

THE
QUARTERLY

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

October 1977



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Editor: Varick A. Chittenden

Cover: From a letter written by Dorothy Cleaveland Salisbury, February 22, 1971:

My Tyler coverlet is dark blue and white. The center part of the coverlet has nine conventionalized groups of four tree branches with leaves and flowers. Filling in the spots between these are oval medallions in the center of each. Other smaller medallions fill in smaller spots between the large designs.

The border has bowls of fruit, including melons, a pear, an apple and cherries, with leaves, grapes and flowers hanging over the edge. The corners have the eagle with three arrows and two olive branches in his talons and a ribbon bearing the legend E Pluribus Unum in his beak with 13 stars between its ends. Below the eagle is the owner's name:

H.S. Ellsworth (should have been H.E. Ellsworth)

Jefferson Co. N.Y.

1848

The coverlet was made for my grandmother Harriet Emiline Ellsworth, then a girl of 19, living in Housefield, not far from Butternville.

[This coverlet has recently been a generous presentation to SLCHA from the Salisbury estate, for exhibition courtesy of St. Lawrence University. See page 3.]



Tyler Coverlet (dated 1834). Compare the design with that shown on bottom left, page 5. Both pieces were made about the same time.

The Tyler Coverlets

by Etta Tyler Chapman

Reprinted through the courtesy of *The Magazine ANTIQUES* from Volume XIII, Number 3, March, 1928, pp. 215-218

The strikingly handsome colors and patterns of Jacquard coverlets were very popular in the American home of the early nineteenth century and are valuable heirlooms today. They were both useful and decorative refinements and testimony to people's wishes to have the products of a swiftly growing sophistication in the technology of the time. Because of a recent donation to the SLCHA (see cover), we draw attention to the products of one talented family in neighboring Jefferson County. All editorial comments in Italics in this article are by the editor of The Magazine ANTIQUES.

For a long time I have felt that my brother and I, as the only living grandchildren, owe it to our grandfather, his children, and their descendants to gather together the available facts about my grandfather, Harry Tyler, and his handiwork, that these might not be vanished by time and entirely lost; for when a man's work endures, his name should not be forgotten.

Harry Tyler was born in the year 1801, in the state of Connecticut. He was of English parentage. His father was a marine merchant, who was lost at sea with his ship and cargo while crossing the Atlantic.

Harry spent his early years in Milford, Otsego County, New York. He married Ann Cole, a beautiful and talented granddaughter of David French, who served as sergeant in Captain Luke Day's Company, Seventh Massachusetts Regiment, commanded by Ichabod Alden, in the war of the American Revolution. He served over four years, and was one of the few to receive a George Washington medal.

Four healthy, intelligent children were born to this union. Their names were Cynthia, Elman (who was my father), Lemman and Leona.

In 1830 my grandfather moved to Boston, Erie County, New York, and, two years later, came to North Adams, a little hamlet east of Adams Center,

Jefferson County, New York, where he purchased a farm and remained one year. But farming was not to his taste, though he was a lover of nature and enjoyed the study of horticulture. He possessed a very scientific mind and rare mechanical ability. So he decided to settle in Butterville, a hamlet two miles south of Smithville, Jefferson County, New York; and to carry out his dream of weaving coverlets and carpets.

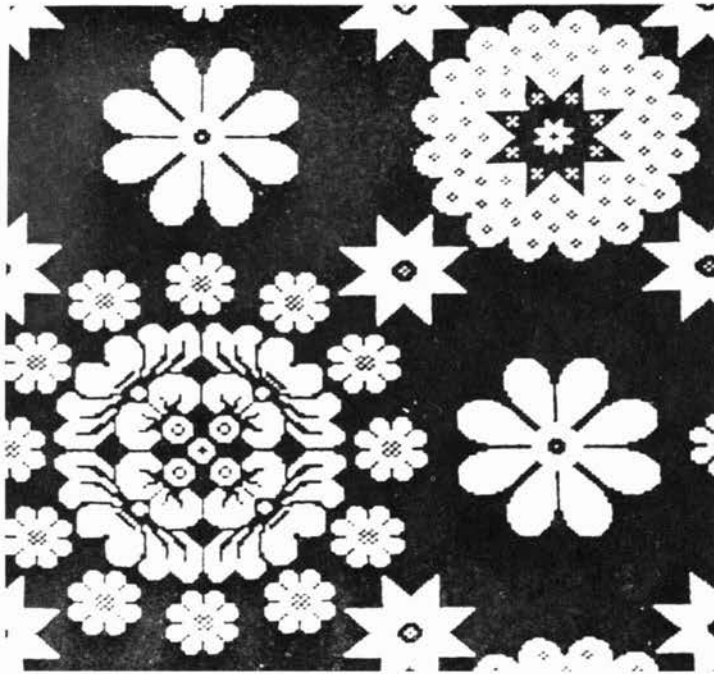
First he purchased seven acres of land next to the school and built a substantial wooden house. He set out a large orchard and nursery and established quite an extensive apiary. He was a man of high principles, very painstaking in all his work, and accurate to the last degree. A man of broad and liberal ideas, he helped to build the Universalist Church in Henderson County.

He not only invented his looms, but made every part of them himself. These he installed in the front room of the house, usually known as the parlor, with some of the machinery in the room above over the looms. These pieces of mechanism were complicated and intricate. One loom was for ingrain carpets and one for coverlets. He himself drew all his designs (which were many and varied) except the fruit pattern and the eagle design, which were executed by Elman, his eldest son. These patterns were cut in heavy paper, which was perforated somewhat after the

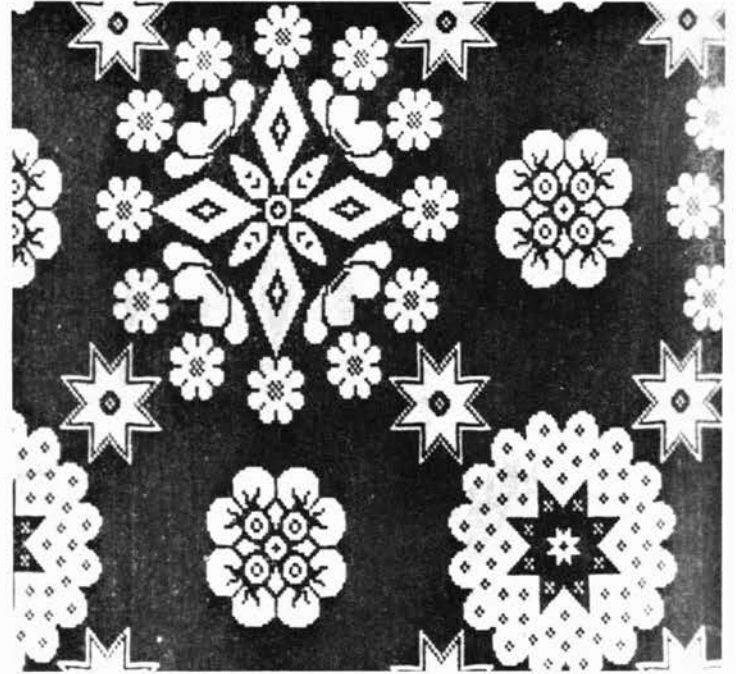
manner of music rolls for player pianos. The weaving was known as two-ply: that is, the finished work, wrought in two colors, was of double thickness; and, though the pattern of each surface was the same, the dominant color of one surface became the secondary color of its reverse.*

Not until 1834 did my grandfather's dream crystallize and the shuttles begin to fly. Only four are living today who ever saw any of the work done, and, as they were mere children at the time, none of them can explain the process. All his coverlets were woven in two strips, however, which were subsequently pieced together.

All of the work he did by himself with the assistance of his three older children as they grew up. None was ever done by anyone outside of the family, and he never allowed even his children to warp a piece of work, lest the secret should escape. Elman felt sure that he could do this properly, but he was never allowed to try. The dyeing was done in a small building at the rear of the home, a large brass kettle serving as dye pot. To insure even coloring, this utensil had to be kept so brightly clean that "you could see your face in it." The task of polishing the kettle naturally fell to the two boys, who, every Saturday morning, had to climb, barefooted, into its depths. They never were allowed to wear anything on their



Tyler Coverlet (dated 1840).



Tyler Coverlet (dated 1841).

feet for fear of making a scratch or dent in the brass, which might result in discoloration of the goods in process of being dyed. So, with old house brooms, a liberal amount of salt and vinegar, and much elbow grease, they scrubbed and scrubbed until every vestige of stain was removed. No matter how well the fish were biting in the pond or how thick the ducks were on the marsh, the kettle must be polished each Saturday morning while the neighbor boys were enjoying their weekly recess.

My grandfather used indigo for all his blues. For his red he used cochineal — the bodies of a little insect gathered from cactus plants in Central America and Mexico. All of his dyes he purchased from Elisha Camp, father of Colonel Walter Camp of Sackets Harbor, for they could always be relied upon. Honor and integrity are always associated with the name of Camp in Jefferson County. As Elman was the eldest son, it fell to him to be his father's first assistant and to make many horseback trips about the county, delivering finished work and returning with dyes and other wares.

Elman was the swiftest weaver of them all. He could weave the two strips of a coverlet in two half days, and was rewarded by freedom to go hunting on the remaining half days. He was a fine marksman, and was known as one who always brought home a bird from the turkey shoot. Spinning, as well as weaving, was an accomplishment in those days; and the best spinner in the neighborhood took great pride in making her thread smooth for the Tyler coverlets. Of these coverlets nearly every well-to-do household in the county possessed one or more; and no bride's "setting out" was

considered complete without at least one, or more usually, a pair.

Grandfather, being of English descent, naturally loved the lion as an emblem, and he used it for several years. Then one day, Elman remarked, "Father, we should have the American eagle on our work in place of the lion."

"Well, son, if you want the eagle, draw the pattern," replied his father.

This was a simple task for Elman, as he



Tyler Coverlet (dated 1850). Note that the heavy classic acanthus scrolls take the place of the more delicate trees of earlier borders.

was teacher of penmanship and held evening writing classes in the different schoolhouses about the town. Thus the eagle and the motto *e pluribus unum* replaced the lion in all the work which followed.

A break in the family came in 1843. The loved and devoted wife and mother died. A few years later my grandfather married Harriette Ann Dye. Four children were born to this union: Beloit, Deloit, Harriette, and Ides. At the age of twenty, Elman left home to learn carriage making, and, a few years later, Lemman also left the family fireside to engage in the same kind of work.

The proverbial shoemaker's children are never well shod. My grandfather made only two coverlets for his own family: one for the daughter Cynthia, and one for my mother. The latter coverlet is all in white and carries, in the corner, my mother's name and the date 1857. This coverlet, I remember, was always kept on the spare bed. It was not so attractive to my young eyes as the colored coverlets. The blue ones I admired especially. They had an air of dignity and elegance; and I shall never forget how thrilled I was when, some twenty years ago, my father gave me a blue and white one, for which he had paid ten dollars. I loved even the big mouse holes in it, though they took me weeks to darn.

My grandfather's weaving continued until, one day, the youngest daughter, aged seven, was taken suddenly ill and died. The father's affection for this attractive child was more than usually keen, and so great was the shock of her death that he was stricken with apoplexy on his return from her burial. He

survived but a single day. Only fifty-seven years old he was when his life's web was finished, but the product of his twenty-four years of labor offers impressive testimony to his skill, his industry, and his never-failing integrity. All who participated in my grandfather's enterprises have long been gone. Nothing remains but the old homestead and some examples of the work itself.

"Tis given to few to create, but to enjoy is the birthright of us all."

NOTE

The Tyler coverlets, like others of their type, were woven in wool over a cotton warp. It was not customary for the weaver to supply the materials. One of Tyler's advertising handbills, dated September 25, 1856, and still preserved by the author of this article, gives the following directions for the preparation of the yarn, which must be supplied by his patrons:

For Coverlets: Spin 60 knots to the pound in oil. When doubled and twisted, 7 runs for one Coverlet, or 13 runs for two Coverlets in the same web. 3½ lbs. Knitting Cotton, No. 12, three threaded, for one Coverlet, or 7 lbs. for two. N.B. The wool may be spun cross-band and not doubled, 30 knots to the pound.

For weaving, do not twist your yarn very hard if you wish good work. Yarn should be scoured with old soap, and not allowed to lie in the suds any time, and rinse perfectly clean in clear water, to color scarlet.

Tyler's prices for weaving were: for one coverlet, \$2.75; for more than one in the same web, \$2.50 each. An extra charge of ten shillings per coverlet was made for dyeing scarlet with the expensive and precious cochineal. At these prices, the weaver's profit must have



Tyler Coverlet (dated 1835). One of the earliest products of the weaver, who did not begin active operations until 1834.

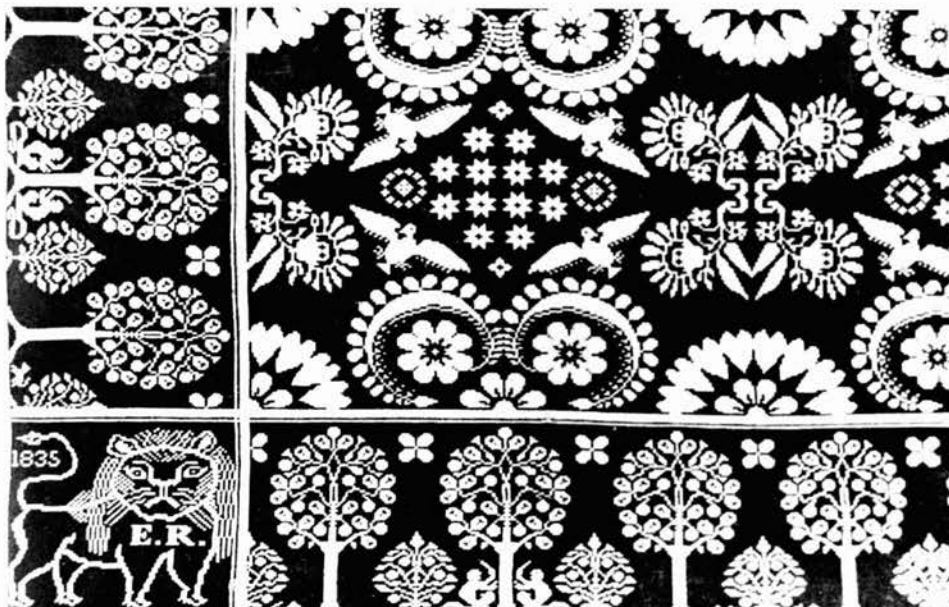
been ridiculously small. The swift-working son Elman could weave two strips of a coverlet in two half days. In addition, the yarn had to be dyed, the warp painstakingly set up, and the weft threads so arranged as to respond accurately to the urge of the pattern cards fulfilling the design. If Tyler had been aware of modern accounting methods and had loaded his books with charges against capital investment, overhead, and depreciation, he might perhaps have accounted himself into bankruptcy. As it was, he doubtless labored under the delusion that he was making a comfortable living. *The Editor.*

**It is easy to overemphasize Tyler's personal inventiveness in building and equipping his looms. The methods which*

*he pursued appear to have been those commonly employed by a small multitude of other weavers scattered through New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois, and, doubtless, other states of the young Republic. The punched pattern card, which so operated as mechanically to control the threading of the weft through the warp, was the invention of a Frenchman, Joseph Marie Jacquard of Lyons, who perfected his device about the time of Harry Tyler's birth, in 1801. Just when the Jacquard loom came into general use in the United States for the weaving of coverlets it would be difficult to determine. Coverlets made on this type of loom and bearing the date of 1825 are known. The great majority of such pieces, however, appear to have been turned out by professional weavers during the period from 1840 until the outbreak of the Civil War. The Jacquard loom with its punched cards made possible the elaboration of pictorial or semi-pictorial patterns, which, during the period noted, quite displaced the simple old-time geometrical designs to which the home weavers had been restricted by the limitations of their own skill and the mechanical inadequacies of their primitive looms. The admirer of those handicrafts which exhibit the minimum evidence of dependence upon mechanical aid will prize the old geometrical coverlets above their more brilliant Jacquard descendants. First cousin to the latter are the ingrain carpets, which are still manufactured, and which, since they show the same pattern - though with colors transposed - on both sides, may be reversed when the used surface shows distressing signs of wear. *The Editor.**

For further reading:

Carleton L. Safford's and Robert Bishop's **America's Quilts and Coverlets**, 1974.



Tyler Coverlet (dated 1853). Here, as in 1848 Ellsworth coverlet on cover, the eagle supplants the lion as a corner decoration. The border design seems reminiscent of stencil designs on furniture.

'By Hell, Cheese and Crackers': Gilman Selleck

by Fred Selleck

While areas like ours have boasted legendary characters of heroic proportions, mountain men and hermits, outlaws and derelicts, the Town of Colton had its own very special local legend in Gil Selleck, who spent more of his lifetime living alone in the woods than any other person in the Western Adirondacks. The author, Gil's nephew, recalls many anecdotes of this unheralded character who may have no equal anymore.



Gil Selleck at Lower Camp, 1914. Photograph by Sumner Lucas, Joe Indian Pond.

From the time of his birth near Parishville Center in 1858 until his death in 1926 at his upper camp near Blue Mountain Stream and Pleasant Lake in the Town of Colton, Gilman Selleck spent more of his lifetime living alone in the woods than any other person of the Western Adirondacks.

Although the location of his lower camp at Grandshue near Gulf Brook and his upper camp near Pleasant Lake are identified on the older Geological Survey maps, nothing that we are aware of has ever been written about his life.

Gilman was one of four children born to Eliza Cary Selleck and Woodard C. Selleck. He was an only son; the others were daughters Elsie, Mary and Cora. When the children were very small, their father, like many others from this area, volunteered for service in the Union Army during the great war between the States.

Woodard was wounded in the hip by a musket ball or grape shot and spent some time in a hospital in Washington, D.C.

When he had recovered enough to travel he returned home to visit his family. Eliza was not feeling well and was beginning to show signs of the dreaded T.B. or consumption as it was then called. Woodard had to return to Washington and spent the rest of the war there on guard duty. The year after he was mustered out, in 1866, Eliza died leaving the young family without a mother.

Amanda Cary had lost her husband Harrison, in the Battle of Antietam. They were living in South Pierrepont and had one son, Myron Cary, before Harrison enlisted. It was only natural that the widow and widower, who were also in-laws should marry and combine the two families for the mutual benefit of each.

Gilman Selleck was a strong young man who never quite fitted into the new home in Pierrepont. However his cousin Myron Cary who was now also his stepbrother were about the same age. They both loved to hunt and fish, and by the time they were 13 years old they were

spending most of their free time fishing, hunting and exploring the woods. And in the early 1870's there was plenty of woods to explore in this area of the northwest Adirondacks. By the time they were 17 the two boys had built a one-room log camp at the same location which was later to be Gilman's permanent lower camp.

My father was born in 1870, so his half-brother Gilman was 12 years older. They were always looking out for each other's interests even though there was such an age difference. In the end it was my father, George Selleck, who took care of Gilman when he was sick and looked after his funeral when he passed away in 1926.

Gilman worked on farms summers, but when it came trapping time he was at his camp at Grandshue for the remainder of the fall and winter. From the time he was 25 years old, he made his home in the woods at Grandshue and later on at this upper camp after 1895.

Gilman learned to play the violin when



Gil Selleck's Lower Camp, 1917.

he was in his teens, and one of his proudest possessions throughout most of his life was his old fiddle. When he was 18 he worked all summer on a farm below Pierrepont Center for Theodore Hundley. For the full six months he saved all his money and when the job was through in the fall, he took the sixty dollars to the Sims Music Store in Canton and bought himself a new fiddle. He kept his violin for many years, until in 1922 someone stole it from his camp.

Uncle Gil was never what is nowadays called an outlaw. He never killed deer for sale and got a lot more pleasure sitting on a high staging at his salt lick, playing to the deer on his fiddle, than shooting them with a jack light and gun.

Gil's lower camp was built around 1885, but it was nearly 10 years later that he decided to build the upper camp near Pleasant Lake.

During the 1880's and early 1890's there was a good market for spruce gum. Gil was quite a professional gum picker and traveled over a wide area gathering the gum. The standard equipment was a spruce gum picker which consisted of a sharpened metal cone, attached to a tapered pole about 10 feet long, a knapsack to be carried on the back for local picking, and a full-sized pack basket for transporting the gum to the clearing and to market at the processing plant at Russell.

Along with spruce gum picking was the



Gil Selleck's Upper Camp, 1917, with bark roof.

continual search for ginseng. Gilman always dreamed of raising a lot of ginseng at his big garden at the lower camp. After trial and error for many years he did manage to grow some, but it was never the success he envisaged it to be.

1903 and 1908 were the years of the big fires that burned much of the Adirondacks, the Low's property and the Rockefeller tracts. Gilman was busy watching out for fires. In 1908 he made a trip every other day from his lower camp to the upper camp and back for over a month or more. Everything he owned was in the two camps, so if a fire got started in that area it would clean him out. One time he fought a fire all alone for over a week and finally got it out. I hope the Sisson and White Lumber Company realized what good fire protection Gil was giving them.

One day in early July 1909 Gilman had gone to Gulf Brook to get a few trout for supper. When he returned something strange was going on inside the camp. He imagined one of the Frenchmen from the lumber camps nearby had broken in, but when he reached the door he found it was a full-grown bear instead. The camp was a shambles with maple syrup and strawberry jam all over the place. Gil kept the berry and maple syrup mixture in old sap buckets in the corner under a bench. Gil of course attacked the bear with an axe that was handy, but the bear escaped through a window in the side of the camp. Thinking the bear would be back, he set his big bear trap near the garden and camp entrance. About a week later when he returned in the evening from a fishing trip, much to his surprise he found the game protector from Colton, Joe Smith, in his bear trap. "By Hell, Cheese and Crackers, Joe, I didn't expect to find you in my bear trap," exclaimed Gil. "I didn't expect to be here either," said Joe; "now help me out of this g-d-thing." Gil rushed around and got a pole for a lever, pried the big spring down and released his "catch."

Luckily for Smith the jaws of the trap had caught him across the heel of the leather high-top shoes he was wearing.

Joe Smith used to run a store in Colton, and in 1929 when I was going to school in Colton, I asked Joe if Gil really did catch him in a bear trap. He pushed his black hat back on his head, smiled and said to me, "Yes, I did get caught in Gil's bear trap, but that's all you are going to find out about it, young fellow."

For many years Gilman grew a big garden at his lower camp. He used to bring fresh strawberries from his garden by pack basket all the way to South Colton for sale at the local stores. He made maple syrup each spring and used it to can and preserve the strawberries and wild raspberries for use during the winter.

A few years after the upper camp was built Gil moved his maple sugar operation there. A nice stand of maple were handy. He boiled the sap on a flat pan he had carried all the way in from Gleason's Mill, which is about 10 miles.

During and right after World War I, vast areas of hardwood were being lumbered off in the towns of Colton, Clare, and Piercefield. Sisson and White of Potsdam and Sykes Brothers of Piercefield and Cranberry Lake were big owners of land in the area.

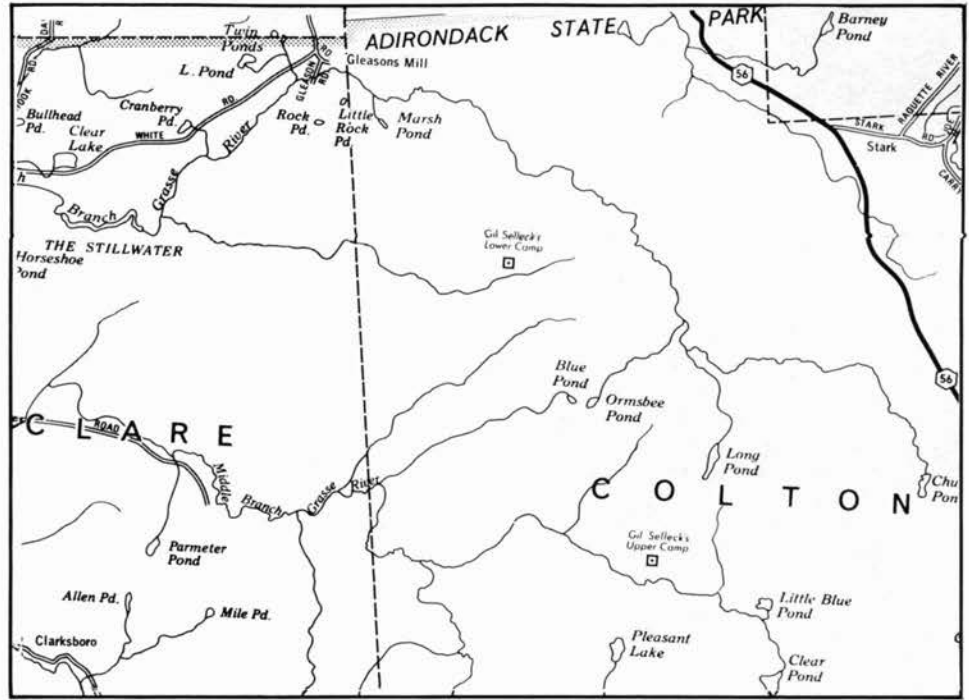
Gil's upper camp was located in an area of good stands of maple and yellow birch, so inevitably the Sisson and White logging crews moved closer to his sugar bush. He finally decided to make a stand and ordered the lumber crew not to cut there. Stanley Sisson himself went to visit Gilman and found him sitting with his gun across his lap, protecting his maple trees. Sisson of course tactfully agreed to leave the trees standing. (Approximately fifty years later - six years ago - Sam Parmelee told me that the Draper Corporation woods crew had just finished cutting Gil's sugar bush.)

Gilman was always whittling and making things to use around camp. One of his projects was a set of wooden false teeth. Surprisingly enough after two years of trial and error he made himself some usable teeth, from wood.

Throughout the years he came out of the woods to the clearing only to visit relatives and get flour, lard and salt and ammunition for his gun. He was usually



Gil with trout taken from Pleasant Lake, 1917.



Map with Gil Selleck's two camps, Pleasant Lake, and Gleason's Mill located.

quite successful at trapping and perfected the dead fall type of trap, that would be the envy of some trappers today. The dead fall was usually made along a stream bank with a heavy log that was suspended and triggered to fall at any sensitive touch by any animal passing under it. It would kill the fur bearing animal instantly, and when it worked right was much more practical than a steel trap.

Nothing that we could find out from those who knew him would suggest that Gilman ever had any romance in his life, except his love for the woods, his love for music and his old fiddle, and his love of animals. Certainly he was a man that lived in balance with nature, or he could not have survived.

After his death our family began to realize how many people knew Gil and were concerned. It was State Representative Sweet from Phoenix County who found him sick at his lower camp in the fall of 1925 and sent word out to the clearing so a party could go in and bring him out.

Another good friend who admired Gil was the late County Judge Andrew Hanmer from Massena. Herbert Holland from DePeyster had hunted with him for many years.

I have recently talked with Sumner Lucas of Joe Indian Pond, Lee A. Rexford and Ernest Peryer of Colton. They all remembered Gilman and had visited his camp at Grandshue.

The only pictures we have of the two camps were taken by his only remaining nephew, Myron Stratton. Gilman returned to the woods in early January, 1926. He had been sick with pneumonia and was not really able to go. He found the lower camp burned when he got there, and he kept going to his upper camp. In early March a lumber train crew found his body in the upper camp. When his body was laid out by Asa Hawley at the Colton undertaking parlor, a note was found in his old black vest pocket. Written on an old envelope with a stub pencil it said, "George, I have got pneumonia, Good-bye, Gilman."

☆☆☆☆

For further reading

Maitland C. de Sormo's *Noah John Rondeau, Adirondack Hermit*, 1969.

Harvey L. Dunham's *Adirondack French Louie*, 1953.

☆☆☆☆

About the Author

Fred Selleck is a former supervisor of the Town of Pierrepont and presently County Sealer of Weights and Measures. His family's long history here and his thorough knowledge of the backroads and characters of our county make him a great authoritative resource.



Ingrain carpet and general atmosphere of a comfortable rural interior in upstate New York in the 1840's at Bump Tavern, Cooperstown, New York.

A Study in Rural Comfort (Part Two)

by James C. McCabe

This is the third and final part of an extensive report prepared by James McCabe for the SLCHA on the architecture and decorative arts of the period of 1830 to 1850 in northern New York. This part concentrates on the recommendations for furnishing rooms in the restored portion of the Governor Silas Wright house in Canton.

PARLORS

It is in the parlors that the most stylistically modern pieces could be found. As the most public room in the house, the strongest impression upon the guests would come from this room. The furniture requirements for the room would be: twelve side or arm chairs, six for each parlor, one or two sofas for the back or both parlors, two tables, one card table that would be up against a wall, and an oval or circular center table that would be in the middle of the back parlor; two looking glasses, one for each room; and drapes and carpeting. It was the style of this period to fill the rooms with as many

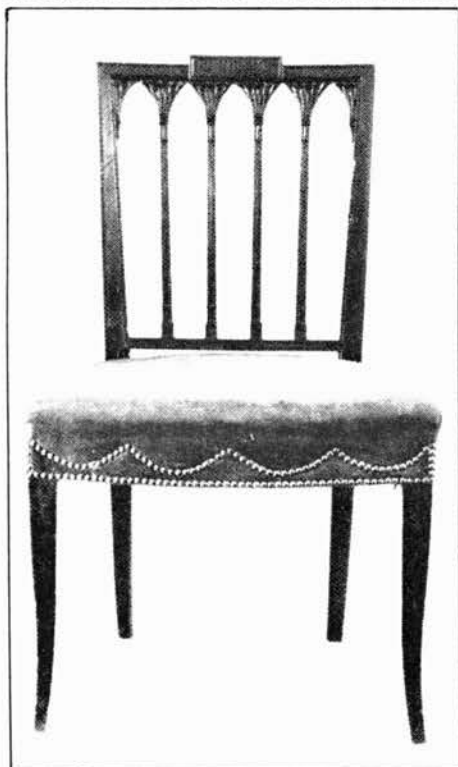
chairs as possible; consequently there are twelve chairs for the parlors and a sofa. Throughout the house, Mrs. Wright followed a pattern of grouping the chairs, six to a room; recommendations will attempt to follow that pattern.

Mrs. Wright seems to have had exclusively side chairs; for the most part, this was not typical of the period, especially in parlors, as armchairs were much more conducive to comfortable conversation. A more typical situation would be to have four armchairs mixed with eight side chairs. Styles here would be about the same as they were in the dining room, primarily Hepplewhite or Sheraton. Armchairs in these styles were basically the

same construction as the side chairs of the period, with arms added. The arm rests on these chairs were usually scrolled, sloping down from near the top of the chair, then leveling and curling over the support. The support was made to look as if it was part of the same shape as the arm rest, blending into the final curl. This type of work is an urban style; rural designs tended to be less elaborate, with simpler joinery involved, but the scroll design was still utilized. This style eventually evolved into the Hitchcock armchair, a very popular rural style that prevailed in the 1840's and 1850's. Had the Wrights bought the chairs in an urban area, such as Albany or Washing-

ton, they probably would have been of the Empire style. This style is characterized by a much heavier looking appearance, with greater emphasis upon detail and ornamentation, in contrast to the Sheraton or Hepplewhite, which had very light qualities to them.

Sofas of the period were the best mark of the change in style between the Sheraton and Hepplewhite, and the Empire period. It is almost certain that any sofa that the Wrights might have had would have come from an urban area, as there were very few rural sofa-makers. This would indicate that the sofa would probably be of the Empire style. Sofas of this style were characterized by serpentine lines with a large amount of scrollwork in the armrest and the feet. Also popular during this period was the half-back sofa, following Egyptian motifs; these allowed one to recline upon the arm rest, while the other end looked like a foot rest. Most of the wood surfaces on the Empire pieces were extensively carved with fancy ornamentation, a characteristic of the Victorian period. If this was the style of the period, it really did not mesh well with the trends of the North Country; more appropriate here would be the simpler Sheraton style. The sofas, like the chairs and tables, stressed a lightness not found in the Empire style; the legs were straight and tapered to the floor; the fabric itself was frequently and vertically striped, further accentuating the vertical qualities. Arm rests were generally straight, or slightly splayed at the top with the support turned as needed. The backs generally were straight across the top although they also



Sheraton side chair, formal style.

were found with sweeping curves carved into the wood.

Tables of this period also showed important differences between the Sheraton-Hepplewhite periods and the Empire. Once again we would expect to find that these tables would be of more recent style than the one in the dining room. The most notable change was replacing the individually attached legs with a well turned central pillar, which had three or four feet coming out from the bottom. On the fancier pieces there was usually a skirt on the top which was carved or inlaid with scrolled designs. One of the tables would be a card table, best set against the wall, and the other would be a center table, belonging in the middle of the room. For the card table, the Hepplewhite-Sheraton styles were dominant and the Empire only slightly altered them, with only slightly more ornamental legs. The center table was the epitome of the Empire style. The pillar was in the center of the table and the table, which was invariably round, was in the center of the room; the style was fit for its purpose. Thus the more decorative of styles belongs in the more prominent place.

A popular item in parlors was a mirror. Mirrors were important for giving the room special qualities that one could not gain with furniture. They made the room seem lighter and more spacious; it was like adding another window to a room. In her inventory, Mrs. Wright mentions having two, one large and one small. In most cases these were found in accompaniment with another piece of furniture, usually a sofa or a table, helping to temper strong horizontal lines or fill some space above these pieces. Like the sofa, the looking glass was a largely urban product, as most were made in New York, Boston or Philadelphia. Consequently, one will not have to consider rural patterns. Very popular throughout the early part of the century was a looking glass called the Tabernacle looking glass. These were in Sheraton or Hepplewhite style, the frame consisting of the two vertical sides simulating doric columns, with the top section enclosing a picture of some sort. Almost invariably they had gilt frames, and Mrs. Wright's inventory verifies this. Above the picture was usually an eagle among much other decorative work. The most important stylist element was the concentration on vertical proportions. Mrs. Wright mentions also having a smaller mirror called a girandole. Usually they were of an oval shape, with a convex glass and sometimes the frames were of wood.

A necessity in a room like this was a stove. Being so far from the fireplace, which did not heat well to begin with, and having so many windows, the parlors could get very cold in a severe North Country winter. According to the holes



Ironstone plate of 1840's, blue spatter and colors, "Bird on a Fence," Diameter 8½ inches.

found in the parlors while stripping, there was a stove at the south end of the rooms, near the front door. It is difficult to say what was used then, but the Franklin stove was very popular then and its square shape fit in well with the decor of the room. A small wood box would also be necessary in accompaniment.

Lighting for the room was likely to have come from candles as in the dining room. A popular way of doing this, particularly in the more decorative of rooms, was placing sconces or candle holders on mirrors which would then diffuse the light throughout the room. These were found on almost all types of mirrors. Although she doesn't mention them in the inventory it is likely that they were used, as she mentions having only two lamps in the entire house. Also popular in parlors of this period were chandeliers; Mrs. Wright does not mention having any, but one could expect to find at least a simple one, perhaps of tin or iron, in many of the fancier homes of the North Country. Locally made products did not follow any special trend. Mrs. Wright mentions two lamps in the inventory. One is an inexpensive simple whale-oil lamp, probably made of tin or pewter with a glass lamp. The lamp that was brightest and most valuable was an Astral Lamp, a lamp which represented the height of technology in lighting for the period. These lamps were of a good size and belonged on a sturdy table, probably set on a candlestand. Otherwise lighting would be restricted to candles, of which the house had large quantities.

Drapes for this room would be much the same as in the dining room, of a damask fabric, hanging all the way to the floor. As mentioned before it is likely that the contrast of color in these patterns would be minimal; sharp contrasts and large designs are more Victorian. The Oriental or Turkish carpets would also be used in this room, the same

type that was used in the dining room. The ingrained-wool carpets would probably be used in a less public room. The walls here would be like those of the dining room, that is having soft, pastel colors. As a side note it may be useful to have one room done with stencils or wallpaper as a matter of demonstrating the craft. It was common practice in rural areas to have a traveling painter come and stencil a room or two for room and board and a small fee, much as a portrait painter would do. Thus it is entirely likely that more than a few of the houses in the North Country would have had this done.

STUDY

Silas Wright's study is likely to have been a much more private area in the house. Here is where he is likely to have gone for longer periods when considerable paper work had to be done, or where the evening would be spent if there were not guests to entertain. This would also be a regularly used room as it was small and easier to keep warm than were the parlors. Consequently in the furniture for the room, one would look for pieces of a much more functional design with many older style pieces, perhaps even brought from Weybridge in Vermont. Perhaps most fittingly, this is the room where he died.

To accompany his desk, which is in the permanent collection of the Association, would be a sturdy, well upholstered chair, a large bookcase, as he had a sizeable collection of books, a Boston rocking chair with a cushion, a clock among other things for the mantle, two small tables or writing stands, candlestands for each table and the desk, drapes and a carpet. The inventory seems to ignore this room except for the contents of the desk and the library, so this is based more on what the average house would have.

Sheraton and Hepplewhite styles would predominate in the study as they did in most of the remainder of the house. The chair that accompanies the desk would be of this style, with a reeded or cane seat; cane would reflect a later style. These would be of a similar style to those in the parlor. Another possibility could be a late Windsor style chair. This older type chair evolved into a low back armchair called "firehouse" or "Captain's" chairs. The rod-backed chair, another variation of the Windsor, should also be considered. These were popular rural styles that made solid armchairs. The rocking chair was another chair whose primary function was to be comfortable. This type of chair was not invented until the late eighteenth century, but it very rapidly became a standard fixture in the rural household. In the 1830's the most frequently found rocker was known as the Boston Rocker. The main characteristics of this chair are a rolled seat, curved

arms with scrolled ends, and seven spindles in the back. Many had stenciled headpieces, while others had inlay in the seat. Usually a cushion for the seat was tied on to the spindles, and Mrs. Wright's inventory confirms this. As for the six side chairs in the room, judging by the value that Mrs. Wright assigns to them, these were of an older or less valuable variety. They were also most likely of the arrow or the fiddleback style, with arrow-shaped or bamboo spindles. The seats were almost always of wood, and the legs and spindles were usually very simply turned.

The large collection of books that Silas Wright had, (the list covered nine pages in the inventory) demands a large bookcase. Bookcases of that period tended to be very large, and would need to be able to hold his large collection of books. The problem with a piece of furniture such as this is that it would be necessary to transport it all the way to Canton, and then fit it into the rather small study. Considering the fact that his desk does not hold many books on its own, any bookcase would have to be of substantial size. Most of the bookcases of the period came with large glass doors that protected the books. Most also came with cabinets beneath them, which raised the level of the books off the floor to a more comfortable height. Hepplewhite and Sheraton cases were generally placed upon tall slender legs, an important element in those styles; Empire cases were heavier set, and did not have the

tall legs. In general, few cases of this type could be expected to be found in the North Country, as most of the high style pieces were made in Baltimore or Philadelphia; consequently one would expect that it was made locally and probably resembled a set of shelves.

Along with the desk and bookcase, the inventory mentions a number of writing stands. These pieces really amounted to a side table that would go up against a wall or next to a chair. These were usually tilt-top tables that could be stored in a corner if they were not needed. The tables were usually built upon a single shaft, supported by three legs in a tripod arrangement. In the Hepplewhite and Sheraton styles, the legs were slender and curved so that they were perpendicular to the floor. With the Empire style the legs curved another ninety degrees so that the ends of the legs formed feet, and the overall appearance became much heavier. Tops of these tables were of almost any regular shape, round, oval, square, octagonal, etc.

The mantle above the fireplace was a popular place for decorative objects that did not belong anywhere else. The most frequently found item found on the mantle in this period was a clock. At the time the house was built, clock technology had only recently advanced enough to allow the building of small clocks. Previously, it was necessary to have a tall cabinet (i.e., the grandfather clocks) to protect the long pendulum arm. So, when a reliable short pendulum clock was



Astral lamps, type mentioned by Mrs. Wright, diminished shadow, 1830-1840. A modified argand with ring-shaped or reservoir.



b



c



d



e



Details from advertisement of 1833 Joseph Meeks & Sons, Manufactory of Cabinet and Upholster Articles, New York.

Furnishings such as these and others cited herein are appropriate to the restored area of the Governor Silas Wright house in Canton that will represent a comfortable home of our County in the time of 1830 to 1850. These photographs are representative of furnishings that we presently do not have and do need. Won't you consider donating a piece for exhibition or money toward the purchase of same? It will be a lasting gift, appreciated by many.



f



g



h



f. Cut glass decanter, attributed to Dummer's Jersey City Works or Gilliland's Brooklyn Flint Glass Works, c. 1845, 10 1/2 inches.
g. Hepplewhite side chair, formal urban style.
h. Heavier style arm chair of the transitional Empire to early Victorian period.
i. Bluish, aquamarine sugar bowl, Redford or Redwood Glass Works, northern New York, c. 1835-1850; lily pad decoration, hollow knob stem with coins dated 1829 and 1835 in hollow ball of cover, with chicken finial.

developed, in the late eighteenth century, small mantle clocks became the style. Decorative ceramics, such as vases or cups, were also popular, although it was mostly a matter of personal preference.

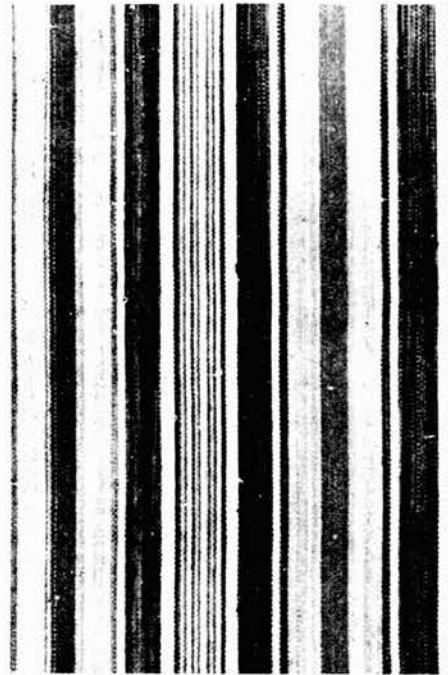
Lighting in the room would come primarily from the hearth or from the many candles that they had in the house. The inventory has many candle holders and few lamps, so it would be logical to have a lamp on the desk, probably a fat lamp, and candles elsewhere, with tin stands and snuffers. On the mantle there would usually be a set of fine silver candlesticks, of a similar quality to those in the dining room. Carpeting in the study was mentioned in combination with that in the dining room, so it would be reasonable to expect that it was an Oriental or Turkish style, large enough to fill the center of the room. Cotton drapes as opposed to those of damask would most likely be in this room for the same reason that the styles are older in the furniture. The study was not an extremely public room, so the functional sufficed. The cut would be the same as on the other drapes in the dining room and parlors.

THE HALL

The hall is usually a showplace of a sort in most houses. It serves the purpose of making a visitor feel welcome and also sets a theme for the rest of the house. With a hall as small as the one in the Wright house, it is important not to fill it up with too much furniture or it will begin to look too cluttered. Visitors should be able to walk through the hall without obstruction. Recommended for this hall are a wooden settee that would run along the length of the hall, or two chairs and a small table in place of the settee. On the floor would be a long ingrain-wool carpet which would run the length of the hall to the door to the dining room and the back parlor, and a wall lamp or mirror sconce with candles which would supplement the light from the sidelights on the doorway. The stairs, according to the inventory, were also carpeted, so another ingrain-wool carpet would be useful here. The stairway may have been unlit because people often carried lamps to the bedrooms before retiring. The upstairs hall was largely unfurnished. Except for another carpet, the furniture would be restricted to a single sidechair, and perhaps an oval mirror with candles, similar to the one on the first floor.

The only pieces that need to be explained in the halls would be the settee and the table. A settee is not mentioned in the inventory, but they were a popular piece of furniture for the entranceway. The lines on a settee are essentially the same as chairs of the same style, as they tended to look like a number of connected chairs. Like the chairs of the same period, the backs and seats were usually

stenciled in the manner of the late fancy Sheraton. The most likely table for the hall is one called a parlor table: a small table that was no more than a foot and a half square with one or two drawers. They were commonly painted in rather bright colors, although not necessarily. Again the style would probably be Sheraton or Hepplewhite. The remainder of the furniture in the hall would be of a similar construction to the pieces already mentioned.



Striped carpet, home spun wool and vegetable dyes, early 19th century.

THE BEDROOMS

Both bedrooms in the house were furnished essentially the same. Like the study, they are not so likely to be up to date stylistically as the other rooms. As a more private room, the bedroom is designed more for comfort than for style. Working mostly from the inventory, the rooms would be furnished with a bed for each room, of the low-post variety, with the necessary bedding for each, a bureau or chest of drawers, a dressing table, a bedside or night table, six side chairs, a washstand, bowl and pitcher, carpeting, drapes and a candlestand. Incidental items would include bonnet or cap boxes, hair and clothes brushes, a spittoon and chambers.

Considering the height of the ceiling in the Silas Wright house, high-posted beds have to be immediately ruled out. Most high-posters were too high to fit easily in a room that size. They were also not an extremely popular rural style as the low post beds were much easier to make and

assemble. Because most of the important work stylistically was done with high-posted beds, low-post styles often amounted to abbreviated versions of the high post styles. There were a few distinctive low-post styles. The most unique style of the low-post was the spool bed, which became popular in the 1830's as a result of new methods in the construction of beds which allowed for having all the posts on the bed heavily turned throughout their entire length. A low-post style that was popular in Ontario, Canada, was called the cannon ball bed, which was a rather simple design that had the tops of the posts made in the shape of cannon balls, with the posts tapered up and down from the joint with the head or foot board. All beds of this period were held together by rope. It is most likely that the cannon ball style was used in the Wright house because of its popularity in the North Country. Because of the severity of the North Country winters, the bedding that accompanied each of the beds was extensive. It included a feather bolster or mattress, two layers of cotton sheets, a wool sheet, a calico quilt, a wool blanket, covered by a wool bedspread. On top of the bedspread were another two wool blankets that were stored in a blanket chest or at the end of the bed. According to the inventory, this is a properly made North Country bed.

Bureaus or chests of drawers from rural areas were of a quite simple style. The Hepplewhite and Sheraton styles were used but altered by the rural craftsmen. The serpentine and oxbow fronts and delicate fronts that were so popular with the urban cabinetmakers are not found in country furniture. Simplicity and durability of construction were more important in the rural styles. Stylistic considerations for the rural chests were focused on bringing out the grain of the wood that the chest was made out of, and also on the shape of the legs. The trend here was to give the legs the lines of a Hepplewhite chest, square and slightly tapered to the foot, but much heavier set. Serpentine lines were restricted to the skirt on the front of the chest, beneath the drawers, which differentiated it from the straight skirts of the earlier Chippendale. Also utilized was the inlay which outlined the basic shapes of the furniture, a standard element of most Hepplewhite furniture.

Dressing tables or night-stands were generally found next to most beds because they were a good place to leave personal articles and the lamp or candle before retiring for the night. These tables were much like the parlor tables in size and shape, but usually they were not so fancily decorated. Styles were simple with long square or round tapered legs that were a bit of a slant to give the small table more grace and stability, and they

usually only had a single drawer. Later tables sometimes came with a tripod type stand with three legs, but the four-legged stand fitted better with the bed. Another possible table in this room would be a lady's desk, or merely a card table with a looking glass. This was a desk for jewelry and other personal items. They would follow the styles of the card tables that were considered in the parlor. A strictly functional piece in the room would be the washstand, with a bowl and pitcher. The trend with this item was to make it as unobtrusive as possible, so most were made to be three legged stands that could fit into a corner, using a minimum of space. All washstands came with two shelves and a drawer; the top shelf generally had a hole in it that the wash basin could fit into, and the lower shelf was to hold the pitcher. The drawer held the soap and other washing items and was usually on the lower shelf. The washstands with four legs also came with towel racks on both sides of the stand. Styles, where any existed, were similar to the tables of the same period; the most popular were the Hepplewhite and spool types. Each room was filled with six chairs apiece; once again these are decorative side pieces of the same or an older style than those on the first floor. Because indoor plumbing was not invented then, another requisite of the room was the chamber pot, which was generally ceramic and kept beneath the bed.

The wool-ingrain carpet was an important part of the room, as it provided necessary protection from the floors in the winter. The value that Mrs. Wright gives the carpets in the inventory would indicate that they were either old or rather small, as it is a small sum. The drapes were of cotton like those of the study and cut like the rest of them. Lighting was not necessary to a great extent in these rooms, and the inventory lists only two candlesticks for the two rooms; they would be on the bureau or the nightstand.

Since there are two bedrooms that are outfitted in essentially the same manner, it might be useful to furnish each in a different style. According to the inventory, the guest bedroom was furnished with more valuable pieces, indicating that they might be newer than those in the other room. To furnish this room in the later Empire style, most of the articles would have a much heavier tone to them and would have much more decoration on them. The heavier style comes from the increasing mechanization of the cabinet-making trade. The machines were not able to work with the smaller, more delicate pieces of the earlier styles. Lost to this style were the local trends that were so numerous in the older styles.

As a matter of explanation of the general themes in this paper, most of the items that have been recommended are



Woodcut showing a whale oil lamp with one wick.

from styles that predominated in the period from 1800 to 1825, putting it ten to fifteen years before the building of the house. So in terms of dates and more national trends, the house belongs to the Empire period, and not the Hepplewhite or Sheraton. The reason that these styles have been chosen over the Empire is that the Empire reflected the entry of mechanization and mass production into the craft of cabinet-making. When one considers the stage of development that the North Country was in at the time, it is unlikely that there was any local shop with those capacities. Nevertheless, the Empire style was available to the Wrights, evidenced by his desk and the sideboard; but this was not the style of the North Country as a whole, and consequently not proper for a museum that is trying to recreate preindustrial life in general. Silas Wright was a farmer, and this should be reflected in any recreation of his life and times.

☆☆☆☆

For further reading

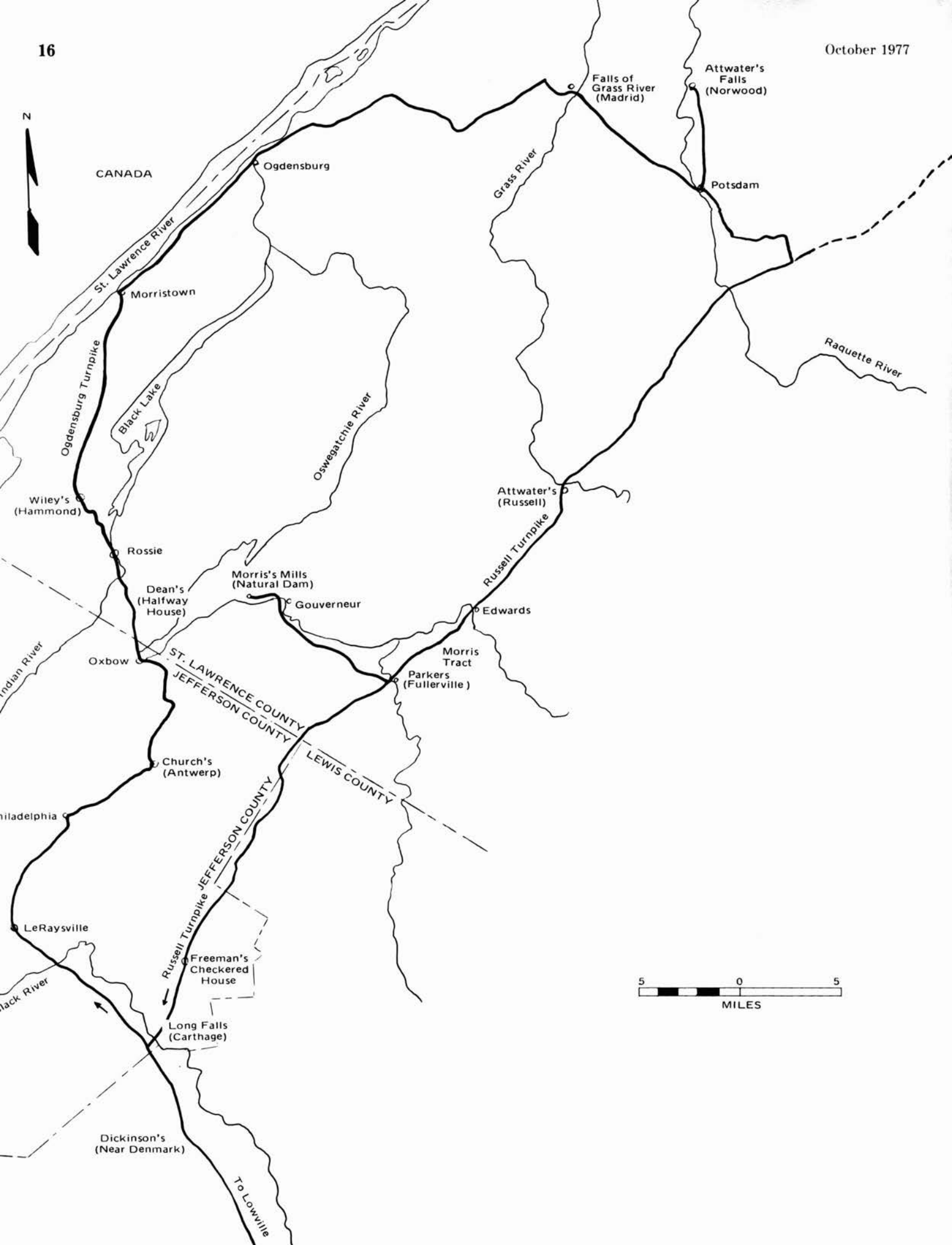
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James C. McCabe is a June, 1977 graduate of St. Lawrence University with a major in history. Part one of "A Study in Rural Comfort" appeared in the July 1977 issue of *The Quarterly*. Mr. McCabe's article on Greek Revival architecture "A Little Greek Temple on a North Country Farm?" can be found in the April 1977 issue.



CANADA

Attwater's Falls (Norwood)

Falls of Grass River (Madrid)

Ogdensburg

Potsdam

St. Lawrence River

Grass River

Morristown

Raquette River

Ogdensburg Turnpike

Black Lake

Oswegatchie River

Wiley's (Hammond)

Attwater's (Russell)

Rossie

Morris's Mills (Natural Dam)

Russell Turnpike

Dean's (Halfway House)

Gouverneur

Edwards

Indian River

Oxbow

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY
JEFFERSON COUNTY

Morris Tract
Parkers (Fullerville)

Church's (Antwerp)

LEWIS COUNTY

Philadelphia

LeRaysville

Russell Turnpike
JEFFERSON COUNTY

Freeman's Checkered House



Long Falls (Carthage)

Dickinson's (Near Denmark)

To Lowville

Gouverneur Morris's 1815 Journey

by David B. Dill, Jr.

One of the best known names in early American history and certainly one of the most influential men in the earliest settling of northern New York, Gouverneur Morris made several forays into his "wild lands". This is an account of his fourth journey, in 1815, largely taken from his own journals, when he travelled here with his wife Anne and their two-year-old son, a sign of the wilderness being tamed.

Late in the summer of 1815, Gouverneur Morris made his fourth journey into northern New York, accompanied this time by his wife Anne and their two-year-old son. Whereas his earlier travels had been time-consuming, exhausting and even hazardous, by now there was a rudimentary network of stage roads and turnpikes in upper New York which he was anxious to see for himself. Accordingly, Morris ventured to load his young family, along with the necessary servants and baggage, into at least two of his own coaches and take off northward with confidence. Although he was to be frustrated by the sad condition of the Russell and Ogdensburgh turnpikes in particular, the relatively swift journey was to require only about twelve traveling days each way, allowing almost six weeks for travel and visiting in St. Lawrence County.

The following is excerpted from the original diary and letters of Gouverneur Morris in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

Monday 7 Aug. 1815. Leave home early and see the sunrise when we are three miles on our way. Breakfast at Tarrytown and go on to Laycock's, eight miles. Cool morning, but warm afternoon.

Tuesday 8. Leave Laycock's at five, reach Deacon's at Peekskill half after seven. Get off again at a quarter before ten, reach Warren's at a quarter after twelve, stay a quarter of an hour and reach Fishkill at half past two. Weather grown warmer and threatening rain.

Wednesday 9. Leave Fishkill a little after four and reach Poughkeepsie before seven. Find that house full. . . leave before ten and reach Loop's inn at Red Hook in five hours. . .

Thursday 10. Leave Loop's a little later than intended, breakfast at Claverack and reach Miller's, three miles beyond Kinderhook, at 2 o'clock. A very light sprinkling of rain in the morning, high southerly wind. Cool, but a little annoyed by the dust. Distance this day about 35 miles.

Friday 11. Drizzling morning after a rainy night. We get off late. Breakfast at Merrick's and go thro' Albany, Troy and Lansingburg to Waterford. . . Put up at Willard's Hotel, which seems rather unfrequented.

Saturday 12. Leave our abominable inn before five in a fog and take by mistake the river road. We do not discover our

error until it is too late. . . determine to go round by Sandy Hill to my Bend farm and thence to Johnstown. Call at Mr. Morris's, who is abroad and his wife very ill, and put up at Cook's inn. . . The weather has been pleasant, and the ride, after the fog was dispersed so as to render objects visible, was charming. . . Our distance this day has been but twenty-seven miles. We drove slowly and got in shortly after noon.

Sunday 13. We leave Mr. Cook's, a pretty good inn, before five and reach Sandy Hill, 13 miles, a little after seven. Breakfast and go on to the Great Bend. Scott is gone to church. Continue on to Phillip's tavern on the road to Johnstown. . . We arrive about two, and find the inn filled with people who come to a religious meeting in the barn of mine host. Weather rather warm but pleasant.

Monday 14. Leave the bad and extravagant house of Mr. Phillips before five, and go on over a hilly and rough road to Stephen Cornell's, which is still worse. Get a miserable breakfast, supplied, however, with alacrity, and after staying two hours to half past eleven, go on eighteen miles by a road generally excellent to Johnstown, which we make at half past three, but do not get housed till five, having examined two strongly recommended inns which are filthy, and then return to Mr. Kibbe's, where we ought to have stopped at entering the village.

I receive this evening a civil note from Justice Morrell telling me of an application to him by a man of the name of Dodge, for process against me to recover two dollars. Send my compt. by the messenger and desire to see Mr. Morrell. He comes, and I find the demand is set up by a drunken butcher for taking some of my baggage into a tavern against my will, and bringing it out again. The justice promises that I shall hear no more of the matter, if he can help it.

Tuesday 15. We are off before five and employ near four hours in going 12 miles to Mr. Lassell's [Lassellville], where we breakfast. The road hilly and rough, tho' good in some places. We leave Mr. Lassell's at half past ten and go on to Ives', where we give drink and meal to our horses, distance 13 miles. The road better, but very lofty hills. We then proceed to Smith's, 8 miles, and in this stage cross, I believe, the highest ground we have to go over. . .

Wednesday 16. A rainy day confines us this day in a dirty bad inn.

Thursday 17. We leave Mr. Smith in the midst of his dram drinking, customary at six o'clock. Breakfast at the house of Williams, which seems to be a good one, at the end of seven miles and come on to I.M. Sheldon's, between twelve and thirteen, which we reach at two o'clock. The roads severe, the weather sultry. Very little of the country remains to settle, and generally speaking the soil is fertile.

Friday 18. We are detained when ready to set off by a shower. We encounter bad road for about eight miles, and not good for six more when we reach Mr. Wetmore's, having passed Mr. Starr's from his want of a sign. Mr. Wetmore's inn is very bad. We leave it as soon as we can, and get on seventeen miles to Welles's Hotel in Lowville. Mr. Stowe comes in, tells me the news. . . [his] object in visiting me is to converse about the settlement of Castorland, which he wishes to engage in. Shortly after his departure, Mr. Bostwick comes. He seems a little tipsy. Speaks of Stowe in unfavorable terms.

Saturday 19. We are off early. Breakfast with the stage company at Dickinson's, nine miles, and then proceed sixteen more to LeRaysville.

[For the next three days the weather was rainy and unpleasant. The Morris family rested and presumably were hospitably entertained by their host, Vincent LeRay, whose father (James D. LeRay) is said to have been in France at the time].

Wednesday 23. Leave LeRaysville early. Breakfast at Bossuit's, ten miles. LeRay precedes us. After breakfast we part and come on to Church's at Antwerp, 16 miles. The road pretty good. The soil from the Black River to the Indian River is in general of inferior quality, in some places bad, in some very good, tho' not of the first rate. Mr. De Villars calls on me this evening to speak of his debt. Refer him to Mr. Kent and explain the arrangement I had proposed, which seems satisfactory to him.

Thursday 24. Leave Church's at Antwerp this morning early and go eleven miles to breakfast at Dean's on the way to Rossie. A rainy morning. We are detained by the inactivity of our hostess till half past ten, and set out in the close of a shower, which is the last of any

consequence.

We travel eight miles over a very rough country. The road, tho' wrought at considerable expense, is hardly passable and will, I think, turn out to be a mere waste of labor. I hope Mr. Parish's works at Rossie may prove better than his road. We stop, our horses very much fatigued, at Wiley's (Hammond) to feed, but he has no grain or meal, so we go on to Morristown, eleven miles, the road much cut and very slippery from the rain. Distance this day 31 miles, but the fatigue is equal to 50 for our cattle.

The soil along the first stage, except on rocky ridges, is very good, on the next nine miles generally bad. In the first is a swamp of near a mile, some part of which will, if drained, be very good. In the second is also a very large swamp, which, by lowering the outlet of Black Lake four feet, will be of incalculable value. The last stage is through good land, but the road runs chiefly on a ridge of rock which is covered by a thin stratum of earth, and is in fact good for nothing by a road.

Morris, with his family and retinue, remained in Morristown from August 25 until September 10, except for a two day visit in Ogdensburg with Judge Nathan Ford and David Parish. His host in Morristown was David Ford, who was the land agent for the Morris tract in Hague. The lively Ford family must have been stimulating and agreeable company, for Gouverneur wrote David Ford on November 4, after his return to Morrisania:

"On the whole, our journey of nine weeks and four days, though sometimes fatiguing, was pleasant, and for much of what we enjoyed during that period we are indebted to your kindness and that of Mrs. Ford. Present us to her in the most affectionate terms and to the young ladies. Gouverneur talks of you all very often and says of each individual that he 'loves it'. He insists also that all are 'good', even your black boy Jack".

While established in the Ford home, Morris invited a number of fellow proprietors of North Country lands, who happened to be nearby at that time. Among them were Vincent LeRay, Mr. Hammond (very likely Abijah Hammond, although Franklin Hough doubted he had ever been in the county), Mr. McCormick (probably Daniel McCormick), Gen. Lewis Morris (nephew of Gouverneur), Mr. Van Rensselaer (presumably Stephen, the Last Patrol) and Mr. LeRoy (Herman?). The landholders must have had a lively time discussing their mutual interests and, perhaps, engaged in a bit of hard trading.

Sunday, the third of September, was a particularly pleasant day. Both Gouverneur and his young son, who had both been ill, were well again. Judge Ford dined with the families, and in the afternoon Lewis Morris came with the news of Napoleon's surrender to the British ship

"Bellerophon". Continuing with the diary:

Monday 11 September. Appearances of good weather. Take leave after dinner and proceed on our journey to Ogdensburg. Reach Judge Ford's at sunset. Appearances of fair weather.

Tuesday 12. *Nimium ne crede colori.* Copious rain last night and this morning, which arrests our progress.

Wednesday 13. We leave Judge Ford's at six, breakfast at the end of seven miles, and get on twenty-three or four [miles] to the falls of Grasse River, [Madrid] one of the most fatiguing roads I ever travelled. Some good land, and some very good. The last eight miles thro' the town of Madrid almost the whole distance a causeway of logs, originally bad, now very bad. A great part of the soil is swamp, and not of the first quality, some of it very poor. Near the Grasse River is good land and a fine settlement.

Thursday 14. We are off at seven and reach the village of Potsdam at ten. A bad road, tho' not quite so bad as yesterday. The land very good except some of the cedar swamps, producing, however, uncommonly large trees. If not too extensive, they will be permanently useful.

Friday 15. Leave Potsdam after breakfast and proceed to Louisville, where by appointment I meet Judge Attwater and examine our property there [Norwood]. The position is fine and important. If duly improved, it will be very valuable. I never saw so many very large pine trees in the same space as there are on a part of this small tract. The soil is very rich. Limestone rock forms the bars which make the rapids or fall, which in the extent I suppose to be upwards of forty feet. Return to Potsdam. The road not yet good, but it will, with little exception, be excellent. Dine late.

Saturday 16. We leave Potsdam after breakfast and reach the [Russell] turnpike after six miles. The first three and a half but so so, the last two and a half very bad, carried by Mr. Parish over very steep hills to keep it within his property. By going a little further west it would, as Judge Attwater informs me, be very level and very good.

After some serious difficulties, however, we reach the long-desired turnpike, and hope that our troubles are there to end. Far from it! Our toil is incessant. Most of the road is very bad: very steep hills, mud-covered causeways, stones, in short, so difficult and tedious that our march from Potsdam, twenty-one or two miles, consumes no less than eight hours. Alight a few minutes before five at Judge Attwater's [Russell].

Sunday 17. A windy, raw, disagreeable day. Troubled with diarrhea. Mr. Parish, Mr. Ross [Rosseal?] and Mr. Charnock arrive at three. Rain this evening.

Monday 18. After a rainy morning it clears. Write.

Tuesday 19. Conclude my business with Judge Attwater this morning and set off late. Reach Parker's [Fullerville] at half past three and find an unfinished house to lodge in. Get quarters for the night at a log house with his father and mother, which is not too well fenced against the night's frosty air. The land we came over is rough and of inferior quality, except a tract of our own in Edwards, which is very good.

Wednesday 20. After great diligence we embark on board of an ox sled and four, for my farmhouse in Gouverneur at a quarter past ten, distance eleven miles. We soon find that the road would, with any other carriage, be dangerous if not impassable. We arrive at half an hour after four, having stopped at different times to clear out the road. A very fine day, after a sharp frost.

Thursday 21. Again fine weather, tho' we had this morning white frost. Visit my mills and farm. Isaac Austin calls, and Dr. Townsend, who says Austin has taken measures to defraud me.

Friday 22. Still fine weather, but a threatening afternoon. Write. Mr. and Mrs. Austin come.

Saturday 23. Rain last night and this day. Write. Mr. Townsend comes and tells me that Bolton can't make out his acct. yet, but will do it as soon as he is well enough. Townsend is persuaded of his honesty.

[Apparently nothing remarkable happened for the next three days worthy of recording in the diary. The family rested in the little house near Morris's Mills, at what is now Natural Dam. Morris, it is worth noting, was accurate in referring to it as his "farmhouse". Later it was to be glorified as his "mansion."]

Wednesday 27. Leave Gouverneur early in a wagon, then get into an ox sled and get out safely to Parker's, where we breakfast and get again in our coaches. Get on in the afternoon to Freeman's. . . [Alfred Freeman's "Checked House" four miles from Carthage]. . .

Thursday 28. Leave Freeman's at eight and breakfast at Dickinson's [probably Denmark]. Set off as soon as we can and reach House's [now Houseville] at sunset, having narrowly escaped being thrown down a precipice as we ascend the hill to Martinsburgh. Had our driver been inexpert, we should probably have lost our lives. . .

Friday 29. Leave House's, which is but a so so house, and come on to breakfast at Boonville. We pass Snow's, which is full of blackguards, and stop at Grant's, where an idle, insolent landlady renders it proper to leave her house and go to Snow's. An indifferent house. We go thence at ten minutes after one, and reach Sheldon's at five and twenty minutes after four. The road, tho' very bad, not quite so execrable as when we went up.

continued on page 23.

ALCOA in Massena: The Early Years

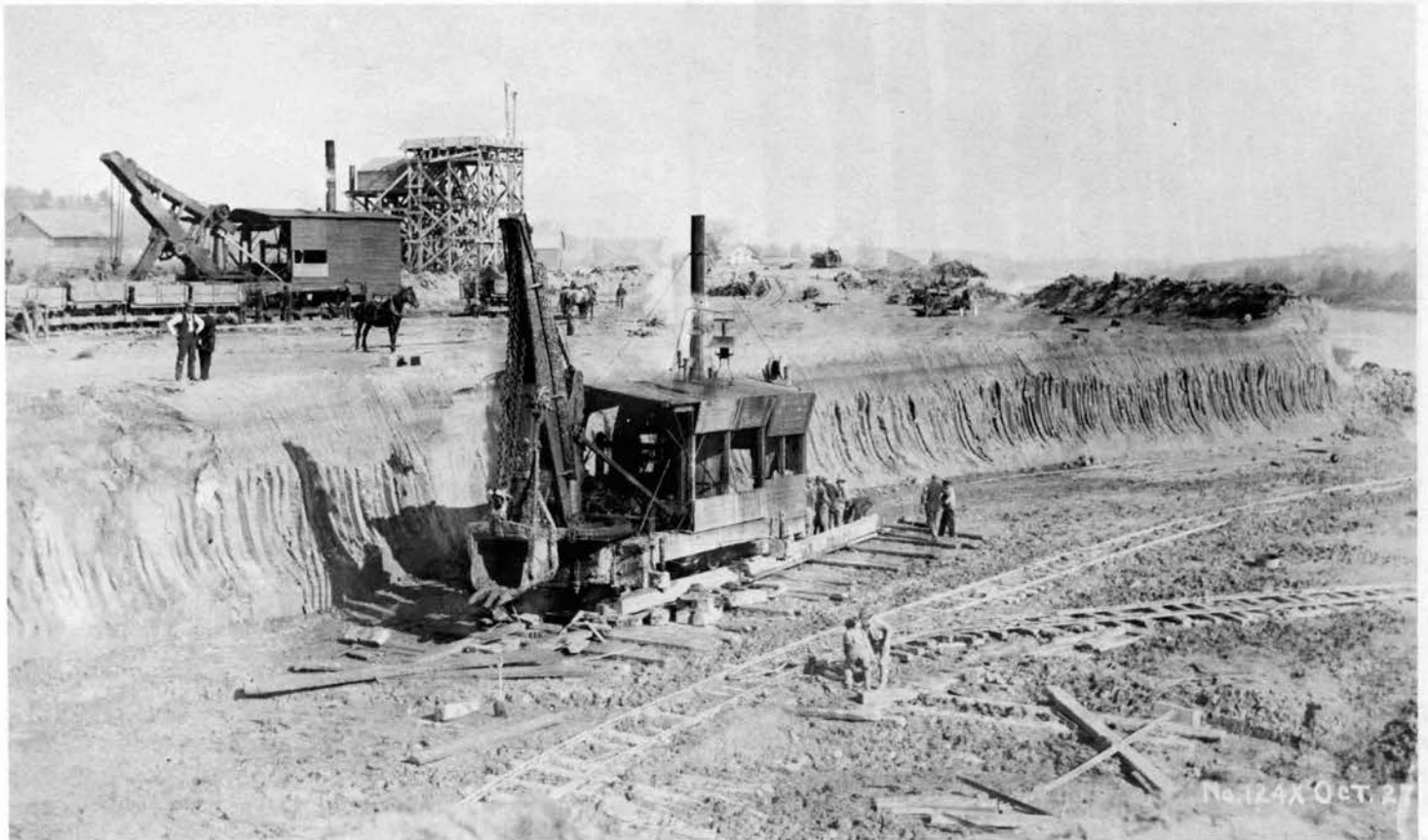


Alcoa's Powerhouse on the Grasse River near completion. Work was begun in 1898 on the power canal, and the canal and powerhouse were completed in 1903 to produce Massena's first metal.

The Massena Operations of ALCOA (the Aluminum Company of America) is this year celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of its locating in our area. In addition to becoming a major industry and employer over the years, it has contributed greatly to the enrichment of the entire northeastern section of the county, adding a cultural diversity and many generous contributions to the general welfare of the area. We salute ALCOA on its special occasion with a photographic essay of their early years in this locale.



August 14, 1897 — Cutting through ridge in back of canal for the railroad which runs along canal.



October 27, 1897 — Early canal construction.

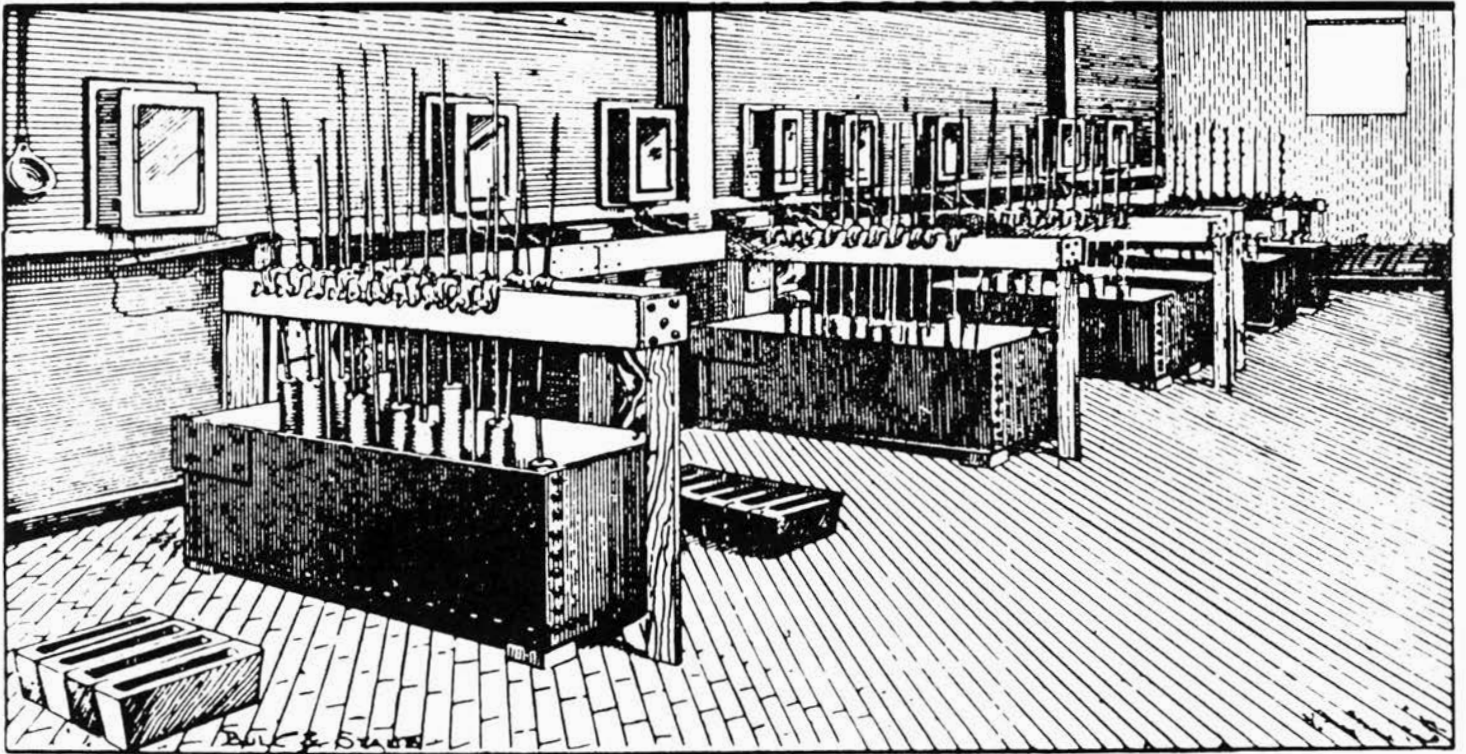


The Main Office Administration Building of Alcoa's Massena Operations taken in 1914. This building is still the administration building for these operations.

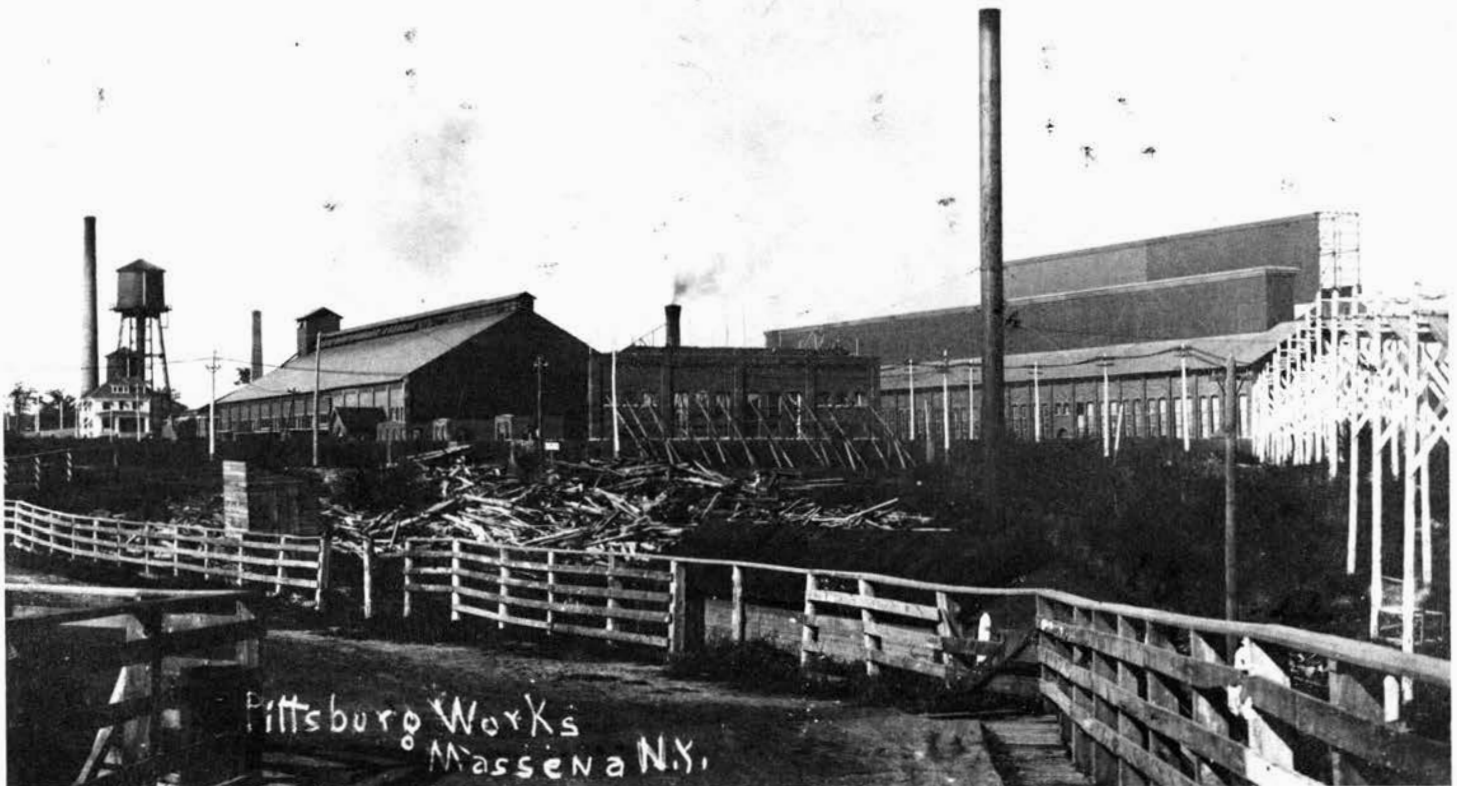
Many new uses for aluminum were being found as the Pittsburgh Reduction Company entered the 1900's and as Massena Operations was established. Construction of the aluminum smelting plant began immediately. The first buildings were located on 100 acres just east of the St. Lawrence Power Co. canal. Each building covered an area of from two to four acres. Specially constructed generators tapped the great sources of power from the river. A labor force was recruited largely from the community. On August 27, 1903, the first ingot or "pig" of shiny aluminum was cast. The industry that would become the largest employer north of Syracuse was on its way.



In 1920, these women were sweepers in the pot rooms at Massena operations of Aluminum Company of America.



Potline in the small Pittsburgh plant where aluminum was first made.



Postcard view of the early Pittsburgh Works.

Photographs provided through the courtesy of the Public Relations Department, ALCOA, Massena Operations; *The Watertown Daily Times*, and the Archives in the History Center, Canton.

From the Editor's Notebook

Because of the recent rapid progress on the SLCHA's planned museum in the Governor Silas Wright House and because of some exciting upcoming events there, I have invited SLCHA Director John Baule to provide a guest commentary this time. — V.A.C.

Structural repair of the Wright House is now virtually complete and plans are now under way to restore the period interior decoration. Since the house will be used in a variety of ways, the Board of Overseers has developed a plan to ensure maximum flexibility. Only the first floor, which will ultimately include a bedroom, will be permanently furnished, whereas the 2nd floor will be devoted to galleries for exhibits on other aspects of St. Lawrence County history.

Taste and decoration in the 1840's differed from modern concepts. Bright, garish patterns were common even in the better homes as people began to enjoy the wide variety of designs and colors made affordable by an expanding technology. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century most people wanted wallpaper and commercially made fabrics and floor coverings. Simple cotton or linen checks were banished to the less important rooms in the fashionable homes although more modest dwellings retained such designs even up to the present day. Wall stenciling and painted floor designs were sometimes meant to imitate the more expensive wallpaper and ingrain or simple striped carpeting. Popular wallpaper designs included monochromatic landscapes, floral stripes, and elaborately

foliated pillar prints. Finally, antique or heirloom furnishings were not popular until after the 1876 centennial. Anything not of the latest available fashion was simply considered old and out of date - to be replaced as soon as possible.

Since we know very little about the exact fabrics and floor covering patterns originally in the Silas Wright House, a decorating committee, whose members are Ms. Priscilla Angelo, Mrs. Richard McKenney, Mrs. Frank Augsbury, Mrs. Robert Wyant (director of the Potsdam Public Museum), Mrs. Richard Dillenbeck (Curator of the Remington Art Memorial), and Mrs. Jerry Jacobson, has been formed to translate general period styles into an appropriate scheme for this house. Although the structure will always be associated with Silas Wright, it was decided that the furnished rooms will reflect a typical mid-nineteenth century home and thus will portray the variety of wall and floor treatments found in the 1830's and 1840's in St. Lawrence County. Thus, the double parlor and dining room will be papered, the entrance hall and study will be stenciled, and the reception room and entire second floor gallery area will be painted. Modern reproductions of paint colors and fabrics will be used to duplicate the 1840 appearance.

Our original intention was to complete the interior decoration in time for a gala opening on December 10, 1977; but to allow ourselves more time we have recently decided to delay the official dedication until late February, 1978. However, we will hold an open house on December 10 to enable our members to see some of our decorating selections as well as to see the house nearing the end of its transformation.

As with any project of this type our financial resources have been strained tremendously by the ongoing reconstruction and we have many small projects that would be excellent memorial gifts. Several such projects are as follows:

1. Restoration of 15 windows - \$350 each
2. Share of the total purchase of wallpaper, paint, and draperies - \$100 each
3. Contributions to purchase specific items of furniture that have not been donated - \$200 each

I have been exceedingly grateful for the understanding and support of our membership during the history of this project, and am thus especially pleased to report that the work is proceeding so well. I look forward to seeing many of you on the 10th of December.

Continued from page 18 'Gouverneur Morris'

"From Snow's in Boonville to Sheldon's at the northern end of the turnpike," Morris wrote in his letter to David Ford, "was a distance of nine miles including the terrific Four Mile Woods, which by the bye may at a small expense well employed be made an excellent road, and we passed in three hours and a quarter. The route from there to Trenton, and along the northern bank of Canada Creek till we passed the cotton factory on this side of Newport, is beautiful. Some troublesome hills lie between that and the Little Falls. We were weather-bound one day at Miller's, near Kinderhook, and brought our horses home fatter than when they left it."

Home again at Morrisania! Now almost 64 years old, Gouverneur Morris was not

to travel again. This was truly a farewell journey to his northern lands, for he would die within the year.

☆☆☆☆

For further reading

David Dill's "From Cambray to Ogdensburg in 36 Hours with Gouverneur Morris", *The Quarterly*, April, 1976.

Anne Cary Morris's *The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris*, 1888.

☆☆☆☆

About the Author

David B. Dill, Jr., of Gouverneur, is a past contributor to *The Quarterly* and was featured speaker at the SLCHA Annual Meeting in 1976.

Upcoming Features:

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