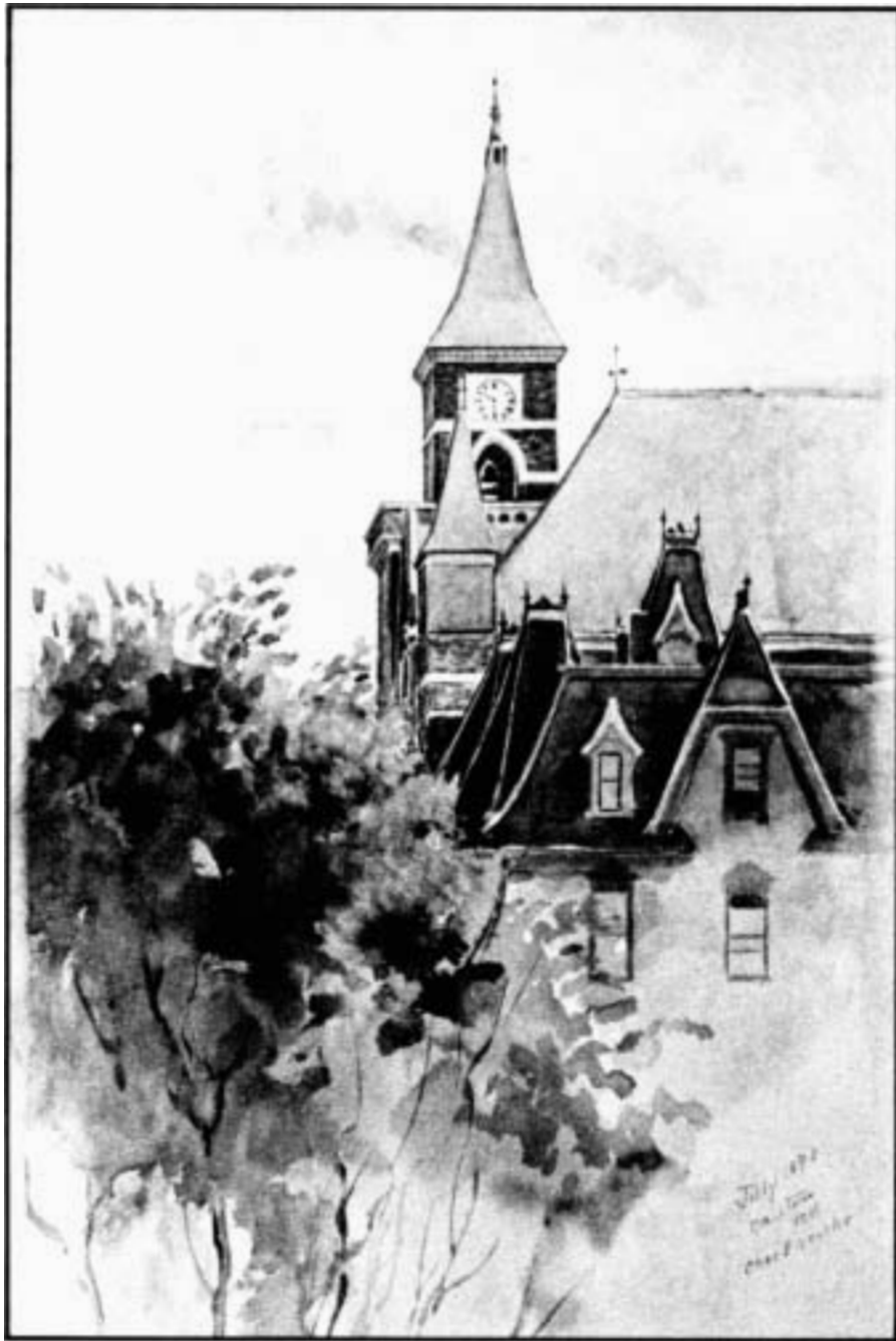


THE  
**QUARTERLY**

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

January 1981



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VOLUME XXVI

JANUARY 1981

NO. 1

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*The Quarterly* is published in January, April, July and October each year by the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

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Editor: Varick A. Chittenden

*This publication is made possible in part with public funds from  
the New York State Council on the Arts.*

**Cover:** A view in watercolor on paper of the old Canton Opera House, by Charles Ehricke, July 1893. See Part Two of the article on Ehricke in the North Country, page 13. (Photo courtesy of the Brush Art Gallery, St. Lawrence University)

"Trouble" having trouble to learn the  
Lucky Strike Theme song.



## B.A. Rolfe . . . From Brasher Falls to Broadway to Broadcasting Enroute: Circuses, Vaudeville, Motion Pictures

by Thurlow O. Cannon  
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*Master Benny Rolfe of Brasher Falls played a trombone solo for a school program at the Brasher and Stockholm school in 1887. Little did the hometown crowd then realize that someday the little boy would be known worldwide as B.A. Rolfe, composer and conductor of popular dance music, a big name in show business. Here the author explores the fascinating life story of one native son whose accomplishments in entertainment brought pleasure to millions in the new world of broadcasting on radio.*

Among the people from St. Lawrence County who went into the field of entertainment, none achieved greater success than Benjamin Albert Rolfe of Brasher Falls. His success story embraced many branches of entertainment—circuses, vaudeville, band conducting, films and radio. He reached his peak of fame when

he was nearly fifty years old. That was when B.A. Rolfe became conductor of the Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra on the National Broadcasting Company, a three-and-a-half year stint on radio from 1928 to 1931. The timing was right. Network broadcasting had begun in only 1926. In fact, B.A.'s orchestra was on the

very first network broadcast. But Rolfe also experienced the vicissitudes of the occupation which Irving Berlin emphasizes in his song, "There's No Business Like Show Business."

Benjamin Albert Rolfe was born in the village of Brasher Falls on October 24, 1879. His parents were Albert

Benjamin Rolfe and Emma Ballard Rolfe. His father, known as Ab, was, in his only child's words, "a character that could have been created only by his age. Like Micawber, he was an unrelenting optimist. Hard luck and failure were merely the overtures to great triumphs which were at all times awaiting us, and might come at any time," B.A. said in an article published in *Etude Magazine* in 1939, entitled "Tooting a Horn for Fifty Years."

Ab Rolfe was born in Fort Covington in 1851, according to a family Bible in the possession of Miss Ada Morse, B.A.'s sister-in-law, who still resides in Brasher Falls and is 86 years old. His family home is believed to be still standing in Fort Covington. The house in which young Benny lived with his parents is still in Brasher Falls.

The elder Rolfe (the name goes back to early settlers in America who moved up from Massachusetts by way of New Hampshire) was reportedly a player on a famous St. Regis Indian lacrosse team which won the world's lacrosse championship in the 1870's. He worked in a store in Hogansburg. Besides playing violin and cornet Ab was at various times a bicycle repairman, lumberman, laundry operator and a foundry-machine shop worker.

Emma H. Ballard was a native of Lawrenceville, born in 1853. She married Ab Rolfe in 1877. Hers was a musical family, too. Her father, Edwin Ballard, was a violinist—not a fiddler. She played clarinet and melodeon.

The three Rolfes moved from Brasher Falls to Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, in about 1885. Ab became foreman of the saw mill of the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company. He soon organized Rolfe's Independent Band. B.A. Rolfe recalled later in life that town bands were as important to entertainment-starved, small-town citizens as was the soldier's monument and the iron deer on the lawn of the city hall.

One of Benny's first recollections was being handed a piccolo at age six and told to play. It was a great thrill for the lad, and soon he was playing in his father's band and was known as a child prodigy. The following year he was given an alto trombone which delighted him still more. Later the cornet would become his instrument.

After two or three years with the Chippewa Falls orchestra, including playing for a roller skating rink, the Rolfes returned to Brasher Falls. A program of public speaking by primary and intermediate pupils, presented at the Brasher and Stockholm school on March 11, 1887, indicates that a trombone solo was played by Master Benny Rolfe.

He apparently got most of his schooling in the winter only, because his



*Nellie and Benny Rolfe shortly after their marriage in 1902. (Photo courtesy of Ada Morse)*

parents soon joined a circus known as Lewis and Wardrobe and travelled through Canada. At the close of the season, B.A. recalled, the family was broke but undaunted. The next expedition was with a kind of travelling vaudeville show. Young Benny was billed as a "boy wonder" cornet player.

In 1888 Ab Rolfe became bandmaster of the John H. Sparks Circus. "We were coming up in the world," B.A. would recall. The show wintered in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and moved out in the spring in eight railroad cars. B.A. would reminisce about those experiences.

"Those were the days! Many a 'Hey, Rube' fight have I witnessed from a vantage point underneath a bandwagon seat. In a mining town, for instance, the miners would appear with lamps on their hats and announce that they had no idea of paying for seats. Someone would cry 'Hey, Rube' and thereupon the circus performers automatically tied handkerchiefs on their left arms for identification purposes and started battle. They

laid hold of tent stakes which, from much hammering, were mushroomed on top and made deadly weapons. Father seemed to rejoice in these fights and earned many a black eye. The circus folks were organized, trained and armed warriors; and the townsmen had little chance with such a crew," he said.

What the circus experience did most for young Benny was to give him a chance to play an instrument. Although his parents were apparently self-taught on their instruments, Benny came under the tutelage of a Negro cornetist named Henderson Smith while with one of the travelling operations. His ambition was to become a famous cornet soloist. In later years, B.A. Rolfe hired Henderson Smith to manage one of his vaudeville acts composed of black performers. Benny also met Buffalo Bill Cody and other circus personalities in those days.

In a letter of application to some organization in 1890, father Ab Rolfe described his own position as bandmaster for the Sparks Brothers Austral-

ian Novelty Company. "My little son is playing a solo every night on cornet," he said. The letter either was never sent or it came back to him. Perhaps it landed him an important assignment.

In any event, in March of 1891 the Rolfes travelled to Europe aboard the S.S. City of New York, entertaining aboard ship and in Europe as part of the Hardie & von Leer Company. Ab was the bandmaster. Listed also are the names of a dozen St. Regis Indian entertainers who accompanied them.

A year later, on March 4, 1892, a stellar presentation took place in Crapser's Hall in Brasher Falls. The famous drama *Little Lord Fauntelroy* was offered under the auspices of Church's Orchestra. Playing the title role was Miss Nellie Morse, 12 years of age. Mrs. Emma H. Rolfe was in the cast of characters. Master Benny Rolfe was listed as an inimitable artist who would introduce specialty numbers on cornet. Master George Kennehan played Dick Tiptin the Bootblack. Others in the cast were J.H. McCarthy, F.P. Butler, Miss Katie Hurley, John R. Donovan, Will Davey, George Croak and Miss Mary Barnage. General admission was 25¢.

Some travelling work kept the Rolfes busy during the rest of the decade. Ab's orchestra, an old program reveals, played for a social ball at Memorial Hall in Lawrenceville on September 6, 1895. It is possible that cornetist Henderson Smith, Benny's tutor, was present for the engagement.

Various accounts suggest that at age 16 Benny settled down to finish high school. Instead of going to the Brasher & Stockholm High School he attended St. Joseph's Academy in Brasher Falls. Miss Mae Murray, former Brasher historian, says that the school was for many years a leader in the teaching of music, art and languages. She indicates that Benny may have chosen to attend for that reason. He would have graduated in 1899 or 1900. As the turn of the century approached, Benny felt that in order to progress, his next objective should be Broadway, "the heaven of all show interests. I was conscious of my own shortcomings and realized that everyone thought that I knew more, at the age of 21, than I actually did. Furthermore, it was clear that I needed more study and experience."

When he left home his first job was in Lowville where he took over leadership of a band on March 27, 1901. The next month he purchased the Lowville steam laundry. Newspaper reports state that Benny's parents were there and involved in the Lowville band—and most likely in the laundry too. An article on B.A. Rolfe in *Collier's* magazine for May 10, 1930, entitled "Toot Sweet," states that when Benny left his home he took with him a cornet that had on its bell "an inscription

that attested its being awarded to Benjamin Albert Rolfe for his proficiency in a contest at the county fair." (The writer of the *Collier's* article seemed more enthralled with his flip-pant writing style than in providing useful information about his subject.)

An important event took place in Benny's life in 1902. He married Nellie Morse of Brasher Falls on March 2 in their hometown. She was born in that village in 1880. She was a talented musician, playing cello and trombone, and was the same Nellie who played Little Lord Fauntelroy eleven years earlier in Crapser's Hall.

Benny got a position as teacher of brass instruments at the Utica Conservatory of Music for the 1902-03 academic year. In the catalogue he is described as



In 1913 Benjamin was beginning to show the chubbiness that would lead to stylish stout in middle age. (Photo courtesy of Ada Morse)

a musician who "commenced his studies at the age of eight under Prof. Henderson Smith. For eight years Mr. Rolfe travelled in all parts of the United States and Canada, closing with a European tour as a cornet soloist. For the past five years he has been bandmaster of several good organizations as well as being cornet soloist in the Majestic Opera House orchestra of this city."

It also states that Benny studied with the renowned teachers Henry Brown and Charles Steele of Boston. It is interesting to note that the staid conservatory did not mention that its brass teacher had been with circuses. Of his stay at the conservatory, Rolfe would later say that he discovered that one of the best ways to learn a thing was to teach it.

After the conservatory stay, which may have been for only one season, Benny and Nellie held band and vaudeville jobs in Utica, perhaps continuing operation of the laundry. A photo in the *Utica Observer Dispatch* in 1904 shows Benny and Nellie as members of Franz Bath's orchestra which played at Utica Park afternoons and evenings. The 1903 and 1904 Utica city directories listed Rolfe as a cornetist and "commercial traveller."

In 1905 they met Jesse Lasky, a successful vaudeville producer and sometime cornetist who was in partnership with his sister Blanche. Ada Morse says that Benny and Nellie were, in today's vernacular, "beautiful people" with great talent. Lasky apparently recognized Rolfe as a superior musician who would add luster to vaudeville acts. Rolfe and Lasky went into partnership.

Rolfe would recall that he and Lasky had the idea to "improve the musical acts in vaudeville, then at its height, by making these acts musically better, dressing them in smart costumes and securing handsome and efficient young women and young men to play in them. The scheme made an immense hit. We had as many as six acts a season continuously booked. The acts would bring from eight hundred to fifteen hundred dollars a week, and the profits were excellent."

In the Rolfe-Lasky organization, Benny and Nellie formed the Colonial Septet which played on a wide theatrical circuit and made at least two trips to Europe. Nellie's mother, then residing in Massachusetts, was a talented seamstress (as was Nellie), and she made the costumes for the Colonial Septet and other acts. Lasky and sister Blanche appeared in a military act.

By 1907 Lasky had new horizons in mind, one of them being the new film industry. *Variety Magazine* for June 22, 1907 used a photo of Benny on its cover. It was captioned "B.A. Rolfe—Vaudeville Producer." "B.A." seemed to be his appellation from that time forward. Inside there was a story about Lasky and Rolfe dissolving their partnership. There was also a full-page advertisement for the new Rolfe Company. Charles Maddox became Rolfe's new partner in vaudeville. On one European tour in that period, an unknown named Will Rogers reportedly appeared in one of Rolfe's productions in England, with a wild west theme.

On December 21, 1910, B.A.'s mother, Emma, wrote from Brasher Falls to her sister, Caroline Ballard Ward, that "Benny goes to the coast and will not return until some time in May. His wife has just returned from Paris (a business trip). She joins Benny this week and takes up her work again in the musical of Benny's called *The Rolfonians*. He has four acts on the road now." Ada Morse,

Nellie's sister, appeared as a dancer in one of the Rolfe acts. In the summer of 1911 B.A. led a band and produced acts at Atlantic City.

*Billboard Magazine* in 1913 reported that Lasky, who had gone into the nightclub business, was to enter films and had hired Cecil B. DeMille as general director. B.A. could see that vaudeville would be replaced by films. "In 1913 I began to look around for different fields and decided to go into the production of motion pictures." In 1914, a trade magazine reported some years later, Rolfe became managing director of the Mark Strand Theatre (in New York City) and filled this position admirably. Ada Morse has a giant loving cup presented to B.A. by Metro Pictures Corporation on the occasion of his appointment.

Rolfe left the Strand management position to become a producer of films for Metro (which later became MGM). "We produced 110 features, five to seven reels in length," Rolfe wrote in *Etude Magazine*. Another source states that B.A. Rolfe Photoplays produced more than a third of Metro's output during this period. Filming for Metro was done largely in the metropolitan New York area.

In 1918 Rolfe became an independent producer under the name of B.A. Rolfe and Columbia Pictures Corporation. Some of these films were made in California, toward which the film business had gravitated. Some of the actors appearing in Rolfe's films were the Barrymores—John, Lionel and Ethel—and the matinee idol Francis X. Bushman. Another player was the escape artist Harry Houdini, and he and Rolfe got into litigation over contractual matters. B.A.'s parents visited him once in California.

After producing 36 pictures the venture failed. "In 1920 I found myself broke. That is, all but my cornet and my ability to play it. Always, when on the rocks, I have gone back to my cornet. There was little trouble in getting engagements," Rolfe recalled.

In their years of success, B.A. and Nellie had built a beautiful home in the Gardens section of Forest Hills on Long Island. Some time during his film career they drifted into separation. They sold the home in Forest Hills. Nellie operated a dress shop in New York City for a few years and later did fashion work with Bamberger's department store. Ada Morse, who remained in show business until 1940, says that Nellie was never divorced from Rolfe. Miss Morse says that B.A. always kept strong ties to the Rolfes and the Morses despite his separation from Nellie. Nellie returned to Brasher Falls in 1930 to live with her mother. She died in 1962.

B.A. was apparently not yet ready to



*Nellie and Benny Rolfe playing with the Colonial Septet in vaudeville. (Photo courtesy of Ada Morse)*

rely on his cornet alone. In the fall of 1920 he sailed to England aboard the S.S. Olympia in an endeavor to raise funds for the production of films there in partnership with one J. Frank Brockliss. He wrote several letters to his parents while in England.

A letter dated October 20 states that "Brockliss and I are hard at work with putting over our deal." The endeavor was not successful, and B.A. came back to New York in December of 1920.

He went back into vaudeville, and the B.A. Rolfe Company appeared in "a spectacular musical extravaganza" in Brooklyn on December 12, 1921. Ada Morse performed with the group on that tour.

Rolfe continued in the familiar field of vaudeville. On May 27, 1922 he wrote to his parents in Brasher Falls from Philadelphia, saying that they "were starting rehearsals on the big show." B.A. never entirely lost his buoyant self-confidence, says Ada Morse. But in a 1923 letter to Nellie's and Ada's mother, B.A. sounded discouraged.

In the *Etude Magazine* piece Rolfe said that in the early 1920's he realized that popular music was changing. "This was largely due to the genius of Paul

Whiteman who gathered around him a group of players of astonishing ability—and also to the talent of composers and arrangers of great skill, such as Ferde Grofe and George Gershwin. Whiteman's style caught on immediately. Here was a kind of music I did not know and which must be learned."

The *Watertown Daily Times* reported on April 25, 1923, that Rolfe was in that city on his way back to New York City from Massena. He reportedly completed arrangements with Commander Harrison J. Angley of the Navy Militia to promote weekly dances at the armory during the summer, "at which a 12-piece orchestra being formed by Mr. Rolfe will play." Rolfe, the article said, was planning to establish a circuit throughout northern New York for the summer season. He would have an organization of picked musicians from New York City under his direction, and he would be the cornet soloist.

"My idea is something like that started by Paul Whiteman and Isham Jones this year," he said. "I intend to inaugurate what will be known as young folks' popular dance nights, to be held in large armories or large auditoriums where we will play. I decided to try it out

in northern New York because I have been home only a few days at a time since I left 20 years ago, and I want to be with my parents this summer.”

Beginning on May 29, 1923, Rolfe's orchestra made a tour of such communities as Ogdensburg, Massena, Saranac Lake, Alexandria Bay and Watertown. Halsey MacPhee, a native of Canton and a prominent local bandleader later when he attended and taught at St. Lawrence University, recalls that he played with the Rolfe band one time that year in Hermon. He said that all of the Rolfe musicians were not from New York City—some were from northern New York. MacPhee said recently that Mr. Rolfe was a polite and friendly man but indeed did not know much at the time about playing dance music.

It is uncertain how long the tour lasted. On September 6 of that year B.A.

wrote to his parents on the letterhead of the Catholic Summer School of America in Cliff Haven, New York—where he apparently had taught music for at least a part of the summer. He mentioned that he was trying to get in touch with Lasky again.

On March 1, 1924, a photo of the 12-piece Vincent Lopez orchestra appeared in the *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star* with B.A. Rolfe in the trumpet section. B.A. wrote to his parents the same day: “We were a sensation here. We all went to the White House yesterday where we met the President . . . you can see that I am going over very big—my old lip is coming back fast.”

A reviewer in the *Washington Daily News* declared that “B.A. Rolfe is doing unbelievable things with a trumpet” with Lopez at Keith's Theatre.

It was announced in a trade journal on

April 23, 1924 that B.A. had been engaged as producing director of the Piccadilly Theatre at Broadway and 51st Street. B.A. wrote to his parents in September of 1924 that “Lopez is good at the Piccadilly and the feature pictures good as well.”

Mother Emma wrote from Brasher Falls to her brother Edward in Saskatchewan on October 19, 1924 that “our son is in New York City managing a theatre, or at least all the musical productions, which keeps him on the hustle night and day and he works very hard and gets very few hours for rest.” B.A. wrote to his parents and admitted that the Piccadilly job was not working out well.

Emma wrote to brother Edward on October 26, 1924, saying: “Benny is the trumpet soloist with the Vincent Lopez orchestra, also manager of the Piccadilly Theatre but intends to resign (the latter position) soon . . . if you have a radio in your house or at a neighbor's, you could listen in and hear Lopez and listen for the trumpet . . . he plays very high in tone (reportedly C over high C) and is considered by the best musicians to be the best they can find. They play for broadcasting every Saturday evening (from the Hotel Pennsylvania). Their station is WEA. When the atmosphere is good one can hear all the orchestras in many cities.”

The *American Dance Band Discography* by Brian Rust indicates that Rolfe was present for a recording session for the Okeh label with Lopez on February 13, 1925. (Xavier Cugat joined as a violinist at about the same time.) When the band recorded in September of that year, B.A. is not listed among the personnel.

On October 21, 1925, the *Syracuse Evening Telegram* printed a photo of B.A., “leader of the Meadowbrook Orchestra and now playing at the Empire Theatre.” Emma wrote Edward on December 13, 1925 that B.A. was in Rochester with his orchestra at Fay's Theatre all week. “I would love to stop in and hear him. I have some of his work on records for the victrola so when I get lonesome I start the machine going and pass a few pleasant hours.” An Edison machine and some family records are now owned by Carl Goodrich of Brasher Falls, whose residence is across the road from the house in which the Rolfes lived.

On March 26, 1926, Emma Rolfe wrote brother Edward that “he is now working in Pittsburgh with his orchestra, a week in each city. Next week he goes to Rochester, then to Boston, then in to New York. He is acknowledged by fine musicians to be the world's greatest trumpeter and cornetist. Of course we feel proud of him.” Perhaps his mother didn't know it but B.A.'s “going into New York” was significant.

He had secured a fine engagement at



B.A. Rolfe in 1924 publicity photo. Although he scorned the baton during the *Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra* years, it appears in many of his photos. (Photo courtesy of Ada Morse)

the Palais D'Or, a dining and dancing spot at 48th Street and Broadway. B.A. stated that the lengthy engagement was "a great advantage because the cafe had a radio wire seven times a week and we played to millions." The orchestra also inaugurated luncheon programs broadcast locally. A writer described noon in the Palais D'Or: "The atmosphere is oriental. Dragons snort fire from tapestry-hung walls . . . the musicians are seated on a canopied platform. Just in front of the orchestra is a microphone—the link with the millions outside."

One newspaper said that "the rhythm of the Rolfe orchestra is inspiring and a real incentive to dance. There are few orchestras on the air today that rank with this orchestra."

Ada Morse says that whenever anybody from the North Country identified himself at the Palais D'Or, B.A. would come out and offer a warm greeting, perhaps pay the bill.

B.A. Rolfe was on his way in the orchestra business. Also in 1926 the newspapers ran photos of Rolfe and Thomas A. Edison signing an exclusive recording contract, one that would last until Edison withdrew from the recording business in 1929. Rolfe's first recording date was on April 29, 1926, and it produced Edison 51750—"What Good Is Good Morning?" and "Reaching For The Moon." In July Emma Rolfe sent brother Edward a pamphlet listing her son's Edison recordings, already a dozen or more. B.A. would make some 125 dance music sides for the Edison label. The first ones were with his Palais D'Or Orchestra. As with other record companies in the 1920's, those quarter-inch thick Edison 78 rpm records sometimes had different artists on each side.

"Commercial broadcasting was just coming into vogue," said B.A. about this period, and he cashed in on its opportunities. But radio needed some structuring too, as it was drifting into chaos in the mid-1920's. The novelty of receiving a distant station for the sheer thrill of the technology was fading. Program content began to become important to listeners. Historian Thomas A. DeLong stated in his 1980 book, *The Mighty Music Box*, that network broadcasting arrived just in time. "It saved radio from increasing disuse. If large scale consolidation of transmitters had not been initiated, radio might have become completely static."

In mid-1927 Radio Corporation of America purchased New York's Station WEAf for one million dollars and made it the nucleus of a large radio station chain—the National Broadcasting Company. By November, 19 stations in twelve eastern and five midwestern cities had signed on as NBC affiliates.

To bring attention to the fledgling network, NBC invited 300 guests to the

Grand Ballroom of the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel for one of the longest and most elaborate entertainment programs in radio history. On Monday, November 15, 1926, a four-and-a-half hour broadcast showcased the leading names of show business. Included were the orchestras of B.A. Rolfe, Edwin Franko Goldman, and George Olsen. Remote pickups were done of Ben Bernie and Vincent Lopez.

The *Watertown Daily Times* reported on July 9, 1928 that B.A. was visiting his father in Brasher Falls and calling on many friends in Massena. His mother died in 1928 and Ab died the next year.

B.A. Rolfe's greatest coup came later in 1928 when NBC selected him to conduct the Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra over its expanding network. This made him a national celebrity. Reams of copy were written about the rotund conductor—he, like Paul Whiteman, often flirted with 300 pounds on the scale. The loudness and breathless tempoes of his arrangements sometimes drew criticism. He was asked to describe his musical theory in an article published in a New York newspaper:

"As director of the mammoth Rolfe musical organization, I purvey music with the life and sparkle of the mountain brook, rather than the muddiness of a slowly moving river. Our huge arranging department is instructed to impart brilliance to its scores, although, always, of course, we strive for variety, rightfully believing that six courses of soup would ruin any meal. The volume and pep which flavor our broadcasting come as a result of our anxiety to season our musical offering with zeal and piquancy. Statistics prove that only an infinitesimal percentage of our auditors dance to radio music; they prefer to sit comfortably back and listen. With that fact in mind it becomes our duty to enliven our listeners, to quicken their pulses and to stir their imagination," he wrote.

For his Lucky Strike broadcasts Rolfe worked with a library of 6,000 orchestration of music composed since the turn of the century. A card bearing the history of each song's popularity was attached to each sheet in the library, noting sheet music, phonograph record and piano roll sales and general length of its life.

"This enables me to select numbers which definitely proved themselves in the past and prevents me from choosing those which I may like personally but which do not rate revival," said Rolfe.

What Rolfe did not say in the article was that American Tobacco Company's president, George Washington Hill, personally evaluated both melody and tempo. During rehearsals he insisted that NBC personnel dance to Rolfe's music. Secretaries and script girls were obliged to try out the week's selections on a makeshift dance floor.

Author DeLong states in his book that Hill would bring his aged and somewhat deaf aunt to rehearsals. She would beat the time with a pencil so the band had to play unusually loud for this lady to hear at all. If the lady's pencil stopped beating time, Hill would order the orchestra to halt, and changes were made in the arrangement.

"Hill's aunt might have been partially responsible for Rolfe's loud, fast-tempo band. But . . . B.A. Rolfe easily fitted into the mold of martial volume and peppy rhythm demanded by an attention-seeking sponsor," says DeLong.

For one 26-week period of the Lucky Strike Dance Hour, contralto Elizabeth Lennox sang with the orchestra. She recently told me that George Washington Hill did not want popular singers who had no voice training. "Hill was crazy as they come," said Miss Lennox, who resides in Connecticut. Rolfe, she said, was businesslike but always pleasant and complimentary. She and B.A. were listed among radio's outstanding luminaries for 1927-28 by the *New York Telegram*. Miss Lennox recalls that the Lucky Strike program was broadcast early in the evening and then repeated at midnight to reach west coast audiences in prime time there, a common practice in radio before taping became available.

The program began as a once-a-week event but evolved into a thrice-weekly show. Its theme was "Happy Days Are Here Again." The orchestra grew to 55 people. Rolfe assembled the best musicians available, ranging from Pietro Capodiferro, the Italian operatic trumpeter, to Phil Napoleon, pioneer jazz trumpeter who founded the Original Memphis Five. There was also Ross Gorman, star reedman who with Paul Whiteman played the clarinet passages on Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" when Whiteman introduced the work in 1924.

Rolfe's Edison records carried the identification of the Palais D'Or Orchestra or the Lucky Strike Orchestra during 1929. A few were listed as B.A. Rolfe and his Concert Orchestra. Thus, he continued playing at the Palais D'Or into 1929.

"My conception of dance music is that it should throb and laugh with happiness," said Rolfe. "It doesn't matter in the least to me whether I play a fox trot hot off the music store counter or one that is 50 years old. Laughing music is what I want—music that is an invitation to the dance. Let someone else play for college boys who boast that they refuse to dance to music that is more than six weeks old."

Rolfe would frequently hold out both hands and wiggle his fingers back and forth when being interviewed. "You see those hands, five fingers on each? Well, the hands and fingers are the most valuable thing a conductor can use. I am



surprised that so many conductors are content with the baton.”

Rolfe would double his right hand into a fist and wave it in a decisive half circle. “That one gesture means more to the musicians it is aimed at than all the air-beating with a baton could possibly mean. It is a decisive gesture, almost a violent one. The musicians immediately knows what the conductor wants—more vigor, more strength, robust finality.”

The *New York Times* on November 18, 1929, reviewed a Rolfe appearance at the famed Palace Theatre. “The played-up attraction at Variety’s First Theatre . . . is furnished by B.A. Rolfe and his Orchestra to which a cigarette company has given celebrity. Mr. Rolfe is a benign bandmaster, and his matinee audiences at the Palace liked him immensely as he led his 37 musicians among several minor classics of Broadway, including ‘Moanin’ Low,’ ‘The Wedding of the Painted Doll,’ and ‘Hallelujah’ . . . with Mr. Whiteman in Hollywood, or some

place, the Rolfe organization provides probably as sweet a concord of jazzy sounds as is obtainable at the moment.”

In 1931, after playing 7,460 dance tunes in 468 broadcasts of the Lucky Strike Dance Hour—boosting cigarette sales dramatically—B.A. Rolfe resigned. He announced that he was going to Europe to rest and study European broadcasting and music. Perhaps both Rolfe and the radio audiences had tired of his musical style. Maybe the sponsor also sensed a need for change for it replaced Rolfe with a format of three different orchestras each week, starting with Wayne King, Andy Sanella and Gus Arnheim.

The *New York Telegraph* reported on August 21, 1932 that Rolfe would be welcomed back from Europe during a special program over NBC. B.A. announced that he would introduce a new type band, one with no brass instruments which, he said, would treat music “without the blare commonly associated

with jazz.”

An NBC biography released earlier in 1932 said that Rolfe had been in Hawaii on vacation and had participated in one of the first broadcasts from Honolulu to a nation-wide NBC audience. NBC quoted Rolfe as saying that when an orchestra conductor has played as long as I have in a certain style, it is time to change stride.

B.A. broadcast under sponsorship of Ivory Soap in 1932. In February, 1933, just before banks were closed all over the nation, he went on the *Saturday Night Terraplane Party* for the Hudson Motor Company. The broadcasts lasted for a year, boosting sales for the new automobile. His Crossley rating was high. “Rolfe has established sensational sales records for both cigarettes (15¢ item) and automobiles (\$1,000 item),” said his management agency.

B.A. Rolfe remained active in radio broadcasting throughout the 1930’s and somewhat in the early 1940’s. His band



Publicity photo of B.A. Rolfe conducting. (Photo courtesy of *The New York Times*)

appeared on such programs as Ripley's *Believe It Or Not, Magazine of the Air*—a morning show—and *Circus Nights in Silvertown*.

In 1937 he visited Brasher Falls. In 1940, his sister-in-law, Ada Morse, moved to Brasher Falls to live with her mother and sister Nellie. Miss Morse managed the movie theatre there until 1955.

Sometime during his career B.A. formed a partnership with one Edna Britton. In February, 1943 he accepted the position of director of the municipal band in Long Beach, California. The Long Beach newspaper reported on March 9 that "the new conductor and Mrs. Rolfe had arrived, accompanied by 'Trouble,' the 16-year-old wire-haired fox terrier which has been their pet for many years."

B.A. said that he was "delighted to come to Long Beach—a city which is known throughout America for maintaining a good concert band." He also noted that his first visit to the city was in 1906. He had vacationed there in the summer of 1941 and was guest conductor of the band for one number during a concert. In discussing the possible Long Beach appointment Rolfe had declared that he had long wanted to locate on the West Coast and that money was not his primary object. The position paid \$5,100 a year.

Rolfe was the subject of a piece in *Time Magazine* in June of 1944. "Long Beach has the nation's finest municipal brass band—and the most expensive. For their \$86,210, Long Beachers get a repertory of good old-fashioned music. They also get the skilled elbow-waving of veteran bandmaster B.A. Rolfe, whose red face, wheezing voice and massive figure have become . . . indigenous to the Long Beach landscape."

Why, a writer for the Long Beach newspaper asked, does B.A. Rolfe face the audience instead of facing the band when he directs?

"It's a theory of mine, almost a conviction . . . I never went to a play in which the actors turned their backs on the audience. I never saw a time in which an attorney addressed the jury with his back turned to the jurors . . . I like to watch the audience, see their reaction. I can't with my back turned to them," said Rolfe.

How did he like Long Beach? "In big cities one seldom has friends—acquaintances, yes, but not friends. In Long Beach we have friends again. Mrs. Rolfe and I both love it," said B.A..

On March 6, 1945 B.A. ended a two-year stint with the orchestra. He resigned because his salary of \$425 a month was "insufficient due to wartime inflation prices and the housing shortage." He was praised for making the Long Beach band a civic asset. Previ-



Part of the large staff of arrangers for the Lucky Strike programs. Photo courtesy of Ada Morse)

ously, he had told friends that he wanted to return to New York to get in on the ground floor of television.

The *Attleboro (Mass.) Sun-Chronicle* reported on July 30, 1947 that B.A. had taken up residence in Mansfield, Mass., with plans to enter television. He predicted that the advent of television "will be the most sensational development in the history of the amusement world and three years hence radio will be regarded as a mere sound effect."

The newspaper story indicated that Mr. Rolfe expected to be deep in the business of television, either in New York or Boston by that fall or in the spring of 1948.

"Mr. Rolfe, with his wife, is residing here principally because of the difficulty in securing an apartment in New York, where he has resided 39 years but where the housing problem is most acute. The property here was willed to Mrs. Rolfe by her mother," said the *Sun-Chronicle*.

An article in the *Watertown Daily Times* on July 24, 1950 indicated that Rolfe was ready to make a comeback by entering television. He was quoted as saying that television "has been a sorry mess of showmanship." The article stated that his new show would begin that fall.

Rolfe did indeed appear as master of ceremonies for a Sunday television feature called *Community Auditions* on a Boston station. It was done in connection with Schillinger House, predecessor to the present Berklee College of Music in Boston. He organized and rehearsed an orchestra of young musicians at the school too.

B.A. also appeared on radio for three

years over Station WNAC in Boston. The program was first done in the studios but later was broadcast from his home in Mansfield and was titled *At Home with B.A. Rolfe*. It was aired on Sunday nights. B.A. wrote the show, in which he talked about events in his long career.

On April 23, 1956 a *New York Times* story from Mansfield reported that "B.A. Rolfe, orchestra leader whose bouncing dance music once enthralled radio listeners from coast to coast, died of cancer today at the age of 76."

Once recalling his youth in St. Lawrence County, B.A. said, "I was not afraid to tackle anything, and there was no one to stop me." *Time Magazine* in 1944 called him "a man of unblushing temperament who . . . frankly describes his abilities as 'brilliant'." He was quoted as stating, "I have always been one of those spectacular musicians."



#### About the Author

Thurlow Cannon, director of public relations at St. Lawrence University, writes frequently on people and events in American popular music of yesteryear. He acknowledges particularly the assistance of Miss Ada Morse of Brasher Falls in his research for this article.



*Home of Hepzibah Clark, Sr., and children James, Chauncey, Hepzibah and Rhoda, on road to Canton, near town line, after death of Samuel Clark, Sr. (From *The Clark Family* by Cyril B. Clark, 1966, courtesy of the Rare Book Room Collection, Owen D. Young Library, St. Lawrence University)*

## The Old Maids of the Stone House

*by Marion Clark Baker*

*A lovely old stone house sits on a knoll right on the Canton-Russell town line. Here the author, Marion Clark Baker, a frequent contributor to The Quarterly, recalls stories of the old family house and of two strong minded "maiden aunts," Zibie and Almy, who were left to care for the house and farm . . . and did it well.*

The stone house that stands on a hill just north of the road marking the line between the towns of Canton and Russell was built by Alvin White, who, with his wife, Betsey Clark White, migrated by oxcart from Granville, Massachusetts in 1805. Early in the same year White had been a member of a surveying party in this section of the county.

From family records and old deeds it is learned that in 1817 Alvin White paid Stephen Van Rensselaer of Albany \$156.00 for 101 acres of land, "Lot No. 5 of the 10th range." According to Hough's History of St. Lawrence County, Alvin and Betsey were living in the stone house in 1806. It appears that it was the only home on the crude road from Canton to Russell at that time.

In the spring of 1807, neighbors of Alvin White back in Granville, Samuel Clark and his entire family, followed the

Whites to St. Lawrence County. It is likely that Betsey White was a niece of Samuel Clark, possibly the daughter of Thomas Clark, one of Samuel's brothers. Samuel's party numbered 17: he and his wife, Hepzibah Jones Clark, their seven sons and three daughters, two daughters-in-law and three small children.

As time went on all but one of Samuel's sons, through the promotion of Russell Atwater, took up homesteads in the area known as Dewitt, later North Russell. One son Linus went west, that is, to Ohio. Samuel and Hepzibah had purchased land and built their home on what is now called the West Road to Russell. The eldest daughter Emmeline had married Elihu Phelps, one of the leading settlers of the village of Russell.

In the fall of 1830 Alvin White sold his property to Chauncey Clark, one of

Samuel's sons, for \$1,000.00. The old deed reads "Bounded on the north by William Perry's farm, in the town of Canton." Then his sisters, Hepzibah (jr.) and Rhoda Almira, went to live with Chauncey and James in the stone house.

In 1838 Chauncey added 50 acres to his property on the west side; one deed says it went "back to the Madrid road." This he purchased from Henry and Elizabeth Van Rensselaer of Oswegatchie for \$225.00. He continued farming until his death in 1843.

Then the two sisters were left to carry on the farm work and they did so with the help of a hired man. Chauncey died intestate. To become joint owners of the land and the home, Hepzibah and Rhoda Almira paid each one of the nine relatives \$200.00.

When their father Samuel had died in 1818 and their brother James in 1835,



*North Russell in 1911, looking north toward Canton. On the right, the church, the Clark store, and the school. On the left, opposite the church, is the cheese factory. (Photo from *The Clark Family*)*

their mother went to live with her two daughters and deeded her property to them. The deed began with the words, "In the name of God, Amen." It ended with her mark. Each daughter paid their mother \$1.00 for the deed. In addition they signed a bond binding them to pay their mother \$500.00 or "to keep the said Hephzibah Jones Clark with meat, drink, clothes and all other things convenient." An incident related by the hired man indicates that the daughters fulfilled their duty to the letter. The story was told that at one of the meals Hephzibah advised the hired man to "eat more lettuce; let Mother have the butter."

The old maids now became aware of their considerable property. They made their wills, several wills, each negating the previous one, of course. Each woman willed all her "possessions, real and personal" to the other. All bequests were identical in the will of each sister; only the signatures were different. The final will, according to family history, was found in a secret drawer of one of two similar cedar chests. In one end of each chest there was a built-in box with a lid and a false bottom. By pulling up one side of the box a small drawer was disclosed.

Hephzibah, the mother, died in 1851. From 1851 to 1870 the two old maids lived by themselves in the stone house.

The following description of their way of life was taken from the genealogy entitled *The Clarks*, compiled by the late Cyril B. Clark. It was contributed by Cyril's Aunt Flora (Mrs. Leland Clark), long deceased. She knew these women personally; they were her great aunts and she called them, as did all the relatives, Aunt Zibie and Aunt Almy.

"The phase of human character presented in the lives of these two estimable women is one seldom met. Their life was simple, honest, frugal and industrious, but with a remarkable

spirit of acquisitiveness and hoarding; it was not miserly or greed, but rather a morbid disease arising from their lonely life and absence of association with others. They were never idle; their loom and wheels must furnish each day its stipulated output and with candle light their needles were forever busy. As years advanced their hoard increased, but there was no cessation in their work; industry was their life and thrift a duty; none of the joys of life was theirs; work and save was their only happiness. And when all the land became theirs, additional burdens were added: securing the tenants, supervision against deterioration and the many details incident to the care of their large estate. The accumulation of income brought danger as well, rather than additional comfort to their secluded life. Rumors of their hoarded wealth, spread doubtless with much exaggeration, soon reached the ears of the unscrupulous, and in 1870 a robber forced an entrance to their house at night, awakened the sleeping women and, at a pistol's point, compelled delivery of such money as he knew was on the premises. His booty secured, he warned the women against an early alarm, regaled himself with such food as he could find in the pantry, and rode away. Nothing was ever heard from him afterward. Then was made the change to the small house near Edmund Clark, Jr's.

"With all their peculiarities, the absence of the universal love for fine clothes was not one of their failings. They always dressed alike and their usual work-a-day dress for winter was a red and black check wool homespun, their own spin and weave, but in their store were many gowns of silk and other fine materials with costly shawls and fineries of a lady's wardrobe. And everything was in pairs—both wore the same on all occasions. But there was one notable exception, and thereby was

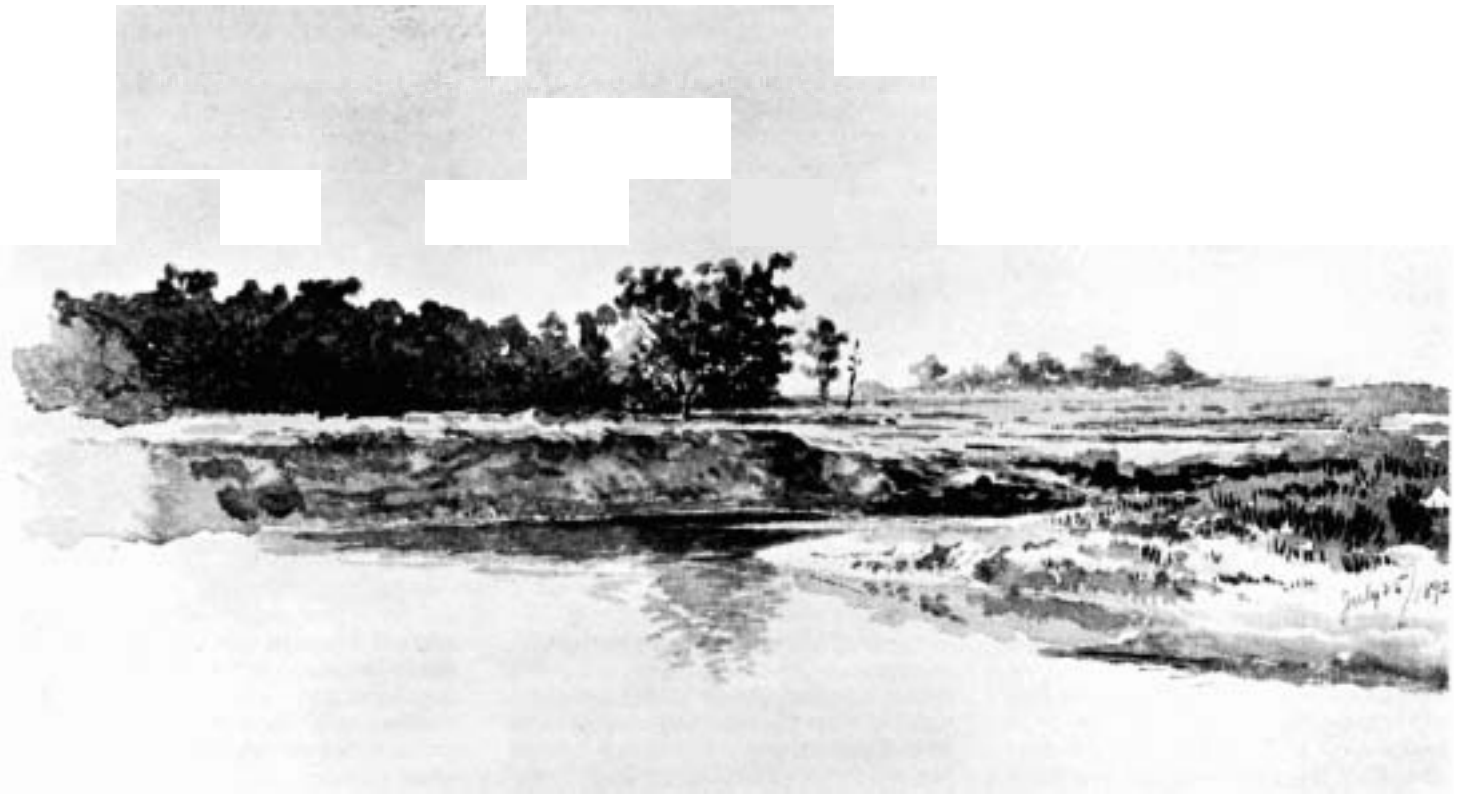
revealed a romance that had once been in the life of Hephzibah. In her younger days Gerry Knox had paid ardent court and the engagement had progressed even to providing the trousseau for the expected wedding. For some reason the wedding did not take place. Gerry Knox was later married to another. Hephzibah never broke faith with her first love. Years later, Gerry, a widower, attempted to renew his suit. Her reply was—once yes—now no. In one of the many chests in which all of their treasures were stored was found a package wrapped with more than usual care; it contained an Empire evening gown of heavy silk, low neck, short sleeves; there was only one—Aunt Hephzibah's wedding dress!

"But the supreme surprise was the revelation after the death of Rhoda Almira of the contents of the store room and chests in the "small house," and the remarkable accumulations of these two industrious women. There were 16 feather beds, 20 beautiful coverlets, 100 or more linen sheets with pillowcases for each, 108 pairs of stockings, woolen sheet blankets and much besides—every piece the work of their hands and each marked with their initials in embroidered monogram; it seems incredible, but the facts are well established and much of this treasure is still in existence and in use. Money was found concealed everywhere; in packages, in bags and among the clothing; some 42 pounds of silver coin, several pounds in gold and many packs of paper money were brought to light, and it is tradition and the belief of many that all was not discovered.

"The furniture and utensils in the house were as unique as the lives of their owners had been. There were seven brass kettles of different sizes; only two of them had never been used. A rocking chair had been fitted with a head rest of style never found elsewhere. They had a sleigh—the finest in the neighborhood—but different from all other sleighs; the body, boat-shaped, was so deep that when they rode to Brick Chapel on Sunday only their heads were visible above the high sides."

Aunt Zibie died at the age of 83, in 1874. Aunt Almy, who was eight years younger, died in 1878 at the age of 79. They were buried in the North Russell Cemetery. The epitaphs on their tombstones are still readable. Aunt Hephzibah's warns: "Behold me now as you pass by, As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be; prepare for death and follow me." Aunt Rhoda's declares gloomily: "The living know that they will die and all the dead forgotten lie; their memory and their senses gone, alike unknowing and unknown."





*The DeGrasse River, July 25, 1892, watercolor on paper.*  
(Photo courtesy of the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)

## Charles Ehricke in Northern New York—Part II

by Paul D. Schweizer

*Here is the second and concluding part of the insightful article on Charles Ehricke, the watercolorist and companion of Frederic Remington, who travelled and painted extensively in the North Country. An exhibition of selected examples from the recent gift to St. Lawrence University will be held at the Brush Art Gallery from February 20 through March 20. Part One appeared in the October 1980 Quarterly.*

During the summer of 1891 he repeated the holiday pattern he followed the previous year by establishing himself in the Haven House towards the end of July. Artistically this was a very important season for Ehricke, not only because of twenty-four watercolors that have survived from that summer suggest that he did a great deal of painting at the time. More important, the quality of the watercolors he produced at that time is consistently high. This is apparent in his view of the Canton Fair Grounds which must be one of the first works he painted in the North Country that summer. Using a compositional arrangement which is characteristic of his work at the time, Ehricke painted the buildings at the Fair Grounds in the middle distance, sandwiched in a thin horizontal strip between a foreground which he rendered in a few broad strokes of green and a sky which sug-

gests some of the spectacular cloud effects which are often seen in the North Country. While the barns in this watercolor are diminutive in scale, they are rendered with a careful attention to their three dimensionality. Ehricke achieved this effect with a subtle modulation of the watercolor washes used to describe the sides of the buildings, the various colors being divided from each other by thin white lines of unpainted paper.

During his stay at the Haven House Ehricke made a striking three-quarter length pastel portrait of Miss Cooke which, when seen in retrospect, was clearly a labor of love. Karl Ehricke has recounted that this portrait, which he now owns, was displayed on an easel in the lobby of the Haven House for a number of years after it was completed. He also owns a letter written by his mother many years after this work was com-

pleted in which she recalled that when Frederic Remington saw this portrait he exclaimed: "I'd give a good deal to be able to paint a woman as good as that".

According to the *Plaindealer* of July 29th, 1891, Remington and his wife had arrived in town several days earlier. He would have been in high spirits at this time on account of the financial success of the publication in photogravure of his sketches for the *Song of Hiawatha* as well as on account of his election that past spring as an Associate member of the prestigious National Academy of Design in New York.

The first documented contact between the twenty-nine year old Ehricke and the thirty year old Remington took place that year on the 28th of July when the two men went on a sketching trip together in the countryside around Canton. On that day Ehricke painted a watercolor which originally carried an

inscription by the artist on its cardboard mount that it was painted with Remington. Stylistically the work is somewhat unusual for Ehricke in that it features several trees in the central foreground although it is unlikely that this is due to Remington's presence with Ehricke that day. The two men must have enjoyed each other's company for there is another watercolor which he painted sometime in August at Pierre Malterner's farm on the Old DeKalb Road, south of Canton, which carries an inscription that it too was painted in company with Remington. Perhaps it was during this sketching trip that both Remington and his friend had an opportunity to feast on the "salt pork and milk gravey" which, according to Atwood Manley, Remington oftentimes enjoyed at the Malterner's farm. Indeed it may also have been during this sketching trip that the following incident, as recalled by Ehricke's future wife, took place: "Mr. Remington was quite a joker and one time the two artists went out to Malterner's Farm to sketch a prize bull. Mr. Ehricke kept on the other side of the fence but Mr. Remington got over nearer the bull who was tied to a stake. Just as Mr. Remington was all set with his easel and ready, the bull began to paw the ground, and over the fence went Mr. Remington. My husband said he never saw anyone leap a fence as quickly as Mr. Remington, who was fairly stout."

This incident would have had to have taken place before the 10th of August, for on this date Ehricke and a number of his Canton companions left for Cranberry Lake. Their departure was fastidiously noted in the *Plaindealer* the previous week: "H.B. Vail, '92, Williams College, appeared in town Monday to visit his old college mate F.S. Scribner. His home is in New York City. These two, accompanied by Messrs. Scott, Downer, Ehricke, W.B. Gunnison, W.L. Fitzgibbons and S.C. Hodge, start next Monday for recreation among the fish and game of Cranberry". Another notice in the same issue of the *Plaindealer* suggests that Ehricke was brushing up on his marksmanship in preparation for his upcoming hunting trip: "Prof. Ehricke must be a crack shot with the revolver, for on Friday he brought to earth a fine blue heron which was perched on the top of a tree near the river where he approached it with a boat."

Among the watercolors he painted while he was at Cranberry was a view of a log cabin dated August 16 which carries the inscription that it was "also painted by Remington", suggesting that these two men might have been together at this time. On the same day he also painted a handsome panoramic view of Cranberry Lake which shows a wide



*High Falls, August 30, 1892, watercolor on paper.* (Photo courtesy of the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)

expanse of water in the foreground with the Adirondacks in the distance and a dramatic sky. From a documentary point of view the most interesting work of this period is the watercolor labeled "Stony Point Camp, East Bay, Cranberry". On the cardboard mount that was originally affixed to this work he identified from left to right the five individuals which are depicted in this rustic camp scene: Bill Rasbeck, Scott, Homer Vail, Frank "Scribby" Scribner and Gage Gunnison. It is not known when this merry company broke camp, but by the 21st of September Ehricke was back in town and on this day painted a handsome view of the rear of the Haven House Hotel as it appeared across the Grass River from the southeast. Two days later he painted a view of some other buildings along the river in Canton which is the last dated work he executed that season in the North Country.

Despite the inconvenience of traveling through the Adirondacks in the middle of winter, Ehricke came up from Albany to the Haven House shortly after Christmas in order to be in town for a performance at the Opera House of the virtuoso Hungarian violinist Eduard Hoffman Remenyi who, among other distinctions, was solo violinist to Queen Victoria. On the day of his performance Ehricke had an opportunity to meet and talk with Remenyi and was able to induce him to sign his autograph book, which he did with a grand flourish. A week after Remenyi's performance the *Plaindealer* described the effect his concert had on the citizens of Canton in purple prose aptly suited for so distinguished a musician: "He compelled his hearers to rejoice or droop in sadness as his instrument sang and laughed, moaned and sobbed. They involuntarily responded to the wild passion that ever

and anon poured forth, or listened with bated breath to catch the last faint sweet sighings that seemed borne to their waiting ears by richly laden zephyrs."

Sometime shortly after this performance Ehricke returned to Albany but was back in Canton again prior to the end of June and for the next month relaxed and amused himself, in part, by sketching and painting the scenery along the Grass River. Remington, who was still smarting from his recent expulsion from Russia on the grounds that his travelling companion, Poultney Bigelow, was a German spy, arrived in Canton at the end of July to join his wife who had already been in Canton for some weeks. Three days after this he and Ehricke went sketching together along the river, at which time Ehricke produced a carefully controlled scene of the banks of the Grass. It must have also been around this time that Remington asked his friend to pose on horseback in the uniform of a U.S. Cavalryman for a pen and ink sketch which he then gave to his friend. It in turn was given by Karl Ehricke to the Brush Gallery in 1976 in memory of his mother. She recounted in a letter the details surrounding the creating of this sketch although she was mistaken in her belief that this was the first year in which Ehricke and Remington were acquainted. "I believe it was in the summer of 1892 that Frederick (sic) Remington came to Canton, N.Y. to visit his grandparents (the Sackriders). I was 18 and my mother, Mrs. Haven, was running our hotel, the Haven House. Ehricke, violinist and artist of Albany, N.Y., was staying at the hotel and while there became friends with Mr. Remington. They went sketching together and Mr. Remington wanted to make a drawing of a U.S. Cavalryman, so he found a uniform and an old horse and asked Mr. Ehricke to pose for him. He did that and

when it was finished he signed his name and presented it to Mr. Ehricke. This took place in Sackrider's yard."

Shortly after this Remington and Has Rasbeck set out from Cranberry Lake for a canoe trip down the Oswegatchie River, a journey which provided material for Remington's short story "Black Water and Shallows" which appeared in *Harper's Monthly* the following August. In this story Remington provided some insight into the attraction he felt for the rugged outdoor life, sentiments which Ehricke would no doubt have agreed with. "The person who tilts back in a chair on the veranda of a summer hotel, while he smokes cigars and gazes vacantly into space, is your only true philosopher; but he is not a sportsman. The woods and the fields and the broad roll of the ocean do not beckon him to come out among them. He detests all their sensations, and believes in nothing holy except the dinner-hour, and with his bad appetite that too is flat, stale, and unprofitable. A real sportsman, of the nature-loving type, must go tramping or paddling or riding about over the waste places of the earth, with his dinner in his pocket."

After Remington and Rasbeck arrived

at the mouth of the Oswegatchie in Ogdensburg, he returned to Canton where he and his wife remained until the latter part of August. On the 24th of the month the *Plaindealer* reported their departure for their home outside New York City: "Frederic Remington and Mrs. Remington left on Monday for their home at New Rochelle, N.Y. Mr. Remington has been preparing pictures for his abbreviated business trip while in Canton, which will embellish an illustrated article". Ehricke was still in Canton at this time. Karl Ehricke owns a watercolor that his father painted in Canton on the 4th of August. On the 30th of the month he completed a handsome watercolor of the Grass River near High Falls, which compares very favorably with an undated watercolor by Remington from around this date at Sand's Island Falls, now at the Remington Memorial in Ogdensburg, as well as with Winslow Homer's 1894 watercolor of the Judson River rapids.

In the early part of September Ehricke painted a peaceful scene which he entitled *After the Shower, Grasse River*, a fully realized composition which includes the figure of a woman sitting in a Rushton guide boat with its

characteristic vertical bow and stern stems, open deck and oars. It is impossible to assert with any certainty, but it is plausible that the woman in this boat is Miss Cooke who was shortly to matriculate as a special student in the predominately female class of thirty-two freshmen who enrolled at St. Lawrence University that fall. Ehricke returned to Albany on September 17th, a date which if he was interested, would have enabled him to see what the *Plaindealer* described as "choice gems of scenery around Canton" that H.D. Kip exhibited in Floral Hall at that year's St. Lawrence County Fair. Around this time Ehricke appears to have developed an interest in supplementing the informal art lessons that Remington would have provided for him during their sketching trips together with a regular course of study. It was with this motive in mind that he wrote to his friend at his home in New Rochelle for the name of an artist from whom he could take lessons. Remington replied on the 31st of May in a characteristic letter now owned by Karl Ehricke: "The only man who does the stunt you ask about is Wm. M. Chase—he has a school at Shinnecock Hill, Long Island. If he don't suit you he can tell you



*After the Shower, Grasse River, September 8, 1892.* (Photo courtesy of the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)

where to go. I do not know his address. It may be West 10th St. Get an old Art Catalogue. Write him. No canoeing this summer I suppose. Did you see my German soldiers—*Harper's Weekly* two weeks ago"? William M. Chase was an accomplished portraitist, landscape and genre painter and one of the leading figures in the New York art scene at the end of the nineteenth century. His art school at the eastern end of Long Island was a popular and highly successful institution for many years. The New York City address that Remington suggested was the famous Tenth Street Studio building in lower Manhattan where many of New York's leading artists maintained studios. The "German Soldiers" that Remington proudly inquired about were the illustrations he produced as a by-product of the aborted Russian trip; which were published in an article which appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on May 20, 1893 by Powhatan H. Clarke entitled "Characteristic Sketches of the German Army".

For some reason Ehrlicke did not enroll at the Chase School at Shinnecock that summer but instead travelled up to Salem, Mass. to take lessons from the watercolor painter Ross Turner, a man whose years of studying art in Germany and Italy between 1876 and 1883 would have struck a resonant chord with Ehrlicke due to his own extensive travel overseas. Among the papers owned by Karl Ehrlicke from his father is a published brochure of a watercolor class that Ross Turner planned to hold in Salem in June of 1898. This course must have been very similar to one Ehrlicke participated in during June of 1893. Students were required to arrange for their own accommodations in Salem and upon payment of \$40.00 fee were privileged to submit their work for criticism by Turner on twelve specified days during the month. Nineteenth century accounts of Turner describe him as a subtle colorist, a quality which is clearly evident in the small watercolor sketch of Baker's Island Lighthouse which he painted in Ehrlicke's autograph book on June 30th. Judging from his own view of the same lighthouse the month spent with Turner had a beneficial effect on his art, for this is certainly one of the most carefully organized and thoughtfully colored works in the entire Brush Gallery collection. He remained in Salem at least until the early part of July and then travelled to Canton where he established himself in the Haven House prior to the end of the month. From one of the upper eastern windows of this hotel he painted a fine watercolor of the picturesque prospect of the dormers, gable, mansard roof and tower of Canton's Opera House. There is a pencil sketch of this view in Ehrlicke's scrapbook from the summer of 1892, but it was not until after his

month with Turner that he attempted this scene in watercolor.

It is a little-known fact among Remington biographers that he (Remington) was briefly in Canton during the summer of 1893, and it is likely that, although everyone was anxious to go west to see the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, he and Ehrlicke saw something of each other at this time.

Despite his complaint to Ehrlicke earlier that spring that there would probably be no canoeing this summer, Remington and his wife arrived in Canton on the 1st of July and three days later set out with the Hon. and Mrs. John C. Keeler and R.H. Sackrider for Cranberry Lake. Certainly one of the purposes of this trip was to inspect part of the five thousand acres of property on Cranberry that State Assemblyman Keeler had purchased the year before in partnership with Judge Russel, Senator Lynde and David Rice in the township of

Harewood, recently made accessible by the opening of the new Adirondack and St. Lawrence Railroad which ran between Malone and Herkimer. The plan these men had to build a resort similar to the one at Blue Mountain Lake was explained in the *Plaindealer* on November 2, 1892: "These gentlemen now propose to build a large hotel at the foot of the lake, equipped with all modern conveniences, besides a number of cottages for guests adjoining the hotel. They also propose to have a plank road built from the head of the lake to the Adirondack and St. Lawrence Railroad so that the trip can be made to the lake from Herkimer via the railroad, the plank road, and the steamers on the lake in a few hours".

Remington and his wife spent less than a week at Cranberry and then returned to Canton before taking a train west to the Columbian Exposition. Ehrlicke remained in town until around



*Baker's Island Lighthouse, June 26, 1893, watercolor on paper. (Photo courtesy of the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)*





*Indianapolis, 1895, watercolor on paper. (Photo courtesy of the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)*

the 1st of August, the day he painted a scene of the countryside around Canton, which is noteworthy because it is the last North Country scene in the Brush Gallery's collection. The following day the *Plaindealer* reported his travel plans: "Prof. Ehricke is spending a short time in town. From here he goes to Chicago expecting to return via Canton". His arrival back in town was reported on the 27th of September, but it would appear that he did not spend the entire two months that he was away from the North Country exclusively in Chicago for there is a watercolor in the Brush collection which he painted on August 31st of Cooper's Falls in the Mohawk Valley.

The following spring Ehricke contemplated returning to Salem to resume his art studies. Karl Ehricke owns a letter from Ross Turner dated April 21, 1894, which implies that he would soon visit with the artist in Massachusetts, but there are no watercolors or sketches which can be positively identified with such a trip. Similarly, were it not for several notices in the *Plaindealer*, it would be hard to trace Ehricke's comings and goings in Canton in 1894 and 1895, for either he did not paint at all in the North Country, which seems unlikely, or the works he produced in Canton during these two years have been lost.

Indeed the only information we have about Ehricke's activities in Canton during the summer of 1894 was that he arrived in town by the 25th of July. In the following year the *Plaindealer* noted

that on the 17th of July Ehricke was again staying at the Haven House. A week later it announced the arrival in town of his older brother Nicholas for what probably was his first visit to Canton, suggesting that by this date Ehricke had formalized his romance with Miss Cooke, who had just graduated from St. Lawrence University.

In anticipation of this upcoming marriage, Ehricke undertook a search for a more lucrative employment. His success in this venture was noted in the *Plaindealer* on July 17th: "Charles Ehricke, of Albany, is the guest of Mr. and Mrs. J.M. Haven. Mr. Ehricke in September goes to Indianapolis, where he has accepted the position of director of the violin department in the Indianapolis College of Music. The director of this department has charge of all the stringed instruments instruction in the college". He travelled out to the West that fall and, despite the demands of his new position, found time to paint at least two scenes in the countryside, one of which is owned by Karl Ehricke and the other is in the Brush Gallery collection. During Christmas recess he returned to Canton and on the 26th of December he and Mary Cooke were married in the Presbyterian Church in a ceremony which received full coverage in the paper which had followed his comings and goings in Canton during the previous several years. Ehricke and his new wife would return to Canton in the future but his love for the girl who grew up in Canton. Although he continued to paint in parts of New England, he seems

to have never again attempted to sketch or paint those scenes along the Grass River and at Cranberry Lake that charmed him during the six years when he became friends with Frederic Remington and when he fell in love.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### About the Author

Paul D. Schweizer, with a specialization in American art history, was the director of the Brush Art Gallery at St. Lawrence University until the summer of 1980, when he became director of the Museum of Art of Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in Utica. He has previously written on Elizabeth Campbell Miner for *The Quarterly*.

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# What A Little Girl Did 100 Years Ago

by Grace Tupper Pemberton

*Mrs. Grace Pemberton was 101 years old when she died in October of 1979. Not long before she wrote this letter to a young niece who will never know the way of life of a child in the 1880's. With this, however, she (and other children), may grow to appreciate it a little better.*

April, 1979

Dear Niece Uma Tupper:

I'm the old lady your Grandpa Tupper tells you about. I was one hundred and one years old in March. It is hard for me to believe it. I am able to take care of myself, walk about the house and do some cooking. I like to listen to the radio and watch television. We did not have these machines when I was young. I like to hear the news, but it is not always cheerful. I did like to read and embroider but my eye sight is too poor to do much of that anymore. I like to sit on the porch in the summer and watch my neighbor's cows and horse. Sometimes they do funny things. I wish you lived close enough to see them. I will try to tell you what a little girl did one hundred years ago. We had very few toys and games but we did have as much fun, I think.

I had a little girlfriend. She would come to our house with her one little doll. I had one, too. Once in a while my father would make a doll for me out of corn stalks. We used to enjoy sitting on the bed where we dressed and undressed our dolls. We had few clothes for them but we tried to use some scraps of cloth left over from what Mother had used to make our clothes. After we had done that a while we would get Mother's long dresses on, take our babies and go visiting.

When summer came we loved to get some of our dishes and take them out in the old corn crib. We called this our home and made mud pies there. When our brothers liked to be mean to us they would destroy our pies.

We liked to jump rope and play I Spy. Grandpa can explain about them. I also used to like to feed the chickens and gather the eggs.

In the winter another real big time was when Father would put straw and blankets in the big sled, hitch up the



*Four of the Tupper children in 1887: Grace, Arthur, Lester and George. Photo by Mrs. J. Hitchcock of Canton, courtesy of LaVerne Tupper)*

horses and pile us kids in. We would be nice and warm and go to our Grandpa's farm for a big turkey dinner.

Our Christmas was fun, too. We would go to bed early, but before we did, we hung our stockings (which were home knit by Mother) by the big black cook stove. When Santa came down the chimney he would put one or two gifts in each. When our oldest brothers got big enough they would go to the woods and cut us a Christmas tree. While they were doing that the rest of us would be stringing popcorn to trim the tree. It was pretty.

We did not have far to go to school. We walked, but in the winter we were so bundled up it was hard getting over big snow banks. All the children in the area went to the same school. Sometimes we had many boys and girls; some of whom were young, some were old, and some in-between. There was only one teacher for all the children. We did not have many books. We took our lunch to school. We loved to raise our hands and say "Please Teacher, may I pass the water?" Our water was in a pail and we had a dipper to drink from. We all used the

same dipper and we never got sick. The boys all liked to go out and fetch the water from the well.

We also went to Sunday School. My mother and father and brothers sang in the choir. When my younger sister was old enough, she sang too. Mother played the organ and we all loved to sing. When I was old enough, I lived with an aunt in Canton so I could take music lessons.

I'm sending you a small gift. I hope you will keep it and it will be in your room when you are one hundred and one years old.

Be a good girl and our Heavenly Father will be with you all through life. I would love to see all the family. I have pictures of your brother and sister. I have one sister, like you, but I had seven brothers.

I'll be looking for a letter.

With love,  
from your great, great Aunt  
Grace Tupper Pemberton

*P.S. Be a good girl, good student, good wife, good woman, good mother and grandmother, and maybe you can get to the age of one hundred and one.*

# The Making of Potato Starch: A Forgotten Industry

by Earl Pattison

*A little known industry today was significant in northern New York from the 1850's to the early 1900's, one other way of "making do" with the products of the land. Potato starch manufacture was viable until more efficient processes were developed.*

Only a few of our older citizens remember when the making of starch from potatoes was a prominent industry in the economy of Northern New York, but from the 1850's to the early 1900's it was an important source of income and—in the Yankee tradition of "Waste not, Want not"—a significant market for small and cull potatoes.

Starch making was reported in 1855, the first census which included manufacturing statistics for New York State, to be a busy and active industry. There were 43 starch factories in the state that year, with 74 percent of them in Northern New York: 17 in Franklin County; eight in Clinton, and seven in St. Lawrence.

More detailed information from the 1865 census shows the importance of starch making in the Town of Parishville, for example. There, three men—Parker Rose, B.G. Burnap, and A.S. Lockwood—each had factories and bought a total of 12,800 bushels of potatoes and made 61 tons of starch. Parker Rose had the largest business of the three. His plant was on a stream north of the Middle Road on the farm now owned by Loren Barton. In 1864 Rose bought 8,000 bushels of potatoes at an average price of 38.7 cents per bushel. This was much higher than the average price paid in most years, 20 cents. He sold 41 tons of starch at \$140.00 a ton, a price that did not vary much. This left Rose with \$2,292 to pay his three men and all other expenses. He got about nine pounds of starch from a bushel of potatoes.

Most of the 223 families in Parishville grew potatoes, first for a substantial part of their food supply, and also for starch manufacture. One hundred fifty of these farm families each raised over 100 bushels. Rose raised 100 bushels on nine acres, Aden Campbell 1,300 bush-



*Mill building in Westville, Franklin County, used over the years as saw mill, grist mill, starch factory and now as a private residence. (Photo courtesy of C. Walter Smallman, Franklin County Historian)*

els on 13 acres, and Theodore Flagg 850 bushels on five acres. Now probably fewer than 500 bushels are raised in all the town.

Starch making required a considerable supply of water, both for the power to grind the potatoes and to wash them thoroughly. Grinding was done between large stones similar to ones used in grist mills. The pulp was moved on frames covered with bransacking. The juice seeped through the burlap into finer cotton cloth to make finer white starch. Underneath the screens, slow fires dried the starch into powder. Then it was put into bags for shipping. Potato starch was largely used in the making of paper, textiles, adhesives, and food.

Most of the factories were located in eastern St. Lawrence County, but histories describe plants in Colton, Hannawa Falls and Canton. Floyd Eakins of Hopkinton still remembers two of the factories in that area. Both of the buildings were taken down and used for other purposes, like poultry or storage. He also adds that the potatoes were not the same as those grown for the table, but were longer and bigger. Eugene Ashley of Slab City recalls picking potatoes to take to a starch factory in Franklin County, years after the early listing of a factory on early deeds on the Floyd Grant farm on the Slab City-Morley Road. A cheese factory more recently had sat on the same site. Ashley also remembers a team of *Jersey* oxen—"though miserable to handle... were faster moving for trips to Malone!"—running away with a load of potatoes and scattering them over the field.

Several factors hastened the end of starch making from potatoes in Northern New York. Fires were as frequent as in sawmills and many factories changed hands often because of fires and other uncertainties of the business. The continued growing of potatoes was said to ruin the land for other crops to grow later. And the coming of the railroad opened distant markets at better prices than starch makers could pay. The substitution of corn and wheat as raw materials for manufacture reduced the need of old. Finally, the competition from large factories in the intensive potato growing areas in Maine and Idaho hurt small operators' chances for profit.

Thus the making of starch from potatoes, like the making of potash and the tanning of leather, once important in the economy of our area, became a nearly forgotten industry of the not-too-distant past.



## About the Author

Earl Pattison is a native of Essex County and has long been associated with agriculture in St. Lawrence County. In recent years he has spent many hours researching family history and early industries.

## Letter to the Editor . . .

To the Editor:

I am writing to express my interest in the October 1980 issue of *The Quarterly*. It happens that on the cover is a picture of the village arch in Gouverneur. This was constructed by my grandfather, Edward M. Hampton. The stone came from the Extra Dark Marble Company. The company was owned by E.M. Hampton, Richard Mahon, and O.B. Fischer, 1902 to 1908. Before that he was connected to the Gouverneur Cut Stone Co. When the Extra Dark Company failed in 1908, E.M. Hampton paid off his debt anyway and established credit for future operations.

He later purchased the mill for cutting and finishing marble from the Gouver-

neur Marble Co. He also had a coal business and owned the Crystal Ice company in Gouverneur.

Mr. Edward M. Hampton was born in Scotland where he learned his trade as a stone cutter. (This took seven years work and study before he could be called a stone cutter.) He came to the USA in 1893, getting his first job helping on the Presbyterian Church. He did most of the work on the tower.

Later he both supplied the stone and did the construction of many buildings—I believe one in Chicago, the Times Building in Buffalo, and a couple of churches in Rochester and Syracuse. A school in Utica is faced with Gouverneur marble.

He had five children: Agnes—Mrs. Leon Reed, George—later in partnership with his father, Isabella—Mrs. Benjamin Bresee (my mother), Christina—Mrs. Leon Force, William—a lawyer in Utica, also State Senator for four terms. My father, Benjamin Bresee, worked for Grandfather in the 1920's as a polisher and sand-blaster.

Of the many grandchildren only two are left in this area, Edward F. Reed of Gouverneur and myself. Only one followed in the trade, Donald Hampton (in Pittsford, N.Y., near Rochester) who runs a monument shop.

As a boy in the '20's I visited most of the sites mentioned in Alan Tuttle's article. I remember the site of New York Marble which was still a building then. Also the Rylestone Company, which took its marble out of a side hill instead of a pit. Most of the machinery, steam-engine boiler, gang saws, etc., were still there but I now believe it was all sold for scrap during World War II. Thank you for a fine magazine.

Willard E. Bresee  
51 Barnes Street  
Gouverneur, N.Y.



. . . *With Your Help*

## MADE IN ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY

Plans are now underway for a major exhibition, tentatively entitled "Made in St. Lawrence County," to be held in the spring and summer of 1981. Being developed in cooperation with the St. Lawrence County local historians, the exhibition will focus on those manufacturing companies and items produced for resale in St. Lawrence County between 1800 and c. 1915. Such items as cheeseboxes, furniture, woolen cloth, stoves, potato starch, etc. We would appreciate any information you may have on such companies, present locations of such products, and related photographs and documents.

PLEASE CALL THE ASSOCIATION AT 386-2780 OR WRITE:  
SLCHA, P.O. BOX 8, CANTON, NEW YORK 13617



## The Wright Corner

*by Mary Ruth Beaman*

Silas Wright, in a political campaign speech in Potsdam around 1844, slipped out of line with his party's principles when he advocated protection on wool. This was probably because he was brought up in Vermont where they raised a good deal of it. He was called an "Incidental Protectionist". (*Courier Freeman*, 1916)

The state officers declared George Fisher, Esq. of Oswego, elected to Congress over Mr. Wright by 7 votes. Then it was found that 42 votes in Edwards had omitted "Junior" after Wright. Eventually Mr. Wright was given the election. (29 Jan. 1828, *Advertiser and Republican*, S.L.U. library) That type of technicality still occurs today, does it not?

The cost of publications and other operating expenses of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association are partially subsidized by this advertising support.

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If your corporation or institution would like to support Association work, a representative will gladly discuss details with you.

## Annual Reports of the SLCHA

### The President's Remarks

Once again it is my privilege as President of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association to chair the annual meeting of our membership and to offer brief remarks. I am pleased to be able to report that our association is stronger in many ways than it was in 1979. It continues to gain in stature within St. Lawrence County and New York State. There are many reasons for this increased visibility. Our current membership of 1,037 people is the highest in the thirty-three years of our existence. We have every right to expect gradual increases each year as interest in our total museum program grows.

We are blessed with one of the finest and most energetic museum directors in the country, John Baule. John's work in preparing six major exhibits in the Silas Wright House and conducting two successful tours during 1979-80 have led to expanded exposure of the work undertaken by the Association. The fact that we are reaching out to a broader constituency with historical programs as best we can, given financial constraints, attests to our vitality and desire. Our traveling

exhibits and developing educational relationships with local school districts have provided new avenues for sharing regional history with the youth of the North Country. The essay contest sponsored in 1979-80 was another productive experiment in encouraging those interested in historical research to write about local history.

The seminar programs, co-sponsored with the Potsdam Museum, have added another dimension to our programming. The *Quarterly* remains one of the best publications of its type and we no longer lack for material to present. The magazine is a critical link between the Association and its membership. Our regular newsletters do a fine job of keeping members posted on what is happening. Our cookbook and Victorian Dinner fundraising projects were creative and of valuable financial assistance.

We have no intention of standing still. On November 2, the Board of Trustees will hold a work session to discuss operating procedures, programs, exhibits and proposed capital expansion plans. The timing for this self-assessment is right as we seek to shape a path for the future. We look forward to these discussions and

the suggestions which will emerge from them.

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association continues to derive its strength from volunteerism. A dedicated group of trustees and officers gives much time and energy to maintain and improve our Association. Each trustee has my heartfelt thanks. Allan Newell, Betty Worsh and Mary Jane Watson who serve as Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, deserve special recognition. Vivienne Conjura continues our fine tradition of an able in-residence secretary and assistant to John Baule.

In closing I would like to express my appreciation to St. Lawrence County, the Village of Canton, and all the foundations and individuals who have generously assisted the work of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association through their contributions. We need the continued support of everyone interested in our work and projects. The Association is anxious to receive more acquisitions for its collection and as part of Wright Home restoration. With your help, we can increase our membership and other bases of support. We shall continue to work to make the St. Lawrence County Historical Association one of the best of its kind. With the help of all our members, we can succeed.

*Allen P. Splete*  
President



Winners of the writing competition—front, left to right: Peter Vrooman, Alan Tuttle, Nadene Tuymen; rear, left to right: Margaret Carvel, John Van de Water, President Allen Splete, Editor Varick Chittenden. Absent from the picture: Alice Gorham, Virginia McLaughlin.



### Board of Trustees Committees

*Collection Management & Acquisitions*  
Dwight Mayne, Chairman; Edward Blankman, Richard Buckley, Elizabeth Knap.

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*Membership*  
Allen Newell, Chairman; Donald Blount, Beverly Markkula, Nicholas Viskovich, Betty Worsh.

*Publications*  
Joan Kepes, Chairman; Kelsie Harder, Paul Jamieson, Varick Chittenden.

*Special Events*  
Judy Gibson, Chairman; DeeAnn Martin, Doris Wheaton, Anne Piskor.

## Report of the Director

As the season of Christmas approaches—indeed, has arrived—the activities of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association have ground to a very temporary crawl, and it is a logical time to take a breath and reflect upon what has happened to your organization in the past year. It has been my privilege to make his annual report to our membership and the public since 1976, and I hope you will bear with me another year as I attempt to summarize our successes and failures during 1980.

Overall, the health of the organization continues to improve. With the many generous gifts of time, money, services, and simply words of encouragement; the traditional activities of the Association have proceeded. *The Quarterly*, under the tireless editorial services of Varick Chittenden, is certainly one of the best local historical journals that I have seen, and there is no question that it is one of our most important programs. Successful summer tours to Corning, the Genesee Country Village, and private homes in the 1000 Islands have kept alive the summer tour tradition, and the near-perfect weather proved that we had a friend in high places. The winter lecture series, in cooperation with the Potsdam Public Museum, presented several fine local history topics; and the year has recently ended in the flurry of the ever-popular Christmas candlelight receptions, workshops, and programs.

Naturally, considering the financial and energy commitments required to keep the doors open and the wolf from those doors, the Silas Wright House and Museum is now the cornerstone of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, and all Association activities are headquartered in the structure. During the past twelve months a considerable number of improvements have occurred to make Silas' domicile more appropriate to the 1840's and usable in the 1980's.

The major project, finally completed in July, was the complete restoration of the wood shingle roof, but some energy conservation measures were also taken, the collection storage area was upgraded, and the front of the house was repainted. The museum function itself was aided and promoted with a number of gifts of local historical artifacts, such as a section of ingrain carpeting and Silas Wright's Empire sofa. Also, exhibits of glass loaned by local residents, work produced by 19th century country artists, and 19th century chairs were mounted on the second floor to augment the permanent period rooms on the main level.

Special Association events during 1980 were highlighted by the mid-Victorian fund-raising dinner held in early May. This lavish affair, the result of countless volunteer hours of labor, certainly must be one of the most unusual and enjoyable activities ever sponsored by our group. We can only anxiously await the next terrific idea of the special events committee.

One of the most significant and long-lasting accomplishments of 1980, however, does not have quite so much razzle dazzle. I am referring to the preparation and adoption of new operating procedures and long-range plans by the Board of Trustees. Prompted by the now-in-progress search for accreditation by the American Association of Museums, the Trustees have spent a considerable amount of time reviewing all aspects of our organization and planning for the future. As a result, progressive policies in collection management, personnel, and long-range planning were adopted on December 4, 1980, so that the Association will be better able to preserve and promote our local history. We now have concrete goals and a better assessment of our needs that will be vital to planning daily programming and the ever-present quest for funds. This work has already "paid off" in the sense that the New York



*A case of selected pieces of glass from collections in the County at the temporary loan exhibition.*

State Council on the Arts recently granted the Association funds to upgrade the artifact records and storage areas to the professional museum standards outlined on our new policies.

So 1980 has seen some good things happen and, if you'll pardon another cliché, the stage is set for stable future growth. However, the Association still must face a variety of challenges that need solid thinking, compromise, sacrifice, and all the other euphemisms for plain drudgery. While these problems have many manifestations, I feel that there are several key areas that, in the words of the real estate advertisements, "need work." The Association needs to do a much better job in publicizing local history and educating the public about its heritage. Certainly, this is one of the primary goals of any local historical society and we certainly do as well as many others since we publish *The Quarterly* and use the Wright House as much as possible. However, we need to bring more people into the Wright House AND get our messages across throughout the county to those people not able to visit Silas' and Clarissa's dream house. To this end, we have joined with the Potsdam Public Museum and received support from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Edward John Noble Foundation to begin developing the "Traveling Shows" series of portable exhibits. Early in 1981, John Sholl, our excellent "Traveling Shows" coordinator, will begin visiting schools throughout the county to see how the Association can help the teaching of local history; but obviously, more is needed—including the installation of a permanent exhibition on the history and development of St. Lawrence County in the county museum in the Wright House. This latter approach is stymied by a chronic shortage of space that only an expensive new facility will provide,



*Workmen restoring cedar shingle roof on Silas Wright House.*

but some type of solution to the problem must be addressed in the coming decade.

I would also like to put in my yearly reminder that the Association must constantly consider its long-term operating income. One of the things that this organization must continue to take pride in is its broad base of generous community and member support, but inflation is no fun for anyone and least of all to the non-profit cultural institution. I am confident that we will survive—in fact, despite the gloomy economic news around us, the Association may well come very close to a balanced budget this year for the first time ever—but we must be ever vigilant about the financial health of an organization with no endowment funds for emergencies or to help cushion inflationary impacts.

But enough of gloom and doom, for I do not want to leave you with the impression that you are part of a second rate organization. On the contrary, the St. Lawrence County Historical Association is definitely headed in the right direction toward becoming one of the strongest county historical societies in the business. The credit for this happy state of affairs is largely due to the tremendous support of our members and the community; as well as staff members Vivienne Conjura and Jack Sholl and the Office of the County Historian. Also, the Board of Trustees, led by Allen Splete, has worked as a unit for the good of the organization rather than for particular interests; and I cannot commend their efforts highly enough. I am looking forward to 1981 and hope you will continue to forward your comments and suggestions to help make the St. Lawrence County Historical Association even stronger.

John A. Baule  
Director



### Board of Trustees

President ..... Allen Splete  
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**Term Expires 1982:**

Edward Blankman, Richard Buckley, Elizabeth Knap, Beverly Markkula, Dwight Mayne.

**Term Expires 1983:**

Varick Chittenden, Paul Faust, Kelsie Harder, Ralph Perkins, Nicholas Vis-kovich.

### BALANCE SHEET December 31, 1980

Assets	Total	Operating	Capital
<i>Current Assets:</i>			
Cash in Bank.....	\$ 2,381.06	\$2,349.00	\$ 32.06
Inventory .....	1,000.00	1,000.00	0
Total Current Assets .....	\$ 3,381.06	\$3,349.00	\$ 32.06
<i>Fixed Assets:</i>			
Silas Wright House and Museum ...	194,199.30	0	194,199.30
<i>Investments:</i> .....	625.00	625.00	0
Total .....	<u>\$198,205.36</u>	<u>\$3,974.00</u>	<u>\$194,231.36</u>
<i>Liabilities:</i>			
Accrued and Withheld			
Payroll Taxes .....	\$ 653.02	\$ 653.02	
Advance Payable on			
Old Hollywood .....	500.00	500.00	
Architectural Fees Payable .....	4,650.00	0	4,650.00
Mortgage Payable .....	23,121.63	0	23,121.63
Total Liabilities .....	\$ 28,924.65	\$1,153.02	\$ 27,771.63
<i>Restricted Funds</i> E.J. Noble Grant ...	5,000.00	5,000.00	0
<i>Equity</i> .....	164,280.71	(2,179.02)	166,459.73
Total .....	<u>\$198,205.36</u>	<u>\$3,974.00</u>	<u>\$194,231.36</u>

### STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSE FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1980

	1981 Budget	1980 Budget	Total	Operating	Capital
<i>Income:</i>					
St. Lawrence Co. ...	\$11,000.00	\$11,000.00	\$ 11,000.00	\$11,000.00	\$
NYS Coun. Arts ...	4,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	
Dues .....	15,000.00	12,500.00	13,727.59	13,727.59	
Gifts .....	2,100.00	1,000.00	5,198.22	2,648.22	2,550.00
Interest .....	700.00	300.00	584.07	513.31	70.76
Village of Canton ..	5,000.00	5,000.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	
Admissions .....	300.00	250.00	247.50	247.50	
Fund Raising .....	2,500.00	3,000.00	1,273.13	1,273.13	
Cookbook (Net) ...	2,500.00	6,000.00	4,659.56	4,659.56	
Miscellaneous .....	250.00	600.00	737.14	737.14	
Rental .....	2,000.00	1,800.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	
Self-Sustaining ....	500.00	500.00	(1,124.98)	(1,124.98)	
Loss/Securities ....			(237.15)	(237.15)	
IMS Grant .....	2,650.00	0	0	0	
Total Income .....	<u>\$48,500.00</u>	<u>\$46,950.00</u>	<u>\$ 44,765.08</u>	<u>\$42,144.32</u>	<u>\$ 2,620.76</u>
<i>Expense:</i>					
Salary/Director ...	\$14,000.00	\$12,700.00	\$ 12,653.80	\$12,653.80	\$
Salary/Secretary ..	6,200.00	5,700.00	5,682.67	5,682.67	
Fringe Benefits....	600.00	600.00	536.98	536.98	
Payroll Taxes .....	1,700.00	1,800.00	1,412.73	1,412.73	
Supplies/Postage ..	2,000.00	1,800.00	1,762.68	1,762.68	
Water & Sewer ....	100.00	150.00	90.39	90.39	
Heat .....	4,000.00	4,000.00	3,586.71	3,586.71	
Electric .....	1,300.00	1,000.00	1,369.25	1,369.25	
Telephone .....	800.00	1,000.00	705.95	705.95	
Insurance .....	1,400.00	1,400.00	1,401.00	1,401.00	
Interest .....	1,700.00	1,800.00	1,889.24	1,889.24	
Snow Removal.....	200.00	300.00	25.00	25.00	
Repairs, etc. ....	1,200.00	1,500.00	2,279.29	2,279.29	
Publications .....	4,000.00	4,000.00	2,500.98	2,500.98	
Printing .....	1,300.00	1,300.00	1,422.61	1,422.61	
Exhibits and					
Programs .....	2,000.00	2,000.00	1,858.67	1,858.67	
Subscriptions.....	300.00	300.00	354.01	354.01	
Conservation .....	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,111.59	1,111.59	
Travel/Meetings...	500.00	500.00	467.50	467.50	
Miscellaneous & Accreditation....	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,193.87	1,193.87	
Total Expense .....			<u>\$ 42,304.92</u>	<u>\$42,304.92</u>	<u>0</u>
Net Income.....			<u>\$ 2,460.16</u>	<u>\$ (160.60)</u>	<u>\$ 2,620.76</u>
Equity—					
Beginning.....			161,820.55	4,808.96	157,011.59
Transfers .....	3,200.00	3,100.00	0	(6,827.38)	6,827.38
Equity—Ending ...	<u>\$48,500.00</u>	<u>\$46,950.00</u>	<u>\$164,280.71</u>	<u>\$(2,179.02)</u>	<u>\$166,459.73</u>

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and the Potsdam Public Museum**

*This program is made possible in part with public funds from the New York State  
Council on the Arts and with the support of the Edward John Noble Foundation*