THE QUARTERLY

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

April 1978

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Editor: Varick A. Chittenden

Cover: A pleasant early spring scene in 1978 on Boyd Pond Road in the Town of Russell, which could just have easily been photographed a hundred years before. Maple sugaring methods — traditional and contemporary — are examined herein, beginning on page 3. Photographed by Ronald Nolland for the Center for the Study of North Country Folklife.

*Old and new methods, side by side, on the Allan Newman farm, Canton-Ogdensburg Road.* (Photo courtesy **Ogdensburg Journal**)

# Inheritance and Future Shock or Politics in the Sugar Bush

*by C. Richard K. Lunt*

*Folklorist Dr. Dick Lunt examines closely the various methods of maple sugaring still practiced actively in St. Lawrence County. For more than just an explanation of techniques and technology, the author considers the various "states of the art" against the context of the people who use them and their attitudes toward their annual rite of spring. His analysis was first presented as a paper to the fall meeting of the New York Folklore Society at Cooperstown in September, 1977.*

Maple sugaring is an occupation that has always fascinated me. Perhaps many of you also began life in a family where it was an annual practice to bleed all the neighbor's maple trees for the sweet sap with which you subsequently risked steaming all the wallpaper loose while you boiled it on the kitchen stove. One year my mother and the lady next door talked their households into consolidating their sap and boiling outdoors, probably thus threatening to steam God's wallpaper off. But if not the wallpaper, at least the cooperative effort stuck, and I can now remember all through my childhood lugging slopping buckets and piling wood on fires under foaming washtubs, with the eventual result of a few, meager, shared quarts of heavenly syrup, which lasted about a week.

Now that I am grown, and a folklorist, I find considerable difference in my approach to the subject. I still love it, both the occupation and the products, but I find now a greater need to understand maple sugaring and its people than simply to enjoy them. I suppose this is the scholar's curse, but one which I hope will serve to illuminate some important questions and provide some answers useful to a greater understanding of ourselves.

I shall describe some of the variation in sugaring techniques and then focus on some of the questions that arise because of it. I shall be concerned ultimately with why we sugar at all, for instance, and what folklorists can learn from such traditional behavior. I suspect that, indeed, "syruping" as a profession or as a pastime shares a great deal with many other traditional occupations and that we may be able to show some perspective on that fact.

First, then, the matter of maple sugaring methods:

Doubtless, most of you have observed or experienced as I have a great variety of techniques used to gather and boil maple sap into syrup. Many of you may have read such sources as Scott and Helen Nearing's *The Maple Sugar Book*, which presents a useful historical perspective on the process from its aboriginal origins to the state of Vermont practice in the 1930's. We all suspect that it is fundamentally a simple process which theoretically anybody can carry through successfully. Let us quickly note, however, that there are degrees of success possible in syrup making, and further that the history of experience in syruping presents some pretty strong traditions which the rank amateur would be well advised to study. There are, in any case, some durable time-tested methods involved, and a good many highly variable ones.

As I present these methods I would like to urge two notions upon you which may enrich and clarify your understanding of them. The first is the concept of "state of the art" as applied to any form of technology. Engineers and historians of technology have evolved this term to refer to the most highly developed body of technique known in any technical process. There is a state of the art of maple sugaring which can be described for any point in the historical development of sugaring. There is a state of the art now which is remarkably efficient. Even though it is not much used, it is a matter of considerable interest to us. Perhaps we can explain that fact.

The second notion is really only an observation that sugaring behavior in St. Lawrence County represents a living history of several sequentially developed states of the art of sugaring technology. You see everything in techniques from those of the 1870's to those of the 1970's. Most of the historical developments are still to be seen, practiced side by side. How's that for an instance of folklore as living history? I think we can explain that fact too.

But first, let us take a look at the methods:

The most advanced, biggest operations in the county correspond to this description. As is customary in all but the most casual of operations, there is the formally defined "sugar bush or bushes" which is kept culled of underbrush, other species of trees and dead wood. The trees are tapped with gasoline power drills as much as two to four weeks in advance of the anticipated first sap run. Plastic spigots are installed in the tap holes after formaldehyde tablets are inserted to keep the holes from healing up and free from infection. Plastic tubing is run from tap to tap, forming a gravity-graded, branched network which consolidates in trunk lines leading to roadside collecting tanks. Everything is set up well in advance of that treasured first sap run which produces the highest percentage of sugar with the least mineral contamination. This yields the Grade A Fancy Syrup. When the sap runs it is transferred from collecting tank to the sugar house tanks by truck or tractor-drawn trailer. Boiling begins quickly before the sap can begin to ferment.

*Small lean-to sugar shanty from an early twentieth century post card view.* (Photo courtesy the History Center)

The boiling equipment in its most recent form in St. Lawrence County usually consists of oil fired brick arches built in a cement floored sugar house.

The boiling equipment in its most recent form in St. Lawrence County usually consists of oil-fired brick arches built in a cement floored sugar house. The evaporator pans are stainless steel and may be covered with hoods which conduct the steam directly outside. Firing is a precisely regulated process controlled by thermostat, and the finished syrup is assessed on the basis of a celsius thermometer and a hydrometer measuring specific gravity. Coth filtering of the hot syrup immediately precedes the filling of containers, either tin or plastic. Some of the later syrup is diverted for the production of maple cream and hard sugar. Often this operation takes place in a kitchen within the same sugar house where electric beaters whip the sugar and rubber molds form the finished candies. It is interesting to note that even in these modern operations the firing is still usually done by the men and the candy making is done by the women!

This group of producers, which is very small, comes quite close to the present state of the art. The only things they haven't tried which are used elsewhere are vacuum pumps on the collection hoses and vacuum hoods over the evaporators. There are only a half dozen or so

*Unloading the sap into the sugar house from the horse drawn gathering tank on the John Swift farm, Colton, in the 1930's or 1940's.* (Photo courtesy Marion Swift Thomas)

*Jimmy Webb tending the evaporator in his mid-sized sugaring operation on the Boyd Road, Town of Russell, 1978.* (Photo by Ronald Nolland, courtesy of the Center for the Study of North Country Folklife).

operators in this category. They operate upwards of 10,000 taps and produce some two to three thousand gallons of syrup apiece.

Far more common in the county is a second level of technique which represents the state of the art of the 1920's to the 1940's. Usually these operators run up to 5,000 taps and produce as much as 1000 gallons of syrup.

They use power drills, but drive metal spigots from which they hang covered metal buckets. Formaldehyde tablets are sometimes used, but only by those who want the security of drilling early to make certain they will be ready for the unpredictable first run. Collection is by tractor-borne holding tank. This has to be done daily during the heaviest sap flow and requires considerable labor.

The boiling of the sap by these operators is done in sugar houses, which usually date from the 1920's, in galvanized evaporators set on cast iron or brick arches dating from the same period. Firing is with wood which has been cut the previous year and stored in a shed part of the sugar house. Such wood only costs the operator his labor and still remains cheaper than oil, though less convenient. Firing with wood requires far more skill than oil firing. Experienced persons, virtually always men, do this boiling and exert great care to avoid burning the syrup in the pan. Boil overs are controlled by the quick application of a piece of bacon or salt pork to the hot sap. The readiness of the finished syrup is generally assessed by both the scientific measures of temperature and specific gravity *and* the traditional technique of aproning. Filtering and canning are practiced in the usual way, with cloth filters and metal or plastic jugs. The operators using this level of technique frequently use old equipment which they have gathered or inherited, and there is strong interest in economy of operation since the profit margin is small or practically non-existent. This group of operators is the largest, from 50-60 percent of the syrup producers in the county. They constitute an interesting group because they put in considerable effort, but profit little in the end from their sales of syrup and candy. I plan later to raise some of the more obvious questions generated by this group.

A third level of technique, though currently being practiced, takes us back to the state of the art before the turn of the century. It is practiced by very few operators who are usually elderly people, running only some one to two thousand taps. They drill taps by hand, eschew formaldehyde, collect by horse drawn tank sled and may even boil sap in the old fashioned flat boiling pan which must be hand dumped with each boiling. The flat pan is relatively rare, however. These third level operators invariably use aproning to judge the syrup's readiness and in general can be said to be highly traditional operators. They constitute at most some 10 percent of the producers in the county.

Finally, I shall include a motley class of very small producers. This diverse group includes people who have recently bought a farm which happened to have an old sugar bush on it, or they are formerly class two operators functioning in reduced circumstances now that the children have moved away, or finally they are people who share suburban or small town backgrounds and who have taken up sugaring just for the fun of it. It is hard to characterize these operations because there is so much diversity of technique and knowledge, but in general they operate with scavenged or jury rigged equipment of doubtful pedigree. Those who have access through friends or family to the traditions of proper wood firing or who own old sugar bushes or sugar houses produce the most. I know one family, formerly class two producers, who now produce fifty gallons a year and reserve *all* of it for their own consumption. Most, however, produce some two to twenty gallons of syrup of indifferent quality. This last may be the most exuberant group, but they seldom market their product and don't enter the

state's production statistics significantly.

I dare say that these categories of maple sugar producers can be found substantially the same throughout the northeast, though with variations of proportion from region to region. More modern methods are used by some of the largest producers elsewhere, as in Vermont, but not in St. Lawrence County to my knowledge. Variation in technique is substantial throughout the northeast, but I feel the state of the art levels outlined in this paper can help us narrow down the most interesting producers from the folklorist's point of view, especially as it comes to directing the right questions to the right groups. To be more specific, our class one producers can be seen to be motivated by somewhat different motives than our class three or four producers, for instance. Different questions are appropriate to each class. Accordingly, let's see what there is to be learned.

Level one operators, with all their modern methods and huge production volume are successful businessmen, working at a large enough volume to make the profit worthwhile. To do this they sacrifice many of the traditional techniques which are prized by other groups. I think this is easy to understand as the supremacy of the profit motive in these operations. On balance in some people's minds, profit takes precedence over tradition. These people take greater risks in terms of their investment in new equipment, but they reap financial a-wards. They seem also to earn other rewards of the kind we might more easily associate with our class two producers. They are, after all, sugaring, not raising beef cattle or operating a lumbering operation. They share the pleasures of sugar production with all the others, but they are also fortunate enough to earn more too.

The level two producers raise more difficult questions. In the end they usually make very little money. One of my students figured out that the best most in this group could expect for their time was on the order of 50 cents an hour. Invariably, however, these producers spoke of other rewards when we asked them why they continued to produce in the face of such small profits. These answers are not surprising to the folklorist. They said they did it because they enjoyed it, they had always done it, would feel lost in the spring if they didn't do it, and generally felt that they gained tremendous intangible rewards from the whole procedure ranging from a feeling of closeness to the land to a stronger sense of family or neighborhood community, occasioned by the shared experiences and work load. One farmer asked, after all, how else could he enjoy himself on his own land after a hard winter and convert labor into cash, however small? Others pointed out how they were so accustomed to maple syrup for their cooking that they had to produce. That family I mentioned that consumes fifty gallons annually even boils hard boiled eggs in syrup as a regular treat. They call them gopher eggs!

*A horse drawn gathering tank on the John Swift farm, Colton, in the 1940's.* (Photo courtesy Marion Swift Thomas).

These answers are familiar to those of us who study folklore. They speak for very strong forces which keep alive a great many rather marginal practices in the world. I would like to take a brief look at what these factors might be and examine how they bear relevance to other folkloric behaviors.

My students often suggest that nostalgia is a factor in keeping such things as sugaring alive. What do you think? I think they are partly right, especially for those in our fourth group, and to some degree in all the other groups. We all remember our childhoods, or to some degree wish we had lived in an earlier time, but I don't think that entirely explains our sugaring. Indeed, our first group looks to me as though there is some attempt to escape the constraints of the past in a flight into modern, avant garde technique. We need something more. The need for sugar is one.

Perhaps simple satisfaction with the way things have been done in the past is an element. What's good enough for Grandma is good enough for us. Certainly there is some of that, but I suspect something underlies this seeming conservatism.

I have observed quietly to myself that much involved with sugaring as well as other folk occupations depends upon developments from the past being handed down, that the present practitioners owe great debts to earlier practitioners. Sugar bushes have been kept cleared of brush; grandfather built the sugar house; aproning as a finishing method evolved long ago. Today's syrupers simply inherit a whole body of technique and material ready made. In structural terms they have a template for present behavior which has been designed over considerable time. It's an inheritance and a boon!

I've seen the same thing in boat-building, ballad singing and tall-tale telling. You have seen it too. The force of a gift from our past is hard to resist.

In addition I have been moved by the concept of future shock to examine other attitudes manifested by sugaring people. I find with striking consistency in all four groups a strong desire for competence and control in their lives. Among the newcomers of group four, for example, there is considerable activism against large, impersonal forces in the community, such as the intrusion of the 765 K.V. power line which cuts through the county. The only thing which explains to me the presence of social activism and maple sugaring in so many single heads is the concept of the desire for control and competence. Many of these same group four people are back-to-the-land people who have a rather idealistic nostalgia operating in them too. Yet surprisingly, groups one, two and three support these ideas strongly also.

I guess finding politics in the sugar bush has been a surprise, but I think I must admit its presence, and explain it as best I can. My bet is with future shock.

There is more to do and more to discuss. I'm all ready set for next spring, with more questions to ask than I had before. I have been happy to share with you some thoughts on maple sugaring.

☆☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆

**About the Author**

C. Richard K. Lunt is a professor of English and folklore at SUC Potsdam. He is presently editory of **New York Folklore** and a graduate of the Folklore Institute of Indiana University.

# Views and Reviews

*For the first time* **The Quarterly** *includes excerpts from and critical reviews of recently published books of likely interest to our readers. In each case we attempt to present something of the original author's (s') intentions and a carefully thought out analysis of strong and weak points in each. The reviewer in each case has a special interest and background in the topic of the book reviewed. In any case, reviews reflect the opinion of the reviewer, and not necessarily that of the Association or of the Editor.*

**Architecture from the Adirondack Foothills.** Robert Harold McGowan. The Franklin County Historical and Museum Society, 1977. $13.84 cloth, $6.35 softbound.

☆☆☆☆

*The idea for this book developed while I was a student at the Folklore Institute, Indiana University. I had been interested in Franklin County architecture before studying there, but my interest multiplied when I saw that houses similar to those in which my parents and grandparents had lived were the subject of serious academic attention. I was especially fascinated by the fact that many nineteenth-century Franklin County buildings held clues to the colonial American and European origins of their builders. Such knowledge helped me to begin reading my surroundings in a new way, helped me to see the past in the most commonplace things. History took on a physical reality that textbooks never provided.*

*The ordering of this book needs a few comments. I have attempted to relate the style periods most commonly used in discussing nineteenth-century architecture — Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic, Italianate — to such categories of folk architecutre as I-house, lean-to, Georgian house type, and classic cottage. Therefore, chapters I, II, and IV discuss the interplay, blending, and finally the replacement of folk forms with changing architectural fashions.*

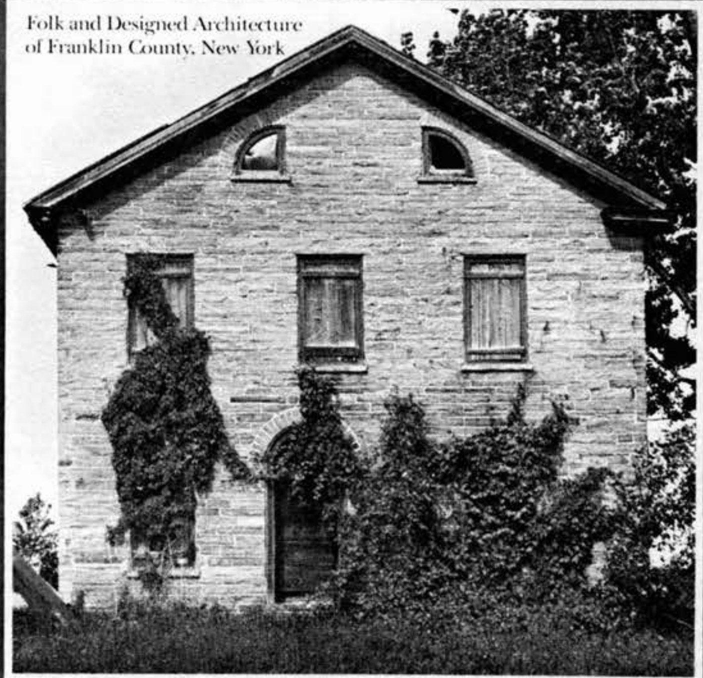
*The chapters are arranged more or less chronologically. I have placed the section on barns at about mid-nineteenth century, when farming was still a growth industry in the county. Within each chapter, buildings are arranged to show changes and developments in form and style and facilitate comparison of similar structures. There is no attempt, therefore, to place individual houses in chronological order. In many cases it is impossible to determine precisely when a house was built. Architecture is not a percise tool for dating, and deeds record when a house was sold, not when it was constructed. I have located each building in a village or township. Naturally, most of the buildings are in the northern half of Franklin County, where most of the people live.*

*In some cases I have mentioned the names of past and present owners, and I have occasionally tried to give an impression of life and thought in Franklin County's past. But this book is meant to be a history of styles, not a collection of anecdotes.*

☆☆☆☆

Cities, towns, and regions across the United States are becoming more sensitive to their local architectural heritage. Mid-twentieth century tendencies toward destruction and rebuilding are being severely curbed by people who realize the advantages of retaining older structures whenever possible. Usually the first sign of local awareness comes in the form of an area survey to catalog and publicize significant structures. Our neighbor, Franklin County, is fortunate to have recently been the subject of just such a survey, the results of which have been published by the Franklin County Historical and Museum Society in a book entitled *Architecture From The Adirondack Foothills.*

The author, Robert Harold McGowan, summarizes his work by stating that it ". . .traces Franklin County buidling styles from the folk traditions of early English and French settlers to Art Deco of the 1930s - focussing on the ways local carpenters combined architectural ideas inherited from their ancestors with designs printed in manuals and planbooks." The important part of this statement is that McGowan does not attempt solely to document pure examples of architectural style. Rather the majority of the book is concerned with the local features that make Franklin County buildings uniquely interesting.



The 112 page book begins with an architectural glossary to acquaint the reader with specialized terms, but moves rapidly into the documentation of the various architectural styles extant in the area. Federal, Greek Revival, Victorian, and Art Deco are all represented, and McGowan points out design features as well as related anecdotes about the individual structures. High quality photography and an easily readable layout contribute greatly to the work.

However, *Architecture From The Adirondack Foothills* is far more than simply a laundry list of interesting houses and barns. Rather local styles are related to the predominant national architectural trends of the period. The Greek Revival style did not enjoy as great a popularity in Franklin County as elsewhere in New York State, but the Federal tradition — with adaptations — was moderately strong. This is clarified by McGowan's study of the traditions of the incoming settlers and the existence of local conditions that influenced the adoption of nationally popular styles. A major migration into the area occurred during the political and architectural period known as Federal. Thus, the first settlers drew ". . . on New England and Canadian architectural traditions" to erect numerous examples of the Federal style. Also, "the lack of a canal helped keep Franklin County small and poor, and it may have contributed to architectural conservatism by stemming the flow of new ideas." Such skillful interweaving of traditions and national trends with the local structural styles is done throughout the book.

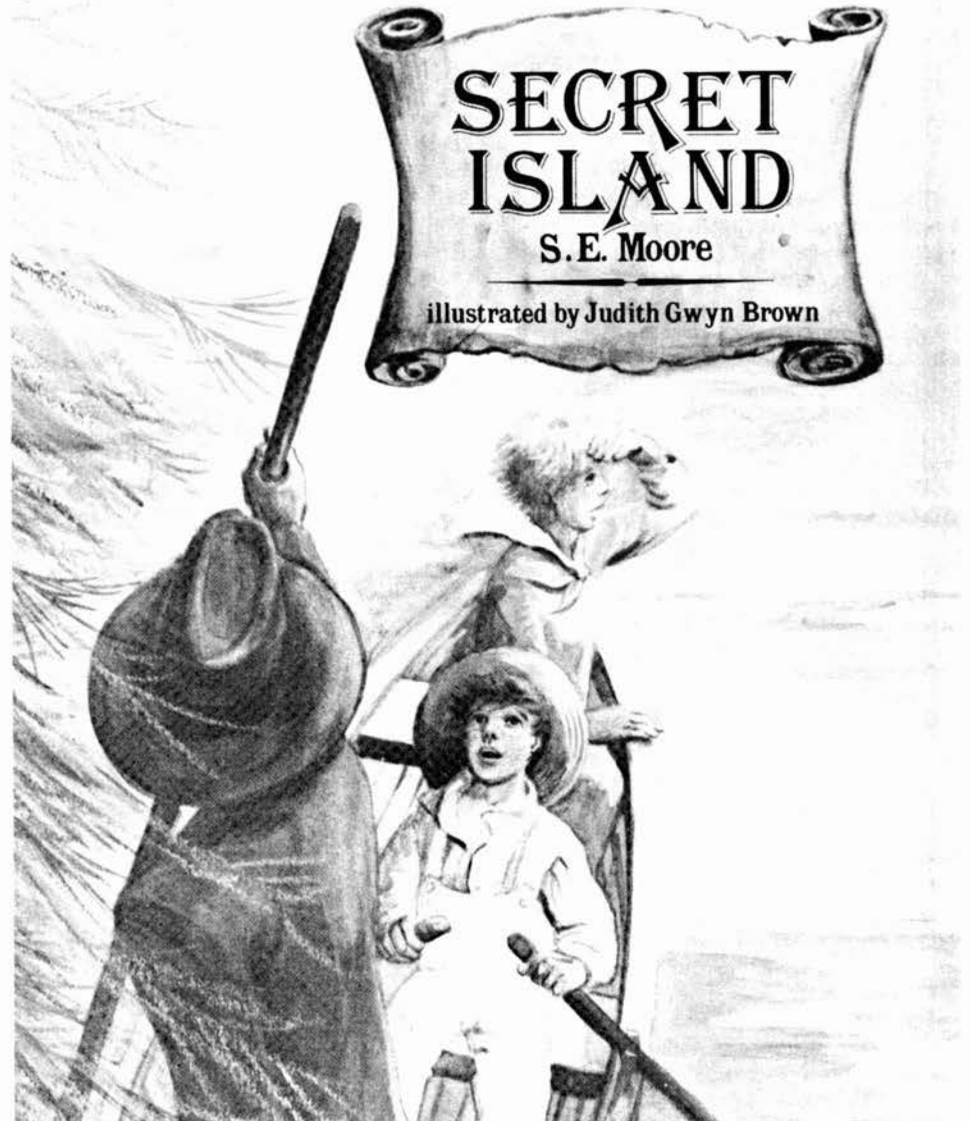
Many books of this type do not expand upon the architectural theme, but McGowan attempts to do so by commenting upon the contemporary social conditions reflected by — or contrasted with — the local architecture. For example, the elegant Federal dwellings hid the realities of a time when women spent year after year in drudgery and men and women faced bleak winters of darkness and cold. On the other hand, the large Italianate mansions with their spacious quarters for the owner and relatively cramped facilities for the servants, clearly proclaimed "that the hard work of a house, and perhaps the people who did it, were less estimable than the owners who lived in the front section and enjoyed that work." Similarily, the austere prison-like lines of the County Poorhouse suggested that ". . . poverty had become less a misfortune and more a criminal tendency by 1870." Obviously, this book does not attempt to be a social history, but such comments do remind the reader that architecture is not a pure form aloof from the influences of the contemporary society.

Professional scholarship and effort are overwhelmingly apparent in this, and the book makes a significant contribution toward preserving the architectural heritage of Franklin County as well as the entire North Country. The Franklin County Historical and Museum Society and Mr. McGowan are to be commended for a job well done.

Copies of *Architecture From The Adirondack Foothills* may be obtained from the Franklin County Historical and Museum Society, 51 Milwaukee Street, Malone, N.Y. 12953. Hardbound editions are $13.84 including tax and postage, and soft cover copies are $6.35 including tax and postage.

☆☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆

**About the Reviewer**
John A. Baule, Director of SLCHA, is a specialist in architectural history and historic preservation. He is presently completing his MA in History Museum Studies with a thesis on late nineteenth century architectural changes in Gilbertsville, New York.




**Secret Island**; S.E. Moore; Four Winds Press, 1977; $7.95, cloth.

☆☆☆☆

*"FOR GOD'S SAKE DON'T FISH IN THESE WATERS . . ." A stone wrapped in this message was tossed through the window of my cousin's home, a farmhouse near the St. Lawrence River, on a night at the end of June of this year, 1865. The sentence, too urgent to be written in cipher, was deliberately obscure in case it was read by the wrong eyes, and the signature was a code name.*

*John Allen, a young boy from New York City, doesn't relish the idea of spending a few months in St. Lawrence County with relatives — that is, not until Captain Gray of the Union Army [and a close personal friend of the family] gives him a very exciting assignment: special agent on the lookout for escaped Rebel prisoners and other criminal activities on the St. Lawrence River.*

*"I could capture Mr. Lincoln's assassins in mid-river," John imagines, "capture bandits with stolen money still in their saddlebags, and maybe save Captain Gray from deadly danger. The North Country — maybe it won't be so bad*

*after all."*

*The Captain, of course, intends John's assignment more as a way to lift his spirits than as an actual mission. But both get more than they bargained for when John and his cousin Sam stumble upon the robbers of the Union Army payroll — a ruthless group of Southern sympathizers who call themselves the Knights of the Golden Circle.*

*Buried treasure . . . codes and ciphers . . . passwords . . . strange meetings . . . a secret island: you'll find them all in this story full of mystery and adventure! And, along with John Allen and his cousin, you can even try your hand at cracking the code which unlocks the secret of Secret Island.*

☆☆☆☆

Although most of the action in Ms. Moore's book takes place in the North Country, the setting is incidental. Northern New York readers may perk up a bit when young John Allen's train trip from New York City takes him through Sandy Creek, Adams, Waterville and Evans Mills, where he transfers to a stage coach to continue his journey toward the St. Lawrence River. At that point, however, Ms. Moore resorts to fictitious place names as she ends by placing her young hero at his aunt's farm, a few miles from Chippewa Bay, if we can trust the map of the "Secret Island Area" at the front of the book.

Ms. Moore provides adventures enough for her young readers. The Civil War has just ended, and John Allen, sent north to rebuild a sickly constitution, tangles with a band of die-hard Confederate sympathizers who seek to dispose of left-over loot from bank robberies and payroll heists of baggage cars. There's a big shootout at the end, after the bad guys have hauled up most of their treasure from a shoal in the St. Lawrence River, where it's been stashed. Older readers may find all the doings a bit far fetched, especially the notion that a twelve-year-old boy would be pressed into service so readily by the U.S. Army agents on the trail of the outlaw band.

John Allen, in the way of juvenile heroes sent to the country for their health, has recuperated amazingly and thinks more highly of his rustic relatives at the conclusion of his adventure.

Bibliophiles who collect any title with North Country references may want to buy *Secret Island*. Otherwise, it can be left to children, who often find great satisfaction in tales that test an adult's credulity.

☆☆☆☆

**About the Reviewer**

Richard D. Kepes is a professor of English at St. Lawrence University, specializing in American literature. He frequently reviews fiction for other publications.

**Hopkinton Maple Festival Cookbook**; Hopkinton Bicentennial Committee, 1976, $2.25 plus .25 postage, from Mrs. Grace Powell, Nicholville, N.Y.

☆☆☆☆

*The American Indians were the first to discover the secret of the sugar maple tree. According to legend, an Indian squaw was boiling venison in the "sweet water" from a maple tree. She forgot to watch her cooking pot and the "sweet water" boiled down to a thick syrup. At any rate, the Indians were making maple syrup and maple sugar before the first white man arrived in America.*

*Maple sugaring has been a yearly event in Hopkinton since the days of the first settlers. At one time most of the farmers had a sugar bush and a sugar house somewhere back in the woods. Over the years many of these have disappeared. Some of the trees were cut for lumber and many of the sugar houses have fallen down from the effects of weather and neglect. There are still, however, a goodly number of folks in Hopkinton who take to the woods each spring to labor long and hard to produce that delightful treat we know as maple syrup.*

*In our Bicentennial year, it seemed fitting to celebrate one of America's and Hopkinton's earliest industries — maple sugaring. This cookbook was published in conjunction with the Hopkinton Maple Festival. Some of the recipes are from old family cookbooks — from the days of the wood cooking stove — and cooking directions are not as explicit as in modern recipes. If you feel up to trying some of these early recipes, we wish you luck. Most of the recipes, however, are of a later vintage, and unless you are like the Indian squaw and forget to watch your cooking pot, we think you will be pleased with the results.*

☆☆☆☆

So many communities across the land and over the years have seen the publication of favorite family recipes in cookbooks for fund-raising by church groups or lodges or women's auxiliaries that one more would hardly seem worth reviewing. But the *Hopkinton Maple Festival Cookbook*, despite motivations similar to others, is different and special. For the avid cookbook-and-recipe collector it is different, for it focuses on one important ingredient and tells of its use in everything from "wax-on-snow" to salad dressing, from beverages to main dishes. It also includes important information about making *and keeping* maple syrup, maple cream, maple sugar and maple candies. One can find such tempting possibilities as maple divinity fudge, stacked pancakes with soft maple sugar, maple custard, baked beans with maple sweetening, and even maple eggnog. For the person interested in local history and folk ways, this book is also special, because it contains some anecdotes about certain recipes and occasional reminiscences of Hopkinton people. One such example is Ira Miller's story about the time he and his brothers had had wax on snow. They decided "that their dog should enjoy some wax too. They wadded a good sized chunk and then helped the dog to eat it by squeezing his jaws. It caused much excitement and much frus-

continued on page 16

# How Clara Washed

*by Marion Clark Baker*

*Recalling from her childhood some of the difficult, painstaking household chores of her relatives, the author carefully recreates an ordinary job that no one would have thought much about then but that helps us appreciate just a little better the "good old days"[?].*

The year I shall take for this account will be 1898, although the method used by Clara for doing the family laundry had been the same for many years previous, there having been two sisters and a brother older than I, an elderly uncle and aunt in the family besides Clara and her husband. Theirs was the era of women's full flouncy, long skirts and petticoats, cotton drawers, all trimmed with lace or Hamburg, and corset covers with much insertion for ribbons.

This was a farm home. It was Monday morning and breakfast had been eaten. Clara brought in the copper boiler from the woodshed. The fire in the wood-burning iron cookstove was built up, the boiler placed on the two front griddles. It had to be filled immediately. There was a smallish zinc sink which had a pump on a raised portion at one end. Clara set a pail in the sink under the spout and filled it from the hand pump. Pail after pail she filled and carried to the stove, lifting them to fill the boiler.

That done, Clara brought in a wooden washtub and, setting two plank-bottomed chairs opposite each other, she placed the tub on the seats. Then she poured into it more water from the pump, warming it with water from the "tank," or reservoir, in the rear part of the stove. Into this tub went the linens first and then the white cotton garments, each article being rubbed a little on the washboard and put through the hand turned wringer. Each piece was rubbed with a cake of yellow Lennox Soap, and then put into the boiler.

While the boiler scalded the contents, Clara continued to repeat the soaking and scrubbing of the rest of the soiled clothes, ending with the denim overalls. The tub then had to be emptied. After the wringer was removed, the water was dipped out with a large tin dipper into a pail and carried to the kitchen porch, where there was an opening of a drain. The tub was rinsed and returned to the chairs. More water was pumped and poured into the tub.

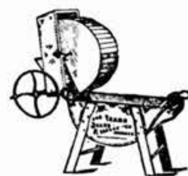
By now the clothes in the boiler were scalded. A large tin dishpan was placed on the griddles behind the boiler and, having removed the cover of the boiler, Clara began taking out the articles and placing them in the pan. This process always held me spellbound. She had a stick about three feet long, stout, round and smooth — "the clothes stick." It had a hole in one end and through it was looped a string by which it always hung in the woodshed. With this stick she would reach into the steaming boiler, lift an article, twist the stick until the sheet or garment was wound on it, then deposit it in the pan. The boiled clothes were then dumped into the tub and others were put to scald in the boiler.

The clothes in the tub were then "sudsed." Nearly all of them were rubbed a little on the washboard, probably to free them of soap and to make sure no stain remained. They were put through the wringer again to await the rinsing while the above process was repeated until everything had been washed. The woolen garments, of course, were not scalded, but rubbed on the board. The long, black, handknitted, woolen stockings of us children and the men's handknitted, woolen socks were washed in the sudsing water. Each one had to be "turned" or washed on the inside.

**The Desplaines American Washer No. 5.**

**No. 23R104 This machine was gotten up at** the special request of some of our customers. It is of the same make and finish as our No. 22 Chicago American. Staves and bottom are corrugated; in fact it is the No. 22 Chicago American reversed. Inside dimensions, 23 x 11 inches. Weight, 47 pounds.
Price, each.......$2.72

**The Sears Washer.**



**No. 23R110 This machine is made on the rubber principle,** the same as used in the Quick and Easy but has two cylinders working in opposite directions at the same motion of the crank shaft, thus cleaning the clothes quicker and more thoroughly than the former machine. It will not tear the clothes and on account of the balance wheel, the machine will work so easy that a child can work it without being fatigued. We have found that the yellow cottonwood grown in the low lands of Arkansas and Mississippi is the best lumber for washing machines, and we have adopted the same in all the box machines. Well made, well painted and varnished, and all the iron parts coming in contact with the water are heavily tinned or galvanized. Weight, 93 pounds.
Price, each, wringer not included..............$5.66

*"Modern conveniences" by Clara's standards, these two washing machines appeared in the 1902 Sears, Roebuck catalogue.*

Again the tub was emptied to be filled with rinse water. This was cold, hard water from the well, whereas the wash water had been rain water from the cistern in the cellar. The well was beside the kitchen porch. The water was pumped and brought in pail by pail. Some hot water from the simmering teakettle was added, also bluing. The rinsing done, the wash was hung on clotheslines behind the house, winter and summer. In summer some things were spread on the grass; in winter things froze at once. Clara said that freezing bleached the white clothes. (The woolens were hung on the clothesbars in the kitchen.) Needless to say there was never a stain on anything, not even a gray place on the towels made of grainbags where the hired man had dried his half-washed hands.

Some garments had to be starched, especially the cotton dresses and aprons. The starch was often made of bread flour. Clara would put the needed amount into a large tin milkpan to which she would add a little cold water. I was often asked to stir this until all the lumps were pressed out. Hot water was added to make the right consistency and "brought to a boil."

Conservation of water was practiced from necessity those days. Clara often used the water from the boiler for scrubbing the porches and steps or the bare part of the woodshed. The rinse water in summer was frequently carried to the garden.

There were times in the winter when the cistern "went dry." Then all hands were called upon to bring in snow. Pans and kettles of all sizes were filled and set on the stove. It took hours to melt enough to do the week's laundry. The well water was considered too hard; it would not make a suds.

Do you wonder, perhaps, how Clara survived such labor week after week? Well, girls, Clara did many other things. Besides bringing up five children and caring for elderly relatives and keeping her house clean and neat, she was active in the church and community and somehow she found time to do a lot of reading. She lived to be 78.

☆☆☆☆

**About the Author**
Marion Clark Baker is a retired teacher who has returned to her family home in North Russell to live.

*The oldest rooms of the house: the dining room with restored mantle and the study with Wright's own desk and law books.*

# What If We Give a Party . . . and Everybody Comes?

## Photographs and Comments on the Gala Opening of the Silas Wright House and Museum

*After five years of hard work, patience and deferred dreams, the Association played host to a large celebration of the opening of the Governor Silas Wright House and Museum on the weekend of March 10 through 12, 1978. Here we reproduce photographs of the interior — upstairs exhibits and downstairs restoration — as it appeared just before the 750 plus visitors of the weekend began to come in, courtesy of John Baule; the article on the Saturday public opening and dedication service, courtesy of the* **Watertown Daily Times***; and, SLCHA President Allen Splete's remarks made at the dedication service on Saturday.*

The sanctuary of the Unitarian Universalist Church did double duty this past weekend.

Not only did it seat churchgoers on Sunday morning but, on Saturday afternoon, it played host to a crowd, old and young alike, from all over St. Lawrence County.

On Saturday afternoon, March 10, 1978, the Silas Wright House Museum, after these nearly five years of restoration and only a bit before its freshly painted doors opened to the public for the first time, was officially dedicated, with all the trimmings, in the sanctuary of the church next door.

All the seats were crowded full.

And so was the back of the church, the standing-room only section.

There were high school history teachers, housewives and professors.

There were sellers of antiques and retired farmers and a baby or two.

Most of them dressed in their Sunday best, on Saturday, came to witness, what the dignitaries there called, "history in the making."

Canton author, retired newspaperman and chronicler of past events and personages, Atwood Manley, greeted the public, with obvious enthusiasm, at the door.

"The dedication was supposed to start at one-thirty," he said with a grin, "but we may have to hold it up."

"Didn't think we'd draw this size crowd."

"We may have to wait a while."

He was right.

When Master of Ceremonies Allen P. Splete, president of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, gave his personal salute to St. Lawrence County's new museum, he spoke to a packed house.

Mr. Splete talked, by way of introduction, of "one of our nation's greatest statesmen," Silas Wright, a man of the 19th century, an attorney, Canton's postmaster, justice of the peace, inspector of schools, roadmaster, politician and

governor of New York State.

Mr. Splete described the opening of the Silas Wright House and Museum, a place where the Governor lived and where he died, as "living proof" of "volunteerism and the results it can bring."

The once ramshackle house has been restored by the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, through the help, financial and otherwise, of many local people.

Mr. Splete explained that the day's dedication was the culmination "of five years of effort."

John A. Baule, Director of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, told the assemblage of things perhaps more basic.

"We are at a point where we finally do have a St. Lawrence County Museum," he said, "and a fine facility."

"We owe a lot to the people who have torn the plaster off and done the work . . . taken the sixty truck loads to the dump."

"Today, this is not a tribute to what has gone before," Mr. Baule said. "It is, in a real sense, a real dedication."

"We must look to the future."

"We have no intention to be a warehouse, a visible storage place. We want this house to live."

Mr. Baule explained that the museum will serve students of history. It will stand as it is and as what it will become.

It will be the showplace for historical exhibits which can be borrowed for display from the Smithsonian Institute, for instance.

"We intend to use the house for a number of things," he said.

"The museum is not done now," he added, "and I hope it will always be evolving. I hope it will never be done."

St. Lawrence County Historian, Mary H. Smallman, the next official speaker, summarized, "as one of the old timers in the organization," the development of the county historical association, the beginnings of a project culminating, in a sense, in the day and the dedication.

Ruth Blankman, Canton's lady mayor, noted that while much mention was to be made of Silas Wright, it was only appropriate to remember too the Governor's wife, Clarissa. "Just as she was involved in her husband's career," said Mrs. Blankman, "so are the women of this county involved in this most historic occasion."

Bennett Abrams, chairman of the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators, carried the good wishes of this colleagues on the board to museum officials and the public.

In praising the former governor and resident of the house, he quoted from the Scotch essayist and historian, Thomas Carlyle: "The history of the world is but the biography of great men."

Wright study: portrait of the governor; stencilling hand applied by volunteer Lynn Case and curtains made by Mary Ruth Beaman.

Dining room: punch bowls all set for the party; flower arrangements by Marilyn Barlow; Wright sideboard from St. Lawrence University.

Parlors, with center table said to be in house when the Wrights lived there.

Upstairs hall gallery with opening exhibit of items "From the Collection;" here childhood memorabilia.

Parlor items from the late nineteenth century.

Kitchen and household items owned by SLCHA.

State Assemblyman, David O'B. Martin, told his listeners that, on the evening before, he had had the opportunity to tour the museum itself.

In the process he had come across a communication which unwittingly epitomizes, he thought, the spirit of Silas Wright.

"It was signed," said Mr. Martin, "I remain, with great respect, your obedient servant, Silas Wright, Jr."

H. Douglas Barclay, State Senator from Pulaski, told the people, "Being very frank with you . . . several years ago I didn't know about Silas Wright."

Mr. Barclay said he was introduced to the historical figure by a local man, influential in seeing the museum project to fruition, Varick Chittenden.

"I'd like to say to all involved," said Mr. Barclay, "congratulations for all that you've done."

The last speaker, Congressman Robert C. McEwen, chided Senator Barclay, suggesting, with a grin, that if the Senator had grown up in eastern St. Lawrence County he might have earlier been aware that Canton could boast a governor of New York State.

Speaking of the gathering, the ceremony of the day, Congressman McEwen further suggested that "Sil" Wright would be pleased."

☆☆☆☆

As President of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association and on behalf of its Board of Trustees and Association members, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the formal dedication of the Governor Silas Wright House and Museum in Canton, New York. This project has had, from the beginning, a dual purpose. First, it represents a 19th century house restoration which was well described in the St. Lawrence *Plaindealer* of March 1, 1978. The house is a form of Greek revival architecture of the period and we have used as many original Silas Wright artifacts as possible to recreate his life in Canton from 1820-1847. Second, the residence contains museum space to preserve and exhibit material of significance related to St. Lawrence County history.

I am tempted on such a grand occasion to reminisce about all the days leading up to this historic moment. Let me instead, before commenting on the man we honor, try to express what this achievement means to the Association and the many wonderful people who made this day possible. The Silas Wright House, as you see it today, is the culmination of five years of effort by the St. Lawrence County Historical Association and its special committees, including a Board of Overseers, who were designated to help with this effort.

The initial fund-raising campaign, which began in 1973, and subsequent

planning were characterized by dedication of purpose and the desire to preserve an important part of St. Lawrence County history for North Country residents. If ever one needed to be reminded of the importance of the volunteer concept in our modern society, this accomplishment underscores that fact. Volunteerism and the results it can bring are the reason we are here today. Personal sacrifice of time and resources makes projects of this nature a reality. Completion of such endeavors seems to be extra-satisfying. Why? Simply because the people involved care enough about something to bring it to pass. Such individuals sense historical value and believe that the results are worth the labor expended, not necessarily for themselves but for those who follow. The opening of the Silas Wright home also serves as living proof that persons interested in county, town, and village history can work together to preserve a chapter of our common past.

Those closely related to the project from the beginning had the vision of recreating the environment in which Silas Wright lived and worked. It is hoped that the house and its contents will allow many to experience anew that part of the history of our nation. The Wright museum will provide the students and citizens of St. Lawrence County, as well as travellers to the region, the opportunity to learn more about the life of one of our nation's great statesmen.

It seems only fitting and proper now that we take time to remember Silas Wright and some of his major achievements. Why was this man so important to us in Northern New York? To answer this question, I'll borrow first from Ed Blankman, who seems to be our resident expert on Mr. Wright. My initial source is a sketch of Wright's life compiled by Ed for the August 1973 bluebook which announced the Governor Wright Historical Center Campaign. It reads:

*Born in Massachusetts and reared in Vermont, Silas Wright, Jr. came to Canton as a young lawyer. He rose rapidly in county and state political circles, moving from postmaster to surrogate to senator, and then state comptroller.*

*National service came soon, first as Congressman, then from 1833 to 1844 as Senator. Elected New York Governor in 1844, he helped carry Polk into the Presidency. He had refused nomination for the Vice Presidency, as well as appointment as either Secretary of the Treasury or Justice of the Supreme Court. By 1847, because of his anti-slavery, free-soil views, he was shaping up as a prime candidate for the Presidency. His death on August 27 of that year removed this possibility.*

*But it did not remove him from the affection of Clarissa, his St. Lawrence County wife, or his multitude of local, state and national friends. In the memory of these friends he remained the 'Great Commoner' and 'Farmer Statesman,' who by 'candor clear as spring water' had led men away from old prejudices to 'new convictions steeped in moral thought.'*

Chair, coverlet and clock in study.

An October 1973, *Quarterly* article, entitled "Silas Wright of St. Lawrence County" by the same Mr. Blankman provides ample background to embellish the essentials. Here one has to be selective, but a bit more about Wright's stature and character should be said. Wright was called "Jackson of the East," and "a preliminary sketch for Abraham Lincoln." Poets such as Walt Whitman and John Greenleaf Whittier mourned his passing and spoke in eloquent verse about his importance to Americans. Wright remains now a symbol of transition from the Federalist Age to that of Jackson.

In a series done by the *Watertown Daily Times* on State Governors, Lewis Blanche aptly said of him and his region: "He was an authentic Northern New Yorker, blending in his person the straightforward honesty, the simplicity, the disinterestedness, and the individualism that are the best marks of the northern New York character." Bligh Dodds, then Collector of the Port in Ogdensburg, said of Wright in the 1958 dedication of the plaque on the front of the Canton house, "His life was a complete devotion to public service." Even what is perhaps Canton's greatest glory of beauty and common-folks recreation, the park (our Village Green), was a gift by Wright for ownership by the Presbyterian church and for use by everyone in perpetuity.

John Garraty, author of a biography on Silas Wright in 1949, makes us mindful of the Canton ties of this great gentleman. Garraty's first chapter begins:

*There was a man named Silas Wright, and he was a historic sight. He was a good man, and he had a Simitary and a Grange named after him, and when he was here he lived at the Tea Cozy.*

*To the child in the grade school at Canton, New York, who wrote this simple biography, the name of Silas Wright is probably as well known as that of George Washington or Abraham Lincoln, for in that North Country community where he lived and died, his fame has not been forgotten as it has been elsewhere. Today, while the names of Van Buren and Benton, of Webster and Clay, of Buchanan, Calhoun, and James K. Polk still ring with some significance to the average American, Wright's is virtually unknown. It was not always so.*

Let us hope that one of the outcomes of today's events is a rediscovery of Silas Wright's contributions in shaping the destiny of our land.

Marnie Crowell in her 1975 book, *North to the St. Lawrence*, refers to the Wright project in her Epilogue: Notes of a North Country Traveller. She stated:

*We pass the primly handsome Silas Wright House, once the home of one of the North Country's outstanding statesmen. Its pink Potsdam sandstone foundation is swathed in plastic at the moment. The local citizen's group that is restoring the Wright House as a history center for the county is horrified at the amount of money that has gone into repairing the foundation — but someday many will thank them for doing it.*

I think Marnie is right.

In closing, this dedication represents an opportunity for the St. Lawrence County Historical Association. Our Wright House and Museum is now ready for use and we can start to offer the educational benefits this form of preservation represents — a journey into and through our past. How meaningful this work of the Association will become will depend largely on its ability to obtain and sustain further membership, government, foundation, and individual support. We must find a way to have an operating budget that enables us to respond to the challenges of potential use by citizens of St. Lawrence County, New York State and our nation. Your support and interest will continue to be needed if the Association is to achieve its goal.

I will not attempt to single out individuals for special thanks but rather wish to thank everyone who has contributed in any way in support of this undertaking. The special feeling of pride and fulfillment which this day brings is just reward for all of us.

# "In Anticipation of 'The Beans'"

*by Norman W. Pauling, Jr.*

*Like many traditions of one's youth, the preparing and serving of Saturday night baked beans and brown bread — with fixings — took on a ritualistic nature. Here the author explains this New England tradition — in his case, Maine, his wife's, New Hampshire — but surely well remembered with slight variations by many other North Country families of New England origins. The recipes are the Paulings'; the illustrations are by Doris Hadlock, reproduced from* **Take the Gray Basin . . .**, *the family cookbook compiled by Mary Smallman.*

The baked bean and brown bread supper on Saturday night was a tradition on both sides of my family for at least two and one-half generations. As a matter of fact, it was traditional to the point of being quasi-ceremonial. On any given Saturday afternoon, after the feeling of fullness from the sumptuous noon dinner had worn off, comments and conversation would turn to anticipation of the "beans." And the harder the task at hand, or the more foul the weather, the stronger would be the anticipation.

Saturday night bean suppers were associated with the semi-weekly baking by the women and girls, and the big job that was saved to be attacked by all of the boys home from school for the day. The thoughts and comments about the last meal of the week also served as impetus to exert that extra charge of energy needed to finish the job started so many hours earlier.

Beans of the kidney type were cultivated as a staple food by native Americans and were quickly adopted by European colonists. Beans could be baked using residual oven heat from bread baking, initially in brick dutch ovens and later in wood range ovens and finally in gas or electric ovens. Left over baked beans would keep for several days without refrigeration; hence they provided a source of protein as well as energy for as long as they lasted. Our families grew their own dry beans and preferred the Old Fashioned Yellow Eye variety. Incidentally this variety is still grown commercially and marketed through First National Stores, in New England.

The bean crop was pulled, stacked to dry, packed in burlap feed bags, threshed with a hand flail, winnowed in the neighbor's fanning mill, picked over, at long last prepared for baking, and finally baked.

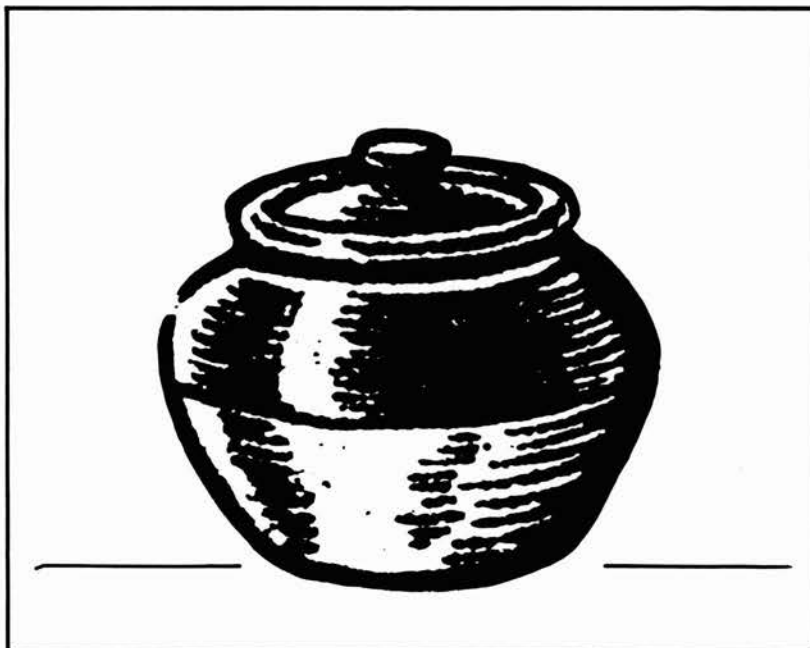
The brown bread was made to a recipe handed down from Great-great-grandmother Griffin and was characterized by excellent flavor and solid substance (real bread, if you know what I mean). My wife, Jan, makes it occasionally, and we use it as bread without the accompanying beans.

The various relish and pickle recipes are examples of the many types that garnished the meal. They were the end products of the seed, manure, lime, fertilizer, water and labor of which our large productive garden was made.

The dessert was usually rhubarb and pineapple sauce and sugar cookies (eaten in that order, sour to sweet, so we could consume more.) My mother's side of the family preferred the rice and raisin pudding; however, my brother and sister found it "too heavy" to handle.

The meal was set on a large oil cloth covered table in the dining room. My father's place was at the end of the table nearest the kitchen door. Nana (my paternal grandmother) sat at the opposite end of the table and supervised the children's eating operation. My mother sat quietly and ate her portion. The children's eating rules included not taking too big a helping, fork mashing of the beans, taking some of everything, not taking too big a mouthful, not drinking more than two glasses of milk, not talking at mealtime, and eating rhubarb and pineapple first — before cookies.

Saturday night was physic night and what a variety to choose from! Rhubarb and soda! Nana made it most of the time; however, my Uncle Fred made it frequently. It was administered by Nana or my mother at the rate of one tablespoon for adults (over twelve) and one teaspoonful for children. In retrospect the Saturday night physic was ludicrous in light of the cathartic nature of brown bread plus the propellant contained in the beans, to say nothing of the bulk provided in the pickles, relishes, and rhubarb and pineapple dessert. Truly Saturday night beans and brown-bread was the highlight of the week. It's a pity that my system can no longer stand it, but what lovely memories.



*Bean pot drawn by Doris Hadlock.*

**Boston Baked Beans**

1 lb. Old Fashioned yellow eye beans (sm. chit)
3/4 lb. salt pork
1 large onion (diced)
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. dry mustard
1/2 cup molasses (Gray's Market bulk *preferred)**

Soak beans overnight in a kettle. Add onion; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer until beans are soft. Add remaining ingredients; mix well. Bake in preheated 250-degree oven for 12 hours. Check frequently during the day; add water as necessary.

*Gray's Market was in the market section of Boston and was razed to make room for the Government Center Urban Renewal Project in the 1960's.

**Brown Bread**

1 cup graham flour
1 cup white flour
1 cup corn meal
1 cup molasses (Gray's Market bulk)
2 cups sour milk
1 tsp. soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1 cup raisins

Sift dry ingredients together, saving a little white flour to mix with raisins. Add milk, then molasses, blending well, and raisins. Steam for 3 hours.

**Corn Relish**

1 doz. medium ears of sweet corn
2 cups chopped onions
2 green peppers chopped
1 red pepper chopped
1 cup chopped cabbage
1 tbsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 1/2 tbsp. dry mustard
1 cup sugar
2 cups vinegar 0.5% acidity

Cut corn from cob. Combine with onions, peppers, and cabbage in kettle. Add remaining ingredients; bring to boiling point. Reduce heat; simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Pour into hot, sterilized jars; seal. Process in boiling water bath for 10 min.

**Pepper Relish**

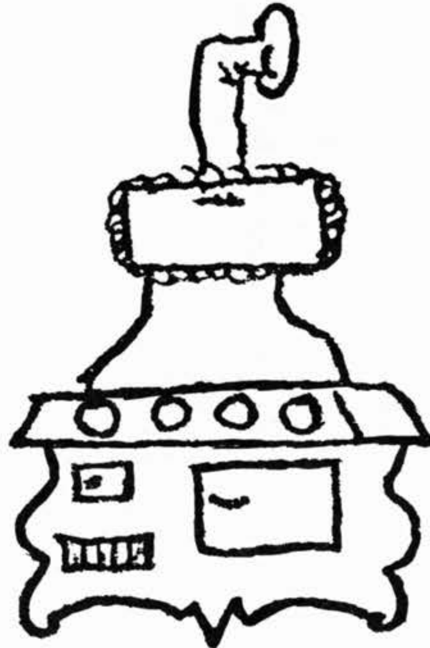
2 doz. sweet peppers (some red)
7 med. onions
*Grind and save juice of the above*
2 tbsp. salt
2 tbsp. mustard seed
3 cups vinegar
3 cups sugar

Boil 30 min. and pack in sterile jars and seal.

**Bread and Butter Pickles**

Take smaller or medium cucumbers. Wash and slice without peeling. Soak in salt water to cover overnight with 1 tsp. alum and 1 cup salt to 1 gal. water. Drain in morning and rinse slightly. Put in jars packing tightly.

Add syrup made of vinegar and white sugar allowing 2 c. sugar to 1 qt. vinegar. Put mixed spices in a bag (pickling spices) 2 tbsp. Add 1/2 tsp. celery salt to vinegar. Bring all to a boil. Let cool a little so as not to break jars. Pour over pickles and seal.



*Kitchen range drawn by Doris Hadlock.*

**Rhubarb and Pineapple Sauce**

Cut rhubarb into short pieces. Stew in a kettle until soft (mushy). Add crushed pineapple and white sugar to taste. Proportions of rhubarb and pineapple would vary depending on individual taste* and supply.

*The person who made it.

**Sugar Cookies**

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup oleo
1 egg
1 tsp. vanilla or lemon rind
1/3 cup sour cream
2 cups flour
1/3 tsp. soda
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking powder

Blend sugar, oleo, egg, vanilla, and sour cream till creamy. Gradually add sifted flour, soda, salt, and baking powder, and mix well. Chill 12 hours. Roll very thin and cut. Bake in 350 degree oven for 10 min.

**Rice and Raisin Pudding**

1/2 cup rice
2 qt. milk
1 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
1 cup raisins

Mix all ingredients; place in baking pan. Bake in preheated 325-degree oven for 2 hours, stirring three or four times.

**Rhubarb and Soda (A Physic)**

One part dried rhubarb leaves
One part bicarbonate of soda

Add enough water to make a very thin pasty solution. Simmer for 15 min. stirring frequently. Cool and store in glass.

☆☆☆☆

**For Further Reading**

Better Homes and Gardens *Heritage Cook Book*, 1975. Mary H. Biondi's *Take the Gray Basin . . .*, 1976. Jean Hewitt's The New York Times *Heritage Cook Book*, 1972.

**About the Author**

Norman W. (Bill) Pauling, Jr. is a native Down Easter (Maine) who now teaches in the Agriculture Department at Canton ATC and supervises the college's farm operations.

**continued from page 9**

tration to the pet dog." Pet lovers may not be overjoyed by the story's inclusion, but it is a good example of a traditional child's prank, good folklore. If I have one disappointment in the book, it is that more local contributors of recipes did not also relate incidents of the sugar woods or about certain recipes and meals in their families, past and present. That context for each contribution — whose recipe, when used, local stories, etc. — would make this an important historical document as well as a handy collection of good recipes.

This year, 1978, was the third year for the Hopkinton Maple Festival. That day is a good one each year for North Country people to watch for — sugar bush tours, pancakes and sausage *and syrup*, wax-on-snow, exhibits of antique sugaring equipment, and more. And the maple cookbook, now in its third year and second printing, is a good buy, for those of us who like history *and* for those of us who like to eat.

☆☆☆☆

**About the Reviewer**

Varick Chittenden is *The Quarterly* editor, a native of Hopkinton, and a folklorist who teaches in the English Department at Canton ATC. He sometimes *tries* to cook, too.

*The Ladies' Mandolin Club of Gouverneur High School in the early twentieth century, subtitled "an organization of promising musicians made up of many popular young ladies." Upper row: Jean Hall, Cassy Saulsbury, Hazel Clifton, Viola Hull, Hazel Smith, Ruth Kellar. Second row: Susie Jones, Grace Randall, Vera Hurlburt, Hazel Jenne, Helen Kelley, Ethel Able, Lower row: Florence Earle and Neva Beach.* (Photo courtesy History Center).

# A Musical Revue: The First Hundred Years of County Musical Entertainments

*by Carolyn Jenner Swafford*

*Music has had an important role in the lives of County people since its settlement. Especially interesting was the era of this discussion, when every little community had some kind of public hall and at least one or two musical groups: cornet bands, choruses, mandolin groups, kitchen hop bands, orchestras, what have you.*

St. Lawrence County remained uninhabited until approximately 1793, when the first settlers came up the Hudson River from New York to Rome and then either by way of Oswego and the St. Lawrence River or overland through Carthage to this area. Others came from Canada across the St. Lawrence, and New Englanders ferried across Lake Champlain to Port Kent or North West Bay and traveled the roads leading to Hopkinton in St. Lawrence County.

Europeans also settled in the growing towns of our county, thus making it a miniature melting pot within the larger container of the existing colonies. People of Scottish descent settled in the areas around the present Madrid, Lisbon, Waddington, Gouverneur, Hammond, and Rossie. The English scattered around the remainder of the county, along with the French Canadians who settled in small communities near sawmills. When the Irish arrived around 1850, they settled in the areas near the present Brasher Falls, DeKalb, and Colton.

During the first part of the century, life in this area was hard. The people worked from the time they arose until they went to bed at night. Roads were poor, houses were small, and floors were rough-hewn planks. But these handicaps and hardships couldn't hold back the development of music in St. Lawrence County.

Very little is really known about the exact musical pleasures enjoyed by the early settlers in this county, but tradition states that, when time permitted, settlers gathered in each other's homes to sing hymns or songs from "Guid Auld Scotland" or "Bonny England." [1]

Dances of French origin were also brought to St. Lawrence County before 1865. A brief description of the main ones follows. The quadrille was originally a stately dance performed by the French nobility on smooth floors amid pomp and glitter. The common people discarded the intricate steps for more simple, natural steps which could be danced in crowded kitchens, in the fields, and on cobblestone pavements. This is the dance that was brought by the Puritans to New England and then to St. Lawrence County by the early settlers.

Like the quadrilles, the contra dances first came into New England and from there into St. Lawrence County. These dances fitted well into the social life along the frontier. Only about five of the many contra dances which were danced before 1850 have survived, and they are: Money Musk, Fisher's Hornpipe, College Hornpipe, Soldier's Joy, and Sir Roger de Coverley (also called the Virginia Reel). The contras have changed little from their original form. "The basic steps were and are: forward and back, cast off, right and left, ladies chain, right hand star, left hand star, down the center and back, circle four to the right or left, promenade and reel."[2]

The Lancers, invented in Paris by Laborde in 1835, came to the United States in about 1857. It is a very graceful, dignified quadrille with music which gives the dancers an opportunity to display the individual style, grace, and skill which is so important to a dance of this type. In the early years, the dance was prompted by a member of each set. In the 1890's, the figure "grand square" was added. Around 1900, the Lancers, along with the quadrilles and contras, lost its popularity (The Potsdam Polka Dots have danced the Lancers since 1950 and at one time were the only club in the USA dancing it).

The waltz, supposedly originating from the LaVolta danced in Provence, France, beginning about 1400, became one of the most popular dances in the county. It gave a gentleman and a lady a chance to dance together, something that was missing in the quadrilles and contras.

The two-step has a very interesting history, originating from several dances. It may be descended from a Hungarian dance, the galop, or from the redowa, which is danced in two forms: in waltz time in France and in 2/4 tempo in Poland. The need for the two-step arose when couples dancing the waltz got dizzy from the constant turning, a feature of the waltz! It appeared in Paris in 1830 in its present form and crossed the Atlantic to our shores shortly thereafter.

Even more interesting to read about is the history of the polka. "The polka was the chief of the Bohemian dances . . . and was introduced in Paris in 1840, and arrived in the USA in the 1850s. The polka with its simple steps and melodious tunes swept the ballrooms of the world by storm and not only created a freer style of couple dancing, but also caused a revolution in clothing. The high coiffures were replaced with ringlets and curls, the heavy loops and flounces that weighted down the colonial dresses were replaced with simple frocks, high waisted and with light puffs of sleeves. Light dainty slippers replaced the heavier shoes. The men's long square tailed coats of the colonial period with the gilt braid and lace cuffs were replaced by slender-tailed

Harvest Ball,

—AT—

Crapser's Hall,

Brasher Falls,

Monday evening, Aug. 15th, 1892.

The company of

Yourself and Lady is Respectfully Solicited.

ROOM MANAGERS:

I. W. MORSE, Brasher Falls,

JOHN BURKE, Helena,

JAMES REED, Massena.

+ MUSIC +

Church's Full Orchestra.

TICKETS, $1.50

*Including Supper at the Riverside House.*

F. F. STEVENS, - - Treasurer.

Spectators not desiring to dance, 25 cents.

Order of Dancing.

1. Grand March.
2. Quadrille.
3. Saratoga Lancers.
4. Money Musk.
5. Portland Fancy.
6. Society (Jersey).
7. Quadrille.
8. Tempest.
9. Schottische.
10. College Lancers
11. Opera Reel.
12. Waltz.

Intermission

13. Portland Fancy.
14. Quadrille.
15. Gavotte.
16. Letter S.
17. Polka.
18. Sicillian Circle.
19. Waltz.
20. Quadrille.
21. Schottische.
22. Tempest.
23. Waltz.
24. Gipsey.

*A typical dance program.* (Courtesy the History Center)

coats buttoned at the waist, similar to but lighter than the present dress suits. The square-toed shoes with the large buckles were replaced by a lighter slipper. Knee britches and stockings became lighter and more slender."[3] And thus as the dances became more comfortable and not so stately, so did the clothing of the early settlers of St. Lawrence County.

There is a dance that has come to be called the St. Lawrence Gavotte, because instructions for its performance have become known only from a visit to an elderly resident of the county. "The steps are simple, the dance is slow and graceful. Some years ago this dance was shown to me by Martin Manley of Hannawa Falls who at that time was over 80 years old. He told me that his father taught the dance to him when he was a small boy and that his grandfather had taught it to his father. So it is to be concluded that this dance was danced in St. Lawrence County for well over a hundred years."[4] The St. Lawrence Gavotte was danced between the quadrilles and contra dances, because it gave the dancers a chance to rest between the strenuous breakdowns.

Perhaps one of the most important people in the many small towns of the county was the fiddler. With his fiddle, he unloosed willing feet as well as gay tongues, and country dances were enjoyed by the hard-working farm folk. In the fall, barn dances were the scenes of laughter and fun, and the air was filled with such tunes as "Turkey in the Straw," "Money Musk," "Girl I Left Behind Me," and "Bird in a Gilded Cage." The winter offered more time for dancing, which took on a new zest. Groups of young folks held dances at the homes of their friends, and it didn't take long for the people to find out about a dance. All that was needed was to find the fiddler; then the dance began. In the town of Edwards, the man to contact in case of a dance was Jimmy McFerran or Jay Dewey. "No matter what tune Mr. Dewey was asked to play, it always turned out to be Bird in a Gilded Cage."[5] Another important element of the barn dance was the caller, and in Edwards, the people to contact were the VanZandt boys — Billy and his four sons. "Billy, a Civil War veteran, also made and played violins."[6] When the people gathered at the Rushton Hotel for dances, music was supplied by McFerran's Orchestra, Calipario's, Martin's, and others.

Parishville old timers recall the many gay times had at the Silver Grey Balls, the Masquerades, New Year's Balls, Military Balls, as well as at the kitchen and barn dances. Among the earliest recalled were the dances held in the famous Parish Inn, a large building built in 1815 and well-adapted to take care of those who came long distances to dance. Sometimes over two hundred people from all over the county attended these dances.

The kitchen and barn dances in Parishville were quite similar to those held in the surrounding county towns. The fiddlers did their own calling with the added help of a drummer and sometimes an organist who played chords. Square dances were the typical dances, because no one knew how to dance anything else! When the rare dancer who knew how to waltz requested one, the tune was usually "Rye Waltz." Soon such dances as "Money Musk, Letter S, Lancers, Quad-

rilles, and the Irish Trot became popular."[7]

Some of the many places available for dancing in Parishville included the West Parishville Grange Hall, where fiddlers' contests were also held. The town historian recalls a blind fiddler, name unknown, who played there and "who could instantly sense when the dancers were making mistakes and correct them."[8]

Lewis and Bertha Crump of South Colton both played violin and traveled all over the county playing for dances. Their sons — Moses, Glenn, Guy, and Ezra — were also quite musical and were quite well-known as callers. Many other names were cited as callers, thus showing that many people were available and interest was high in music and dancing.

Many dances were held in the Town Hall after shows and entertainment. The Cake Walk, which became popular about sixty years ago, soon became an integral part of an evening of dancing. "Mr. A.H. Bresee and his daughter, Mildred, became quite proficient in this dance and often danced it as a specialty for the crowd."[9]

Several old newspaper articles and dance programs are in the possession of the Parishville historian. One program tells of a "Social Dance at the Commercial House, Parishville, N.Y., August 27, 1886. Tickets: 50 cents. Good music in attendance."[10] Another program tells of a Thanksgiving Ball held in 1889 at Shattuck's Hotel, "on Thursday evening, November 28. Music furnished by Randall and Harts full orchestra. Tickets: $1.50."[11]

A Thanksgiving Ball was held in Eagle Hall in 1905. People from Potsdam, Hopkinton, Winthrop, Buckton, Hannawa, Colton, Fort Jackson, Nicholville, Pierrepont, Madrid, North Lawrence, South Colton, Converse, North Bangor, Lawrenceville, Beechertown, and Parishville attended! Eighty-one couples attended and music was furnished by the Odd Fellows orchestra.

A 1906 program of a New Year's Ball that was held at Eagle Hall on Monday evening says: "Yourself and Lady are cordially invited. Music by the 'Odd Fellows' orchestra. Tickets $1.50. Spectators, 15 cents." The program of dances: Grade March at 8:30. 1. Sicilian Circle 2. Waltz 3. Quadrille 4. Two Step 5. College Lancers 6. Gavotte 7. Portland Fancy 8. Trilby Two Step 9. Cotillion 10. Three Step 11. Lancers 12. Waltz Refreshments 13. Quadrille 14. Five Step 15. 20th Century Waltz 16. College Lancers 17. Two Step 18. Virginia Reel 19. Columbian Schottishe 20. Waltz 21. Portland Fancy 22. Three Step 23. Sixteen to One 24. New Orleans 25. Gavotte 26. Waltz. Balance of evening at your pleasure." WOW![12]

On February 22, 1909, there was a Masquerade Ball in Eagle Hall. The order of dances was similar to that of the Thanksgiving Ball with the substitution of barn dances here and there.

Because the early settlers of Northern New York were largely Congregationalists, the only amusements tolerated were prayer meetings and singing schools. To illustrate the strength of the influence that the religious sect had over the people, an incident is cited of an innkeeper who was forced to "stand up in a church meeting, ask forgiveness and submit himself to discipline for permitting a ball to be held in his tavern."[13]

Chorus music found expression in the singing schools, which came into vogue after the Civil War. For miles around, people would gather to sing tunes "sounded off" on a tuning fork. Thus many tunes of the old home land were revived or kept alive. Occasionally, singing contests were held, particularly among the males. When the reed organ made its appearance, musicales were greatly enhanced by its accompaniment, but it took some time for the organ to be accepted. For many years, it, along with the violin, was regarded as "an instrument of the devil."[14]

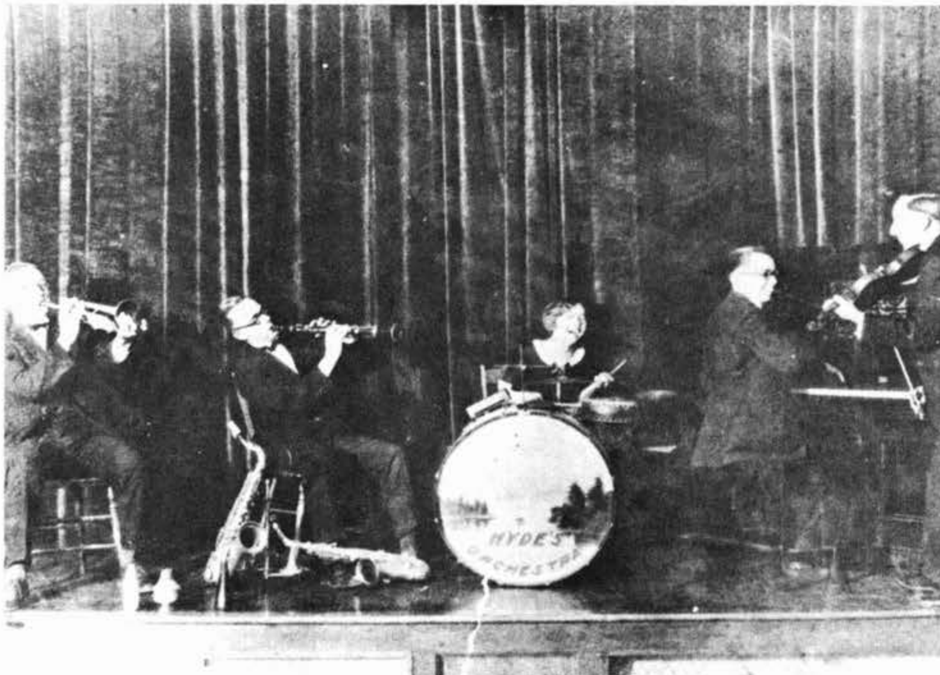
In the Gouverneur records, note is made of a James L. Thompson who led the choir in the old Baptist Church in the 1820's. He sang tenor while his daughter, Sophrina, led the soprano with her small brother, Oscar, on one side and Harvey on the other. "The voices of the entire choir rang out with clarion distinctness guided only by the key-note from Mr. Thompson's pitch-pipe."[15]

Early in the 1830's, David Wilcox, the itinerant singing-school master, introduced the fiddle to the area. Other instruments presented at the same time were the flute, introduced by Isaac King, and the bass viol, used by Deacon Willard Guernsey. "Brother Wilder Guernsey sang a good bass and was at one time the organizer and leader of a singing-school."[16]

A Choral Union was organized in Gouverneur, which had as its able conductor for over ten years Professor W.F. Sudds. He gave his first concert on April 23, 1878; several of the numbers performed included "Festival Hymn" by D. Buck; "He Watcheth over Israel" from "Elijah"; "Hallelujah Chorus" from the "Messiah."[17] Soloists from away were several times secured for the Choral Union and other concerts of this period; "Miss J. Etta Crane, Miss Howe, and Miss Lillian Bacon will be most pleasantly remembered on these occasions."[18] Several numbers presented at one of these concerts included:

"Song - 'Thou Art Not Near Me'
...................... W.F. Sudds
Mrs. Henry Sudds
Recitative and Bass Solo —
'The Heathen Ragged' .... Reineckle
Prof. Donaldson Bodine"[19]

On record also is the establishment of a music department in 1869 in the Gouverneur Wesleyan Seminary, under the principalship of Professor Dains, by Mrs. Jessie E. Paul. One of the students was "Miss Harriet B. Dutting. She studied in New York under Hoffman and Dr. Mason, followed by a two year course in Berlin under Dr. Raif."[20]




*Hyde's Orchestra: Alger Hyde, violin; Claude Hyde, piano; Helen Hyde Loue, drums; Vernon Gardner, clarinet; Edwin Harland, trumpet.* (Photo courtesy the History Center)

In the earlier history of Parishville, music was emphasized largely in the church life with pageants, cantatas, choirs. Special singing classes were held, both in the church groups and in general town groups. Musicians would come to Parishville from other towns to teach singing; the town's trained musicians had classes, and others taught instrumental music. These teachers had much to do with preparing the future church organists.

In the minutes of the First Congregational Church of 1880, there is mention of Miss Nellie Young, who was a paid organist. Miss Young was an accomplished musician, teaching both vocal and instrumental music. She probably received her music education in Potsdam. When the Methodist and Congregational Churches united, Miss Young continued as organist, although it is not known for how long. A long list of people followed her as organist and had must to do with excellent musical programs in the church.

The Baptist Church also had many musical people in its flock, among them the Mitchell family. Luther was leader of the choir for many years and also sang a good bass; his son sang tenor in his church choir.

These two churches held unison services, and the union of the two choirs often resulted in splendid concerts, pageants, and cantatas. Many of the fine musicians were graduates of Crane Institute in Potsdam. Two of the girls who made good use of their training by helping hometown groups were Lottie Clark and Gratia Bowers. Miss Bowers worked with a group of girls from the Baptist Choir, "imparting to them the knowledge she was acquiring at Potsdam."[21] Miss Julia Bailey, a Crane graduate from Canton, had a vocal class in Parishville to which she traveled regularly to teach. Helen Riggs taught instrumental classes, which gave public recitals at the close of the term. Marie Bouck Newton drove a horse all over the area to give organ and piano lessons around 1897. Minnie Robson Mitchell was an organ and piano teacher in Parishville for many years, and the Parishville historian received training as church organist from Mrs. Mitchell. "Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell gave the young people in the Baptist Church a very fine start in music."[22]

Special programs were prepared for Christmas, Easter, and Children's Day. It was a special time, and the church would always be packed with parents, relatives, and friends.

As people died or moved away, the church musicals began to die out, and the people of Parishville began to depend on the school for choral concerts. Because there were no special music teachers in those days, the music programs in the schools depended on what the classroom teachers had extra time to teach and prepare. Nevertheless, many of the grade school teachers put on some very good concerts, which were open to the public and held in the Town Hall.

A different type of concert also held in the Parishville Town Hall was put on by the Mandolin Group of Mrs. George Kennehan of Winthrop. The number of members was approximately twenty and consisted of two pianists, a drummer, banjos, guitars, tenor banjos, and sometimes a special solo pianist for added attraction.

Articles from an old Parishville newspaper, *The Advertiser*, published in the 1880's, gives the following interesting information:

> "January 27, 1880: Mr. Blodgett, the blind singer, had a crowded house Wednesday evening. The magic word 'FREE', probably brought in a large crowd. His forte is in singing comic and sentimental songs, all of which were sung well. His fiddle solo was artistic, but the 'Fiddle' was a 'Little' out of tune.
>
> "June 15, 1880: Professor Baker, a blind singer, gave a concert here last Thursday eveining, to a fair audience.
>
> "September 7, 1880: The elocutionary and whistling prodigies, G. Paul Smith and Miss Jennie Armstrong, are to give an entertainment on Thursday eveining, September 9. Attraction extraordinary."[23]

Two articles from old *Courier-Freeman* tell us of the following concerts:

> "A program for Children's Day of unusual merit was rendered at the Baptist Church last Sunday evening, and the crowded house showed the appreciation of, and interest in the efforts of the children. The floral decorations and arrangements were profuse and beautiful. The musical numbers were of group-singing of children's songs, numbers by the choir, the "Hallelujah Chorus" by Mrs. E.P. Mitchell, anthems and hymns by the choir.
>
> "September 21, 1901: Musical, Town Hall, Parishville, N.Y. by Nona A. Burke and Edna L. Crane, Readers, and Daniel L. Burke, Tenor, Saturday evening, 8:00. Hear piano duets, solos of Gavottes, Waltzes, Nocturnes, besides the readings and the tenor solos."[24]

No information has been compiled on musical events in Norwood, but the writer did learn of a barbershop quartet formed in Norwood that became quite popular in the area. Its specialty was performing at political campaigns held in the Music Hall. This building was built by the village of Norwood and the town of Potsdam in 1889 and was located until just recently on land given by Mr. Benjamin Baldwin.[25]

"Who doesn't love a band? It is part of our American heritage."[26] The people of St. Lawrence County certainly have done their part in building up this part of our heritage. It all began in our county in Canton, and after the first brass band was organized there, just about every town around soon had a band of its own. These bands were seen and heard at all important occasions — the county fair, the political rally, local celebrations, lawn socials, harvest dinners, and other affairs.

1841 marks the beginning of band development in the county, particularly in Canton. Its members were young Canton men who were excellent musicians, and they played in surrounding towns, because there were no bands in Potsdam, Gouverneur, Ogdensburg, Malone, or Plattsburgh. Among the men instrumental in its formation were Levi B. Storrs, H.A. Poste, Erastus Hale, Amasa O. Brown, William Young, and Delos A. Baxter. Mr. Medad Moody, brother-in-law of Silas Wright, a United States Senator, gave Mr. Storrs a free hand to order what was necessary in the way of instruments, music, and other equipment for the band. But he stipulated that each individual was to be "responsible for the music, instruments and any other material he secures."[27] There were seventeen pieces in the Canton Brass Band, including "five bugles, two coronets, trumpet, two French horns, two tenor trombones, ophicleide, bass horn, bass trombone, bass drum, and snare drum."[28]

At the time the band was organized, there lived in Canton a German, Lieutenant Henry Young, who was a musician of "remarkable skill."[29] He was a former instructor at West Point Military Academy and could play every known instrument in Canton at that time.

This organization gradually died out as members died, moved away, or were attracted by the Mexican War. It finally went out of existence in the late 1840's or early 1850's. Spasmodic efforts to revive the group failed. But it wasn't long before the dwindling number of Canton musicians tried again. In 1859, nine men formed the Second Brass Band. Their leader, Fred Boynton, had the distinction of being a bugler with General Zachary Taylor in the Seminole War.[30] His band was prominent in the recruiting days of the Civil War. This band dropped out of existence when J.B. Livingston's Orchestra formed in 1868. The orchestra was termed "a high class musical organization in Canton"[31] and it played at every ball and dance in that town.

A Fireman's Band was formed in 1875 by L.H. Whitney. Professor W.H. Easton of Madrid instructed the band for two years and then J.B. Livingston took over. Members furnished their own instruments with the aid of $100 raised by the citizens. "Uniforms were made by L.B. Storrs & Sons, and when attired in them, it was one of the finest appearing musical organizations in the county."[32]

About 1875, an Edwards Citizen Band was organized, and on July 3, 1879, one of the first outdoor band concerts was held in the new bandstand. In 1892, the band appeared in new uniforms of dark blue rimmed with gold.

In 1908, another band was organized with Mr. Eddie Brayton as leader and coronet player. Most of the members were self-taught and Henry Grant could play any instrument in the band. At one time the band played a concert in Canton and won its transportation home by betting that Grant could play any instrument the Cantonians had; Henry won!

The first band in Hermon was organized originally by Civil War veterans who brought back from the war many instruments. They played at Memorial Day and Fourth of July celebrations, Saturday nights downtown, at Russell and Trout Lake. Joseph Frisson, leader of the band, came to this country from Germany, and the band broke up when Mr. Frisson moved west.

Hermon also had an orchestra, which played in the late 1890's and early 1900's. Under the leadership of Lou McKee, it received a set price for playing at dances sponsored by the firemen, Masons, Stars, and other town organizations.

An orchestra under the direction of John Lechich, a violinist, seems to have been the best known one of its kind. Perhaps the biography of its leader was the reason. Mr. Lechich was born in Trieste, Austria, in 1880 and came to America in 1893. While living in Utica, he studied violin at the Utica Conservatory of Music and also graduated from Lambert's Dancing Academy in Detroit, Michigan, in 1905.[33] The instruments in the orchestra included piano, cornet, saxophone, clarinet, and drum.

Gates Curtis, in his history of St. Lawrence County, relates the following story: "In the summer of 1817 President James Madison made a trip through the northern part of New York. He was met by a party of men from Ogdensburg on August 1, 1817 where he was received by a BAND OF MUSIC . . ."[34] This was probably the Ed Olds band, which has been mentioned in old newspapers.

An interesting item in an old scrapbook dated November 23, 1887, relates the occasion of the marriage of a band member, George McFadden, to Miss Eliza Anderson. It was a home wedding and, shortly before the ceremony, "the band, in full uniform came marching down the street. Their presence added much to the festivities of the day."[35]

A closer look behind the uniforms of the Mechanics Band of Heuvelton serves as an example of the typical "musician-on-occasion": Foster Johnson, leader of the band, ran the first ice cream parlor in Heuvelton; Fred Lanning was a tinsmith and played coronet in the band; Charles Flack was a farmer; Will Popple was a tinsmith. Even after a hard day's work in their various regular occupations, nothing but sickness could keep the men from their instruments when a practice was called in the evening.

The earliest record of a band or orchestra in the Town of Macomb was the Bellinger Band. This seems to have been a family organization since most of the members were named Bellinger. This band was in existence for some time previous to the Civil War, and two of its members served in the war.

*The Mechanics Band of Heuvelton around 1886: left to right, O.C. Goodenough, Robert Johnson, Lewis Simmons, James Bell, Homer Furness, Frank Johnson, Walter Millard, Ad Anderson, John Baker, Homer Johnson, George McFadden, William Popple, Charles Flack, Fred Lanning, and Foster Johnson.* (Photo courtesy the History Center)

About 1890, Roy P. Bellinger organized an orchestra and shortly after 1900, he had two daughters and a son playing in what was called "Bellinger's full orchestra."[36] Mr. Bellinger played violin, Georgia played piano, Elinor played the drums, and Bruce played saxophone.

A man named George Reynolds came to the town about 1890, and according to records found by the town historian, he was probably the best fiddler around the for the thirty years he lived in Brasie Corners. He did find a little competition, though, in a man named Hiram Puffer, who lived in Pope Mills.

Madrid's band history starts before the Civil War with a band called Hough's Band with H.S. Wright as bandmaster. Although most of its members went off to war when duty called, the organization didn't die out. Instead, after the war, the returning members began to give weekly musical programs in the Madrid bandstand. The band was financed by the women of Madrid, who earned the money by giving socials.

A most interesting event occurred when three of the local band members were selected to play in the band at President Lincoln's funeral. They were Henry Eastman, J.F. Crowder, and S.A. Greene.[37]

A few brief notes were found on the band and orchestra development in Brier Hill. In 1894, Bert McLear formed a band. They played every Saturday night for home-made ice cream socials held on Strough Lawn in the summer and in the Centennial Hall in the winter. An orchestra was organized in 1896 by Leslie Klock. Instruments included violin, piano, clarinet, trumpet, cello, and drums. This orchestra played all over the north country, at firemen's balls, and at the Opera House in Ogdensburg. (The Opera House was built in the fall of 1879 on the corner of Caroline and Ford Streets. The stage of the opera house was on the opposite end from the entrance, and the seats were on a circle in amphitheatre form descending to the stage, with boxed seats on either side.)[38]

The Russell Cornet Band was the first all-brass band in the Town of Russell. It was formed in 1908 and had thirteen members who played such instruments as alto horn, bass drum, tenor horn, baritone, and, of course, coronet. All decked out in their dark green uniforms with gold trimming and with Charles Hepburn, Sr. conducting, they would play every Saturday evening from the town bandstand to a crowd of several hundred people. The band also played for graduations, church socials, picnics, minstrel shows, box socials, Fourth of July, Labor Day, and field days. "When a concert was

held on a Saturday night, Harley Perry would pass the hat to collect funds for expenses; everyone gave generously."[39]

There is mention of a home dance orchestra in Parishville which played for many of the dances. One such orchestra was the "Odd Fellows Orchestra." It received this name because its members belonged to the Odd Fellows, although the orchestra itself had nothing to do with the organization. Instruments included coronet, violins, drums, and pianos. The orchestra usually played at Eagle Hall, in Hastings Hotel, and for special affairs at the Grange and the Maccabier Hall. They also traveled to other towns — Fort Jackson and Crary Mills — and usually gave free concerts. Bera Hart was the official caller, and the group alternated round and square dances.

Other orchestras which performed similar services were those organized by Mr. Vernon G. McNassar and Mr. and Mrs. Otis McIntyre.

Parishville's band history begins around 1879 or 1880 with a band called "The St. Regis Coronet Band." In the old newspaper, *The Advertiser*, the following articles appeared:

> "May 11, 1880: Everybody and and their relation was in town Saturday evening, but all missed the music of the St. Regis-Cornet Band. Wake up boys and give us a tune.
>
> "September 7, 1880: The bandstand has been removed from its site, and is to be made over into a 'house or barn.' The appearance of Main St. is greatly - improved by its removal.
>
> "September 7, 1880: The band boys are now playing weekly, and are doing good work. They think seriously of a thorough re-organization, adopting a new name, etc. We are pleased to hear of this move, and wish their efforts much success, as the place has really been lonesome with the 'St. Regis.'
>
> "December 23, 1879: The band concert on Friday evening was a first class entertainment in every respect. The St. Regis Coronet Band sustained their excellent and growing reputation. The visitors, the St. Lawrence Coronet Band of Colton, N.Y. discoursed some very fine music. The solos and songs by the singers were well rendered, and pleasing to all."[40]

A second Parishville Band, formed in the 1890's, was made possible by two fortunate events. First, Simeon L. Clark generously paid for the uniforms and the instruments; second, a stranger named Dave Wilson arrived in town and became the band's capable and willing instructor. A brief biography of Mr. Wilson proves to be an interesting story. He was a quiet, reticent man with no apparent family connections who said little about his past life. It was known that he was born in England, where he received his musical education. When he came to North America, he settled in Canada for a while and was organist in a large Montreal church. Wilson arrived in Parishville with a traveling show, which disbanded there. He seemed to like the town and stayed, becoming an engineer at the Clark upper sawmill. That he was a highly trained musician, could read and interpret classical music and could play every band instrument, is vouched for. Under his leadership, the band, composed of unskilled amateurs, became a credit to the small community and was invited to play in many places, including the Potsdam fair. The townspeople would watch with pride when the band, dressed in the new uniforms and preceded by Bert Tupper, the drum major, marched across the fairgrounds.[41]

Norwood was not to be left out in the development of bands in the county, and with Fred Worden as leader, played at any and all public gatherings. This band gained much acclaim in the county, and Mr. Worden was considered one of the best leaders in the country.

Why are there only a few small town bands still playing today after such a wide, wonderful history? One writer expresses the tragedy of the lack of small town bands today when he says: "The conditions that made the old bands possible will probably never recur. No industry is apt to develop . . . to bring together so many prospective players and no capable leader will again drop from the skies to reside with us. The generation they represented has well nigh disappeared, but we elderly feel like the old fellow in James Whitcomb Riley's poem:

> "I make no doubt yer new band
> now's a competenter band
> And plays their music more by
> note than what they play by hand,
> And stylisher and grander tune;
> but somehow, anyway,
> I want to hear the *old* band
> play."[42]

St. Lawrence County was not without its famous composer: William F. Sudds filled this bill. He was born in London, England, on March 5, 1843 and came to America at the age of seven, where his family settled in Gouverneur. His musical inclination was manifested at an early age and at fifteen, he was a self-taught player of the violin, guitar, cornet, and violincello — quite a variety of instruments! A year or two later, he was permitted by a friend to practice on her piano and eagerly took advantage of the opportunity, although he had to walk three miles to practice after his day's work. Sudds enlisted as a private in the Civil War, and when he joined his regiment, he had a much battered cornet! His performance on the instrument nevertheless resulted in the order to report as a musician. While connected with the war band, he composed and arranged many pieces for it. After the war, he became a pupil in the Boston Conservatory, studying organ under Eugene Thayer and violin and composition under Julius Eichberg. His compositions for orchestra include four overtures: "From Ocean to Ocean," "A Night in June," "The Merry Chanter," "The Viking's Daughter" and many marches, waltzes, gavottes. Among the choicest of his works are "Five Tone Pictures" for violin and piano, a song, "Whatever Is The Best," a trio, "Fairy Song," and a Christmas Cantata, "The Star of Bethlehem." Since 1899 many of his works have been published; the music publishers, Oliver Ditson and Co., were the first to recognize the merits of his compositions as is evidenced by the following:

> "Boston February 22, 1881
>
> Friend Sudds:
>
> Any piano pieces of yours will always be acceptable, for you have shown more ability in this line of composition than nay man in America, except Gottschalk.
>
> Yours very Truly,
> Oliver Ditson"[43]

And so music developed in St. Lawrence County. This is by no means a complete report, but it does serve to show that the county, through bands, dances, choral groups, and even our own famous composer, added its fair-sized portion to the large kettle of American Music.

☆☆☆☆

## FOOTNOTES

[1]Leah M. Noble, "Musical Edwards," *Dances, Bands, and Choral Groups*. (An unpublished collection of articles compiled by the St. Lawrence County Historians), 1963.

[2]Howard M. Smith, "Dances of St. Lawrence Co.," *The Quarterly*, Gouverneur, New York, SLCHA, January, 1963, p. 6.

[3]Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[4]Smith, *op cit.*, pp. 15-16.

[5]Noble, *op cit.*

[6]*Ibid.*

[7]Elsie Bresee, "Parishville Dances," *Dances, Bands, and Choral Groups, op. cit.*

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]Bresee, *op. cit.*

[10]*Ibid.*

[11]*Ibid.*

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]Gates, Curtis, ed., *St. Lawrence County, New York*, Syracuse, 1894, p. 130.

(continued on page 23)

# From the Editor's Notebook . . .

I shall use the editor's prerogative of occasionally speaking out from this back corner of our journal and shall cover a variety of topics that have been collecting on my desk over the last few months.

First, despite the efforts made to minimize errors in *The Quarterly* there always seems to be a few — of omission or commission — and for those I am sorry. I am especially sorry for the inexcusable mistake about the childhood home of one of our contributors to the January 1978 issue, Mrs. Flora Brewer Garner, now of Springfield, New Jersey. Mrs. Garner, who wrote the popular article about itinerant traders, was born and grew up on the Brewer farm at Beech Plains, near West Pierrepont, where her brother Horace and nephew Bill Brewer still live. My sincere apologies to you, Mrs. Garner.

Second, even with such errors, our recent issues have been receivers of considerable kind praise, public and private. I have had nice compliments on the street and through the mail and am grateful for them. Ms. Aileen Vincent-Barwood, editor of the book the *St. Lawrence Plaindealer* and the *Rural News*, devoted long editorial columns in each paper in mid-February to the content and the appearance of the journal, saying many nice things. Such praise is welcome, for one in this position often wonders, "Is anybody even reading? In this case you must be, and I thank you. But, we must continue to have new contributors and new manuscripts to keep the publication lively. And we also welcome constructive criticism to help make good changes in the future.

While I am on the subject of praise for recent issues, no small amount must be shared with our new printers, Ryan Press of Ogdensburg. They provide me with considerable help in making decisions about printing, layout, special features, etc. Especially crucial in this business in the quality reproduction of photographs, and the clean new look of the typesetting and of page layouts. Their good advice and experience makes considerable difference in the present final product. I want to single out brothers Larry and Terry Ryan, their graphics specialist Mary Rutherford, typesetter Lynn Schmidt, cameraperson Joanne Thornhill, and pressmen Freeman Deloney and Reynold Hubbard.

With this issue we begin a new feature for *The Quarterly*, the inclusion of reviews of various books that should interest our readers. We shall try to invite members to prepare reviews who have special background in the subjects of the books being reviewed in order to bring more analytical observations to our readers. If you would like to review a new or old book for our use, please feel free to make a submission.

By now I feel that I have a little better idea of what an editor should be doing. One thing I hope to be able to do is keep manuscripts and article ideas coming in, so we can plan ahead. Right now we have excellent issues planned for July and October and encourage anyone who wishes to send material in for other upcoming issues. Look for such topics as folk artist Eddie Perry, the stone houses of Waddington, cedar oil making, Fourth of July celebrations of the past and an exciting theme issue for October.

Finally, speaking for the Publication Committee, we welcome your ideas for special new publications under the auspices of the Association, both that can provide new information and new interest and that perhaps can generate much-needed income for Association operations. Please let us know.

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**continued from page 22, Music'**

[14]Grace H. Corbin, "Musical Reminiscences," *Centennial History of Gouverneur*, Watertown, 1905, p. 146.

[15]*Ibid.*

[16]*Ibid.*

[17]Corbin, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

[18]*Ibid.*

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 148.

[20]*Ibid.*

[21]Elsie Bresee, "Parishville Concerts," *Dances, Bands, and Choral Groups, op. cit.*

[22]*Ibid.*

[23]Bresee, *op. cit.*

[24]*Ibid.*

[25]Mrs. Royal Lyman, *Our Town, Norwood, New York*, compiled for the Norwood Historical Association, 1963.

[26]Nina W. Smithers, *Dances, Bands, and Choral Groups, op. cit.*

[27]E.F. Heim, *Dances, Bands, and Choral Groups, op. cit.*

[28]*Ibid.*

[29]Heim, *op. cit.*

[30]*Ibid.*

[31]*Ibid.*

[32]*Ibid.*

[33]Rebecca C. Brunet, *Dances, Bands, and Choral Groups, op. cit.*

[34]Curtis, *op. cit.*

[35]Curtis, *op. cit.*

[36]Willis E. Kittle, *Dances, Bands, and Choral Groups, op. cit.*

[37]Mrs. Arthur Thompson, *Dances, Bands, and Choral Groups, op. cit.*

[38]Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

[39]Jeanette D. Barnes, "Russell's Coronet Band," *The Quarterly*, Gouverneur, April, 1964, p. 5.

[40]Elsie F. Bresee, "The Old Parishville Bands," *The Quarterly*, Gouverneur, October, 1963, pp. 10-11.

[41]Warren O. Daniels, "The Second Parishville Band," *The Quarterly*, Gouverneur, October, 1963, p. 11.

[42]Daniels, *op. cit.*

[43]Corbin, *op. cit.*, pp. 357-358.

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**About the Author**

Carolyn Jenner Swafford is a native of the County who graduated from SUC Potsdam in 1968 and now lives in Liverpool, New York. This article was first prepared as a research paper from local source materials while Ms. Swafford was a student.

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Morristown and Waddington are also same as town historian. No appointments in Canton, Hermon, Massena or Hammond.

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