

THE QUARTERLY

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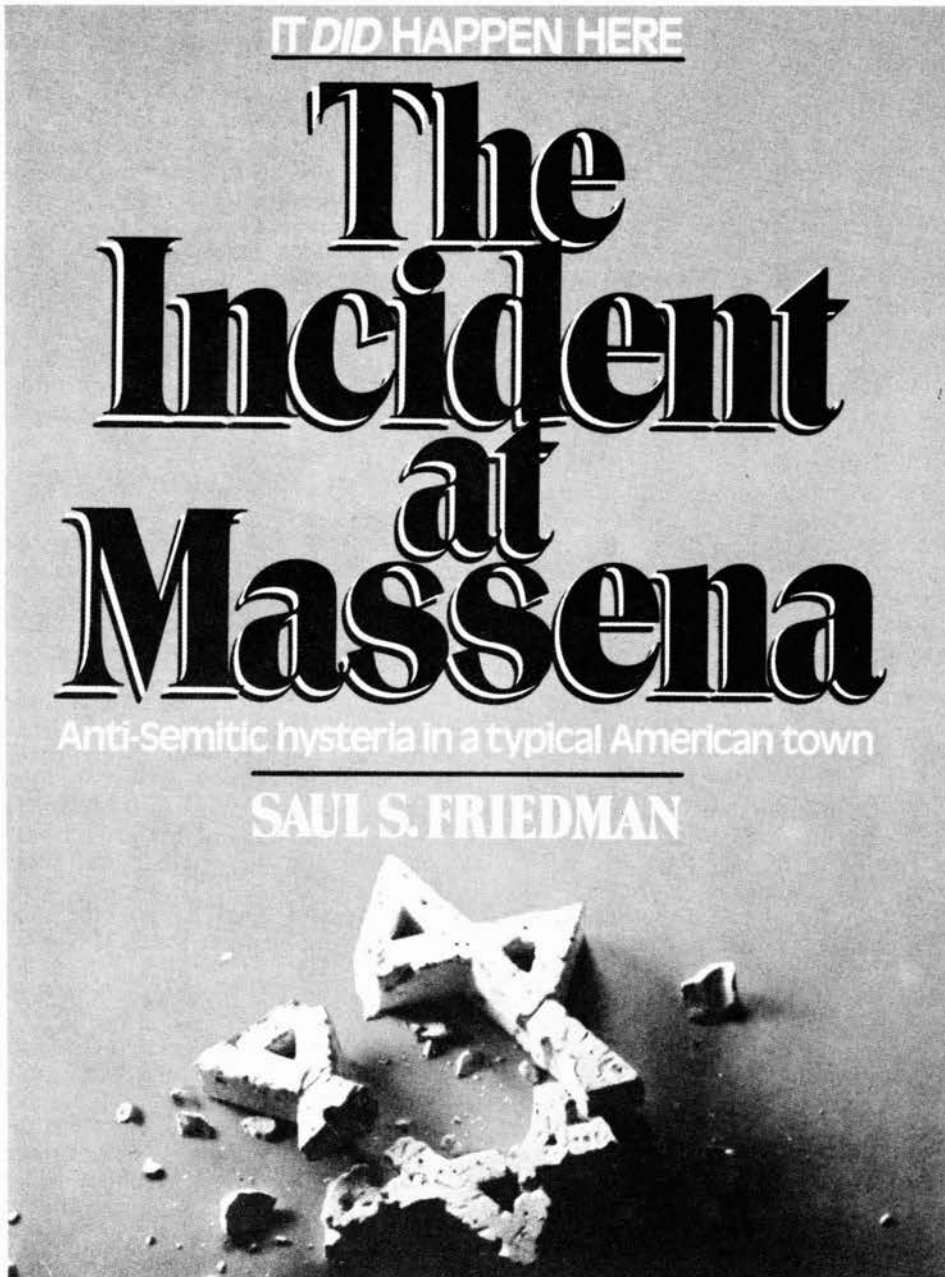
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Editor: Varick A. Chittenden

This Issue is Dedicated to the Memory of
Eugene Hatch (1894-1979) and
Bert J. Rogers (1893-1979)
Dedicated Long Time Members, Supporters, Trustees, & Presidents of SLCHA

Cover: Walter Brown Leonard, Morley native, with his first orchestra. (Photo courtesy of St. Lawrence University Archives). See articles beginning on pages 9 and 14.



Dust cover of *The Incident at Massena*, published by Stern and Day.

The basic tools of an historian are his source—his proofs—his notes. It was as a result of poring over the end notes to Joshua Trachtenberg's essay on persecution, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the New and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism*, in 1962 that I first found reference to the incident at Massena. It was not until 1971, however, that I was able to pursue the matter with a trip to the little town on the Saint Lawrence River. This was followed by visits to Syracuse, Rome (New York), Albany, New York City, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Cincinnati in an effort to reconstruct what actually transpired in Massena in September 1928.

Generally, I found people everywhere cooperative and willing to talk. Among the Jewish community in Massena, I was especially aided by Dora Cohen and

Mimi Klein, daughters of Jake Shulkin; Abe Kauffman, son of the town's "first" Jewish inhabitant; Jack Jacobs and Lou Greenblatt, unofficial historians of the Adath Israel Congregation; Saul and Jeanette Rosenbaum, two old-timers who went through those difficult days as adults; and, whether she appreciated the fact or not, Minnie Slavin, with whom I spent a lovely afternoon discussing Jewish life in the North Country.

Massena's Gentiles were also most helpful. My thanks go out to Marie Elden-Brown, town historian; Cole Cummins, at ninety-three still the town intellectual; attorney Seward Hanmer; the late Leonard Prince, editor of the *Massena Observer*; his successor Pat McKeon and her assistant John Maines who agreed that the story must be told; Ernest Wagar, onetime secretary of the

'We Must Tell the World this Story So It Will Never Happen Again': Four Viewpoints of 'The Incident at Massena'

by Saul S. Friedman, Lawrence Baron, Eleanor Dumas, and Samuel Jacobs

In 1978 a book whose subject is of great historical importance to St. Lawrence County and far beyond was published. *The Incident at Massena*, by historian Dr. Saul S. Friedman, recounts and analyzes a single event in 1928 that stirred the worst fears in our Jewish community and left concerned Americans—near and far—confused and disbelieving. Controversial as the event itself was, the appearance of the book fifty years later has been met with a very mixed reaction, especially among local readers. Here four different viewpoints about the contents and the research methods are expressed—by the book's author, by a scholar of Jewish history especially interested in anti-Semitism in America, and two by lifelong Massena residents who know the event well, one Christian and one Jewish.

Chamber of Commerce; Dale Wright, chief of police; Dave and Marion Griffiths; Anna and Margaret Pilialoglous, Ella Lahey and Eleanor Dumas, Sam Cappione, George Ure, Emily Bushnell, Captain Harry Hollander, and Joseph Burke.

In Rome, New York, I spent much time with Ben Shulkin, another of Jake Shulkin's children. In Syracuse, my source was the wonderfully alert octogenarian, Eli Friedman, who was then recuperating from an operation at Syracuse Community General Hospital. In New York City, I was aided by Boris Smolar of the Jewish Telegraph Agency; Samuel Brennglass, son of Rabbi Berel Brennglass; and assistant librarians at the American Jewish Committee and American Jewish Congress. Additional information came from the Wise Records of the American

Jewish Historical Society at Brandeis University; the Alfred E. Smith Papers, State Education Library, Albany, New York. In Albany, my searches were made less painful by Bob Boberman and Dr. Lewis Tucker of the State Records Center; Al Singer of the State Legal Department; and Superintendent William Kirwan and Officers Bardosi and Vainauskaus of the State Highway Patrol. And in Rochester, my thanks to a gracious lady, Mrs. William Shulkin.

In the process of reconstructing the events of that fall, I have been hampered by confused and conflicting stories, a dearth of written records, and the temporary obstinacy of one archivist to part with documents. I have found newspapers, especially the New York press, to be generally reliable. Some written reports, moreover, are at great divergence with one another, and much oral testimony is equally confused. Some sources flatly admit they cannot distinguish between what they actually recall and what they think they *should* recall.

Because of problems posed by oral history, several alternatives have been suggested to me by well-meaning friends. One was to render the account in fictional form, along lines recently attempted by Richard Kluger in his *Members of the Tribe*, which deals with the Leo Frank Affair. Such a procedure, I have been assured, would guarantee not only a "best-seller," but also a movie contract. Tempting as that may be, the skills of an historian are not the same as those of a novelist. Perhaps one day a Michener or Malamud will come along with such a work.

Others have suggested that I emulate the fashion of Thucydides, who wrote 2,300 years ago:

"I have found it difficult to remember the precise words used in the speeches which I listened to myself and my various informants have experienced the same difficulty; so my method has been, while keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words that were actually used, to make the speakers say, what, in my opinion, was called for by each situation."

I have also rejected this course as unwise. To tamper with events as they unfolded in September and October 1928 would be to compromise the reality of what happened. I do not want people saying that, "that could never happen in America" or that this is a script for a "Movie of the Week." What is described on these pages did happen in an America that prides itself on ethnic diversity and toleration. I have taken great pains to document every statement. Where I have digressed into conjecture, I have so advised the reader.

In writing this book, it has not been my intention to rekindle the faggots of hatred in Massena or any other town. I

have pledged to those with whom I spoke that such research would not embarrass them. Because of the historic importance of the blood libel, however, and because I want people to know the facts, I deliberately did not alter the names of any of the principals in the affair. I affirm that this book has been written not from vindictiveness but with a view toward educating Jew and Gentile alike on the baseness of the ritual murder canard so that what happened at Massena might never happen again.

Finally, my appreciation to my assistants Mark Connelly, Mike Billirakis, Skevos Corfias, and Susan Fogaras, who helped with technical aspects of the manuscript; to Youngstown State University for extending two graduate research grants and a university research professorship for completion of this project; and to my wife, Nancy, who has been my rock during the good days and the bad.

About the Author

Saul S. Friedman is Associate Professor of Jewish and Near East history at Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio.

The accusation that Jews murder and drink the blood of Christian children as a rite of their holy days has been a recurrent theme of European anti-Semitism for almost a thousand years. The charge of ritual murder, incredible as it seems today, made sense to medieval Christians who had been taught by the Church that the Jews were condemned to live in degradation behind ghetto walls for killing Christ, rejecting Christianity, and conspiring with the Devil. Despite the fact that Jewish law prohibited the consumption of blood, the Jews allegedly were so perfidious that they periodically reenacted the crucifixion of Jesus using a young sinless proxy whose blood they imbibed to purify their wicked souls. Consequently, the mysterious disappearance or death of a Christian child often set off a chain of events that ended with the execution of Jewish suspects and pogroms against the Jewish communities in the area. Though many kings and popes dismissed the charge of ritual murder as unfounded, the government in some places, Czarist Russia between 1881 and 1917 for example, encouraged such trials and rampages to divert the attention of its subjects away from a repressive political and economic system and towards their Jewish competitors and creditors. The Nazis wrote the last chapter to this tragic story by citing the blood libel as another rationale for their annihilation of European Jewry.¹

American anti-Semitism, while borrowing its stereotypes of the Jew from the Christian tradition which had evolved in Europe, usually has been a

reaction to immigration, economic crises, and domestic radicalism. Rather than being the major targets of bigotry in this country, the Jews have shared that dubious distinction with ethnic Catholics, blacks, and other minority groups. To be sure, social and occupational discrimination continued to plague American Jews until the last few decades.² The blood libel, however, rarely has reared its ugly head in the United States. The Massena incident which began on September 22, 1928 is not the only exception to this rule,³ but it is the only recorded case in which public officials gave credence to the anachronistic canard that Jews commit ritual murder.

On the basis of published accounts, archival material, and interviews of eyewitnesses, Saul S. Friedman has reconstructed what transpired in Massena at that time. The affair started when four-year-old Barbara Griffiths got lost in the woods. After search teams had failed to locate the girl, the town was buzzing with rumors about what might have happened to her. A Greek restaurant owner, who remembered tales of ritual murder from his childhood in Salonika and hated Massena's Jews for patronizing his arch rival's establishment, insinuated that Jews might have kidnaped Barbara for their observance of Yom Kippur the next day.⁴ Having no other leads, Mayor W. Gilbert Hawes made what he subsequently admitted was "a serious error of judgment" by ordering two New York State Troopers to investigate whether there was any connection between the upcoming Jewish holiday and the disappearance of the Griffiths girl. The commanding trooper then questioned a young feeble-minded Jewish man who was incapable of refuting the charges being leveled against his coreligionists. The next afternoon Massena's rabbi was summoned to City Hall to undergo interrogation. Indignant over the very idea that anyone still could believe that Jews used human blood in their services, Rabbi Berel Brennglass delivered an impassioned lecture about how Jewish ethical and dietary codes forbid such an abominable practice. If this did not dispel the specter of ritual murder in the minds of the mayor and the troopers, the return of Barbara Griffiths several hours later certainly did.

During those two days members of Massena's Ku Klux Klan tried to take matters into their own hands. As Friedman notes, the existence of a Klavern of the Klan in a small northern town like Massena was not unusual in the twenties. This, after all, was the decade when the Klan could claim eight million members throughout the country. Where there were no blacks to terrorize, the KKK combated the influx of "unde-



Main Street, Massena, 1928. (Photo by A.J.Wescott, Wescott's Stationery, courtesy Town of Massena Historian's Collection)

sirable" Catholics and Jews from Southern and Eastern Europe. That it was not alone in its battle is evidenced by the adoption of the restrictive immigration quotas of 1924. The Massena Klansmen had focused their fury on the Catholic "foreigners" who had come there to work in the Alcoa plant and on the Catholic Governor of New York, Al Smith. Nevertheless, when the opportunity to ferret out a Jewish conspiracy presented itself, these self-appointed guardians of the American way pounced on it. While Barbara Griffiths was still missing, some of them conducted unauthorized searches of Jewish stores to check if her corpse had been hidden there. Even after she had been found, they milled around on the streets taunting Jews with comments like the following: "Scared you into returning the girl, didn't we?" The same group of Klansmen probably organized the boycott against Jewish businesses in the ensuing two weeks.

What further exacerbated the tensions already generated by the ritual murder incident was the rivalry between the two nationally known Jewish leaders who intervened in the case. On the first evening of their ordeal, Massena's Jews contacted Louis Marshall, the chairman of the American Jewish Committee, to come to their defense. Marshall dispatched a newspaper reporter to find out exactly what was occurring in Massena. Since this journalist had not arrived in town by the next morning, the aid of additional dignitaries, including Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress, was solicited. Marshall and Wise had feuded with each other on many occasions. The former, a prominent

Republican, represented that segment of American Jews who opposed Zionism, whereas the latter, an active Democrat, represented those American Jews who supported it. Neither man was willing to accept the informal apology initially offered to the Jewish community by Mayor Hawes, who hoped to settle the matter quickly in order to avoid adverse publicity. Instead, Wise persuaded Governor Smith to institute a state inquiry into the unfortunate episode and exacted an unequivocal apology from Hawes which was printed in the *New York Times*. Marshall, fearing that he had been upstaged and that the Democrats would exploit the issue to win over Jewish voters for Smith's presidential bid, demanded an even more explicit confession from Hawes. Ultimately, Massena's Jews asked Marshall to desist from this course of action, which only had antagonized the town's Gentile population.

Friedman is at his best when he analyzes the vulnerability of Massena's Jews. For example, in his discussion of kosher slaughtering procedures, he shows how sinister these customs must have appeared to the rest of the townspeople who knew little about Judaism. The sight of Rabbi Brennglass, who also served as the butcher for his small congregation, wielding a large knife and slitting the throats of animals to drain them of blood, must have struck terror in the hearts of villagers who easily could have imagined Barbara Griffiths' neck on this chopping block once they heard she was missing. Likewise, the relative prosperity of Massena's few Jewish businessmen was bound to cause resentment in the not particularly wealthy town. When this distrust and

hostility surfaced during those fateful days in September, Massena's Jews anticipated the outbreak of pogroms like the ones they had experienced in Eastern Europe and thought they had escaped by coming to America. Although such mob violence never materialized, the psychological scars left by the fear of its possibility would remain for a long time.

Unfortunately, Friedman's outrage over the incident and his tendency to overdramatize it frequently mars the objectivity of his book. He employs slang pejoratives that have no place in the writing of a professional historian to belittle those Massena residents who succumbed to their anti-Semitic biases during that period. Furthermore, his lapses into melodrama blow the significance of the event all out of proportion. The following quotation, which sets the stage for the searches of the Jewish stores on the first night, exemplifies both of these faults:

"It was as if a cesspool of hate had suddenly been tapped, and now Neanderthal, carnivore, budding rapist, blood avenger, howler at the moon, *haidamak*, crusader all materialized in Massena. Things that of themselves should not have counted for much—the bias of a religious zealot, the ignorance of a backwoods politician, the braggadocio of a retarded boy—now struck like hammer blows at the walls of civilization."⁵

In another instance, Friedman reads more into his evidence than is warranted. Thus, he originally mentions that one of his witnesses claimed that Mayor Hawes had led the boycott against the Jewish stores,⁶ but ten pages later, without any additional

evidence, Friedman categorically states that Hawes "at that very moment was spearheading an economic boycott of Jewish businesses in Massena."⁷

In spite of these shortcomings *The Incident at Massena* is an important book which deserves to be read. It is not just an exercise in rubbing salt into old wounds as some Massena natives may believe. Rather it is preventive medicine. Prejudice is still very much alive in American society. In remote rural areas like the North Country, where there is little ethnic, religious, and racial diversity, stereotypes based on something one learned as a child, on the strangeness of an unfamiliar culture, or on a single unpleasant encounter with a member of a minority group often go unchallenged. For the most part they either remain dormant or emerge in some seemingly innocuous ethnic joke. But in effect they rob these minorities of their humanity and reduce them to faceless types from whom the worst is expected. In times of crisis such preconceptions might permit otherwise decent people to persecute without any qualms the strangers in their midst. This is the lesson of Massena which should be recalled as a warning for the present and the future. Rabbi Brennglass expressed it eloquently when he told his congregation:

"We must forgive, but we must never forget. We must forever remind ourselves that this happened in America, not czarist Russia, among people we have come to regard as our friends. We must show our neighbors that their hatred originates in fear, and this fear has its roots in ignorance—ignorance of Judaism, our beliefs, our history, our people, our God. We must show them they have nothing to fear from us. We must tell the world this story so it will never happen again."⁸

FOOTNOTES

¹For a survey of the history of European anti-Semitism, see any one of the following: *Anti-Semitism* (Jerusalem, 1974); Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (New York, 1965); X. Malcolm Hay, *The Foot of Pride* (Boston, 1950); Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism: From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews* (New York, 1974); Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (New Haven, 1943).

²John Higham, "American Anti-Semitism Historically Reconsidered," in Charles Herbert Stember et al., *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York, 1966), pp. 237-258. For a review of research on anti-Semitism in contemporary America, see Melvin M. Tumin, *An Inventory and Appraisal of Research on American Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1961).

³There have been two other cases where the blood libel has contributed to anti-Semitic incidents in the United States. The first was in New York City in 1850 when an angry mob of Irishmen raided the apartments of Jews whom they suspected of murdering a Gentile girl. The other case occurred in 1915 after the controversial trial and conviction of Leo Frank for killing an adolescent girl. As Frank appealed that decision, the future senator from Georgia, Tom Watson, wrote a series of articles, one of which suggested that Frank may

have had ritualistic motives for committing the crime. Ultimately, Frank was lynched by a group of vigilantes. See ed. Michael Selzer, *Kike!* (New York, 1972), pp. 18-19 for information about the first case and Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York, 1968).

⁴Until Saul Friedman's book appeared, it was thought that an old Polish farmer had started the ritual murder rumor. See Lee M. Friedman, *Pilgrims in a New Land* (Philadelphia, 1948), pp. 110-111.

⁵Saul S. Friedman, *The Incident at Massena* (New York, 1978), p. 78. *Haidamak* refers to bands of armed anti-Semites who ravaged Jewish villages in the Polish Ukraine during the Eighteenth Century.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 135.

About the Author

Lawrence Baron, an Associate Professor in the Department of History at St. Lawrence University, has a Ph.D. in History from the University of Wisconsin/Madison. He has specialized in modern European intellectual history, modern German history, and modern Jewish history.

* * * * *

If ever a book deserved to be given a medal for presentation of misinformation and misspelling and particularly an attempt to place one small incident in a blazing light of shame, it is *Incident at Massena*, by Dr. Saul S. Friedman.

From the jacket cover with its "Anti-Semitic hysteria in a typical American town," to the list of persons giving resource material, there is little about this amazingly inaccurate book to attract any normal resident of Massena or of any other "typical small town."

The author, to my own knowledge, was told by many of the people he interviewed, mostly by long distance telephone, that his whole premise was wrong, along with most of his "facts." He chose to ignore this and bulldozed ahead, leaving many Massena people dazedly saying "But I never said that" or "I never told him that."

If it were not so sad, it would be funny. Dr. Friedman lists my own mother as one of his sources, although she had been dead years before he started work. He gives picture credits to people who must have reached out from the grave to him.

The incident of which Dr. Friedman writes concerned then-four-year-old Barbara Griffiths, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Griffiths, who lived on Cherry Street, then the farthest south-west limits of the village. Bordering the area were large, scrub covered fields, which sloped down to the Grasse River and which were a favorite playground area of the children on the neighboring streets.

Barbara Griffiths went out to the fields in search of her brother on a September afternoon and failed to reappear at the normal time. A search was instituted, with hundreds of local

men and boys taking part, and it was the unhappy feeling of many that the girl might have fallen in the river.

I can only give my version of what I know and what I remember. It was the unfortunate experience of the time that a European-born person told police that it was the anniversary of a time in Europe when centuries ago, Jewish people offered sacrifices. A finger was pointed at a local boy of the Jewish faith and it is from this springboard of anti-Gentilism that Dr. Friedman has taken off.

A local historian is quoted in the book as saying that there was a "sneaky" type of anti-Semitism in Massena. That historian was not local and the rest I leave to the people of Massena. The town was filled, and had been, since 1898, with people not only from Europe but around the world. In 1919 there were 51 nationalities represented here and churches ranging from Congregational to Eastern Orthodox to the Synagogue. It would be just as correct to say there was anti-Irish, anti-German or anti-Polish feeling in Massena as anti-Semitic.

It was a way of the times that people often said "that Mick who lives on the corner" or "that Hunky down the street" or "that Dago." "That Jew" was no more an insult than any other way utilized to identify a friend, neighbor or home.

I never in my lifetime heard any of my family or their friends speak disparagingly of any of the Jewish community and I remember well the community effort that went into finding Barbara. While Dr. Friedman talks of near-riots and the excitement in town, I remember a sort of deathly quiet which settled over the community as hundreds and hundreds of men and boys turned out to help search for her.

A careless remark about a non-Gentile perhaps being responsible for the girl's disappearance was not taken lightly by people like my grandfather, a retired merchant, or my mother, who spent many hours with Mrs. Griffiths before the child was found and returned.

Massena, despite all of Dr. Friedman's very off-beat and almost insulting remarks about the town, had an enviable population of Jewish people who were gentle, generous and, despite the fact that they held to their own beliefs, were readily assimilated into the community. Very few families have been held in as high regard as the Jacobs, the Friedmans and the Stones, the Clopmans, the Kauffmans, the Levines, Rossoffs, Shulkins and Slavins, to name a few.

It is an impossible task to correct all of Dr. Friedman's errors. He says that there were no Jewish cemetery records kept, when, if he had checked, he would have found that until 1933 Jewish

people were buried in Ogdensburg and that after that, the records are very complete here. He speaks of Anable Faucher whose name was Amable Faucher and of Andree Massena instead of Andre Massena. He says the bridges over the Grasse River on Main Street rotted and fell down every ten or twenty years when in actuality there was a wooden bridge which burned, then an iron bridge, and finally the concrete bridge which is still there.

Dr. Friedman says Massena's main street was not paved until after World War I, which is incorrect, and he speaks of the Diamond Creamery's business in 1945, when in fact, the Creamery went out of business in 1920.

He carelessly moves downtown Massena to Massena Center, which is no mean feat, and refers to the healing "sulfur" water of the Grasse River. One can only suppose that he refers to the springs on the Raquette River.

Then again, he makes reference to Eleanor and Marie Eldon-Browne when my name is Eleanor Dumas and I am not related to Mrs. Eldon-Browne and have never been the town historian. As a matter of fact, I was not the "editor" of the *History of Massena*, because perhaps, there was none. My daughter,

Nina, and I did the writing of that book.

Dr. Friedman seems terribly preoccupied with trying to impress his own ideas of anti-Semitic activities and of the Ku Klux Klan on Massena people. If the Klan ever existed here, it had seldom more than one subscribing member, was not active and was more a matter of something to joke about than anything. Dr. Friedman, had he done his homework, would have realized that the people of Massena came from a long line of residents who had run the last link in the underground railway, who risked their lives and all they owned to do it, and who fought, almost to a man, in the Civil War to free the slaves. They were not about to don white sheets and burn crosses to scare blacks or anyone else.

Dr. Friedman speaks of mobs which gathered during the time that Barbara was missing, before the "City" hall. Massena was never a city and it is a town hall and it is more likely that the "mobs" were the men gathering to get instructions for the hunt for the child. He says "toughs" gathered near the Synagogue after Barbara was found and taunted the Jews, but several older men told me they were there—and it did not happen. "Toughs" is a city word and while there

might have been a few isolated incidents they would be much regretted by local people.

There was a happy ending to the incident. Barbara was not really lost; she heard the men calling her in the fields but confided to her mother later that she did not answer because she did not hear her mother's voice.

Anyone in the Jewish community who suffered because of the "Incident" deserves the apologies of the people of Massena. Perhaps Dr. Friedman should mull over the thought that not one person "pulled up stakes" and left Massena, feeling it an unsuitable place to live, as a result of a short and unfortunate happening.

In closing, I feel it is indicative of the friendship and loyalty which has existed between Gentile and Jew in this community that the people were not torn apart by this book.

About the Author

Eleanor Dumas is a native of Massena who has written for area newspapers and long been interested in the history of the region. Recently she and her daughter Nina co-authored the bi-centennial history of Massena.



Adath Israel Synagogue, on Church Street in Massena, was built in 1844 as a Congregational Church of local red brick from a kiln on Center Street. The Jewish congregation bought the building in 1921, removed the steeple, added a community center and a new decorative entrance.

In the long and depressing annals of anti-semitism, some of the most horrible chapters are headed "blood libel." Jews who are at all acquainted with their own history know that this refers to the despicable fabrication, born somewhere in 12th century Europe, that Jews needed Christian blood, especially of children, for their religious rituals. This medieval libel was usually revived around Passover/Easter since Christian blood was alleged to be especially needed for the baking of matzos (unleavened bread). Beginning with the first known case in Norwich, England, when the "martyr child" was canonized by the Church, trials and massacres of Jews accused of such crimes continued for centuries. The famous "Beilis Trial" of 1911-13 in Russia evoked world-wide reaction. The civilized world was horrified to realize that such trials could take place in this enlightened 20th century. Alas, the Nazis were to revive this terrible lie later on with consequences we all shudder to recall.

While this medieval libel usually sprang up at Passover when the feelings of hatred against the Jews as "Christ Killers" reached their annual feverish pitch at Good Friday, the charge could come at any Jewish holy day. This was especially true when a child was found dead or had mysteriously disappeared. Once a rumor had sprung up that the Jews had murdered the child to obtain blood for some heinous rites, it spread rapidly. Untold thousands of innocent Jewish men, women and children died as a result of this reprehensible calumny.

Everything about the infamous "blood libel" suggests the dark blood lusts and bigotry of the Middle Ages. How incomprehensible, then, almost incredible, that a charge of ritual murder should have arisen in our own, quiet, rural, idyllic Northern New York in the 20th century. Whether it was simply a fluke of history or not, we do know that Massena has the unenviable reputation of being the only place in North America where an accusation of ritual murder was actually leveled at a Jewish community.

The story would somehow seem more credible if it had happened in the traditionally bigoted, "red-neck" South. It goes without saying that no one in Northern New York cared to publicize this incident, for it casts no particular credit on most of those people involved, with the exception of the Rabbi who headed the Massena Jewish congregation. In fact, after a few weeks of flickering publicity, mostly in metropolitan newspapers, the whole matter was quietly buried. (Strangely enough, the *Massena Observer* never carried a line about the incident, either in its news or editorial columns, until 50 years later.) Its ramifications were not so

easily laid to rest. In October of 1978, a professor of history at Youngstown State University published a book purporting to give a complete and accurate account. The book, "The Incident at Massena," unfortunately, contained so many factual errors and distortions, that some people were convinced the whole thing was fiction. Alas, the incident did take place. If the events were played out less sensationally than claimed, they, nevertheless, still evoke feelings of horror and shame. One finds it still difficult, now 50 years later, to absolve either those persons who first uttered the libel or those officials and community leaders who acted upon this monstrous accusation.

The Jewish Holy Day involved in this case was not Passover but Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish religious calendar. Just two days before Yom Kippur, which came on Sept. 22nd in the year 1928, four year old Barbara Griffiths disappeared from her home on Cherry Street in Massena. Late in the afternoon she had apparently gone looking for her brother in woods and brush which then covered the Nightengale area of the Village. At that time, the Village limits were just this side of the woods. When she failed to return, search parties, led by the Massena Volunteer Fire Dept., went looking for her. But darkness soon fell and the actual search was halted until daylight; it was felt that the child might be too frightened to respond to the searchers' calls during the night.

Since the area to be searched lay entirely outside the Village limits, the State Troopers took charge. This meant the two men who had recently been assigned to the Massena area. Sometime during the evening Trooper Hughes and Corporal McCann ate or had coffee at an ice cream parlor in the center of Massena. Suspicion over the years has pointed to the proprietor, a Greek immigrant who had been known to utter anti-semitic remarks in the past. Certainly, southeastern Europe had had several "blood libel" trials and this terrible fabrication was undoubtedly part of the cultural baggage which, sad to say, many immigrants brought with them from the old world to the new. Just what this man might have said about looking for the Jews in a case like this no one will ever know. Very soon afterward, however, the rumor began to spread that the Jews were somehow implicated in the disappearance of little Barbara Griffiths.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that the rumor spread first amongst the firemen who were organizing the search itself. Massena and all of northern New York in the late 1920's, strange as it may seem to us now, had been infected with the virus of the Ku Klux Klan. It was

common knowledge that the fire department of those days was a hotbed of Klan activity. One might expect such people to listen receptively to this kind of anti-Jewish fabrication. Certainly we know that the rumor grew quickly that Saturday night and when Sunday morning's light brought no sign of the missing girl, Corporal McCann and Village Mayor W.G. Hawes decided it was time to follow up the Jewish angle.

Their decision to act upon suspicion and ugly rumor had been somehow strengthened by confused statements made by two members of the Jewish community. On Saturday night, whether by accident or intention, the 20 year old son of the lay leader of the Jewish community was questioned. Everyone in town knew that this lad was mentally ill and totally irresponsible; yet, the police questioned him and people who should have known better thought his incoherent statements should be given credence.

When the young man was brought home by the police that night, his parents understood enough from his rambling talk to arouse their worst fears. Hurried telephoning amongst the leaders of the Jewish community resulted in a late Saturday night meeting. Most of them had seen with their own eyes in Eastern Europe what irresponsible rumors like this could quickly lead to. A long distance phone call to the American Jewish Committee in New York City alerted at least one national Jewish defense organization to the makings of a possibly ugly situation.

Sunday morning, another Jewish man was questioned. Inexplicably, the man interrogated probably knew less than any other Jew in Massena about Jewish history or religion, for he had been brought up in a Catholic orphanage in New York City. Again, his reply was vague enough to seem evasive and enough to fuel already bigoted minds.

By this time, Mayor Hawes had assumed leadership in pressing this angle of the case. He suggested to the Troopers that they bring in the Rabbi of the community for interrogation. Rabbi B. Brennglass, spiritual head of the small community of some twenty Jewish families, was a small-built man of courage and dignity. Though his English was heavily accented, he could express himself both eloquently and strongly. Like many other immigrants who had fled the religious persecutions of the old world he was shocked to the core when confronted with this vilest of all anti-semitic accusations. He, at first, indignantly refused to accompany Trooper McCann to the police station. Early in the afternoon, though busy with preparations for the beginning of Yom Kippur that evening, he walked

(continued on page 23)

Morley's Minstrel Man—

by Eleanor Niedeck

In the heydays of travelling theater companies that went from small town to small town, one St. Lawrence County native, Walter Brown Leonard of Morley, became well known, as showman, composer and entrepreneur. The author, Leonard's daughter, grew up in the theatrical tradition, and now recalls vivid details of life with her father. Here are three selections, especially about the North Country, from Mrs. Niedeck's soon-to-be published biography, *W.B. and the Black Trunk*.

Following this "one night stand," father returned to Albany, stayed a few days and then bought a ticket for home. This was the first and only time he had never had an unprofitable experience in the South. Momentarily his wife and child and his home looked good to him after his disappointing financial failure of the past few months. Upon his return to Glens Falls, W.B. did not produce any more local talent shows for a few years. However, he was not idle. He had begun to be interested in the "movie" business. He had seen an ad for a moving picture outfit in the *Burlington Free Press* and went over the purchase it. At that time one could rent an alley way, hang up a sheet in the rear, close the front with plaster board, put in a player piano, install a picture machine placing over the main entrance a sign bearing an electric insignia such as "Bijou Dream." The moving picture outfit consisted of a small projecting camera and reel, all of which was packed in a paste board carrying case which could easily be carried in one's hands. There was a gasoline tank which had to be pumped up with a bicycle pump when electricity could not be procured. "This machine would always work better when we were trying it out at home," he said, "as it invariably balked when we used it in connection with an entertainment." W.B. used this contraption for a short



W.B. Leonard in November 1897. (Photo courtesy the St. Lawrence University Archives)

period. He then sold it.

"My second venture with pictures was a short time after this. I bought a Two-Pin Edison Machine of Gaspard in Glens Falls, New York. He had framed up a vaudeville and picture show and equipped it with special paper, banners, etc., all of which was included in the deal. With this outfit was a one-reel of funny subjects and the big hit *The Great Train Robbery*.

"I got together a small company of performers for the vaudeville show and a couple of operators for the machine. I went out and booked a lot of one night stands up in the northern part of New York State and any place where there was electricity. Although pictures were beginning to be popular I did not make a barrel of money.

"There was a picture theatre in Glens Falls, the Bijou, which was one of the first houses to open in the city and which always did a good business. This house had changed several times before. The policy of the house was: one reel of pictures and an illustrated song for a nickle except on Thursday when I ran a

one-reel Universal-101 Bison picture for which I got a dime. At times I would have an amateur night for local performers to compete for a first and second prize, and occasionally I would book in a professional vaudeville act at a ten cent admission.

"I ran the Universal pictures having the exclusive right of the city. They were then considered the best. We gave several shows during the afternoon and night and cleared the house after each run. This house, being in the very center of the city, it was not infrequent that we would find patrons of the nearby cafes indulging in their siesta or nocturnal slumber and were obliged to awaken them and either make them loosen from the price for the following show or tell them to run along and find other quarters of repose.

"I had not been there long before there was a fire in the block which damaged my belongings to a considerable expense. However, I did not close the house except for a week opening again for business. I paid one hundred and twenty five a month rent, my service

Morley Athletic Club Benefit

Grange Hall, Morley, Thursday Night, July 2nd.

“Kountry Kollege Kapers”

Prof. W. B. Leonard's Latest Musical Comedy

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Clothing and Millinery House, Madrid

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Convenient to Station. Good Service
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All of Morley's Best Local Talent Un-
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W. B. Leonard.

Don't fail to see the Funny Professor,
Irishman, Negro, Hebrew, Farmer,
Old Maid and the Pretty Kollege Girls,
Kute Little Hayseeds and Kindergarten
Kids.

Executive Staff.

Director.....W. B. Leonard
Pianist.....Ruth Lawrence
Promptress.....Lena Butler
Leader of Band.....Field Midgely

KAST OF KHARACTERS

Lyington Loadstone.....The New Professor
Prof. W. B. Leonard
Barney Blarneystone.....The Irish Coachman
Harold Fenton
Blinkie Blackstone.....A Negro Servant
Arthur Northup
Si Scythestone.....A Farmer
W. L. Brown
Gasoline Goldstone.....A Hebrew Autoist
Harold Miller
Hi Hubbard...Leader Hayseedtown Cornet Band
Field Midgely
Sophie Soapstone.....The Matron
Grace Leonard
Magnolia Moonstone.....A Southern Senior
Una Dandy
Heartsease Heatherstone.....A Loving Senior
Beatrice Todd
Pansy..... } Seniors { ..Cora Westaway
Violet..... } ..Alice Fulton
Daisy..... } ..Lillian Erwin
Lily..... } ..Alys Finnimore
Bud..... } The { ..May Livingstone
Cud..... } Four { ..Gertrude Paine
Mud..... } Twins { ..Mollie Lawrence
Dud..... } ..Cecil Coleman
Kindergarten Kids—Ethel Sanford, Eleanor
Leonard, Arthur Lawrence, May Livingstone,
Mollie Lawrence, Gertrude Paine, Cecil Cole-
man, Mae Smith.
Farmers, Musicians, Etc.

Entertainment - Sharp 8:00
Admission, Children Under 10, 15c
" Adults - - - 25c
Reserved Seats - - - 35c
Seats on Sale at Usual Place

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Good Hotel Accomodations are Appreciated
by Everybody on the Fourth

 Don't Fail to See the Free Street Parade by Hayseed Town Cornet Band

cost me sixty dollars a week. I paid my operators seven dollars for seven days and nights work, paying my pianist the same, while to my girl ticket-seller I paid five dollars a week. I believe that I had no license to pay and my electric bill—I have forgotten what it was. After closing the house I sold everything. I had eventually quit the game with just about as much as I started with, plus experience."

We had been in Glens Falls for quite a while during father's trials and tribulations with the motion picture business. I was now a little over four years old and showing a bit of promise, if one can tell at such an early age, that I might be able to speak a piece or two. Father decided to teach me a few short poems, some of his chorus songs and a few dance steps. The speaking parts had to be done in rote as I could not reach but I could carry a melody and he decided after some instruction that maybe he could use me in some of his local talent shows. He was considering, after checking and rechecking his trunk equipment, to start back up north again and so we went to Morley, New York and put on the *Kountry Kollege Kapers* for the Morley Athletic Club, playing in the Grange Hall. Here I made my debut singing in the chorus with six little girls. There was a dance routine, quite simple but precise, and I can recall the words and music and even the gestures which accompanied the songs. After that there were several more engagements in that area. In fact we stayed around the northern part of the state for several months. It was economical, for we were living with several of father's relatives; my mother was always available as an accompanist and now W.B. had a small child "star" to act as an added attraction. In 1915 we were still in the north country and I performed in my first minstrel show, playing black face as a pickanniny and also doing specialties in the olio. These specialties consisted of short elocutionary pieces and a sad soulful song called *Only a Waif*—a sad-eyed, raggedly dressed little girl of five singing "Only a waif out in the street asking a penny from all." I would sing my song and then walk down the aisles, supreme tragedy, as I pretended to beg for a penny from people in the audience. Of course, I never took any money although the patrons would willingly have put the coins in my outstretched hands while tears streamed down their cheeks. Although only five, I can remember it even now, the odd satisfying sensation of making people feel sad because of my tragic appeal.

While we were still playing several shows in northern New York, father conceived the idea of having me placed in a bread truck in front of the theatre performing some of my specialties. The

audience would come in from all the little towns around and, as they were mostly farm people, they were starved for some form of entertainment. One old farmer came up to the bread truck and said to my father, who was standing beside the truck, possibly to keep me from leaving the scene but probably to keep his eye on the crowd and ticket sales, "If that little gal is goin' to be in the show, I want to get some tickets; she's worth the price of admission." From that time on I was a regular feature outside and inside the theatre.



My marriage was held July 2nd, 1932 in the Episcopal Church in Binghamton. It was a small wedding, attended only by the family and a few close friends but it turned into a theatrical production—as anything that father was involved in became. The minister of the Episcopal Church had been in a Shakespearean Company before he went into the ministry. My father had met him several years before on the road but they had not seen each other until the night of the rehearsal for the wedding. It was a great surprise to both of them and we could hardly pry them away from each other long enough to conduct the ceremony. Just as the organist started playing "Here Comes the Bride," father and the minister said in unison, "Curtain going up!" and we were finally married.

After our marriage my husband got a job teaching dramatics in Ithaca, New York. We set up housekeeping and father and mother moved back to Glens Falls, this time to another house, and we visited them there. While we were on one of our visits my father decided that he wanted to have a tombstone designed to be placed in the Leonard plot in Morley. Art, my husband, and I were there at the time of the designer's arrival to go over the details with my father. We all gathered in the living room and listened to the description of the stone W.B. had pictured in his mind. It was to have a large white cross at the top and under the cross a design with the words "A Life of Melody then Immortality." Under this, at the base, were to be names of the cast: Walter Brown Leonard/Born 1860—Died—, and Grace Fox Leonard/Born 1882—. No dates had yet been set for the performances.

I recall thinking at the time that it was almost like advertising the arrival of a show and this was to be the advance billing. This was so like my father, though. He would not trust anyone of his family to "dress the stage"—no granite stone, no small white tablet for him. He wanted something that would

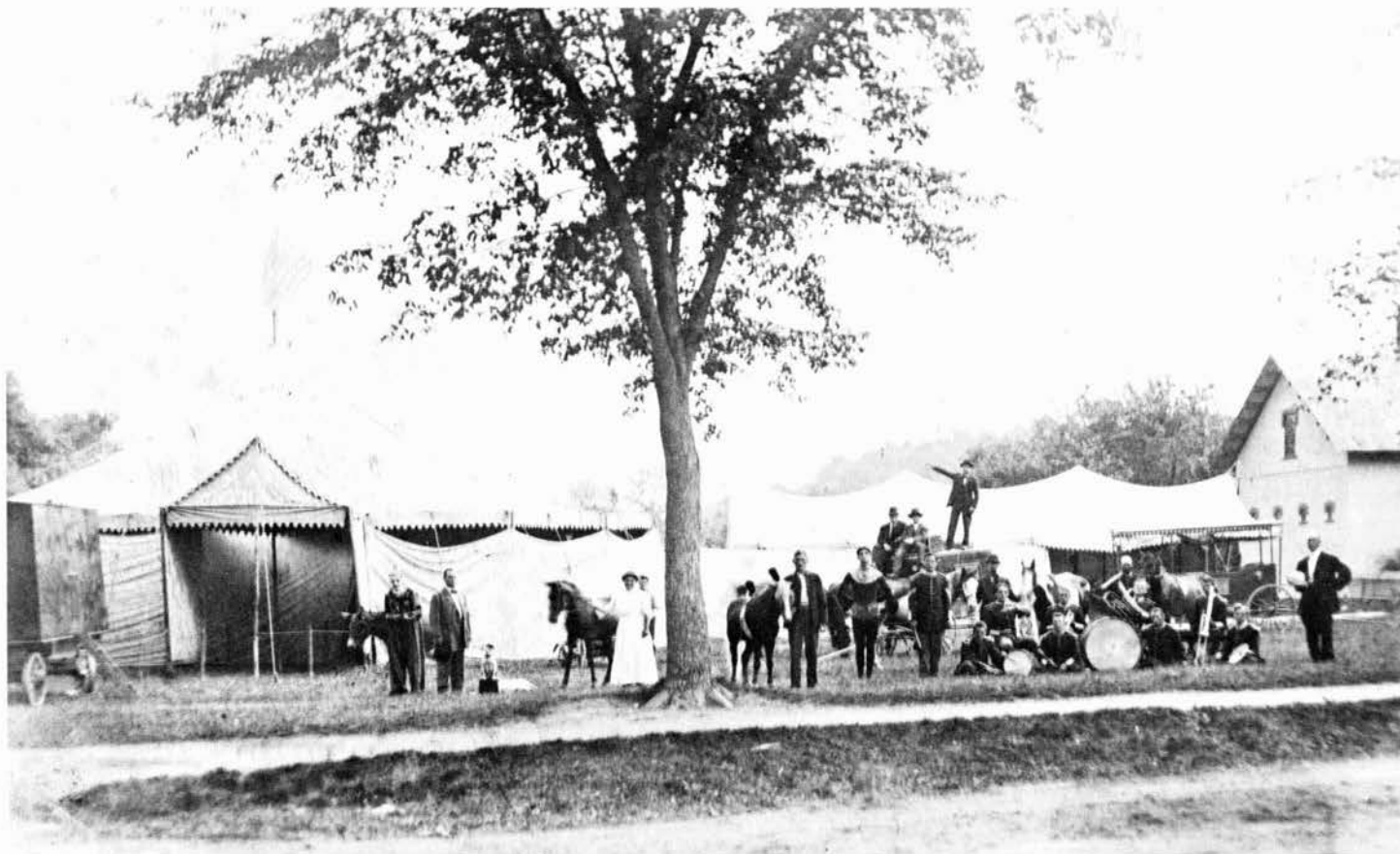
really surpass anything in that tiny cemetery.

I never got up to my mother's funeral since she died when I was in Biloxi, Mississippi during the second World War and I had just had a baby girl and couldn't travel that distance. I went up briefly for my father's memorial service some six years later. Not too long ago, I made another trip to Morley previous to starting this book to obtain some research material which I needed. My husband and I went to the cemetery to plant some flowers on my parents' grave and to obtain any information from the ancient stones of relatives who had been buried in the Leonard plot. The tiny Trinity Episcopal Church was still standing alongside the little church yard but most of the antiquated tombstones were slanted or falling on their faces; however W.B.'s monument was standing straight and tall and still glistening white. I thought as I looked at it—Showmanship to the end! He would have been proud to know that his message was still being carried to the few people who would attend this tiny churchyard from time to time.

About the first summer we were married and my parents had made their move back to Glens Falls, W.B. decided that he would like to become a "country gentleman." He had always been fond of the territory in Northern New York and just above Colton on the Raquette River he heard through his nephew that there was a cottage for sale on the river. As soon as he had settled his belongings in Glens Falls after his move from Binghamton he and my mother went up to Colton. He found the cottage, loved it and purchased it. It was right on the bank of the river, very rural, no electricity, no plumbing but that did not deter father.

As he had bought the camp semi-furnished there was little to do about furniture moving so W.B. took to decorating. He bought some bright orange paint and painted the cottage orange with black trim. As I mentioned before, since there was no plumbing, way in the back was the privy or outhouse. This, too, he painted orange and black. He papered it inside and out with old minstrel posters. On one door was the poster "Gentlemen, the Overture." on the other, the poster "Ladies, Be Seated." Over the door he painted the sign "Box Office," and that was where you went when you had to go. I think it was one of the most entertaining outhouses that has ever been built.

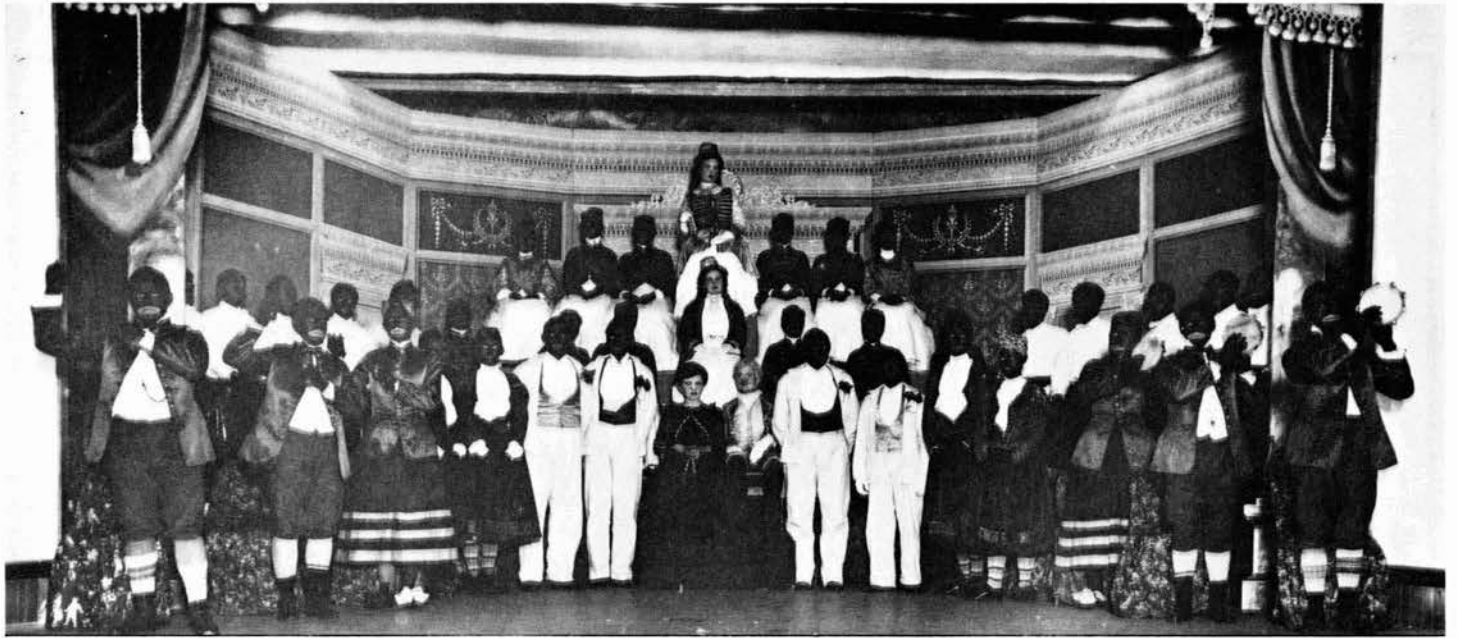
The cottage was small but it had an upstairs intended originally to be a loft but converted by W.B. into sleeping quarters. He called his summer place TROUPER'S REST and you could see the sign of orange and black for miles up and down the river. It did become a trouper's rest as many of W.B.'s old



Leonard's travelling company with their summer show tent. (Photo courtesy the St. Lawrence University Archives)



Troupers on parade at 10° below zero in White River Junction, Vermont, January 1904. (Photo courtesy the St. Lawrence University Archives)



Mixed Minstrels at Barton Landing, Vermont, February 1905. (Photo courtesy the St. Lawrence University Archives)

friends who lived in the area came up periodically and exchanged long talks of bygone days. Some of the old band men that he had been associated with paid visits and some younger people came too. W.B. heard that they gave a community band concert in Potsdam once a week so he attached himself to them. He would initiate a parade from time to time and frequently would conduct the band himself. He was in seventh heaven every Friday night when there was a concert.

I can see him now, back at his Trouper's Rest retreat paddling his canoe, Indian fashion, as his father had taught him many years ago. Sometimes he would take his guitar and if someone was along to navigate he would sing his old French Canadian songs and many other melodies. His main goal of the season was to pick one hundred quarts of black raspberries which grew profusely in back of the cottage. That was his quota for the summer, and he would not give up until he had reached it. I think that these summers were a sort of release from the tensions and restlessness that had always been a part of his life. Here he seemed content to "stay put" but of course there were not many miles that he could wander. My husband and I made frequent summer visits to the camp and as W.B. had never owned an automobile, always depending upon commercial transportation in his work, he was, as you might put it, "stuck" unless we made our yearly visit. When we visited we did track down a few tent shows or circuses and always in the casts of these father would find at least one old buddy. In the fall, we would all return home, my husband and I to Ithaca and schoolteaching, and father and mother to Glens Falls.



We had been astounded by a letter from my father early in the spring of the year 1949 that he had taken off for Sarasota, Florida to visit some of his old circus friends. There was little correspondence after this, perhaps a card or two but then quite a lapse of time before we heard from him.

In the summer of 1949, to fill a need for a speech teacher at Tufts University, my husband was hired by that college to teach a summer session there. I stayed in Amherst with my family.

One night, as I was at home, my husband still at Tufts, I received a phone call from a man who was manager of a hotel in St. Petersburg, Florida. The gentleman said that there was an elderly man staying at his hotel who, though quite ill, refused to go to a hospital. They had found my name in his effects and so were able to contact me. I told the caller to give my father every available consideration and have him removed to a hospital. The next morning the hospital called me and said that he was dead. He had died of pneumonia. In one more day he would have been ninety years old. He had always determinedly predicted that he would live to be ninety years of age. This proved to be the only curtain call he never made.

The hospital sent to our home a black trunk containing his personal belongings. Little did we know, until much later, that he himself had sent a similar black trunk to the Archives at St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York. This trunk contained early minstrel memorabilia, costumes, his first banjo, one of the first ukuleles

imported into this country and more than twenty-five scrap books containing his writings.

At his memorial service held later in the summer in Morley, New York, I, of course, was in attendance. Ironically, I could not keep my mind on what the minister was saying. His words kept getting further and further away—closer to me was the picture of a tall man in high silk hat, attired in an immaculate dress suit, flourishing a cane as he sang:

"On a bright and sunny morning
in the springtime
When the birds are sweetly singing
in the shade,
There is nothing half so thrilling
to the senses
As to see a minstrel troupe
do their parade.
In the front line there's the
Manager and Owner
Then behind him comes the talent
of the show
Some are artists brought from
far across the ocean;
All in perfect step to music as they go.

ta, ta, ta, tum,
On they come.
Look at 'em mash,
Hear the drums crash,
Comedians in line,
Some of old time—
'Tis the Minstrel Street Parade.*

*Words and music copyrighted 1892 by
W.B. Leonard.

About the Author

Eleanor Niedeck was the young "star" of W.B. Leonard's life and has always been interested in theater and acting herself. She presently lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.



A North Country Native

A Poetized-Melodized-Aphorism



By WALTER BROWN LEONARD

La Petit Maison, Glens Falls, N. Y.

NATURE'S MELODY

BY WALTER BROWN LEONARD

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The much travelled Walter Brown Leonard returned occasionally to St. Lawrence County and maintained many friendships through the years with North Country people. In his later years he wrote many little verses filled with nostalgic thoughts for friends back up here. They were published in a series of columns in Canton's Commercial Advertiser, by his friend/editor, John Finnigan. His subjects ranged over places, events and people he remembered; here are some selected memories of friends, taken from a complete scrapbook of Leonard's verses in the St. Lawrence University Archives.

The Commercial Advertiser

Many moons have shoen and vanished; many stars have twinkled out
Since the days of genial Tracey, who both likeable and stout:
Owned and edited the paper, where today John F. the scribe,
At the place holds full dominion: he is sachem of the Tribe
That inhabits the North Country, and his tomahawk's a pen;
While his wigwam is his office, which he loves to call "his den"
The Commercial Advertiser has been read from coast to coast;
Many years the sheet has flourished, yet the owner does not boast.

John F., the Scout

He's a scout for ancient data; an historian of note,
Present topics interest him; all his time he does devote.
Often "gazing from his window," closely watching every move
On the Main street of the village, which his writings truly prove.
By the mass he is respected, many loyal friends has he,
He is courteous and truthful, but at times will disagree,
Though he never is deceitful: tells you bruntly what he thinks,
Which at times is scarcely relished; Truth and Honor, closely links.

"Johnny on the Spot"

'Tis a pleasure to have known him all these hectic, gadding years
To have been in close communication with his fortunes and his fears;
Many years I've corresponded for this paper which he owns,
I have written much and often from full many distant zones.
Our relations have been pleasant; he's been always fair and just;
Never taking an advantage; his veracity could trust—
Let us hope he'll long continue in the work he loves so well
On the spot he's always "Johnny," at the ringing of the bell.

* * * * *

Johnson, the Potsdam Tailor

There are those who still remember H.D. Johnson who for years
Was the leading custom tailor—(he had "Burnside" covered ears),
He designed and finished garments which were very hard to beat,
And with all a genial person, both with "common" and elite.
'Twas the writer's happy fortune that in Phoenix we two met
And enjoyed a pleasant visit, I remember even yet
That I met his little family: Mrs. Johnson and two girls
Whom on former years we'd visit—thus my memory "unfurls."

Big Tom and Dan

There's a picture comes before me of a most unusual man:
It is that of "Big" Tom Charters, he the leader of his clan.
At a time he was a sheriff or a constable-at-large;
Of the peaceful town of Potsdam, over which he had the charge.
Then his genial son "Big" Dan who resembled much his dad
Both in form and disposition—many manly traits he had;
Then the pretty sister, Lottie, who became Bill William's bride,
At a hotel at Massena, years they labored side by side.

A Potsdam Virtuoso

In the days of youthful pleasures, Thurlow Parker was my chum,
I first met him at the "Islands" and at that time he was some
Swell guy of fine proportions, wore a military suit
As he'd just got home from college, he was certainly "the fruit!"
Later on he toured the country with a minstrel show of fame,
As a feature cornet player he acquired a famous name (?)
Then to Boulder, Colorado, where he joined a concert band—
From this time his life was checkered, till he "took himself in hand."

A Meritorious Passing

There was Honorable Ed. Merritt, meritorious was he;
He was General in the army, he was brave as he could be!
Now his wife was very charming, she was mother's cousin, too,
And we oft paid them a visit, when their Potsdam home was new.
Then "Young Ed." as but an infant, yet with seeming rapid stride
In the footsteps of his father, he became his country's pride.
Though his death was most untimely, he'd accomplished much of
worth,
Now he's sleeping by his father in the land that gave him birth.

Historian Embryo

William Heckles, he of Canton, is a lover of the North;
He is versed in dates and data, which he frequently sets forth;
He has made a careful study of the early history
Of the towns in old Saint Lawrence, both from book and memory.
An historian-embryo, 'tis the hobby of his choice;
He's a warm friend of the writer, though I seldom hear his voice,
As a penman he's artistic, been employed for many years
By the County Clerk of Canton, where his penmanship appears.

The Swans

George B. Swan he figured largely as a manufacturer,
He was also a contractor—it was few who could compare
With his energetic marvel who for many years made good,
While his many fine constructions all these years the test has stood.
Fred, his son, has lived and prospered in the town where he was born;
He's an honest, genial "quadrat", yet he does not "blow his horn."
Day by day he keeps a-plugging—he's an optimist at heart,
I have known of his successes since his very early start.

Potsdam's Julia C.

Julia's eyes they shown like diamonds, and her hair was black as coal;
To our place she came from Potsdam, and school teaching was her role.
All the boys were fascinated, Carlton L. among the rest;
She would entertain him nightly—to his bosom she was pressed.
They were sheltered by the woodbine, Carlton with his arm entwined
Round the sylphlike waist of Julia—she to him was always kind.
Soon her beau was fast-aslumber, she withdrew from his embrace,
Cautiously the Potsdam beauty placed a dash-churn in her place.

A Diversified Dynasty

There was "Uncle" Philo Leonard, on a fertile farm he dwelled,
On the road that leads to Colton; he with much respect was held.
He had hair and beard prodigious, and Walt Whitman favored much
Of the old bewhiskered poet, Uncle Philo had the touch.
Through his pleasant spacious acres ran the rippling "Leonard
Brook,"
Where you'd catch the "speckled beauties," anywhere you'd cast your
hook.
Of his many former children few are left upon this earth—
On the farm is faithful Leon of integrity and worth.

Leonards Plus

Of the Leonards there was Moses, "mighty hunter of the wood."
Many bear and deer he'd slaughtered, as his marksmanship was good.
Many brave and thrilling perils he'd encountered during life,
And accounts of his adventures still in history are rife.
There was "Uncle Alva Leonard, he a tiller of the soil,
And his faithful wife "Aunt Lowie" many years together toil
To support their growing children in a manner that was fit,
Nor did any of their family ever disappoint a bit.

A Cornell Family

Ike Cornell, a leading blacksmith, was a man of just repute;
Many years did wield the hammer; and his worth you can't dispute;
He was happily united to a handsome Canuck girl;
And their two sons—both were clever—kept the parents in a "whirl."
Ethan, he was a swell musician, played in orchestra and band,
Like his Dad: he pounded iron; he was always in demand,
Brother Frank was unassuming, yet his life is a success:
Many years a traveling salesman; now on 'Easy Street' I guess.

Lionized Will Lewis

I recall my friend Will Lewis—with his "handle-bar" mustache;
How he rapidly ascended from a mediocre clerk
To a most successful banker; leaving dry-goods in the lurch.
How his voice rang out sonorous; what a pleasing style he had;
Nearly everybody liked him—at his demise they were sad—
From the time he came to Canton from the "Old Green Mountain
State,"
His ascendancy was gradual, ere he reached "The Golden Gate."

Joy-Boys of Canton

Let me name the "Boys of Joy," all in Canton at one time:—
I will start with loved Jim Johnson: he a native of North Clime;
Then Fred Hammond, people's favorite; Levi Storrs the genial gent;
And those boys: Bigelow and Healy, all for pleasure were intent.
Then Bing Packard, Sherdie Jackson, Bob Dezell and Bertie Graves;
J. Fred Wheeler. "Young George" Champlain, to their "hobbies"
they were slaves;
Charley Bridge and Hobbie Chandler, "Bony" Sims
and "Jinkie" Stone;
Charley Johnson, Byron Traver—most have reached the "Golden
Throne."

An Abbreviated Hero

Are there any who are living now recall petit Smith King?
He the Sheriff of the County of St. Lawrence—I still cling
To a memory I cherish of this one armed little man
Who was braver than a lion and from danger never ran.
He had had some fierce encounters with the prisoners in the jail,
And had fought them single-handed and was never known to fail
In his high official duties, which involved both strength and nerve;
He was always just and upright—from his duty never swerved.

A Phenomenal Personage

Nowhere in the Northern Country is a more successful man
Than ex-sheriff, Edson Martin: now a tiller of the land
And a breeder of fine cattle, that have taken many a prize:
He's a most deserving native and has earned his rapid rise.
As a local cause promoter I can testify his worth:
For we once collaborated when I gave my Minstrel birth;
It was through his fine promotion, that success was then achieved,
In the way of home amusements—it was generously received.

The Lumber King

One of Potsdam's leading people was that sturdy man John Snell,
He was physically a wonder, a fine business man as well.
As a pioneer promoter, he was called "The Lumber King,"
And 'tis said amassed a fortune, "making good" with every thing.
In the Adirondack section many lumber camps he owned,
And his payroll was enormous; much on mortgages he loaned.
He was upright, square and honest and he had a host of friends;
His demise was much lamented, while his memory extends.

Old Man Spencer

Of aristocratic bearing dissipation could not kill;
I can visualize his "lordship" as he's coming up the hill
With a box of large proportions made of tin or metal sheet,
Which contained his stock of "notions," which he hawked about the
street.
He'd been coming through North Country
selling goods for many years;
And at first he drove fine horses and a cart of painted gears;
But alas! by dread intemperance, he became the wreck he was;
T'was the years of indiscretion that too plainly was the cause.

Canton Band (Baldy L.)

The old timers they'll remember of the "music in the air,"
When "old Baldy" up in Canton furnished music for The Fair:
There was Will and Archie Woodruff, Ernie Sims and Levi West,
L.A. Taylor and Fred Gamble, Gay and all the rest.
They would always form a circle out in front of "Floral Hall,"
And the music that they furnished was enjoyed much by us all.
They would play some dandy quicksteps and
some waltzes Baldy wrote.
And there wasn't a fakir—everybody played by note.

The Photo King

All throughout the northern country, N.L. Stone was widely known
As the leading photo-artist—from a small concern had grown.
Every section of the country it was canvassed by his men
Who took orders for enlarging choice family portraits then.
He would "shoot you" in his gal'ry if you chanced to come his way—
In most everybody's album you would see a grand display
Of the wives and of the sweethearts, and the relatives and friends,
Of the babies and the children, he had "captured" with his lens.

Van the Horseman

There was Van the Canton horseman, he was someone
you should know;
When the wind blew through his whiskers and his face was all a-glow!
How he used to love to argue with the Judges in the Stand,
If decisions didn't suit him—of the game he had command,
All the people called Van honest, and I reckon that he was
As he drove in many races and he only quit because
He was wanted in "Horse Heaven" just to drive a race up there,
So he hitched onto his sulky and went floating through the air.

Zenith of Power

Few are they who reach the zenith of the power allotted man
You will find by close inspection as past history you scan;
Yet the fact substantiated may not fully be approved,
As there's one whom I will mention to this eminence has moved:
Its of Bertrand Snell I'm citing who has reached the honored goal,
He the product of Saint Lawrence—that of Congressman his role,
He's an honor to our country—to his father who has passed;
May he still be winning laurels while his earthly stay may last.

A Musical Courtship

I was visiting the Parkers—'twas a winter of delight!
At the time Professor Hathorn called on Mable every night;
And their courtship it was novel—never saw the like before:
It was all a feast of music, each a portion of it bore,
The Professor would play a nocturne on the grand piano there,
Then his sweetheart she would follow with a "cottage-organ-air";
Then the two would play together on the instruments at hand,
Then they'd play a "grand finale," when they'd part by shake of hand.

A Dancing "Adonis"

Danny Haskell was no beauty, it was claimed by all his friends,
But to see him at the dances then all criticism ends;
He was certainly a leader in the art of terpsichore,
And his dancing was admired till he left the ball-room floor.
Yet his feet they were tremendous; he was stocky and uncouth—
He the "poetry of motion" was a well established truth.
Every girl was fascinated when with Danny she could dance,
And she'd take him as a partner every time she had a dance.

A Madrid Maiden

Callie Wears who lived in Madrid was a keen, resourceful girl;
She was everybody's favorite and was always in "the whirl!"
'Twas away back in the nineties that I had her in my shows,
And she always proved a "knockout," (this is as the saying goes.)
When I gave my Lady Minstrels she was on the "outside end";
With her jokes "she had 'em howling" they to her bouquets would send.
For a time she left the village and of course was greatly missed,
As she was the life of Madrid—of her worth they still insist.



A Zealous Proselyte

They were holding a revival at the Wesleyan Methodist Church,
They had made a lot of converts and were always on the search
For more sinners for conversion—had all proselytes at work
Rounding up the likely prospects, were they old or young or perk.
Charley Corey was a gambler; he was called "a poker shark,"
And they thought if they could land him, he would be a shining mark;
So they took him to the meetings, to convert him of his sins,
And at last they thought they had him—now its here the theme begins:

As It Were

After several nights attending, finally our hero goes
With his chums up to the altar, and with grace he overflows!
Midst exhorting of the preacher and the singing of the host,
He gets very much excited and it seems as though he'd roast—
In his handkerchief he carried playing cards—a brand new deck,
And as he perspired freely, drew his handkerchief, wiped his neck,
While the cards they went a-flying over all the proselytes
As they knelt there at the altar—'twas indeed a night of nights!



"Prof. Walter Brown Leonard" in formal pose used in publicity pictures. (Photo courtesy of St. Lawrence University Archives)

A Fiery Ordeal

At the time I ran a restaurant, serving oyster stews and such;
When there came a drunken farmer; just to stand he'd need a crutch;
'Twas a good hot stew of oysters that he ordered to be made;
So I placed him at the table where the steaming stew I laid.
Soon I heard an awful coughing, of the strangulation kind,
And I saw what was the matter as I viewed him from behind—
He had shook the box of pepper all into the oyster soup
And he nearly coughed his head off—every mouthful did he scoop!

The Dancing Hales

In the little town of Colton there was Lon and Billy Hale;
They had learned to dance together and if asked they'd never fail
To accommodate the people who were proud to know these boys
Who with clogs of wood and jingles, make that happy clicking noise.
Soon they got a chance to travel—they were called "the dancing
Hales."
Many seasons they were trouping over seas and over "rails,"
They became a real sensation and were classed among the best,
Of their future I knew nothing, some one else may know the rest.

Brasher's Benny

As a cornet vir-tu-o-so he began his long career
Of successes without number; getting greater every year;
He has been a band director; has promoted many acts
Both for vaudeville and "units"—at his work he never slacks.
On the radio you've heard him; and in pictures he has starred;
He's a most successful showman whom the critics never marred—
'Tis our own North Country Artist: Benny Rolfe of Brasher Falls,
In a country band he started, and he played for country balls.

The Meeting

In my best clothes mother dressed me, to the "graded school"
I went
Very proudly, with my sisters—much to me the visit meant.
I was seated in the school room just behind a big, fat boy
Who was drawing funny pictures—all his time did it employ.
He would hold them up behind him so that I might plainly see;
He would wink, and keep me laughing—he was
funny as could be!
Now this boy they called him Frederic, and
his name was Remington;
Later on we played together, and he made a lot of fun.

The Eating

'Twas our mothers who were friendly, they were schoolmates
in their youth,
They would visit very often, bringing Frederic who in truth
Was my favorite chum for playing—he invented many a game,
And was always drawing pictures, which some later gained him
fame.
Now this boy was always hungry, he could never eat enough;
He would take the largest portion and his stomach he would stuff!
He would say as he was bigger he required more food than I,
And would often swipe my vit'els, when there was nobody nigh.

Final Greeting

Often times he'd visit Canton, while his mother was alive
After he became so famous—in the summer he'd arrive
And with other boon companions take a trip into the woods,
Up and down the Racket River, which he sketched when in the moods.
It was here our final meeting; we were camping on "The Bog,"
And "the boy" was just as friendly (oft he'd take a little "grog"),
All his life it was his pleasure just to entertain his friends,
Who recall his many virtues; to his name enchantment lends.

That Cheese Was Cheese

Whatever happened to that once great cheese, so sharp its
taste was remembered with joy and in anticipation of more.

The question is prompted by an article about cheese and
cheese-making in the January issue of *The Quarterly*, a
publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.
The details of cheesemaker Floyd Denesha's long experience in
an enterprise that was as much an art as it was a trade raised
sparks of recollection, some of which even now stimulate the
taste buds.

We aren't about to say that modern day cheese processing
isn't the best around or that the product isn't superior. We do,
however, have memories—and not necessarily very old ones—
of the outstanding sharp cheese that was available in the North
Country. And we also recall the disappointments when what
was passed off an excellent sharp cheese turned out to be
anything but. Indeed, such occurrences used to move one fine
shopper to say, "Stung again."

What we are talking about was a cheese of fine texture and
whose fragrance alone was an enticement. It would crumble
delightfully on the tongue, and the contact with the palate left a
lingering flavor that made the next bite irresistible. But it was
that indescribable quality that gives the name to sharpness
which possessed us. Yet it was not biting as the word implies
nor tangy in terms of strength. The cheese let you know its
presence, but it was both bold and gentle at once, never
intruding or offensive.

How much the art of the cheesemaker had to do with all this
we don't know. We suspect, however, that it was greatly
responsible. Everything he did from the time the milk entered
the vats until the end product was ready to be sold must have
contributed to its success.

We're even willing to acknowledge, although very little, that
our mind might be playing tricks, that our imagination may be
running overtime. But usually only two things stick with a
person over his lifetime, the good and the bad. And for the very
good there is a special niche which accommodates no
encroachment. That's how it is with that cheese. To paraphrase
The Quarterly, "That cheese was cheese." Where has it gone?

Watertown Daily Times Editorial

Recollection of a Former Slave

by Isaac Johnson

Introduction by Edward J. Blankman

Isaac Johnson had been a child in Kentucky when his black mother and three brothers and he were all separated into separate slave lives. After fleeing to Canada, Johnson eventually resettled in Ogdensburg and lived out his life here as a master builder of some of our most impressive structures. The Chamberlain's Corners arched stone bridge and the Waddington Town Hall are known products of his design and supervision. Others, like the arched bridge over the Grass River in Madrid, are said by some to be his, while still others are no longer known. Further research about Isaac Johnson's life and work here should be done. Here are reprinted several chapters of his own account of his childhood days in slavery, privately printed by him in Ogdensburg in 1901.

The arched bridge over the Grass River at Chamberlain's Corners and the Waddington Town Hall were designed by an ex-slave, Isaac Johnson. The bridge at the Corners long had the reputation of being St. Lawrence County's most aesthetic bridge. It still has harmony in its parts, though a reconstruction of years ago could not preserve all of its original beauty.

Isaac Johnson served in a black regiment in the Civil War, then came north to settle in Canada. He became a skilled mason and craftsman. Eventually he found his talents in demand south across the river. He spent the remainder of his life designing and constructing in our North Country. His home here was at 21 Main Street, Ogdensburg.

In September 1901 he published a little book, "Slavery Days in Old Kentucky." Printed in Ogdensburg, it was subtitled "A True Story of a Father Who Sold His Wife and Four Children, By One of the Children."

Portions of the volume, especially from Chapters VI to VIII (the concluding chapters) are printed below.

Through most of the book runs the appeal of "free" land as Isaac worked under slave conditions in Kentucky of the 1850's. He made unsuccessful attempts to escape to Canada. It was the war and the conclusion of it which enabled him at last to head north and settle in Ontario.

The early chapters, with the one important difference of slavery, could apply in large measure to rural life in

the North Country, 1844-60. There was the same kind of pioneer home—

"It was about twenty feet by sixteen with a nine foot ceiling. It had only one outside door and two windows. The house was divided into two rooms, a kitchen and a bed room. A fireplace occupied a part of one end, the foundation being large flat stones on which the cooking was done. Their furniture was limited as well as their cooking utensils, but these were sufficient for their wants, and on the whole it was a happy

home. They at first had no neighbors nearer than ten miles. They worked together in harmony."

Labor through long days meant tilling and hoeing, wagoning corn or other grains to either a gristmill or distillery, taking care of "stock," and perhaps building up a farm primarily for cattle or horses instead of crops.

Slavery, of course, was brutalizing. It had special effects in Isaac's case. His father was white, his mother black. In Isaac's earliest years, 1844 to the time he



Isaac Johnson. (Photo courtesy of the Town of Waddington Historian's Collection)

was seven, life was reasonably happy on the family's own homestead. Then, more and more conscious of neighbors' ostracism because of the mother, his father sold the farm and, without informing his wife or four young sons, left them after he'd made arrangements for them to be sold at auction. The woman and her four boys were sold separately in amounts from \$200 (the baby Eddie) to \$1,100 (the mother). There was not even a chance for goodbyes.

The middle chapters recite alternate cruelties and kindnesses on the part of Isaac's owners. Acts of kindness came mostly from womenfolk, each of whom had to be addressed as "Mistress." Every "Master" of Isaac's got the utmost labor out of his hands, and, according to temperament or drunkenness, laid on the "snake" or whip for disobedience or idleness. Even his "kindest" master could address his slaves like this—

"You must understand you are just the same as the ox, horse, or mule, made for the use of the Whiteman and for no other purpose. You must do as the Whiteman tells you; if you do not, he will punish you just the same as he would the mule when he breaks him."

One of the cruelest circumstances Isaac tells about is the yearly purchase (spring) and sale (autumn after harvesting) of many blacks as farm hands. He himself was rented out several times, never knowing whether his new master would be a brute or a "moderate" disciplinarian. Always his greatest praise was for his mother, whose family name, Johnson, he had adopted. Memories of that auction, where his kin was sold perhaps to go down to slave markets at Vicksburg or New Orleans, embittered him against whites in the pattern of his father.

His fortunes began to change in 1860, when, as he says, "Abraham Lincoln, God bless his memory, was elected president." The long war was fought and won, then happier years of releasing his energies and creativity opened up for him in Ontario and St. Lawrence County.

CHAPTER VI. Bob, the Canadian

Among the five slaves brought back to the stock farm unsold, was one named Bob, who had come from Canada. He was an engineer and had hired on the steamer Louisville at Cincinnati, Ohio, for the round trip. When they reached New Orleans the cargo was sold, and just as the boat was ready to return, the sheriff came aboard and all Negroes found who were not owned by a Whiteman were taken to the city jail, advertised for three months as runaway slaves, and if no owner claimed them they were sold to the highest bidder. This is the way Bob became a slave. At that sale of Bob, my master, John Madinglay, was the purchaser. He took him to Grand Gulf and not being able to sell him there he brought him to the stock farm, where he was placed in the hoe gang over which I was boss. My gang consisted of six boys and six girls besides Bob and myself.

Bob was a shrewd as well as a powerful man. He was closely watched and not allowed to talk to any of the men, though he could at all times talk to and associate with Rosa and was encouraged to do so. The result was, Bob fell deeply in love with Rosa and talked with her freely. He told her all about his home and life in Canada and proposed that she go there with him. He pictured to her how pleasantly they could live in that land of freedom, where colored people were treated as human beings, and he laid before her

all his plans to escape. She apparently consented to his proposals and the time was fixed when they were to start. The stock farm was on the banks of Beech Fork river, and whenever there was a heavy rain this river was swollen to a flood. When this should next occur was the time fixed upon for escape, and I was to go with them, though at first I did not know that Rosa was to go with us.

The flood soon came. I had charge of the skiff and watched eagerly till the water was at its height, when I informed Bob of the situation. I explained to him how we could go over the dams in safety. It was Saturday and I proposed to Bob that we start that night and when evening came I urged Bob to start at once. But Bob said "No!" He was going to take Rosa with him. This was the first I knew of his intentions with reference to Rosa and I told him not to trust her, that she told everything she knew to Master. He refused to start that night, but said he would go next Monday morning as the Master was going away that day and would not return till night. I told him that would never do and tried to impress him with the fact that Rosa could not be trusted; but he insisted that I leave the matter to him and everything would be all right. I was finally persuaded to do as he said.

Monday morning came and I got the horse for Master, who said he was going to town, and told me to go to the field to my work. On reaching the field I informed Bob Master had gone and there was the skiff. At this point of the river there was an elbow around which the distance was ten miles, while across the land it was only three miles. Bob told me to take the boat around the elbow and he and Rosa would meet me by going across the land. I started. The current was strong and I made the



Bridge at Chamberlain's Corners. (Photo courtesy of the Town of Waddington Historian's Collection)

distance in good time, reached the other side but no Bob or Rosa was there. I waited and waited for them for about three hours when I concluded to wait no longer. Bob had explained to me the whole route to be taken to reach Canada and so I started alone.

I continued down stream till about seven o'clock in the evening. I was halted during the day three different times by men on the shore who had guns and got at me. The first shot struck the boat but did not injure it. Soon after I was shot at twice, but neither of them came near me. This gave me courage and I thought: "Fire away! You can't hit me!" Still I pulled harder than ever and soon reached the railroad bridge and passed under without being seen. About half a mile inland I saw a light which I took for a Negro cabin. I was fearfully hungry, having had nothing to eat since morning. I pulled my boat ashore and started for the light.

After I had gone two or three hundred yards the light disappeared and I started back to the boat. As I drew near I saw two men armed and they had two dogs with them. I turned and ran for a swamp near by, the men and dogs following. I managed to keep out of their way for a couple of hours or more. The number of men had increased to ten and I saw there was no chance for me to escape and the longer I tried to evade them the worse it would be for me. I knew the character of the dogs and what I might expect from them if they should reach me before the men were near and I gave myself up.

One of the men said he would take me to his house till morning and then return me to Master. I was taken to the depot near by, where there were about fifty men armed, all of whom had been hunting for me. Although I was only a poor Negro boy, ignorant and without arms, these men were thoroughly armed with guns, knives and dogs as if they were in pursuit of a wild and ferocious animal. I was taken to the house, given some supper, which I was glad to get as I was as hungry as a bear, was given a place to lie down in a corner. The man and his wife were in another corner in the same room, so also were the dogs. He bolted the door, laid his revolver on a table near his bed in which he and his wife slept.

I took in the situation and made up my mind to have that revolver before morning. I laid down determined not to sleep. My day's work, however, had been a hard one, harder even than it would have been in the field on the old stock farm. I had scarcely laid down before I was fast asleep and knew nothing whatever till the man called me in the morning. My disappointment was great. I feared I had lost my last chance for freedom, still I had a little hope left and did not wholly despair. I was given

some breakfast and told to split some wood while he hitched the horses. I watched him, sideways, till he entered the barn and as soon as he was out of sight I took to my heels and ran for the swamp. I must have had a quarter of a mile start before he set the dogs on my track. I heard their loud baying and quickened my speed.

If there is anything that will make one almost fly through the air, it is one of those blood hounds on his track, with the knowledge that unless he outstrips them he is liable to be torn in pieces. It is no wonder to me that deer and other animals chased by dogs become so fleet. I have never since heard of such a chase for a deer, but I think of this race of my own, and I must say it has created in me a sympathy for the animal, and I would gladly banish by law, if I could, all such manner of hunting.

I reached the swamp pretty well exhausted. Here I hid, and, as luck would have it, the dogs passed on beyond me, baying at every jump. After they had passed I ran for the river and followed it till about four o'clock in the afternoon. If I heard an alarm on one side of the river I swam to the other side and continued my race. I watched for a skiff. Not finding one, I concluded to make a raft.

I had one about completed and was covering it with brush, when I heard the sound of dogs near by. I did not have time to push off the raft, so I plunged into the water, swam a short distance to a big stump near the shore. The water in this river was almost as black as ink, and an object could not be seen below its surface. I sank in the water, leaving only my nose and mouth above. Here I lay for some time. There were five men on the shore and the dogs were hunting up and down the bank. At last one of the dogs got the scent and started for me with a yelp. The men gathered at once on the bank and, pointing their guns at me, ordered me to swim ashore. I saw there was no further use in my trying to escape and I surrendered.

I was taken to the nearest depot and thence to my Master, who paid fifty dollars for my recovery. I was taken to the garret in his home, handcuffed for the night, and, to make sure I would not escape again, Peter was handcuffed to me. The next morning Peter was released, shackles were placed on my legs, and I remained in this shape till about 10 o'clock, when Master and his brother William, who was his slave agent, came to the garret, took off the shackles, handcuffed my hands behind my back and took me to the punishment room or shanty where I saw Bob lying on a few boards, his throat cut and he was slowly dying in great misery.

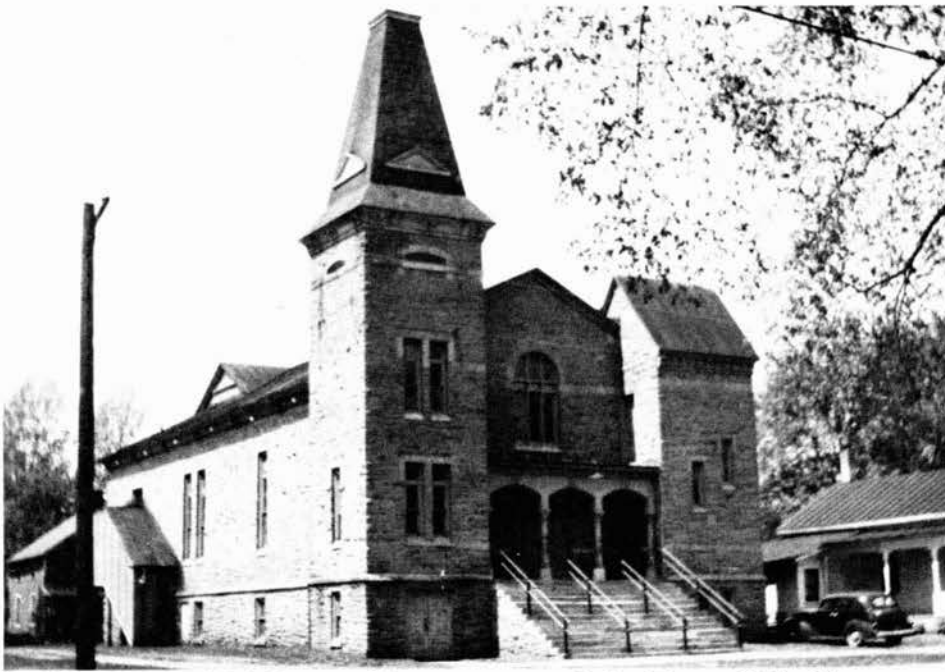
From him I afterwards learned that about half an hour after I left the field,

Master and three slave drivers came to the still house, sent for Bob to come there, which he did, not mistrusting what was before him. As soon as he arrived the four men all pounced upon him like four ravenous wolves upon a lamb. He fought all of them till he was overpowered. They then drove four stakes in the ground and he was tied to these with his back up and the four men took turns lashing him with a raw hide whip, the black snake I have referred to, until his back appeared like a piece of beefsteak pounded. They then took hot coals from the furnace and poured them over his back, after which they took him to the punishment cabin, shackled his feet, chained him to the punishment block and in the night two of them went into the cabin and cut his throat, taking care not to cut the jugular, but cutting just enough so he would die gradually in torture.

Bob's condition was a lesson to the rest of us, and no means were allowed to escape making it an impressive one. He lived in this condition for five days and then his poor soul took its flight to the region where it is hoped no slave holder will ever have the privilege of exercising his power over human beings.

Talk to me about human slavery being a "Divine institution!" As well tell me the devil is a merciful God. The system not only degraded the slave, but it degraded the master even more. Any man of the South who is a descendant of a slave holder who upheld the system of American slavery, ought to blush with shame for his degraded origin. I have in me the blood of one such, on the side of my father, and to me, my poor black Negro mother shines as an angel in comparison to a devil, and, if I could, I would willingly draw from my veins every drop of that white blood that goes pulsing through my body received by way of my father. It is the only stain I have, received from the laws of nature, of which I am ashamed, while on the other hand, I am proud of my Negro blood.

Poor Bob's skin was black, but his soul was pure and in the great future where we are taught, we shall be ruled by a just God, what will be Bob's condition in comparison with those who tormented and murdered him? But, the worst of all is, that Rosa, whom Bob loved and trusted, was his betrayer. The white blood in her tainted her so that she was equally as bad as her ancestors. She was bright and intelligent beyond most of her people, or even many of the whites, and it may be that she had learned to love her Master and was blinded, by reason of this, to all humanity for another. Had she carried out all that she promised to Bob and started to leave with him and been captured, she would have shared his fate.



Town Hall, Waddington. (Photo courtesy of the Town of Waddington Historian's Collection)

Perhaps she was not strong enough to fully recognize the enormity of her relations with her Master and maybe she hoped those relations would some day be the means of her own freedom. As bad as it is we do not wholly condemn when men are cast upon the ocean where sure death is before them unless they have food and then draw cuts to see which one shall die to furnish food for the others. Perhaps she regarded her own condition much like the above and acted as she did to save herself. I do not know. I would like to shield her if I could, but I sometimes fear she was the treacherous being Bob believed and she appeared to be.

Bob was at last dead and then followed his funeral. A box was made into which he was placed, all the slaves were brought to view his remains, a grave was dug, the improvised coffin was loaded into a cart and we all followed him to his burial. After the remains were lowered into the grave Master preached what was called a funeral sermon. The substance of his words were: "This Negro, Bob, was a bad man. I paid my money for him and I was his master. You all know that if he had done right as you have done, he would never have been where he is. He cut his own throat and beat me out of my money. You know that I must be obeyed and if you do not obey me I must whip you; but he was so mean that whipping was of no use to him and it would have been better for you and me if his throat had been cut long ago. There isn't one among you but knows I have done right, as he was a mean, mean Negro. You must understand there is no Lord or God who has anything to do with any of you,

as I alone am your Master, your maker and your law giver, and when you do what I tell you to do you will get along all right."

After Bob's condition had been impressed upon me sufficiently, as they thought, and before Bob had died, at the time they took me to see him I was again taken to the garret, from there I was taken to a ladder which stood between the house and the garden. My clothes were taken off and I was strapped to this ladder. Master's wife came forward and said: "Let me tell the whole truth about going away." I don't know, but I think she wished to implicate Rosa. Knowing that Bob was the same as dead and could not be hurt any further, I told them that "I was going to Canada because there I would be a free man." Master then asked: "Who told you that Canada is a country in which you can be free?"

I said: "Bob told me."

He asked how many of the Negroes knew about the runaway and I told him, "not one that I know of."

He said: "Don't you know that you are lying to me? Doesn't Rosa know all about it?"

I told him, "No! if I had thought she knew about it I would not have started, because I knew she would tell you."

He asked: "Are you sure none of the other Negroes know anything about it?"

I answered, "I am sure, so far as I know."

The Mistress then said: "Isaac, I don't want to see you killed the same as Bob has been; if you will go in the garden and obey my orders I will see that your Master does not hurt you. I want you to never speak to a Negro on the place, nor leave the garden without my

permission, and when you come to meals come to my dining room and Rosa will serve you and at night you must go to the garret to sleep."

She then spoke to her husband, saying: "Let him go and I will look after him."

I was put in the garden which was surrounded by a high fence, the gate was locked and the key was given to Rosa so that I could not get out without her knowing it.

The above occurred before Bob had died. After I had been in the garden two days, Master and his wife went to visit a neighbor. After they had gone Rosa came to the garden and I asked her to allow me to go and see Bob. She had always been friendly with me and consented, saying, however: "You can go, but do not allow anyone to see you, if you do it will make trouble for me." I went. Bob could talk, but his voice was very weak. It was then he told me the particulars I have related about their treatment of him, and that he had been betrayed by Rosa. He also said: "Isaac, here is just one thing I want to do before die, and that is to punish Master. I am shackled and chained and can't get three feet from the bed. I want you to bring me a hatchet, ax, or something, and I will be satisfied."

I told him I could not do that as I was watched, but that I would get him the prong of a pitchfork. I went to the garden, got the prong, hid it under my shirt, picked some onions and asked Rosa if I could take the onions to Bob. She consented and I took them to him and left the pitchfork prong which he concealed about his bed and waited for a chance to get even with the Master. But Master was too cautious for him and did not go into the place till Bob had been dead some six hours.

CHAPTER VII.

The Years 1859 and 1860.

During the year 1859 Master had gathered on the stock farm one hundred and twenty Negroes and all but ten were taken away to market. These were taken away in the same manner as others had been and all were sold except two who were brought back to the farm in the spring of 1860; and during the summer he gathered about eighty more. After the crops were in and harvested these eighty slaves were taken to market, but in the meantime, Abraham Lincoln, God bless his memory, had been elected president. There was no market for the Negroes and they were brought back to the farm in the spring of 1861. The war had commenced by this time and slave property was at discount and he bought no more.

It was then freely talked among the slaves that we would soon all be free. Next, the Yankee soldiers began to appear in the state and I concluded, "Now is the time to make a break for

liberty."

I heard there were troops within two miles and on the following Sunday I started. But I soon found I had made a mistake, as the troops proved to be Confederates from our own state. I was arrested and put into the guard house. The guard house was a large tent with a guard stationed in front. A severe storm came that night and blew down the tent which caused quite a confusion, during which I gave the guard the slip and ran for home, which I reached without my absence having been discovered. I remained at home for a year, till one day there was a Michigan regiment's train which came within a mile of the farm.

I was at the mill that day and saw them. I made a bargain with one of the men to go and cook for his captain. That night after my work was done I started and about one o'clock I overtook the train. The guard halted me; I said I was a friend and he told me: "Advance friend and give the countersign." I advanced but I had no countersign when he wished to know what I was doing there that time of night? I told him I had hired with one of the men to come and cook for his captain. He told me if that was so it was all right and took me to the wagons where we found the man who had hired me. I turned in with him for the rest of the night and in the morning he gave me a breakfast and a new suit of soldier clothes. I drove a team to Lebanon where I met Captain Smith of the Eighth Michigan, captain of Company A., and hired out to him for seven dollars per month, the first money I had ever had a chance to earn and call my own. I was then eighteen years of age.

We lay in camp a few weeks and then went to Green river. While at this place I had a letter written to Rosa telling her of my good fortune, but the Master got the letter. He, with a Negro driver, soon started for the camp. I saw them while I was by a brook washing some clothes for my captain. I mistrusted they were after me and hid near the road where I remained till I saw them go away, when I took the clothes to my tent.

The captain came in and asked: "Isaac, what are you looking so down hearted for?"

I said: "Nothing in particular."

He then said: "Oh yes, Isaac, there is something wrong."

He answered: "I suppose you saw your master?"

I said: "I did, but he didn't see me."

"Well," said he, "your Master has been here after you, he went to the colonel and asked for you. The colonel was indignant and told him he hadn't come here to make himself a blood hound to hunt runaway Negroes and then said he would give him just fifteen minutes to get outside of his lines, and your Master started without asking any more questions."

The captain then called me into his tent, gave me a revolver and twenty rounds of cartridges saying: "Take these and protect yourself, that is all we have to protect ourselves and if any man comes to demand your liberty, shoot him as you would a dog. If you don't, you ought to be a slave."

Oh what a feeling of manhood came to me with those words. I felt myself a man, every inch of me. It was my second taste for freedom, the hiring for wages being the first. I took the revolver and cartridges and made up my mind to follow directions if I should be molested and that I would deserve my freedom. I remained with Captain Smith till his term had expired. He and many of his regiment re-enlisted. They were given a furlough and I accompanied him home to Detroit.

CHAPTER VIII.

Full Manhood At Last.

After we got to Detroit, I could look across and see that happy land of Canada, to me a Canaan, of which I had heard so much, for which I had yearned, and of which I had dreamed sleeping and awake. I never step my feet upon Canadian soil, even to this day, without a feeling of love and respect for its people, and God bless you! instinctively comes to my thoughts. I told the captain I thought I should go to Canada where I was sure to be free from all masters. He wished me to stay and return with him to the army. I told him, "No! I shall never return unless I can go as a soldier."

He then informed me they were getting up a colored regiment in that city at that time, and if I desired to fight for myself and my race I had better enlist with that regiment, and I did so in short order.

I accordingly enlisted in Company A., 102nd United States Colored troops and I remained with them till the war was over. After the close of the war I had a strong desire to return to the old Kentucky home to see my old master and to learn what I could of my own people. I think I also had a desire to see Master in the broken condition I imagined the war must have left him. I started and reached the old stock farm at last where I had seen so much misery. I went to the house and found Master in bed, paralyzed. He had not been out of his bed for six months. I said to myself: "The Lord has answered my prayer and allowed me to live and see him punished who so cruelly tortured and murdered my friend Bob."

Master was apparently glad to see me. He said I was the first to leave and the first to return. With the old time Southern hospitality he sent to the cellar for something to drink and I was made welcome to the best in his house. I could not help but notice the change. There were two ex-Confederates in the room who did not look upon me very kindly, if

I read them aright. Master offered me good wages if I would only return and remain while he lived. I think, perhaps, I may have given him, from prudential motives, some hopes that I would do so. But I knew him too well to think of it seriously. I found Rosa, who had married one of the Draper colored people across the river. The Drapers were Catholics and were always good to their slaves, never selling one to the slave traders. She was a happy woman in her new relations and her husband was industrious and prosperous. I could not learn anything of my own people, but I saw my father's brothers, who told me some of the things herein related. They had never heard from my father after he caused us to be sold.

Master never left his bed. With all my Negro blood and all that I have passed through, I would rather be in my black skin than in his or my father's. Think of being obliged to associate with men of their stamp, say nothing about being their slave, and the mere thought is repulsive. A man who could sell his own children or who would uphold a system that enabled him to do so—the thought is a horror. My people, for I call only the colored people mine, suffered for centuries, and the only wonder to me is that so many have survived, that they are as intelligent as they are, and as forgiving as they have shown themselves to be.

A race with such natural characteristics comes nearer to the teachings of the great Master than any people of whom I have learned. The manner in which they have used their freedom and treated their former masters appears to me they must have indelibly stamped in their natures the Lord's teachings, wherein He says: "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven."

To be worthy to be counted one who lives up to the above is my desire, notwithstanding all I have experienced.

In order that my relatives may know where to find me, in case this little pamphlet should fall into their hands, I give my Post Office address:

ISAAC JOHNSON,

21 Main Street, Ogdensburg,
St. Lawrence Co., N.Y.

About the Author

Isaac Johnson (1844-19) published the pamphlet *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky* in Ogdensburg in 1901 "to give to the world a knowledge of the subject that no eloquence may ever make the same thing again possible.

Edward Blankman, well known to the readers of this journal, has long been interested in black literature and culture.

Incident at Massena continued
hurriedly to the police station. As soon as the interrogation began, the Rabbi explained how totally false the whole accusation was. The shedding of blood in any connection was totally repugnant to the Jewish religion and the Jewish people. He went into some of the historical background but mainly he emphasized his horror and shock that anyone in the United States in the enlightened year of 1928 should give even the slightest credence to such vile falsehoods. He warned them that they would deeply regret this lapse into the unspeakable bigotry of the Dark Ages. Prof. Friedman in his book says that the Rabbi had to pass through a gauntlet of jeering, angry men gathered around the police station. There is no real evidence that this was so.

One must here digress for a moment and express, even at this very late date, the intense disappointment which the Jewish people felt at the silence of the good people of Massena. We know that many people, perhaps most, did not really believe any of this. Furthermore, relations between Jews and Gentiles had been excellent and the Jewish people were an integral part of the civic and business life of this northern New York village. Nevertheless, that Sunday morning not a single minister or priest urged his congregants to refrain from

listening to such rumors against the Jews, rumors which were so contrary to both Jewish and Christian religious morality, human decency and the American concept of religious freedom. Surely, from their close relationships with Jews for over 30 years, the people of Massena should have known that something like that was unthinkable.

There was not only silence in the pulpits; not a word about the incident ever appeared in the *Massena Observer*. Would not an editorial word of apology by the editor have been in order? There seems to have been a silent consensus to hush the whole matter up.

Just when this dangerous situation threatened to boil over, late on Saturday afternoon, the little girl herself walked out of the woods unscathed. As her parents had originally suspected, she had wandered off to look for her brother. She knew she was lost but apparently was not really frightened. The joyful news spread quickly and the sullen gloom which had enveloped Massena for nearly 24 hours suddenly lifted. But in the Jewish community, tension and resentment mixed with fear lingered on. Even now, more than fifty years later, I recall that as a small nine year old boy I had felt the nameless, shapeless fear which had engulfed my family. Religious services that Yom Kippur night and on the following day were touched with an extra-special feeling of thankfulness but the nagging thought of what might have happened had the girl been found dead has never completely disappeared.

Tension did not subside immediately. Jewish merchants feared an economic boycott; Mayor Hawes and others who had acted against the Jewish community feared for their safety. The American Jewish leadership, men such as Louis Marshall and Rabbi Stephen

Wise, insisted that those responsible for these anti-semitic libels be punished. At the very least, they insisted that Mayor Hawes and Corporal McCann apologize to Rabbi Brennglass and the Jewish community of Massena. At first, the Mayor and the Trooper balked but eventually the Governor forced apologies from both of them. Corporal McCann was severely reprimanded by the Superintendent of the State Police in Albany. Large city newspapers and Jewish publications kept interest alive in this incident for some time. Then there ensued a half-century of almost total silence.

With the publication of Prof. Friedman's book, interest has been reawakened in the whole affair. Despite the book's discrepancies, errors, and occasional purple rhetoric, it will probably remain, for the immediate future anyway, the only definitive account. The author's main theme is that it did happen here and that it can happen again. In small towns as well as big cities, in the North as well as in the South, racial bigotry and religious prejudice can create dangerous situations. Though none of us who live in St. Lawrence County and who love dearly our North Country, enjoy having such skeletons brought out of the closet, knowledge of the incident in Massena should strengthen our determination to fight racial and religious bigotry whenever and wherever it raises its ugly head.

About the Author

Samuel Jacobs is a lifelong resident of Massena who well remembers many of the principals of the book he here reacts to. He has also written reviews of the book recently for scholarly journals of Jewish history.

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The Wright Corner

by Mary Ruth Beaman

What Has Happened to Silas' Pitcher?

Gov. Silas Wright died in Canton, N.Y. in 1847. The merchants of New York City, to show their high regard for him had ordered from Europe a set of solid silver to be specially engraved to him. Unfortunately his death occurred before the silver even reached the States so it was presented to his widow, Clarissa Moody Wright. Upon her death the pieces were divided between her three surviving brothers, the children of her deceased brother, and a friend. During Gov. Hill's period in office in the late 1800's he learned that the solid silver pitcher was for sale. Gov. Hill bought it for \$150, with his personal funds but expressing the desire that the piece become the property of the State and remain on the side-board in the dining room of the Governor's Mansion.

The pitcher was about 16" in height, small at the base, swelling to its full proportions about one-fifth of the distance from the mouth. The surface was decorated partly in repousse work and partly engraved and hammered. A smooth shield was in the center of either side, one of which bore the inscription "Presented to Silas Wright by His Mercantile Friends of the City of New York in Testimony of their Respect and Regard for his Public and Private Character, Fourth of July, 1847." The handle was described as of bold and strong Arabesque.

(*Commercial Advertiser*, 3 July 1889)

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“Landmarks and Lemon Crackers”



The St. Lawrence County Historical Association proudly announces that it is now accepting advance orders for its new cookbook, *Landmarks and Lemon Crackers*. Available September 23, 1979, the cookbook features family tested recipes submitted by members and friends of the Association and covering every category a cook could wish. Also, artist Sandra Lowe has sketched over 30 county landmarks for which historical and architectural notes have been prepared. Photographs of another 60 sites and accompanying notes complete the landmarks portion. Every county town is represented.

When the two aspects—recipes and landmarks—are combined, the Cookbook Committee is sure you will find a book both worthwhile to own and enjoyable to use. Proceeds will help support the activities of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

“Landmarks and Lemon Crackers”

Has a coated cover for easy upkeep

Has a plastic spiral binding

Has complete indexes of recipes and landmarks

Has large, easily read type

Costs \$6.00 for SLCHA members and \$6.95 for non-members

Will be available initially at a gala September 23 tasting party

Can be gift wrapped and mailed for you at an additional charge

Think of it as a gift for yourself, for friends and relatives with St. Lawrence County ties, as a bridge or door prize, as Christmas or birthday gifts for office staff or customers. Wouldn't your friends, relatives, and acquaintances enjoy something special this year?

Place your advance orders today; cut out the mail order form inside.

