

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

Published by the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

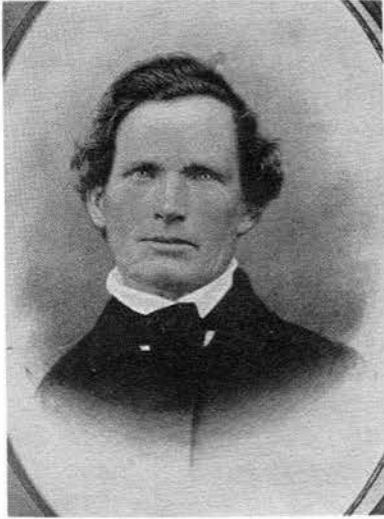
Editor - Atwood Manley, Canton, N. Y.

Associate Editors - Mrs. Mina Smithers and Mrs. Bette L. Mayhew, Jr.

Vol. III, Number 1

Canton, N. Y.

January 1956



Isaac Parker



Amanda, His Wife



Abraham X. Parker

ISAAC PARKER---PIONEER AND HIS ILLUSTRIOUS SON

Excerpts taken from Isaac Parker's letters, selected by his great-granddaughter, Doris D. Rowland, of Parishville. The only other living descendant is a grand-daughter, Mrs. Bessie Parker Erwin of Potsdam.

Isaac Parker was born in Addison County, Vermont, September 5, 1799, a son of Abraham and Sarah Whitney Parker. He married Amanda Patrick of that county in 1824. Of six children born to them only two grew to adulthood, one of the two, Miss Sophie Parker, who died in Potsdam in 1861 at the age of thirty-three. The other, a son, was the late Abraham X. Parker, of whom more is written at the end of this article.

Two letters, written by Isaac Parker in 1830 and 1831 from Montpelier, Vermont, to his wife in Kingston, Vermont, reveal how at that time he was serving in the Vermont legislature.

Isaac Parker moved with his family, to St. Lawrence County in 1839. They lived for a short time in Parishville, and then moved to Pierrepont Avenue in Potsdam, near the Garfield residence. Later Mr. Parker built a home on Madrid Road, now known as Pine Street.

While living in Potsdam he served as town supervisor, trustee of the St. Lawrence Academy, and was one of the founders of the Potsdam Presbyterian Church. He died in 1856, and his wife in 1872. With their daughter, Sophie, they are buried in Garfield Cemetery.

The following quotations are taken from letters written to his son, the late A. X. Parker, during the winter of 1854-55, while the latter was attending law school in Albany.

October 1, 1854

My dear Son,-

Do be very careful of your health, Do not smoke or use tobacco in any form. That is enough to ruin the constitution of anyone. We are about as usual at home - my own health miserable enough. I start to-morrow to meet the Supervisor at Canton. I dread the job. These Potsdam-Canton hotheads will make it harder than ever. Redway got the nomination for county treasurer over Russell who had held it for twenty-one years. We shall probably soon have two counties out of old St. Lawrence. Canton and probably several towns south of it will fight hard to get an appropriation of \$5,000 to build a new Jail, but Potsdam will offer to build all the County Buildings if they will let us have them here for a new county.

The freight and lumber cars have begun to do a lively business. It is a splendid sight to see them moving along opposite us, especially in the evening. Our young horses are much attracted by the sight and noise.

Dec. 1, 1854.

I endured the session at Canton better than I had expected to. I found a very friendly feeling for the most part among my associates, and I succeeded beyond my expectations in securing the interests of Potsdam.

I have just been looking, this fine, pleasant morning, to see the cars go out. The view from our house is a pleasant one. I have not yet had time to go to the depot, but am told appearances indicate life and business. I suppose Sophie told you all the local news. Business is very lively here compared to neighboring towns. Any young man capable of being a law clerk could get thirty dollars a month, if he boarded and clothed himself.

Dec. 15, 1854.

The Railroad track is being slowly finished by laying the rails toward the village. It is now within about two miles of the village, and we, at our house, shall soon see the iron horse puffing out smoke and snorting along with his load of rails, I heard it near us this morning.

May 15, 1855.

I have never known such hard times here, and business of all descriptions is very dull. There is famine for both men and beasts. Grain and potatoes are almost used up, yet winter still lingers with us. Money cannot be borrowed at any reasonable consideration. Property is being offered at ruinously low prices, and almost everyone is talking about going "west". The cause is apparent - the last unfruitful season and the long hard winter just past. It will take two or more favorable seasons to level us off to the position we have lost.

I keep both horses yet, and probably shall have to for some time to come. No-one will buy them for much. Hay is worth twenty dollars a ton, and Indian meal two fifty hundred pounds, and we have scarce any of either in this country now.

If you think best to settle here, you had better plant yourself immediately, and rent a pew in the new Presbyterian meeting House. If you do not get any bad habits such as intemperance or smoking and chewing, I think you can do a great business here. It will depend on yourself, your fidelity to business, perseverance and economy. We can all help you with good will and to good effect, if we find it will pay. Write soon unless you are coming home immediately.

Affectionately your Father,
Isaac Parker

Of St. Lawrence County's more notable public personalities, Hon. Abraham X. Parker, of Potsdam, holds a prominent place. Born in Vermont before his parents came first to Parishville, and later to Potsdam, his schooling did not extend beyond the old St. Lawrence Academy in Potsdam and the Albany Law School. After short terms of practicing law in Buffalo and Syracuse he settled in Potsdam where he soon became prominent in political and community matters.

From numerous local political offices he advanced into broader and broader public fields. He served in the New York State Assembly, in the State Senate with distinction. He was elected from the old 19th congressional district to the House of Representatives where he served four terms. In 1890 President Benjamin Harrison appointed him an Assistant Attorney General in the U. S. Department of Justice of which William Howard Taft was then Solicitor General. Thus formed a friendship between these two to endure throughout the remainder of Congressman Parker's life.

Although often in the seats of capitol at Albany and Washington, on his elective duties, Mr. Parker was staunchly loyal to his North Country folks. In Potsdam he became a member of the Potsdam Normal Board when that institution was chartered. Late in the 19th century it was to him the Clarkson sisters so often turned for counsel and advice in establishing Clarkson College as a memorial to their late brother. He became one of its first trustees and succeeded John G. McIntyre as chairman of that board.

He took great pride in the fact that back in 1865 President Lincoln appointed him postmaster of Potsdam.

Abraham X. Parker's career came to a close in 1909, the date of his death. His sound judgement, high purpose in life, and marked ability commanded the respect and affection of the people of this county.

(Note: Miss Rowland was asked what the initial X. in Mr. Parker's name, Abraham X. Parker, stood for. She laughed. "Nothing, nothing at all. There was another A. Parker on our street in Potsdam. The mail of my uncle constantly became mixed with the other Parker's. So uncle adopted the initial X. to assure getting his own mail. This was always a great joke within the family.")

"THE ETERNAL FIRE"

Some months ago a fire was started in a huge bark pile just east of Waddington as part of the clearance for the Power Project. It burns slowly but steadily through rain and snow and looks like the crater of a volcano. Formerly pulp wood with the bark on was brought up the St. Lawrence River to the dock at Waddington. The first operation after unloading was removal of the bark. The refuse bark was piled near by, and over a period of years these crossings formed a great accumulation over a considerable area. The slow burning of this material underneath the surface may continue until spring.

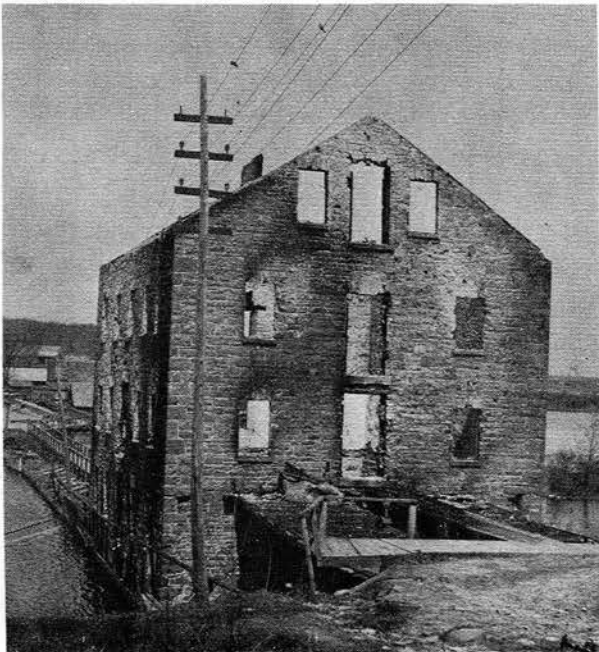
AN INTERESTING MIRROR

On the wall in the den of Harold Storie's home on John Street in Gouverneur Village hangs a beautiful old cherry-framed early American mirror with glass picture panel at the top, surmounted by a mantle design above. The mirror is said to have been brought to this area in 1808 by James and Betty Downs Thompson, who came as settlers from Hartford, Washington County. It remained in the family down to the time it became the property of Mr. Storie.

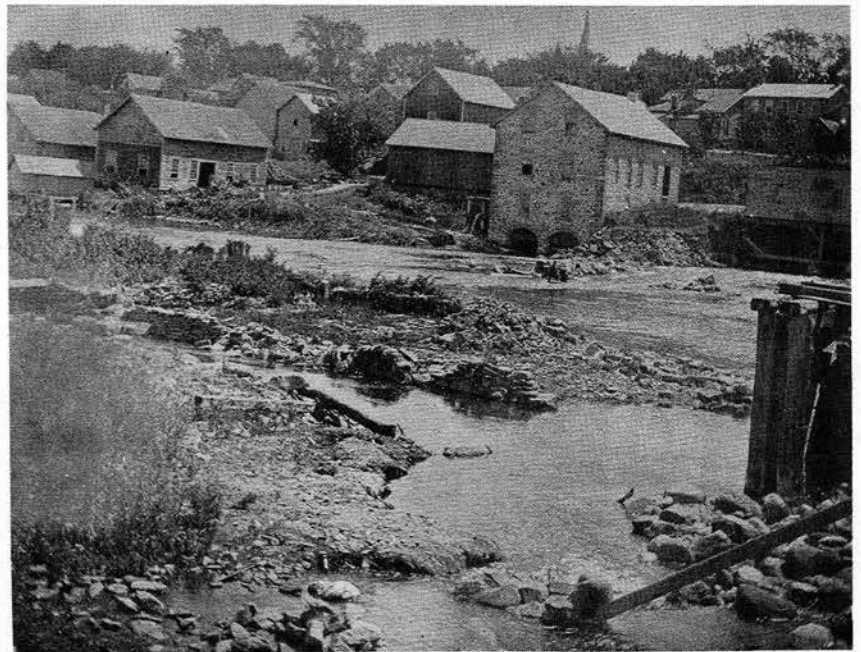
At some time a re-silvering job was done to the glass, but at the panel at the top still bears a painting of the Thompson farm home. The piece is fifteen inches high, twelve wide. The sides have a beaded relief design. The piece is in remarkably good condition after 150 years and more of use.

James and Betty Thompson purchased their original 40 acres from Gouverneur Morris through the latter's agent, Dr. Richard Townsend. Later purchases increased the farm to 140 acres. It passed successively down through the family: From James to James Harvey Thompson, then to Mrs. Emma Thompson, and from her to James Bishop Thompson, and finally to James Hubert Thompson. He sold the property February last.

This mirror is but one of many choice antiques to be found in Mr. Storie's constantly growing collection of early American items of local interest. He is a lineal descendant of another family who settled in Gouverneur about 1808, Benjamin and Willard Smith being his early forebearers. It has been Mr. Storie's fond hope, and that of many another, that through some means these and other items of local historical interest find a final repository in a Gouverneur museum. In other words the idea of such a museum still exists in that community.



Proctor Crist Mill Ruins



Old Waddington Industrial Shoreline

Early Waddington
The Dam, the Lock, and the Power Canal
By Ethel C. Olds

A two mile stretch of the St. Lawrence river between Waddington and Ogden, or Crapser, Island is known locally as Little River. Along this course the water fell eight or nine feet within a few rods, the same drop which, in the north channel, extended for about three miles to form the Rapide Plat.

The south channel, with its short carry, was the favorite route for the French voyageurs and was the traditional route for the Indians in their passage up or down the stream. Artifacts found in the soil and aboriginal burial sites near the village are evidence that Indians tarried here on their journeys. The water, above and below the cascade, flowed over the limestone river bed making an ideal fishing area. Black bass, northern pike, muskellunge and wall-eyed pike had always been plentiful in Little River. The brooks which empty into the river at Waddington were a natural spawning ground for wall-eyed pike. The "spring run" would find the Indians waiting.

The beauty of the falls and the possibilities for water power drew white settlers there as early as 1798. By 1803 they were being supplied with lumber from a saw mill powered by water through a race way. The proprietors, David A. Ogden and Thomas L. Ogden, of New York, had visions of an industrial empire at this water power center. A village was laid out by David A. Ogden, which he called Hamilton, in honor of his late friend and former law partner, Alexander Hamilton. When it developed that there was a village called Hamilton in Madison County the name was changed to Waddington in 1818. When settlers first began coming into the area Hamilton became a flourishing settlement. Permission to build a dam having been received from the legislature in 1808, the proprietors made haste with its construction. Plans included a lock to make the south channel navigable. The lock was to be fifty feet long by ten feet wide, with a draft of two feet. Durham boats, the largest craft then in use on the river, were not more than 35 or 40 feet long and the dimensions of the lock were adequate. A toll of twenty-five cents a ton was established.

The St. Lawrence Lock Co. was organized April 1, 1808 "for building locks at Isle au Rapid" (Ogden Island) and the lock was completed after some disappointments due to faulty construction. Built below the dam and near the north end, it was in use until some time in the 1830's. By that time steam boats were used on the river and shipping was being routed through Canadian canals and locks past the Rapide Plat. In 1956 the above foundation, still intact, could be seen in the dewatered south channel. It was the only lock ever in use on the American side of the St. Lawrence, an eminence now soon to be yielded to the Eisenhower and Grass River locks.

The stone dam was completed at a cost of \$3,000 according to the record and historians of that time speak of it as a hydraulic power without limit. About the same time a bridge was built above the dam by David A. Ogden to the island where he was constructing his imposing stone mansion. The bridge was always maintained by the owners of the Island property, the Ogden family, and, later, the E. S. Crasper family. Known as "the drawbridge" it at one time had three openings through which boats could be admitted. One was filled in years ago. After an April storm took one of the two bridges in 1951, permission was given to close the second opening. The bridge was then built higher and had one opening for water.

A board walk for pedestrians was also provided on the dam. About the middle of the century a wooden bridge was built just below the dam for wagons and sleighs to transport raw materials and finished products.

The power was used directly from the dam and also from a power canal that was dug from the south end of the dam. This was further extended, probably in the 1830's, to Oak Street. The mills and shops were on the land between the power canal and the river or were built across the canal itself. A road called Canal street, paralleled the canal.

The upkeep of the dam and canal may have been the responsibility of the Ogden family with fee collection for this purpose. The death of Isaac Ogden occurred in 1867. On May 11, 1868, The Waddington Canal and Water Works Company was incorporated. Made up of the real estate owners on the northerly side of the canal, it was organized "to widen and deepen the canal, keep the walls in repair and regulate methods of taking the water". Annual assessments were not to exceed \$300. Owners were, by law, required to keep in repair the walls of the canal along or across their lots.

Sites changed owners at times. Fires occurred at intervals and mills were rebuilt or the sites with their valuable water power were taken over by other industries.

For the next hundred years or so, industry centered along the dam and power canal. Raw materials to be processed at the mills and shops were brought in by the farmers of the surrounding area who had their grain ground into flour or grist, wool made into cloth or yarn, and logs made into lumber or finished woodwork. Hides were made into leather from which itinerant cobblers could make boots and shoes. Flax was processed for the home spinner. Many of these products brought a cash income to the farmer. Waddington prospered and grew, becoming an incorporated village April 26, 1839.

There was always a grist mill in operation and usually more than one. The earliest industries were listed in 1810 as two saw mills, a grist mill, a fulling mill and a trip hammer shop. This shop was later known as the scythe factory where Sylvanus Pratt, son of Amasa Pratt, manufactured the first scythe and axe to be made by machinery in the county.

A woolen mill, a paper mill, a blast furnace, a distillery, tannery, flax mills, carding mills, planning and wood working shops, shingle mills, a sash and blind factory, an oat meal mill, barrel factory, a butter tub factory and asheries were other industries which had developed before 1840.

The paper mill was the first in St. Lawrence county. A record of July 20, 1826 in the county clerk's office indicates the sale of land below the dam on Flume 4 to James S. Thayer, Moses Whitcomb and Samuel Wales. A building had been provided for the paper mill and the deed stipulated that the water power must be applied to paper making only. This industry lasted about twenty years under several owners, making wrapping and writing paper. This paper mill of 1826 is not to be confused with the James mill which will be described later.

A tannery was built by Jason Fenton in 1827. It was a profitable industry and was continued by the family until bought by Peter Dalton in 1855. He added an upper story to the stone building and continued the industry more than twenty years until the building burned. It had an output of 2800 hides a year. When the tannery needed bark there would be a procession of forty or more teams lined up on Canal Street waiting with their loads of hemlock or oak bark. The walls of the tannery were a prominent feature of the river bank near the end of the power canal until the summer of 1957.

A foundry was established with Benjamin Bentley as operator in 1840. This burned in 1874 but was rebuilt and continued many more years, making ploughs and stoves. A rusty stove door with elaborate pattern salvaged when the river bed was dewatered in 1956, was probably a discarded product from the foundry.

An iron furnace, an industry established by the Ogdens in 1834, made pig iron and castings. It is described as twenty-six feet square and twenty-eight feet high having an inside diameter of six feet ten inches with one cold blast and one tuyere. It is reported that the brick building enclosed two stacks or separate furnaces, one of which was put in operation in 1836 and was used for only one blast. The furnace used bog ore brought seven miles from swamps near the Grass river two and a half miles from Madrid. The cost of the ore delivered at the furnace was three dollars per ton. It made iron of excellent quality but the difficulties connected with maintaining a blast furnace prevented the industry from operating at a profit and after 1840 it was discontinued. Slag, the glass-like refuse, as well as pieces of iron ore, were frequently brought to light during the work of excavation.

At the foot of LaGrasse street were flour and grist mills which ran steadily. A large one called the "Model Mill" of Bowhall and Rutherford built about 1855 had three run of stone and was always busy. The same owner, J. T. Rutherford, builder of Richardson Hall, at St. Lawrence University, erected another large flour mill in 1873 with capacity for a thousand barrels of flour yearly.

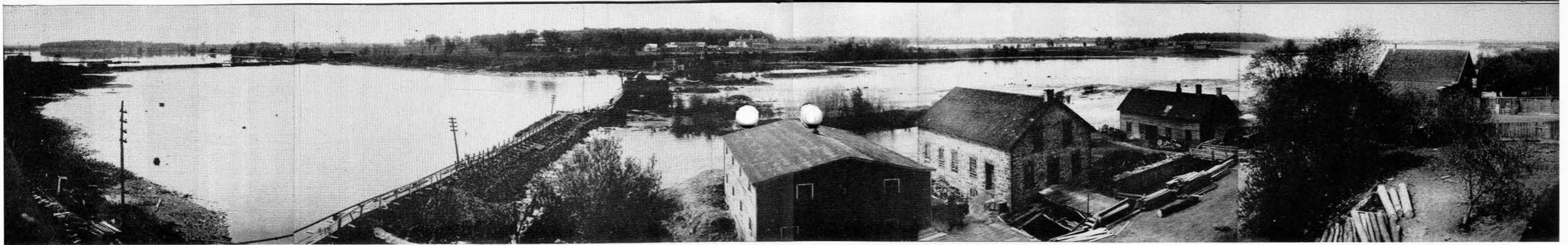
A large stone mill built in 1850 by Capt. Nathaniel Taggart was operated by Northrop brothers until 1866 when it was sold to L. J. Proctor. It had four run of stone and roller machinery which was steadily employed in custom work. It continued until 1900 when it was destroyed by fire. The water wheel pit of this mill with its early type turbine was to be seen in the ruins at the south end of the dam. Below the Proctor mill, separated from it by a planing mill, grist was ground for custom in another mill.

A butter factory at the Island terminal of the dam was an important industry for many years. This was owned and operated by Hon. E. S. Crapser, who in 1880, bought the Island property from the Ogden estate.

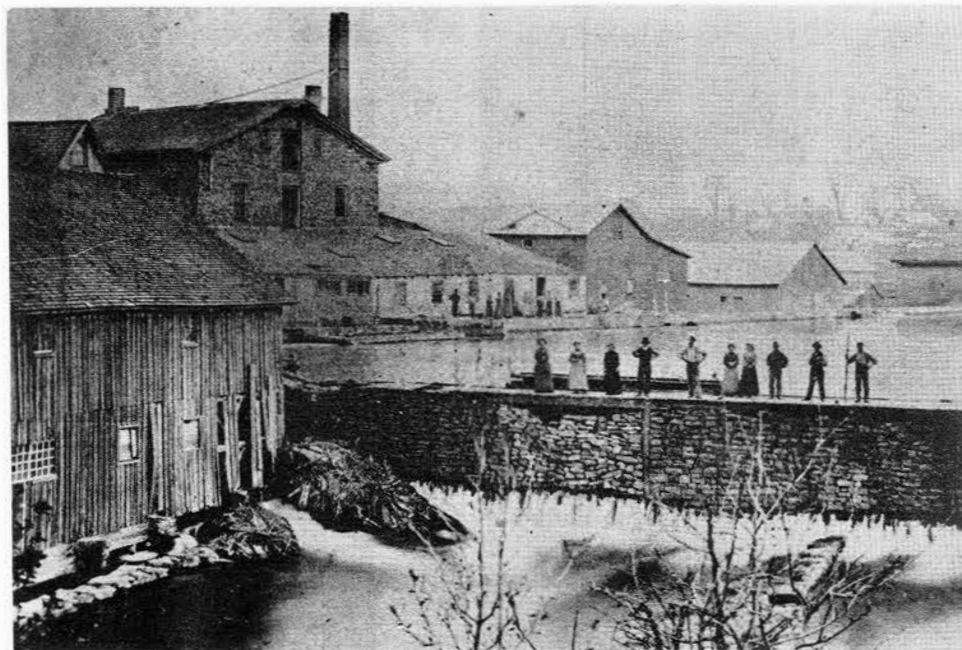
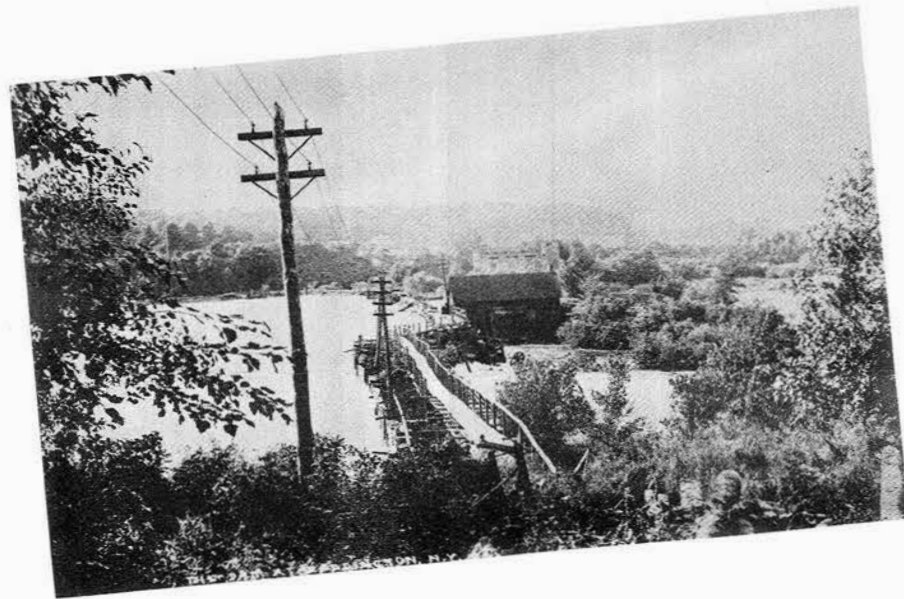
A saw mill was also in operation adjoining the butter factory.

In 1863, Henry Ripley James, publisher of Ogdensburg, bought an old stone grist mill along the dam and converted it into a paper mill to supply his newspapers, the St. Lawrence Republican and the Daily Journal. He built an addition and installed a new modern machine, a 64" Fourdrinier. The mill operated the year round, supplies being brought in by boat in summer. Rags were used for stock for which women, at times as many as fifty, were employed to sort. Men of the town had employment in the mill and as teamsters for the transportation of the paper which had to be moved to Ogdensburg by team in the winter. The industry was the most extensive one to make use of the water power. It continued for twenty years until destroyed by fire, April 24, 1883.

About 1896 the village voted to build an electric light plant. Under the direction of Herbert Dalzell it was completed in 1897. It supplied incandescent street lights of 30 candle power. A water pump was installed as it was expected water would be piped to the streets. Funds for this failed so the only pipe laid was a surface line from the power house to the Town Hall. Soon homes were being lighted on a flat rate basis. There was one switch in each house and when that was turned on all the lights came on. People still remember that lights went off at midnight, and a dance or other social function must stop then unless some one took up a collection and hastened to the power house to pay the operator to keep the power on for another hour or so. After a few years the plant was sold to the New York and Ontario Power Co., which company was acquiring water rights in the area.



Little River, Waddington, fifty years ago. "Bridge" at left. Old dam with "catwalk" in center. Canal Street, industries and exposed Power Canal, right.



Panorama at Top: Little River's main shoreline was once lined with many thriving small industries as the row of buildings above indicates. As shown there was the shore, the buildings, then the "power canal" which was actually a planked over flume (part exposed where planks had been removed at right) from which laterals diverted water from the flume to the water wheels in each plant. Paralleling the flume was Canal Street, a short section of which can be seen at the right. Out in the center of the old dam, along which is the footwalk with hand rails, can be seen the old Electric Light Plant (small wooden building) of 50 years ago. In distance are the ruins of the old paper mill, the lock. On the island is clearly discernible the Ogden Island House (Mansion). At left is the "bridge" or causeway for vehicle traffic to the Island. Second Row of Pictures; Left to Right: As the "catwalk" along the dam looked in the early 1900's. Iron waterwheel found in the ruins of the old Proctor feed-mill at east end of dam. Two arches over sluices carrying water from power canal back into Little River, from old grist mill. Lower Left: James Paper Mill 1863-1883. Lower Right: Foundations of old Lock, first and only lock on American side of St. Lawrence until Eisenhower (Robinson) Lock and Grass River Locks were constructed.



It was expected that the company would develop power for sale in New York and Canada but this could not be accomplished. The company paid taxes for many years on the property but it finally reverted to St. Lawrence county. The St. Lawrence Utilities bought the machinery in 1923. The wooden building, the last remaining structure on the dam, was finally demolished.

The power canal was still in use in the early 1900's. There were black smith shops, a butter factory, several wood working shops, monument shop and saw mills. These were small industries but served the people well. However, they could not compete with the industrial expansion that produced large scale operation and superior commodities. Waddington was hampered too by its remoteness from a railroad. The buildings along the canal fell into disuse and were dismantled. The last building to be taken down was that of J. S. Rutherford, a large wood working establishment.

Now, not a vestige remains of the industrial center. The Power and Seaway Project has cleared Canal street, demolished the Island Mansion, removed the dam. As time goes on it is increasingly difficult to remember the historic landmarks of Little River that once made an interesting and picturesque Waddington.

A LIST OF HISTORIC ANNIVERSARIES OCCURRING IN 1958
Prepared by Malcolm Booth, Secretary
of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

- 1602: Champlain's first voyage up the St. Lawrence River.
- 1858: Construction of new jail at Canton.
- 1858: October: Formation of St. Lawrence County Teachers' Association in Canton.
- 1808: April 1: Passage of act to authorize J. Waddington, D. A. and T. L. Ogden to build canal and locks at Hamilton (Waddington).
- 1858: Erection of state arsenal in Ogdensburg.
- 1808: First visit of David Parish to Ogdensburg.
Opening of Rosseel store in Ogdensburg with stock of \$40,000.
Building of two schooners, "Collector" and "Experiment" commenced in Ogdensburg on November 10.
- 1858: June: Building of village and town hall commenced in Ogdensburg.
- 1833: First resident Catholic priest, Father James Salmon, in Ogdensburg since the French war.
- 1808: First school in Neuvelton, taught by Dyer Badger.
- 1858: November 11: Legal incorporation and building of Rensselaer Falls Methodist Church.
- 1858: R. M. Godard and Co. started first bank in Canton.
- 1858: Institution of St. Lawrence commandery, Knights Templar, at Canton.
- 1808: Settlement of West Potsdam by Simeon Dart.
- 1858: Erection of town house at Potsdam, costing \$5,000.
- 1833: Secular society of Potsdam Methodist church formed, February 4.
- 1858: Construction of Potsdam Baptist church.
- 1858: March 4: Organization of Norwood Congregational church
- 1808: First school in Lisbon, district 1.
- 1808: September 7: Madrid Baptist church formed.
- 1808: or 1809: Hamblin-Castle distillery built in Madrid.
- 1858: Gardner Cox's potato starch factory changed to corn starch factory in town of Pierrepont.
- 1808: December 2: David Parish purchased Rossie from Gouverneur Morris and James D. LeRay.
- 1808: Reuben Streeter built mill on Oswegatchie River in town of Rossie.
- 1808: Henry McLaughlin, Amasa Blanchard, and Seth Abbott were appointed to prescribe rules for the administering of smallpox vaccination in the town of Hopkinton.

- 1858: D. I. Merrill's starch factory started in Hopkinton.
 1808: July 6: First Congregational church of Hopkinton formed.
 1808: December 2: David and George Parish purchased Parishville from James D. LeRay.
 1833: Hiram Parker built brick house in Parishville Center.
 1833: August 23: First Methodist society of Parishville reorganized.
 1808: Isaac Kendall built bridge across Oswegatchie River in town of Gouverneur.
 1808: Gouverneur Morris spent three weeks in Gouverneur as guest of Isaac Austin.
 1808: September 10: Gouverneur Morris agreed to give land behind Gouverneur Presbyterian church as a cemetery.
 1858: June 23: Consecration of Riverside cemetery, Gouverneur.
 1808: Elizabeth Sackett taught first school in Gouverneur, in bridge construction shack.
 1808: John Ross opened coopering shop, Peter F. Thatcher a chair shop, and Abner Wright a wagon shop in Dekalb.
 1858: December 18: Congregational church organized, DeFeyster.
 1808: First settlement of Morrystown village by Col. David Ford, Arnold Smith, and Thomas Hill.
 1833: February 11: Formation of religious union society, Morrystown.
 1833: March 25: Formation of Presbyterian society, Morrystown.
 1858: Opening of Mailesboro post-office, S. M. Farmer, postmaster.
 1833: Iron ore found on farm of Justus Peck at Little York.
 1833: August: Fuller Bros. blast-furnace completed at Fullerville Iron Works.
 1833: Opening of South Hammond post-office, Mr. King, postmaster.
 1808: First school in Louisville, taught by Elisha W. Barber in the Willson neighborhood.
 1833: Construction of a stone grist-mill at Louisville by James McVicker.
 1833: September: Sixty people subscribe money to survey a canal around the Long Sault rapids. G. Ogden and U. N. Crvis lead the venture.
 1833: Bridge at Massena Center swept away by flood.
 1808: Calvin Hubbard and Stephen Reed erected first grist-mill in Massena.
 1808: First frame house in Lawrence built of basswood "shakes" by Samuel Harris.
 1808: Quaker meetings held in Lawrence.
 1833: Fort Kent-Hopkinton stage line inaugurated.
 1858: Construction of North Lawrence Methodist church, later destroyed by fire.
 1833: First burials in Mound Hill cemetery, Nicholville.
 1808: September 11: Formation of Nicholville Baptist church at Hopkinton.
 1808: Law passed providing for road from Canton to Chester. This became the Lake George road.
 1858: Hermon Universalist church organized.
 1858: Spencer, Anderson, & Co. built saw-mill and boat oar factory in Fine.
 1858: Henry Rushton of Edwards built grist-mill in Fine.

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

The plaintive question of Juliet to Romeo, may be linked in a small degree to Andrew H. Irving, a resident of Gouverneur 60 years ago. Mr. Irving made a trip to Europe and had his baggage marked quite plainly, Andrew H. Irving, Gouverneur, N. Y. His first stop was at Paris, and from the start he noted he was receiving unusual attention. It was not long before it could be seen that his attention was far more than any other person was receiving. The obsequious attention finally forced him to inquire as to the reason for bell hops, clerks and even ordinary citizens acting so extraordinarily polite. A bell hop said, "The Governor of New York we are proud to have as a guest. Gouverneur is the French word for Governor, and his baggage indicated that he was the Gouverneur of New York. Mr. Irving was for quite sometime a resident at 29 Grove Street, Gouverneur, this now being the property of Mr. and Mrs. James Frank McCormick. Later he lived in Ogdensburg. Mr. Irving was chairman of the St. Lawrence County Draft Board during World War I. His home Ogdensburg residence has since been enlarged into the palatial limestone Pythian Home just west of that city.

BRIEF HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE IN ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY

By William H. Davies

Of course we are in a general way informed that the Indians did some farming but for the most part they did not rely on cultivated crops for food so we can pass over their farming as they had no taxes, or other community cash expenses.

As early as 1749 there were 3,000 Indians and French soldiers at Fort La Presentation (Ogdensburg) and at Indian Point below Ogdensburg. A little farming by Indians was practiced in a limited way in what is now Ogdensburg.

In 1796 Nathan Ford, land agent for the Ogden family, took possession of Ogdensburg and began to sell land around Ogdensburg and Black Lake. In 1798 some farmers came from Connecticut and cleared land at Black Lake eight miles west of Ogdensburg. These people had sold lands in Connecticut which were not very productive. They wanted better land. They found it by buying from Mr. Ford. Their county seat was in Plattsburgh, St. Lawrence County not being formed until 1802.

In 1810 the state legislature began building the turnpike from Carthage to Malone (Now Route 11). This opened up the southern part of the county to settlers. These early settlers cut down the trees, piled and burned them. They planted crops between stumps at first until they had time to remove the stumps. They built log cabins. Families lived, ate, and slept all in one room. Moss was packed between the logs to keep out the wind. The fireplace served both for heat and light. Sheep were the first and most common domestic animals as they needed them for clothing, although some linen was made from flax.

In the town of Oswegatchie in 1820, there were 2,000 sheep, 1200 oxen, 800 cows, and 100 horses. Heavy work was done by oxen as horses were not strong enough. The first crops were corn, wheat and flax, and potatoes.

A yoke of oxen cost about \$60, cows were worth from \$10 to \$15 and sheep \$2 to \$5.

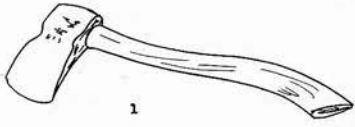
The first agricultural industry was that of making of potash. The farmers and settlers cleared the land and burned the logs and the stumps, boiling the ashes down to dry lye or potash. Thirty cords of wood made a ton of ashes which made only one-sixth of a ton of potash which was worth \$100 in those times.

Money was very scarce but people got along as they had no schools, no school tax, and very low general taxes which could, for a time, be paid in wheat or worked out on the paths (now roads) under the guidance of the pathmaster. This position is now that of Town Superintendent of Highways. Schools did not come to the early farming areas until the 1840's. However the children were taught by their parents at home. The education was suited to the times. It was inexpensive but would, of course, not be suited to present-day problems of making a living and "getting on", as they still say in our county.

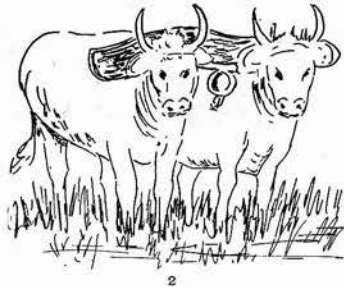
Our county farming went along in this manner for many years. Every community had its saw mill, grist mill, and tannery. These were paid annually by giving part of the product instead of cash. Churches were built without cash. In 1824 the members of the Congregational Society of Madrid desired to build a church. They had a large garden near the church and sold crops, raising \$400 for the construction of the church.

The civil war was the turning point from sheep farming to dairy farming, although the change was very gradual. In 1820 there were 75,000 sheep in the county. By 1890 the number was only 10,000. In 1820 there were 10,000 oxen and by 1890 few were left. The last oxen in St. Lawrence County were owned by Elder George Lockie of Gouverneur in 1955.

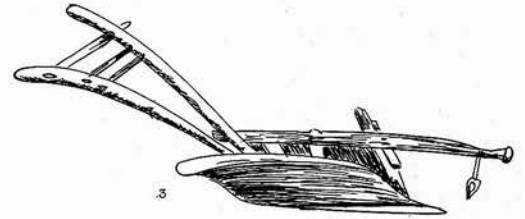
EARLY AMERICAN FARM TOOLS USED BY OUR FOREFATHERS
 IN THIS COUNTY
 (Illustrations by Miss Lillian Todd, Gouverneur)



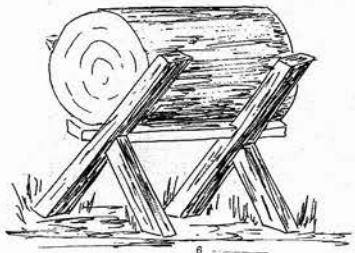
1



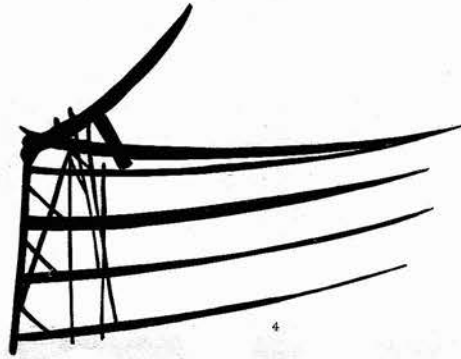
2



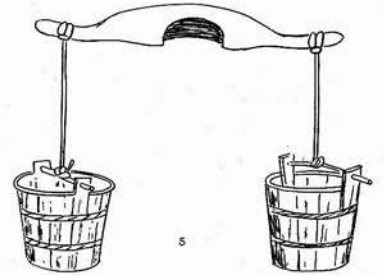
3



6



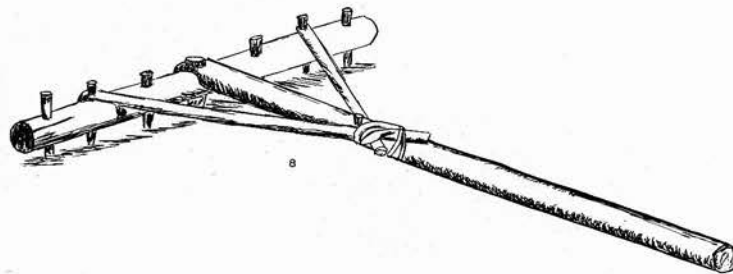
4



5



7



8



9

1. Ax for felling trees or chopping wood.
2. "Buck and Bright", as often called, harnessed with yoke.
3. Early type of plow with wooden beam.
4. Grain cradle for harvesting crops. A muscle builder.
5. Man's yoke for carrying water, sap or milk.
6. Sawhorse for holding logs. Served two purposes: to warm you while you worked, and what it made for the fireplace.
7. Grubbing hoe, or mattock, used in planting and weeding.
8. Home-made wooden rake, or hand-harrow. Which? or, What?
9. Adze for shaping timber or hollowing logs.

At first butter and cheese were made in the home. The butter industry thrived around Madrid where the Scotch immigrants made better butter, historians tell us, than the Yankees from Vermont. The first cheese factory was at Richville in 1863. In 1830 the Madrid creamery was shipping a ton of butter a day to Boston. For years we shipped tons of butter and cheese to England and France.

This butter and cheese era, from 1870 to 1920, was truly the golden age of agriculture in this county. The great farm buildings were built and depicted in the various histories of St. Lawrence County. Substantial barns and houses, neat yards and driveways, and the best of fences. Taxes were low and farmers had money to keep up their buildings.

About the time of the first World War farmers began to sell some whole milk without getting whey or skimmilk back for farm animals.

The first Fair was held in Canton in 1822 and in 1852 the St. Lawrence County Fair Association was formed there. Ogdensburg planned a fair for 1871, and Potsdam for a fair in 1870. The Gouverneur fair came later.

The Grange has been an agricultural force in our county. The first granges were established in Norwood and Massena in 1873. Other early granges were at Potsdam, Crary Mills and Gouverneur.

Gradually every town had a grange established. It was a great social organization, all the members of the family being in attendance. It was truly a family organization. Granges had a program on the local, county, state, and national level. These gave farmers an opportunity to organize in order to better their industry.

The Farm Bureau has played an important part in increasing the crop and animal production of the county. In recent years the Farm Bureau has been replaced by the Extension Service which aims to offer a broader program in also teaching better farm management.

The Farm Bureau is now a state and national organization with a comprehensive program of a legislative nature for the betterment of the farm industry on a broad basis. It also sponsors several insurance organizations.

Agriculture in this county seemed to be the most prosperous from 1870 to 1920, or about the end of the first World War.

Since then the cost of producing milk has increased through the use of expensive machinery. Taxes have increased by leaps and bounds. Although a few farmers seem to be making money, the average farmer does not reflect prosperity through the appearance of his buildings and farmsteads.

Many bankers have observed this. With the coming of the Seaway, supposedly a boom to the county farmer labor problems have been greatly increased.

1883

Last Friday Braithwaite & Kelly of Canton took the job of erecting the new "Union Free School" house which will cost \$18,000.00. It is to be built of brick and will accommodate 500 students. B. Hodskin and D. M. Jones are the building committee. Such a building has long been needed.

FROM THE COUNTY'S CRACKER BARRELS

(Including the names of all Town and Village Historians together with a continuing report of their activities)

BRASHER: (Mrs. Joseph O'Brien). CANTON: (Mrs. Karl M. Mayhew, Jr.). Frank Crary has completed the last tools for hand processing flax, Maple log for same given by Oscar Douglas and buzzed to size by Keith Mayhew. Snapshots to be taken of local post office staff at work and prints of current operations, also many clippings and snapshots of past operations. Photostats include presidential postmastership appointments of: Two for Mrs. Grace Sullivan; Mr. Eldred Wood; three for late J. Fred Hammond. Thus the names of five U. S. Presidents are in the Post Office History books: They are, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower. RENSSELAER FALLS VILLAGE: (Mrs. Nina Wilson). Continues research on Old State Road. CLARE: (Mrs. Leslie Colton). Cemetery map nearly completed in the rough. Some service records ready to turn in. CLIFTON: (Mrs. George Reynolds). has handed in her lumbering article. COLTON: (Mrs. Judon Miller). Has handed in her lumbering article. DEKALB: (Miss Mabel Sheldon). DEPEYSTER: (Mrs. Emery Smithers). Punchlock historians had a Christmas party December 21. The Town has received two flags from the descendents of General Curtis: an American flag carried in the battle of Fort Fisher, and the other a dark blue battle flag carried by his regiment in the battle. The American flag was placed on the General's casket during the funeral. EDWARDS: (Miss Leah Noble). We have no Yorker Club this year. FINE: (Mrs. Alma Marsh). Sincerest sympathies to Mrs. Marsh on the death of her father in October. "I'm continuing to work on the incomplete World War II Soldier's records and those of present servicemen and unfinished cemetery lists. Also collecting data for article on "The First Baptist Church of Oswegatchie." FOWLER: (Mrs. Helen Cunningham). GOUVERNEUR: (Miss Helena Johnston). GOUVERNEUR VILLAGE: (Julius Bartlett). Contribution published separately. HAMMOND: (Harold Hibbs). Listing the firsts in the Town of Hammond. HERMON: (Mrs. Kellog Morgan). My work for 1957 included calendars done, service records to date, maps completed and reports in. I have purchased for Hermon Hepburn Library the book on the history of New York State recommended at our Historical meeting last fall, and also by Dr. Corey. HOPKINTON: (Mrs. Dorothy Squires). LAWRENCE: (Mrs. Gordon Cole). Working on scrap book of town. LISBON: (E. Earl Jones). Is working on old Post Office records. Hopes to write a history and have an exhibit. LOUISVILLE: (Mrs. Lorraine Bandy). Have completed pictures and album on removal of cemeteries along St. Lawrence River Road. 490 bodies were removed. Have been before my town board with my annual report. Finished my town calendar. MACOMB: (Mrs. India Murton). Taking a vacation in Florida, but I am clipping news print and plan to work on some articles I have outlined and catch up on correspondence with people who can help with historical facts about our town. MADRID: (Mrs. Margaret Thompson). Was the first Historian to have her 1957 Annual Report to the County Office. Have acquired boxes and boxes of late Lawyer Merriman's data to look over for dates. Also have complete data on the history of the telephone in Madrid and vicinity. MASSENA: (Mrs. Ella Lahey). Continues filing clippings and has sent in her lumbering article. MORRISTOWN: (Mrs. Doris Planty). Has made Calendar of Historical Events of Morristown 1804-1957; also one of Brier Hill 1812-1957. Has completed History of St. John's Catholic Church. Has made 41 interviews to gather local history this year. (We were so sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Planty, our sincerest sympathies, Doris.) NORFOLK: Although Mrs. Ralph Wing is not officially appointed as Town Historian, we list her here for her fine historical work in the town. She has completed mapping and recording of all the cemeteries which included 1467 plots. OSWEGATCHIE: (Mrs. Monna Mayne). HEUVELTON VILLAGE: (Mrs. Ida Downing). PARISHVILLE: (Miss Doris Rowland). Hopes to attend the Historians Workshop meeting in New York City in February. PIERCEFIELD: (Mrs. Beulah Dorothy). Finished her calendar of Events and is working on her lumbering story. PIERREPONT. (Millard Hundley). PITCAIRN. (No historian). POTSDAM: (Charles Lahey). Is working on a North Country Seminar to be

patterned after those held in Cooperstown. ROSSIE: (Mrs. Virgie Simons). Working on town calendar. RUSSELL: (Mrs. Dorothy Manning). STOCKHOLM: (Lindon E. Riggs). Sorry to report the death of Major Horace Scott, December 2, 1957. WADDINGTON: (Mrs. Ethel Olds). See article elsewhere.

FROM THE YORKER CRACKER BARREL

CANTON: Three groups have elected their central officers. Roger Cota is President; Cindy O'Brien, Vice President; Kay Hall, Secretary; and Robert Hall, Treasurer. A food sale was to be held January 11th. EDWARDS, COUVERNEUR and NEUVELTON have not organized. MASSENA: There are 105 applicants for membership in the club. Sponsors find it impossible to accomodate such a large group and have a rather unique way of reducing the number. An historical assignment is given the would-be Yorkers, and the way in which the individual handles the project, determines his membership. The Yorker Club was organized five years ago in the Massena Schools. The present officers are: President, Susanne Lavack; Vice-President, Carol Avery; Secretary, Mary Wescott; Corresponding Secretary, C. Gardner; Treasurer, Robert LaPointe. LISBON: Has five Yorker groups. The newest one is the Andrew O'Neil Chapter and is composed of Ninth Graders with Richard Pinover as sponsor. Officers are: Kathy Houlihan, President; Joyce McHally, Vice President; Sheila Mayne, Secretary; and Vicky Marshman, Treasurer. Lisbon Yorkers have been using filmstrips and opaque projectors as well as making posters. Mr. Richard Pinover, of the high school faculty, spoke to the Chapter on antiques and showed them a powder horn dated 1758 with a map of Fort Edwards. The four other chapters are: Seaway, St. Lawrence, Lisbon and Lisbon Centre. A new school has been added to our list with the Madrid -Waddington Yorker Club. This is a group of seventh grade students with Margaret Fisher as President; Mary Fay, Vice President; and Connie Morris, Secretary. Helen Howard of the 9th Grade sent in the information.

1880

J. H. Rushton, the winner of the late regatta on Lake George, has gone to Canada to purchase some first class cedar for his Rob Roy and other class of boats.

1882

A dagnerreotype of Gov. Silas Wright was recently discovered in a closet of the Moody house in Canton which is said by those who knew him in his lifetime to be a better picture of him than any previously known to exist. The picture is in the possession of Dr. J. C. Prestin of this village. It is about as large as the "cabinet-sized" photograph and is enclosed in a morocco covered case such as were common thirty years ago and more when dagnerrotypes were in vogue.

St. Lawrence County Historical Association

P. O. Box 251
CANTON, N. Y.

