

THISTLE



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Stewart Hartshorn at the wharf in Center Harbor, N.H. in the summer of 1934.
Photo by Thomas J. Collins

Stewart Hartshorn Remembered

by Thomas J. Collins

The name Stewart Hartshorn evokes in many minds the image of a successful inventor and business man, and one who loved nature. However, little has been recorded about the man, as an individual, that would let one know him as he was, apart from his commercial activities.

Those who knew him intimately - his immediate family, close friends and associates - knew Hartshorn as a person, but these sources did not record their views and impressions of the man.

While significant and detailed information is denied us, it is my hope that what follows will shed some light upon an individual whom I was privileged to view from a unique perspective.

I was most fortunate to have been born in Short Hills, NJ on the estate of Stewart Hartshorn, industrialist and founder of that lovely community. My father had been hired by Hartshorn in 1902 as a coachman. He subsequently became family chauffeur when Hartshorn purchased his first

automobile in 1907.

A house was provided on the estate for our family and I was born there in 1919, the youngest of four children and the only son.

As a child I was aware of Hartshorn's being a person of considerable importance who lived in the great house overlooking the ponds and willows that lay below. Occasionally I would see him on the grounds of the estate, or passing by in a family car driven by my father, or by James Patterson, his valet. At times he could be found visiting a site where his workmen were building roads, and questioning the foreman concerning the project.

Fishing was one of Hartshorn's great loves. It was his habit to travel each summer to New Hamp-

shire to fish for smallmouth bass in the waters of Lake Winnepesaukee. My father would drive him and his valet to the lakeside town of Center Harbor where he stayed at the Garnet Inn. It was nearly a two-day ride to cover an approximate 350 mile journey. As a lad of about ten or eleven years I was privileged for the first time to accompany them, seated in front beside my father.

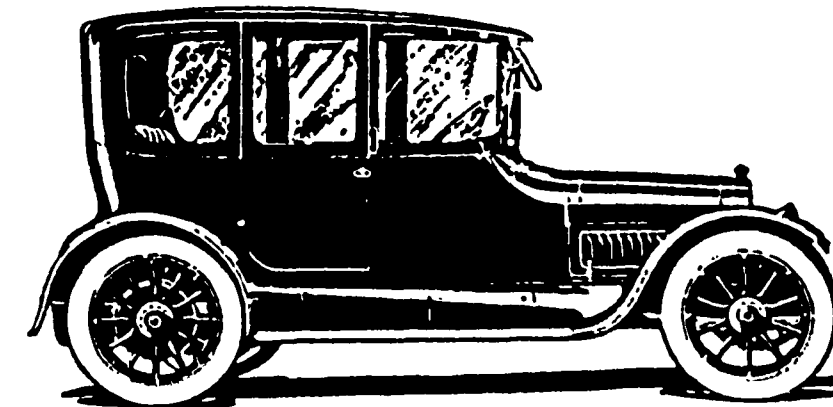
Hartshorn was fond of Buick automobiles. Our first trips were made in a 1928 sedan and later in a 1931 model. The route we followed crossed the Hudson River via Bear Mountain Bridge and went on into Connecticut where we passed through Danbury, Thomaston, and Farmington. Continuing north into Massachusetts we passed through Westfield, Northampton, and Greenfield, then on through Brattleboro and Bellows Falls, Vermont where we crossed the Connecticut River into New Hampshire. Our route now took us through Claremont, Newport, Franklin, Laconia, and Meredith, then into Center Harbor.

On the northbound trip we would stop for lunch at Bear Mountain Inn or, at times, we would divert from our usual route and have lunch at a hotel in Waterbury, Connecticut.

Hartshorn was very fond of plums.

In the afternoon we would stop in one of the towns while his valet visited local markets to purchase the fruit which was shared by all.

One other diversion from the route was at Old Deerfield, Massachusetts where Hartshorn always asked that we leave the main highway and drive slowly through the town while he admired the architecture of the homes of this historic community.



We would stay the night at a hotel in Brattleboro, Vermont and complete our northbound journey to Center Harbor at about noon the following day. There would be no waiting now. Hartshorn would be fishing in Lake Winnepesaukee by mid-afternoon.

Hartshorn Remembered, *cont'd...*

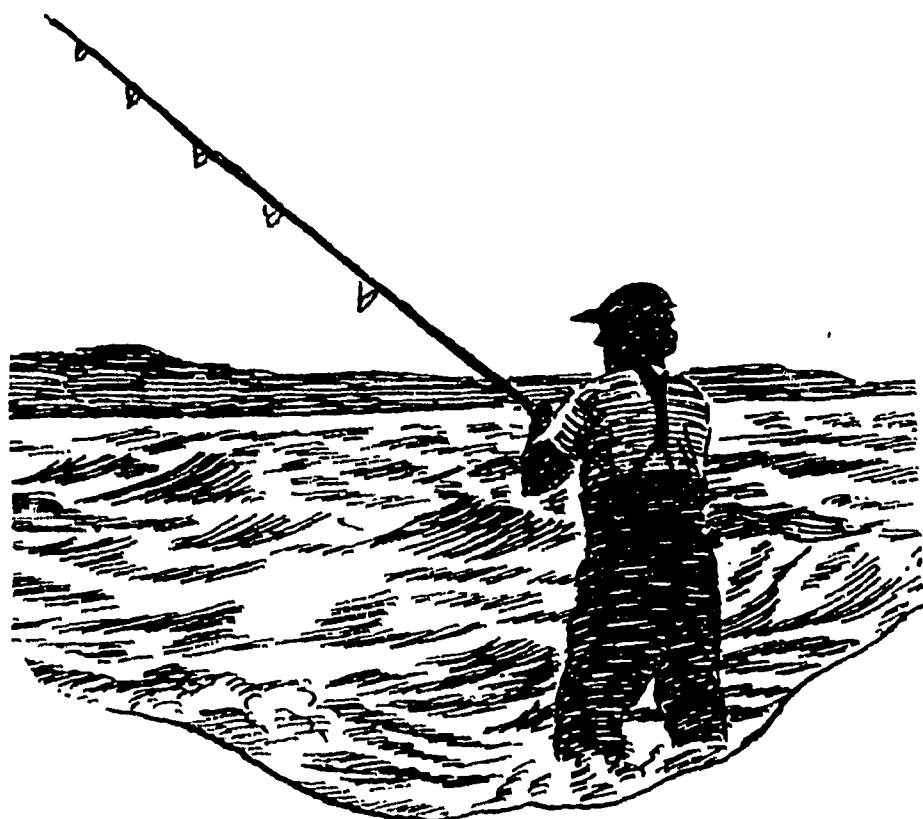
At Hartshorn's insistence, my father would stay at Center Harbor for two days to rest before his return trip to Short Hills. Some weeks later I would return to New Hampshire with my father to bring Hartshorn and his valet home. The return route was over the same roads as before, with a lunch break or an overnight stop at a hotel in Northampton, Massachusetts.

On one occasion, while waiting for a table at the hotel dining room, we browsed in an adjacent gift shop. Hartshorn called my attention to a portrait of a gentleman and asked if I knew who it was. "Yes", I said. "That's Andrew Jackson". He said, "That's right", and continued, "He was a friend of my mother."

There were times that we stayed overnight in Farmington, Connecticut at the Elm Tree Inn. I recall this as a favorite lodging place for Hartshorn, perhaps due to the age of the facility, for unlike most hotels of the period, it remained an example of the hotels of his youth. It was a large wooden structure with narrow hallways. Each bedroom was supplied with washbowl and pitcher. My father always feared that the building might burn

some evening and that we would be trapped.

It was in the summer of 1934 that I became best acquainted with Hartshorn. As he prepared for his annual fishing trip to Center Harbor, he suggested to my father that it was time for me to learn how to fish for real fish, and that I should stay with him for the season. I was, of course, thrilled with the prospect of fishing in such a large body of water as Lake Winnepesaukee. My fishing activities had previously been confined to waters of my hometown: the North and South Ponds and the stream that flows through South Mountain Reservation.



On the morning of our departure we gathered at the door of the mansion. The Buick sedan, with baggage aboard, was parked beneath the porte cochere. Hartshorn's daughter, Cora, and members of the household staff were on the front porch to wish him farewell. Hartshorn stepped out on the porch. Dressed in a finely tailored suit and standing well over six feet tall with a long white beard, he made a striking figure. One thing, however, spoiled this picture. Hartshorn was wearing his favorite broad-brimmed fishing hat, which clashed with the rest of his attire. Cora immediately dispatched a servant girl to get his proper hat whereupon she removed his fishing hat and placed the other on his head. With fishing hat in hand, he entered the auto.

On this trip I was to sit with Hartshorn while his valet, Patterson, rode up front with my father. We drove away from the porte cochere amid waving and "Goodbyes" from those present and proceeded along the driveway. Upon reaching the driveway entrance at Hobart Avenue I was startled when Hartshorn, uttering an oath, threw his hat to the floor of the car and donned his favorite fishing hat. After all he WAS on a fishing trip.



Upon stopping for lunch that day at Bear Mountain Inn, my father, ever the diplomat, succeeded in having Hartshorn change hats before exiting the automobile.

Our trip to Center Harbor was uneventful. At the Garnet Inn I shared a room with the valet. Hartshorn occupied an adjoining room and we shared a connecting bath. There was no elevator in the inn, but the stairs proved to be no problem for Hartshorn despite his 94 years. His walk was steady and he needed no cane.

We settled into a daily routine, arising at 6:00 a.m., at which time the valet would draw the bath water and assist Hartshorn at the tub.

One morning the valet and I overslept and were awakened by the sound of running water. Hartshorn was up and about to have his bath without disturbing his valet.

We were always among the first to be seated for breakfast in the dining room. Conversation would settle around the previous day's fishing and the prospect of a good catch this day. As we ate, the kitchen prepared a large basket of lunch for the three of us to take aboard our boat. Following breakfast we were driven the short distance to the Center Harbor wharf where we boarded the "Lucy Mae", a chartered launch captained by a local guide, Raphael Belmore, who was known to all as "Poley".

Leaving Center Harbor we would cruise down the lake some two or three miles, then anchor the boat to fish at places selected by Poley as good spots to find bass. Baiting our hooks, we would try our luck. At noon we would stop to eat from the basket lunch, at times going ashore on one of the many islands that dot this lovely lake. The conversation would usually be about earlier fishing trips or times shared in the past with other fishermen.

We had good luck for the most part, with Hartshorn catching some fine bass. I recall his catching a specimen, weighing just short of six pounds, that gave him a great fight. Using light tackle, it was all that he could do to withstand the pull on the line. After several minutes it appeared that he was tiring and needed help. His valet moved to take the rod, and Hartshorn let him know, emphatically, that he needed no help. He eventually brought the fish to the side of the boat so that it could be brought aboard with a landing net.

At times, after such an encounter, Hartshorn would smile and say, "That was a good fight", then to the guide, "Throw him back".

The fish that we kept were brought back to the inn. On one occasion the manager of the inn had several examples of our day's catch placed on a large tray and carried through the dining room at dinner time so that other guests could see how one might fare if he were to stay awhile and fish. This brought a smile to Hartshorn's face when it was announced that this was his catch.

I loved fishing, but I could not keep up with Hartshorn, who fished every day of the several weeks spent at Center Harbor. In fact, on this trip he missed but two half-days of

fishing when thunderstorms made such activity impossible. I soon joined him on but two or three trips each week, which satisfied my desire to fish. For three days of one week it was not possible for me to fish with him as he had elected to try his luck on nearby Squam Lake where he owned a summer retreat, "The Little Jungle". Here he used a row-boat that could accommodate only himself, his valet, and the guide.

At the Garnet Inn I was often seen at breakfast and dinner with Hartshorn, leading some inn guests to believe that I was his grandson. I was certainly treated as such.

At mealtime he would engage me in conversation. One conversation remains sharply in my mind. As I was seated opposite him I noticed that he was turning his water glass around and around in his hand while staring intently at it. Finally he looked up and, holding the glass out toward me, asked me to note the tiny speck of dust on the surface of the water. Close to the rim of the glass I saw the speck supported on the water by surface tension. Hartshorn then slowly rotated the glass and asked me to note how the speck remained stationary as the glass rotated about it. He said that the speck was near that edge where he

would have placed his lips when drinking, but that rotating the glass failed to move it away. He became more thoughtful and eventually looked up and asked me if I understood the workings of the autogiro. He knew of my great interest in aviation, but I did not understand how that fit into the present situation.

We discussed how the autogiro, a forerunner of the helicopter, obtained its lift from rotating blades. Hartshorn then said that perhaps someday I might design a rotary wing aircraft in which the passenger cabin, being supported in a liquid, would remain fixed as the rotors turned about it, as the speck of dust remained in place despite the turning of the drinking glass. Here he was, a man of 94, still exhibiting his inventive powers!

Three years later, following a short illness, Hartshorn died. I went to the mansion that day where I met Patterson, his valet. He asked if I would like to see "The Old Gent", as he was called by many of the servants. Together we mounted the servant's stairway and entered his room where he lay, as though asleep. Silently I said my farewell to one I had admired and respected, and who had the kindness to take a young lad fishing.

Sotheby's at Short Hills

The annual meeting of the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society, on June 2, 1994 at 8:00 p.m. in the Millburn library, will feature two experts from Sotheby's. The guest speakers will present a program on the auction process and, for a donation of \$5 per item, will appraise objects (or from a photo) brought by members of the audience. Please join us for this exciting meeting!

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Old Short Hills Road Walking Tour



The Millburn Short Hills Historical Society is proud to announce the completion of its 5th Walking Tour: Old Short Hills Road. The entire set is now available. This Walking Tour, and our other publications can be purchased at:

Set of 5 Walking Tours Available for \$5.00 at:

- Hartshorn Arboretum 324 Forest Drive South, Short Hills
- Millburn Public Library 200 Glen Avenue, Millburn
- The Station Stop 36 Chatham Road, Short Hills
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Is Your Membership History?

This is the time of year when we solicit renewal of membership for our upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1st. Your dues support our programs and the ongoing and special projects of the society. Among these projects are our exceptional walking tours of the township, the Thistle, archive acquisitions and photo collections and ongoing projects such as the slide shows and Item indexing.

When you receive your renewal notice, we urge you to renew your membership once again and thereby support our efforts to increase the awareness of the history of our community.



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