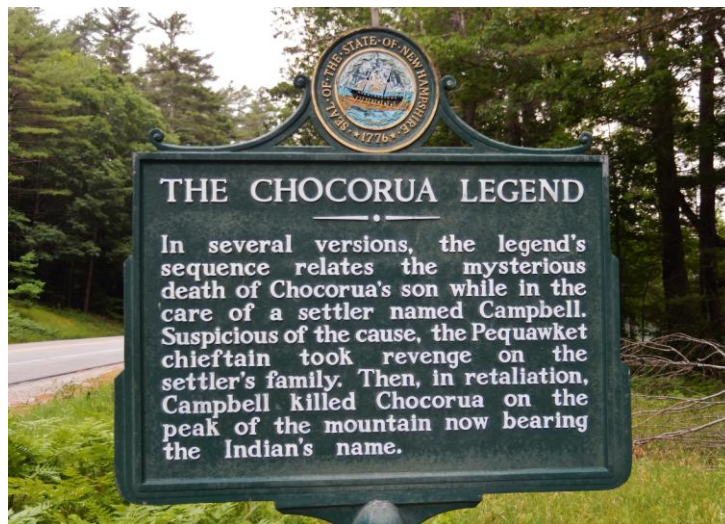


# The History of Chocorua Ski & Beach Club Association

*Compiled by Cal Carpenter*

*June, 2023*

Our corner of Tamworth, a part of the Village of Chocorua, has had an interesting story of growth and development. The Annual Report from the 1945 town meeting states: *"The date of settlement of Tamworth is clouded in misty traditions. Many maintain that a settlement was made by Cornelius Campbell and his family on the shores of Chocorua Lake around 1750."* This Mr. Campbell is the focus of the legend surrounding the Sachem Chocorua and his death by Campbell on the summit of the mountain that today bears his name. Much of the story, as we know it, was taken from the writings of Lydia Maria Child who in 1844 published the poem, "The New England Boy's Song About Thanksgiving Day" (better known as "Over the River and Through the Wood"). No real records have been found to validate any part of this legend.



Historic marker next to Chocorua Lake on Route 16

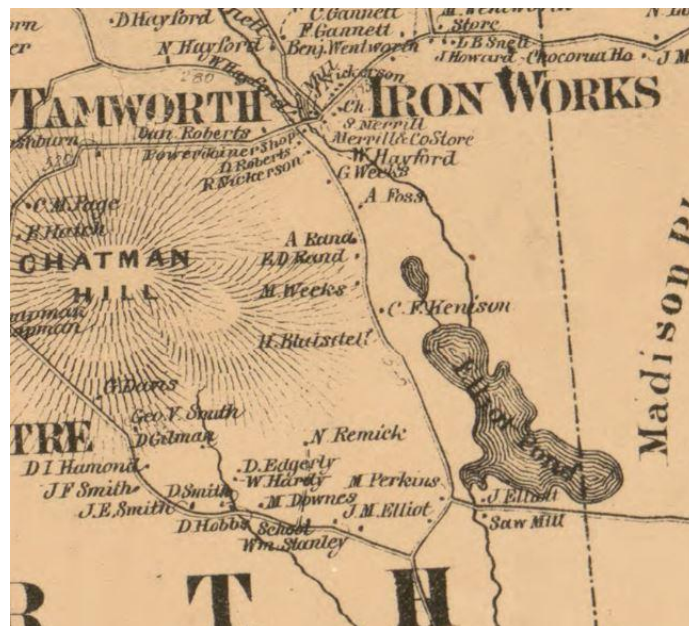
The first settlement, according to "The Tamworth Narrative" by Marjory Gane Harkness, was a result of the 1766 Charter granted to the town in the name of Governor Benning Wentworth by King George III of England. The town website tells us that *"by 1790 [the first census of the United States] there were 47 heads of families in Tamworth; 126 by 1800."* Names from the census such as Mason, Nickerson, and Remick have become part of our community.

The Village of Chocorua was kick-started with an unexpected industry. When "Bog Iron" was found at the bottom of, then called, Ossipee Pond. Harkness tells us that in 1785 an iron works was established. *"The foundry was located on the east bank of the Chocorua River, just south of today's bridge that takes Route 113 into Route 16, close to the falls then there."* The village that grew there was called Tamworth Iron Works, a name that lasted until 1890. It became the village of Chocorua thanks, in part, to American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910) who was one of several Harvard University professors who bought up area property for summer cottages. In their book "Chocorua Recalled" (Smith, Smith & Moot, 1996) the authors report *"that William James was twitted by his Harvard faculty colleagues about his summer place being at Tamworth Iron Works. They thought it was a terrible name, and he was apparently somewhat bothered...So William James was supposed to have gone to see John Runnells, and together they went over to see [president] Grover Cleveland, and told him the problem. And he said, "All right, if you want to change the*

name, what do you want to make it?" Apparently they hadn't thought about that, and one or the other of them said, "Chocorua." And Grover Cleveland said, "All right, I think I have enough influence in Washington," and he sent a telegram...The next day, they got a notice that the name was changed to "Chocorua." That was apparently very late in the summer...around 1890."

The Chocorua River was an important source of water power used locally for several key products. The river begins as an outflow from Lake Chocorua and flows south, past the mill dam in Chocorua Village, and enters our pond. The outflow under our covered bridge meets the Bearcamp River in Ossipee which terminates in Ossipee Lake. Leo Spencer, who designed and developed the Chocorua Camping Village across the pond from us, has done considerable research on the mill located on his property adjacent to our covered bridge entrance. He reports that this river *"was particularly appealing to those who sought to harness the power of the moving water to supply energy for various tasks of the times such as grinding grain or corn, milling and pressing apples for cider, carding wool, sawing logs for lumber, producing spools to help meet the demands of woolen mills along the larger southern New Hampshire rivers, or lastly producing electricity for local consumption."* He further found that *"the mill at Moore's Pond had an active life during the very early 20th century, the entire 19th century, and likely also during the 18th century as population grew during the settlement and agrarian phase of development."*

Our pond was not always named Moore's Pond. In the early 1800's the body of water was identified as Nickerson Pond. From early maps Spencer found that one of the earliest of the known dams and mills was owned by the Nickerson family and was so named into the 1840's. This dam and its mill constructed by the Nickerson family changed the dimensions of our pond. The dam caused the pond to rise approximately 12 feet more than doubling the area of the pond. Spencer reports that the banks of the pond nearly reached the smaller Kennison Pond to the north of us. At this time the dam powered a saw mill producing needed lumber for the growing community. At some point in the 1830's Joshua Nickerson sold the property and land to the south of the pond (now Chocorua Ski & Beach Club) to Joshua Elliott. According to Spencer, records of this sale were destroyed by an 1840 fire at the County Registry building. The map of Tamworth in 1861 now shows the name of the pond to be Elliott Pond with the saw mill located at the outflow of the Chocorua River.



1861 map of Tamworth Iron Works, now Chocorua

On June 25th 1866, Joshua Elliott sold his property, including that of our community to Alvah B Moore. Recorded by the deed in county records [Book 48 Page 566], the name of the pond slowly became known as Moore's Pond. Harkness writes that *"Moore's Pond, so lonely and charming, was almost as busy a spot as the Iron Works in its day"*. She found that, over the years, this mill was a saw mill; a grist mill to grind corn, wheat, and rye; and a cider mill. Alvah is identified in the 1870 Census of the United States as a "millman" living in Tamworth. Born in 1821, he was 61 when he married Abbie Francis Glidden of Effingham on June 20, 1882; she was 39 years old. In 1896, at age 75, Alvah sold the property to his wife Abbie as recorded in county records [Book 117, Page 166]. On March 3, 1905 Alvah Moore died at age 83 and is buried in the Chocorua Village Cemetery.



1892 map of the Chocorua area with the Alvah Moore home and mill identified



Gravestone of Alvah B Moore in the Chocorua Cemetery

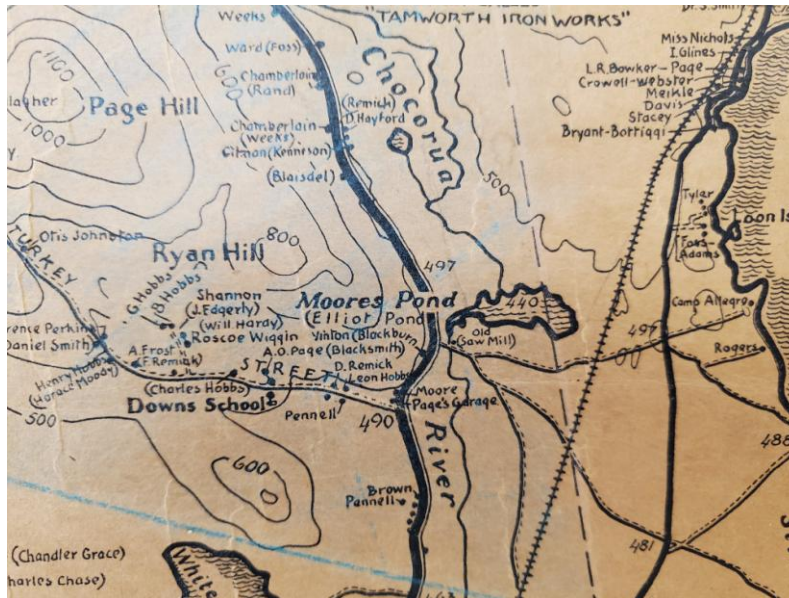
The 1910 Census of the United States finds Abbie (age 65) living with her son George Alvah Moore (age 23) in the family homestead that was close to the family mill. Spencer tells us that the Moore home was across the

bridge just to the east of the Chocorua River as seen in the 1982 map of the area. Abbie remained in control of the land connected to Moore's Pond but sold the rights to the dam site to the Chocorua Company in the early months of 1912. Spencer identifies that the Chocorua Company was owned by Charles and Rose Piper along with Mark Robinson, who at that time also owned the Chocorua Inn. Reconstruction of the dam for the purpose of producing electric power was completed in late 1912. The State of New Hampshire, Reports, 1914 [Volume IV, Page 310] states that *"this plant was incidental to the main purpose of the Chocorua Company, which was to operate a hotel. It was built primarily to provide light for the hotel"*. The plant began producing electricity in early 1913. Spencer further states that production continued *"...until an especially strong storm occurred in 1916, during which there was an apparent failure to open the flood gates in a timely manner. As water rose to the top of the dam, it found its way around the eastern end on the dam. Once the embankment was breached, the relatively soft gravel of which it was composed very likely washed away under the pressure of the impounded water in a short time, perhaps minutes or certainly not more than a few hours, leaving the east side of the structure much the way it is seen today."* The pond rapidly emptied out leaving the shape and dimensions we know today.

Along with the dam, the bridge (apparently of wood construction) also washed away. On March 17, 1917 Abbie F. Moore sold the land she had controlled to the Town of Tamworth as recorded in the county records [Book 152, Page 411]. Spencer records that *"the Town of Tamworth rebuilt the bridge not just once but several times following the 1916 flood as periodic floods continued to damage or wash out the bridge."* The map of Tamworth from August of 1932 reflects the change that occurred to the size of Moore's Pond. It should be noted that the town convinced George A. Moore to move from his home since his family were the only ones on the east side of the river. His new home (seen recorded on the 1932 map) is on the main road south, reported by Spencer, and *"is currently owned by George Ricker and on which he operates his auto and recycling business. With George Moore moving, "the town no longer had to cover the cost of periodically rebuilding the bridge."*



**Postcard of the flood damage to the dam in 1916**



1936 map of Moore's Pond area with "Old Saw Mill" noted

On June 23, 1936 the Town of Tamworth sold the property they had acquired from Abbie Moore to Brainerd N Bock as seen in the county records [Book 204, Page 300]. Brainerd had married Vera E Bush on April 8, 1934 in Yuma, Arizona. He was a career Navy man in 1935 as a Commander working at the Navy Yard in Boston. He seems to have bought the property as an investment. According to the 1940 Census of the United States he was still working for the Navy in Boston; and in 1941 he was in San Diego, California where he remained. On October 19, 1946 Brainerd N. Bock and Vera E Bock sold the property to Lester W. Clark and Grace S. Clark as recorded in the county records [Book 245, Pages 333-334]. It appears their interest was also investment as they held the property for almost 20 years. The Clarks lived in New Rochelle, New York. The 1950 Census of the United States places them in that community; Lester was identified as a salesman. On May 28, 1965 Lester and Grace Clark sold the property to American Central Corporation as recorded in the county records [Book 389, Pages 461-463]. It appears that from 1917 to 1965 the owners of what would become Chocorua Ski & Beach Club had just let the land lie. Not much happened aside from the close call with the threat of the Great Fire in October, 1947. The blaze didn't impact our area but vast regions of both Maine and New Hampshire were devastated.

1965 was the milestone year for Chocorua Ski & Beach Club. With the ink barely dry in May, American Central Corporation submitted their plot plan to the town in June of that year. The plan, as you see here, was designed by surveyor True W Chesley of Northfield, New Hampshire. This plan was revised and re-submitted to the town on August 18, 1965. The submission was recorded on that date in the county plan records [Book 7, Pages 43-44]. The beach and playground were planned from the outset, but the tennis court and ball field were planned to be "Chapman Drive" and more house lots.



**1965 Development Plan of what would become Chocorua Ski & Beach Club**

The small house on East Chocorua River Drive, across from the playground and beach exit was the sales office for American Central Corporation. Five days after the plot plan was submitted, on August 23, 1965, the first lot for a home in Chocorua Ski & Beach Club was sold to Norman and Catherine Robinson as recorded in the county records [Book 393, Pages 428-429].

As lot sales increased and the number of residents grew, a group of home owners got together and filed a Record of Organization of the Chocorua Ski and Beach Club Association. This meeting of the Incorporators of the Association was held on July 25, 1970, and elected a Board of Directors led by Edward Griffin, the first President. Also at this meeting bylaws were adopted to support the business and maintenance of the community and to reiterate the deeded covenants and restrictions that govern the private nature of our Association. On September 21, 1970 American Central Corporation sold the property, including the bridge, to the Chocorua Ski & Beach Club Association [Book 472, Page 221-223].

The covered bridge over the Chocorua River, and passing by the historic dam, has grown to become a signature of the Chocorua Ski & Beach Club Association. The bridge was built in 1965 by American Central Corporation. It replaced a smaller wood structure used to access the property by former owners. The recognized cover was constructed and a ribbon cutting ceremony was held on September 11, 1988. Crossing our covered bridge has evoked a feeling of coming home for all residents as they arrive.

The feeling of community continued to evolve. The playground was originally planned by American Central Corporation. Additional equipment, including a size-appropriate basketball court, was added over the years to make a visit to the swings, slide, seesaws, and merry-go-round the highlight of many a child's day. Recreational features were augmented when a proposal for a tennis court was brought before the Board of Directors in August, 1979. Funding was approved in June, 1980 and the tennis court was completed circa

1981. Subsequently, new ten-foot fencing was added in 1995, and the further painting of popular pickleball lines, on both sides of the tennis net in July, 2018, were added when the court was re-surfaced. The ball field first was proposed at the Annual Meeting of September 13, 2003. It took a long time as development came about slowly due to a need for new home construction to dispose of the sand dug from foundation holes; a cost-effective plan to level the field. Support and funding continued and, once leveled and a backstop added, the field was ready for play in the summer of 2014.

In 1995 the Association was made aware of 44 acres of land available from American Central Corporation that ran south of Indian Trail. At a special meeting on April 27, 1996 it was voted to acquire that land and on July 21, 1998 the "Back 40", as it became known, was added to the Association property [Book 1757, Pages 836-837]. This provided greater access to ATV and snowmobile trails as well as hiking, biking, and some of the finest blueberry picking in the area.

Located adjacent to the beach access road is our Veterans Memorial Park, constructed through the volunteer efforts of residents and dedicated on Memorial Day, May 26, 2012. The park honors family members who served in the military and remembers residents who have lived and loved their time at Chocorua Ski & Beach Club. Leading to the rings of veterans and families is a walkway containing bricks dedicated to the incorporators who created our Association.

With the initial thoughts that the area would be a vacation place, minds soon changed and owners began to move in permanently. Of the 270 lots (as of June, 2023) within Chocorua Ski & Beach Club, the number of full time residents is now beginning to exceed our weekend warriors.

While our pond has seen historic growth since the 18th century, another organism in the Chocorua Ski & Beach Club has witnessed lengthy history and yet has remained unchanged; other than getting so much larger. A white pine found in the Association appears to be one of the few trees not cut down to fuel the need for lumber in the area; perhaps this is because of its tenuous location on the bank of the Chocorua River.



**White pine in the Association, here since before the first settlers arrived**

This pine tree is 14 feet, 10.25 inches in circumference when measured four feet from the ground. By dividing the number of inches by 3.14 and then multiplying that by the growth factor for a white pine (5) - the age of the tree is 283 years old. In the first twenty years of its growth, between 1740 and 1760 when the first settlers began to arrive here, a lot was happening in the history of the United States:

**1740** Population of the British colonies: approximately 889,000.

**1744** King George's War, the third French and Indian war, begins. It lasts until 1748.

**1745** June 16: New Englanders capture Fort Louisbourg, a French stronghold in Nova Scotia. The fort was returned to the French at the end of King George's War, outraging New Englanders.

**1751** Benjamin Franklin publishes his Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, perhaps the most influential essay written by an American colonist.

**1752** June: Benjamin Franklin demonstrates that lightning is form of electricity by flying a kite and a key during a thunderstorm.

**1754** 30-year-old Benjamin Banneker, an African American, constructs the first clock made entirely in the American colonies.

May 28: The fourth and most important French and Indian War (1754-1763) begins when British and French and Indian forces clash near Fort Duquesne (the site of present-day Pittsburgh) for control of the Ohio River Valley.

July 19: The Albany Congress, called to negotiate a treaty with the Iroquois in event of war with the French, approves Benjamin Franklin's "Plan of the Union" of the colonies, with a president general named by Britain and a grand council with legislative power. The plan was rejected by the colonies and the Crown.

**1757** August. 10: A day after surrendering to French Gen. Montcalm at Fort William Henry in northeastern New York, many British troops die in an ambush by France's Indian allies. James Fenimore Cooper makes use of this incident in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

**1759** September 13: In the climactic battle of the war, Britain defeats the French on the Plains of Abraham at Quebec. Both French Gen. Montcalm and British commander James Wolfe die in the battle.

**1760** Population of the British colonies: approximately 1,610,000.

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