



Timeless Chocorua

50 Years of Conserving the Basin (1968-2018)

Contents

DEDICATION	5
I — THE CHOCORUA LAKE CONSERVANCY AT 50	
<i>History of Conservation Efforts in the Chocorua Lake Basin (Chocorua Lake Association, Chocorua Lake Conservation Foundation, Chocorua Lake Conservancy)</i>	7
by Neely Lanou and Alex Moot	
<i>“It Takes a Village:” Land Conservation and Stewardship</i>	39
by Peg Wheeler	
<i>A Tradition of Stewardship</i>	43
by Lynne Flaccus	
II — WHAT WE PRESERVE	
<i>Chocorua Lake: An Overview</i>	49
by Alex Moot	
<i>“On Shining Waters:” A History of Steps Taken to Preserve the Water-Quality of Chocorua Lake</i>	51
by Dwight Baldwin	
<i>Lakefront Memories</i>	57
by Steven M. Weld, Jr.	
<i>Chocorua Lake Basin’s Key Features</i>	63
by Alex Moot	
<i>Narrows Bridge:</i> 63	
<i>The Grove:</i> 66	
<i>Sandy Beach and The Island:</i> 67	
<i>Sanitation and Trash Problems:</i> 69	
<i>Chocorua Lake Dam:</i> 69	
<i>Tamworth Sled Dog Race:</i> 71	
<i>Loons on Chocorua Lake</i> by John Cooley: 73	
<i>Frank Bolles Nature Preserve:</i> 74	
<i>Frank Bolles: Naturalist and Chocorua Leader</i>	77
by Theo Page	
<i>Frank Bolles Nature Preserve</i>	80
by Lynne Flaccus	
<i>Charlotte C. Browne Memorial Woods</i>	85
by Mason G. Browne and Katherine Greenough	
<i>The Making of a Breeding Thrush Survey: 1993-2017</i>	88
by Harriet P. Hofheinz	

Geological History

- The Chocorua Landscape* 99
by Richard W. Allmendinger

Cultural History

- Early History of Chocorua Village* 109
by Alex Moot
- Chocorua as a Summer Destination* 119
by Elizabeth Durfee Hengen
- Chocorua Basin's Architectural Heritage* 129
by Elizabeth Durfee Hengen
- Art History of Mount Chocorua and Tamworth* 137
by Douglas Nelson

Mountain History

- Mount Chocorua: An Overview* 141
by Alex Moot
- Legend of Chief Chocorua in Literature:* 141
Fire History: 150
Jim Liberty Shelter and Peak House: 152
Abandoned Ski Trails: 158
- Mount Chocorua's Horn and Legend* (first published 1916) 161
by Charles Edward Beals, Jr.
- The Chocorua Patrol: 1923–2018* 178
by Theo Page
- The Evolution of the Chocorua Legend:* 185
From 19th-Century Fiction to Present-day Scholarship
by Bonnie Hurd Smith

Chocorua Mountain Club (CMC)

- Notes on the Early Years* 193
by Howard Mathews
- Trails Maintained Today by the CMC* 202
by John B. Watkins

APPENDIX

207

Board Members and Officers of:

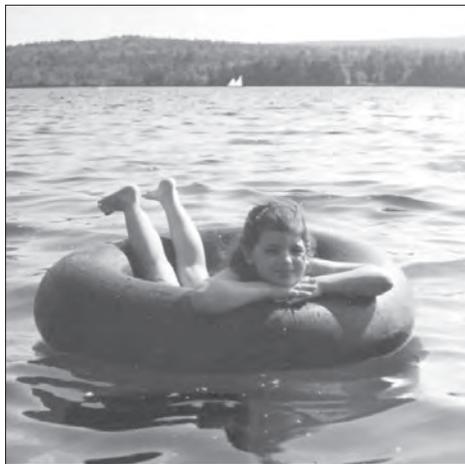
- Chocorua Lake Association (1968-2014)
- Chocorua Lake Conservation Foundation (1968-2014)
- Chocorua Lake Conservancy (2014-2019)

Dedication

Each new generation has shared with family, friends and newcomers a sense of gratitude toward those who preserved the natural beauty, the peacefulness, the pristine lake, and the acres of forest that define the Chocorua Lake Basin.

Realizing that the work of protecting this special place is never done, the next generations are stepping up and building a new sense of community.

We dedicate this book to our elders, present and past, with thanks.

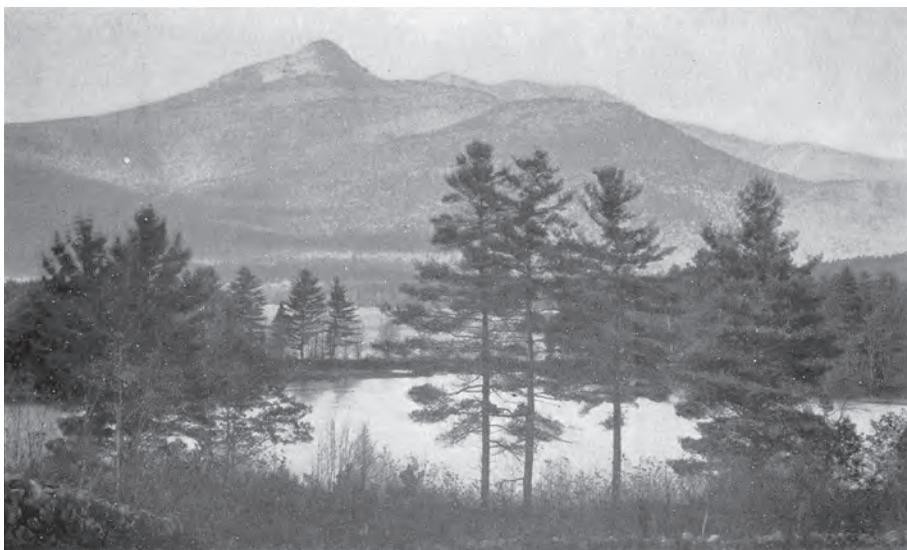




View lot, ca. 1900. Courtesy Phil Wagner.

*Chocorua may not be as big as the Matterhorn
but the principle is the same."*

—Rev. Dr. Samuel McChord Crothers, Cambridge, Mass.



Chocorua Lake and Mountain, Homes Studio, Chocorua. Courtesy Phil Wagner.

I

The Chocorua Lake Conservancy at 50

History of Conservation Efforts in the Chocorua Lake Basin

Chocorua Lake Association (1968-2014)
Chocorua Lake Conservation Foundation (1968-2014)
Chocorua Lake Conservancy (2014-present)

by Neely Lanou and Alex Moot

Introduction

Today, the traveler north on Route 16 comes to the top of the hill just north of Chocorua Village and sees a jaw-dropping view: two lakes separated by a picturesque bridge with beautiful wooden railings, forests on all sides with no houses visible, lorded over by the craggy peak of 3,478-foot Mount Chocorua.

The Chocorua Lake Basin community has managed to resist the development pressures so many New Hampshire lakes have faced: there are no billboards, no commercial buildings, no jet skis, no houses visible around the lake. There are attractive public areas for nearby residents and occasional visitors along the southern and eastern shores for swimming, kayaking, photography, cross country skiing, skating, ice fishing, and sled dog races.

This is the story of how a farsighted group of landowners in the Chocorua Lake Basin built on the efforts of the early owners of summer

homes to create a system for protecting this special spot. These pioneer conservationists founded two remarkable sister organizations—the Chocorua Lake Association (CLA) and the Chocorua Lake Conservation Foundation (CLCF)—which merged in 2014 to form the Chocorua Lake Conservancy (CLC). All told, they convinced over seventy landowners to place voluntary restrictions on their properties to ensure the preservation of the iconic view of the Chocorua Lake Basin you see today.

A hundred and fifty years ago, New Hampshire tourism was in its true infancy. After the Civil War, the Chocorua Lake Basin was a depressed area with many farms abandoned in the fever to go west. At the dedication of the first Runnells Hall in 1897, the Harvard philosopher William James, a summer resident, reported: *“Once this was an agricultural town, but in its new history it has become a summer resort for businessmen and teachers who come here for their long vacations.”*

At that time, the area now known as Chocorua was called Tamworth Iron Works, thanks to the iron factory in the nearby village that, according to local lore, forged the first anchor in the United States. Tamworth Iron Works was then, as Chocorua Village still is today, little more than a small village crossroads.

The economy of Tamworth Iron Works and nearby towns received a large boost in the early 1870s when Eastern Railroad licensed the New Hampshire line of the Portsmouth, Great Falls and Conway Railroad and extended the line to a Mount Whittier station in West Ossipee. In 1872 the railway was extended north to Madison and then to North Conway, and in 1875 the railway was extended to Intervale where it connected with the recently opened Portland and Ogdensburg Railway. In 1890, the Portsmouth, Great Falls and Conway were absorbed into the Boston & Maine Railroad.

By the 1890s, three trains a day ran up from Boston, and it was possible to travel from Boston to one’s house in the Chocorua Lake Basin in about five hours: four hours on the train and an hour’s buggy ride from the West Ossipee stop. Tamworth had a good system of town roads that became the network for the summer homes that sprang up around Chocorua Lake and on former farmland in all directions.



Chocorua View House, ca. 1922. Courtesy Bonnie Hurd Smith.

Chocorua Inn

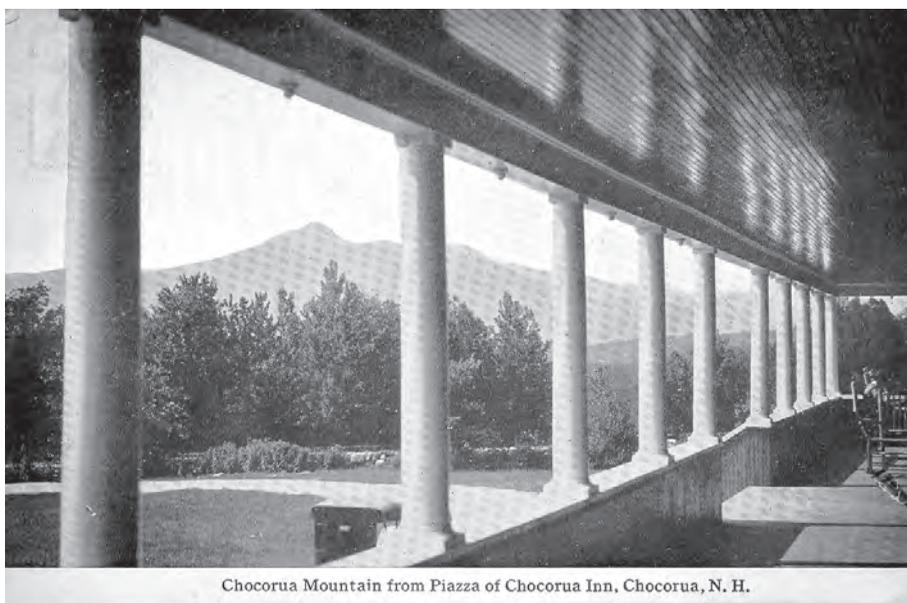
The Chocorua Inn, first known as “Chocorua House” or “Chocorua View House,” played a critical role in the evolution of the Chocorua summer community. In 1861, John Henry Nickerson, local farmer and real estate speculator, bought this property (including a farmhouse) on the top of the hill overlooking the Chocorua Lake Basin from the south. Nickerson first opened the farmhouse as Chocorua House for summer tourists. Many early summer residents had their first exposure to the region as a guest at the House, and often their own guests stayed there. The majority of the hotel guests came from the Boston area, but some came from New York City, Philadelphia, and points west.

To capitalize on the growing number of visitors to the area, Nickerson enlarged Chocorua House in 1865, adding a second story and wings to either side to accommodate thirty-five guests. One of the first summer guests-turned-resident was Marshall Scudder (see p. 119), whose brother Horace was an editor at Riverside Press and later the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Scudder bought the Emery farm in 1874. Like most inns in the region, Chocorua House provided guests with local produce and dairy foods from its own farm. Nickerson managed the operation until 1899, when he sold it to Mark Eddy Robertson. By then, the hostelry was capable of accommodating sixty guests.

In 1912, Robertson sold Chocorua House to the Chocorua Company, under whom the operation changed its name to “Chocorua Inn.” One of the three owners of the Chocorua Company, Albert Atwood, assumed ownership of Chocorua Inn around 1920 and ran it until it closed in the 1940s. During World War II, Atwood’s wife had the two newer inn buildings removed. Of the remaining buildings, the original farmhouse



Chocorua Inn, ca. 1914. Courtesy Bonnie Hurd Smith.



Chocorua Inn: piazza view, ca. 1914. Courtesy Bonnie Hurd Smith.

became known as the Annex. In 1919, long before the Inn's demise, the Chocorua Company sold the Annex to Cora Ayers. For a number of years after the war, the Annex was used as a residence, candy and ice cream shop, and changed hands frequently. In 2003, the Annex (also known as the "Candy House") was acquired by new owners who then razed the abandoned building.

Charles Pickering Bowditch

Among the guests at Chocorua House was Charles Pickering Bowditch (1842-1921), a Boston financier and amateur archaeologist with a specialty in Mayan culture who was captured by the beauty of the Chocorua Lake Basin. In addition, Bowditch possessed the foresight and means to apply his purpose of conservation for the remaining forty years of his life.

Bowditch, born in Boston, was the grandson of Nathaniel Bowditch, the self-taught Professor of Mathematics at Harvard and the "Father" of American maritime navigation. After earning his undergraduate degree from Harvard College, Charles Bowditch served as captain of the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and later as captain of the 5th Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry—both African-American regiments—during the Civil War. He returned to Harvard to earn a master's degree in 1866.

Bowditch managed private trusts and served as a director for various companies. He is perhaps best known for his pioneering work as an archaeologist, specializing in Mayan hieroglyphic writing and the Mayan calendar system after trips to Mexico in 1888 and Honduras in 1890. Bowditch was a major benefactor and trustee of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of Harvard University, financing numerous expeditions to Central America. He served as president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was a founder of the American Anthropological Association. In 1866, Charles married Cornelia Livingston Rockwell, and the couple eventually settled in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, where they raised five children.

In 1879, with a Civil War associate, Henshall P. Walley, Bowditch bought the Cone Farm on the eastern shore of Chocorua Lake followed by several other parcels, including Stratton Farm on the western shore.

The two men purchased Cone Farm under unusual circumstances. The prior owner, Sylvester Cone, was serving thirty years in prison for fatally shooting one of a group of boys he found skinny dipping in the lake—in full view from his home. Cone’s wife sold the house and land to Bowditch and Walley in order to pay his debts.

John Sumner Runnells

John Sumner Runnells (1844-1928) grew up in Tamworth, the son of Elder John Runnells, who was for many years the beloved pastor of the Chocorua Baptist Church. Lured by the West, the younger Runnells settled in Iowa in 1868 after graduating from Amherst College. There, he put his law studies to work as private secretary to the governor. For the next twenty years, Runnells served as U. S. Consul in England and U. S. District Attorney for Iowa, and he practiced law. In 1887, Runnells moved to Chicago and became general counsel, then vice-president, of the Pullman Palace Car Company. During that period, the famous Pullman labor strike occurred. In 1911, Runnells became the company’s third president, succeeding Robert Todd Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln’s son; he held the position for the next eleven years.

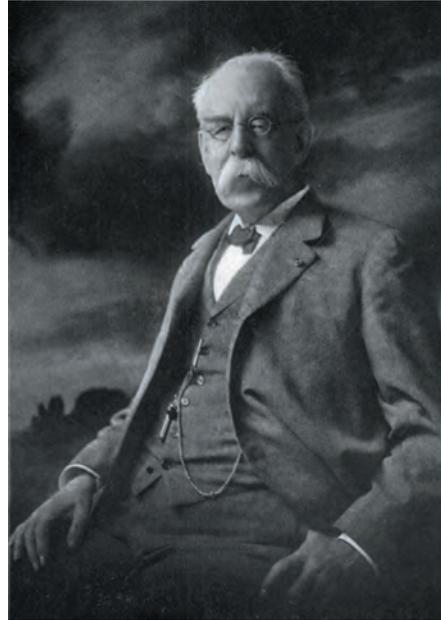
Runnells regularly brought his family east to Chocorua for summer visits and eventually purchased a fifty-acre tract where, in 1899, he built perhaps the largest residence in Chocorua—a cottage more akin to those erected along the Maine coast. That August, the nearly completed house burned to the ground. Runnells immediately commenced rebuilding, working with the noted Boston architectural firm Peabody and Stearns (which undoubtedly also designed the first house). Runnells was among those responsible for the successful petition to change the name of Tamworth Iron Works to Chocorua Village.

*Runnells Hall in Chocorua Village
is named for J. S. Runnells’ father.*

In the late 1930s, Runnells’ heirs tore the house down, leaving the outbuildings standing in an effort to save on property taxes. In 1945, they sold the property to the current owners who built a new summer house.

*“To insure in the future,
as I have attempted in the past,
the keeping of the shores of the
Chocorua ponds in as natural
and wild a state as possible.”*

—from the will of
Charles P. Bowditch



Charles P. Bowditch.

Early Conservation Efforts

In the 1890s and early 1900s, lumbering operations, and the devastating forest fires that sometimes resulted from the lumbering slash left behind, were destroying many of the beautiful forests of northern New Hampshire. The White Mountain National Forest, which was established in 1918 as a result of the Weeks Act of 1911, had yet to be created. When the Chocorua Lake Basin was threatened by a large lumbering operation, Bowditch started buying up land in the Basin to protect it. Between 1891 and 1907, Bowditch acquired 41 parcels totaling 350 acres. He came to own close to 85% of the lakeshore.

Other major holdings around the lake were acquired by Charles Loring, a Civil War brigadier-general, Thomas Sherwin, a Civil War general and president of the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, and Frank Bolles, the first secretary of Harvard College, founder of the Harvard Cooperative Society and a noted naturalist (see pp. 74-80). Eventually, Bowditch, Sherwin and Bolles controlled all of the land around Chocorua Lake.

Bowditch and Runnells, with support from William James and Robert Todd Lincoln, brought suit against a lumber company and successfully stopped the construction of a major new dam above Chocorua Lake.

The dam was designed to power a new saw mill, which risked polluting the lake and would have flooded the extensive Pequawket meadows north of the lake.

In 1901, Bowditch purchased the water power rights in the village below, then called Tamworth Iron Works, and constructed a dam in the village in the hopes that the newly available power would stimulate the local economy through light manufacturing. Although the endeavor did not prove successful, the reconstructed dam greatly improved the aesthetics of its mill ponds above the dam.

Shortly thereafter, Bowditch had a small wooden dam built at the southern end of Little Lake in the narrow passage between Second and Third lakes. His goals were to raise the water level of Chocorua Lake and improve the ragged, muddy appearance of the lakeshore. By raising the water level, Bowditch's dam also facilitated easy boat passage under the Narrows Bridge between the main lake and newly created Little Lake. This wooden dam was later reconstructed at the present location, at the outflow of Fourth Lake. This second wooden dam lasted until 1962 when it was replaced by a cement dam, financed by the Tamworth Foundation (see p. 69).



Narrows Bridge, Homes Studio, 1912. Courtesy Phil Wagner.