

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

John Earle Chase Memorial Park

1. What is the Chase Property and where is it located?

The Chase Property is a 400 acre parcel of land located just north of Gannon's Narrows in the Municipality of Trent Lakes. The land was farmed for many years by members of the Chase Family. William Parse Chase, a sawyer from Otonabee, and his wife Elizabeth, purchased the property in 1872 and started a sawmill on the shore just north of where the causeway is today.

3. What is happening at the property? I've heard that it's going to be sold and developed.

Absolutely not. The land was donated to Parks Canada by members of the Chase Family on the condition that it not be developed. Currently several organizations are working together to create a few walking and hiking trails. All of these organizations are committed to honouring the family's wishes that the land be left in its natural state. This area will remain a beautiful spot to enjoy nature. The few trails that are being developed will make it safer for members of the public to hike and walk here, and limit damage to the flora and fauna.

4. How will these groups work together?

A unique licensing agreement is being developed between Parks Canada, the Municipality of Trent Lakes and Kawartha Land Trust. The agreement will ensure the land is protected, maintained and enjoyed by the public. It also means more people will be monitoring the property which will potentially reduce the abuse that has been occurring. The inclusion of KLT also means that the experts that volunteer for the organization will be involved in developing a Stewardship Plan to help protect the area's plants and animals. The proposed agreement should result in a decrease in the unauthorized motorized activities taking place on the property and an increase in passive uses such as walking and hiking.

5. Not many people are aware this property exists or that is owned by Parks Canada. Why?

The park has not been promoted or used much in the 20 years since the agreement was signed. And over the years the number of people who knew or remember the Chase family has been shrinking. A neighbour went to the media in the early 2000s to complain that the family gift was not being properly recognized, and that is when the James Earle Chase Memorial Park signs were installed. This lack of awareness has resulted in abuse of the area by ATVs and snowmobiles, and others have been dumping trash and cutting down trees. There have been reports of 'altercations' and some have been afraid to use this gift. Activities that are allowed on the property by Parks Canada have been limited to only a few people who hike, walk, x-country ski, birdwatch or walk their dogs.

5. Why was an agreement needed?

Although donated to the TSW, ownership of the land falls outside its core responsibilities of managing the Trent and Severn watersheds and operating the historic waterway so that boat navigation is possible from Lake Simcoe to Lake Ontario. As there has been no TSW presence on the property it has been abused by individuals dumping garbage, cutting down trees and damaging the area through unauthorized ATV and snowmobile use.

TSW has had to look at their options and determine whether they can manage and afford to own the property long term. This new relationship has set a goal to increase protection to the intentions of the donors for the property long term.

6. Who will be responsible for the property?

At the moment, the partners have only taken a first step. The properties flora and fauna have been surveyed, trails inventoried and some interim actions suggested. Over the next few months, the

partners will assess the property first while undertaking some initial stewardship actions such as signage, tree planting, removing dumped debris.

If Kawartha Land Trust will be involved, as with all properties, a stewardship endowment fund will need to be raised to ensure long term management of the lands or interest in lands conveyed.

7. What activities can be done on the property?

Any activities that can be enjoyed without damaging the local ecosystem such as walking, hiking, bird watching, x-country skiing, and snowshoeing will be allowed.

8. What activities won't be allowed?

Use of any motorized vehicles, such as ATVs and snowmobiles, will not be allowed. You cannot dump garbage, cut down trees, camp or have fires on the property. These activities were already banned but have been happening illegally.

9. What's special about this property?

This property offers a breathtaking view of Gannon's Narrows. It includes large tracts of hardwood bush interspersed with scrub and wild meadow species. There is a marsh area almost completely covered in cattail vegetation. It includes upland and lowland cedar forest, beautifully managed oak stands and some seasonally flooded areas full of wildlife.

Bird watching opportunities are excellent here and there is evidence of coyote, deer, raccoon, porcupine, fox, otter, mink, ducks and mice.

The property is also historically important for the Buckhorn area, as the Chases were one of the earliest families to settle in this area.

10. Why does Parks Canada own the property?

The last two members of the Chase family (Ralph and Evelyn) wanted to make sure the property was not developed and signed an agreement donating the land to the Trent Severn Waterway, Parks Canada, in 1995. They asked that it be named in honour of their brother, John Earle Chase, who was killed in the Second World War in 1943.

11. Who was John Earle Chase?

John Earle, known as Earle, was a school teacher in Buckhorn area before joining the Reserve Unit of the Royal Regiment of Canada in 1940. He trained as an officer with the C.O.T.C. of the University of Toronto while completing his Bachelor of Arts degree. After graduation he joined with Regiment in December 1942 in time for the invasion of Sicily. He transferred as lieutenant to the 48th Highlanders and on August 1, 1943 was called upon to lead a company and take a hill near Regalbuto when he was killed by a snipers bullet. He was 29 years old and is buried in the Agira Canadian War Cemetery near the Regalbuto battlefield.

12. What are the plans for the property?

The property will be kept in a natural state and a few looping trails will be maintained so that it is safe and clear of debris. A Stewardship Plan will set out what will be done in terms of tree planting, removing invasive species and other activities that ensure a healthy ecosystem.

13. What's next for the property?

In the short term we are planning a clean-up and tree planting event on May 19th, and we need volunteers to help plant trees, shrubs and clean up trash. On June 2nd we are planning a celebration to officially open the 9 km of trails that will be opened for the public to enjoy year round.

And for the long term, the three parties will develop an agreement specifying how this property will be protected and maintained while at the same time honouring the family's donation and wishes. We will keep you informed of our progress.

14. How can I get more information?

If you are interested in attending these events, please provide us with your contact information by emailing: info@kawarthalandtrust.org.