

# CHATHAM TRAILS ASSOCIATION

## A Brief History

On November 10, 1921, Frank Mason, first manager of Cold River Camp (and one of its founders), called together a group of sixteen Campers to organize "an Association independent of the AMC and Cold River Camp." At this first meeting the following "by laws" were approved.

(1) The purpose of this Association, to be known as the Chatham Trails Association, was to keep in condition such existing trails in the region of which Cold River Camp, North Chatham, N.H., is the center, as are not under the Committee on Trails of the AMC and such as are not under the governance of the U.S. Forest Service, or otherwise cared for; to project such new trails as the Association may deem necessary and to use its influence in the protection, preservation and proper use of the scenic beauty spots, places of historic interest, and the general forestations in its territory.

(2) The officers of the Association shall be President, Secretary-Treasurer and three other members who with the /President and Secretary-Treasurer shall consist of an Executive Committee of five. Such Executive Committee shall, in the absence of special instructions, through vote of the Association, have full powers in the management of the affairs of the Association.

(3) That the Association shall take measures to become affiliated with the New England Trail Conference and the President or in his absence the Executive Committee is empowered to appoint a delegate to said Conference.

(Shortly after this organizational meeting, CTA applied for affiliation with the New England Trails Conference - an organization which now includes more than 50 trail clubs varying in size from one or two members to the AMC and a chapter of the Sierra Club).

(4) Dues for membership in the Association shall be \$1 a year with life membership \$5. and that the Executive Committee shall have the authority to name as honorary members from year to year, those who by services or gifts are worthy. That the expenditures be kept within the funds in hand from such dues and from any donations that may be voluntarily made.

(5) That meetings of the Association shall be held upon call of the President or upon the signature of several members to petition for a meeting.

The original Executive Committee consisted of the following:

President	Walter S. Edmunds
Secretary-Treasurer	George H. Evans
Committee-Men	Nathaniel M. Nichols
	Eugene E. Pettie
	Ralph C. Larrabee

It should be noted that Frank S. Mason was also the President of the AMC. He founded the Association as Temporary Chairman and served on its nominating committee chairman for several years but never held an official position on the Executive Committee.

At a later date the Committee-Men were referred to as Directors. At a meeting in 1938 the position of Secretary-Treasurer became two separate positions: Treasurer and Secretary. In 1960 the position of Vice President was added.

At a meeting held on February 8, 1922 it was voted that the Secretary should apprise the Supervisor of the White Mountain National Forest of the readiness of the Association to assume charge of such trails as the Executive Committee has already voted to accept as may lie within the Federal Reserve and to seek his approval of the same. A copy of the reply to Mr. Evans' letter is attached.

Thus began the long official association between the Chatham Trails Association and the U. S. Forest Service which continues to the present.

With few exceptions, the Association has held one annual meeting sometime between late February and mid-April in conjunction with the Cold River Camp reunion. Until 1975 this meeting was held at the Appalachian Mountain Club headquarters at 5 Joy Street in Boston.

Within the first 10 years of its existence approximately 35 miles of trails were "stabilized," i.e. constructed or brought to good condition. This system of trails included ones on Kearsarge Mtn. (the Chatham-Kearsarge Trail), the Meader Trail and the Meader Ridge - Rim Junction Trail which included construction of the Blue Brook shelter. In 1941 the Bicknell Ridge Trail was constructed by CTA and added to its system of trails. At one time over 42 miles of trails were maintained by the CTA - mostly within the White Mountain National Forest. Some of these early CTA trails were later abandoned or turned over to the AMC for their care.

CTA continues to exist after 73 years and, with the help of many dedicated members, has carried out the work for which it was chartered. Throughout the decades its mode of operation has changed considerably. For the first 25 years of its existence it was headed by Nathaniel Nichols and was almost disbanded on his death in 1947.(?) In fact there was no annual meeting in 1947 - the year that would have marked the 25<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. Much of the early trail work, was done with the help of residents of North Chatham; the names of Andrews, Charles and Chandler figure prominently during the middle years of CTA's existence. Later, in the 60's 70's and early 80's much of the trail work was done by Cold River Camp crew members hired by CTA for this purpose. For example, in 1981 Jon Dingle was paid \$1300 for trail clearing on trails devastated by the winter storm of Dec. 1980. In 1983 the current system of trail maintenance was established under the presidency of Terry Frost. In this system, members and other volunteers spend 3 or 4 weekends at Cold River Camp doing maintenance on the approximately 30 miles of trails which CTA currently maintains as a cooperator of the USFS.

It was voted at a later date to raise the membership fee in CTA to \$2.00. At some unknown time in its history, guests of Cold River Camp were given the chance to join CTA when they were paying their bills. Many did and donated more than the \$2 membership fee. Additional monies were raised in response to the notice of the annual meeting mailed to recent guests and CTA members in conjunction with the yearly Cold River Camp reunion (which probably originated solely as the CTA annual meeting). Initially CTA's funds on hand were spent largely on tools, material and/or for contracting with others to maintain Forest Service trails. Since 1983 funds have been spent on tools, material, food and lodging of volunteers at Cold River Camp, publication of a CTA map and, as noted below, for the purchase of land to be given to the public via the U.S. Forest Service. Currently there are approximately 300 dues paying members of CTA who contributed on the average \$8 per person in 1993.

In 1984 a situation developed in the Cold River Valley that somewhat changed both the structure of CTA and some of its activities. One of Walt Charles sons was to get married and subsequently to build a house on property he owned. This property was at the trail head parking lot of the Baldface Circle Trail. Moreover, the first 4/5's of this trail crossed land belonging to the Charles family. Because of this, the Forest Service asked if Cold River Camp would be able to donate land for a parking lot - at least to solve the trail head parking problem. CTA became involved - hoping to find an alternate solution to both the parking lot and the issue of crossing private land since there was an obvious threat of having access to the Baldfaces shut off. At the time there was some concern about a parking area on Cold River Camp land affecting its shallow well water supply. At CTA's 1986 annual meeting it was voted that the officers were authorized to spend up to the balance of CTA funds on hand (over \$4000) and to request donations if more money were needed. As a result of this vote it was decided by the Executive Committee that the Association should incorporate. This action was done to protect the officers of the Association from personal liability should the CTA own any property as a result of the decision to possibly purchase land for public use.

In 1988 the Cold River Camp Committee and the Appalachian Mountain Club donated to the USFS by easement (to become by fee) about 3/4 acres of land for the trail head parking lot.

In 1989, CTA contacted the Wardwell family who owned a large tract of land just south of the Charles family about the possibility of obtaining land for both a trail corridor and a parking lot. They agreed to sell land for the trail but not for a parking lot.

In February of 1990 a meeting was held at Pinkham Notch to discuss issues involving the Baldface Trail parking lot and the possible purchase of the trail corridor. Members of the Forest Service, AMC Pinkham Notch, AMC Cold River Camp and CTA were present. At this meeting it became clear that the Forest Service did not have funds for any significant land purchase nor was AMC willing to contribute significant funds for the purchase. Because of the urgent nature of the situation, CTA agreed to pay for the required land survey and to pay for at least part of the actual trail corridor from funds on hand which amounted to about \$5000 at the time.

In the notice for the next annual meeting CTA members were notified of the impending land purchase and suggested that if CTA funds at hand were increased that CTA could negotiate for the entire land purchase.

In September of 1991 the trail corridor, a strip of land 4.3 acres in extent, was purchased by CTA from the Wardwell family for a price of \$4980. The land was immediately deeded to the Forest Service. In total approximately \$8000 was spent by CTA for the price of the land and the cost of the required survey. This money included a \$1000 donation to CTA from Cold River Camp, current CTA funds and additional funds given by CTA/AMC members specifically for the land purchase.

We conclude this very brief history with the following remark.

On the one hand, the Chatham Trails Association has been closely associated with the non-profit Appalachian Mountain Club from its inception when it was founded by Frank Mason. It has been supported throughout its history by AMC members - most of whom have been closely associated with the AMC Cold River Camp. Most former Presidents of CTA have been either Cold River Camp managers or Cold River Committee chairmen. On the other hand, almost all of CTA volunteer efforts and funds have been channeled directly to the U. S. Government through the U.S. Forest Service. Currently CTA has a standing agreement with the USFS Bethel Maine Ranger District to maintain the following trails which, except for Conant Path, are either entirely or partially within the White Mountain National Forest:

Bicknell Ridge	Eastman Mtn.
Bickford Slides	Emerald Pool
Blueberry Ridge	Hermit Falls
Brickett Falls	Horseshoe Pond to Conant Tra
Chandler Gorge	Laughing Lion
Cold River (Leach Link)	Little and Big Deer Loops
Conant Path	Slippery Brook
Conant Trail (Pine, Lord, Harndon)	Stone House
Deer Hill Spring	White Cairn
Eagle Cascades	

March 29, 1922

Mr. Geo. H. Evans,  
Somerville, 42, Mass.

Dear Sir:

Reference is made to your letters of February 18 and March 23.

It is gratifying to me to know that responsibility for trails in the Cold River section has at last been fixed through the organization of your Chatham Trails Association.

We approve the trails listed in your letter of February 16 under condition that the standards of trail construction and maintenance, the naming of trail signs, etc., published by the New England Trail Conference in its publication No. 6 at Boston, 1921, and particularly the votes recorded on page 16 of the publication be given recognition by the Association.

There is a certain correlation between trail location and silviculture, particularly as it has to be practiced under present economic conditions. There will be times when certain trails will temporarily be used as logging roads when perhaps a certain amount of their charm will, in the opinion of some people, be detracted from through this use. This fact must be reckoned by us in our relations with both the timber users and the recreationists, and there is no reason why both cannot bear their due share of the burdens.

The Forest Service as an organization and we, personally, recognize that the Cold River Valley has great natural scenic attractions, and at the same time we recognize that the settlers in the Valley on whom we all must depend for our roads, forest fire protection, agricultural activities, and maintenance of general improvements are entitled to the economic developments which naturally combine with life in our New England mountains.

We trust that the Chatham Trails Association will not only aid in the preservation and protection of natural beauty spots of the region, but that they will also use its influence for the improvement of the region so that it may be made useful and enjoyable to the greater numbers that will inevitably go there in the future.

Very truly yours,

J. J. Fritz,  
Forest Supervisor.