

## **The Ammonoosuc Valley Fish & Game Club A History of a Local Treasure**

It was 1924 when a group of local citizens organized the Ammonoosuc Valley Fish and Game Club for the purpose to protect, propagate, and increase fish and game in the waters and woods of this section of New Hampshire. To the reasonable, legitimate and equal use and benefit of the community for food and sport. To conserve and increase the same for the benefit of future generations. The people all agreed to pay \$1.00 annual dues and established the club.

C.A. Bassett	D. R. Rpusn	B. Hampson
W.W. Leonard	W. Pike	E.W. Sawyer
H.O. Taylor	J.W. Rann	H.S. Rhinehart
L. Kugleman	Albert L. Abbott	F.P. Dearth
J.W. Fullerton	W.R. Wilson	G.H. Watson
Wm. Clough	M.P. Clough	N.C. Ricker
Carl Eastman	Henry E. Lothar	Guy Haynes
C.F. Heath	L.E. Collins	Henry F. Smith
Arthur Bailey	G.A. Pebbles	V.H. Edson
H.B. Knight	H.E. Mann	M.A. Bisbee
L.A. Moulton	Lyman Warden	F.G. Weeks
Georgy Lyons	F.F. Sanders	Fred Wells
F.H. Cryan	O.M. Bemis	W.S. Burton
R.T. Trumpass	J.O. Sheldon	Fred Sargent
F.R. Rice	Fred B. Morse	A.L. Kezer
J.B. Chapman	R.E. Boemig	R.R. Scruggs
Henry G. Smith	L.G. Gordon	O.E. Kittredge
Dr. Miller	Sam McAllister	Earl Batley
Wells R. Batley	G.R. Sanborn	L.R. Webster
B.A. Stymest		

The club was organized April 1, 2024

Trustees were R.T. Bartlett, E.L. Hartwell, and E.S. Miller

The officers consisted of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, an executive committee of nine members of which the president was chairman and the secretary was clerk ex officio, five of whom constitute a quorum. All of the officers were elected annually.

On May 5, 1927 Arthur W. Young of Bath, New Hampshire sold the club 9 acres of land located on "Bunga Road" (now Route 112) for \$1.00.

The club house was built about 1931 and some early members indicated that the large stone fireplace was constructed by the CCC that was located in Easton, N.H.

In March 24, 1949 the club became a non profit cooperation. The bylaws were revised several times and house rules were established in October 19, 1951 by President Clifton Dexter, Burns Bedell, A.P Hill, Guy Walton, Clyde Darling, Tracie Robie, Oscar Chase, Ken Green and Secretary Ray Bailey.

In 1950 the annual dues were \$2.00.

The club has had many presidents during it's eighty plus year history. The first president was R.T. Bartlett. A likeness of him is in the oil painting that hangs over the fireplace in the club house.

A particle list of presidents, both past and present is R.T. Bartlett, Clifton Dexter, Ray Bailey, Claude Gadwah, David Dudley, Jim Patten, Bruce E. Simonds, Eric Batchelder, Albi Esties, Randall Burt and Dean Thompson.

All did a service in maintaining the club but many of the major improvements were done under the leadership of these presidents. Ray Bailey was for many years the man in charge that kept the meetings interesting In 1950, 45 to 50 members attended each meeting. Before television many social activities took place at the club. During the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's, events and gatherings were held on the club grounds including clam bakes, chicken barbecues, pig roasts and games of all kinds.

During the 1970's Jim Patten cleaned up the club house and established a life time membership program Claude Gadwah furnished new cupboards and stove for the kitchen. One of the longest terms was Randall Burt who was president for 10 years. Randall was responsible when members replaced the metal roof on the club house plus made many other improvements to the buildings and the grounds. Also the New Hampshire State Black Powder Championship Shoots were held at the club and many other events added to the active interesting activities.

Dean Thompson, the present president (when this history was composed), has done more for the club house building than any other. He established and ran the very popular Super Raffle. The funds generated put the club on sound financial footing which made it possible for most of the improvements to the clubhouse and grounds. These included lowering the ceiling, carpeting the floor, new chinking between the log walls, sealing outside of the building with a preservative coating, new light fixtures, new doors, and some new windows, plus a heating furnace so the club house is usable in the winter time. A covered firing point was built on the range by several members with room for four shooting stations. Robert Rutherford designed the blueprint for the original safety Berms at 50, 100 and 200 yards. Dr. Alan Ingle updated a modification plan and improved the Berms for use with the covered range. Also range rules were established and a large bulleting board listing the rules was constructed on the range.

Sporting events have always been a part of the activities. One of the first was the Fall Field Day. It was usually for two days with shooting events and other games. On Sunday the

activities for the year ended with the bean hole dinner. The beans are cooked in the ground as the lumbermen did on their log drives down the Wild Ammonoosuc River. The Crawford family has cooked the beans for many years with Janice Crawford the chief cook. The dinner is now named after William "Bill" Crawford, her late husband who was a member for many years and always worked on cooking the beans.

At the 1951 Field Day the club featured Wilbur Cox, a famous trick shooter who worked for a firearms company. He put on a wonderful show of marksmanship which ended with him shooting the Indian Head which hangs in the club house. He placed a frame containing a sheet of aluminum and a sheet of paper about fifteen feet away from him. Using a model 63 Winchester automatic .22 rifle and several magazine tubes of cartridges, he rapidly shot freehand the picture from a sitting position ending with several shots forming the eye.

During the 1950's Ken Green ran a Registered Trap Shoot for the club. There were two trap houses on the grounds. One was used for single birds and the other was used for doubles. These were well attended and brought a strong financial benefit for the club. After a short dormant span of no trap shooting it was revised again on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1967. A group of club members, Eric "Bud" Batchelder, James Slayton, John Adams, John Fullerton, Jr., Richard Welch, William Crawford and Lyle Grimes, installed huge lights, donated by the railroad, near the registration house. This enabled the shooters to see the clay birds as day turned into darkness and trap shooting could continue into mid evening.

In later years Fred Charles, Jr. ran the trap shoots for several years. When he died the registration building was dedicated in his memory and a large sign was fastened to the wall in a ceremony with his family and club members. William Schmidt and then Bruce Crawford carried on the trap shooting until this year with a committee of four, Eric Batchelder, Albie Estes, Chet Ludwig and Michael Dannehy, will continue the shooting program.

Other shooting events held at the club included a New Hampshire State Championship Muzzle Loading Match chaired by Bruce E. Simonds, Nelson Simonds, Bruce Henry Simonds and Larry LaMarre. As many as 75 or 80 shooters competed for medals in the many individual matches and most shot for the Championship.

Some of the other shoots included many modern rifle matches with the running deer target being the most popular challenge. The 22 rimfire targets for the young shooters drew a large following. The latest contest is the marble shoot held during the Field Day in the Fall on Saturday followed by trap shooting on the Sunday morning and the bean dinner served at noon.

One of the best events which the club holds each year is the children's fishing derby. This was started many years ago and is now about fifty years old. It has introduced hundreds of young people to the enjoyment of fishing. One hundred or more youngsters catch the beautiful brook trout stocked in the Wild Ammonoosuc River by the New Hampshire Fish

and Game Department. The youngsters fish from 8:00 am until noon on a Saturday in early June. Prizes are then given to the young boys and girls and refreshments are enjoyed by all. For several years Butch and Barbara Atwood ran the event. It is now chaired by Bruce Henry Simonds with the help of Cliff Batchelder, Craig Jewett, John "Jack" Shafer, and many other club members.

Another club function is the New Hampshire Hunter Safety Course both regular and for the archery hunters. This is required to obtain a N.H. hunting license. The class is well attended each year and is usually held in the month of August. It was run by John Shafer and other members for several years. Cliff Batchelder is now in charge of the regular program and Lewis Mardin the bow program.

An award was established to honor the club member who had done outstanding work for the club each year. A trophy plaque, with the name voted each year at the annual meeting, hangs on the wall in the club house. The first member so honored was Dwight Robie.

For many years the club house was rented for parties, family reunions, weddings, Lion Club, Cottage Hospital, American Legion, and other group picnics. This helped with the club expenses and served the community. It is now limited to past renters as demand exceeded the members being able to use their club grounds. At one time the grounds were left open for public use. A break-in in the 1980's by unknown parties during deer hunting season where a vehicle was used to break down the kitchen door caused the club to gate the road way. Taken was a large moose head that came from old Hotel Wentworth in Woodsville. Also stolen were six deer head mounts, one of which was a large odd rack shot in Groton, Vermont and donated by club member George Veayo.

When the Mountain Lakes was begun, the wilderness area of the club began to disappear. Across the Wild Ammonoosuc River at the lower end of the club grounds, a developer started building a bridge. First he constructed a large log bridge to reach his property. The next spring it was gone. It had been swept away by the ice and water of the wild river. He next built a metal bridge. The following spring it was a twisted wreck downstream. The developer then built a couple of camps on an area he called "Deer Run Acres" but was killed when trying to free his bulldozer, it toppled over the high river bank.

One hundred acres of his land across from the club was for sale with a price of \$10,000. The club did not have the funds to purchase the land. A. "Pat" Hill was secretary and treasurer of the club for many years. He and Bruce Simonds worked on having the Federal Government purchase the land and add it to the National Forest. First the voters of the town of Bath at the Bath Town Meeting agreed to allow this sale. Next it went to the State of New Hampshire. The Fish and Game said it was a deer yard and the sale was again agreed to. Next it went to the Congressman Jim Cleveland who found there were funds available for adding to the National Forest so the purchase was made. This stopped any further development and the club was protected.

The original founders of the Ammonoosuc Valley Fish and Game Club left a lasting legacy for many generations that followed them. It is a treasure for now and future generations. May we live by their Sportsman's Creed.

1. Never in sport endanger human life
2. Never kill wantonly, or needlessly or brutally.
3. Obey the laws of State and Nation, work for better laws, and uphold the law-enforcing authorities.
4. Respect the rights of farmers and property-owners and also their feelings.
5. Always leave seed birds and game covers.
6. Never be a fish-hog.
7. Discourage the killing of game for commercial purposes by refusing to purchase trophies.
8. Study and record the natural history of game species in the interest of science.
9. Love Nature and it's denizens and BE A GENTLEMAN.



