

## Captain E. S. Chase



Captain E. S. Chase was a man of many hobbies from his youth to old age. He got his name "Cap" (Captain) when he was a skipper of the Heinrich D. Wright, a packet boat, which ran between Wilkes-Barre and Nanticoke on the North Branch of the Susquehanna. About 1875, he participated in many summer sports, including boxing, rowing, swimming, fishing, bow and arrows and golf. Boy Scouts always interested him and he spent many hours teaching them how to tie knots, archery and Scouting lore. He came to Eagles Mere is about 1885 and was employed to lay out the entire water and sewer systems for the town. The dam at Hunter Lake was constructed under his supervision in order to give Eagles Mere electricity. The narrow gauge railroad was another engineering project that he undertook.

In 1903 Capt. Chase stood at the edge of the lake one January day watching children. They asked him why he couldn't build a "real good" toboggan slide down the slope of Lake Avenue. It was a logical idea. Capt. Chase had a "finger in every pie" in the development of Eagles Mere. He had moved here from Williamsport in 1886 and continually initiated projects such as laying out the street plans of the village, planning and cutting the Arrow Paths and our well-known Laurel Path around the Lake. One of his monumental contributions was sounding out and making a map of Eagles Mere Lake depths heretofore unknown. He began work on the design and method for building a toboggan slide that would be safe, sturdy and continued pleasure for Eagles Mere residents. The slide today is executed from these original plans using Captain Chase's planer and his method of grooving the ice. The townspeople were excited about this project as were members of Eagles Mere Land Company of which Capt. Chase was General Manager.

The next winter, men and boys declared a holiday and enthusiastically turned out to build the toboggan slide when the ice was declared solid at 12 inches. Handsaws were used. Horse teams with wagons and bobsleds plus strong arms and backs hauled the ice blocks to the foot of Lake Avenue where construction began. The slide was ready for operation in January 1904.

After the initiation of sleds and toboggans, a few homemade contraptions appeared on the scene immediately. The slide was active until the middle of March. The building of the slide was discontinued after four or five years and the reasons for this are not recorded. In 1929, two slides were built and were used off and on for several years. The Sports Association had, in the meantime, built toboggans with two runners to fit the grooves made the ice. It now seemed a sound economical move and a safety factor to rent these to the public for a fee of \$.50. By the end of the 1930s, manual labor was again paid \$.20 per hour. The toboggan slide flourished and eager visitors to Eagles Mere lined up once more for the ride. In the late 1930s, the snack shop concept developed and both the Ladies Auxiliary and local church groups served warm drinks and food which helped pay expenses. It passed to the fire company in later years.

When World War II hovered over the mountaintop, all operation of the slide were suspended. By 1945, Eagles Mere as well as the rest of the world was anxious to return to familiar activities and routines. The slide operation resumed and the laughter and fun resounding all around the Lake that winter warmed the hearts and smiles of everyone. At this time, the building of the toboggan slide became a volunteer project. It was necessary to expand facilities and to build or repair more toboggans. The Slide Association met three or four times a season to plan a safe and efficient operation. Teamwork and skilled craftsmanship went into building the slides each year.

Since then the local fire company has continued the ice slide each winter when the weather is cold enough to freeze the ice to a thickness of at least 12 inches. 100 years later devotees still travel many miles to Eagles Mere to slide down Lake Avenue out over the lake. The captain's legacy lives on.