

CHEWONKI

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

A History 1915-2005

BY JESSE DUKES



WISCASSSET
ON THE MAINE COAST

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DESIGN BY FALL DESIGN

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A Condensed History of Chewonki

- 1915 Clarence Allen founds Split Rock Camp for boys on Lake Champlain
- 1918 Clarence Allen moves his camp to Chewonki Neck
- 1929–1933 Roger Tory Peterson is a counselor and camp naturalist
- 1962 The Chewonki Foundation is chartered
- 1965 Clarence Allen retires
- 1966 Tim Ellis becomes Camp Director
- 1970 Tim Ellis becomes Executive Director
- 1970 First Environmental Education programs offered
- 1970 First Wilderness Trips for adults and families offered
- 1973–1984 Maine Reach, for high-school seniors and recent graduates
- 1976 First Co-Ed Wilderness Expeditions are offered
- 1985 Outreach Programs begin
- 1988 Maine Coast Semester, for 11th graders, begins
- 1991 Tim Ellis retires and Don Hudson becomes President
- 1999 New Center for Environmental Education opens
- 2000 First all-girls program is launched at Wood Cove Pond in Attean Township, Maine
- 2002 Chewonki purchases Big Eddy Campground on West Branch of the Penobscot River

IN BRIEF

Camp Chewonki for boys (originally Split Rock Camp) was founded in 1915 on the shores of Lake Champlain, New York, by a young educator named Clarence Allen. In 1918 he moved his operation to Wiscasset, Maine, to the southern half of Chewonki Neck, a 400-acre peninsula on Montsweag Bay. Clarence and a committed staff ran the camp successfully through both World Wars, the Depression, and into the 1960s.

In 1962 a group of loyal camp alumni formed a nonprofit corporation called The Chewonki Foundation and embarked on a capital campaign to raise funds to buy the camp. The campaign was successful, and shortly later “The Boys bought out The Boss.” Clarence retired in 1965, and in 1966 the foundation hired a young teacher named Tim Ellis, who had grown up at Chewonki, to succeed him. Under Tim’s leadership, Chewonki began experimenting in the 1970s with year-round programs and more extensive wilderness trips. Thus began Chewonki’s transformation into a full-time year-round educational institution.

Today Chewonki continues to maintain its traditional boys’ camp. It also offers a broad array of environmental education programs, natural history programs, wilderness trips and workshops for adults, families, and groups, and a residential academic program for high-school juniors called the Maine Coast Semester. The current president of The Chewonki Foundation is Don Hudson, who succeeded Tim on his retirement in 1991.



The Farmhouse in the 1920s.

Chewonki Neck Before Camp Chewonki

Chewonki Neck comprises about 300 acres of forest and cleared land and nearly 100 acres of salt marsh. The peninsula juts into Montsweag Bay, which is a widening of the Back River, itself an auxiliary of the Sheepscot River.

Before European settlers arrived, the Sheepscot watershed was occupied by the Kennebec grouping of the Eastern Abenaki. The Abenaki organized themselves into family bands consisting of fifteen to twenty-five people, and into larger villages consisting of several related family bands. Depending on the time of year, a family band would either stay close to its inland village or range out to the coast to hunt, trap, farm, and fish. It is likely that Abenaki occupied Chewonki Neck during summers in order to gather mussels, scallops and crabs.

As early as the 1500s, Spanish, Portuguese and English ships entered the Gulf of Maine to fish, but it was not until the early 1600s that the Maine coast began to be settled by Europeans. In 1662 an English sailor named George Davie purchased a tract of land that included Chewonki Neck, several nearby islands, and most of present-day Wiscasset. It is believed that the first local European settlement followed Davie's purchase, and there are records of early settlers on "Jewankee Neck." While we do not know much about those settlers, we do know that most settlements during that time consisted of a house or cabin with a nearby garden of corn and grain.

In 1676 a series of wars began that involved the various groups of Native Americans on the Maine

Coast, the European settlers, and the European nations that sponsored settlement. The so-called Indian Wars continued for eighty years, and in the process the first wave of white settlers, including George Davie, were driven from the Maine coast.

A second wave of European settlement began in the late 1720s, sponsored by the British Colonial Government and land companies in Boston. In 1734 Rev. Christopher Toppan of Massachusetts purchased a large tract of land in southern Wiscasset that included Chewonki Neck and the neighboring points and islands. In the 1740s the Colonial Government established a garrison on Westport Island to protect the settlers who lived on "Jewankee" Neck and the nearby lands. The remainder of that century was marked by declining relations between the Abenaki and the British colonists, with occasional eruptions into tragic conflicts.

During the eighteenth century, increasing pressure from British colonialism eventually forced the Abenaki north. At about the same time, timber was harvested at Chewonki Neck and clay for bricks was mined from what we now call Pumphouse Ravine. We do not know whether the settlers on Chewonki were engaged in brick making or logging, or whether they leased their land to local operators. Brick makers harvested timber mainly to fuel their kilns, although it is possible that some of the pines were used as masts for ships.

By the early 1800s Chewonki Neck was divided into two parcels of land, each worked by a separate subsistence farming family. It was during this time that most of Chewonki Neck was cleared and the buildings we now call the Farmhouse, Gatehouse

and Hilltop were built. By 1857 the Baileys owned the property to the north and the Nasons owned the land to the south. It was a time when farmers were beginning to abandon New England for more economically promising locations, particularly in the West, and when New England soils had to compete with grains and meat that could be shipped East by railroad from the agriculturally rich land of the Midwest. Both the Nasons and the Baileys were "stickers," however, and their farms prospered. In fact, both farms seem to have grown from "subsistence" status in the 1860s to "livelihood" status by the 1880s. They produced a variety of commercial products, including firewood, cattle, sheep, milk, chickens, eggs and apples. The livestock must have been particularly important because by 1900 most of the pastureland was given over to sheep. In 1913 the Nasons sold most of the southern half of Chewonki Neck to Herbert Hawes who put the property up for sale within two years.

Clarence Allen Founds Split Rock Camp

Clarence Allen was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, on February 8, 1887. His father worked as a confectioner for a Massachusetts company, and his grandfather, Francis Allen, was a finishing carpenter who worked on the interior of clippers in the shipyards of Bath, Maine. In order to capitalize on trade opportunities, the clippers would occasionally sail before the interior was complete, and Francis Allen would travel around Cape Horn to San Francisco and complete the work while the ship was underway. Because of his grandfather's trade, Clarence grew up with a casual knowledge of ships, and his younger son, Douglas, remembers him appraising the quality of potential charter boats by sticking his penknife into the planking. Both of Clarence's grandfathers fought in the Civil War, and he related with pride that Francis Allen fought in the Maine battalion that held Little Round Top during the decisive opening skirmishes at Gettysburg.

In the winter of 1890 Clarence's father moved the family to England to install American-style soda fountains in English restaurants. Clarence later provided a pithy description of the experience: "While there, I was baptized, began school, con-

"In those days, when summer came, and you had a son, you engaged a young man, preferably a teacher, to 'tutor' him for the summer to get him out of your hair, so to speak. The word 'tutor' didn't mean sitting all day teaching lessons. It involved doing interesting things with the boy, teaching him to play a good game of tennis and to swim, taking him hiking in the woods, teaching him about the flowers and trees, bird watching and imparting your knowledge to help him be more observing."

—Kay Allen, from an interview on September 13, 1986 (former wife of Chewonki Founder Clarence Allen, Camp tutor, Camp gardener, and self-appointed overseer of all Chewonki details.)

tracted chronic bronchitis, picked up the habit of dropping my 'H's' and at baptism, acquired my given name, merely because my mother was impressed by the fact that the Church of England rector who baptized me was the nephew of the Duke of Clarence." After eight years his father was recalled, and the family moved back to the United States.

In grade school in Fitchburg, Clarence was impressed by a teacher named Abby Churchill who visited all the local schools. She told stories and read poems associated with nature and took interested children for nature walks. Clarence kept a copy of the book of poems Miss Churchill compiled, and in later years he credited her with awakening his interest in the natural world.

In 1904 Clarence's chronic bronchitis worsened, which he attributed to smoking too many Sweet Cap cigarettes. At a time when a change in surroundings was still a common prescription for all sorts of ailments, Clarence took the advice of his doctor and moved to Vermont to stay with the parents of a family friend by the name of Flood. While

*Ten minutes to bed, how many?
Ten minutes to bed, how many?
Go to the washstand and use your soap
You will be cleaner tomorrow we hope
For it's ten minutes to bed, how many?
Ten minutes to bed, how many?
We hope that you will all sleep tight
For it's ten minutes to bed, lights out.*
—Renny Little, remembering a song counselors sang at bedtime (Camp Chewonki 1942-1948, Chewonki Staff 1953-1955, 1960, Former Trustee, Current Advisor.)

accompanying Mr. Flood on his rural mail route, Clarence passed by a boarded-up schoolhouse near New Discovery Mountain. Mr. Flood related that the schoolhouse window had been covered with boards because "the boys threw the teacher right out the window." This must have piqued young Clarence's interest because within a few months he had taken on the task of running the school.

Clarence was only seventeen, and his students were not a docile crew. Although he did not suffer the same fate as his predecessor, he was regularly pelted with snowballs whenever he rang the bell to end recess. He was not a trained teacher, but the town superintendent took the necessary steps to make sure he had a Vermont teaching certificate. It is difficult to imagine how spending a winter teaching unruly students in a single-room school could improve anyone's health, but Clarence later claimed he returned to Fitchburg that spring in excellent health and was never again troubled by bronchitis. Moreover, his early experience in rugged Vermont apparently whetted his appetite for education and the rustic life.

When Clarence returned from Vermont, his friend and teacher Stella Woodward suggested that he attend college. He was accepted into Dartmouth College, and Woodward loaned him \$600 to cover his four-year tuition. He entered in the fall of 1906 and studied German, science, French, chemistry, math, economics, and comparative languages. Clarence graduated from Dartmouth in 1910 with a bachelor's degree in science and quickly found a job with Newton Country Day School in Newton, Massachusetts.

For five years, Clarence taught in Newton during the school year and spent his summers tutoring boys from Boston's "well-heeled" families. On October 11, 1911, he married Elizabeth Leiper of Fitchburg. They lived in Watertown, Massachusetts. Clarence suffered from illumination gas poisoning from a leak under the sidewalk near their house. The gas damaged the nerves in his teeth, and he had to have his four front teeth removed. His doctor installed a plate of false teeth that was apparently so well crafted that no one ever knew his own teeth were missing.

In 1914 Clarence tutored the son of Major Thomas Lee Higginson, the founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Higginson had a large estate in upstate New York on the shores of Lake Champlain. Clarence spent one summer there as the tutor, and although he enjoyed the job, he did not like having to spend the summer away from Elizabeth. For the next summer, he hit on the idea of opening a camp for boys where his wife could join him. Higginson raised livestock on his estate, and near the farm buildings was an enormous rock believed to have been left by the glaciers and a small, protected cove known as Grog Harbor. Clarence arranged with Higginson to rent a few acres of land on Grog Harbor, and in 1915 he opened Split Rock Camp. He later described the spirit of the time: "I look back on my nerve of starting such a venture, since I had never been in a boys' camp, either as camper or counselor. But ignorance sure was bliss and by the grace of God, we made a go at it."

Since he had no model upon which to base this first endeavor, Clarence developed his own guiding principles. The experience would be educational,

fun, and healthful, and he wanted mature leaders for counselors. He sought to teach boys an array of activities that would become worthwhile, lifelong hobbies. He was not keen on the pressures associated with competition, and any competitive activity would be undertaken with leisure and goodwill. Sailing, woodcraft, and nature were his early favorites, and these activities would remain essential to the Chewonki experience.

Twenty-five or thirty boys came to Split Rock Camp, and according to Clarence's account the staff numbered four. The country was in the midst of World War I and there were many difficulties to overcome in that remote setting. Nonetheless, the first summer was counted a success and Clarence Allen was in the boys' camp business.

Split Rock Camp did not suit Clarence's long-term plans, however. The name Grog Harbor, which conjures up images of drunken sailors, could make the task of convincing parents to send their son for a summer needlessly challenging. Also, it is easy to imagine that Clarence, who later took to being called "The Boss," probably preferred the idea of owning his own parcel of land. Whatever his thinking, he began to keep an eye out for possible sites throughout New England.

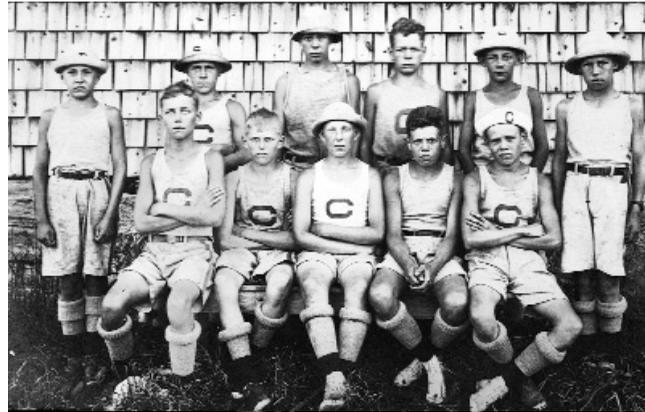
Clarence apparently started considering mid-coast Maine as early as 1916, when Algie Douglass, a Split-Rock counselor, shared an account of his travels there. In 1917 Clarence's father had settled in Bath and was successfully running a candy store. He spotted an advertisement in the *Bath Times* about some property "on the shores of Montsweag Stream" for sale, and he sent it to his son. That winter, Clarence took the train from Boston to Bath, crossing the Kennebec River by ferry and then

continuing to the Monstweag Depot, where he met Herbert Hawes. From there they road in a horse-drawn cart to the old Nason place, just down the road.

Clarence explored the sheep farm on snowshoes. While standing under what would later be called the Old Pine Tree, he could see down the peninsula to the point and to Monstweag Stream; there were no trees to obscure the view. Before agreeing to the purchase, he obtained assurances that the well delivered good drinking water and that Montsweag Stream was suitable for swimming. Deed records reveal that the plot sold for \$2,500 and consisted of about 125 acres. That spring Clarence oversaw the renovation of the Farmhouse and looked to his first year in Maine with keen excitement. The land that had most recently been used to raise sheep seemed a perfect site for the crowds of boys he hoped to attract.

Camp Chewonki Opens Its Doors

Camp Chewonki, "A Saltwater Camp for Boys," opened in 1918 with an enrollment of about forty. The history of the very first years of camp are largely unknown. We do know that the boys stayed in tents, which were cleaned and aired out once a week. On "tent days" the campers would leave Chewonki Neck to explore nearby points of interest. During those early years, Clarence further developed his philosophy about education and the natural world. By the 1930s, everyday camp life had developed into a routine that remains well documented. The routine was built around two basic units of time: the week,



1920s. Campers. From postcard printed at Labbie's Picture Shop, Boothbay Harbor.

of which there were eight in a summer, and the days of the week.

On a regular camp day, the campers were awakened at 7:00 A.M. by the sound of a ringing bell. After breakfast, they participated in a morning activity, a general swim or free period, and then a short rest period. After lunch came another rest period, this time closer to an hour in length. Campers emerged from their naps to the sound of a ringing bell and shuffled off groggily to their afternoon activity. The afternoon activity gave way to a general swim, which brought the campers right up to supper.

Supper was followed by an activity that usually involved all of camp. Sometimes everyone played a giant game of Capture the Flag in a clearing on the east side of the peninsula. Another popular game was Kick the Can, played in the quad between the Farmhouse and Barn. The now sixty-foot-tall pine trees that have grown to dwarf the Farmhouse were planted early on, and their lower branches made for great cover in hiding games. Some nights there was a skit or musical revue from the dramatics program.



In the 1920s, campers slept in tents, and trees were beginning to grow on Chewonki Neck. You could still see Montsweag Stream opening into Montsweag Bay through the trees.

Every Saturday night consisted of campfire beneath the Old Pine Tree with skits, songs, and other entertainments. The evening activity ended shortly after 8:00 P.M., when the boys headed back to their cabins to get ready for bed.

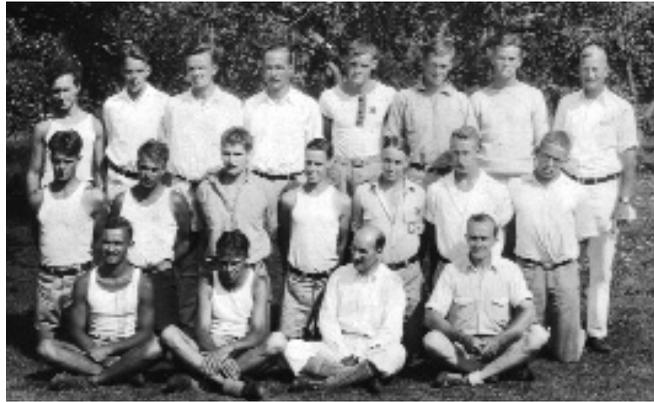
Daytime activities formed the core of the camp experience. Although there might have been a few new activities during any given year, the activities that were offered year after year included tennis, swimming, sailing, the weekly *Chronicle* newsletter, woodcraft/canoeing, nature, riflery, archery, wood shop, dramatics and crafts. During various summers, gymnastics, boxing, golf, music appreciation and horseback riding were all offered. Most counselors were assigned to teach a particular activity all summer, although there were a few "floaters" who helped out as needed. Campers

could earn "credits" through impressive achievements in their activities. Depending on the summer, the right number of activity credits (usually two or three) would earn a camper the prestigious "camp medal" as a token of his achievements.

Campers slept in tents or cabins, arranged in the lower field according to age group. The youngest campers lived just east of the Farmhouse in a circle of cabins that included Orchard House, Ranch House and Juniper. These were the Woodchucks, and they were considered a separate program from the rest of camp. They did not go to the same activities; instead, their counselors organized special activities such as baseball games, group swims, and special hikes. They left campfire early on Saturday night, and the rest of camp sang "Goodnight Woodchucks, we're sad to see you go."

From the beginning, an appreciation for nature was an important part of the Chewonki experience. Clarence Allen, like many in his time, saw God's plan revealed in the beauty of the natural world, and he constantly sought to share this vision with the campers. In 1928 Clarence's regular nature counselor was unable to come up for the summer, and he recommended that his friend, a fellow named Roger Tory Peterson, be hired in his place. Clarence contacted Peterson, who had no other prospects at the time, and shortly thereafter received a legendary telegram: "If you want your camp naturalist, send me \$39.50 for rail fare. I'm broke." Clarence was characteristically reluctant to send the money, but he needed a nature counselor, so he sent it. Peterson arrived in Wiscasset without so much as a nickel with which to call for a ride, so he walked the six miles to Chewonki.

Bart Chapin (the elder) remembered being impressed at Peterson's willingness to dive into a muddy pond to capture a frog or nymph while wearing his Sunday best. Kay Allen described him as a pied piper whose enthusiasm for bugs and birds the boys found contagious. Peterson impressed Clarence Allen enough during that first summer that he mentioned a possible job opening in the science department at the Rivers School in Brookline, Massachusetts, where Clarence became the headmaster in 1929.



Clarence Allen (front row, 2d from right) and his counselors, including Roger Tory Peterson (back row, 3d from right) in 1932 or 1933.

Peterson worked at Rivers and Chewonki for the next five years while working on his first *Field Guide to Birds*. Phyllis Bergen, secretary to Clarence Allen at camp and Rivers, typed up his manuscript. The book was published in 1934 and was dedicated to Clarence E. Allen and William Vogt. By the late 1930s, Peterson's time at Chewonki was passing into legend. In 1938 he visited for a Saturday and was honored with the dedication of the Roger Tory Peterson bird sanctuary on Chewonki Neck.

After Roger Tory Peterson's stint as naturalist, nature activity remained a tremendously important part of the camp experience, fueled by the interests of Clarence and a series of excited nature coun-

"[Paul Killiam] had painted railings and he had the big wheel painted there with a glass coming up in front of it. And he had the lines and you could see the furled sails up here, and you've got ratlines going up. In the background you could see the clouds and maybe a sea gull just behind the furled sails. It was impressive. You got in the mood and you felt you were at sea." —Norm Brown, remembering the set from a Gilbert and Sullivan production (Camp Chewonki 1938, 1940, 1941.)

selors who had learned a love of birds from Peterson. For years, nearly all the trip reports written for the *Chronicle* featured a list of birds that had been spotted on the trip. Many also included the plants, fish and mammals.

There were always special events that occurred at different points in the summer to break up the routine. One day per summer was devoted to the Treasure Hunt, in which the boys were sent all over camp following clues that eventually led to a prize. There was usually a field day on the lower field. Beyond the usual formal track events such as the long jump, dashes, and distance runs, there were silly events such as potato-sack and three-legged races and a baseball throw. On the Fourth of July, an epic event called the Horrible's Parade took place. In the early days, Walter Warner, the Jamaican cook, led a parade of boys and counselors past the Farmhouse, with participants competing to see who could dress in the most outlandish costumes. In 1938 Norm Brown came in second place dressed as "a Swiss." Other costumes included Huck Finn, a "hunter and pygmic" team, Santa Claus, and Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt—with the president portrayed by his grandson, Franklin D. Roosevelt III. After the parade, the boys ate burgers and corn-on-the-cob, usually accompanied by a soda. A watermelon hunt followed the meal, and the evening was capped by a fireworks display.

During the final week of camp, a group of counselors and older campers performed the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas *The Pirates of Penzance* and *HMS Pinafore*. Younger campers were usually assigned the role of the female chorus and would dress accordingly. These productions continued through the 1950s, but by all accounts the glory days were the late 1930s and early 1940s, when

close friends Paul Killiam and Bill Phelps were involved. Paul Killiam is remembered as a skilled actor who impressed everyone with his renditions of the "patter songs"—which tested the nimbleness of the tongue and entertained the audience but did little to advance the narrative. Bill Phelps was a skilled musician who could play the entire accompaniment on the piano. The operettas consumed camp for the week leading up to the performance, as performers sought to learn their lines and songs, costumes were sewn, and an impressive stage was built in the Barn.



A costume from the Horrible's Parade in the 1940s.



Circa 1930. Walter Warner (2d from left) and his assistants. Walter was Chewonki's head chef in 1920s and 1930s.



Late 1930s. On camp schooner, *Regardless*.



Circa 1946. Canoe trip to Merrymeeting Bay. Campers (from left to right) include Renny Little, Bill Hetzel, Rob Trowbridge, Herb Hudnut and Scully Scandrett.



1985. Naturalist Roger Tory Peterson (left) and bird sculptor Charles "Chippy" Chase. At age 9, Chippy was Chewonki's first camper—delivered by his mother in a row-boat. He went on to be recognized as "the Audubon of wood sculpture."



1987. Adult and Family trip to the Arctic Circle. Photo includes Don Hudson and Tim Ellis (seated) Kate Wilkinson, Lee Huston and others.



2000. First all-girls program at Big Wood Pond in Attean Township.



1999. The Center for Environmental Education opens and begins to offer public programs.

Sometimes there were themed events, such as Delphic Week or Circus Day. Circus Day featured an extensive sideshow that included an African dodger, snake charmer, “human skeleton,” and, in what must have been a stretch for any boy, a “fat lady.” The boys played games of skill and chance and used “wafers” as currency, a tradition that has lived on in the form of the beans campers now exchange at the camp carnival.

The practice of setting out for several days on a wilderness trip goes back as far as we have records of camp life at Chewonki. In the 1920s and 1930s leadership of the trips fell to the counselors who ran the nature, woodcraft, or sailing activities. Each trip had a different emphasis depending on the activity that sponsored it. Trips explored the Kennebec River and Merrymeeting Bay above Bath, Pemaquid Lake, and the Saco River.

One of the premier destinations of the early days was a hike to Camden Hills. The boys would pile

their equipment into the back of one of the lorry-style camp trucks and then jump in with the gear for a three-hour drive to Camden Hills. The camp had an arrangement with a local farmer who allowed him to park the truck and set up a camp kitchen in exchange for a small sum. The next day the boys would hike to Bald Rock and set up a base camp. The next few days would feature hikes up Mt. Megunticook or Mt. Battie, with the old truck sometimes used to shuttle campers to different trailheads. The views from Mt. Battie, the dizzying dropoff at Maiden Cliffs, and the occasional blueberry picking were all highlights of the trip. After two nights the boys would walk back down to the truck for breakfast, thank the farmer, and begin the slow drive back to Chewonki.

Other destinations included hiking trips to the White Mountains and Tumbledown Mountain, sailing trips on Casco Bay and to Monhegan Island on the camp schooner, and canoe trips on local lakes

and rivers. Early Chewonki campers and leaders did not have the lightweight and well-designed equipment available today; the *Chronicle* is full of accounts of counselors Hardy Ellis and Joe Scott tinkering with ornery old stoves and finding creative methods by which to jury-rig and patch leaky tarps. In keeping with the spirit of goodwill and hard work, however, there were usually plenty of competent and energetic counselors around to keep everything running smoothly.

In the early days, Clarence Allen generally arranged to charter a camp schooner complete with a captain. In the 1930s, Captain Scofield set out on several short cruises, maybe a week or less, with a group of boys. The trips would go south to Casco Bay or north to Muscungus Bay, Monhegan Island, and sometimes as far as Mt. Desert Island. Depending on availability, either the sailing counselor or a cabin counselor came along to manage the boys and help cook the meals.

Clarence Allen, along with an ever-changing staff, maintained this basic format for Camp Chewonki for forty-one years, into the 1960s. He directed the camp successfully through two World Wars and the Depression. During this time, he also served as headmaster at the Rivers School for twenty-four years and worked for a few years for the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

Clarence’s wife Elizabeth became sick with multiple sclerosis in 1931, and in 1941 she died. About a year later, Clarence married Kay Barrett, a long-time colleague at Rivers and the camp tutor for several years. Kay Allen took on a greater role in the management of camp in the 1940s and 1950s as Clarence grew older and more detached from the day-to-day details.

Chewonki Changes with the Times

Clarence Allen had begun his search for a suitable buyer for Camp Chewonki sometime in the mid-1950s. The property had become valuable, and Clarence received offers from developers, but he held out for a buyer who would continue to use the land as a camp. In the early 1960s, seeking a way to keep Chewonki as a boys’ camp, a group of former campers—among them Melville Chapin, George Wallace, Ted Haffenreffer, and Sinclair Weeks—began to consider how a purchase of the land from The Boss (as he was then called) could be accomplished. The group decided to establish an entity that could raise the money to buy the property and then oversee the camp’s operation.

Mel Chapin, who worked for the law firm Warner & Stackpole in Boston, knew that if the group could receive tax-free contributions, it would be a tremendous boon both to the immediate fundraising process and to future growth and stability. The Chewonki Foundation, Inc. was chartered on February 9, 1962, as a 501(c)3 tax-free, nonprofit corporation. The charter of the new foundation stressed the values of educating young people about the natural world pursuant to the principles espoused by The Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy.

Over the next few years, the foundation’s board raised the money to make a down payment on the \$100,000 purchase price of the camp property. Clarence Allen held the mortgage, an arrangement that suited him well since it guaranteed him a monthly income in his retirement. The next task was to find a director to replace Clarence. Clarence agreed to serve as the foundation’s first employee—

“One day when we were headed for Monhegan Island with one counselor and Captain Scofield with six or eight boys. Pretty soon, on this particular day, we saw evidence of whales breaching. We saw the plumes and we thought that was great sport to have them around. As we chugged east, we noticed that at least one of the whales was getting closer and that made it even more exciting. Well, every time the whale would surface it would be on a different side of the boat, but always closer. Well, pretty soon, it was about seventy-five feet away. The counselor was getting nervous, and so he sent us all below, but we all stood in the hatch and watched as this whale got closer and closer and closer. Nobody understood whales, so we thought that it was showing hostility. Actually, now we know that whales are gentle and playful creatures. Finally, at one point—I can still see it—I was standing in the hatch and all of a sudden: whoosh, up it came, and the whale scraped right along our port bow, and you could feel the whale’s rough hide on the ship, as it kind of shuttered a little. We all got sprayed. That was just astonishing and frightening. At that point, the counselor had had enough, so we changed course and the whale left us.” —William Tyler (*Camp Chewonki 1936-1945, Camp Parent and Camp Grandparent (1972-2004) Trustee, Honorary Trustee.*)

camp director—while the board considered possible candidates.

Tim Ellis, it is often said, first came to Chewonki in a bassinet, and indeed, there are those who still remember his father, Hardy Ellis, bringing a baby to camp in 1938 or tying young Timmy to the well house a few years later. Tim grew up at Chewonki, and as a young man he followed in his father's footsteps as an enthusiastic woodcraft counselor and trip leader.

In the early 1960s, Tim discovered the world of international education. He had met his wife, Margaret, while teaching in Switzerland and was looking forward to pursuing a teaching career abroad. In 1965, George Wallace, who was at that time president of the Chewonki Foundation, asked Tim if he wanted to take over as camp director. It was a tough decision because it meant an entirely different path than he had envisioned, but Tim agreed and Chewonki had its new director.

Clarence stayed on for one year, and he and Tim Ellis ran the camp together in 1965. He also traveled with Tim for a year, introducing him to contacts and demonstrating the ins and outs of promoting a summer camp. After that, Clarence retreated to a quiet retirement in Camden where he remained a close friend to Tim Ellis and to the entire Chewonki community. Former counselors and old friends often dropped by to visit Clarence and Kay, and they were always welcomed gracefully and elegantly.



1950s. Clarence Allen seated (center) on The Farm House porch.

Kay and Clarence continued to travel extensively in the United States and Canada, and Clarence continued to add new birds to his life list. He suffered from several heart attacks in his last few years but recovered from each one to return to his correspondence. His mind remained keen until March 30, 1974, when he died in his sleep at the age of 87. Kay would live another 18 years, never flagging in her support and enthusiasm for Chewonki.

As the new director of Camp Chewonki, Tim based his program largely on the traditions of Clarence Allen. As society became in many ways more permissive and more inclusive, however,

Chewonki slowly changed too. Boys were no longer subjected to weekly haircuts by a local barber, for instance. Another change, far more significant, was the embracing of a more diverse community. Tim remembers that the language of the early camp brochures appealed to an very upscale demographic. Chewonki continued to appeal to a wealthy clientele, which Tim felt was necessary in order to “pay the freight,” but its nonprofit charter now compelled it to develop a scholarship program as well. Tim also made a greater effort to recruit a more economically and culturally diverse group of campers.

Another change Tim made was to abandon the High Episcopal Sunday service that Clarence had run for so many years. Clarence's tradition of giving a short moral lesson remained, but it took on a new form: the drama club would present a morality tale—Dr. Seuss' *The Sneetches* or *The Zaks* were favorites—and Tim would allow the campers to draw what meaning they could from the performance and ask leading questions when he felt they had missed something important. Campers would read short inspirational pieces, occasionally from the Bible but more frequently from other works or from their own journals.

Experimenting with New Types of Education

As its summer camp program changed in small but important ways, the newly established Chewonki Foundation was undergoing a significant structural evolution. This was driven by two closely related processes: the active identification of Chewonki with educational institutions and growing movements in education,

and the development of programs in the noncamp seasons.

Tim remembers that when he became camp director, the enrollment that had been quite strong in the 1950s was in decline. As a full-time private-school teacher, he didn't have a lot of time to devote to the tasks of a year-round camp director—which was what he believed Chewonki needed if it was to rebuild its enrollment. As he thought about how he might convince the Board of this, he also began to realize there was the potential to use Chewonki Neck for other types of education.

In 1970 Tim presented a paper to the board arguing that Chewonki needed a full-time, year-round director. Furthermore, he argued that Chewonki Neck was too valuable a resource for education to be allowed to sit idle for three seasons every year. A year-round director could develop new programs, help raise funds from sources other than tuition, and “increase the camp's participation in conservation and other community betterment projects.” Tim remembers that it took some convincing, but the board was eventually supportive and hired him as the year-round executive director of the Chewonki Foundation. In the years that followed, Tim and his staff worked to expand Chewonki's mission and to develop year-round programming on Chewonki Neck.

Tim and his staff grew Clarence Allen's model first by expanding wilderness tripping. In 1966, counselor Don Hudson helped lead a trip to the area around Umbagog Lake in western Maine in order to prepare several boys to take the Junior Maine Guide test. Afterward Chewonki continued to use the Umbagog area for longer wilderness expeditions (and still uses it today for kayaking programs.) In 1968 the oldest boys in camp were sent off to hike the Mahoosuc range on the Maine-New Hampshire

“When I was a kid, a barber would come to camp one day a week. Clarence would check your hair and it was time to go. Well, you don't do those things in the sixties and still have an institution. There were a lot of camps that folded in the sixties as institutions that weren't really willing to change with the times.” —Tim Ellis (Camp Chewonki 1945- 1950, 52, Chewonki Staff 1953-1959, 1961, 1963, 1965-1980, Former Advisor, Trustee.)



In the 1970s, Chewonki developed a challenge activity known as "Dead Man's Gulch" a crossing between The Point and Osprey Point.

border. This arrangement was formalized the next summer as the Osprey Program, in which the oldest boys in camp routinely spent a great deal of their summer in the wilderness.

In 1970, Tim and counselor Tri Devakul developed the first Thoreau Wilderness Trip, in which a group of older boys spent their entire summer on the rivers, lakes, and trails of northern Maine. This too was successful, and for the next few years Chewonki continued to experiment with other extended wilderness trips. There were full summer trips to Umbagog, a dory rowing trip to Salisbury Island off Nova Scotia, and in 1975, the first canoe trip to Mistassini, Quebec. In 1976 Chewonki also

began enrolling coeducational wilderness trips as part of an expanding effort to provide opportunities for girls. This effort proved significant as girls and women began to participate in more and more of Chewonki's programs, as participants and as leaders

The first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970, and in the fall of that year Chewonki offered Eco-Week, a family camp program with natural history instruction. Eco-week emphasized an appreciation of the natural world through instruction and observation of ecological processes in the woods. Dave Barrington, who had worked at Camp Chewonki in the summer, helped create the curriculum in natural history and ecology while maintaining an atmosphere of fellowship and good times. It remained a popular program through the 1970s. Also available to families were wilderness trips to destinations such as Katahdin and the St. Croix River.

In the fall of 1971, forty students from the Rivers School's eighth grade in Massachusetts came to Chewonki for a 10-day outdoor education program. The program was co-taught by Rivers and Chewonki faculty and emphasized elements we now term adventure challenge: rock climbing, map and compass, whitewater canoeing, and a rope traverse across Dead Man's Gulch between The Point and Osprey Point. The students stayed in groups of eight to ten with one Chewonki leader and one



1979. Maine Reach students interview a park ranger from Acadia National Park.

Rivers teacher. The success of this model convinced Tim and the board that there was room at Chewonki for this type of education, and Tim began to plan similar programs with other schools.

In January 1973, the board gave its approval to develop Maine Reach, a year-long program for high-school seniors and recent graduates, for the fall of that year. Tim and former camp counselor Tom Bertocci, then a candidate for a PhD in education, began to make preparations. The Farmhouse needed to be renovated to make space for an academic community, and Tim secured a mortgage to pay for the construction. A growing community of people interested in the program developed, including Don Hudson, a recent Dartmouth graduate and camp

counselor/trip leader who was wintering at Chewonki. Maine Reach opened that September with twelve students and four staff. Students during the first month were introduced to the members of the Chewonki community, many of whom were around in September to help with the recently established shoulder season programs. During the fall, the students helped winterize the Farmhouse and Ranch House, organized into groups for management of daily life, and engaged in learning about the subjects in the unique Maine Reach curriculum. They took trips to Baxter State Park to learn about Maine's natural history, to Aroostook County to pick potatoes and learn about Maine's agricultural economy, and to Eastport to learn about a proposed oil refinery. Other topics they studied included Maine folklore and anthropology, the paper industry, and environmental management in Maine.

In December, students began to arrange for their internship. They were expected to work hard, learn the value and costs of commitment, and serve as resources for their mentors. The positions they secured included researching marine biology, teaching in a public school, working with a weaver, and apprenticing to a guitar builder.

On their return to Chewonki in March, the students planned the final phase of their academic

"And overnight we organized a trip for all of them, a hiking trip and a hard hiking trip, to the Mahoosucs. The idea was basically to tire them out and to get them away from camp where they were getting into trouble. That was the beginning of the Osprey tripping program and Tim's recognition that these kids wanted and needed more adventure than they could find at camp."

—Don Hudson (Camp 1962, 1963, Chewonki Staff 1966-present, with a few odd years excepted, Maine Reach 1973-1975, Camp Parent 1991-2002, MCS Parent, Trustee.)

...to improve and develop the character and citizenship of the individual and to this end it may conduct a non-profit boys' camp with organized classes and well qualified teachers and instructors to teach the art of woodcraft (such as may lead to qualification in such programs as the junior Maine guides), the appreciation and conservation of our natural resources, natural history, and the observance of nature and wildlife in its usual environment...

...to present such programs as the complete program of the National Rifle Association and the lifesaving program of the American Red Cross...

—From Chewonki's Corporate Charter, February 9, 1962

year: Group Action Projects. The students divided into small groups and, with the help of a Maine Reach teacher, chose a means of working for positive change in Maine. One of those groups made a long-lasting contribution to Chewonki's programming. Don Hudson and three students spent a week at the Ocean Park Environmental School near Scarborough, learning basic techniques for directing younger students' minds and senses toward the natural world. A few weeks later, they taught a series of free environmental education programs at Chewonki to fifth- and sixth-graders from several local schools. The Maine Reach Environmental Education School was a great success and the catalyst for developing Chewonki's year-round Environmental Education (EE) and Natural History Outreach programs.

For the next ten years, Maine Reach continued to form the structure and heart of the year-round community at Chewonki.

The early 1970s were an exciting time at Chewonki. Even Clarence Allen, whose vision had never included year-round or coeducational programs, seemed to have caught some of the enthusi-

asm. A letter he sent before he died conveyed a sense of vicarious excitement about Maine Reach, which perhaps triggered memories of a time nearly sixty years earlier when he and a small staff had embarked on an exciting new project with an uncertain future.

By 1975, the foundation's future was still uncertain but it was on stable ground. Chewonki had just raised the money to buy the remaining acreage on Chewonki Neck—about 150 acres—demonstrating a strong base of support. Maine Reach was viable and successful, Environmental Education programs were developing, wilderness programs were expanding, and the summer camp was stronger than ever. Chewonki had demonstrated it had something to offer in terms of year-round education and the proven ability to get support and resources when necessary. For students, families and participants, Chewonki was pioneering exciting programs at a time when many hungered for more ways to get outdoors. For staff, it was a joyful and exciting place to work, where a young teacher or counselor's idea could turn into the next year's new trip, curriculum, or event.

"There was nothing fancy about Chewonki in those days. Just nothing fancy about Chewonki. In fact, when I came here to look at the place, I was at a point where I was sort of thinking about what the next thing was, and I was really fascinated with this idea of environmental education, which was new to me. I looked at a whole bunch of places. I remember coming here and I drove in and I was probably in a coat and tie because it was an interview. I didn't realize that you didn't need to do that. I was sitting in the Gatehouse, which is where the offices were, and two guys come downstairs—they turn out to be Mike Heath and Ken Grant—in their pajamas and bathrobe to use the bathroom that I think was outside at the time or was still an outhouse maybe, because this is before it was renovated, and I'm thinking: 'What kind of place is this?'...The only reason you would have been here is because it was fun work, and because the other people you were working with were great, and because you felt like you were doing something important. There was nothing else that would have attracted you."

—Scott Andrews, describing Chewonki in the mid-1970s (Chewonki Staff 1978-present.)



1988. Maine Coast Semester 1, students and faculty.

Catching Up to the Present

Throughout the 1970s and mid-1980s, Chewonki continued to use its property as a laboratory for new types of education. The EE program brought increasing numbers of schoolchildren to Chewonki for encampment-based programs with a natural history and adventure-challenge curriculum. Participants also came for a variety of wilderness programs including family trips and Elderhostel programs. From 1978 to 1982, Chewonki offered year long boat-building courses. Bill Highsmith began the program, and Lee Huston continued the boat-building classes that produced the traditional sailboats now carrying campers on extended wilderness trips.

"I remember that I was nine years old...at the final banquet ...I had eaten huge portions and I had just unbuttoned my pants when Mr. Allen said: 'Let's hear from the Woodchuck who has been living in Woodchuck Circle the longest of everybody.' And so I had to buckle my pants in a hurry. They were those itchy, gray, camp uniform short things. I had to buckle my pants in a hurry and stand up and say that I had really enjoyed being a Woodchuck for five years and people were of course amazed that I had survived for that amount of time."

—Joe Scott, Senior (Camp 1935-1951, Camp Parent of Joe, former Advisor, and Fred, current Trustee.)

In 1982, Chewonki also introduced a college semester program – The Environmental Education Practicum – which ran for four years. The Fall Outdoor Leadership Semester, which trained participants in outdoor leadership, was added in 1984 and ran for two years.

In 1984, Maine Reach ended after ten years. The leadership training semesters, along with a consistent set of Elderhostel trips, allowed Chewonki to run throughout the year. Around the same time, Chewonki launched a major capital campaign to raise money for several building projects on campus. The most significant of these were the George Wallace Center (an addition to the dining hall) and the Clarence E. Allen Natural History Center (for future academic programs). Chewonki's Traveling Natural History program began to travel across Maine, introducing rehabilitated wildlife in classrooms and other public places. In 1986, Tim Ellis stepped aside as Camp Director and hired long-time Chewonki camper and counselor Dick Thomas to run camp.

In 1987, Scott Andrews, formerly EE teacher and co-director, camp director for two years, and assistant director of the Foundation, was hired to develop a successor to Maine Reach that would be more readily accepted by traditional high schools. The Maine Coast Semester for eleventh-graders began in the fall of 1988. Since that year, students from

around the country have enrolled in the program, living in winterized cabins, participating in a traditional high-school curriculum, as well as a hands-on work program that includes time in Chewonki's farm, kitchen and woodlot. As The Maine Coast Semester approaches its 20-year anniversary, it continues to emphasize traditional Chewonki values, with a strong emphasis on the natural world, the physical world, intellectual rigor, physical work, and community.

In 1991, Tim Ellis retired as executive director. The Board of Trustees chose Don Hudson, then serving as Chewonki's Staff Naturalist, to succeed Tim. In 1994, Chewonki began to create a series of curriculum materials for teachers to assist in environmental education, bundled together as *Pathways to a Sustainable Future*. Concurrently, the foundation began another capital campaign. This time, the goal was to build a new facility to house and expand the Environmental Education Program and *Pathways to a Sustainable Future*. In 1999, Environmental Education Director Dot Lamson moved her operation into Chewonki's new Center for Environmental Education. The CEE is an impressive green-design, modern building that includes Chapin Hall, a large meeting room with the massive skeleton of a Northern Fin Whale suspended from the ceiling. In addition to serving as a base for Chewonki's EE and Outreach programs, the center also hosts conferences and is home to Chewonki's renewable energy curriculum and Maine's first hydrogen fuel cell generator.

The scope of Chewonki's educational activities and mission has matured and solidified over time, with Camp, Wilderness Trips, Environmental Education and The Maine Coast Semester making up the four major programs of the Foundation.

Camp Chewonki runs its traditional program, which is quite similar to that of the 1960s, or even the 1940s. Coed wilderness expeditions explore the woods and waters of Maine and Canada every summer. The Center for Environmental Education reaches nearly 30,000 students from public and private schools, both through its traveling natural history programs and its residential EE programs. The Maine Coast Semester forms the core community during the academic year, with roughly 38 high-school students residing and learning at Chewonki each semester.

If Clarence Allen could be granted a glimpse of Chewonki today, he would likely be surprised. The place has grown. The small pines that were just starting to grow up from the fields form a small forest. Where there were once three buildings, there are now dozens, and where the nature activity once had a small shed, there is now a modern education center. The 125-acre parcel of land he bought in 1914 has been extended to include the entire peninsula. Where boys once frolicked in the summer, boys, girls, and adults now explore Chewonki year-round.

Despite his surprise, however, Clarence might well see some familiar sights as he watched children playing, teenagers climbing in the Barn, or families embarking on canoe trips. Reading one of Chewonki's promotional brochures, he might nod his head, recognizing the same ideas and values that informed his first forays into camping. The place is still committed to the same basic principles that Clarence voiced as a young man: Chewonki's programs teach us about nature, about personal growth, about the value of hard work, and about community, as they always have.

More than two years ago, in anticipation of Chewonki's 90th anniversary in 2005, we embarked on compiling a history of Chewonki. Although Clarence Allen once said, "the briefest history of the camp is that it started in 1915 and is still running," we knew there was far more to the story than that. The abridged history presented here—much of which is drawn from a memoir that Clarence Allen began writing in 1970—is the first step in an even larger project: the compilation of a book to celebrate Chewonki's 100th anniversary in 2015.

Although we have spent considerable time researching historical papers and interviewing campers, counselors, and friends of Chewonki around the country, our work is not yet done. We are still looking for others to interview, particularly those whose relationship with Chewonki stretches far back in time. Historical materials, including old letters, documents, and photos, are also of interest. Please feel free to contact Don Hudson or Dick Thomas if you have material to loan or donate.

Contributions toward the 100 Year History of Chewonki are gratefully accepted. Please contact Lucy Hull, The Development Office, Chewonki Foundation, 485 Chewonki Neck Road, Wiscasset, ME 04578
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jesse Dukes grew up in Charlottesville, Virginia, and studied anthropology and history at the University of Virginia, where he graduated in 1999. He spent the five years following college traveling around the country and working seasonal positions in various fields. The one constant during that period was Chewonki, where he worked as a counselor and trip leader every summer. While working as an assistant to the camp director, Jesse was given the opportunity to research a written and oral history of Chewonki. This history is the result of his work.





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