

The Mountain Lion

(From the Ed Foss Collection)

The Woodman Museum, in Dover, at least until recently had on display a mountain lion, or cougar, or "painter", slightly over eight feet from nose to tailtip, and which weighed in at death at one hundred ninety eight pounds. This beast was killed on the Cartland Road, near the Route 125 intersection in 1853. Long before it was killed it was often seen in the area, and most often in the large tract called Lovell's Land of Loveland, which lies west and north of Smoke Street. One Smoke Street boy of the time saw more than he wished of the giant cat. He was headed down the road when the beast leaped onto a stonewall, bared his teeth and lowering his head snarled menacingly. The frightened boy took off full tilt for home, but the cat suddenly was in the road in front of him, and the same shake of the head and snarl greeted the boy. Paralyzed he stood motionless until the cougar leaped easily into the brush out of sight, and then took off again for home. A third time the beast moved silently into the road ahead of him, and this time it moved a pace or two at a time toward the frightened boy, snarling and threatening until the clatter of a wagon frightened it off. To those who felt the boy had been in mortal danger of being eaten alive, a neighbor had a few trenchant remarks to make. "I live next to that family over twenty years. Knowed the boy, knowed father, an' mother and whole damned family. Ain't ever seen any sign they ever washed. I tell you, that mountain lion looked him over and figured he was too damned dirty to eat."