. I don't know much about Joseph and Mary Gordon, but I think it's safe to assume they were resourceful, resilient and hardworking. It seems to me that just staying alive under those circumstances, keeping body and soul together (especially so many bodies and souls), would have required a high level of skill, ingenuity and sheer grit that more recent generations, myself included, have lost. I'm sure the things I consider hardships, current crisis included, are nothing compared to what their lives looked like on a daily basis. Joseph and Mary lived to be 90 and 89 years old, respectively, in an era where so few people made it to a ripe old age; another testament to their resilience and grit.

We had heard somewhere years ago that this house had been passed down through the women in the family, although I can't recall who gave us that bit of information. Our research proved it to be true, as 5 generations of women/girls in that family line made their home here over the course of a century. Orpha (Gordon?) Fife, presumably one of Joseph and Mary's daughters, married William Fife, who came to live here with her at the home-stead while Joseph and Mary still ran the farm. Eventually as Joseph and Mary aged, the house was passed on to William and Orpha, and then to William and Orpha's daughter Rilla. Rilla married Seth Webb, who came to live here with her. To our knowledge Seth and Rilla only had one daughter, Inez. Inez married Ned Bryant, who again came to live here with his wife. Although we don't know the circumstances of it, Inez died as a young woman in 1910, the same year her daughter Hildred was born. Perhaps she died in childbirth? The baby Hildred died the following year, leaving Seth and Rilla without children or grandchildren, the end of their line. Having buried her daughter and granddaughter, Rilla was last woman surviving in the Gordon-Fife-Webb-Bryant line. After Seth died, Rilla sold off most of the land (1924), keeping only a couple of acres to go with the house. Eventually the house was sold as well in 1943.

(Continued on Page 4)

(Our Old House -Continued from page 3)

The house changed hands a couple of times in 1943 and 1954, although we don't know anything about those owners other than names. In 1954 Ray and Jean Curtis bought the home. As part of the purchase agreement, they were required to take down the giant original barn, which had been bisected by the new property line when Rilla sold off the farmland years before. (As a side note, we had seen the big pieces of cut granite piled oddly in the woods, and wondered what it had been, not discovering until much later that it was the remains of the barn foundation.) The Curtises also installed the first indoor plumbing in the early 1960s, removing the brick oven so that the toilet could claim that spot. The Curtises loved this home, and enjoyed being summer residents of Chatham for about 55 years.

We ultimately bought the house from the Curtis estate in 2011, making us only the 5th family to own the home its 200 years of existence (as far as we know). We've made our own marks on the house, modifying the home to suit the needs of our household, as each of its former inhabitants did before us. In the process we've discovered treasures hidden within the walls, uncovered character left by the former occupants as well as added our own layers of character. Our heels hit the same depressions in the floor, wearing them ever deeper. We warm ourselves by the same hearth and grow vegetables in the same soil. Our children play in the same yard, dig worms out of the same dirt, and go fishing in the same brook. So much has changed since Joseph and Mary Gordon lived here with their children 200 years ago. But in many ways, some of the most important parts of "home" are still the same.



Joseph Gordon's Gravestone

A Memory of Rilla Webb by George Fernald

It was customary for ladies to bring their children to visit the elderly. My mother would bring me to visit Rilla Webb when I was 5 or 6. Rilla Webb was an elderly widow. She always would comment that the babies were cute. I remember her saying about me, in her scratchy, old voice, "My, doesn't he have a nice shaped head."



Left to right—Richard Chandler, Lucretia Chandler, Henrietta Chandler (Wellington's wife), Millard Chandler, Georgie Chandler, Rilla Webb, Charles Chandler, Wellington Chandler, Evelyn Chandler, Keat Chandler, Fred Lusky, Fred Burke

Millard Chandler mentioned in his diary, January 17, 1943: Josselyns decided to buy Rilla Webb Place. Rilla Webb spent some years before the sale living at the Royce House in North Chatham. She died November 5, 1945 at the Royce House.

New Members

Michael Hill - Life
Paul Reiss - Life
Barbara Dall
Joan Roberts
Louise Perry - Life



Bob Benes, serving his first ice cream cones at Bobbi Sue's, West Ossipee

(Fundraising—Continued from page 1)

(The back page of this newsletter has photos of the prizes, as well as tickets. Mark on each ticket the prize you would like to win with that ticket. We encourage you to make copies of the tickets to share with your family, neighbors and friends. We must receive tickets and money by October 10th.)

Many thanks to the artists who donated these items. Fran West lives on the shore of Lower Kimball pond where she practices the joy of photography; at www.franwestphotography.com you can see more of her work. Ann Landers is a long-time volunteer at the AMC Cold River Camp and loves to paint Chatham barns. Ellie Waterman, our Chatham School Bus Driver, usually crochets and knits while waiting in her bus at events, but had an unusual amount of time to work on projects this summer. Kathleen Panno, of Stow, has mastered many different hobbies and crafts over the years; she can be reached at 207-697-2047 to order custom mittens. Marjorie Talako vacations at a quiet cabin

in North Chatham whenever she can. Other felted birds of hers can be found on the Web at Etsy, Birds of New England.

We also are working to set up a virtual store on our website. Items currently can be seen at our schoolhouse by appointment (call or email!). We have photos and several copies Fran West's book, *Oh Look! Baby Loons!*; nature photos by John Rondeau; and crocheted carriage blankets, an afghan, and knitted dish clothes by Barbara Eastman. We also have our Chatham t-shirts, our Chatham history book, Chatham coverlets, Holiday greeting cards, boot jacks, and more. And just in, Chatham bumperstickers and magnets!



Color bumper stickers and magnets

Upcoming Events

October 10, 10 AM

Tour of Little Chatham Road with Doug Burnell

to learn the history of cellar holes, cattle pounds, and schoolhouses.

Meet at Chatham/Conway line on Little Chatham Road

Moderate walking required.

We Need Your Email Addresses !

Please help us update our address book!

If you have not been receiving emails from us this summer, it is because we do not have your address. There has been a lot of interesting and important information to share with you between newsletters. Please send us your email address at chathamnhhistoricalsociety@gmail.com. Thanks! We'd like to be sure to include you!



The full color Christmas cards above are available for sale for \$2.50 each, 3 for \$6 or 5 for \$8.50. Order by Nov. 1

Chatham Historical Society Award

by Matthew Gunther



Matt Gunther at the glades on South Baldface

My name is Matthew Gunther and I am proud to say that I have been living in Chatham for my entire life. My sister and I are the only two kids that live on Robbins Hill Rd, the dead-end right by the church, library, and town hall. Growing up here was probably one of the best things that could have ever happened to me. Sure, living in a typical neighborhood has its perks, but living in the middle of nowhere has more. To start, you can't necessarily explore a town like you can Chatham. I am a very active teenager who loves adventures, so living in Chatham is sort of the best-case scenario for me. While the average person might think that there's nothing to do here, I've searched for and found many of the hidden treasures in this small new Hampshire town. There are numerous amounts of hiking trails only minutes away, outstandingly beautiful rivers and waterfalls, and most importantly to me, a sense of peace that you can't find anywhere else. It's perfect in ways that are unexplainable. It's only fifteen minutes to the nearest town, thirty minutes from the famous North Conway, and two minutes away from the best corner store in northern New England. Chatham is also a gateway to the White Mountain National Forest, which brings endless opportunities for new experiences and adventure. All-in-all, I am so glad that our parents raised us in this north woods paradise and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

Membership Form

\$10.00 /person/year

Name	
Address	
Email	
Winter	
Dues	
Donation	
Building Fund	
Total	

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