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FRANK BOLLES OF CHOCORUA AND CAMBRIDGE:

Writer, naturalist, and educator (1856-1894)

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Photographs at <http://homepage.mac.com/sfe/henry/frank_bolles/index.html>

[Note: A one-third-length version of this text appeared in December 2002 in *Appalachia*, the mountaineering and conservation journal of the Appalachian Mountain Club at 54(2 #215): 92-113. I think you'll enjoy the additional quotes from Bolles's work in the longer version (18,000 words) reproduced here.]

Frank Bolles was a meteor that flashed across Chocorua's skies. Like some before and many more later, he was a city dweller whose heart and hearth were in the White Mountains, to which he would return to restore his spirit.

His profession was writer. His consuming avocation was to observe and describe birds and nature with great care. His job titles were journalist and Secretary of Harvard University. His charge to himself was to live an eager, purposeful life and benefit humankind. His principal legacies are two books about the countryside and its wildlife near Boston and near Mount Chocorua. These books are honored by their inclusion on the Library of Congress' list of American scenic and wilderness literature. Memories of his life and work have faded. Since, a century apart, the paths of our lives have crossed too many times for it to be coincidence, I heeded a distant call to learn about this man.

Youth

Frank Bolles was born in 1856 in Winchester, a village outside Boston.

When he was ten, his family moved to Baltimore, then Washington, D.C., where his father was Solicitor and Judge Advocate General of the United States Navy.^[1] As a youth, Bolles started to write; his wife was later to say, "There has never been a time since Mr. Bolles was old enough to hold a pen when he has not been writing either prose or verse." He formed with Jesse Grant, the President's son, a self-improvement, fraternal, and literary club with other sons of prominent Washington, D.C. families. It met in a cottage on the White House grounds. He was firmly reform-minded: for example, at 15, he started nation-wide petitions to ban tobacco-spitting in the halls of Congress. He returned to Massachusetts for boarding school at Dean Academy in Franklin, where he wrote that he was "thoroughly fascinated" with the study of "bird habits and peculiarities."^[2] In his valedictorian's address he declared, "Let us remember that each of us must be of some good or some woe to the world. God did not make any one of us to live for self alone. We are responsible for every act."^[3]

As a youth, he spent thirteen summers in New Hampshire (in South Lyndeboro, Temple, and Rumney), where his family had roots. In an effort to attract more summer folk to Rumney and bolster the economy, he published an anonymous booster letter in the *Boston Journal*. He would take rambles of beauty and adventure across New Hampshire, during which he and companion(s) would agree upon "a subject of discussion for each day of the trip."^[4] He published in local papers descriptions of these rambles and the discussions (called "Highwayman Letters"). These "tired tramps" solicited supper and shelter from farmers. His trip journals show a dry wit: e. g., "I mesmerize a chicken at Orford to the alarm of the owner" [Sept. 11, 1879].

Later, he would use an incident from such a teenaged wander to inspire his 1881-83 essay "Deserted Homes."^[5] This interesting essay, which he submitted to the *Atlantic Monthly*, examined the causes and consequences of (and cures for) the abandonment of the New Hampshire countryside, "leaving the old and feeble to struggle alone with life on the hills."^[6] In "Deserted Homes," he related,

"It is a common event for one exploring obscure parts of the state, while seeking shelter from a storm or approaching night,... to discover on knocking first at one door [of a farmhouse] and then another, that it is deserted. In the northern part of Rumney, scattered along the mountain roads that skirt Lake Stinson, stand fifteen or twenty houses which used to form a little settlement called Doetown. They are now, with one or two exceptions, unoccupied, and it is only in the haying season, when parties of men from the village four miles below, come to gather the scanty mowings from the unimproved fields, that the hush of abandonment is broken....If New Hampshire is to remain a commonwealth worthy of forming one of the Union, her agricultural districts must hold their place beside her cities. Brickmakers and spinners are not the men upon whom can safely be rested the guidance of a state; yet if the farm lands are to become waste, and the forests to creep down again to the rivers, and the rural population to melt away,—the state will inevitably pass into their control."

He embarked on one such rural betterment project while still a schoolboy—the creation of a privately-subscribed free library in Rumney. In the late 1870s, Bolles as a teenaged summer visitor brashly and perhaps single-handedly gathered signatures throughout the town and cajoled money to create a free library open to the public. Four years later, in "Deserted Homes," he described this effort and practical difficulties:

"Intellectually, the 'back-towns' which form the great areas of the state, rank very low. There is little reading done beyond the newspapers, which are too often of the least desirable kind. Public libraries are few in number. Where they do exist, they are either grudgingly supported or are running to waste. A few years ago a public library of several hundred volumes was opened in South Lyndeboro, thanks to the zeal of summer boarders. So little interest has been shown in it, that the books are now scattered over the town, and no one feels it a duty to insist on their return. A free public library of sixteen hundred volumes, opened four years ago in Rumney, is supported with great difficulty by private efforts, because those that subscribed for its creation are afraid to entrust it to the care of the town, believing that if it was placed in popular control, the poorer and more ignorant citizens would, in a few years vote to sell it."[\[7\]](#)

In 1877, after graduation from Dean Academy, he returned to Washington to get an undergraduate law degree. He wrote his brother about his ambitious plans to start a small-town New Hampshire practice, with national renown his dream:

"My plan is simply this, as you divined at once, to study law hard for two or three years, be admitted to the bar here [in Washington], which will give me complimentary admission to almost any other bar, and then go to my old New Hampshire home, make Rumney my base of operations, and Washington my end and object. Of course all this will take years....An election to the Legislature... would... make the state my foundation instead of the town, and then all would depend on health and ability" [Dec. 16, 1877, p. 13].

After graduating with an honor prize in 1879, he came to Harvard University for an additional bachelor of law degree, which he believed would have been his late father's wish. He was an enterprising, politically-aware, and socially-conscious student. For example, New York newspapers carried a report of a straw vote he organized on multiple campuses during a presidential political campaign. This success led him to write in his journal,

"I am unquestionably the originator of this movement and I pray God that it may have done some good. It is a queer feeling to be an originator. I feel much as I did in regard to the Rumney Library, as though Frank Bolles were someone outside of *me*. After all, the best things I do are not self-prompted. I feel some power guiding me which I am powerless to be deaf to, and which once heard I love to obey" [March 10, 1880, p. 27].

He lobbied (unsuccessfully) for an Episcopal Church to be built on the campus. He was an editor and owner of the first Harvard daily newspaper, *The Echo*, during part of its struggles to survive.^[8] He conceived of, lobbied for, and was the first president of "a grand scheme," the Harvard Cooperative Society. It sold at cost to students their coal, books, and notepaper, and their second-hand textbooks and furniture. (The Coop survives in gentrified form to this day.) One fall he and two law school chums got the idea of publishing in a convenient form the old English statutes that their law professors cited; in six weeks they had it on the street. He said, "We sell them like hot cakes all day....Ah, my first book!" (Bolles's 1888 third edition of this book, *A Collection of Important English Statutes* is still "in print," through a print-on-demand house for sixty dollars.)

He would spend three years at Harvard Law School. As graduation approached, however, his grades were only adequate, and he grew skeptical about the "petty meannesses of the law." He wrote in August 1881 that he

was "in the depths of doubt" about what he should do. Becoming convinced that it was through writing and journalism that he could be of more help to the community, he wrote:

"When I think of *law*, I grow bored and dull and chafe within myself, when I think of *politics* a flood of ambition pours up around me, with doubts of popular favor and vision of failure; but when I think of a life devoted to my *pen*, to the constant thought and discussion of the noblest, deepest questions of our age and when I dream of swaying thousands by gentle argument or crushing vice and fraud by the hammer blows of honor—my whole being throbs with new life and I see a bird freed from the golden cage and soaring upward over waving forest and rippling fields towards the sky!" [Jan. 13, 1882, p.48.]

The power of the press

Though he received his Harvard bachelor's of law degree in 1882 (and won the Bowdoin Prize for essay writing), he remained at Harvard for two years in non-degree but writing-related studies in history, political science, etc. He also took a job as an editorial writer (initially low-pay piece-work) for the *Boston Daily Advertiser*.

"My bill to the *Tiser* for my second week is \$11.86 and \$3.75—more today. I feel quite rich and for the first time in my life I feel that I can afford to ride in the horse-cars instead of walking (fact)" [Oct 14, 1882].

The paper's independent politics suited him, and the editor commented that his work was "full of meat." For an activist young writer, it must have been a dream job, despite the night hours. Two thick scrapbooks of his unsigned editorials, articles, and book reviews survive. They make good reading—his work was clear, intelligent, non-condescending, witty, and probably often controversial. His range of topics were impressive, including Adulterated Foods, Mormonism, Bonded Whiskey, Congo Complications, Butler and the Democrats, the massacre of Chinese miners in Wyoming, A Sign of Southern Progress, Causes of the Apache Rebellion, the death of Jumbo the elephant, What It Costs To Live, immigration policy, On to Khartoum and the Mahdi, Arctic Exploration, Our Navy Policy, The Force of the Future [electricity], labor troubles, China and Egypt, Uniformity in Time, Russia at the Gates of Herat [Afghanistan], and Small Boys and Stamps. An example

of an earnest editorial is one on Native American rights, a cause in which he was active:

March 29, 1886: "There is a time in the history of every great movement in favor of human rights when success and failure waver in the balance, and when years of effort may be saved by one united effort in the cause of progress. That moment has come in the history of the struggle for Indian rights... Hitherto he has been treated as a stranger and an alien in the land of his birth. He has been cheated without the power of appealing to justice, and his property has always been held subject to the pleasure of others."[\[9\]](#)

He also wrote a few conservation-oriented editorials, including those praising an arrest under the short lobster law and the care of the west's forests:

March 4, 1886: "It was a great day for short lobsters yesterday. One of their arch enemies fell into the hands of the lawyers down in Maine and was fined \$1368 because of his cruel detention and overheating of 1368 lobsters who were too small to defend themselves. All of their kinfolk that we saw at market yesterday were red in the face with delight to think that justice had been done their cause. But, seriously, the law is a wise one, and necessary to the preservation of these savory creatures. The Maine court did good service in enforcing it faithfully."

March 19, 1886: "If the great rivers of the West are to be preserved for the use of future generations... this generation must take early and effective steps to protect the forest covered mountains....Once out of the control of Congress, nothing can save these protecting wildernesses from the destroying march of the woodcutter."

He did have an engaging wit. Here his editorial skewered an English politician:

Sept. 12, 1885: "Lord Randolph Churchill is reported to be suffering from nervous prostration. The disease is probably produced by undue contemplation of his own political vagaries. It may have been intensified by the difficulty of dodging the Irish question."

By 1885, Bolles was publishing his own editorial work at the remarkable rate of a third of a million words per year. In today's newspapers, this would be an annual column two and a half football fields long. Then the newspaper

was bought by people with different politics—"rich, Republican, and high-tariff," he said. They were courteous, but he resigned in March of 1886, though he continued to publish occasional articles in Boston and New York papers through 1892. He had been at the *Daily Advertiser* three and a half years. He wrote to his mother in January of 1886, "I have no reason to fear the outcome and rejoice hourly in the hope of a life free from the slavery of desk work and the degrading feeling that I am only the tool of men whose motives I do not respect and whose methods I despise."

Lily and Crowlands

About two years earlier, midway through his time as a writer at the *Daily Advertiser*, his mother had dragged him away to Madison, New Hampshire for a brief vacation— though "I have been advised to not ask for one," he had written her. He spent these vacation days in September 1883 with his mother and sister and two Cambridge friends, one of whom was Miss Elizabeth Quincy Swan. It was on this trip that he made his first visits to Chocorua Lake and first ascended Mount Chocorua, accompanied by Elizabeth Swan ("Lily") and his sister. Bolles's engagement to Miss Swan was announced within a month, and they married a year later. Lily Swan Bolles became his companion on many adventures, guided him with botany, helped with his books, was mother to their four lively daughters, published at least two unsigned book reviews in the *Daily Advertiser*, and often was the presence hinted at in his stories.

Their honeymoon in October 1884 was spent at Chocorua House, an inn overlooking the lovely lake and vista: "Here we spent nearly three weeks. I amused L & myself during part of our time by catching chipmunks. I had four in all—keeping them in a cage together & letting them run round the room on rainy days."^[10] Five days after their wedding Bolles first rowed Lily across Lake Chocorua to a tumble-down farmhouse, then twenty years abandoned. Later, Bolles would remember:

"We wandered through the rooms of the cottage, peeped at the sky through the cracks in its roof...and whirled the old flax-wheel which stood in the dark attic. Then...we strolled on and on through pastures until a faint path led us to the lonely lake among the dingles, almost at the foot of Chocorua. Softly descending the steep path to the

edge of the green water, we saw five black ducks rise from the lake and fly from us over the oaks. The rush of their wings is in my ears to this day."^[11]

His resignation on principle from the *Daily Advertiser* in March 1886, after eighteen months of marriage and with a three-month-old baby, was a big decision for the couple. "What will come next I don't know," he wrote. "What I shall do is a serious question. I *will not* write what I do not believe." He decided to rusticate himself and his young family to Chocorua and support them "as a free lance, writing for magazines and various papers and writing book notices."^[12] Lily Bolles later remembered,

"Having no definite prospects, he decided upon the experiment^[13] of attempting to make a living by unattached writing. Since to do this would of course require strict economy, his thoughts turned to a life in a quiet New Hampshire village as giving an opportunity for simple and healthful living on a small income. The thought of this change was the more attractive as night work had begun to tell on his strength and he longed for a more natural mode of life. Fortunately the one particular piece of land which he most wished for was found to be for sale. It was an old farm of about two hundred thirty acres on the Northwest curve of Chocorua Lake...and it contained, what really had won Mr. Bolles' heart, Heron Pond [the lonely lake] with its surrounding birch and oak woods. This land was accordingly bought—a gift to his wife from her mother" [p. 72-73].

This house, which Bolles called Crowlands^[14] or the red-roofed cottage, was (and is today) a simple, small New Hampshire farmhouse built in 1830. It is in the town of Tamworth near the village that was soon to be renamed (with Bolles's encouragement) Chocorua.

Thus, as a man, he had found (and repopulated) a "deserted home" reminiscent of his boyhood adventure. In early March, 1886, Bolles hurried to prepare for their planned permanent move to the woods. Ever the writer, he bought an encyclopedia, a world atlas, the census, and an almanac. More practically, as he wrote his sister,

"During May, I want to get a kitchen garden planted, a cow and horse bought and my fences in order so that I may put some sheep on the farm. Later my hope is to repair the old house so as to make it cozy for a man and wife" [March 5, 1886, p. 174].

But fate intervened, in the person of Harvard's President Charles W. Eliot, who that month offered Bolles a job at his right hand. Though Bolles was to accept Eliot's offer, he and his family would quickly bond with Crowlands. They would go there every long summer (though Bolles some years had to weekend-commute) and regularly at other seasons. They soon regarded it, not Cambridge, as "home." That first summer he wrote his mother:

"I am steeped in the flavor of a horse, a cow, two pigs, two puppies, eleven hens and a rooster. I live out of doors with axe, boat, fishing rod, or hammer, never idle" [June 6, 1886].

The little house must have bulged when it was stuffed with the family, pets, and help. A few years later he would write about those days:

"The stage [a local stage-coach from the railroad station] turned into a narrow ribbon road lined with white-stemmed birches. The road pointed straight towards Chocorua, whose vast base rose like a wall across the north....To the right, glimpses of water revealed the position of Chocorua Lake. The ribbon road led to a red-roofed cottage in the midst of an ancient orchard, and there stopped. This cottage stands within the limits of the wilderness...The mountain broods over it...From the days after the civil war...this cottage was the home of the children of the forest. Man left it to be shingled by lichens and glazed by cobwebs. Snow lay deep in its attic....snakes and skunks dwelt in its foundations....It had ceased to belong to man. Although of late years it has been my home, I have done what I can to maintain the belief among the creatures of the forest that it belongs to them."[\[15\]](#)

Harvard Yard

The redoubtable Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard University, was approaching the mid-point of his forty year tenure as president of a university that he was leading through a period of unprecedented growth in size, stature, and complexity. He had known Bolles as an concerned student and as a journalist with a particular interest in the university's affairs. I think Eliot decided that he was not going to let this particularly promising bird fly away to Lake Chocorua. (It is also possible that the older generation quietly intervened to save this young Cambridge couple from the rashly rustic consequences of their idealism.) Bolles in a later letter to Eliot recalled what had happened:

"In March 1886 you walked with me up and down the sidewalks surrounding the College yard, and sketched for me the outline of the 'new office' which you wished me to fill. You told me that what you wanted was a man of experience in the world, a graduate of the University, who would bring to his work deep interest in Harvard's growth and unfailing devotion to its interests" [July 25, 1892].

Eliot warned Bolles that initially the job might be mundane—he would be an assistant to the dean of Harvard College. Bolles also knew that "the Office" was disparagingly known as that place that impersonally recorded marks and delinquencies. But Eliot assured Bolles that his responsibilities would soon broaden and his status would increase. Eliot also promised that Bolles would have his summers largely free to write [p. 76]. Bolles and his friends had misgivings. One then a student later wrote, "When he accepted the position... many of his friends looked upon that step as a voluntary assumption of the yoke of monotonous routine which must virtually close a career of unusual promise."[\[16\]](#) But accept he did.

Within about a year Bolles was indeed confirmed by Harvard's Overseers as Secretary to Harvard University, a new position of greater status and, under Eliot (to whom he reported directly), sweeping responsibility. "He created among us this position which now appears to us indispensable," said Rev. Francis G. Peabody of Harvard.[\[17\]](#) Bolles expanded a network of teachers who identified able students of whatever means. He then advised the new students and found ways to find them support and even permanent jobs. Bolles wrote,

"Beseeching, honest, or searching eyes look straight into the heart, and the heart would not be good for much if it did not grow warmer under their scrutiny. Generally all except the least useful and adaptable of such men find ways of earning much of that which is needed to keep them decently clad and safely fed during their years of study; but it is anxious work starting them on self-support, and helping them to drive away homesickness."[\[18\]](#)

One project was to help create a new cooperative society called the Foxcroft Club; he wrote, "It is cooperative in this sense—that it brings together a lot of poor and non-resident students who furnish and maintain study, reading, and lunch rooms close to the college yard, where meals will be serve a la

carte at the cost of the provisions only."[\[19\]](#) He later jotted a pleased note to Lily,

"Breakfast at Foxcroft [at the cost of] *14 cents!* Hot oatmeal— 3¢, milk and sugar, bread —1¢, butter— 2¢, baked potato—1¢, cold rare roast beef —7¢, lots-of-all."

The scope of his involvement in university affairs broadened—he also became Secretary of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, secretary of the Academic Council, and the acting administrative head of the graduate schools. Always busy, he was active in promoting the university on the national stage; he replied in person to some six thousand letters. He wrote his sister,

"It is nearly six o'clock and I am having a moment or two of leisure in my big room [the Faculty Room in University Hall]—all dark except the green shaded drop light over my desk. The President's absence makes busy days for me.... Monday morning I have leading editorial articles [about Harvard matters] in the Boston Post, Journal, and Globe and in the New York Tribune."[\[20\]](#)

His direct, confidential relationship with Eliot flourished as he promoted the interests of the University as a whole, not favoring any one of its jealous and powerful baronies. Eliot became known as "the creator of the American university,"[\[21\]](#) and in the process Harvard underwent major and controversial changes, which were often opposed. It was not easy. The senior dean characterized the attitude of the Harvard Corporation as "sometimes intractable, hard to inspire, and unwilling to multiply responsibilities as fast as [Eliot] has desired," and the dean added that the Harvard Overseers "have never failed to hold a strongly critical attitude....sometimes manifesting threatening revulsions of feeling... and sometimes flatly refused to agree to proposed action."[\[22\]](#) A new publication, *Harvard Graduates Magazine* was started, with Bolles's "indispensable cooperation," to build support for change. The first editor of that magazine wrote of the range of Bolles's activities:

"He rarely missed a game of football or baseball; you never failed to meet him at the Hasty Pudding plays. And in the official concerns of the University, in the

discussions of policy, in the debates of the Faculty on questions of government and instruction, he took the liveliest interest."[\[23\]](#)

Bolles published long quarterly reports about the full range of issues— from food to faculty—that faced an institution which was metamorphosing from a small rich man's college of 600 students in 1870 into a large modern university of 3150 students in 1893 (2200 of which were under the faculty of Arts and Sciences, of which 1600 were in Harvard College). Though the university was growing at a welcomed but frightening ten percent per year, Bolles never forgot the individual student. *Harvard Graduates Magazine* published posthumously Bolles's disarmingly-titled but potentially incendiary "An Administrative Problem," in which he offered for discussion (after much internal debate and many drafts) a proposal to *arrange* Harvard College administratively and physically into smaller units of approximately 500 students. He well knew that if reformers (such as he might be accused of being) laid hands on Harvard College to *divide* it, it might cause a "slaughter of [such] innocents." So, he stated the problem in very human terms:

"There is something very ugly in the possibility of a young man's coming to Cambridge, and while here sleeping and studying alone in a cheerless lodging, eating alone in a dismal restaurant, feeling himself unknown, and so alone in his lectures, his chapel, and his recreations, and not even having the privilege of seeing his administrative officers who know most of his record without having to explain to them at each visit who he is and what he is, before they can be made to remember that he is a living, hoping, or despairing part of Harvard College."[\[24\]](#)

He envisioned something that looked like the house system into which Harvard evolved many decades later:

"If a beginning is once made in the establishment of separate colleges under the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, it would of course be natural that the future growth of the University should adapt itself to the new order of things. Buildings would take a form suitable to the joint accommodation of students and a professor's family; the dining-hall might form a part of the structure and a common room for study, reading, or social meeting might break the barrack-like monotony of the dormitory of today..... What will [the College's] membership be in 1900 or in 1950? At the latter time, if the rate of growth and our present administrative system are maintained, the Dean and Recorder of Harvard College will be personally caring for 6,500 individuals, with all

of whom they will be presumed to have an intelligent acquaintance."

One student of the time wrote, "To a community of young men his life was of unspeakable value."^[25] But the pressures on him were high—though he had broad responsibility in his job, he had less tangible authority and respectable but ambiguous rank. Moreover, he was in a tank of tenured tigers and was overwhelmed by minor burdens. It was classically stressful. A colleague commented that his eagerness at times became vehement and fiery.^[26] His private letters reveal a powerful intensity, a yearning for the woods and mountains, and a concern about his health (though his wife and others would later comment that such letters insufficiently revealed the joy in living he would also express):

To President Eliot: "That year of work came so near to killing me that relief was imperatively necessary and you [Eliot] gave it without my asking for it."^[27]

To a university official who had slighted his efforts: "I sacrifice health and hope of advancement by serving the University. I give it all my time, thought and interest."^[28]

To his mother: "I sometimes think I cannot endure another week away from woods and mountains. If people did not tell me I was doing good by staying where I am, I would not remain Secretary another month."^[29]

William Brewster and The Nuttall Ornithological Club

Bolles had not forgotten he wanted to be a writer and he had not forgotten nature. People would see him on the train or the street cars, often writing on a small pad on his knee (note the pad in his portrait). Students reported seeing him crossing Harvard Yard, dressed to go off for a tramp, perhaps to his customary hills and marshes west of Cambridge.^[30]

Lily Bolles later wrote to the naturalist William Brewster that Bolles's interest in the careful and enthusiastic investigation of birds was reawakened in 1884-85 while still at the *Daily Advertiser*, when he wrote a review of Elliott Coues's *Key to North American Birds*. This 863-page book was a manual of ornithology and collecting that described every living and fossil

bird in North America. Lily continued, "From that time on his interest never flagged."^[31] While at the *Daily Advertiser*, he also wrote at least two minor articles about seasonal bird observations and this biting, parting-shot editorial:^[32]

[From an editorial about a proposal to feed poisoned bread to the House Sparrows, which were displacing native species:] "Yesterday an observer counted the remains of over twenty of our most attractive New England birds sewed to the headgear of the women who were riding into town in a single horse car. Five pairs of woodpeckers' wings and their accompanying tails graced, or rather disgraced, the hat of one of those persons...If poisoned bread is to be fed to the worst enemies of our birds, milliners and their customers would better live on crackers."

In May, 1886, the very month he left the *Advertiser*, Bolles started to incorporate Chocorua into intensive bird studies. His papers include a hefty pocket notebook entitled "Chocorua Birds." It is full of densely-penciled notes and was begun the very day the family moved north for their first summer. A week later, he wrote, "So far I have identified 42 kinds of birds... Lily is making a list of plants. I, of birds."

In December, 1887, he was elected to membership in the Nuttall Ornithological Club in Cambridge. The Nuttall Club, the first ornithological society in the world, had been formed only fourteen years before by William Brewster, a Cambridge neighbor.^[33] The friendships Bolles made in the Nuttall Club, and the knowledge and confidence he gained there, sharpened his knowledge of the natural world and gave authority to his subsequent writing. In his writing life, the Nuttall Club and Chocorua would become intertwined.

In the Nuttall Club, Brewster had gathered about him a small group of knowledgeable men who met monthly at Brewster's private museum next to his house. Bolles later described with admiration both Brewster (five years older than Bolles) and the ambiance of the monthly gatherings.:

"[Despite] all his learning, love of nature, and fortune, [Brewster] is as modest and unassuming as a man can be and be sincere. The meetings of the Peep Club at his

house, before the Nuttall Club, are charming. His house is one of the handsomest in Cambridge and his dining room is large and richly furnished. At the round table he and I sit *vis a vis* and carve and around us are Purdie, Faxon, Batchelder, Spelman and others, all noted ornithologists. Mrs. Brewster sits at the side table with her friend Miss Simmons and pours the tea, coffee, and chocolate. At 8 p.m. we adjourn to the cozy museum where in all nearly twenty men gather as the Nuttall Club and discuss bird ways and news. Brewster has a pair of Snowy Owls in his cellar and they are wonderful creatures...I plan to spend a day in the woods with Brewster on Thursday and to spend Saturday and Sunday next on the Ipswich sand dunes where many interesting birds are to be found at this season" [Life p. 149].

At the meeting at which Bolles was nominated, the Club started the important project that would occupy it for the next four years—"Studies on the Distribution of Birds."^[34] Each meeting would cover only a few species, and members would discuss where and when these birds could be found, their habits, and any geographic variation. This became grist for Bolles's mill—his observations from Tamworth fit nicely into this project, and the investigations he was pursuing there were read at meetings and critiqued by club members before being published in ornithological journals. He took to it like a duck to water. Fifty years later, the club historian Charles Foster Batchelder, who had proposed Bolles for membership and had visited Crowlands in mid-winter, still vividly remembered him:

"Bolles's influence in the Club was great from the moment he entered it. Physically somewhat conspicuous, with a physique powerful rather than graceful, mentally he was always so alert that he was in the foremost of whatever company he might be in. His most fundamental, and most obvious, quality was his earnestness. He fully believed that what he was doing was worth while. In his field work, to an exceptional degree, he concentrated his attention on the problem in hand and brought to bear on it, too, a remarkable ingenuity in experiment. He was among the first to record, watch in hand, every action of his subject, missing nothing, scorning nothing, however minute. The ready command of language, simple, vivid and concise, that he showed in presenting with equal exactness the results of his work, well illustrated his character. In the meetings his stimulating presence, his active mind, brought fruitful discussion."^[35]

In 1890, Bolles read to the Club (and later published at its suggestion) a "warmly received" paper about his "Barred Owls in Captivity."^[36] (One owl perched in Brewster's fireplace and observed while Bolles read the Nuttall

paper.) Bolles had captured the owls at Crowlands in 1888, and he observed them and their interactions with other birds. He used the owls to attract wild birds, and he gave up the shotgun as a collecting tool:

"On my arrival at Chocorua I began to keep systematic account of all birds seen each day, making careful allowance for birds seen twice in the same day. Between July 6 and Oct. 14 [1890], I recognized 9,782 birds, representing 95 species. On nearly half the days in this period Puffy [a captive Barred Owl, named by his family] was my companion on my walks and rides. At first it was not easy to induce him to leave his cage and accompany me, but after a few lessons he consented to step from his perch upon the short pine stick on which I used to carry him, and to remain clinging while I walked or ran, scrambling over ledges, or forced my way through thickets and brambles. He went more than once to the heights of Chocorua; passed hours traveling through dark woods and high pastures; or perched resignedly on the sharp prow of my Rushton boat, watching dragon-flies skimming the surface of the lake, and his own image reflecting in the water. ... I soon found that the Owl was keenly alive to anything passing skyward, for if a Hawk or Crow came into view far away in the deep blue, Puffy's gaze was instantly turned full upon the growing speck.... On one eventful day he showed me 334 Hawks sailing southwest under the pressure of a stiff northwest wind. It was September 10, one of the later of the days when the fires were raging among the forests along the St. John River....Puffy seemed to recognize a [Pileated Woodpecker as] a hereditary foe, for...the Owl suddenly changed his appearance from rough-feathered and sleepy content to an astonishing resemblance to an old moss-grown stump." [8(#3) *Auk* 256-270 (July, 1891) p. 109].

In February, 1891, he read to the Club (and later published in two articles [\[37\]](#)) another long paper on his previous summer's research at Crowlands on sapsuckers and on their interaction with hummingbirds. His research writing was straightforward and unadorned:

"Last summer I was led to spend a considerable time in close study of these woodpeckers [the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker] and their feeding habits by the peculiar relations which I noticed seeming to exist between them and Hummingbirds. My observations were given point by...the difference of opinion among ornithologists regarding [the diet of these sapsuckers and] their motive for tapping sap-yielding trees."

This paper provides an example of his patient research methods. Here is a part of one day's entry:

"The day following...I was on duty at the tree from 9 A.M. until [6:30 P.M.]. I lay on the ground concealed by the spreading branches of a beech tree; my watch hung from a twig before my eyes, while equipped with pencil and paper, I took notes of all that occurred from minute to minute throughout the day. My record runs as follows....

9:08. Male [Sapsucker] returns, dips from six holes.

9:09. Goes out on dead limb.

9.11. Hummer [Hummingbird] takes sap from two holes. I could hear no humming. Male quiet.

9.15. Young Woodpecker comes.

9.17. Goes out on limb, having dipped 37 times in 9 holes. Male flies.

9.20. Young dips 39 times from 13 holes."

And so on for a total of 130 entries on that day alone. Batchelder, later president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, remembered that Nuttall Club meeting "We listened to him, amazed, as he convinced us that young Sapsuckers could live for three or four months on a diet almost exclusively of sugars."^[38] Bolles wrote to his sister later that week, "[The sapsucker paper] was received with real enthusiasm. Brewster, who is generally undemonstrative, said, 'It is the finest paper of the kind ever written by an American student of bird life. It reminds me of some of Darwin's work.' "^[39] Twenty years later, Brewster still remembered "the extraordinary care, precision, patience and intelligence with which Mr. Bolles was accustomed to pursue his field studies of birds."^[40]

Thus, the Nuttall Ornithological Club welcomed Bolles as a friend and as a serious naturalist. The Club was later to write that Bolles not only made contributions of permanent scientific value through his skill in patient and intelligent observation but also presented ornithology so attractively as to awaken the widest popular interest.^[41] The regard of his fellow members helped Bolles publish his interesting research and heightened his reputation at the very moment his literary career was about to start. The combination was synergistic to his success.

"Land of the Lingering Snow: Chronicles of A Stroller in New England From January to June"

In the late 1880s and early 1890s Bolles, was actively preparing and publishing Harvard materials and his bird research. Since joining Harvard's employ, Bolles had not published natural history in the popular press since seven unmemorable articles in 1886-1888.^[42] At that time he also published three review of books of nature writing.^[43] In these book reviews he noted the various styles of other nature writers, and his articles seemed to experiment with his own style.

His literary career started almost inadvertently. He had little expectation of fame when in early January 1891 he sent a letter to the editor of the *Boston Post*. It told about that afternoon's winter walk, cross-lots over Arlington's hills at the rural edge of Boston. It was published two days later under the transparent pseudonym of "O.W.L." His plan was to send a similar nature letter every week as winter turned to spring, and perhaps beyond. Lily Bolles, who accompanied him on the first and on some other walks, recalled that when he returned home he would write swiftly—"he seldom gave as much as three hours to writing a letter, made few corrections and never rewrote any part."^[44]

To his surprise, the O.W.L. letters soon aroused public interest. The first letter was gentle and unassuming: "Entering the woods, I found written upon the snow the records of those who had traveled there before me." And Bolles simply read those records to the reader, closing with "gratitude and admiration...for a day of rest." The second letter revisited these hills now under a glaze of ice, with all trees armored and bowed. But I think it was the stark, sparse description in the third letter, published January 29, 1891, that hooked people, as it did me. This third weekend was stormier yet: Saturday had been prosaic, with dirty snow, smelly manured fields, and sloppy walking. He resolved to call it quits for the weekend. But Sunday dawned stormy and he was impelled (what was it with this man?) to return to the Arlington-Belmont hills. Immersed in this winter northeaster, he described this "furious snowstorm" by simply writing what he saw when he turned upwind, then downwind, then to each side:

"As I stood in the pines and looked northeast, every tree was black against a distance

of on-coming white rage. As I looked southwest every tree was white, finely outlined in black, against a retreating mass of colorless motion. If I looked southeast the trees were black and white, and if northwest they were white and black, and whichever way I looked the air was surging on, laden with the bewildered and bewildering snow."

This was a new voice. A few days later he wrote to his sister, "The O.W.L. letters have apparently aroused a good deal of curiosity and I am daily receiving words of approval and kind comment on them" [p. 148]. The letters continued as the season turned. Here are his early March bluebirds near Lincoln:

"As I rounded the corner...Spring herself stepped out to meet me, for twelve bluebirds rose in a flock....It is hard to say which is the loveliest, the cerulean flash from their backs or the chestnut warmth of their round breasts. I watched and listened to these birds for more than an hour. They were joyously happy. They flew, they basked in the sunlight, they went to the orchard and peered into a hole in the apple limb in which many a bluebird has probably been hatched; they hovered all over the cedars, eating their bluish aromatic fruit; they perched on the ice at the brink of Stony Brook and drank from the rushing water; they pecked at the sumac spikes, they sipped melting snow on the slate roof of the freight house; they swung on the telegraph wires, and they filled the air with their sweet, simple notes."[\[45\]](#)

There was soon talk of a book. In mid-March, Bolles wrote, "Yesterday morning and this morning Mr. Brewster took me to drive for thirty five minutes between breakfast and my office hours. He is very warm in praise of my letters... Judging by the number of daily congratulations I receive and the comments which Brewster gives me second hand, the letters have excited no [small] common interest and aroused no small amount of serious approval." James Russell Lowell was reported to have urged, "Don't waste this material in ephemeral form," and later, when he learned of Bolles's decision to publish, Lowell wrote, "I am glad that you are going to collect and publish your O.W.L. letters which greatly interested me who am obliged to get my walks on other folks' legs now" [p. 152.].

The *Post* in late March decided not to continue serializing the O.W.L. letters, but Bolles continued to write weekly essays to include in the book. There would be twenty-six tales in all, through the end of May. They would also

include essays about the Ipswich dunes, Mount Wachusett, the Blue Hills, crawling through the Rock Meadow in Belmont to see a bittern, Highland Light (with Lily), and two trips to Chocorua. In "A Voyage to Heard's Island," Bolles described an overnight boating and camping trip with William Brewster on the Concord and Sudbury Rivers:

"As our paddles rose and fell, scattering bright globules of water on the river, which at first refused to receive them back into itself, we left Concord behind us on the one side, and on the other many a meadow and sloping hillside, crowned with farmhouse or summer cottage. The town did not let us abandon it suddenly. More than once, when I thought it left far away across a meadow, the river would sweep back to it, and show us more green lawns and terraces, gay boats lying on the grass, elms fruited with purple grackles and cowbirds, children at their games, purple martins soaring near their bird boxes, and wagons rolling up dust in the roads....About seven o'clock....we raised out tiny masts and spread our white sails. That which followed was to physical action what falling asleep is to mental effort. It was not rude motion gained by thumping oars against resisting water. It was more like becoming a part of the air and gliding on in its embrace, silently, swiftly, without friction. Side by side our boats slipped on past whispering grasses, over the black water, under the violet sky in which the high stars were now appearing. Behind us the water was broken into ripples. They held quivering, bending bits of color, deep red, orange, yellow, and silver, scattered over the inky blackness of the stream....[Then follows a description of a campsite in a grove in Thoreau's Conantum that became known as "Frank Bolles's pines":]

"After a sleepless hour or more had passed, I sat up... There were the great pine trunks rising like roughly carved columns to support the dark roof above. The moon's rays came between them and fell full in my face. I could see up the river, whose ripples were full of bits of moonlight and black shadows, over which hurried shreds of mist. Quiet as was the night, nothing seemed asleep. Nature, shamming repose, was moving silently about on mysterious errands of which slumbering man was not to know. The moon sailed on with her convoy of stars westward, the clouds sailed eastward. The river flowed northward, the mists were moving southward. Thousands of frogs mingled their songs on the river banks. The woods were full of slight rustlings of leaves, creakings or snappings of twigs, squeaks which seemed vocal, and an undercurrent of sound which was like the hushed breathing of the earth. Then, as though guiding all, came the weird voice of the owl in its strange rhythm and its stranger intonation"[\[46\]](#)

Comparisons with Thoreau are inevitable and parallels are unmistakable. They both walked crosslots and their paths crossed regularly (e.g., in

Concord, Cambridge, Highland Light, and Mounts Wachusett and Chocorua), though fifty years apart. But no one would confuse them. Thoreau called himself a saunterer (with the overtones of questing), the other called himself a stroller (though he was energetic and focused). Though both were patient observers of nature, Thoreau desired to achieve such sympathy with the observed object as to intuit the higher laws that transcend visible nature; on the other hand Bolles described nature accurately to increase scientific understanding and public interest. Thoreau made an internal journey and was an explorer; Bolles was an educator. Bolles alludes to Thoreau only sparingly. Thus, Bolles does not climb to success on Thoreau's back; he takes a parallel path.

In a 1886, Bolles wrote in a book review that, because Thoreau "had not benefited by the ripe learning of Darwin," Thoreau's vision was that of the artist-poet, not the naturalist:

"Thoreau, wandering by the sandy shores of Walden saw birds and squirrels, opening buds and bursting seed vessels with the same loving eyes which [the author-artist] Hamilton Gibson uses. But Thoreau had not benefited by the ripe learning of Darwin....Burroughs [whom Bolles describes elsewhere as a poet as distinguished from a naturalist] is the lineal descendent of Thoreau, as [Bradford] Torrey and our other nature lovers are the disciples of Burroughs."[\[47\]](#)

Bolles's quick characterization was—understandably—incomplete. We know now that Thoreau was in January 1860 among the first North American readers of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. We also know that Thoreau did grapple with evolution and early Darwinism, and did make systematic natural history observations. But Thoreau did this mainly in his journal, the full text of which did not appear until after Bolles's death. In 1883, Bolles, an Episcopalian of firm faith, had read Darwin's *Descent of Man* (published after Thoreau's death) and wrote in his journal that he found spiritual inspiration in the finding of new scientific harmonies:

"Read in Darwin's *Descent of Man*....No fiction can compare its fascination with the work of a calm, clear-souled champion of truth, who sentence by sentence forces home upon the willing mind the long-hidden beauties of God's handiwork. To my mind the finding of new scientific harmonies is the most joyous way of opening the

soul of men to the [illegible] of the life God has set us to live here. I cannot understand why so many men fall away from faith in God, in Jesus, his Son, in miracles, in prayer, simply because the new systematic theory of the universe is being worked out by scientists. We have always ascribed all power to God. Why should men turn aside from the old faiths when new truths are brought like lamps to make its mystery more mysteriously awful? [Six days later he wrote:] Finish Darwin, who fully convinces me of his theory of Sexual Selection and removes the gravest of my doubts concerning man's origin. Some such theory would alone save creation from seeming eccentricities and inconsistencies and such a theory detracts in no way from God's majesty—or Love" [Feb. 10-16, 1883].

Bolles understood, though, what Thoreau was about. While returning from Mount Wachusett, Bolles wrote of seeing from the train "Fairhaven Hill and Walden Pond, where Thoreau studied life and its mysteries." [48] Bolles, though viewing nature through different eyes, was also concerned with mysteries as he looked toward his home and family:

"The view from the [Arlington] Heights at night is bewitching. Myriads of stars people the blue heavens, and myriad of baser stars people those depths below. The stars above differ one from another in glory; the stars below differ one from another in evil. Those above tell of eternity and rest. Those below tell of toil, vanity, self-indulgence, crime, sickness,—the unrest of human life. Still, being a man, I looked down into that sea of light, and seemed to find one star gleaming in the distance which was part of the glory above, and related only by propinquity to the evil of the city. Toward that light I took my way, and finding it, put it out and went to bed." [49]

Though few, there were other such personal glimpses in Bolles's writings: one was in the essay "In the Wren Orchard." [50] This small orchard was a Shangri-La in Belmont to which he took "his little covey of buttercup hunters" (identified elsewhere as Lily and two daughters) plus Puffy the tame owl. It was "a beautiful glen" that contained "all the elements of home and shelter which a majority of land birds desire." They picnicked on milk, sandwiches, and strawberries. In his journal he wrote about the day, "We have seen birds, picked early flowers and let the children drink in pure air and happiness *ad lib* [i.e., without restraint or limit]" [April 18, 1891, p. 150].

These writings and others would be included in his book, *Land of the Lingering Snow: Chronicles of A Stroller in New England From January to*

June, published in the fall of 1891. Though two essays in this book introduced Mount Chocorua and Crowlands, the opening pages of both essays described not the New Hampshire landscape but—like a preamble—the five-hour journey by train and stage from Cambridge: the weather, the view from the window, the musings. In one essay he wrote:

"[The rain] beat upon the Saugus marshes and the sands of Revere Beach, and it splashed into the rushing tide of the Merrimac flowing seaward at Newburyport.... The marsh seemed like a great wheel revolving beside us, its lines of haycocks being the innumerable spokes forever whirling past."[\[51\]](#)

The presence of these introductory passages implicitly made Bolles's point—that the two worlds of Cambridge and Chocorua were linked in his life, physically and emotionally. His essays of New Hampshire were not snapshots of pretty scenery but reflected both parts of a real life, and people sensed that and responded. Having established that linkage, he could then go on to describe the stage-set backdrop that is the Sandwich Range, against which his northern tales would soon take place:

"At sunset I walked to the rustic bridge between the lakes and let the wonderful beauty of the scene flow in and fill every corner of my being. Against the northern sky rose Chocorua, Paugus, Passaconaway, and Whiteface, four connected mountains, each beautiful, but all different from each other. Chocorua on the east, and due north of the lakes, sustains a horn of naked rock upon shoulders of converging wooded ridges. Paugus, heavily wooded, yet with many ledge faces and scars showing light among its hemlocks, is a mountain of curves and wrinkles, having no one definite summit, but many fire and wind swept domes. Passaconaway is an immense spruce-covered pyramid, pathless and forbidding. Whiteface, at the west, is a shoulder of rock 4,000 feet high, draped in forest except where an avalanche has rent its covering and left bare its substance....All of them were repeated in the placid lake, which also copied the glory of the sky and of the descending sun."[\[52\]](#)

"At the North of Bearcamp Water: Chronicles of a Stroller in New England from July to December."

Even before *Lingering Snow* was published, he was writing new essays. His next book, *At the North of Bearcamp Water: Chronicles of a Stroller in New England from July to December*, is a very different book. Here, Bolles

immerses his reader in the wilder wild of the Chocorua region, Mounts Paugus and Passaconaway, and the Albany (Swift River) Intervale. He made no bones about it—on the first page he declares, "I said Yes to the veeries and sought the swamp." In "Migration," he described how the birds of the forest were moving in bunches, southwards, through the forest:

"These chickadees, alert, courageous, tireless, and generous, are the convoys of the warbler fleets. For an hour the silence of the forest will be broken only by the tiresome platitudes of the red-eyed vireo, the dry-staccato of the harvest fly, and the occasional whistle of a hyla [spring peeper]. Then, far away, will be heard the faint "dee, dee" of the [chickadee]. It comes nearer and presently a dozen or twenty little birds are seen hovering, darting, flitting, but steadily advancing, tree by tree, through the woods. Perhaps not more than one in ten will be a chickadee, yet it is the chickadees that give character and direction to the body. The guided flock of easy-going warblers and vireos, nuthatches and kinglets, drifts on, feeding and frolicking, heedless of what it passes."[\[53\]](#)

In "The Dead Tree Day," Bolles spent pre-dawn to dusk hidden near a dead pine overhanging Chocorua Lake. The pine with its eighty seven branches was a "famous" bird roost, and Bolles told of every bird that came along that day. But each story has its surprises. For example, in "The Dead Tree Day," his opening sentences are so off-point that they are wonderfully disarming:

"It is the theory that there are always plenty of hens to be bought in a New England farming town; but as a matter of fact, in the month of July, 1892, the country north of Bearcamp presented such a dearth of hens that, after traveling miles in my efforts to buy some, I returned to my own neighborhood and hired a contingent for the season. The transaction was unique, but, on the whole, mutually satisfactory. It had one drawback. When one owns fowls, the accumulation of family wrath against the rooster on account of too early crowing on his part always finds relief in eating him; but when one hires a rooster, his life is charmed by contract, and he can with impunity crow the family into nervous prostration.... Not a ray of daylight pierced the bank of mist...Nothing but instinct or bad conscience could have told Murillo that it was time to crow."[\[54\]](#)

And so the Dead Tree Day began. In contrast, "A Night Alone on Chocorua" is a tour de force about thunderstorms, aloneness in a summit cave, the August meteor shower, and a pre-dawn chorus. Bolles had written of the Alps—"Never having seen anything approaching such beauty, I never could

have imagined such beauty"—and so he knew what the White Mountains weren't, but he made Chocorua at night big enough for anyone. On its summit's "dizzying platform" he wrote,

"My own light was growing dim, so I extinguished it...The moon slowly made way with the clouds, and by two o'clock a quarter part of the sky was clear. The mercury had dropped to 52 degrees, and the moisture hurled against the mountain by the wind was condensed and sent boiling and seething up the sides of the peak. Tongues of fog lapped around me with the same spasmodic motion which flames display in rising from a plate of burning alcohol. At first they scarcely reached the peak; then they came to my feet, and swept past me around both sides of my platform; finally they flung themselves higher and higher, hiding not only the black valley from which they came, but Paugus and more distant peaks, the sky, the moon, and the glimmering stars."[\[55\]](#)

Later the sky cleared. Before dawn, one white-throat sang, then others, and juncos and thrushes chorused. Bolles concluded "A Night Alone on Chocorua" with these words:

"There is something inexpressibly touching and inspiring in the combination of fading night, with its planets still glowing, and the bird's song of welcome to the day. Night is more eloquent than day in telling of the wonders of the vast creation. Day tells less of distance, more of detail; less of peace, more of contest; less of immortality, more of the perishable. The sun, with its dazzling light and burning heat, hides from us the stars, and those still depths as yet without stars. It narrows our limit of vision, and at the same time hurries us and worries us with our own tasks which we will not take cheerfully, and the tasks of others which are done so ill. Night tells not only of repose on earth, but of life in that far heaven where every star is a thing of motion and a creation full of mystery. Men who live only in great cities may be pitied for being atheists, for they see little beyond the impurity of man; but it seems incredible that a being with thoughts above appetite, and imagination above lust, should live through a night in the wilderness, with the stars to tell him of space, the dark depths of the sky to tell him of infinity, and his own mind to tell him of individuality, and yet doubt that some Being more powerful and less fickle than himself is in this universe. The bird-music coming before the night is ended combines the purest and most joyous element of the day with the deep meaning of the night. The birds bear witness to the ability of life to love its surroundings and to be happy. The night bears witness to the eternity of life and to the harmony of its laws."[\[56\]](#)

Literary lion Thomas Wentworth Higginson soon wrote Bolles: "I should hardly know where to look in literature for a passage of the same length so rich, sustained and profound, relating to external nature" as the preceding paragraph. Bolles wrote his mother and sisters, "I feel very lofty about it" [p. 157].

"Bringing Home the Bear," on the other hand, was a rollicking tale of a quest to bring down a shot bear—"the real owner of forest and ledge"—from the mountaintop. The hunter and bearers were almost Chaucerian, and the corpse, aided by gravity, had a will of its own as they all tumbled down the hill past the hornets' nest. Eventually there was a community celebration at the bottom, with draughts of raspberry vinegar (!?) for all:

"More than six hours had elapsed since our departure from home when our little procession wound out of the woods into my dooryard. Raspberry vinegar never was more gratefully swallowed, and never was dead emperor received with more respect than poor Bruin by the crowds which flocked to view his remains during the afternoon of that hot August day. One bought his nails, another his teeth, a third his thinly haired skin, while pieces of his flesh, prepared for future cooking, were carried away in various directions. As when sugar is spilled upon the ground, ants come from every quarter to gather up the grains and draw them away, so dead Bruin drew gossips and idlers from all parts of the town, eager to pick up bits of his body or stories of his melancholy end." [NOBW p.82]

What was Bolles's life like at Crowlands? He wrote prospective guest William Brewster, "Do not bring good clothes. I wear rough, strong flannel shirts, old shoes, & trousers all-gone in the seat. The air today is fresh from Hudson's Bay.... You'd have laughed the other day to see me trotting a woodchuck on my knee." [57] He took patient time to study nature wherever he found it, and he tried to explain it to both ornithologists and popular audiences. For example, he started a magazine article on chimney swifts nesting in Crowlands' chimney with the following straight-faced confession of his obsession to observe:

"Lying flat upon my back on my bedroom floor, with my head in the fireplace, pillowed upon the andirons, and my gaze directed intensely up the chimney, I watched, hour by hour, the strange domestic doings of two of my tenants." [58]

He explored the Sandwich Range and, unafraid to risk another encounter with a bear trap, bushwhacked up untrailed Paugus. An 1891 Appalachian Mountain Club group reported the view from the eastern end of the summit of Passaconaway, from a ledge cleared by Bolles:

"In twenty minutes we were upon the summit, enjoying the superb view now afforded from the eastern end. Here, in recent years, a ledge, formerly covered with small spruces, has been cleared by Mr. Frank Bolles, a summer resident beside Chocorua Lake, one whose love of wild nature has led him to this secluded spot. A panorama is here opened of nearly 180 degrees, extending from the easterly slopes of Mt. Carrigain to Mt. Shaw of the Ossipee Mountains. Mt. Willey, with the Notch, Mt. Washington, the Carter Range, and the peaks about Jackson and North Conway are among the most prominent mountains in the view, besides a host in Maine, clear around to Agamenticus by the sea."[\[59\]](#)

Bolles also spent time with and learned from New Hampshire men who were native to the hills—the experienced Sumner Gilman and farmer Nat Berry of Tamworth, and trapper and guide Jack Allen of Passaconaway hamlet. The last was to say of him:

"Trailing's an instinct. A guide's instinct's a gift. If Mr. Bolles hadn't been educated, he'd have been the best guide I ever knew. But his brains spoiled his instinct. He never had the right chance to exercise it, and sometimes his reason would get to working and end it all."[\[60\]](#)

His daughter Evelyn's keenest memory as a very young girl was hearing his "Bob-White" whistle as he came out of the woods one day at dusk.[\[61\]](#) Though Bolles referred to Crowlands as "my own dear home" (and he was registered to vote in the town), there was an invisible elastic cord connecting Bolles at Chocorua to his life in "that granite prison at University Hall."[\[62\]](#) He was never free of its tension. Like a modern networked worker whose cell phone rings anywhere, he answered Harvard letters and wrote Harvard pamphlets from Tamworth. Yet when each year he surrendered to the pull and returned to Cambridge, the pain was almost palpable. On Sept. 25, 1891, as the family packed up at summer's end, he wrote in his journal, "Tomorrow we go. Ah, it is like cutting off one's hand."

Bolles and the land conservation movement

At the time Bolles was writing his two books, two land conservation issues were catching the public's attention. One was politically hot: the proposal to preserve metropolitan parks at the edges of Boston. The other issue was still heating up: the increasing intensity of logging and forest fires in the White Mountains. Bolles wrote about both these areas—so did he play a role in their protection?

In *Lingering Snow*, Bolles celebrated parcels at the edge of metropolitan Boston, but I cannot document that Bolles was part of any organized lobbying effort. Bolles's O.W.L. letters were definitely not tracts. On the other hand, common sense suggests that things may not have been apolitical. It was his boss' son, the landscape architect Charles Eliot (1859-1897, referred to without a middle initial), who was the champion of the effort to create a metropolitan Boston park system. During the very months that Bolles was publishing the O.W.L. letters in the *Boston Post*, the younger Eliot was busy lobbying (with the principal help of the Appalachian Mountain Club) for a law to create and authorize a citizen group (now the Trustees of Reservations) to acquire scenic land in the metropolitan area for public use.^[63] A recent search of Charles Eliot's papers reveals two slender clues: Bolles's name in the younger Eliot's handwriting was included on a penciled list of Boston influentials; though the list is undated, it is among papers associated with this preservation effort. And the head of the Appalachian Mountain Club later recollected, in a letter to President Eliot, that Charles had lent him (for purposes of the campaign) a copy of the "private address list of Harvard College, with the express injunction to see that it did not get into the hands of any advertising persons."^[64] Of course, one logical source of such a list would have been President Eliot himself, but a very likely source may have been Charles's contemporary, Bolles, one of whose jobs was maintaining alumni records.

The purposes of the campaign must have been attractive to Bolles—the Eliot-inspired petitions circulated by the Appalachian Mountain Club and officially delivered to the legislature in December, 1890, read as follows:

"The undersigned petitioners respectfully represent that it is of the greatest importance to the welfare of the people of Boston and of the surrounding cities and towns, that the enjoyment of natural beauty of the country in their neighborhood should be assured to them. Only through ample spaces provided in sufficient number can this large population obtain the opportunities for rest, relaxation, exercise, and general recreation in the open air that are essential to its continued physical and moral health. The rapid growth of this great community now threatens either speedy destruction of, or the exclusion of the public from, the spots most suitable for public open spaces, namely: the hilltops, the rocky woods, the seashores, and the banks of streams. At the same time there is caused a pollution of the streams most dangerous to public health." [\[65\]](#)

That same month, Charles Eliot wrote Bolles's *brother-in-law* (and occasional Crowlands guest), Governor William E. Russell, successfully soliciting his support for the proposed legislation. Also that month Eliot also wrote then-better-known natural and local history writers and unsuccessfully solicited chapters on their specialties (e.g., birds, woods and fields, geology, industry) to be included in an Eliot-edited guidebook to the metropolitan open spaces. The philosophy was that people would be willing to protect lands that they are permitted to enjoy. Though Bolles may not have received such an invitation, it is likely that he was aware of the guidebook project, for his friend William Brewster was sent such a letter on January 1, 1891, only a week before Bolles embarked on his first O.W.L. walk. By mid-March, 1891, when hundreds of supporters attended the legislative hearings on the proposal, the *Boston Post* had published eight of Bolles's weekly O.W.L. letters. They were about such private lands of public value and described their beauty and the consequences of inaction. Only two weeks before this important hearing, one of Bolles's O.W.L. letters described the desecration of the once-beautiful Belmont Meadows:

"I left the hills and crossed the Belmont meadows....Head-lights on distant engines made menacing gleams on the wet rails; the great excavations in clay beds next to the brick yards were filled with black shadows from which rose vapors; brooks once clear, now polluted by slaughter-houses, gave out foul clouds of mist, and as electric lamps along the road suddenly grew into glowing yellow balls in the fog, they showed, rising above them, crucifixes of this nineteenth century on which are stretched the electric wires whose messages of good or evil keep the nerves of society forever uneasy."

In this letter, Bolles also included this exhortation about two other parcels that were widely known to be candidate parks: "Fortunate Boston, to be girdled by such diversified and picturesque country!"^[66]

The O.W.L. letters also quietly made their own points: for example, that his tramping grounds, the country west of Boston, had both scenic views and "some of the wildest, roughest, and most heavily timbered country within sight of Boston," and that they were better in some ways than the Blue Hills, a known park candidate. And the O.W.L. letters demonstrated that some places were deserving for their wildlife values. Finally, Governor Russell would two months later sign this Trustees of Public Reservations bill into law. (Gov. Russell would also sign the following year approve Charles Eliot's follow-up bill creating the Trustees' government sibling—the Metropolitan Parks Commission.)

Thus, whether or not the O.W.L. series may have begun apolitically, Bolles the political man must have become aware of the effect of his letters (they even included mass transit directions!) on the public controversy. His evolving choice of locales included many of the likely candidate reservations—including the Blue Hills, Revere Beach, Prospect Hill, Fresh Pond, Waverley Oaks and Beaver Brook, Bussey Woods, Bellevue Hill ("a favorite of the Appalachian Club"^[67]) and Mount Wachusett. His essays probably aroused the public's and a publisher's interest in part because of their timeliness. It was recognized at the time that these O.W.L. letters and the resulting book supported protection of open spaces. For example, the first annual report of the Trustees of Public Reservations said, "I refer my readers to the accurate and entrancing description of [the Cape Cod seashore at Highland Light] in Frank Bolles's new book, *Land of the Lingering Snow*. All this shore should be forever accessible to the public."^[68] And, reporting in 1896 on the successful acquisition of the Waverley Oaks as a park, one writer noted, "Of late years notice has been repeatedly drawn to them in the charming pages of *Land of the Lingering Snow* by that talented author, Mr. Frank Bolles, whose untimely death has been so mourned."^[69]

At the time Bolles wrote his second book, *At the North of Bearcamp Water*, voices were starting to cry out in warning about the devastation occurring in the White Mountains.^[70] In the 1880s, the shift to pulp-based newsprint had accelerated the timber cut ten-fold.^[71] But by 1891, only one rail spur of limited capacity had penetrated to the Albany (Swift River) Intervale—over Bear Mountain from Bartlett.^[72] And though huge forest fires burned, they were far away. Bolles wrote of them ominously:

"Dull masses of firelight shone upon the smoky sky in three places on the horizon... and beyond, above, dimly present in the smoky heavens as conscience is present in the mind of man—Chocorua."^[73]

His writings were clear on the issues—he abhorred the coming waste, the ugliness, the power of man to destroy, the loss of the habitat for his beloved wildlife. His poem about the crow-sized Pileated Woodpecker ("The Log-Cock") expresses both his immersion in nature and his awareness of the threat to its creatures:

...Would you seek him? Borrow owl wings
Soft as darkness, light as lake-mist;
Learn to tread the leaves with fox feet,
Like the hare to cross the snow-drifts,
Learn to burrow like the woodchuck,
Learn to listen like the partridge,
Learn to wait as does the wild cat,
Learn to start as does the red deer;
Wary, watchful is the log-cock,
Man among his foes most dreading....

When the blade of greed and commerce
Robs the Saco of its woodland,
Strips the mad Pemigewasset
Of its sheltering birch and hemlock,
Fells from Ossipee to Paugus,
Bares the crest of Passaconaway,
Then the log-cock too will vanish,
Seeking death or distant refuge,
Shunning man the sure destroyer,

Man who wastes the ancient forests.

As few will know him, few will miss him,
Yet the few will mourn his going,
For among Chocorua's tenants,
Oldest seems he of its vassals,
From some former age surviving;
Left to guard the ancient hemlocks,
Left to wave his flaming signal,
Left to shriek his vengeful warning,
Left to be the last to perish
In the conquest of the forest.^[74]

Also aware of the impact on humans, Bolles on Christmas day, 1891, wrote the following about a lumberman's family in the Albany Intervale, deep in the winter forest northwest of Chocorua:

"The smoke of the saw mill showed that the timber-eater finds no time for remembering the birthday of Jesus. Teams were moving as usual as usual, carrying the green lumber down to the railway. The men employed to demolish our forests are poorly paid. A dollar a day and board is what the French Canadian receives here. Board is called fifty cents a day, and the married workman with a houseful of children lives on that sum. We passed the home of a French Canadian known in the valley as Bumblebee. The house is twelve feet long by ten feet deep....The walls are made of boards, battened, and the roof is unshingled. Bumblebee has five children, the eldest being eight. His wife's mind is affected. The standing timber, the mill, the lumber railway, and many of the dwellings and small farms belong to non-residents, whose only object is to shear the mountains, squeeze the laborers, and keep Congress from putting lumber on the free list [i.e., keep Congress from lowering tariff barriers on Canadian lumber]."^[75]

In 1893, Bolles was working actively (though unsuccessfully) to create a New Hampshire Trustees of Public Reservations for "saving the forests." On April 3, 1893, only about a month after the publication of *Bearcamp Water*, he wrote forestry activist Jonathan B. Harrison of Franklin Falls, New Hampshire:

"On Friday last Professor Goodale and I met with Mr. Charles P. Bowdich, and had a long and interesting conversation regarding [a proposed] Trustees of Public Reservations in New Hampshire. Mr. Bowdich will serve as trustee, and do all in his

power to further the objects which we have in mind. He thinks that six out of nine trustees should be legal residents of New Hampshire. It was decided to ask you to suggest the names of seven residents of the northern part of the state—senators, perhaps, from Coos, Carroll and Grafton counties. The Board as finally constituted is likely to consist of the following members: Mr. J.B. Harrison, Franklin Falls, N.H.; Mr. Charles P. Bowdich, Boston, Mass.; Professor George L. Goodale, Cambridge, Mass.; a representative of Dartmouth College; a representative of the Agricultural College of New Hampshire; two representatives of the northern counties shall be experts so far as lumber questions are concerned; one more man of the stamp of Mr. Bowdich, *and finally myself*, making nine in all. How does this outline strike you?"^[76] (Emphasis added.)

His books, however, did not proselytize and did not call out for political action. In both *Lingering Snow* and *Bearcamp Water*, Bolles simply expressed his values and his love of the land and its creatures. When, eleven years earlier, Bolles had decided to abandon thoughts of a career in law or politics, he had envisioned the life of a writer:

"When I think of a life devoted to my *pen*, to the constant thought and discussion of the noblest, deepest questions of our age and when I dream of swaying thousands by gentle argument or crushing vice and fraud by the hammer blows of honor, I see a bird freed from the golden cage and soaring upward over waving forest and rippling fields towards the sky."^[77]

Thus, his two books were this passionate man's "gentle arguments."

Ascending the heights.

Everything was splendid for the 36-year-old Frank Bolles in 1893. *Bearcamp Water* was published in February. Harvard published his well-received and helpful pamphlet, "Student's Expenses," a collection of real-life budgets which he had solicited from recent graduates. In May, the *Atlantic Monthly* ran his "Individuality in Birds." It was a statement of the ethics of the human relationship to nature, and it advocated the serious study of the natural world (not just lab study) by *citizens* as well as scientists. Bolles's *sustained* studies of particular birds permitted insights on individuality:

"There are hundreds of intelligent men and women in New England who do not know a bluebird from a blue jay, a chickadee from a junco, a catbird from a cow

bunting. They know them all as birds, and love them as such, after a vague fashion, but of the racial or specific characteristics of these charming creatures they know nothing. What, then, will they say to the avowal that not only do species of birds differ from one another... but that individual birds of the same species have, in proportion to the sum total of their characteristics, as much variation as individual men? ...

"With me, belief in the individuality of birds is a powerful influence against their destruction. Like most men favored with out-of-door life, I have the hunting instinct strongly developed. If a game bird is merely one of an abundant species, killing it is only reducing the supply of that species by one; if, on the contrary, it is possessed of novel powers, or a unique combination of powers, and can be distinguished from all its fellows, killing it is destroying something which cannot be replaced. No one with a conscience would extinguish a species, yet I already feel toward certain races that their individuals are as different from one another as I formerly supposed one species of bird to be from another. At one time I should have shot a barred owl without a twinge of conscience; now I should as soon shoot my neighbor's Skye terrier as kill one of those singularly attractive birds...If we know more of the influence of individuals, we might have a clearer perception of the forces governing evolution...

"Sentiment aside, bird individuality, if real, is of deep scientific interest. If we knew more about the influence of individuals, we might have a clearer perception of the forces governing evolution. Serious science is now so fully given up to laboratory as distinguished from field study that but little thought is given to problems of this kind. This fact makes it all the more possible for amateurs to work happily in the woods and fields, encouraged by the belief that they have innumerable discoveries still to make, countless secrets of nature still to fathom."

The following month, the *Atlantic Monthly* ran a remarkable book review entitled "Chocorua in Literature," which concluded,

"[A] careful reading of the two books which include thus far his deliberate work impresses one with the belief that in Mr. Bolles we have an artist in letters who, if he leaves these books only, will have made a *distinct contribution to American literature*."[\[78\]](#)

To add to the magic of that spring, at Harvard's June commencement, President Eliot awarded Bolles an honorary degree of Master of Arts. His old newspaper wrote on page one:

"When the honorary degrees were conferred was when the enthusiasm of the crowd rose to its highest pitch. Secretary Frank Bolles, popular and deserving, was greeted by a storm of applause as he rose, slender and self-possessed, from the crowd of university men at the left of Dr. Eliot to receive his A.M."[\[79\]](#)

Lily wrote that Eliot waited for the applause to quiet before he read aloud, in Latin, the citation he had composed: "Frank Bolles, an elegant and insightful author, whose devoted study of the nature of things is an example and an inspiration to others"[\[80\]](#)

That summer, he and Lily spent a "charming month" together on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island. One evening in the deep dusk, they rowed out of the harbor into the northern ocean, and he wrote about the experience and about the mysteries of science:

"A few strokes more and we were abreast of the Bill, that ultimate edge of rock which [Cape] Smoky thrusts into the northern sea, piercing the cold waves, and dividing the fierce storm currents beating down from Newfoundland. The wind was fresher in the unprotected sea, and the lighthouse with its nestling lights upon the bar seemed much farther away than it had a moment or two before. A sense of loneliness, almost of danger, crept over us, and by common consent the boat was turned backward into the shelter of the great rock, and the homeward voyage began.

"It was now my turn at the oar, and a thrill passed through me as I grasped the great sweep and wrestled over it with the waves. Night had fallen. All color had died on the red cliffs of Smoky. Stars had burned their way into the dark blue sky, and among them, stray meteors fell seaward, or glided thwart the constellations. A year before, I had spent the long hours of the night on the peak of Chocorua, watching those wayward waifs of space as they danced behind the cloud curtains of the storm. Now, with all a Viking's zeal, I tugged at my big oar, pounded my tholepin, made deep eddies chase each other in the dark water, and breathed joyously deep breaths of the salt northern air. What contrasts man may make for himself, in his life, if he yields to the spirit of restlessness within him! The Vikings yielded to it, and swept the northern seas, and I felt in my weak arms something of their strength and wantonness as I urged the boat homewards under Smoky's shadow. Black rocks, placid sea, bright stars, dancing meteors, and breath of northern ocean,—I had them all, even as the Norsemen had them....

"So I eased my frantic stroke, and watched the phosphorescence play in my oar's eddies....The meteors are inorganic, dead mysteries. The phosphorescence is an

organic, living mystery. Yet it is no more impossible to imagine the history and future of a body perpetually traveling through endless space than to try to count the numbers of these phosphorescent myriads. Generally I have the feeling that science is bringing us nearer to a perception of what the vast creation is which surrounds us, but at times the greater truth flashes before my eyes,—that what we are really learning is not more than a drop in the limitless ocean of fact."[\[81\]](#)

That fall he relinquished some Harvard duties to have more time for writing, exercise, and family. In addition to Harvard writing and work, he worked on an *Atlantic Monthly* article for yuletide, and on two popular science articles on chimney swifts and hummingbirds at Chocorua. For other projects, there was an almost-finished book of poetry and a half-done book on nature for boys; and he hoped to break free in the spring to write about nature in June, which he thought of calling "The High Tide of the Year." In December, he was pleased to learn that the *Atlantic* would run the following summer all four of his articles about Nova Scotia. "And there the story ends," he told a Christmastime correspondent, not knowing that it would end for him so soon.

Frank Bolles died suddenly the following month, on Jan. 10, 1894, of pneumonia at the age of 37. Of all the memorials to him, two are most appropriate. The first is by the editors of the student daily newspaper, *The Harvard Crimson*, the successor of the student paper he had once owned and edited:

"Mr. Bolles's death is a peculiarly sad one, for he of all men enjoyed life. Nothing in his work, which at times was most perplexing and discouraging, could ruffle his spirit or make life a burden to him. He could look through all the troubles of his office, and though conscious of their presence, could see beyond them to a land of beauty and truth. A hard worker while he worked, he always had the life around him to cheer him...To live, to move about in the sunlight in a world of trees and flowers and birds, this was his highest pleasure" [Editorial, *The Harvard Crimson*, Jan. 11, 1894].

But it is the last paragraph of President Eliot's condolence note to Lily Bolles [\[82\]](#) that to me best conveys the intense, personal sense of loss that many in the community felt:

"I feel so keenly the loss of Mr. Bolles' companionship and support, that I want to tell

you what he was to me and to the university. He was a cheerful, hopeful, loyal and sympathetic helper; alert to serve the University, or me, or the youngest student who sought his aid; ready to give quick attention to a complaint, or to a tale of disappointment, embarrassment or injury; eager to remedy evils, remove obstacles, and address injuries; sympathetic in happiness, too, and often joyous himself. He put his whole mind and heart into his work and every person who had dealings with him recognized in him a disinterested and devoted person.

"It makes me shudder to think that you have lost this, and a lover beside. I shall miss him more than I can tell, and I never expect to see his place filled."

The position of Secretary of the University did remain vacant for forty years and is now abolished. But he is remembered in the valleys of the Bearcamp and Swift Rivers. The "Lost Trail" between Paugus and Chocorua that he and woodsman Nat Berry reopened to the "barren, smitten land" of the Albany Intervale has been named the Bolles Trail in his honor.^[83] His old farmhouse at Crowlands remained in the Bolles family for a hundred years, and the successor family has been sympathetic to its traditions—the house and the barn have changed only modestly. Bolles's great-grandson, a gold and silversmith, built his log house nearby and creates his own images of Chocorua in jewelry. The remaining 247 acres of Crowlands (including Heron Pond) were given in 1969 by Bolles's daughter as a nature reserve in her father's name to the Nature Conservancy. And Mount Chocorua and the Sandwich Range are now designated as Scenic, Research, and Wilderness Areas in the White Mountain National Forest.

Brief Bibliography and Acknowledgements

Frank Bolles's papers are at the Tamworth Historical Society; in the collection of Alan Phenix of Chocorua, Bolles's great grandson; at the Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College; at Harvard University's Pusey Library and Widener Library; and at the American Antiquarian Society. I extend my thanks to all, especially to Alan Phenix, Bobbi Carlton, and Joan Casarotto, all of Tamworth. I am also grateful to the staffs of the Museum of Comparative Zoology (for access to the William Brewster papers and to the records of the Nuttall Ornithological Club); of Harvard School of Design's Loeb Library Special Collections (for the papers of Charles Eliot); of the Chocorua Public Library and the Cook Memorial

Library of Tamworth (both of which Bolles helped create); and of the library of the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston. My thanks also to Judith Brenner of Brookfield, N.H. Alexander Goriensky of Boston, and Norman Muller of Princeton University for their courtesy and encouragement. Quotations are used with permission. I extend a final note of appreciation, indeed almost affection, to Elizabeth Quincy Swan Bolles, who took care to preserve the record of their lives.

A full bibliography of Bolles's published works would include hundreds of writings, including his editorials, articles, poetry, and book reviews in at least nine newspapers and seven periodicals. In addition to Bolles's two best-known books, Lily published two other books posthumously: She collected his final articles, as well as most of his principle natural history articles from *The Auk* and elsewhere, in a third book, *From Blomidon to Smoky and Other Papers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894). And she also published a small volume of his poetry about the birds of Chocorua: *Chocorua's Tenants* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895). Other than the availability of print-on-demand reprints of *North of Bearcamp Water* and his 1888 edition of important English statutes, Bolles's books are regrettably long out of print. Second-hand copies are, however, available from your favorite shop or through the web at, e.g., abebooks.com, alibris.com, or addall.com/used.

And some of Bolles's articles are available. One of Bolles's tales, "Following a Lost Trail" from *At the North of Bearcamp Water* was reprinted in the excellent anthology, *White Mountain Reader*, edited by Mike Dickerman (Littleton NH: Bondcliff Books, 2000). Also, nine of Bolles's articles that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* are available in readable-downloadable GIF format on the web at Cornell University's *Making of America Project* Journal Collection at <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/>. These nine articles and their URLs are the following:

- (1.) **The Equinoctial on the Ipswich Dunes**, by Frank Bolles, *Atlantic Monthly*. Volume 68, Issue 408: pp. 522-526 (October 1891). URL for this journal article: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0068-75>

(2.) **Alone on Chocorua at Night**, by Frank Bolles,
Atlantic Monthly. Volume 70, Issue 422: pp. 758-765 (December 1892).
URL for this journal article: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0070-105>>

(3.) **In a Wintry Wilderness**, by Frank Bolles,
Atlantic Monthly. Volume 71, Issue 423: pp. 92-99 (January 1893).
URL for this journal article: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0071-12>>

(4.) **Individuality in Birds**, by Frank Bolles,
Atlantic Monthly. Volume 71, Issue 427: pp. 619-625 (May 1893).
URL for this journal article: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0071-87>>

(5.) **Birds at Yule-Tide**, by Frank Bolles,
Atlantic Monthly. Volume 72, Issue 434: pp. 757-760 (December 1893).
URL for this journal article: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0072-123>>

(6.) **From Blomidon to Smoky**, by Frank Bolles,
Atlantic Monthly. Volume 73, Issue 439: pp. 592-605 (May 1894).
URL for this journal article: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0073-95>>

(7.) **Ingonish, by Land and Sea**, by Frank Bolles,
Atlantic Monthly. Volume 73, Issue 440: pp. 781-787 (June 1894).
URL for this journal article: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0073-121>>

(8.) **The Home of Glooscap**, by Frank Bolles,
Atlantic Monthly. Volume 74, Issue 441: pp. 47-56 (July 1894).
URL for this journal article: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0074-8>>

(9.) **August Birds in Cape Breton**, by Frank Bolles,

Atlantic Monthly. Volume 74, Issue 442: pp. 158-166 (August 1894)
URL for this journal article: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0074-29>>

A more complete bibliography, photographs, and other information appears on my research page at the <http://homepage.mac.com/sfe/henry/frank_bolles/index.html>.

Author

Stephen F. Ells <SteveElls at post.harvard.edu> as a young man hiked 'cross-lots where Bolles hiked on Belmont Hill, birded in Rock Meadow, was an editor of the *Harvard Crimson*, is a lapsed Harvard lawyer, spent hours researching a bird species (the bobolink), lived in Conantum near "Frank Bolles's Pines" (where Bolles camped with William Brewster near the Sudbury River), wrote a book on open spaces in metropolitan Boston, and is a member of the Nuttall Ornithological Club. From his camp site in Madison, New Hampshire (the town in which Bolles vacationed with Miss Lily Swan), Ells looks at Mount Chocorua across a still-unspoiled pond about which Bolles wrote. When he read his first Frank Bolles book only two years ago, he knew he had to write about this man.

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Notes:

[1] His father was Massachusetts Secretary of State, a Boston newspaper editor, and then Solicitor of the U.S. Navy. His mother's family (the Dixes) had New Hampshire roots (e.g., Dixville Notch) and her brother was governor of New York, Secretary of the Treasury, and Ambassador to France. [[Return to text.](#)]

[2] William Brewster's foreward to Frank Bolles's "Notes on whip-poor-wills and owls," *The Auk*, XXIX (April): p. 150 (1912). [[Return to text.](#)]

[3] Elizabeth Swan Bolles, *The Life of Frank Bolles as told in his letters and journals*, Orig. MS of 458 pp. (ca. 1902), copied by Evelyn Bolles Phoenix, p. 43 in typescript copy. Further citations to this typescript may be abbreviated to *Life* or simply to page number in brackets. Original MS is in collection of Alan Phenix; original draft MS is at Tamworth Historical Society (THS). Typescript copies are at Harvard University Archives, THS, and Alan Phenix collection. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[4] "Highwayman Letters," Franklin NH *Sentinel*, Sept. 6, 1879. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[5] "Deserted Homes," 12 pp. TS, at Tamworth Hist. Soc. (ca. 1881-83). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[6] "Among the Wind-Swept Lakes," *At the North of Bearcamp Water* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895) at p. 214. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[7] Bolles was undaunted. Only five years later (in 1887-1888), he championed the creation of a free library in Chocorua village (but this time first obtaining firmer allegiance from townspeople!), and he would in ca. 1893 help create the free library in nearby Tamworth village. In one of his last letters, he wrote his mother and sister of his pride in the two libraries, "I have the pleasure of spending about \$85.00 this year upon the two Tamworth libraries, and by the time the two are ready to be consolidated, the one at Chocorua to be a branch, we shall have over 1000 well selected volumes" [Dec. 20, 1893]. In 2002, the Rumney, Tamworth, and Chocorua libraries all survive and provide excellent service. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[8] See, *Life*. Six months after Bolles graduated, the *Echo* stopped publishing, and some of its editors joined the surviving competitor-daily, the *Herald-Crimson*. Thus, in that sense, the *Echo* lives on. See, *The Harvard Crimson*, (Cambridge: The Harvard Crimson, 1906) p. 13-14; and *The Harvard Crimson: Fiftieth Anniversary 1873-1923*, (Cambridge: The Harvard Crimson, 1923) pp. 13-15. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[9] Citations of all his newspaper writings are to Bolles's two extant scrapbooks in the Harvard University Archives. Bolles later became secretary of the Cambridge branch of the Indian Rights Association [*Life* MS 280]. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[10] Frank Bolles, "Notes on my chipmunks" (MS 1894) ca. 5 pp. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[11] "My Heart's in the Highlands," in Frank Bolles, *At the North of Bearcamp Water* (hereafter cited as *NOBW*), (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1893), p. 161. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[12] Letter to mother, Jan. 10, 1886, p.73. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[13] Lily's draft manuscript of *Life* reads "hazardous experiment." Though she struck out the word "hazardous," her initial thought may suggest what her understandable concerns had been. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[14] The derivation of the name is hinted at in his poem "The Crow," which refers to a grove of high pines near Lake Chocorua where crows have nested for "countless seasons." It continues, "Midway in the month of roses ... all the crows in Crowlands gather." Frank

- Bolles, *Chocorua's Tenants*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895). [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [15] "Chocorua," in Frank Bolles, *Land of the Lingering Snow* (hereafter cited as *LOTLS*), (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1891), p. 212-213. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [16] Charles Knowles Bolton, "Frank Bolles," *The Open Shelf* (Cleveland Public Library), 1 (5): 139-142 (1894). See, William R. Thayer, "Frank Bolles," *Harvard Graduates Magazine*. 2 (#7, March 1894): 366-372. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [17] "In Memoriam: Frank Bolles, Appleton Chapel," *Cambridge Tribune*, Jan. 27, 1894. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [18] "My Heart's in the Highlands," *NOBW*, p. 161. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [19] Letter to sister, March 17, 1889, in *Life*. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [20] Letter to sister, Feb 6, 1891, in *Life*. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [21] Kuehnemann, Eugen. *Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard University, May 19, 1869–May 19, 1909*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909) p. 2. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [22] Charles F. Dunbar, "President Eliot's Administration [25th year review]." *Harvard Graduates Magazine*, 2(8): 449-76 at 474-75 (March, 1894). Dunbar at the time was Dean of the new Faculty of Arts and Sciences. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [23] William R. Thayer, "Frank Bolles," *Harvard Graduates Magazine*, 2(#7) at p. 369 (March 1894). [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [24] Frank Bolles, "An Administrative Problem." *Harvard Graduates Magazine*. 3(9): 1-8 (1894). [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [25] Bolton, *Open Shelf*, p. 142. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [26] "Memorial of Faculty of Arts and Sciences." Feb. 6, 1894. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [27] Letter to Charles W. Eliot, July 25, 1892. *Life* p. 121-123. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [28] Letter to William H. Tillinghast, Editor of the Harvard Quinquennial Catalogue, Feb. 26, 1890. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [29] Letter to mother, May 19, 1889. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [30] Mabel Hill, "A latter-day pioneer: Frank Bolles," *The Granite Monthly*, Oct. 1897: 196-204. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [31] Letter of Elizabeth Bolles to Wm Brewster, Feb 1, 1912. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [32] Frank Bolles [all unsigned], "Spring with Meringue," March 30, 1885; "The Birds of the Field," July 31, 1885; editorial, March 9, 1886, all in *Boston Daily Advertiser*. [\[Return to text.\]](#)
- [33] Though Brewster had no university degree, he had become widely respected. He had been curator of the bird collection at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, and was to become the first president of both the American Ornithologist's Union and the

Massachusetts Audubon Society. He was the author of many publications on natural history. Also, extracts from his journal were published as *October Farm* and *Concord River*. The Nuttall Club continues to meet monthly in Cambridge to hear about new research and to share observations. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[34] "Nuttall Ornithological Club Records of Meetings," ca. 1887 - 1894. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[35] Charles F. Batchelder, *An Account of the Nuttall Ornithological Club 1873-1919*. (Cambridge: NOC Memoir No. VIII, 1937) p. 53. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[36] Frank Bolles, "Barred Owls in Captivity." *The Auk*. 7 (2): 101-114 (April 1890) and in Bolles's *From Blomidon to Smoky and Other Papers*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[37] Frank Bolles, "Yellow-bellied woodpeckers [sapsuckers] and their uninvited guests." *The Auk*. 8 (#3, July 1891): 256-270; and "Young Sapsuckers in Captivity." *The Auk*. 9 (#2, April, 1892): 109-119]. Both are reprinted in *From Blomidon to Smoky and Other Papers*. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[38] Batchelder, p. 58. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[39] *Life*, p. 148-9. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[40] William Brewster in foreword to Frank Bolles's "Notes on whip-poor-wills and owls," *The Auk*, XXIX (April, 1912): p. 151. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[41] Ralph Hoffman et al., "Memorial of Frank Bolles, Feb. 21, 1894." *The Auk*. 11(2): 184-185 (1894). See, William Brewster's introduction to Bolles's "Notes on Whip-poor-wills and owls," *The Auk*, 29: 150-159 (April, 1912). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[42] Frank Bolles [unsigned], "The coming of winter," *Boston Post*, 12/3/86; "Three Days in the Snow," Unpub. MS, Jan. 1887; "The Reawakening," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, March 22, 1887; "Birds on the Wing," *Boston Post*, March 23, 1887; "A March Afternoon's Stroll [Middlesex Fells]," *Boston Post*, March 30, 1887 (the best article of the bunch); "Arlington Heights are well known..." *Boston Post*, March 20, 1888; "Birds on the Wing," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, March 30, 1888. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[43] Frank Bolles [all unsigned]: [Review of] *Happy Hunting Grounds* by Wm. Hamilton Gibson, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 23, 1886; [Review of] *Waste Land Wanderings*, by C. C. Abbott, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, April 20, 1887; [Review of] *Rural Hours* [new edition], by Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 18, 1887. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[44] *Life*, p. 146. Bolles related that when "I told [Brewster] that I seldom give as much as three hours to a letter, make few corrections, and I never re-write any part of one, he fairly groaned, saying that he sometimes re-writes twelve times and that a column of my material would take him more than seven days to produce." Bolles once commented, however, that he and Lily went over the manuscript of *North of Bearcamp Water* with a "critical currycomb." His manuscripts at the Rauner Library, even those that give clear evidence of being his original effort, show little revision. The opening of "Individuality in Birds" shows

the most revision. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[45] Frank Bolles, "Winchester Hills and Lincoln Hollows [Feb. 28-March 1, 1891]," *Boston Post*, March 3, 1891; and as "The First Bluebirds" in *LOTLS*, p. 43, [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[46] *LOTLS*, p. 132-33. Compare pp. 21-25, William Brewster, *October Farm: From the Concord Journals and Diaries of William Brewster*, edited by Smith Owen Dexter (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1937). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[47] Frank Bolles, Review of *Happy Hunting Ground* by Wm. Hamilton Gibson, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Dec, 23, 1886. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[48] "Wachusett," *LOTLS*, p. 197. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[49] "Rock Meadow at Night," *LOTLS*, p. 180. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[50] *LOTLS*, p. 198-207. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[51] "Chocorua," *LOTLS*, p. 208-09. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[52] "Forest Anthem," *LOTLS*, p. 155-156. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[53] "Migration," *NOBW*, p. 119-120. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[54] "The Dead Tree Day," *NOBW*, p.96. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[55] "A Night Alone On Chocorua," *NOBW*, p. 76-77. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[56] *NOBW*, p. 81. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[57] FB letters to Wm. Brewster, June and Aug. 1, 1892. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[58] "Up the Chimney," in *Popular Science Monthly* and in *From Blomidon to Smoky and Other Papers*, pp. 246-59 (1895). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[59] Charles E. Fay, "Mount Passaconaway." *Appalachia*, 6(#4) (Bound Volume #4 1890-92): 310 (Jan. 1892). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[60] Hill, p. 2020-203. See, for Jack Allen, *Passaconaway in the White Mountains*, by Charles Edward Beals, Jr , (Boston: Richard D. Badger, 1916) pp. 272-300. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[61] Evelyn Bolles Phenix, "Frank Bolles, New Hampshire Naturalist," *New Hampshire Audubon Quarterly*, 14(2): 42-45 (April, 1961). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[62] "My Heart's in the Highlands," *At the North of Bearcamp Water*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 18930, at p. 157. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[63] The younger Eliot was Director of Topography of the AMC when he enlisted the support of the Club's president. Indeed, Harvard President Charles W. Eliot later credited the AMC for its practice of running "in the vicinity of Boston, the weekly excursions...to places interesting for their scenery or their historical associations, [and this] had made many persons familiar with the places and scenes which ought to be preserved, and with the destruction already wrought by the rapid and unguided growth of the suburbs." [Eliot, 1902, p. 324.) President Eliot also credits journalists and an 1886 article in *Appalachia* on the

Middlesex Fells as generating early public support for preservation (See also, Mark Primack. "Charles Eliot: Genius of the Massachusetts Landscape." *Appalachia*. (June 1982): 80-88). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[64] Letter from G. Mann, to President Charles Eliot, Dec. 31, 1900. (From Eliot family archives; courtesy of Alexander Goriansky.) [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[65] In the historic documents binder in the library of the Appalachian Mountain Club, Boston. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[66] Bolles, "Letter to editor: Waverley Oaks and Bussey Hemlocks," *Boston Post*, Feb 24, 1891, at p. 36, also in LOTLS. See, Charles Eliot (1859-1897), "Letter to editor: The Waverley Oaks: A plan for their preservation for the people." *Garden and Forest*, March 5, 1890. (*Garden and Forest* was the magazine of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum Director Charles Sprague Sargent. It was influential in both the metropolitan Boston parks movement and the first years of White Mountain protection.) [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[67] West Roxbury [Mass.] News, Dec. 19, 1891. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[68] Jonathan B. Harrison, "A Report upon the Shore Towns of Massachusetts, Jan. 21, 1892," in *The First Annual Report of the Trustees of Public Reservations 1891* (1892). And in *Garden and Forest*, 5: at 10 (Feb. 6, 1892). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[69] Joshua Kendall, "Round about the Waverly Oaks," *New England Magazine*, 20(2) at 233 (1896). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[70] In the period 1888 through 1893, the first warning articles appeared by Francis Parkman (1888), Charles Sprague Sargent (1888), Jonathan B. Harrison (1889-93), and Julius Ward (1893). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[71] Frederick W. Kilbourne, *Chronicles of the White Mountains*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916) p. 377-404. See, Richard Ober, "The Weeks Act of 1911," in *At What Cost? Shaping the Land We Call New Hampshire*, (Concord NH: NH Hist. Assn & SPNHF, 1992) p. 43. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[72] Bill Gove, *Logging Railroads of the Saco River Valley*, (Littleton NH: Bondcliff Books, 2001) pp. 6, 8, 56-63, 79-80, 92-93, 103-105. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[73] "Forest Anthem," *LOTLS*, p. 151. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[74] "The Log-cock," *Chocorua's Tenants*, p. 13-14 (1895). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[75] "Christmas at Sabba Day Falls," *NOBW*, p. 275. And see, Bolles's 1892 article "Bird Traits" in a popular magazine wherein he refers to this age of "steam sawmills and wasting forests 'protected' against Canadian lumber." *New England Magazine*, 7: p. 93 (1892) (also cited as Volume 13, Issue 1, September 1892). It would be six more years before the Rev. John E. Johnson's electrifying article appeared about the misdeeds of non-resident owners and resulting abysmal social conditions: "The Boa Constrictor of the White Mountains, or the Worst 'Trust' in the World. An Account of the New Hampshire Land Company," reprinted in Mike Dickerman's excellent *White Mountain Anthology* (Littleton NH:

Bondcliff Press, 2002). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[76] Bolles letter to Jonathan B. Harrison of Franklin Falls, NH, April 3, 1893 (in Rauner Library, Dartmouth College). He anticipated it would be created within a few days—the same day he wrote Dr. Charles Dewey: "The Board will probably be made up within a few days and incorporated under the general laws of the state." This initiative appears to have been shelved because of the expectation of some of the likely trustees that the new, permanent N.H. Forestry Commission and its power of eminent domain "can accomplish all that public opinion has a right to expect in New Hampshire." See, Bolles letter to Harrison of April 18, 1893. Soon, however, great floods from deforestation made it evident that the state was too poor and too powerless to deal with the problem. See, Charles Sprague Sargent, "Floods and Forests," *Garden and Forest*, 9 (Nov. 4, 1896): 454 and in *Garden and Forest*, 10 (#508): 450 (1897): and see, soon-to-be governor Frank West Rollins, "New Hampshire's Opportunity," *New England Magazine*, 22(5): at 538-39 (1897). Thus, the need persisted for a private group with both New Hampshire and Boston connections to lobby for popular support and for a national forest. Such a group was created a few years after Bolles's attempt: the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, which lobbied for the creation of the White Mountain National Forest. By 1916, Mt. Chocorua and much of the Sandwich Range had been acquired by the federal government, but only after much had been clearcut: "Not even a bush could be seen on Paugus." See, Charles Edward Beals, Jr., *Passaconaway in the White Mountains*, (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1916) at 116. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[77] Jan 13, 1882 , in *Life* p.48. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[78] "Chocorua in Literature," *Atlantic Monthly*, 71(428): 846-848 (June, 1893)(emphasis added). [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[79] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, June 29, 1893, p. 1. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[80] Eliot's English translation has been lost. His original Latin is "FRANCISCUM BOLLES - scriptorem venustum et ingeniosum, qui rerum naturalium ipse studiosus aliis exemplo est et incitamento." [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[81] "Ingonish, by Land and Sea," *Atlantic Monthly*, xxxx, and in *From Blomidon to Smoky and Other Papers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895) p. 51. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[82] Original letter in possession of Alan Phenix. Lily Bolles omitted the intensely personal last paragraph in *Life*. [\[Return to text.\]](#)

[83] "Following a Lost Trail," *At the North of Bearcamp Water*, (1895) pp. 42-61. The description of the hamlet of Passaconaway is from Mabel Hill, "A Latter-day Pioneer—Frank Bolles," *Granite Monthly*, 196-204 at 201 (Oct. 1897). [\[Return to text.\]](#)