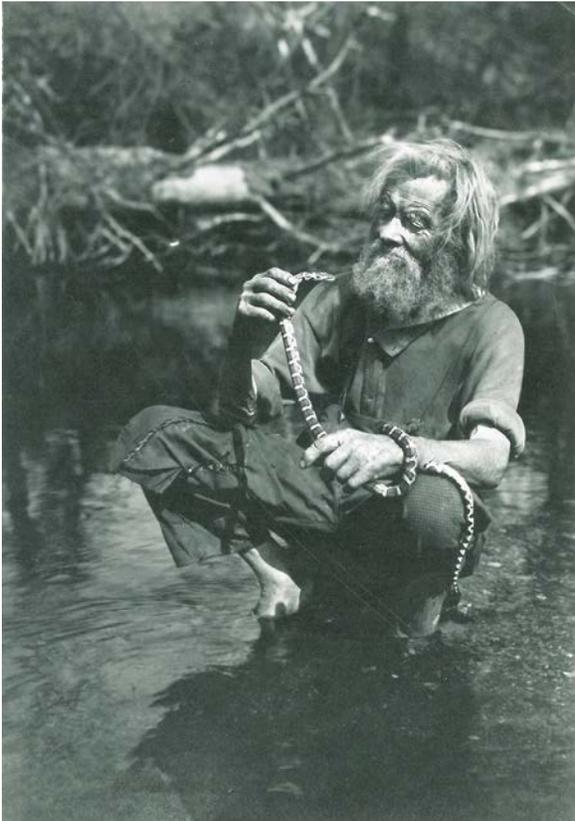


## **THE HERMIT OF MOSQUITO POND**

*Written by Maura Leahy, City Clerk's Office*



Charles Lambert, better known as the Hermit of Mosquito Pond, forged a life in the wilderness for more than 60 years. A transplant from Lincolnshire, England, Lambert first visited Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts before settling in Manchester, New Hampshire, in the 1840s. He purchased over 40 acres of land, on which he built a house out of logs he found on the property, and began his life as a recluse. In 1864 the property was worth \$54, but quickly increased in value to \$516 by 1880.

While living in Lincolnshire, England, Lambert developed an interest in horticulture. He was interested in the potential medical applications of roots, herbs and other plants. His skills as a farmer also allowed him to live a sustainable and relatively self-sufficient lifestyle, and earned him money when he

bartered with local apothecaries. He also traded animal pelts whenever other items were needed.

Over the years, his hermit lifestyle made him into a kind of local celebrity, and he became the object of great curiosity. Despite opting for a secluded lifestyle, he would be visited by hundreds of people every summer. During his life he amassed a large collection of Native American artifacts that he found on his property, which he showed to visitors. He also found solace in writing poetry.

Most of the information that is known about the Hermit of Mosquito Pond is known from Ulric Bourgeois, the photographer who, for a dozen years, documented Lambert's daily lifestyle. Their relationship resulted in the creation of 150 to 200 photographs that showed the daily activities of Lambert such as fishing in Cohas Brook, chopping wood, reading, darning socks, praying and sleep. Bourgeois also found solitude in returning to a simplistic lifestyle, one that mirrored his upbringing in Quebec. Over the years, their relationship grew. Bourgeois gave Lambert a wood stove and a mattress for his log cabin in order to make Lambert's life more comfortable. While the stove was met with enthusiasm, the Hermit had no use for the mattress and it spent its days leaning against an outside wall. The boards in his bunk were more to his liking.

In the winter of 1912, the Hermit contracted pneumonia and collapsed in the snow. He was taken to Sacred Heart Hospital in Manchester and then transferred to the House of St. Johns for elderly men. Always being a religious man, Lambert used this opportunity to be baptized into the Catholic Church. His godparents were Joseph Devine, a local funeral director and Mother Mary Gonzaga O'Brien, a nun with Sisters of Mercy in Manchester.

Despite his age and illness, the transition to a maintained living did not suit Lambert, prompting him to return to Crystal Lake without permission. Not long after, he was convinced to go back so he could receive proper care. He stayed there for two years until his death in 1914 at the age of 91. His body now lies in St. Joseph Cemetery marked by a plain white tombstone, inscribed "The Hermit". His will stipulated that all his property was to benefit St. Patrick's Orphanage in Manchester.

Unfortunately, the cabin, his Native American artifacts, and his poetry did not survive. However, Bourgeois' portraits remain as a testament to his life.

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Photo courtesy of the Manchester Historic Association  
(Sampson, Gary. *A World Within a World: Manchester, the Mills and the Immigrant Experience.*)  
(Clayton, John. *Faces and Places in the City*)