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JOCK DARLING: THE NOTORIOUS “OUTLAW” OF THE MAINE WOODS

BY JAMES B. VICKERY III

Jim Vickery began work on this article shortly before he died in 1997. He had been researching Jock Darling for several years, and at my urging he set down his thoughts on the “old outlaw” under an arrangement by which he would compose the article on one of his infamous “yellow pads,” and I would transcribe the results on my computer and return a clean copy to him for editing and proofreading. He would also fill in the blanks where I could not decipher his handwriting. Before we could complete this project, Jim was hospitalized with the condition that finally resulted in his death. Over the intervening years, I have worked on the manuscript, having at hand the original draft and all of the newspaper copies Jim used to compose it. The result is somewhat problematic. Since Jim’s draft was nowhere near finished, I have taken a heavy hand with the editing, and have filled in gaps in the story as I imagined Jim would have done it. Since Jim did not have an opportunity to compile footnote references, I was not able to finish the manuscript with standard notation. The bibliography, however, contains references to all the materials in Jim’s “Jock Darling” file (deposited with the Vickery Papers in Special Collections, Fogler Library at the University of Maine). It is with a great sense of satisfaction—and relief—that this project finally comes to fruition.

RICHARD W. JUDD

SINCE ITS EARLY settlement in the 1760s, northern Maine has been noted for its vast pine and spruce forests. The headwaters of the Androscoggin, Kennebec, and Penobscot rivers attracted few farmers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but these heavily forested uplands were a haven for lumbermen, hunters, trappers, and fishermen. Moose, deer, and caribou were abundant, as were smaller fur-bearing animals like beaver, sable, and martin. The trappers and hunters who pursued these animals lived a solitary life in the woods, snowshoeing their trap lines and visiting the lumber camps spread through the



Jonathan "Jock" Darling. His great skill with a rifle and canoe paddle, intimate knowledge of Maine big game, and uninhibited hunting technique spread his name far and wide. (*Forest and Stream*, 15 January 1898.)

deep forests of Penobscot, Piscataquis, Washington, and Aroostook counties. Some of these early woodsmen—Rufus Philbrook, David Libbey, Daniel Lyford, Manly Hardy, Joshua Gross Rich—became legendary; all of them were contemporaries of Jonathan “Jock” Darling, the subject of this article. What follows is a biographical sketch of the notorious “outlaw” of the Maine woods: “Jock” Darling, poacher, trapper, guide, and game warden, whose life spanned—and in many ways encapsulated—one of the most colorful episodes in the history of the Maine woods.

In addition to loggers, trappers, and hunters, the northern forests were visited at the end of the nineteenth century by another class of men drawn by the lure of Maine’s unexcelled fishing and hunting. Intrigued by books about outdoor life written by enthusiasts like Henry William Herbert (Frank Forrester), men of wealth and leisure from the cities of the Northeast took advantage of new railroad access to central Maine to try their luck at hunting and fishing. Some spent fortunes on elegant hunting lodges located on Maine’s inland lakes and streams. Using their improved fishing gear and new sport-hunting weapons—particularly the Winchester repeating rifle—they added to the pressure on, and competition for, Maine’s fish and game. The result was a set of conservation laws that changed the rules of the chase dramatically.

Sobered by decimation of the huge buffalo herds out West, and by similar signs of game depletion in the East, Maine legislators, like others from the northeastern states, began enacting laws that redefined the meaning and methods of hunting and fishing in the 1880s. These new rules encroached on the traditional habits of the solitary hunters and trappers whose forebears had plied their trade in the Maine woods since colonial times. Jock Darling, like many old woodsmen in Maine, was caught in the transition from pioneer hunting to modern fish and game management, with its restrictive bag limits and more “sporting” and conservative hunting and fishing measures.

Jonathan “Jock” Darling was born in Enfield, Maine, on 28 September 1830, the son of Walter and Susan Shorey Darling. The Darlings had moved to the District of Maine from Andover or Danvers, Massachusetts, settling first among the pioneering families of Blue Hill in 1763. Jock’s great-great-grandfather, born in 1741, noted that his own father had died during the siege of Louisbourg on 21 March 1746. From Blue Hill the Darlings moved to an unincorporated plantation along the upper Penobscot River known as Cold Stream, where Jock spent his boyhood. The plantation, later called Enfield, was incorporated in 1855.

Much of the township is covered by Cold Stream Pond, which flows into the Passadumkeag River.

Jock's father was a farmer, but when the family moved to the upper Penobscot Valley they relied on a variety of subsistence activities, as did most pioneer families. Due to poor roads, early upland farmers traveled mostly by log canoe or blazed trail; selling farm produce under these conditions was not particularly advantageous. Jock's father cleared sufficient land to plant corn and grain, but he had to carry the threshed grain to Old Town. Henry David Thoreau, who passed through Enfield in 1846 on his way to Mount Katahdin, noted an orchard of apple trees in the bearing state, but there was probably little else in the way of agriculture upon which to remark.

Settlers in this neighborhood hunted deer and ate a great deal of venison. Fortunately, Jock's father was also a skilled hunter, and Jock accompanied his father when he tended his bear traps, even before he was strong enough to lug a rifle. His father sometimes killed a deer while on the trap line, and he would show Jock how to prepare venison and how to boil it in a pot over a bed of red-hot coals. Like many a boy growing up in rural Penobscot County, Jock soon acquired his own gun and used it to help fill the family larder. His first weapon was a so-called gas-pipe cannon, which was simply a tube mounted on a wooden block, with the breach end plugged with a piece of wood. With sufficient charge, the pipe would throw a pebble half way across the Passadumkeag River, but not without considerable danger to the marksman. Jock's father reputedly told him that "thet thar squid shooter o' yo'rn 'ill blow yer darn head off some day," and the prophesy came alarmingly close to realization when the pipe exploded near the young boy's head. Nevertheless, Jock became proficient with this firearm and acquired notable accuracy shooting in the woods and fields. Jock's father next gave the boy the old family flintlock. Known as a "Queen Anne Gun," it weighed about twelve pounds and misfired as often as it fired. This, too, rewarded Jock with a store of squirrels and birds.

In 1841 Jock's father moved the family south to Greenbush, settling on 160 acres of virgin forest. Moose were plentiful in the woods nearby. The swamps along the Penobscot River and Great Works Stream in Bradley provided a rich habitat for big game, and moose were common near Clifton and in the vast unsettled territory stretching eastward to the St. Croix River on the Maine-Canada border. In the rear of the family farm Jock discovered a yard of five moose, and within two hours' travel on snowshoes he could reach three more yards.



Jock with a client. In the late nineteenth century hunting and fishing had become a big business, providing important income for hotel owners, railroad managers, guides, boat-builders, garden farmers, and many others in Maine. (*Forest and Stream*, 11 January 1898.)

At a very early age, Jock went to work as a cook's helper in a logging camp, and in his teens he began tending a trap line for beaver, muskrat, mink, and martin. With the proceeds from his trapping, he purchased a better rifle and took up hunting bigger game. By age eighteen Jock had achieved a reputation among hunters as a "lone Indian," because he preferred hunting alone. Being a still-hunter, he reasoned that the smaller the number of hunters, the less noise there would be to scare the deer.

At about age twenty Jock began to hunt and trap for a living, working out of Enfield and ranging the woods from Great Works and Bradley north and eastward to the St. Croix River at the Maine-New Brunswick border. In 1850 he spent a winter near Sourdnamunk Lake where moose were plentiful. Here he fell in with Daniel Lyford and a partner named Daigle from Passadumkeag, who were running a line of traps between the Sourdnamunk Stream and the flanks of Mount Katahdin. Among other things, Lyford and Daigle showed him how to hide behind trees or make detours to avoid an angry bull moose during the rutting season. Over the three decades between 1850 and 1880 Jock claimed to have killed over 1,500 moose and hundreds of deer and caribou. The hides he

sold to a tannery in nearby Kingman, and the meat he shipped by train to Portland or Boston. During these years Jock accumulated a number of colorful hunting stories that would become part of his stock-in-trade when he began working as a guide. One day, for instance, a bull moose charged him, forcing him to climb a pine tree. Unable to fire his rifle, he dropped out of the tree and cut the animal's throat with his knife.

Jock Darling was an astute and enthusiastic observer of woodland creatures both small and large. He insisted that white-tailed deer were the most difficult animals to hunt. Their ears are trumpet-shaped and can capture the slightest sound, and their eyes, set far back on the sides of their head, can detect the slightest motion. Moose and caribou, on the other hand, are slower, and depend less on their eyesight, at least before catching a human scent. Caribou, by a fatal curiosity, sometimes stand still when they encounter a hunter. Jock once remarked of a case where two hunters fired twelve shots at three caribou, and "only one ran away." Given the deer's wariness, stalking was an art: "At one time I saw two bucks feeding in a meadow while I was in my canoe . . . [but] by stooping [I found it] . . . possible to get quite near. I got within ten rods before they picked up my scent." When deer were surprised like this, Jock related, they would "jump . . . as if shot, and then they would snort and blow and give a few jumps and blow again." According to him, deer habitually walk and feed by night, and in summer they forage along the borders of lakes and streams; the rutting season is in the fall, and the does drop their fawns in the spring, up to the end of May.

During these same years Jock acquired the habits that would later bring him into conflict with Maine's new cadre of fish and game wardens: he used dogs to drive deer; he hunted game during closed season; and he sold the resulting skins and carcasses, often out of state. Nevertheless, his great skill with a rifle and a canoe paddle, his intimate knowledge of the haunts and habits of Maine's big game, and his uninhibited hunting techniques spread his name far and wide; his exploits found their way into newspapers in Boston and New York. By the 1880s Jock reigned as one of the state's leading experts on hunting, fishing, and trapping, possessing a knowledge of backwoods Maine few other men could have dreamed of.

In appearance "Uncle Jock" Darling was clean-cut, of the old Roman-nose type. He was a man of strong opinions and conveyed his vast experience with the Maine woods in words both colorful and unrefined. He was a good conversationalist, always gentlemanly, and he possessed a great fund of anecdotes. His education was probably slight, as small

communities like Enfield offered only grade schools. Still, at one time he served as first selectman of the town. He had his own views on the game laws and was not shy about arguing these points with local game wardens. He was also a man of impressive ingenuity. One example occurred on a winter evening when he came to a deserted lumber camp. Wet and tired, he needed a fire but discovered his matches were wet. Using his wits, he whittled two pieces of dry cedar, rubbed them together to produce friction, and soon had a fire for the night. He enjoyed sitting and noting the habits of the wildlife around his camp at Nicaitous Lake. A caribou once walked up to within ten feet of where he was sitting, then extended his head to catch Jock's scent. He let out a yell, and the caribou kicked up its heels and jumped. He found the prints to be ten or eleven paces apart where the caribou had bolted. Jock enjoyed observing the behavior of partridges and ducks, but was most fond of the curious "moosebird," or Canada jay, a bird that became so tame it would eat morsels from his hand.

The most dramatic episode in Jock's early hunting career was his shootout with Joe Ritchie. Jock claimed the tract of forest between Nicaitous and Oxhead lakes as his personal hunting grounds. Thus when Ritchie appeared in the area equipped for a season's hunt, Jock told him he was trespassing. Ritchie replied that he lived in Union River, and that he claimed a right to hunt anywhere he wanted. This concluded the conversation, but a few weeks later on a snowy day Ritchie was dressing out a deer and thought he heard a branch snap. He turned back to the deer carcass, but a few minutes later he stopped when he heard the crack of a rifle. The bullet missed him by a hair's breath. Standing up and brushing away the branches, Ritchie saw Jock Darling, motionless, rifle in hand. Jock's gun was a not a repeating rifle; he dropped it and begged for mercy. He claimed he had mistaken Ritchie for a deer, but Ritchie always believed that Jock meant to kill him.

In another escapade at Nicaitous, a well-known lumberman accused Jock of not paying his board bill and had him ejected from the camp at supertime. Jock left, but not before shooting up the camp, and the next morning when the teamsters went out to hitch up their sleds, they found every binding chain missing. Logging operations came to a halt while the boss made a hasty trip to Bangor to purchase new chains. In spring 1860 a more serious matter occurred on the West Branch of the Big Sebois at the camp of an Orono lumberman named Gilman. Jock had made the camp his headquarters while moose hunting. One morning in early March he pursued a cow moose and killed it right in camp. The

boss insisted that he share the carcass with the woodsmen. Jock refused and was again ejected from the camp. He put the moose on a sled bound for Old Town, and a short while later the logging camp broke up for the season, but when the driving crew returned after two weeks, they found the camp burned flat, along with all its contents, including axes, pick poles, and other equipment. Jock claimed he had not been within fifty miles of the camp, but most accounts placed the blame on him.

Another instance that demonstrated Jock's capacity for revenge involved the meat of two moose he had cached in the woods. A lumbering outfit stole a portion of the cache, and Jock knew where the moose meat was, but said nothing about it. Later the crew discovered their equipment was missing and the boom they had been preparing on the ice had been cut, leaving the enclosed logs free to float out in the spring, wherever the wind and currents would take them. Jock had been up to the camp to visit, and apparently had taken his revenge. A year later Jock met the boss of the camp while crossing the lake in winter. As a *Bangor Commercial* reporter told the story in January 1898, the boss, "about as desperate a man as there was in the woods," held out his hand, but Jock refused to take it: Jock was armed, and the boss was not. "He gave Jock a jolly about his gun and asked Jock to let him examine it. Jock refused.



Moose bagged by a client of Jock Darling. The mid-nineteenth century saw an enormous toll taken on Maine's moose herd, bringing concern that moose, like the buffalo out west, would soon be all but extinct. (*Forest and Stream*, 11 January 1896.)

There was murder in the eye of the boss, and Jock told me that he felt sure that if he had handed over the gun the boss would have blown out his brains then and there."

In the years after 1850 the uncut townships of the eastern Bingham Purchase were opened to lumbermen, who built hundreds of logging camps in the forests between the Penobscot and the St. Croix, breaking up the haunts of the moose. Working in these woods, a hunter like Jock Darling could kill as many as 400 moose in a year, skinning the carcasses and selling the hides to tanners and bookmakers. These mid-century years saw an enormous toll taken on Maine's moose herd, bringing concern that moose, like the buffalo out west, would soon be all but extinct. Moose and deer were plentiful in Maine in the first half of the nineteenth century, Jock recalled, but after 1850 over-hunting diminished the herd. By the 1880s they were mostly found in Washington, Hancock, and Penobscot counties.

Before 1867 there had been no closed season for hunting game in the state, and the few game laws the legislature passed went unenforced because there were so few wardens. In that year, however, Maine established a Commissioner of Fisheries, and in 1873 the legislature added game protection to the commissioners' list of duties. In addition to creating an office of Inland Fisheries and Game, the legislature passed laws limiting the hunting season and restricting the number of deer, moose, and caribou that could be taken in any one season. Early on, hunters were allowed three deer during a season running from August to December. Later the legislature shortened the season to one month, from mid-November to mid-December. By 1881 there were fifty-one wardens in Maine, largely in Penobscot, Washington, and Hancock counties. Over the next decade, Commissioners Elias M. Stilwell and Henry O. Stanley regularly attended legislative sessions proposing stricter controls on hunting and fishing. Although they initially believed that killing game for immediate consumption posed no imminent threat to the herds, they recommended restrictions on market hunting. They also proposed limits on fishing for land-locked salmon and on ice fishing, which they thought should be forbidden. Farmers opposed the latter law; fishing for them was subsistence more than sport, and for some it was an important part of their spring diet, since they were probably getting to the bottom of the larder by late winter, early spring. The commissioners also requested a twenty-dollar license for hunters.

In 1882 the commissioners reported that deer were unusually plentiful in the woods, despite the inadequacies of the warden system and the

faulty wording in the enforcement statutes. Nevertheless, the slaughter had been terrific; Commissioner Stilwell noted that the American Express Company had shipped some 408 deer carcasses out of Maine over the previous six months, and sadly enough, much of this meat had spoiled before it reached the Boston or New York markets. The commissioners proposed a law to forbid hunting with dogs. It was enacted, but the ban seemed to have little effect, largely because “hounding” deer was a longstanding tradition in the northeast woods, and because urban sport hunters, typically less adept at tracking, stalking, or still-hunting, depended on dogs to flush their game. In 1882 the commissioners reported the most destructive season to that date; market hunters fanned out across the Maine woods and broke all restraint of law, exceeding bag limits, using dogs to run deer, hunting on the crust of the snow, and shooting does. The following year the laws were again amended, but the commissioners felt the number of deer killed was still growing. By this time, the penalty for illegally killing a moose was fifty dollars, and for a caribou or deer, forty.

It was during these years that sport hunting won favor among out-of-state enthusiasts, giving Jock Darling another opportunity to put his woods lore and his knowledge of Maine’s game animals to use. He had begun guiding at age sixteen, and in the late 1870s he built a log hunting camp at Nicatous Lake. By fall 1887 he was lodging four or five guides and sixteen dogs at the camp to provide hunting and fishing services to city “sports” and local hunters. Stories about the notorious Maine woods “outlaw” continued to accumulate, but given Jock’s reputation for poaching and for revenge, wardens gave him wide berth.

In his younger years, Jock, like most backwoods hunters, killed moose, deer, and caribou with abandon, but as he grew older he began to take a more careful note of the activities of his fellow woodsmen. By the 1880s it was apparent to Jock that public opinion in Maine—even among hunters—favored protection for game animals. Hunting and fishing had become a big business, providing an important source of income for hotel owners, railroad managers, guides, boat-builders, garden farmers, and many others. Resort owners and their out-of-state clients pressured the commissioners to enforce the state’s fish and game laws. Jock claimed to have no objection to hunting laws in general, and he believed that it was the business of the wardens to carry out the wishes of the public. In a surprising turn of events after years of ignoring the game laws, “Uncle Jock” himself accepted a position as warden, prompting a *Forest and Stream* editor in 1891 to write that Maine had “set a thief to



Camp on Grand Lake Sebois. Jock’s log hunting camps at Sebois and Nicatous lakes provided hunting and fishing services to city “sports” and local hunters. (*Forest and Stream*, 22 January 1896.)

catch a thief.” In a letter to the *Phillips Phonograph*, an upland Maine newspaper, Jock explained that this was not a “change of heart, but [rather] some changes in business.” He had always believed in protecting Maine’s fish and game, he insisted—there was “too much talk” about him being an outlaw—and now that he was a successful sporting-camp owner and operator he had a stake in protecting the fish and game his clients expected. Jock felt that a few wardens with suitable woodcraft skills could prevent most illegal hunting in Maine, if they coordinated their efforts and divided up the territory, with each warden following a “beat” like a policeman. At this time a warden received \$1.50 a day—good wages for a rural Mainer—but as Jock noted, the recipient had to be a first-class woodsman with expertise in hunting, woods lore, and canoeing.

Thus, Jock Darling, according to some reports, “became an advocate of the game code.” He discontinued market shooting and turned his attention to the thriving sport-hunting business at his camp on Nicatous Lake—one of the first such camps in the state. Later he sold the outfit to a club of New York sportsmen and moved up the East Branch of the Penobscot to Grand Lake Sebois, where he built a second set of camps. Jock kept the waters around his camps well stocked with trout and

salmon. As a warden, he preferred to use “moral suasion,” he told the editor of the *Industrial Journal* in 1890. But he promised to be a vigorous enforcer: “I will say to the hunters, guides, or poachers, that I don’t want to catch them breaking the fish and game laws,” he announced in an 1891 letter to *Forest and Stream*. “I don’t want you to kill game when you are not allowed to do so by law. I . . . say that if you keep on or do kill, as some of you have in years past, I shall catch a few or more of you.” In some respects, however, the transition from law-breaker to law-enforcer was difficult for Jock. He wrote in a letter to *Forest and Stream* that he had great misgivings about arresting a man “for killing meat when he was hungry.” Nor was he enthusiastic about laws banning the use of dogs—a particularly tenacious tradition among backwoods hunters and even some city “sports.” Jock had fought this particular law for years, and he believed that most hunters who used dogs would obey the other game laws if the state would sanction this practice. He had “always allowed sports to have guides with dogs to hunt deer,” and he would continue the practice as long as out-of-state hunters demanded it. It was largely on this account—the ban on dogging deer—that after years of eluding the game wardens in 1889 the “old outlaw” was served a warrant for his arrest.

By this time Jock Darling’s views on the Maine game laws were well known. In his letter to the *Phillips Phonograph* he insisted that the commission had staffed the warden force with unsuitable men who viewed every person who hunted as a poacher and a potential source of fines. During the mid and late 1880s, Jock testified several times before the legislature expressing his objections to these laws, and in fall 1888 he made several trips to Augusta to speak in committee hearings in opposition to new restrictions proposed by the commissioners. The laws already on the books, he thought, were “illegal,” particularly as they applied to methods of enforcement. As a result of Jock’s testimony, the commissioners’ amendments failed passage, and this aroused the ire of Commissioner Elias M. Stilwell who, along with Frank H. Carleton, headed the Inland Fish and Game Commission. Incensed by this display of opposition from one of his own wardens, Commissioner Stilwell decided to bring Jock to justice. As early as 1873, when Stilwell became the state’s first game commissioner, he had sized up Jock as an outlaw. No doubt Stilwell was correct that Jock made his own rules, but he could “not get the old rascal and prove it.” In fact, most wardens were afraid to show their faces at the Nicatous or Sebois camps.

In an article in the *Industrial Journal* in 1889, Jock charged that Com-

missioner Stilwell had employed a Boston detective named McNamara and sent him to Jock's camps to shoot a deer or moose under illegal circumstances. A second detective named Swanton from Millbridge was to serve as a backup witness. McNamara proceeded to Jock's farmhouse in Lowell and asked Jock to take him to his camp at Nicatous Lake. There the detective hired two guides and their dogs, and the party went out by canoe. Swanton, according to Jock's story, killed a deer after the dogs drove it into a lake. The following Sunday—a day closed to hunting—the dogs drove two deer past McNamara, and the detective killed them. Jock, who was apparently not along on the hunt, returned home to Lowell from his camps.

The next week McNamara reappeared at Jock's farmhouse in Lowell at breakfast time with six officers and a warrant for Jock's arrest. The detective handcuffed Jock and took him away in his old hunting clothes, without allowing him to read the warrant. On the train to Bangor, a doctor from Old Town took pity on Jock and demanded the detectives remove the handcuffs. Shrewdly, Jock realized that the handcuffs would elicit more sympathy when he arrived in Bangor and declined to press the issue. True to form, when the police marched him from the station to the courthouse, his friends turned the situation into a circus. The gathering crowd cheered the old woodsman, and the local papers printed sympathetic accounts of the arrest, taking care to give full attention to Jock's side of the story. "When he was led up Exchange Street handcuffed and guarded, the whole city of Bangor turned out to get a look at the famous outlaw," a newspaper reported. The *Industrial Journal* described the incident in a November 1889 issue:

The streets were so crowded that the police had to clear a way through the masses of people. The sheriff met the party at the door of the jail and invited Jock and his two escorts into the jail office, where he served cigars and refreshments to them. Meantime one of the officers stood at the door to keep Jock from escaping. When the sheriff asked Jock to go and take dinner with his family in a private dining room, the officers were so shocked that they could stand it no longer, and having collected their fees, went home in disgust.

On 28 January 1890, Jock was arraigned before Judge Thomas W. Vose and charged with misconduct in office and accepting a bribe. The detectives alleged that Jock had accepted \$20 from four men—W. H. Lewis, Edward Jackman, James Lewis, and Pearl Young—who had violated the state's fishing laws. Moreover, as a state warden, Jock failed to



Jock Darling of Enfield, Maine. "Uncle Jock" was clean-cut, of the old Roman-nose type. He was a man of strong opinions and conveyed his vast experience with the Maine woods in words both colorful and unrefined. (Fannie Hardy Eckstorm Collection, Fogler Library, University of Maine.)

enforce the game laws during the deer-dogging incident. In particular, he refused to arrest the guides who had set the dogs on the deer. Jock's lawyer filed a demurrer, but Judge Vose ruled this out of order, sentenced Jock to three months in the county jail, and ordered him to pay court costs amounting to \$13.

Jock appealed the conviction and was released on bail, and over the next year the case made its way to the State Supreme Judicial Court. The complainants, Jock argued, failed to show which provisions of the law, if any, he had violated. In February 1892 the case went before Chief Justice

Joseph Hutchins and was rescheduled, but before it could be resolved Commissioner Elias Stilwell died on 15 January 1893, at the age of eighty-three. As a result *The State v. Jonathan Darling* was held over at the Bangor Municipal Court until 18 November 1895, and finally, in January 1897, the case against Jock for "irregular and improver conduct on the part of a public officer" came to trial. Again Jock's counsel, Charles J. Hutchings, filed a special demurrer. This time it was upheld, and in the spring the case was dismissed.

Jock Darling died a year later on 10 January 1898, at his home in Lowell, following a malignant stomach disorder that lasted nearly two years. He was sixty-eight years old. While he had led a very colorful public life, Jock had found time for a family. He and Nancy N. Hayden had married in 1858 and they had had three children: Emily, born in 1861; Charles, born in 1863, died in 1865; and Mary, born in 1865. In the "mournful little cemetery of Lowell," Jock's family and friends brushed aside the snow and "fashioned his grave in the frozen earth." Nearly everyone in town turned out to see their "widely known townsman laid away." The *Bangor Daily News* eulogized the "old outlaw" by stressing his woods lore rather than his brushes with the law: he had "studied hunting and trapping intently," and according to his obituary he had "never harmed anything he did not want for food, and he never killed for the sake of killing." He was, in short, a "man of integrity" to the last, despite his reputation. "When the Maine game law first reached out to put a stop to the game slaughter of fifteen or twenty years ago," the writer of the obituary acknowledged, "Jock was among the most vigorous protesters. He saw nothing in the measure but an attempt to wrest the meat and hide hunters of their bread and butter." Ignoring the law, he was "branded as an outlaw, but common report made him appear a great deal worse than he really was."

A short time after his death in 1898, Jock's friend and fellow hunter David Libbey extolled the old outlaw by challenging some of the legends spread by sportsmen, newspaper reporters, and Jock's fellow hunters. In Libbey's January 1898 letter to the *Bangor Daily Commercial* he insisted that to call Jock Darling an outlaw would be "an insult to his memory." Jock, like many backwoods farmer-hunters, had participated in the great slaughter of the mid-nineteenth century, but this was all done before the state had taken measures to conserve this valuable resource. Jock's reputation grew out of those uninhibited times, Libbey implied, and it was inappropriate to judge him so harshly, given the path he cleared through the tangle of traditional hunting habits and new game laws in subsequent years.

During the contentious transition from wide-open hunting to conservation and game management in Maine, Jock Darling, like several of his contemporaries, vacillated between hunter and guide, warden and poacher, aware of the need for regulation, yet chafing under the new authority of the state. An opportunist at heart—not unusual for an upland Maine farmer-hunter of the late nineteenth century—he nevertheless remained firm to the end in his conviction that if game commissioners learned to respect Maine’s native-born hunters, the hunters would learn to respect the commissioners’ new game laws. A reporter for *Forest and Stream* saw Jock as a “representative of the old type of hunters and pioneers that is fast disappearing, and in a few years will be a thing of the past.”

But Jock Darling was more than this. With his camps at Nicatous and Sebois lakes, he pioneered the business of entertaining out-of-the-state sportsmen; he was among the first of the old Maine hunters to grasp the new meaning of fish and game resources in the late 1870s. His successes in the guiding business netted the “old outlaw” a small fortune—some \$15,000 to \$20,000 at the time of his death. After some well-publicized missteps, Jock Darling made the transition from hunter to guide, refashioning his reputation and his woods lore to appeal to a new class of hunters and to garner an entirely new source of income from the fabled north woods. While many Maine backwoodsmen abandoned market hunting and took up guiding during this period of transition, not many were as successful as Jock Darling.

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