

## INDUSTRIES AFFECT ON HISTORY

From the beginning of the settlements in the United States from Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts, to the shores of California, men and women came to make a new life for themselves and their families. Many of these people died just coming to America on boats. Many more died traveling to anywhere in this great country that was to them, the promised land. The settlers who made it through all these hardships and settled on the land sometimes found it a hard life to live. This is very much true of the Adirondacks. With such long winters, piles of snow, and bitter cold that even most of the indians left in the winter. Many settlers that came left soon after. Those settlers that stayed were a hardy lot who knew dreams only come true with hard work and a little luck.

There is a area in the town of Watson N.Y. that sits on the foot hills of the Adirondacks that proves this is true. For the settlers that chose to stay and live in this region soon realized that no one commercial enterprise could support their community, as the history of Chase's Lake will show. The people of this northern community used every

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resource of the land and water that was available to them, and once the logging industry started more businesses followed. Although these business depended on the logging business and the people that came with it. Not all the businesses folded after the lumbering stopped. In fact, the hotel that started after the lumbering industry stayed on to become the new industry leader in the area.

## History Of Chase's Lake

In 1798 Chase's Lake was surrounded by a vast untouched forest that was owned by James J. Watson. After the death of Mr. Watson in 1808 and that of his son James T Watson in 1939 the land went to cousins in the family. Isaac G. Puffer, the first settler in the town of Watson, purchased a large parcel of land near the lake from James T. Watson. Mr. Puffers son Ebenezer Puffer became a local hunting legend when he killed forty-seven wolves in one year, five of which were said to be the hard to find black wolves, (Chase's Lakes History).

## Second Settler

Mr. Timothy Mills was the second settler in the region and in 1814 the first settlers child was born to the Mills family, Miss Susan Mills. In that time the people called

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the area "going over to the mill". It was not until 1841 when Mr. Puffer built a saw mill on the outlet of the lake for Mr. Reuben Chase did the name Chase's lake begin. This started the first commercial logging in the area of the lake. Although much of the forest was pine trees, there was more than enough hard wood to keep the saw mill busy, (Chase's Lakes History).

#### Mr. Charles Chase

By the early 1850s much of the land that formed the Watson estate was reverted back to N.Y. State for back taxes. In 1851 Mr. Charles Chase purchased eight separate parcels of land that totaled to 750 acres from the state for \$76.24. His holdings incorporated a large portion of the land around the lake that bears his name, but not the intire lake. Mr. Chase with his brother spent the next twenty years conducting logging operations. With in those year, not only was the sawmill increased in size to accomanate the expanded production of lumber, but also a very successful summer hotel was built on the outlet to the lake, (Chase's Lakes

#### Guests

The hotel, or Chase's Lake Hotel as it was called, received about 1,400 guests a year. This is a very large amount of guests considering that there could not have been more than a thousand people in the whole town at the time. Many hotels and resorts were opening in the Town of Watson at that time, but none of which has had so many local people and out of town people coming together in one place. The hotel was situated about 300 yards from the lake by the outlet. A guest had to walk down a worn path to the lake to go swimming or fishing. It was said that the building stood next to several rather large-old pine trees that set the inns picturesque beauty, (Chase's Lakes past. Lewis County 497).

#### Hemlock Plant

Mr. Chase sold the land in 1871 to Lewis, Crawford & Company for a undisclosed amount. The next summer a large Hemlock extracting plant was built on the outlet of the lake. Then in the proceeding years Chase's Lake started to boom. The company divided into three parts; besides the extracting plant, there was a logging and peeling industry, and a saw mill business that cut the peeled logs into lumber. 4000 cords of bark were used a year, and 3500 barrels of extract were produced. The hemlock was shipped in large barrels on reinforced wagons with three mules to

haul the load to Glenfield, where the nearest rail road station was, ( Local Interest.)

### The Town

A small town started by the lake with two general stores, blacksmith shop, post office. Homes, tenement houses, theater, and boarding house were built and more people moved to Chase's Lake. Farming was also popping up in many of the clearing made buy logging, Potatoes were grown as a cash crop and shipped buy barge in the Black River Canal, The Chase's Lake Hotel was changed to the pine's Hotel and became more popular then ever. Although the hotel advertised in the local paper, word of mouth was the best advertising the hotel had, for many a guest would come back year after year and most times bring a friend, (Chase's Lakes past. Mr. Ventcent, Burnham).

### Ghost Town At The Lake

A fire burned down the Hemlock plant to the ground in 1888 and agian in 1894. both times the plant was reconstructed. After the retirement of Mr. Crawfords partners in 1889 he continued the business alone until 1899 when the Hemlock

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plant closed do to the increasing lack of Hemlock bark within the region. Activity at Chase's lake with out the plant and then the lumber mill slowed considerably. Mr. Crawford did start logging pulpwood and floating the logs down the nearby Independence River. This did not help Chase's Lake however, for there was a saw mill built on the river for that purpose. The operation lasted until 1909 when N.Y. State took the property by right of eminent domain for the State Forest, (Wild Scenery. Chase,s Lakes Fire.)

### Looking For Work And Fire

Looking for work people abandoned thier homes, and the stores soon closed. The Post office was also closed and the rural root delivery was started in Glenfield. What once was a thriving community and center point in the lumbering Industry become a Ghost town. A forest fire swept threw the area in 1913 burning 5400 acres of State and privet land, although there were other fires in this region this fire was the worst in the Town of Watsons history. The Hotel remained open untill 1914 when Mr. crawford retired, (Wild Scenery, Chase,s Lakes past).

## LINGERLONG ESTATES

Mr. Crawford's death several years after his retirement left his heirs, Mrs. Mary Crawford and Miss Anne E. Crawford the new owners of Chase's Lake. In 1922 the lake and surrounding land was sold to Lingerlong Estate Corp. of Boonville New York. Big plans for the hotel and the lake were made. First the land around the lake would be subdivided into camp sites, and a golf course was planned on the far side of the lake. More land would be cleared and the lumber used for 50 cabins to be built on the camp sites. The hotel was to be modernized with electricity and fresh new paint. The hotel reopened in the presence of a large crowd in June of 1923, the hotel on the outlet of Chase's lake was reopened once more, (Big hotel Deal).

## Change of Plans

Unfortunately the hotel was said to have burned down shortly after the opening. This however did not deter Lingerlong Estates for the Corporation converted the old Crawford store and post office, which was closer to the lake, into an office and dining room. The floor and windows to the old theater were used to rebuild the structure. Most of the plans Mr. William Hough, the senior partner of the corporation, had would never come to be, for the golf course and 50 cabins were never built, (New Features. Mr. Elmer, Cobb).

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## The Years

Although most of the shore line was subdivided and sold, the large scale layout was never completed. The new resort stayed open and vacationers still came to swim and camp. Some of the old cabins were repaired and rented out for the summers. Eventually camping trailers lots with electricity and water was offered. The years past by with little change other than Mr. Hough buying out his partner and becoming sole owner of the resort. The lake only changed by the seasons, (Lingerlong Estates. Mr. Elmer, Cobb).

## Mr, Cobb

Mr. Hough, had many people over the years maintain the resort for him, the last man to hold this position for Mr. Hough was Elmer Cobb. Mr. Cobb was caretaker from 1970 to 1980. Then at age 100 he passed away. This, Mr. Cobb told the author was Mr. Gruoghs wish, to be able to live to be 100 years old. Mr. Gruoghs passing ended his 58

years of ownership of the hotel. In Mr. Gruoghs will he left Mr. Cobb the Chase's Lake Resort and the land that went with it, (Mr. Elmer, Cobb).

### The Cobbs

Mr. Cobb and his family have run the resort as it has been in the past, in a friendly-family way. Today going to Chase's Lake is as beautiful as it was a hundred years before, although the lodge now has a small addition where soft ice is sold. Walking into the resort can be like feeling part of the past come back. The floor from the old theater is still there and if you look on the wall there is a map of the lake with the golf course, fifty cabins, and the old hotel, dreams from men that never came to be.

Chase's Lake as you read was not the easiest place to settle and carve out a living in America, but the men and women that did deserve our admiration. When their main support of making a living closed, the true settler did not leave, but cultivated smaller business to take over the space left by the closed down logging industry. What Robert Louis Stevenson said so many years ago stands true, "All who have meant good work with their whole hearts, have done good.

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work, although they may die before they have the time to sign it. Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully has left a hopeful impulse behind it in the world, and bettered the tradition of mankind", (Lewis County).

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NOTE; 1. There is little doubt that the formation of the State Forest Preserve had a immense affect upon the lumbering industry. This most of been one of the reasons the Hemlock Plant and saw mills closed.

2. The fire of 1913 was most likely a factor in the closing of the hotel on Chase's Lake in 1914