

In the spring 1982 CRC Committee meeting a resolution was passed that “a CRC Historian will be charged with the responsibility of maintaining a photographic, written and/or oral record of CRC history as a continuing reference for those responsible for policy, planning and daily operation of CRC”. In a November 13, 1982 memo from Don Allen to Guy Papale, chairman of the committee at that time, Don stated among other things that there is no current need for a new history of CRC because:

“The acquisition of CRC and the early years are detailed in Frank Mason’s article, ‘Cold River Camp’ in the 50th anniversary number of APPALACHIA, February 1926, page 362.

The history of the first 25 years, and the transition to present-day operation and management, is excellently told by Luella Otis Beaman, ‘The Growth of Cold River Camp’ in APPALACHIA for December 1944, page 176. (See also ‘Little Deer Dispatch’ – number 15, page 20-24).

The record is carried forward and expanded by Carl Gary’s pamphlet, ‘Cold River Camp A.M.C. 1919-1969. (This was later expanded to ‘Cold River Camp Reflections 1919 – 1986 ‘)’

Don goes on to say that “there have been no important changes since 1969 that would seem to cry out for a new full-length history.”

In a little more than a decade CRC will have its 100th anniversary and even now the most notable building in camp will have its 100th birthday. It is time to update CRC’s history. This, I hope, will be a start, to be placed on a future ColdRiverCamp.org web site that can be updated by others and myself. Don states in his memorandum that this history of CRC “seems too large (and too important) a job to commit to a single historian or even to a small committee.” With the advent of the Internet the entire CRC community including the CRC committee that is responsible for the health and operation of Cold River Camp can keep this history.

My own interest in this history dates back to about the 26th anniversary of CRC as a 15 year old Crewmember. Since that time I have served on several committees starting around 1960 when I returned from six years in Alaska. Starting in 1975 I started bringing my new family to CRC and continued to do so until we completed the Hedgehog Hillton a half-mile south of CRC in 2000. I am now happy to act as an advisor to CRC. After being involved in buying land for CRC and later 100 acres for my own HH from C. Harry Eastman, I became interested in the origin of Chatham and it’s original settlers. This is an on-going process but I have managed to trace back the original land purchased by Frank Mason, Ted Conant et al as described under CRC Land History below..

The history that I’m adding now is not so much about the traditions of CRC or about the people involved in its founding and operation. It is more about the physical and environmental changes that have occurred even going back more than 200 years to trace the ownership of the original 40 acres of land which AMC bought in 1919 (actually the 40 became 38 because of the right of way of the major road running the length of Chatham). It will attempt to describe the changes in the camp infrastructure including major structural changes. These changes were made for various reasons by approximately 24 different committees as building and health codes and AMC itself changed. Unfortunately most of the committee records from 1919 through the 60’s seem to be missing. Carl Gary however was able to chronicle some of the changes through either personal recollection or records that he was able to obtain. It is my hope that others may be able to find old records and or recollections that can be used to augment the history.

I went to the archives at 5 Joy St. in May 2007 to find out what they might have that would shed some light on the early history of CRC. The most valuable item they had was a collection of old photographs taken around 1919 and donated by Ben English Jr. It would be good to have a copy of these photographs to add to the collection made by Bobbie Kaufman and which is located in the CRC library.

The backdrop if you will is Chatham itself which, although it has changed a lot less through its approximately 200 years of settled history, than most towns. It still has a town house with no plumbing; the town clerk has office hours in her house once a week for 2 hours; Barbara Eastman holds forth in the Chatham library and historical society building every Wednesday afternoon. There is no zoning, no building inspector and only relatively recently was forced by the state to form a planning board. There once were five elementary schools in town. Now there are none. The kids have to be bussed to Lovell. There once were three post offices in town now there are none and the Chatham zip code is Center Chatham. The population of Chatham when CRC was founded was slightly less than it is now (226 in 1920, 260 in 2000). Of course what is now route 113 (also called Main Road) was a meandering dirt road which ran from South Chatham over Robbins Hill past CRC to the Brickett Place. The road over Robbins Hill was closed when the town fathers decided not to rebuild the bridge across Langdon Brook after a "freshet" wiped it out in the 50's. Thus one cannot get to Center or North Chatham without going through Maine. Of course the reason for the five schools, is the kids had to walk to school. According to Harry Eastman who grew up next door (and later sold some of the farmland he inherited to AMC) the road through town was not plowed until 1931. Instead the road was rolled with a huge roller pulled by oxen or draft horses after a storm. Cars were placed on blocks for the winter and a sleigh pulled by a light horse was used for transportation.

The following written a little more than a decade after the founding of CRC by George Evans of CTA expresses the bucolic nature of the North Chatham

"This seclusion and unspoiled naturalness is one of the compelling charms of the valley. There is a blessed absence of hot dog stands and amusement places, No blatant signboard intrudes its shrieking vulgarity upon the purple splendor of the Royces. The roadsides are unlettered with the debris of slovenly motor luncheon parties. The forests are still immune from the devastating cigarette stub. As you pass a fox slips over a stonewall and silently fades into the green shadows. A portly 'chuck raises his head inquiringly from his clover patch. The mellow tinkle of a distant cowbell filters through the drowsy summer afternoon. The cows are coming home and the long brown road will presently bring you into camp. Only here in all the wide world can you go 'a-purpling' at the hour of the hermit's vesper song".

CRC Land History (see also "the Mystery of the Mill Place" Little Deer Dispatch – number 14)

The 38 acres sold to AMC by Wilford Robbins on June 6, 1919 were originally 40 acres belonging to one of the first settlers in Chatham, William Abbott, who was "quieted" this land by the original proprietors of Chatham in 1792. It was reduced by two acres when the right-of-way for the main thoroughfare of Chatham passed at the western edge of the property sometime between 1866 and 1896. It is located in the northeast portion Lot 1 of Range 1 that also includes land quieted to two other early settlers, Paul Chandler to the south and Jonas Wyman to the west now owned by the Wardwells across the road. There is no record of the transaction in the Grafton County registry of deeds but the when the land was sold by Abbott to Asa Eastman in 1798 it is described as a rectangle 144 rod along the northern border of Chatham and 45 rods along the provincial line (at that time with Massachusetts). A full Lot is 160 rods (1/2 mile) east west and 100 rods north south. Note that at that time Paul Chandler also owned part (144 x 45) of Lot 2, Range 1 and all of Lot 3, Range 1. Jonas Wyman's land also extended into the western part of Lot 2, Range 1.

This parcel was passed down through the Eastman family until Kimball Eastman, the great grandson of Asa, sold it in 1896 to Charles S. Chandler, the great grandson of the Paul Chandler mentioned above.. Ten years later in 1906 Chandler sold the property to Wilford Robbins a non-resident who among other things loved to tramp around the mountains in that part of the world. Shortly before he bought the property he stayed at the Chandler Farm that was run by the Chandler family. It is the large farmhouse (vastly modified by the current owners) immediately south of CRC. In addition to the land, Robbins was also deeded the rights to a spring across the road in 1910 by Preston Chandler, another great grandson of Paul.

In addition to the land he sold to AMC on June 6 1919, Robbins included all six major buildings and most of their contents and the rights to the spring. He reserved the right to remove millstones on the property. In the "ORIGINAL PROSPECTUS, 1919", see "Little Deer Dispatch" – number 13, Frank Mason mentions "the deed covers two excellent springs of water, a small water-power, a considerable grove of pine and spruce, a well-made tennis court and six bungalow-type buildings, all quite recently built ..."

I'm still investigating where the spring referred to in the deed is – I think it's probably the one that the Wardwells currently use as Preston Chandler sold his farm to Oscar Williams, Dorothy Wardwell's father, in 1920. Martin Larrabee, the son of Dr. Ralph Larrabee, president of AMC, stayed a camp with his parents (and a dog) in September 1920 – 1923. In a memo he wrote to me in 1994 he recalled "a fine four-bladed water wheel that Mr. Porter set in one of the channels where the river coursed between The Ledges before the dam was built".

When this property was deeded to Kimball Eastman in 1866 it was referred to as the Mill Farm (and later as the Mill Place). In 1805 all towns in New Hampshire were required to produce a map of the town including things like lakes and mountains. A copy of this map in the state archives indicates the location of the Mill Place Falls. In addition old tax records shows that Asa Eastman had to pay a mill tax but it is doubtful that he ever built a house on this property. Obviously the land was used for grazing at one time and there are the remains of some sort of structure near Larry's Lair. (Perhaps CRC should get an archeologist to investigate it). Carl Gary in "Reflections" mentions that Millard Chandler talked about his great grandfather bringing grain to be milled at the Baker gristmill. It is possible that he lived at least part of the time in this structure. The mystery continues.

I have attempted without much success to find out more about "The Ledges" which Wilford Robbins created. It was obviously more than a summer home for him. The following information that I obtained from Randy Bennett of the Bethel Historical Society is from BETHEL CITIZEN, 15 Sept. 1927:

"Wilford Lash Robbins entered into rest at his home in Bethel known as Birchmont Farm on Monday, September 5th. He had been a resident of Bethel for eleven years, but owing to increasing ill health he had lived more and more in retirement as the years passed."

"Dr. Robbins was born in Boston, August 7, 1859, educated at the Roxbury Latin School and a graduate of Amherst College, 1881. He entered the Cambridge Divinity School and upon graduation there spent a year abroad in study. He was ordained a deacon in the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1884 and a year later advanced to the priesthood. After two years as rector of the Church of Our Redeemer, Lexington, Mass., he was called to be Dean of All Saints Cathedral in Albany"

"While in Albany he became widely known as a brilliant preacher and as the author of two books, 'An Essay Toward Faith' and 'A Christian Apologetic'."

"After 17 years in Albany, he was called to be Dean of the General Theological Seminary (GTS). His administration there was noteworthy and the Seminary reached the high point of efficiency. Increasing ill health brought on a physical breakdown and he retired to Bethel in 1918. Dr. Robbins held doctor's degrees from Amherst, Hobart, St. Stephens, and Princeton Colleges"

"In his earlier years he was a keen sportsman and was one of the first to go into the wilds of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Cape Breton in a search of game. As a boy and young man he knew almost every foot of the White Mountains, having ranged among them during many summers with some of the famous guides of the time. It was this early love of the mountains that drew him back again to make this region his home".

Randy goes on to say Robbins house and farm buildings were actually in Mason but the house burned in the 1930's when it was owned by Edmund Smith (see "Reflections").

Robbins was about 44 when he became Dean at the GTS, 47 when he bought "The Ledges" property and 59 when he retired to Bethel in 1918 and put "The Ledges" up for sale.

It would be nice to get more information about "The Ledges". The librarian at GTS could not find any information about it.

The CRC property has grown to over 100 acres with the following purchases:

1. 12/24/1920 from Madison O. Charles, about 2 acres on the northern border of the original 38 acres near its middle and extended the northern border to Charles Brook. This was probably done so that CRC could get water from the small reservoir on Charles Brook mentioned in "Reflections".
2. 6/22/1937 from Georgia P. Chandler, about 10 acres to the north of and abutting the original CRC land and bounded on the west by the road and north and east by Madison O. Charles land. This parcel includes several acres on the north side of Charles Brook. It abuts land on which the North Chatham School was situated until 1950?? Georgia was the widow of Charles S. Chandler who sold the original AMC land to Wilford Robbins. It is not clear why AMC bought this land. Perhaps because the trail from CRC towards the Baldface Circle Trail went across part of the purchase.
3. 5/7/1977 from E. Walton and Mary Ellen Charles, approximately 4 acres abutting the original AMC property. The purchase of this land along with the two purchases mentioned above brought the entire original northern border up to Charles Brook. It is interesting to note that the committee wished to buy another 15 acres on the north side of Charles Brook. It presumably would have extended the northern border of the purchase # 2 to the state line. AMC refused it. This purchase was made as CRC was worried about the proposed Army Corp of Engineers proposed dam north of CRC and felt they needed protection. It should be noted that these 3 land purchases were in land that was originally not part of Chatham but in Gilman's grant annexed to Chatham in 1823.
4. 10/1/1958 from Lucretia P. Chandler and Fannie E. C. Hill less than an acres on the south east side of the original property which extended the property from the state line to the thread of the Cold River. Also see 5.
5. 1/30/1958 from (see above), approximately 4 acres running from the road to the thread of the Cold River along the southern border of the original property plus the previous. This was done as some of the southern cabins were very close to the old border. Apparently they found that Greely straddled the border.
6. 8/28/1984 from C. Harry Eastman, an 11-acre strip approximately 500 feet wide bordering that described above running from the road to the thread of the Cold River. At the western end of this strip lies the Chandler cemetery dating to 1780 and is deeded to Chatham. This land was bought mainly from proceeds of the sale of Arnold Lahee paintings donated by his daughter.
7. 11/28/1986 from C. Harry Eastman, an approximately 32 acre strip 545 feet wide running from the road to the thread of the Cold River and adjoining the strip described above. In addition the 6 acres in Maine is about 964 feet wide and its eastern border is the thread of the Cold River and its southern border is a line parallel to its northern border. The money for the New Hampshire portion of this property was a donation of the Hanna family in the name of Sarah Hanna's father, Don Ross. In return they were allowed to build a cabin on the property that will eventually be turned over to AMC. Several members of the CRC community donated the money for the Maine part of the property. The reason for these latter purchase came from a resolution by the committee in the 70's to buy land adjacent to CRC when it became available to protect it from further development.

It is doubtful that CRC will add any more land to what it has. It does not need to. It is bounded on the west by a small strip of WMNF land called the Baldface Corridor and the Wardwell farm which is now owned jointly by the 4 children of Dorothy and Henry Wardwell; on the south by what remains of the former Chandler farm now owned by the McCabe's but is up for sale for over 1.5 million dollars: on the east by the WMNF; and on the north by land owned by Don Devine, land owned by Gary Punsky who has placed a conservation easement on his property and a small lot

with the old North Chatham Schoolhouse on it owned by Elise Earl. Furthermore the CRC property has almost ½ mile along Charles Brook and the same for Cold River not to mention two good swimming areas on the Cold River. There is also a small spring fed brook just below the Teahouse that runs constantly throughout the year regardless of drought or sub freezing temperatures..

CRC Infrastructure History

Here infrastructure refers to water and electrical distribution and sanitation.

For at least the first couple of years the water piped from the spring on the Preston Chandler farm mentioned above was used. It is not clear where it was used but at least it must have gone to the cooking area in the Lodge. It apparently stopped being used in 1921 or 1922 according to "Reflections". The Preston Chandler farm was sold to Oscar Williams, Dorothy Wardwell's father, in June of 1920. I would not be surprised that for whatever reason the water became unavailable because of this sale. In any case, apparently for a while water had to be brought up from Charles Brook by bucket. Probably in the early 20's a spring below Springhaven was found and the current Pump house built over it. A Fairbanks Morse shallow well pump was used to pump water to a wooden water tank on the site of the current "Men's". See also "Littler Deer Dispatch – number 12". Some time in the 50's?? a well was dug a few feet northeast of the pump house and lined with two 4' well casings. In 1953 or 1954 the water tank was removed and water was pumped to a pressure tank next to the old workshop. By this time the Fairbanks Morse gasoline pump was replaced by an electric pump that could be controlled remotely by a pressure switch. In the 80's the pressure tank, which was becoming unreliable, was removed and a pair of bladder tanks installed in the pump house along with a submersible pump in the well. Finally, in the 90's a UV system was installed in the pipe from the well and later replaced in 2005. The reason for the UV system is that just before camp was to open sometime in the 90's the water did not pass the test. The well was emptied, cleaned and sealed at the same time. The reason for the replacement was both the difficulty of changing the bulbs and obtaining bulbs for a unit no longer manufactured. (They should be replaced every couple of years). The original steel water pipes were replaced with plastic in the 60's??

Mention was made above about the water turbine in the Cold River. Was it used for low voltage lights in the Lodge?? Probably in the early 20's a Delco System consisting of a gasoline engine driven generator and 20 six-volt glass batteries was used to supply electricity for lights in the Lodge and kitchen and possibly in some other buildings. This System was placed in a small tower located at the current site of Housekeeping that was built in the 90's. Overhead wires from this system were used to bring power to the Lodge, kitchen and possibly other buildings. It was not used for the water pump but may have been used for a refrigerator in the kitchen. The Rural Electric Association (REA) was founded in 1935 to supply electric power to rural areas like Chatham. In 1938 this power came to Chatham that meant the Delco System could be removed. The tower continued to serve as the first separate Housekeeping. It is interesting to note that according to Harry Eastman the town wanted to install street lights along the main road through Chatham (now called Main Road) but fortunately it was found to be too expensive. In the 60's and 70's underground cables replaced the overhead wires.

Not much is known about the original sanitation systems. There were several outhouses around camp probably emptying into pits that occasionally had to be cleaned. Men's, Women's, Jack and Jill were around by the 40's but the date of their original appearance is unknown. Unfortunately there are few photographs of such structures. Originally, the waste from the toilets went into various cesspools and gray water went into drywells. Similar systems were installed in Barracks and Tower early on. In the 60's or 70's?? septic tanks were put in for all waste systems including the kitchen that also required a grease trap. These changes were made because new state codes required it. Note that a septic tank was placed at the end of the soil pipe at Manager's around 1986 but few knew about it until 20 years later when the soil pipe into the septic tank backed up

sewage because the tank had never been cleaned. CRC got permission from the state to run the output line from the septic tank to a dry well rather than a leach bed in 2005.

Major Buildings

Lodge

The “most major” and probably oldest building in Camp is the Lodge a.k.a. Conant Lodge also referred to as the Main Bungalow by Wilford Robbins. The actual date of its construction is not known but has been reported to be the first building on the “Ledges” property. Robbins bought the property in November 1906 and probably started the Lodge in either 1907 or 1908. There are several photographs of the original Lodge looking at it from the south around 1919 but none that I’m aware of from the north. The original Lodge obviously consisted of the common area west of the fireplace, a dining area east of the fireplace, and a kitchen with wood stove connected to the dining area with a pantry. From this pantry a set of stairs led to a small basement where root crops could be stored (as was done in 1945). Probably in the early 20’s?? the dining area was expanded towards the north by building a connecting shed on the north side and removing the windows (but not their frames) in back of the fireplace. A photograph in the Ben English collection shows a large door in the opening between the two parts of the expanded dining area – probably a back door to the Lodge. At some time in the 20’s or 30’s the kitchen area was expanded eastward to make way mainly for the large ice rooms. A new electric refrigerator was added in 1939 after the REA power became available. The ice for the ice rooms was cut from a pond on Mill Brook about a half-mile north of camp by local people and stored with sawdust for insulation in the Ice House. The remains of the ice pond dam can be seen next to Main Road. In 1952? several changes were made in the kitchen: the ice rooms were removed to be replaced by the walk in refrigerator; the wood stove was replaced by the current gas stove; a bake oven was installed to the east of the main stove. Dishes were washed by hand until sometime in the 60’s when a Hobart dishwasher was purchased (I was on a committee of two with Lathrop Merrick to select one). A newer dishwasher was purchased in the 90’s I don’t know when the porch north of the kitchen was built but it was closed in in the 80’s?? In the late 90’s the porch part of the dining room was extended westward to accommodate another table because the 12th table that had to be placed in the Lodge was considered to be a hazard. Unfortunately this made two of the Lodge windows non-functional. The handicap accessible ramp on the west end of the lodge was installed in the early 90’s?? after AMC mandated that full service facilities had to be made accessible to the handicapped. Other recent changes are paddle fans in the dining area; modern wiring, emergency lighted exit signs, doors that opened outwards and battery operated emergency lights. These were done following a report by Shawn Bergeron who was hired by AMC in 2004 to bring AMC facilities up to various safety codes. A major change was made in 2005 when all of the circuit breakers and transfer switch on the east wall of the kitchen were placed in a shed attached to this wall. At the same time 400-amp service was installed to replace the old 200-amp service. In 2006 a 27 KVA emergency generator was installed to replace the 8 KVA generator installed in the early 90’s because the 8 KVA unit could not be used without shutting off various circuits in the kitchen and had lost the ability to recharge its battery.

Ravine Cabins

The ravine cabins are singled out because they were the first cabins to be built and were designed by Frank Mason who Don Allen in his 1982 memo describes as: “Probably the single most important person in CRC history”. The dates when these cabins were built can be ascertained from the CRC Registers in which CRC guests (and frequently crew) signed when they arrived and their quarters assigned. They date back to 1919 but were discontinued in 19???. Incidentally 74 guests of the first CRC Valley Day on July 8, 1921 signed the 1921 Register including Millard Chandler and his father John from the Royce House (Henrietta, John’s wife was hosting the affair), Charles S. Chandler who originally owned the property and helped build the Lodge, Preston Chandler and the Wardwell’s who at that time owned the large house at the base

of Blueberry Mountain. Young Henry Wardwell latter married Dorothy Williams from across the street and eventually inherited the property originally owned by Preston Chandler.

The following is a list of all the “new” cabins including non-Ravine Cabins

1920

- *Choate – now Notchview
- *Alice
- *Potter
- New Villa
- *Carpenter – now Big Birch (according to “Reflections” the initial cabin)
- *Chalet
- *Baldface
- Birch - probably the same as Big Birch

1921

- Porter
- Jewett Villa (same as New Villa ?)
- *Hemlock

1922

- *Whipple – now Springhaven
- *Mohican
- Purple Mountain
- *Tall Pine
- Ledges – now Ledgeview ??
- *Little Deer
- Bicknell - Owl’s Nest ??

1923

- *Fernbank

1973 –4

- East/West Royce
- Meaderview
- Speckled Mountain

The Frank Mason designed ravine cabins are marked with *. They are truly unique cabins and might be called the trademark cabins of Cold River Camp. They were all built at their ravine location because of the beautiful mountain views to the north and the sound of Charles Brook not far away at the bottom of the ravine. With a lot of help over 87 years they have managed to keep their precarious perch on the edge of the steep slope leading to the ravine bottom. A good many of the original supporting timbers have been replaced with PT wood. Old railroad ties have been used to help shore up the bank under the cabins and in many cases concrete filled sauna tubes have been used to provide a solid support for the cabin base. There have been a few changes; the most noticeable is the infant proof deck railings required by insurance underwriters. Old photos of these cabins show the old beautiful railings made from young peeled Hemlocks. One of my main delights was replacing them as necessary at Committee meeting days. Of course the decks did not last long until Norm Rayner had the brilliant idea to make the deck in sections that could be removed in the fall and stored in the individual cabins. In the early 90’s it was decided to do away with the removable decks and replace them with PT or redwood. According to “Reflections” During the late 1960’s some of the shuttered head-hazarding fronts of the Ravine cabins were modified to provide a safer and lighter look with doors and windows” I think this was done in the 80’s but eventually all the Dutch doors were replaced with French doors and the front shutters replaced with windows. There is one photo in the English collection that shows the front of an original Ravine cabin. There were advantages to the original front in that it was easy to adjust the front of the cabin to take best advantage of the wind and rain conditions. The

combination of non-removable decks and French doors has caused problems with sticking doors and rot. If you observe these cabins in the winter with two or three feet of snow on the deck you can appreciate the Norm Rayner solution. In 2005 the roof of Hemlock was extended as a shed type over the deck that shielded the deck from most snow but had the effect of making the cabin much darker. Also all of the shuttered windows were replaced with sliding windows. In 2007 the shuttered windows of Potter were replaced with sliding windows.

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