

T H E Q U A R T E R L Y

Published by the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

Vol. 1, Number 1

Canton, N. Y.

January 1956

FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIR

Whether this, the first issue of the first volume of the first full-fledged publication attempted by our St. Lawrence County Historical Association will endure, time alone will record. Quite, true, there have been several distributions of different historical papers read before our society in the past. To date, however, the Association has never undertaken the publication of a periodical.

Its continuation will depend upon several factors: The response with which it is received; the interest of those willing to contribute articles and information; some financial tight-rope acrobatics to keep within the limits of our meager funds; the durability of your editorial board to keep the ball rolling.

To confine the copy to the space limitations of this issue it has been necessary to cut some contributions "to the bone," especially in connection with the Cracker Barrel. Also, we have found it necessary to postpone an excellent article about the history of the Association by Mrs. Bette Mayhew. This we will headline in a later issue.

Editing even a modest bulletin such as this means work, more work, and still more work. If the flesh is willing we intend to meet the deadline imposed each quarter. Your generous spirit in accepting what is offered, in not shooting the fiddlers who are doing their best, and then by lending a hand yourself, will fulfill a dream - we hope.

There is great urgency. St. Lawrence County is in the midst of historical turmoil. A gigantic face-lifting--historically and topographically -- is in progress. Pioneer homes, pioneer settlements, cemeteries and whole communities are being removed and changed. The St. Lawrence is being harnessed. Time and chance are creating vast changes. History, therefore, is in the making. It is vitally important to posterity that we, today, endeavor to record that which needs to be recorded historically, and thus preserve the record. Some valuable work is being done in this direction but, obviously, much will be overlooked and lost and left undone.

It is suggested that there is an unusual opportunity to create a photographic record. Is it out of line to suggest that the Board of Supervisors might aid in this matter? Such a record preserved in the files of our County Historian would be used incessantly in years to come. It is hoped that the splendid film and reportorial record being compiled by Mrs. Eleanor Dumas of Massena be made available for museum preservation, at least in facsimile form.

History is never static. Too often its horseman gallops by before the stopwatch clicks, the lens blinks, or the pen delineates. We must be on the alert. There is much valuable material passing in front of our own doorways today.

building from the seventh there is little time to keep Yorker work alive here. Twenty-two eighth graders meet every Tuesday night at 8:30. Project: Made and sold Christmas corsages for funds. A new ninth grade chapter was organized with Mrs. Georgian Wranesh as sponsor. Year's project is history of our school system. Dorothy Coates, sponsor. LISBON: Has 33 members from the 8th grade. President, John Miller; Vice President, Belva Maynew; Secretary, Karen LeBarge; Treasurer, Jack Carr. LISBON; St. Lawrence Chapter has 28 7th grade members. President, Kathleen Houlihan; Vice President, Thomas Johnston; Secretary, Frank Farnsworth; Treasurer, Sheila Mayne. Eighty-five Yorkers accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Pickard, Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Olds and Sponsor, Rachel Dandy, went to the Seaway Project October 11th. Compositions, making of models, booklets, and charts or snapshots taken on the trip followed. Lisbon had the first Yorker Club in this County. Miss Dandy was its sponsor. The district Yorker meeting was held at Lisbon last spring with 200 Yorkers in attendance. Atwood Manley, President of the County Society, gave an illustrated talk on "Land Titles in the North Country." MASSENA: Has a Yorker Club with Town Historian, Ella Lahey, its sponsor.

Editorial Staff: The President of the Association is indebted to Mrs. Bette Maynew, Canton Town Historian, who has done the bulk of the work in preparing the copy for this issue and Mrs. Nina Smithers, County Historian, for her assistance.

THE FIRST BRIDGE TO SPAN ST. REGIS RIVER

(Editorial Note: It is our desire to include in each issue of the Bulletin at least one article of historical significance, as well as demonstrated research. The following contribution comes from Dorothy Squires, Hopkinton Town Historian.)

The first bridge across the St. Regis River was built in 1805. Eliphalet Brush relates the story. "Six of us started out from Hopkinton one morning about daylight. Aaron Warner had moved out a mile and a half west of Hopkinton a few weeks before and started clearings. When we got to his place he joined us with his ox team and log chains and we came to the river, carrying our provisions, axes and a few other tools. Where the banks were high and dry seemed the best place for a bridge. Halfway between the island the west bank, we made an oblong pier, using hard wood logs under water and cedar above. More logs were notched and built up, cob house fashion about six feet above the surface of the water. We filled in with stones to about the top of the water or a little higher. For the stringers we used the best trees in the swamp. We had a hard time snaking them out, the ox were pretty small, but they were smart and gritty. The floor of the bridge was cedar logs, notched where they rested upon the stringers and fasted a little on logs. Then we hauled on some smooth straight hardwood logs about the same length as the stringers for side pieces. These kept the floor logs in place and strengthened the bridge, for we tied them down to the outside stringers with birch withes and wooden pins and toggles. We camped here one night and got back to Hopkinton about sundown the second day. We were afraid we hadn't anchored the pier enough to stand very high water, so one day before fall a friend and I went back with the ox team and chains and hauled a pile of boulders against the pier on the upstream end to protect it from damage of ice in the spring." That's how the first bridge was built across the St. Regis.

FROM THE YORKER CRACKER BARREL

CANTON: Foote's Followers is divided into three groups. This year's projects: collecting stories, making title maps of the town, county and state, making a scrapbook on Canton's Centralized School System. Publicity Committee: Elizabeth Neuse and Keitha Sapsin. Mrs. Mildred Howard's group has Barbara Dommeyer, President; Kathryn Finley, Vice President; Peggy Gray, Recording Secretary; Beverly Reddick, Corresponding Secretary; and Steven Poole, Treasurer. Roy Otis' group: Margaret Rocca, President; Rita Munn, Vice President; Don Huddleston, Recording Secretary; Donald DeMarsh, Corresponding Secretary; and Sharon Martin, Treasurer. Arthur Cassada's group: Judy Warner, President; Linda Brown, Vice President; Christina Munson, Recording Secretary; Linda Atiyeh, Corresponding Secretary; Donald Stein, Treasurer. EDWARDS YORKER CLUB (See Historian's news.) HEUVELTON: Van Heuvel's Yorkers have 20 members. President, Betty Rounds; Vice President, Norma Howes; Secretary, Cora Glidden; Treasurer, Eleanor Cougler. We are collecting old pictures, doing a short history of Heuvelton, writing and producing an historical play. Irvin Failows sponsor. GOUVERNEUR: Marble Village Chapter. Margaret Walrath, President; Mary Lynn Neuroth, Vice President; Secretary, Sharon Bradish; Treasurer, Kristine Battersby; Historian, James Hart. With the eighth grade on a half day session in a different

MEETING A CHALLENGE

The County Historian's Department brings greetings and all good wishes to the membership of the County Historical Association and most particularly to those who are undertaking to bring this publication to the members of the society. May it grow in usefulness, interest and volume!

This department has long felt the need of an organ of communication between the membership and those who are its leaders. We need the cooperation and the coordination of all who are interested in local history, its collection and its preservation. Dr. Erl Bates once said, "A knowledge of community history leads to community pride: community pride leads to community responsibility."

This is a challenge which must be met. It cannot be put off until some distant future. We must activate ourselves before precious records are gone. To this end this department offers the fullest cooperation and the use of the History Center and the County Museum.

Nina W. Smithers
County Historian

Wanted: A willing volunteer to paste-up album files of the St. Lawrence Seaway for our County Historian's archives. No references required. No salary paid. Honorable mention of all applicants in the next bulletin. Report directly to Mrs. Smithers at her office in the Court House, Canton, on any Monday or Friday. This should be an interesting, and certainly a very helpful, assist.

AT THE COUNTY MUSEUM

Recent acquisitions reported received at the County Museum by Mrs. Smithers: From Mrs. LaRue of Massena, the epaulets, sword and sword belt worn by General Edwin Atkins Merritt of Pierrepont (later of Potsdam) in the Civil War; from Mrs. Alice Poste Gunnison of Ogdensburg some Parish papers, thirty-nine books, four costumes, bible, book of cuts, card book, silver watch, beaded change purse, three pairs of old spectacles; from Harland Norton, formerly of Massena, 1817 map of Massena copied by hand by him; also gift of the wedding dress of Mrs. Nickerson, the grandmother of the late Mrs. Zona Nickerson McPhee of Canton.

Mail all new membership dues (\$1.00) to either William Guyette, Treasurer, or Andrew K. Peters, Secretary, Canton, New York.

Already, and largely through his efforts, the matter of having adequate historical displays included in connection with the gigantic St. Lawrence River Development is receiving serious consideration. Although neither the Seaway and Power Authorities apparently possess the latitude to create an historical museum as such as part of the Development, both indicate that suitable exhibits or displays will be established in which historical data will be featured.

The proposition of establishing several historical museums in this county, quite separate and apart from anything done by these River Authorities, presents a real challenge to our Society and to the people of St. Lawrence County. Dr. Corey has pointed out that should our local communities establish several local museums, and if we can thereby effect a county-wide historical program in connection with these institutions we shall be doing some valuable pioneering in this state.

In closing, I wish first to commend the growth made by the Yorker Clubs in this county. There is rich field of helpful cooperation our Society can make in this direction. I personally wish to thank each and every committee worker, our ever-faithful trustees, our County Historian who has given me such valued assistance, and each of my fellow officers.

Officers and Trustees of the
St. Lawrence County Historical Society

President, Atwood Manley, Canton; Vice President, Carl Burns, Lisbon;
Secretary, Andrew K. Peters, Canton; Treasurer, William Guyette, Canton.

Terms to expire 1956:--Helen Stiles, Richville; Fred Johnson, Potsdam;
Marguerite Chapman, Potsdam.

Terms to expire 1957:--Miles Green, Massena; Harold Storie, Gouverneur;
Glyndon Cole, Morristown.

Terms to expire 1958:--W. Allan Newell, Ogdensburg; Virgie Simons, Rossie;
Ella Lahey, Massena.

CHARTER NO. 6803

After having fulfilled the necessary requirements imposed under its five-year temporary charter, the St. Lawrence County Historical Society was granted a permanent charter on November 18th by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. The inscribed charter has been received. It is being framed and will be hung in the office, County Historian, Nina W. Smithers, beside the Temporary Charter which has been there in safe keeping. The Society is entered as Charter No. 6803.

For several years, under the program of the County Historian, our Town Historians have been compiling cemetery records. Three towns have now reported 100% census records of their cemeteries -- Depeyster, Edwards, and Hermon.

WADDINGTON (Ethel Olds). Aided Seaway Engineers with cemetery work. Made a picture album of the landmarks being obliterated by the Seaway. Discovered and reported an Indian burial ground, Dr. Ritchie, State Archeologist, made excavations last summer and plans more this summer. This site will be submerged.

An immediate need! New paid members for our County Society. A good motto: Each member get a new member! A membership is only a one dollar bill, usually to be had just for the asking. Such dues will hardly more than pay the cost of the bulletin publication. Of course, we seek no paid subscriptions. Just members!.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 1954-55 --

This has been what we may choose to term a normal year for our Society. We have had about the usual number of meetings, the usual number of historical tours, and the usual number of pleasant dreams of that which we should like to see accomplished.

As you recall, we opened our 1955 program with the Map Meeting in Canton April 30, at which time Professor Edward Blankman and Mr. Maurice Gardner favored us with splendid talks. Then, a month later, we participated in the Gouverneur Sesquicentennial, and in August the Hermon Sesquicentennial. These four-meetings were both informal and thereby all the more enjoyable.

Fortunately, we were invited by our County Historian to join with the annual Town Historians meeting in Canton on October 8th, at which Dr. Albert B. Corey, State Historian, was the guest speaker. Dr. Corey spent the two previous days here in St. Lawrence County in connection with three conferences on the subject of small, local museums. These conferences were held at Gouverneur, at the Potsdam Museum, and at Massena. They were all well attended, and Dr. Corey was greatly pleased with the interest shown, and courtesies extended, at each place.

If for nothing else, just the publicity these seminars evoked, made them well worthwhile. But actually the publicity was an unexpected, unpremeditated by-product of Dr. Corey's visit with us. Our society sponsored these seminars. Thanks to a fine newspaper release by Mrs. Smithers to the daily press, the local press in Gouverneur, Potsdam, and Massena picked up the ball and made the most of the opportunity. At each meeting cameras clicked and reporters took notes.

The meeting at Potsdam was particularly helpful, and we must hold one of our summer meetings there so that a much larger group can benefit. Mrs. Chapman, Mrs. Keller who is the museum's curator, and their local group gave us first-hand information about how their museum came into being and of how it has been maintained since.

It is our good fortune to have enlisted the interest of Mr. Allen Newell of Ogdensburg to become chairman of a Steering Committee on the whole subject of St. Lawrence County Historical Museums, Present and Future.

HERMON (Lela Hance). Town's 125th anniversary observed August 6 and 7 with banner parade, program in afternoon, evening banquet and block dance. Hermonites present from Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Connecticut, New Jersey, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Washington, D. C. and all parts of New York State. Luncheon was served to the St. Lawrence County Historical Association by the Hermon Grange. HOPKINTON (Dorothy Squire). See special article. LAWRENCE (Mrs. Gordon Cole). LISBON (E. Earl Jones). LOUISVILLE (Lorraine Bandy). In 1954 mapped four cemeteries being moved due to Seaway. Fifth cemetery completed in 1955--Nichols or Wright cemetery is only completely abandoned cemetery to be moved. Geneological research done on 26 families connected with this cemetery. Contacted 125 service men and women, completed except for 89 needing post service information. Pictures and information on the vanishing landmarks collected and used on WCNY-TV broadcast. Assisted engineers of Uhl, Hall and Rich on River Road cemeteries. Eight pieces of literature filed. MACOMB Has no historian. MADRID (Margaret Thompson). The death of Dr. O. P. Coleman, town dentist for 52 years (1903-1955) was reported. Dr. Coleman was chairman of the Red Cross branch for 13 years. At 1955 election Madrid, a republican town, goes democrat. MASSENA (Ella Lahey). Program plans of the Massena Historical Association are centered around exhibits suitable for window displays. In October an interesting evening of pictures of "Early Locomotives" from the collection of R. Parker Downs. November meeting was a demonstration of utensils with which great-grandmother cooked her Thanksgiving dinner. January meeting is on "Steamboating on the BIG RIVER" with Dan McCormick, staff member of the "Steamboat Bill" publication. A documentary history of Massena is being gathered by Mrs. T. S. Bushnell for the February meeting. At the annual meeting of the County Association Mrs. Lahey's daughter, Eleanor Dumas, Watertown Times Correspondent brought us up-to-date on the Seaway with colored slides to illustrate her talk. MORRISTOWN (Malcolm Booth). NORFOLK (Has no historian). OSWEGATCHIE (Emma Cheney). HEUVELTON (Ida Downing). PARISHVILLE (Nina Daniels). Barns on the Milton Snell farm, largest in the town, and the home of Charles and Orville Riggs, both destroyed by fire with loss of life in the Riggs home. Three generations had lived there. A strange and terrible tragedy. Miss Doris Rowlands entertained a few historians and guests at her home in August. The day included a tour of other historic homes. Luncheon was served on a George Washington heirloom table cloth on a long leafed cherry table set with antique china and silver; visited the buildings built by the Parishes during the days of the land barons. PIERCEFIELD (Beulah Dorothy). PIERREPONT *(Millard Hundley). PITCAIRN (Has no historian). POTSDAM (Has no historian). ROSSIE (Virgie Simons). In spite of illness Mrs. Simons clips newspapers, writes an article on "Horsethieves of Rossie" for North Country Life and does research. RUSSELL (Dorothy Manning). STOCKHOLM (Lindon Riggs). Hobbist Riggs tinkers with old clocks, currently repairing one for the County Historian's office. Has completed two cemeteries, Jenkins Neighborhood and Buckton, bringing to eight the total cemeteries completed with two lonely burials near Old Forge. Has also completed Southville East Part, Willis, Ellis, Brookdale and Holmes Hill. Sanfordville, W. Stockholm and Winthrop yet to go. One hundred eleven service mens's records completed. Scrapbook on news items about the township. Miss Eva Crane loaned county museum a grandfather clock owned by her grandfather, J. Wesley Curtis, also Skinner "family bible", a letter mailed when the receiver paid the postage. George Kennehan has donated interesting iron articles. William Kegan loaned iron articles and an antique gun.