Before the Moultonboro Historical Society actually came into existence Mr. Solon Colby and Mr. Carl Colby came over to Moultonboro, from Meredith, to tell us something of the methods the Meredith Historical Society used to get organized and action started. At the close of that meeting I asked Mr. Solon Colby where one could get historical knowledge that had not before been gathered and written up and feel sure that it was authentic. His answer was that stories of incidents and facts handed down in families was the only source for such information and must necessarily be accepted as fact. These stories, backed up many times by ruins of buildings, articles of furniture, names and epitaphs on old gravestones found in family cemeteries, was mute proof enough that there was much fact in the old handed down stories.

With Mr. Colby's statements in mind, I venture to write down the information which follows regarding the early days of the area around Lee's Mills. The source of much of my information came to me from my great grandmother, Lucy Brown, whose mother was the daughter of David Lee, who I believe to be the first owner of the Mill named after him. Great Grandmother lived to be nine-two years old and her home was at the old farm where I now live. At the time she passed away I was fifteen years old, so you see I had a number of years with her to listen to the stories she loved to tell of the early days of Moultonboro. Her mother and father were not married until after their respective families came to the new land to make their home and a future for themselves. Her mother's name was Elisabeth Blake and their farm was located on the now called Blake Road, just about opposite the home of Mrs. Marion Perkins. When I was a child, although the house and out buildings had been gone for many years, there still signs of former hay fields there, and the place bore the name of the Horse Burying Yard, for most horses who passed away in this end of the town were buried there because of the easy digging. There was one other house on the road and that was located on the corner of the road and the main town road, which is now Route 25. Again in my childhood days the only proof there had once been a house there was the presence of a good well and curb on the property.

After their marriage David Lee and Elisabeth Blake made there home on the Lee's Mill Road in the house which when I was a child was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. McKeen and their family. Today a Mr. and Mrs. Bainton, of Melrose, Massachusetts, own this property and for the present use it only as a summer home, but Mr. Bainton will soon retire to the place and live there the year around. It was in this house that the ten children of the David Lees were born, the youngest of which was Lucy, who later married my mother's grandfather, Lyman Brown. There were three more houses on the road, going toward the Mill, one where Catnip Lodge is now located and another one directly opposite which I can just remember as a weather beaten, unpainted, peculiarly shaped old house. The third one was located where the home of Harold Martin sits. The road to the Landing, which we now call Lee's Mill Wharf led off to the left some distance from where the present one is. A short distance down that road was an old barn,
very black and weather worn which had a few horse stalls in it and seemed always to have some hay there. It was there that everyone who had occasion to go out on the lake, unharnessed their horses and put them in the stalls, under cover, to protect them in case of rain or give them shade in case of hot weather. My recollection is that in those days the care of horses was paramount with all men who owned horses. On hot days they were quite apt to be blanketed when they were put in the stalls in a sweaty condition, where they might have a chill and colic might follow.

My first recollection of the Landing was a wooden wharf where one could look down through the big cracks and see the water. This was always in need of repair and often looked as if it had the measles. Many times different people claimed ownership of the wharf and there was often controversy over it but nothing was ever brought to prove their claims until someone who bought property thereabouts found the wharf included in their deed, and I believe he eventually turned the wharf over to the town. That was not too many years ago.

The old Mill was built on a river which connected what was then called the upper pond and the Big Lake. A large dam was built there to make the power which turned the big wheel. There was also a huge sluiceway which went down into the water of the river just before it emptied into the big lake. Of course my childhood life here in Moultonboro was entirely a summer one as I had to return to Massachusetts soon after Labor Day. Generally the old Mill ran for a short time after I arrived here in the Spring but it closed down in early July for there was no one free to work there during haying season and everyone was busy at that most important job. Halfway down the river, on the left hand side was a building which was called the Cooper Shop and I presume barrel hoops must have been made there, for Grandfather used to threaten to take my brother down there and hoop him because he ate so much.

In the Spring the river and the entire Bay would be a regular field of logs, from shore to shore, in all directions, held in place by big booms. As soon as the ice broke up in the Spring little steamers towed these huge rafts either to Lakeport, Alton Bay or to Wolfeboro, to the railroad sidings. The Meredith Shook and Lumber was often a destination for these rafts. Most of these little steamers had huge barges which were fastened to their sides and these were used to take large loads of sawed barge to some stated destination. In this same manner a lot of so-called spool stock used to go over to Meredith. About once or twice the owner of one of these barges could be prevailed upon to take a load of passengers down to Lakeport for a day's shopping in Laconia. This boat generally left the Mill before six o'clock in the morning with anywhere from ten to twenty passengers. About four hours it tied up in Lakeport where the Irwin Company now have their boat docks.
There the passengers boarded a trolley car for Laconia, after learning they must be back at the boat at four P.M., as the return trip to Moultonboro was always scheduled for that time. Any time after three o'clock, horse-drawn vehicles, generally small express wagons, would start arriving at the wharf where the boat was tied up, loaded with all sorts of merchandise which the passengers had purchased on their shopping trip. Generally one or more barrels of flour or sugar were unloaded along with many large wooden boxes filled with various staples, articles of furniture, cooking utensils, farming equipment, etc. Frequently some of the ladies would come back wearing a new hat or coat and sometimes shoes, as to do this was the safest and easiest way to get them to the boat. It was always a beautiful trip up across the Lake in the late afternoon hours and the sunsets were truly gorgeous even to my young eyes, and a seat on the old barge was one of rare advantage to see all this beauty. When the boat reached a spot about opposite Black's Wharf one long and two short whistles were blown to tell those who were waiting at home that it was time to harness the horse to the express wagon and drive to the Mill Wharf to pick up the tired passengers and their purchases and take them home.

Often there were two other trips made on these barges during the summer, one to Advent Campmeeting in Alton Bay and the other to the Wiers to attend Governor's and the Soldiers' Reunion, the latter being an especially gala event.

To return to the subject of the very active lumber which had its start at this end of the Lake, there were several points in this area for picking up logs or loading barges of lumber beside at the Mill. One was at Oak Landing at the farther end of Green's Basin; another was at Black's Wharf and at Clark's Landing and Union Wharf still farther down the Lake. In fact raft of logs could be picked almost anywhere they had been boomed provided the water was deep enough for the steamer to maneuver. It was quite a trick for men to run the logs held in place only by the surrounding boom. These logs would turn and spin and occasionally a man would get a ducking in the icy waters of early Spring as he ran from place to place in an effort to get the logs properly arranged to pull the raft out into deep water without the boom bursting open. It was indeed a sad story when a raft did break open for all the hard wood would sink to the bottom and it was a real job to salvage it and often it seemed impossible to get them up so some of it was never redeemed. Whenever the wind came up on the Lake when a raft was being towed it was absolutely necessary to get into the nearest cove for protection and it was not unusual for the boat crew to have to wait for days before the wind subsided sufficiently to make it safe to venture out into open water again. It took often more than one day, even in favorable weather to tow a raft across the Lake for it was essential that the boats did not run faster than half speed in this business. It was not an uncommon sight to see one or more men out on the raft in the middle of the Lake looking for weak spots in its construction. Spring rafting was a cold, wet job and the men who worked at it wore very heavy wool underwear which was liable to be wet for days on end.

Back in the 1890's a new business was developed at Lee's Mills when the old house located at the top of the hill opposite Catnip Lodge and had been unoccupied for several years, suddenly had tenants in it, six or eight people altogether. At first much mystery surrounded these people -- why were they there and what were they doing? In due course of time it came to light that they came up from Manchester for the purpose of fishing and the efforts results of their efforts were shipped at intervals to a Fish Market in that city.
The first camp, or cottage, which was built on Moultonboro Bay, belonged to Arthur Brown, a nephew of my grandfather, in about the year 1893, and is the one now called October Morn and is now owned by Eustis Clemons, of Montpelier, Vermont. The present owner is a relative, by marriage, of the said Arthur Brown. The next one to be built was the little green one, still standing on the left just after passing through Mill Narrows by the little island. Arthur Weeks, father of Raymond Weeks, built it. It is now owned by the For¬ners whose home is in Darien, Connecticut. Next came the Starkweather cottage, now owned by Russel Hoch, of Braintree, Mass. Directly across from this is Camp Inwood, built the next year by my father, Bill Carter, in the year 1912, and this place is now owned by two nephews of Raymond Weeks.

About this same time one of the younger relatives of Dr. Green's family built the little green camp right on the mainland directly in back of Tea Rock. Another one of the earlier camps of the area was built on the right hand side a short distance beyond October Morn and was owned by Lena Davis, mother of Lyle Davis, who also built one or two more camps on the Birch Hill Shore. About the same time Fred Foss, father of Roy and Clyde, also built a camp on the Birch Hill Shore. Soon after this Orville Bartlett bought a large acreage of land on the right shore just where the high tension wires now cross the lake to the lower Moultonboro shore. He selected one spot there and built what was considered a very fine cottage for those days. When it was new he occupied the place, with his family for perhaps two summers and then he rented it for several years until one of his tenants bought it. Their name was Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland and both were vaudeville artists.

From this time on the ball of development moved rather slowly until about ten years ago and then things began to speed up until now the shores of Moultonboro Bay are well lined with attractive cottages.