

# Chatham Times

## Past and Present

### Ida May Woodruff Hill

By: Jeanne Eastman

Diadem Dunham Harriman was called Didie by the older girls in the orphanage as they put her to bed. She was so young she remembered nothing of life before the orphanage except water and being on a boat. The records showed she was born in Deer Isle on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1871. She was four years old when she was adopted by Charles and Elizabeth Woodruff, who changed her name to Ida May. The Woodruff family lived in Cape Elizabeth, Ida being the only child. They moved to Taughton, MA, but Ida was very sick there, so they moved again, when Ida was 11 or 12, to the Ridge Road (now called Little Chatham Road) in Chatham, NH, right across the road from the little schoolhouse.

Mother Woodruff was little and English and very stern, believing in the maxim "spare the rod and spoil the child." Father Woodruff was tall and thin, and kind-hearted, but couldn't stand up against his wife. (as remembered by Ida's daughter, Idella)



Ida May Hill, about 1887



Ida May Hill's family 1910

Ida worked in the "saleswork" shop making men's clothes – coats and pants. When she was 14, she was hired to teach at the little school. There were only about four pupils attending.

When Ida was 16, she was hired by Stephen Wesley Hill, the youngest of ten children, to help care for his mother, Asenath, who was in very poor health. He had already tried thirty six women to help with all the housekeeping and care. The Hills lived in Green Hill, just beyond the South Chatham line (part of the Leita Munroe Preserve now). Ida liked it there and did not want to go back home to the Ridge Road.

On December 21, 1887, Wesley told his mother that he was taking Ida with him to Fryeburg to get some groceries. They were gone a long time, and when they returned,

Continued on page 4

## Notes from the President

Our December potluck supper in conjunction with Carols and Candles at the Chatham Church was a full house. While people enjoyed the company of old and new friends and the great food, Steve Eastman played a couple of our “new” cylinder records on the Edison Phonograph.

Our February potluck supper and bonfire was also well attended, fun, and delicious. Thanks to Dale McClure for providing the fire, and to everyone who helped with the planning and setup for these two events.

Alan Eastman has been keeping our driveway plowed so we can hold our open hours every Tuesday morning. Currently we are checking over our collection of documents and artifacts to be sure it is all organized, cataloged, and easy to find answers for any question on Chatham history. We always have to time to welcome visitors.

Welcome to our new members: Rondi Stearns, Karen Epranian, and Dale McClure (Life). A reminder to those with annual memberships – this is the time of year to renew.

Dues are a very affordable \$10 per year, or \$100 for Life. Besides getting a great deal, we assume Life members feel a strong connection to our Society and will be committed to supporting us over the years. We love to hear from our members, especially Life Members who haven’t been in touch for a while.

We appreciate all donations and support which help us fulfill our mission. Thank you all for your interest, encouragement, and ideas for future programs and exhibits! We hope to see you soon!

*Jeanne Eastman*

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[www.chathamhistoricalnh.org](http://www.chathamhistoricalnh.org)

### Board Meetings

April – October, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, 6:30 PM

### Open Hours

Tuesdays 9 – Noon  
We look forward to seeing you!

## The Peddler's Pack

*a bundle of news from the neighbors over the years*

**George Perry:** When I was a kid, I'd walk with my fishing pole along the road to fish in all the streams. The Crouses (Harry and Gloria) or the Hanscoms (Olin and Ora) always invited me in for some homemade root beer and a cookie. That was the best root beer!

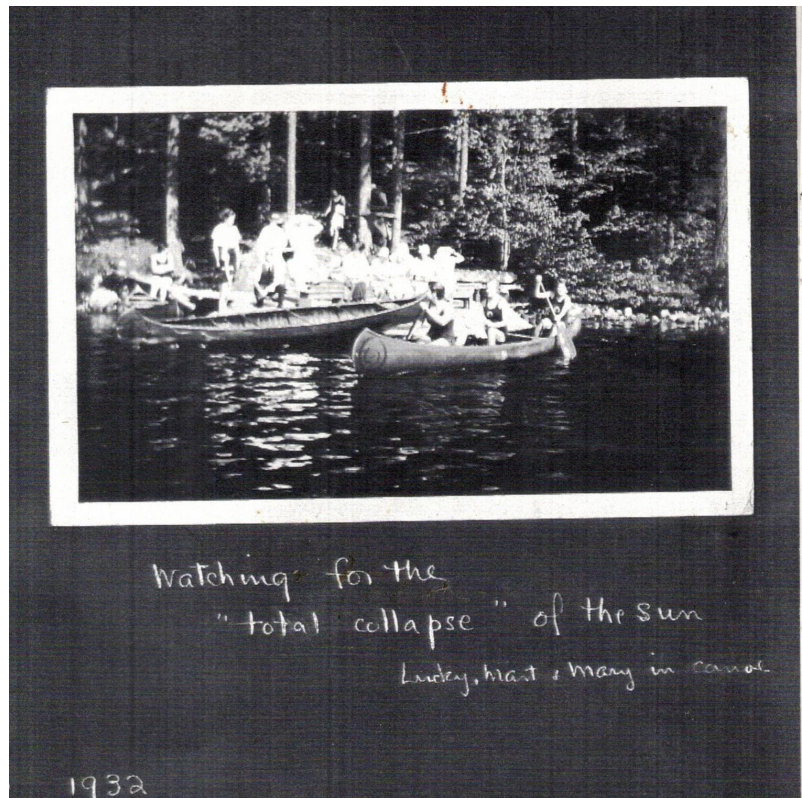
**Ken Small, in From Then Til Now:** (after writing about Jonah Hill's carding mill) ... there was another small business known as "Sailwork," a tough cloth used for clothing, which was made in a shop by the local ladies. This was "piece work" and they were able to earn a little money in that way.

**Norris Hill, from his 1981 diary, March 8:** "I attended the get-together at the Town House with activities for the benefit of the Heart Fund. I took a set of numbered horse shoes and stakes; called at Claire Perry's and got two pkgs of food for the food sale. I played cribbage, breaking even; won a game of checkers. Won enough games of "barn-yard golf" or horse shoes to get the blue ribbon. Won two nights of camping for two people at South Arm Campground.

**Frank Eastman:** I played several cribbage games at the fundraiser for the Heart Fund. Someone would pay a quarter to challenge the winner of the last game. There was also checkers, cards, and a lot of games for the kids.

**Ellie Eastman:** I was responsible for raising money for the Heart Fund, so for several years we had games and invited everyone. There were cribbage tournaments, checkers, a cake auction as well as a "cake walk," which was musical chairs around the podium in the Town House, with the prize being a whole cake. We also had a live auction. And my father, Nelson, and Barry Hill, Sr. gave snowmobile rides.

**From a biography of Ithiel Clay found in History of Carroll County:** He named his farm (now called Deep Meadow Farm) in Chatham Center "Winnecunnett Farm," which is an Indian name said to mean "Beautiful Place of Pines."



*August 31, 1932: The girls at Chatham Woods Camp on Upper Kimball Pond are waiting for the "total collapse" of the sun.*

Wesley said to his mother, “Mother, this is my wife.” Wesley was 38 and Ida was 16. Ida cared for her mother-in-law for more than seven years before Asenath died. And her father-in-law, Timothy Wentworth Hill, lived with them for more than thirteen years.

Wesley and Ida had twelve children: Harold (born 1890), Idella (1892), Florence (1894), Roy (1896), Vernon (1898), Edna (1900), Ora (1902), Donald (1904), Norris (1906), Charles (1908), Leura (1910), and Carroll (1912). (Leura is my husband, Steve's, mother.)

In the 1950s, Idella wrote her memories of growing up. She remembered her mother, Ida, as very pretty and always laughing. She remembered her getting all the children ready for the Exercises at the schoolhouse – everyone clean and dressed, and ready to recite their pieces. She spearheaded a school fundraiser to buy a flag for the schoolhouse - a “soap bubble party & sale” where homemade dolls were auctioned and prizes were given for who could blow the biggest and smallest bubbles. Ida was also the Superintendent of the Sunday School. Idella wrote, “She was so busy, so much to do, but she could always do one more thing.” She would buy wool from a neighbor and walk back and forth, singing, while she spun it on the large “walking wheel.” She dyed the yarn and made sweaters and mittens for all the children. Ida was also very involved in the Grange, getting home from meetings well after midnight at times!

When Vern was a baby, the family had outgrown the house. They moved a few miles south, to the Lang Place, where Timothy Wentworth's aunt, Lydia Lang, had lived. The place is still in the family today.

Ida began several diaries over the years, which end every spring when she must have gotten too busy to write. She recorded that the family sold wood, apples, butter, cider vinegar, honey, and eggs. She spent money, sometimes on credit, at the stores in Fryeburg, for meal, overalls, grain, and some groceries.

In 1920, Ida started out recording which children went to school, who was home sick, which of the grown children came to supper, how many were at Sunday School, what Wesley spent money on in Fryeburg. The work she did most of the day was so routine she didn't record it.

But on January 13<sup>th</sup>, “Wesley sick in bed.” (This was the tail end of the Spanish Flu epidemic when so many died.) Then, it was “awful cold.” Her children were home from school sick. Sunday School was canceled. Wesley was still sick. The older children came by to help out where they could, but one day Ida had to go out and cut the firewood herself.

Friday, February 6: “Snowed all night, hail and wind. Worst storm for years. Children came and shoveled all day to get paths to the barn and spring – rained all p.m. Snow awful heavy and sticky.”

Saturday, February 7: “Fair. Children are shoveling a path to the road. I went to Fryeburg in p.m....had to walk the horses every step both ways (5 miles each way) but it wasn't very cold so I didn't mind. Ora, Don, and Nod (nickname for Norris) met me beyond the river place with the lantern.....”

On February 12<sup>th</sup>: “Flod (nickname for Florence) came over with stable team, said Roy sent me a telegram, wanted his father to have the doctor.... Flod brought over another blanket for her father's bed.” February 13 “Stormy. The doctor did not come. Wesley no better.” February 14 “No Grange – so many sick ones...” (Editor's note: If I hadn't known the future, as Ida didn't, I would have been some worried!)

Finally in the 16<sup>th</sup>, the doctor came and said Wesley would be all right. And he began “gaining slowly,” with the older children bringing him “1 dozen oranges,” “soda crackers,” and “tonic pills.”

On March 8th, “The roads were so bad I did not go to Fryeburg.” Instead she borrowed oats from neighbor to feed the horses. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, “I carried the children to school and went to Fryeburg with Queeny. The roads very bad below Harrimans. The horse hit her heels and frightened her. She bucked and

ran away. I jumped out. The horse ran into a load of wood and broke her shoulder and had to be shot. Arthur Andrews bought home the pung and grain.”

Not only did Ida have a large family to care for, but she cared for her neighbors too. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, she wrote, “Fred Hutchins called down, wanted me to go down to Brocks and help them out as Cassia and the two children were sick.” The next day she went. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, “the little Brock boy died at 7 a.m.” And on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, “Cassia died at 11:30 P.M.” After the funerals, Ida returned home on the 16<sup>th</sup> to clean her house and feed her family.

Another record of caring for her neighbors: January 12<sup>th</sup> 1922, “Cad called down after me at noon – Leala's baby boy was born this morning at 2 o'clock. Leala very sick. ....I stayed all night. Baby cried all night.” 13<sup>th</sup>: “Cad brought me home at 7:30 a.m. I had sat up all night and was rather done up.” 15<sup>th</sup>: “Cad came down after me to do some cooking. I baked 4 pies and made doughnuts, then came home and got dinner for my own family.” 17<sup>th</sup>: “Children at school. I did the house work. Cleaned out the cupboard and mended. Cad called down for me to go up and take care of the baby through the night.... Leala getting along well. Baby fussed all night.”

Ida May was an extraordinary ordinary woman, as most women had to be – doing everything that was need to sustain a large family and a small community. As I had started reading her diaries, I thought they were rather boring. (But aren't most people's daily lives pretty routine, which can soon seem boring. And I am sure Ida May wasn't thinking that I'd find her diary one hundred years later and be wanting to know about her life. Who knows why she started a diary each New Years Day for several years.) But as I started transcribing, I soon realized she wasn't recording most of the happenings in each day: how much she cooked and cleaned, sewed and tended children – all the ordinary, every day things. In reading Idella's memories and the letters that Idella and Flod wrote to family members, a fuller picture of a happy family and loved mother came to life for me.

It wasn't until after Ida May died, at age 55, in 1926 that her children were able to find two of her birth siblings and learn some of her past. She was the third of four children born to Joshua and Sarah Harriman. Her father was a sea captain from Holland. When the father died in 1874, Diadem was taken to an orphanage in Portland. The oldest sister was never heard from again. The other two were raised on Deer Isle by their grandmother who had a difficult time bringing them up.

*A transcription of Ida May's diaries, copies of the Hill Family letters, and Idella's written memories are at our museum, available for anyone to read.*

## Donations

*Thank you so much for your generous support!*

**Diane Powell:** Edison Standard Phonograph, with horn and many cylinder records, originally owned by her grandparents, Chester and Sadie Eastman, in Chatham.

**Frank Eastman:** the cane that he carved for his wife, Barbara, in a display case built by John Stryker.

**Jim Wilfong:** newspaper columns to scan.

**Emily Fernald:** a photo to scan and history of the Chatham Congregational Church.

**Margery Eastman:** photos to scan.

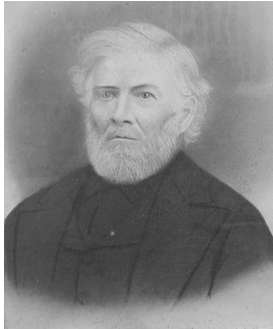
**Steve Eastman:** notes on birch bark from Millard Chandler, newspaper articles.

**Monetary donations:** Diane Powell, Jane Nesbitt, Debra Mann, Sue & Mike Zlogar.



## Bliss and Sarah J. (Ames) Charles

*Great-great-grandparents of Harold "Hallie" Thurston, Jr., remembered on page 7*



*Bliss Charles*

Bliss Charles (1810-1891) was a farmer, served several years as Chatham town treasurer and selectman, and was a representative to the State Legislature in 1847-48. In 1883, their son, John Flint Charles, with his family, moved back to the family farm where his parents still lived.

Sarah (Ames) Charles (1817- Dec. 13, 1907) – From the Lewiston (ME) Illustrated Magazine Section, November 16, 1907: “Mrs. Sarah J. Charles, aged 91 years of North Chatham, N. H. She was born in Stow, a Maine town, her maiden name being Ames. She is also a remarkably smart old lady, belongs to Eagle Grange of North Chatham, having joined this organization when she was 89 years old, making her its eldest member. She has been a fairly regular attendant at the Grange meetings and a year ago recited an old-fashioned piece which made a great ‘hit’ and is still the talk by these country-side fires.

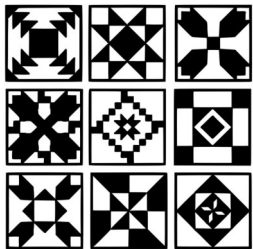


*Sarah (Ames) Charles*

Until last year, Mrs. Charles also took a great interest in the West Oxford County fair, where she had exhibits of her own handiwork. Her quilts and patchwork were annually expected, together with her own motherly presence. She still spins, and her hands are not yet idle, finding a field for service in knitting mittens and hose for those she loves in this cold and mountainous country....” (Early Families of the Cold River Valley, by David Crouse)

## Quilt Program

Quilters, Crafters, and History Buffs, mark your calendars for May 16, 2024, 6 PM. We will be featuring Pam Weeks, the Binney Family Curator of the New England Quilt Museum.



Pam is a quilter, fabric artist, quilt historian, and state-juried member of the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen.

She will be speaking on the history of fabrics, quilting through the ages and will be showing her quilts throughout her talk. She encourages you to bring any old or family quilts that you would like to display and talk about.

If you have questions, she, as an expert historian, will have answers for you. We hope you will attend and bring a friend.

*\*\*\*\*\* Highly recommended by Beverly Aiman!*

## In Memory

*Our deep sympathy to the families of these loved ones:*

**Kay (Fernald) Littlefield, 86;** passed away December 18. Kay was born at the family's farm in Stow, Maine. She attended the one-room school at Stow Corner. She later taught at the Stow Corner school, and then Sadie F. Adams School in North Fryeburg. She kept the books for her husband's carpentry business, worked at Memorial Hospital, and owned the Village Florist in Fryeburg.

**Wayne Infinger, 71;** passed away January 3. Wayne loved his family, and boating and fishing on Lower Kimball Pond. He and his sons started their own insurance agency. Wayne was a Chatham Selectman 2010-2018 and a Life member of Chatham Historical Society.

**Mona (Munroe) Ames, 82;** passed away January 6. Mona was raised at "Weeks Farm" in South Chatham. She worked 40 years in nursing and nurse administration. Her employers noted with interest that her resume included MOTHERHOOD with her children's names and their pursuits, of which she was so pleased. She devoted herself to her family. Mona was a Life Member of CHS.

**Harold Thurston, Jr., 98;** passed away January 21. Hallie managed the Snowflake Canning Company in Fryeburg the last years of its operation. In 1973, he bought Phil Andrew's dairy farm in North Fryeburg where the 270 cows were milked three times each day until the government buyout in 1986. He then continued crop farming beans and corn until selling to Green Thumb in 2007. Hallie was regularly seen bicycling a 6.9 mile route around North Fryeburg with his son, Greg. Last year they were hampered by rain and a health issue, and logged only 670 miles. (In 2022 they logged 870 miles, and in 2021, 1014 miles!) Hallie's mother was the fifth generation of the Charles' family to live in Chatham, and Hallie was a long-time member of the CHS.

## Upcoming Events

**March 23rd and 24th:** Maple Weekend – chili and baked goods fundraiser

**April 27th:** History Hike to cellar holes along road to Rollins Pasture

**May 16, 6 PM:** Historic Quilts, with Pam Weeks of the New England Quilt Museum. *(see page 6)*

Pam will be speaking on the history of fabrics and quilting through the ages. She encourages you to bring any old quilts or family quilts, and she will answer questions about any quilts. Bring a friend!

**May 21st:** Potluck Supper and Annual Membership Meeting, please join us!

**June 23rd:** Local Native Americans, with Tom McLaughlin

Chatham Historical Society  
 1061 Main Road  
 Chatham, NH 03813

### Dues and Donations

Chatham Historical Society is a non-profit 501(C)3 Charitable Organization  
 1061 Maine Road, Chatham, NH 03813

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