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Chocorua—Tomorra

Three generations of women on Mount Chocorua, 1903–1974

Jane English



“CHOCORUA, CHOCORUA. IF WE DON'T GO UP TODAY, WE WILL GO UP TOMORRUA.”

That is what my maternal grandmother, Ida Rachel James, used to say with a big smile. Even more than much taller Mount Washington, Mount Chocorua was my family's favorite in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the landmark “great mountain” when I was young. I heard my parents talk about it often, and they pointed it out to me as we drove past it from when I was very young. Its rocky, pointed cone stood in great contrast to the other nearby rounded peaks. While driving by the mountain and the lakes of the same name, we often stopped at Chocorua Hill on New Hampshire Route 16 to admire the view down across the field, across the smaller lake and the little wooden bridge to the larger lake and up to the mountain. We often picnicked and swam at the sandy beach between the lake and the highway.

Steven D. Smith describes the mountain this way in his 2006 book, *Mount Chocorua: A Guide and History* (Bondcliff Books): “Beloved by hikers and photographers, painters and poets, the granite pinnacle of Mount Chocorua is second in notoriety only to Mount Washington among the peaks of the White Mountains.” He quotes historian Frederick W. Kilbourne's 1942 article in *Appalachia*: “No

August, 1903.

Aug. 29	5 balls Cotton tape		25
	Ball of Twine		10
31	Shoes for tramping	189	3 50
	Tapping Shoe	189	75
	Bicycle Store cap	"	50
	Elastic		18
	Woolen Stockings	189	25
	2 Candles		03
Sept. 2	Tent	7½ x 7½	5 00
	Carfare		20
	Lunch		15
	J. T. J. Jr. Cheese Cloth		25
	Dried Beef	½ lb.	15
	½ lb. Mule Berry Coffee		20
	"Reliable" Flour		25
	Rent	½ August 1st	16 00
	Soap Paper		10
3	2 fares to Greenband		40
	2 pkgs. Gudge		10
4	(2 fares to Madison (mileage 72 m. ea.)		
	Excess baggage on tent, etc.		18
	Ride from Madison & Piper House		1 50
8	Carrying tent to Piper's & Madison		25

A page for August 1903 from the account book of the author's grandparents. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION

In 1904, the author's grandmother, Ida Rachel James, left, and Kimball Johnson rest on the summit watching the sun rise. Ida's husband, Walter H. James, was behind the camera. W. H. JAMES

peak of such insignificant altitude anywhere in the world rivals Chocorua in volume of print, as well as picturesqueness.”

Women’s Mountain-Climbing Clothing

As you meet the three generations of women in this article, consider how “proper” women’s mountain clothing changed dramatically over their lifetimes. The three women are my grandmother, Ida Rachel Butterfield

James (1875–1966); my mother, Ruth James English (1906–1994); and me, Jane English (1942–). Ida Rachel and her sister Lucy Ardena Butterfield, known as Dena, wrote stories that often mentioned what they were wearing. So did a detailed account book kept by Ida Rachel and my grandfather, Walter.

Until the late 1940s, camping clothing and equipment were made of natural fibers (wool, linen, cotton) and leather, with some rubber. Fastenings were metal or bone, not plastic. My first nylon windbreaker jacket in the 1950s replaced cotton poplin jackets that had been my mother’s in the 1930s—nylon seemed quite wonderful.



Ida Rachel in 1904 in her “regulation outfit”—a waterproof cape and “real men’s pants.” W. H. JAMES

Ida Rachel wrote in 1904,

It was decidedly warm, and we soon found that our clothing was too thick to wear when “packing,” so we gradually peeled it off until comfortable, amid much merriment. Walter got plenty of fun out of our different rigs, while Eleanor [Sweet, a family friend] was so overcome by my personal appearance that I had to follow her the rest of the way to the top. . . . When at last we saw Shackford’s welcome sign, we rejoiced, but, when we also saw ladies dressed in white shirt waists, we were reminded of our own dirty condition. . . .

We had intended to go to Berry’s before returning to camp, but as Eleanor and I had on our regulation outfits—namely, real men’s pants—we had been planning to sit down behind the shed and let Walter buy crackers and milk for us. As we were all in such a famished state, a hearty dinner now seemed to be what we must have, so, throwing away our [fishing] poles, we set off unmindful of our attire.

As we neared the house, Eleanor and I had a growing consciousness that if the boarders were there, we would not look quite presentable. It was showery all the morning, and we had our rubber capes, which we now fastened around our waists, as well as possible, but even then, we presented a strange appearance. As we rounded the corner of the shed, sure enough, we saw Mr. Whittemore, a Harvard senior, looking out of the window at us. As carelessly as possible, we sank to the ground, shaking with laughter, though trying to look demure. . . . The ladies had thick underwear, woolen waist or blouse, and bloomers, short skirt, duck gaiters, and sweater. The skirts were usually left in camp, except on special occasions.

In 1905, Ida Rachel wrote of her hiking clothing, “My bloomers made me feel like walking behind Walter whenever we came within sight of anyone, but it did not often happen that day.” She also wrote about how a friend, Mabel Parker, did surgery on her clothing to walk more easily:

Coming down through Franconia Notch, Mabel’s long skirt so impeded her progress that a surgical operation was performed on the skirt, by means of a dirk in the hands of Mr. Heuter, which left the skirt looking a little fringy around the bottom but made it far more comfortable for tramping.

In 1908, Walter climbed the mountain with Dena, Mrs. Washburn, and a woman from New London, Connecticut, whom they had met at The Pines.



This photo of two women on Chocorua in skirts, while of dubious technical quality, shows the dressy garments women of the early 1900s wore on mountains. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION

(Ida Rachel stayed in the valley with their baby, 2-year-old Ruth, and took short hikes that year.) Walter wrote,

Starting in untrained muscles on a mountain climb the first morning after arrival seemed a rather rash proposal, but we wished Dena and Mrs. Washburn to be sure to get a good day on Chocorua, so, as Saturday morning gave promise of a fine day, the trip was decided on. The party consisted of Miss Roath of New London, Conn., whose acquaintance we made at The Pines, Mrs. Washburn, and Dena, with myself as guide. We drove to Berry's, left [the horse] Nan in the barn, and started for the Brook Path. The tramp up was without any unusual occurrence; we ate lunch on the ledges and reached the top in the early afternoon. The view was just ordinary—neither very clear nor very hazy, but the wind blew a gale.

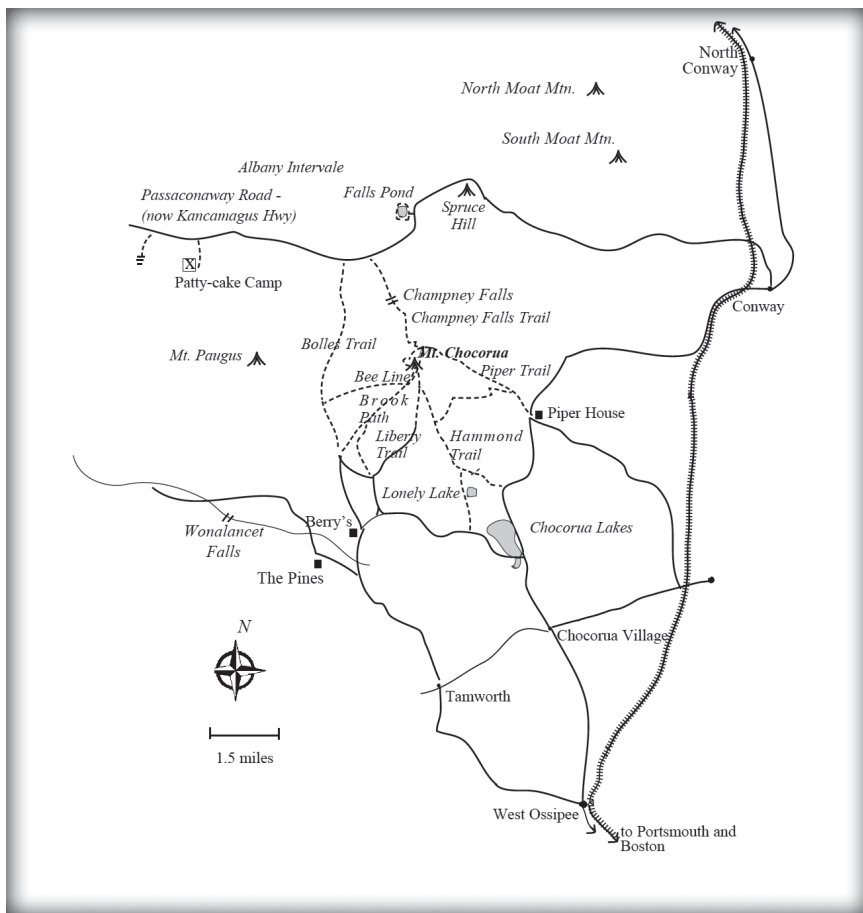
Retracing our steps down the peak, we had just passed the place where the Knowles Path and the Brook Path separate when we came upon a sign

indicating a trail down over the west side of the mountain into the valley of the Lost Trail and thence to Paugus. This was something new since last year, and I at once expressed a desire to descend that way to the Lost Trail and follow that out to Berry's. The ladies were ready for almost anything, and we decided to make the attempt. Little I realized what a course I was leading them! If I had, I think some other route would have been selected. For a little ways we walked almost west, down over the ledges. Someone remarked that it looked as if we were coming to the edge, and it surely did look so. What is more, it was so, the edge proving to be the beginning of a very steep and rough slide, possibly the one [Frank] Bolles' refers to as being visible from Paugus.

The prospect ahead was mighty unpromising for a party of ladies, only one of whom had ever climbed a mountain before. No one was willing to turn back, however, so on we went, but not far on the first lap, for a little drop off to a shelving ledge three feet down proved a monster obstacle. Two of the ladies hunted out ways along the side, where, by clinging to the bushes, they crawled down. The third one sat on the rock clamoring that she did not know how she was to get down, for all the world like a duck that couldn't fly and didn't dare to jump. She finally managed to get around where the others did. This was the beginning, and it was not long before the same person was stuck again, this time in a pile of gravel where she couldn't stand still without holding to the bushes and didn't dare to go ahead for fear she would get going too fast. I got her by the arm and showed her that, by walking along and digging in her heels, she could get on all right. After this, her troubles somewhat lessened.



The author's great aunt, Dena, cooking breakfast in 1908, during a horse-and-buggy trip from West Ossipee to Tamworth, New Hampshire. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION



A map showing the trails on Mount Chocorua, in the Sandwich Range of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. JANE ENGLISH

In the meantime, the others were squealing away, sliding down the rocks by sitting down, or else squatting. Progress was slow, but all three gained confidence in themselves as they went on, so that the foot of the slide was reached without mishap. The lumbermen had worked up to this point so that the rest of the journey, while long and not very smooth, was over lumber roads which were passable. I had to admit that the trip was a rough one and that none of the ladies showed lack of real backbone.

The clothing continued to evolve in the 1930s.



Left, Ruth (at left) with a friend, both in stockings and bloomers, at Carter Notch Hut in 1932. Right, only two years later, Ruth had begun wearing shorts, low, thick wool socks, and sturdy hiking boots. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION



Ida Rachel James cooking on a 1923 camping trip in Vermont. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION

First Generation: Ida Rachel James, 1875–1966

Ida Rachel James grew up on a farm in Dunstable, Massachusetts, then worked as a secretary in Boston, where she met her husband, Walter H. James. Walter had grown up on a farm in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and became a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Married in 1899, they spent their honeymoon on a carriage trip to Mount Monadnock, a peak she had enjoyed seeing in the distance from the hilltop Dunstable farm. At the time of the story here they lived in Waltham, Massachusetts.

My family's book *Our Mountain Trips, Volume I* (Bondcliff Books, 2005) includes the delightful account of the first real camping trip Ida Rachel and Walter James took together. Ida Rachel wrote it in the third person for presentation to a women's club. Walter did not yet own a camera, so they did not take pictures on this trip, which started from his childhood farm in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It appears that they had spent some time since their 1900 train and carriage trip to the White Mountains reading about the peaks they had been introduced to on that trip. They chose Mount Chocorua for this "tramping" trip.



Ida Rachel and Walter H. James in 1904. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION

Camping on Mt. Chocorua.

One warm day early in September 1903 found the man and the woman joyfully starting from Portsmouth. He with flannel shirt, old trousers, and heavy shoes—she with woolen waist, short skirt [mid-calf length was their idea of short], and heavy boots with verandas around them, but just the thing for mountain climbing. Never again will the man start with old trousers, for when he took an unexpected slide over a crumbling ledge on the mountain, results followed which would have been even more serious had not certain parts of the trousers been previously reinforced.

The tent, food, and extra clothing made a bundle of forty pounds, which was sent as baggage. The car ride was pleasant, past Dover, Rochester, and Ossipee, but when the train neared the Bearcamp region, where one could begin to see real mountains, then the spirits of the two kept rising and rising.

About one o'clock, the train stopped at Madison, just at the end of Silver Lake, and they left the train gladly, for were they not now really setting their faces towards Chocorua? They found that it was five miles to the foot of the mountain to which they had intended to walk, but with the mercury at 88°, and a forty-pound pack to carry, their courage suddenly ebbed, so someone was hired to carry them. The drive [by horse and carriage] was through a woody road, quite hilly, giving occasional glimpses of the bald peak of Chocorua, which seemed to come nearer and nearer.

At the Piper House, where the Piper Trail commences, the two started off with the luggage, somewhat to the amusement of the onlookers. As the man shouldered the pack, Mr. Piper observed, "That looks like a pretty big pack for a little man"—but the "little man" could carry it just the same. However, he soon stopped to make it into what he calls a "doughnut," which makes the load much easier to carry, and the woman also took her share.

On they went, through the warm September sunshine, leaving behind the cows and barbed wire fences as last vestiges of civilization, into the "forest primeval," following the well-worn trail which runs along a big swell of the mountain. After about an hour's tramping up the path, with many stops to rest—for the load was none of the lightest—they found a small brook, at the sight of which the man's heart rejoiced, for he was very thirsty and thought it time to camp.

A little way back from the trail they found a good place for the tent, in a little grove of poplars, with pretty white birches and small spruces right in

front, and, over across a deep ravine, a long ridge of the mountain showing faintly through the trees. It was almost an ideal place to camp, for the trees were not thick enough to make it damp, there were plenty of dead birches for fuel, while bracken and young spruce boughs furnished a fragrant bed. The only things lacking were a more plentiful water supply and an unobstructed view of the summit, but they afterwards found a big ledge up back of the camp, which they named, "The Lookout," from which there was a beautiful view.

It was some work to make camp and as soon as it was finished, it was time for supper. How cheerful the campfire looked, how good the coffee smelled, and how hungry the campers were! A semicircular fireplace of stones had been built in front of the tent, over which a stick was placed to hold the pail for boiling the food. The baby spider² was intended principally for frying the trout they expected to catch, but alas! for the fisherman's luck: Never a trout did they get. But it served its purpose admirably for cooking biscuit. Much to the surprise and pleasure of the campers, quantities of delicious blueberries were found on the top of the mountain, fully 3,000 feet above sea level, and these were a very acceptable addition to their larder.

A little table was made by laying small twigs across two others supported by forked sticks, while plates and baskets were made out of birch bark, which had the advantage of not needing to be washed.

The camp was a permanent abiding place, so everything was left there during the day, while trips were taken, but nothing was molested in the absence of the owners. The first day they climbed to the summit, but as it was cloudy and drizzly when they reached the top, another trip was made the next day. As the top of the mountain is 3,500 feet high, it makes a good climb, ordinarily taking about three hours. The Piper Trail is entirely through the woods until almost at the summit, and a beautiful woods it is. There are quantities of silvery paper birches, with some beeches and poplars and a sprinkling of young spruces. The old growth was evergreen, and along the path lie many large trunks of spruce and hemlock, almost fallen to pieces with decay, but showing that here once stood giants of the forest. Fire and hurricane have left the summit entirely bare, and the ledges are quite white when seen from a distance.

²This was an iron skillet on legs for cooking over a fire.

The man and the woman both thought the view from Chocorua more satisfactory than from Mt. Washington. At the north, across the Swift River Intervale, the whole landscape is composed of rugged mountains, the nearer ones clothed in verdure to the very tops. In the distance, the Presidential Range could be clearly seen, sometimes with clouds covering the summit of Mt. Washington, while nearer one could locate the Crawford Notch and Kearsarge and Moat Mountains. Towards the west, beyond a deep ravine, lay Paugus, the next in the Sandwich Range, and beyond were Toadback [later Wonalancet] and Passaconaway. The view south and east was less grand, for the mountains were smaller, and in the valleys lay many beautiful lakes and several villages. Two hours each time were spent on the summit, watching the purple shadows creep slowly over the mountains and lakes, but the time was all too short. Other people were there enjoying the view, and one gentleman was found who pointed out the late Frank Bolles house, near the shore of Chocorua Lake, also the little lonely lake of which Bolles writes, and the rock near the summit of Chocorua under which he spent the night alone during a thunder shower. The woman had been coaxing the man to sleep up there one night, so as to see the sunrise; he would not consent to such a plan and was rather amused when the gentleman previously mentioned, on being asked if he had ever done it, said, "No, some fools do it." The upper woods abounded in small birds, mostly warblers, but their time for singing was past, and only once did the campers hear the voice of little Killoleet, the white-throated sparrow.

The first two nights were warm, but the last two were decidedly cold—cold enough so that snow fell on Mt. Washington. The woman would not dare tell you all the clothes she wore at night, but you can imagine how many she might need to keep her warm. Before the moon came up, they had a cheery little "friendship fire," which looked very attractive as the shadows grew deeper and deeper.

How reluctantly they were to break camp! Already the little spot seemed like home and it was hard to leave it. That last morning they were up at five o'clock, for it would take some time to get breakfast and pick up their household goods, ready for the tramp down the mountain.

A farewell visit was made to the lookout. The leaves on the further side of the ravine were beginning to turn, the air was clear and still, and just above the opposite ridge, the big moon was almost ready to sink out of sight. The woman had to be fairly pulled away from the lovely spot—not that the man was unappreciative of the beauty, only he seemed to bear the

burden of responsibility and knew it was time to be starting. What a pleasure it would be to stand there in June and hear the thrush songs ring down the valley!

Finally, everything was ready, and, with a last fond look at the little camping place and a murmured hope that some day they might come back there again, the two travelers, each with luggage on back and staff in hand, set off down the trail. At the Piper House they sent their packs over to Madison and themselves tramped along leisurely, with many backward looks toward the dear old mountain.

*Written for the Waltham Woman's Club, October 23, 1903,
by Ida Rachel James.*

The two volumes of the *Our Mountain Trips* books contain accounts, of Ida Rachel's subsequent camping trips to Chocorua in 1904, 1905, and 1920. The diaries of Ida Rachel and her daughter Ruth indicate that Ida Rachel and Walter continued to vacation near Mount Chocorua well into the late 1930s, mostly staying at country inns.

Second Generation: Ruth James English, 1906–1994

Whereas Ida Rachel was something of a pioneer when it came to “camping and tramping,” her daughter Ruth was born into a family wherein such activities were “matter of course” and were celebrated. It seemed that nothing could raise enthusiasm more than the prospect of a mountain trip.

Stories we gathered in the *Our Mountain Trips* books show that Ruth's first family trip to the mountains, staying at an inn rather than camping, happened when she was 2 in 1908.

After that, Ida Rachel stayed home with the children while Walter went on occasional mountain trips each year with friends and MIT colleagues. Ruth did accompany family to short day trips to nearby small mountains, Stratham Hill in 1910 and Agamenticus in 1915. By 1918 the James family had acquired its first automobile, a Model T Ford, and used it for tours in the mountains. In the summer of 1920 when Ruth was 14, her father, Walter, introduced her to camping while on a trip to visit family friends in Maine.

September Camping Trip—1920

The first real family camping trip by automobile and Ruth's first time climbing Chocorua was in September 1920. This next story by Walter H. James is in the second volume of *Our Mountain Trips*.

The party consisted of the immediate family and Florence Cheney. The medium of transportation was faithful old Lizzie, freshly painted and with new Vacuum Cup Cord tires on the rear. The equipment consisted of the "A" tent, tent fly, Army pup tent with mosquito tent to fit, together with innumerable blankets and quilts, large and small, quantities of personal clothing, cooking utensils, and food. When all was packed, there was no room inside the car for rattling around, either for people or things, and the running boards and front fenders were piled high.

The destination was [an island in Downes Brook the family called] old Patty Cake Island in the Albany Valley. The start was made on Sunday forenoon, August 29, at a little after 11 A.M. Nothing of special interest happened on the trip through Nashua and Manchester, to the "supper spot" in a grove just beyond Manchester. There was no definite plan for the night, although the general expectation was that camp would be made somewhere along Lake Winnepesaukee. By the time we reached Laconia, it was dark—very dark—and as no attractive spot to camp seemed available, we decided to push on to Center Harbor and get into the hotel. Arriving at Center Harbor, we found the hotel full but were directed to a farmhouse just off the main road. Here we found most acceptable accommodations and excellent food.

About midafternoon of the next day, Monday, we arrived at our destination with no mishaps except that one of the new inner tubes on the rear tire went flat, necessitating changing just beyond Spruce Hill. The usual duties of making camp kept us busy until night. No very remarkable incidents occurred during our stay, except on the day we ascended Mount Chocorua. One day we set out for Sabbaday Falls but were caught in a thunder shower and turned back. The visit was successfully made a day or two later.

On one clear morning, we drove to the beginning of the Champney Falls Trail, left the car in the bushes, and started up the trail. When we got well up above the trees, Rachel discovered that she had dropped her sweater. Thereupon, I reluctantly turned back to hunt it up. After descending a short distance, I met a young lady with her father. She had picked up the sweater a long ways back and brought it along, thus saving me a long, weary tramp. For the rest of the climb to the top and down to the valley of the Bolles Trail, we



On the left, perhaps, is the girl who retrieved the lost sweater, then Florence and Ruth—hiding from the camera. Behind them is the table upon which a forest fire watchman laid out his map and compass when checking on smokes. W. H. JAMES

remained in the company of these two people, and we found them very agreeable companions. Our plan was to follow the Bolles Trail back to the Albany Intervale, but, after struggling for a couple of miles, we lost the trail entirely. Night was coming on, and Ruth had a sore eye which was causing her much discomfort, so we decided to turn back. We went out to Nat Berry's and persuaded Mrs. Berry to put us up for the night.

The next morning, Ruth, having recovered from her trouble of the night before, joined me in a tramp back up over Chocorua, ascending via the Brook Path. We returned to yesterday's starting point and found Lizzie unmolested. Then we started off and drove around the mountains to meet the rest of our party, who said that they would walk slowly from Berry's along the road toward Chocorua Lake. We met them shortly after one o'clock nearly at the old Piper House.

The remainder of the week was spent around the valley visiting, among other places, the falls on the Swift River and the little lake which lies hidden just beyond. Sunday morning, we packed up and made an early start, hoping to spend the night in the vicinity of Lake Winnepesaukee. Alas for the hope! As we were going down Spruce Hill, I found that my service brake lining had given out, so I tried the not uncommon trick of braking by using the reverse pedal. But I must have used it too forcibly for the drum broke with a crash, wedging the pieces between the gears and effectually stalling the engine. We coasted down the hill, controlling the speed with the emergency brake, and brought up in the door yard of a vacant cottage. Here I set to work, fishing the fragments out of the gears, which fortunately were not injured. A passing automobile, containing a motherly lady and her son, took Ruth and Florence to Conway where they found a room for the night. Rachel and Arthur [James, Ruth's younger brother] stayed by me. I worked until dark, then we put up the mosquito tent and slept in the door yard.

At nine o'clock the next morning, I had the engine running, and we drove out to the Conway Garage, minus the power to back, but perfectly able to go forward. By the aid of the garage man's car, the family members were rushed to the station in time to catch the Boston-bound train, while I remained until the afternoon train in order to make arrangements for repairs.

I was rather dirty, but, by the purchase of a shirt at the store, which I put on in the basement of the garage, I was able to make a fairly decent appearance. A week later, I returned to Conway, found Lizzie in fit condition again, and drove her home.

Chocorua, June 3–4, 1933, with an Unknown Friend

After my mother Ruth graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 1929, she again lived at home, in Waltham, Massachusetts, and worked in Cambridge as a secretary at Harvard University. With various women friends from college, home, and work, she made many camping and skiing trips to New Hampshire. Ruth did not write as much as did her parents, so records of her 1933 ascent of Chocorua are photos and brief diary entries.

Saturday, June 3, 1933—Left for Chocorua. Took Marjorie to Manchester. Thunder near Laconia, and water in car. Supper in Meredith. Night at Wing's Tavern (The Piper House). Sunday, June 4, 1933—Climbed Chocorua and swam in Lake Chocorua. Supper at Marjorie's, then home.



Ruth on the top of Chocorua on June 4, 1933. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION

Ruth's undocumented, last ascent of Chocorua was sometime in the early 1950s with me (Jane English) and my brother. We went up the Piper Trail and down the Weetamoo Trail.

Third Generation: Jane English, 1942–

This is a story I wrote 50 years ago after I climbed Chocorua on June 3, 1974, with my husband, Gia-fu Feng, with whom I had created a bestselling edition of the Chinese classic *Tao Tè Ching* (Vintage Books, 1972; other editions were published in 1989 and 2011), illustrated with my black-and-white photos and his beautiful Chinese calligraphy.

The handwritten notes I made that day contain numerous corrections and edits my mother made that evening.

The day dawned clear and cool, 40F in Tamworth, and it was obviously the day for a mountain climb. I decided on Chocorua partly because I had been thinking about writing this article and partly because my husband Gia-fu Feng had never been up it.

I had climbed it several times—once in the 1950s via the Piper Trail/Weetamoo Trail loop with my mother and brother, once with my brother leading

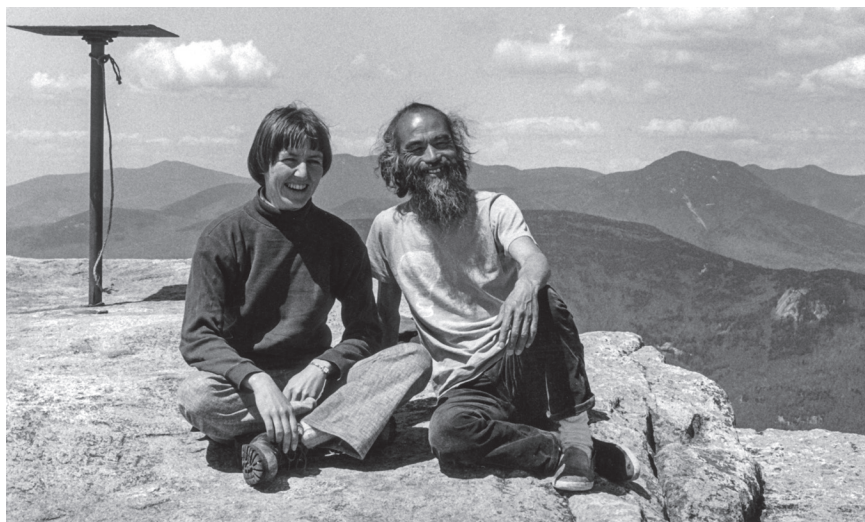
a group of Camp Asquam girls only to the first ledges on the Brook Path on a hot, humid, buggy day in 1960, and once in 1962 via the Champney Falls Trail leading a group from Camp Marlyn.

For today's hike we decided to go up the Brook Path and down the Liberty Trail. Starting out from the car at 8 A.M., we walked briskly in the cool air, making several photo stops in the hemlock woods. Alternately walking along and photographing we reached the summit around 11 A.M. where we met a honeymooning couple who had come up the Champney Falls Trail.

Near the summit where several trails together ascend the summit cone, the rough granite is worn smooth along the paint-marked trail by the passage of thousands of feet—including mine on previous occasions, my mother's on her four ascents, and my grandmother's on her many trips up this mountain.

The day was clear and the view excellent. It felt good to sit on the summit and look out at so many of the mountains I had been on—Kearsarge, Cardigan, Sandwich, Osceola, the Franconias, Potash, Hancock, Carrigain, Willey, Willard, the Southern Presidentials, Washington, and on around the horizon. Washington still had snowfields on it, and I imagined a few die-hard skiers were there.

As we sat on the summit we kept hearing loud rustlings in the bushes just below the summit. I stood up to peer over the edge to see what was happening—people coming? a bear? papers blowing about? or what? Finally one of



Jane and her husband, Gia-fu Feng, on Chocorua on June 3, 1974. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION



The author rests on the ledges. JANE ENGLISH COLLECTION

the noises came closer and closer and turned out to be nothing but a small whirlwind that almost blew my drying socks off the mountain.

After about an hour we left the summit and headed down the Liberty Trail. It was hard for me to imagine my grandmother on these same steep ledges as I knew her only as an old lady, though one who still walked in the woods and showshoed until she was 85. As we crossed the ledges I was glad of my good Vibram-soled Limmer boots and wondered how it would be with leather soles. That evening my mother told me that what my grandmother wore were sturdy, high, laced boots that indeed had leather soles.

We wandered on down the trail, not too fast and not too slowly, talking about ideas for the next book Gia-fu and I might create together. I made more photographs, and, as is often the case on a climb, the last couple of miles back to the car seemed longer than they really were.

In all, it was a fine day.

Postscript

As I write this in late 2023, now myself an old woman of 81 years, I think of what might have been fourth and fifth generations of women in our family climbing Mount Chocorua. But having no children or grandchildren myself (I tell people I had books rather than children!) I look to you, the reader, to consider as your own ancestors the three generations of women whose stories I tell. You are the fourth, fifth, and even sixth generations who walk in our footsteps. Enjoy the “tramping!”

JANE ENGLISH is a photographer, writer, and creator of books and calendars. She has always lived near mountains and for the past 22 years has lived on a dirt road by a pond in central Vermont. Her latest project is to be called *White Pines: Stories and Images from a Woman's Life-long Friendship with These Trees*. She is working on that book with Steve Smith, Dave Govatski, Joseph Bruchac, and others.

Resources

Our Mountain Trips, Volumes I and II: Being authentic accounts of camping, packing and tramping in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, by Ida Rachel Butterfield James (1875–1966), Lucy Ardena Butterfield (1871–1955), and Walter H. James (1873–1963), edited by Ben English Jr. and Jane English. Bondcliff Books, 2005 and 2007. Available at eheart.com and at bondcliffbooks.com, also at the bookshop in the AMC's Highland Center in Crawford Notch, New Hampshire.

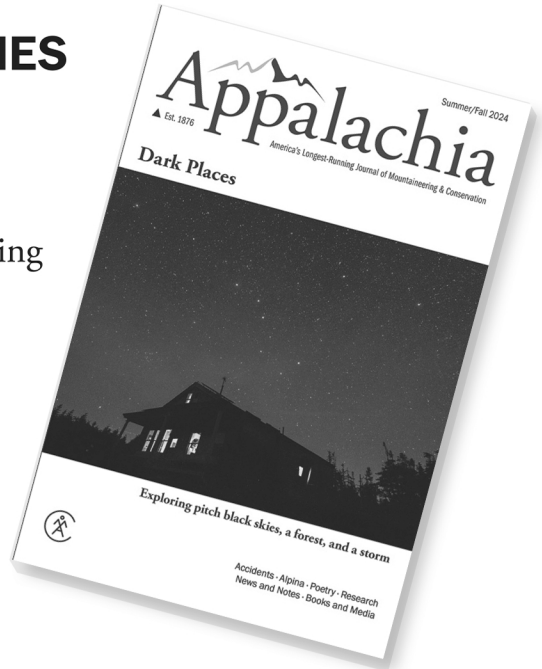
Mount Chocorua: A Guide and History, by Steven D. Smith. Bondcliff Books, 2006. Available at bondcliffbooks.com and at Steve's bookstore, The Mountain Wanderer in Lincoln, New Hampshire. eheart.com. Jane English's website. Includes the books she created with Gia-fu Feng.

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