

THE QUARTERLY

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

April 1982



A Tribute to Mary H. Smallman

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Editor: Varick A. Chittenden

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the New York State Council on the Arts.*

This issue of *The Quarterly* is dedicated to the many years of exemplary service to county and town history study and to the work of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association by Mary H. Smallman.

Cover: Mary H. Smallman helping local history researchers at the History Center Archives. (Photo by Jeanine Anderson, courtesy of *St. Lawrence Plaindealer*)



Mary H. Smallman researching in the History Center's family history records. (Photo by Jeanine Anderson, courtesy of St. Lawrence Plaindealer)

Thanks to Mary—

A Tribute to the Dedication and Work of a Local Historian

For eighteen years Mary Smallman served St. Lawrence County as an official historian until her name became synonymous with the study of our county's heritage. Upon her recent leaving office, the Association takes note of the years of dedicated, energetic work and takes this opportunity to thank her. We wish to offer this issue of The Quarterly as a permanent tribute to her and her service. Here are excerpts from letters from a few of her friends.

Mary Smallman deserves the special thanks of all of us for helping to build and sustain an interest in St. Lawrence County history. Her efforts, whether in helpful searches to trace family roots or in supplying information for local historical research, did much to encourage citizens to explore their past. Mary rendered long and faithful service as historian, *Quarterly* editor, and as an Association officer. I offer my personal appreciation and that of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association for her outstanding contributions. There could be no more fitting tribute for Mary than an issue of *The Quarterly*

dedicated in her honor. We know that the April 1982 issue will remind her of the many friendships developed over the years and inevitable anecdotes which were a part of them.

Allen P. Splete
President

St. Lawrence County Historical Association



Former St. Lawrence County Historian Mary Smallman's versatile treatment of the county's past, its peoples,

and records for almost two decades has been a big tourist attraction. She led, with others, in the creation of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, chartered in 1955, following its organization in 1947, and incorporation in 1962. For nine years she was editor of the association's magazine, *The Quarterly*, and served as a trustee/officer of the association for a number of years. She filled many needs among the county's city, towns, and villages. In 1968, Mary was program chairman of a year-long observance of the City of Ogdensburg's centennial. In the 1970s, she was a forceful lobbyist/worker in

the campaign to acquire and develop the property which is now the Silas Wright Home and Museum. In that decade, she wrote a column of comment on local history of the county for the *Ogdensburg Advance-News*, the *St. Lawrence Plaindealer*, and the *Rural News*. A member of the New York State Bicentennial Commission, she worked tirelessly for local celebrations of the United States' 200th anniversary of its independence.

Elizabeth Baxter
Ogdensburg City Historian



In 1977 when North Country Community College indicated it would be interested in some programming of local and regional interest, I turned to the one person in the North Country who could offer the critical perspective of practical experience, the broad range of acquaintanceship with North Country scholars and scholarship and the courageous honesty to state things as they appeared. I turned to Mary Smallman for advice and support. As a member of the Center's advisory board since its inception Mary has given of herself so that it is fair to say that North Country Community College's Center for Humanities and Adirondack Studies owes a great debt to Mary Smallman.

Murray Heller, *Director,*
Center for Adirondack Studies
Saranac Lake, N. Y.



Mary Smallman is undoubtedly the most well-known County Historian in New York State. Since the middle 1960's it has been my privilege to know and work with her. At that time she was one of a small group who provided the impetus and leadership to unite County Historians into a state-wide organization.

In recognition of her leadership qualities and her enthusiasm she was made the first president of this organization. In this capacity she also laid the groundwork for a periodic newsletter and worked tirelessly as its editor for several years.

Mary displays an uncanny grasp of the many facets of researching, collecting, preserving and disseminating local history, which is highly respected among her peers.

As her colleagues we have learned that she can always be counted on for fresh ideas tempered by good judgment.

Dorothy S. Facer



Mary Biondi (Smallman), center, presenting silver bowl to Nina Smithers, at Mrs. Smithers' retirement as County Historian after 15 years of service, April 1965. (L to R): Edward H. Heim, Canton town historian and president of SLCHA; Smithers; Biondi; Dr. William G. Tyrrell, historian of the Division of Archives and History of the State Education Department; Cecil H. Graham, toastmaster. (Photo courtesy of History Center Archives)

My first knowledge of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association resulted from my meeting Mrs. Mary Biondi. I had written "blind" letters to town historians to find the origin of the town names and other community names. Instead of answers, I met Mary, who let me know in rather certain terms that any information I needed about St. Lawrence County should be addressed to her.

She was right. She knew more about the county than anyone else—in or out of St. Lawrence County. She had mastered the knowledge of its history and could use this information in all the areas of her work, very practical work, as county historian, editor of *The Quarterly*, archivist, executive director, researcher, and advisor. In her many-faceted position, she was indeed Mrs. St. Lawrence County. She was the St. Lawrence County Historical Association for many years.

Whatever I have contributed to the work of the SLCHA resulted directly from Mary's persuasive efforts. She was always helpful, enthusiastic, hard-working, and exacting. It was impossible not to try to emulate her when working with her. She had a knack for stimulating interest in the county's history and culture. I doubt that anyone again will ever contribute so much to such responsible work.

Kelsie B. Harder
Trustee and Past President, SLCHA

If I may, I would like to add a word of appreciation to those of the others for Mary Smallman and her work as historian.

I have known Mary Smallman for several years. Our acquaintance began when I as a fledgling historian attended my first meeting of the State Assoc. of Co. Historians. I was awed by her experience and reputation but even more delighted by her friendliness and charm. Through the years that I have known her, my appreciation of her as a historian and a friend has grown.

John G. Wilson
Wyoming County Historian



To say that St. Lawrence County is indebted to Mary Smallman for her dedication and painstaking guardianship is to belabor the obvious. The Fates were kind in producing her when the position begged for the likes of Mary. My claim to distinction, if I have any at all, is being Mary's predecessor as historian of the town of Hermon. I shudder to think of the mess that greeted her when she took over *that* assignment. I am serene, however, in the knowledge that by now she has restored order and that the job, once more, is in the right hands.

Walter B. Gunnison
Sacramento, California



Cover photo of October 1965 Quarterly. Mary Biondi (Smallman), county historian, at desk of SLCHA exhibit at 1965 county fair at Gouverneur. Mr. and Mrs. Harold Storie were the "students". (Photo courtesy of History Center Archives)

I first met Mary Smallman, then Mary Biondi, in the spring of 1976. I was finishing graduate work and applying for the then-vacant position as Director of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association. Mary, who was recovering from eye surgery, made a special trip to her office to meet and acquaint me with the office of St. Lawrence County Historian. Her effort was appreciated, for I was pleased to meet the person whose name was often coupled with St. Lawrence County history. At that time and since, I have remained impressed with her encyclopedic knowledge of our county's past and its people. As successor in the post of county historian, it will be many years before I can hope to have a similar grasp. Her efforts over the years, however, have helped many people research valuable information

in the historian's archives just as her cooperation with me made my first years as director of the Association relatively free from major historical blunders. May Mary and Walt enjoy their retirement.

John A. Baule
Director, SLCHA; County Historian



Mary Smallman has been my "research Mom" for more than a dozen summers while I've worked in her office. She long ago placed me in awe of her talents and nearly inexhaustible energy. But of all the qualities of this unusual lady I must pay special respect to her "magnetic personality." She attracts historians and genealogists very literally. It works like this.

I open the office on a Wednesday at

9:00 a.m. Wednesday is a day Mary normally doesn't come into the office. It's a very quiet morning. I work at a project and see no one. At 11:30 a.m. Mary arrives, very unexpectedly. She reaches the top step of the winding stairway, and the phone rings for the second time so far today. (The first call was from Mary herself, checking to see if all was well.) Because the phone is opposite the top step, Mary answers it.

While she speaks, footsteps on the stairs again. Two people arrive, needing help with research. I try to aid them. Two more appear, as if by magic. They wait for Mary to finish the phone call and then she is working with them on a research problem. One lone researcher arrives. Then another. Soon the later comers are looking around for empty chairs! It's suddenly after 2:00 p.m., and Mary takes a Cup-o-Soup

break. It's uncanny!

I've seen this scene again and again. Mary didn't know she was going to visit the office this day. How do these people know?

There has to be someone with great magnetism in Mary Smallman's family tree.

Van Hoyt

Former Deputy St. Lawrence Co. Historian



My earliest recollection of Mary is the contrast I noted between her and Nina Smithers at the time Nina arrived as county historian and Mary succeeded her.

Where Nina had been gentle, Mary was brisk. This is not to imply that one trait is preferable to another. Both women performed notable services for the county and the historical association.

Nina organized, clipped, filed, and advised in the organization's early years. As Mary became historian in 1964, she continued all this. Her briskness encouraged the town historians to remain effective, just as Nina's gentleness had enlisted their support at the outset of the historical society's organization.

This is no place for listing early trustees and presidents and so on. But, since Mary added editorship of *The Quarterly* to her job in 1966 (Nina Smithers had never taken this on), the predecessors who handed over to her an excellent journal may be named. They are Atwood Manley and Mason Rossiter Smith. Mary kept the publication up to excellence throughout nine years, October 1966 through July 1975.

Mary extended the work and interests of the association to other counties of New York State. She wrote pieces of her own as well as edited other persons' writing. Accounts of St. Lawrence County supervisors, biographical items gleaned from genealogical research, summations appearing on North Country historical markers—all this she did, and much more.

A little-known part of her job was helping to enlist capable persons as officers of the association. In this context as well as the others mentioned here, she was for close to twenty years a pivot upon which the county historical society moved and survived and, indeed, flourished.

She deserves all the recognition which this issue of *The Quarterly* accords her, and much more. A brisk and stalwart person, she did exactly the kind of job one would expect—brisk and stalwart . . . and, in the framework of North Country history, enduring.

Edward J. Blankman

Trustee and Past President, SLCHA



Mary Smallman receiving her Empire State College diploma for a bachelor's degree from mentor Sr. Celeste Williams, March 1979. (Photo courtesy of Walter C. Smallman)

Having had the pleasure of working with Mary for a number of years I have recognized certain characteristics possessed by her which, to me, are outstanding. Her great enthusiasm, especially noticeable in our field of responsibilities as historians, is always present and contagious. Also, her sense of humor is an enviable quality. It would be difficult for a County Historian to be successful, as Mary has been, without this quality.

Elizabeth L. Crocker

Chautauqua County Historian



My acquaintance with Mary goes back to 1968 when she was instrumental in reorganizing the New York State County Historians Association. She was our first president and I shall never forget the patience and forbearance she exhibited during the struggle to compose a set of by-laws. She also acted as editor of the organization's newsletter CHAT, whose name was her idea, and she did a great job though contributions from members were scarce at times.

I consider Mary one of the ablest county historians in the state and always came home from CHA meetings inspired with ideas she suggested. There is no doubt that St. Lawrence County, New York State and the association of County Historians will be losers when Mary leaves the depart-

ment of history. Her talent, ability and enthusiasm will be sorely missed.

Cary Lattin

Former Orleans County Historian



I first met Mary at Cooperstown back in 1966 when we both had signed up for a course in wood-carving at the summer seminars. We had great fun chipping away at our pieces of wood making first a bird, then a whale. On graduation day we planned a skit to surprise our instructor, Jarvis Boone. We arrived to show off our "art" work with bloody (red-stained) bandages on our hands and heads! That sure brought down the house!

Shirley L. Woodward

Broome County Historian



Mary and I have been close friends for only a few years but in that time we have shared joys and sorrows. Together we have been awed by the beauty of wild flowers and birds. We have agreed on many things, violently and loudly disagreed on others, yet remained friends. She has taught me much about methods and sources of genealogical research. The extent of her knowledge of the history of St. Lawrence County never ceases to amaze me.

Mary Ruth Beaman



The sawmill and shingle mill of the E.E. and C.C. Green Company which was constructed in 1894. The mill had an up-and-down (vertical) saw powered by water. This building burned in 1913. (Photo courtesy of the author)

The Green Sawmill of Sanfordville

Five Generations Old and Looking Ahead

by Mildred Jenkins

A family business is rare enough these days especially one which has lasted into the fifth generation through five disastrous fires and other major changes. Stockholm Town Historian Mildred Jenkins relates the fascinating saga of a sawmill operation which has lasted and plans to last some more.

The little hamlet of Sanfordville, located in the Town of Stockholm, St. Lawrence County, N.Y., has a claim to fame, as it is here that the E.E. and C.C. Green Sawmill was first founded in the early 1800's.

Lumber production seems to run in the families of the descendants of the late Ira Green, as John and Sondra (Sullivan) Castle are the 5th generation

to own and operate this lumber mill, now known as the E.E. and C.C. Green Lumber Corporation, which has been in existence for more than one and one half centuries.

In spite of the mill burning five times, throughout the years, it has been the determination of the family, each time, to re-build and carry on.

The first mill was started by Drullus

Ellis and Levi Wellington, on the bank of the West Branch of the St. Regis River, which flows through this St. Lawrence County hamlet of Sanfordville.

In this original mill, in the 1890's, cider was made each fall in the upstairs part of that mill. The men would pull barrels of apples up to the door which were pulled upstairs by pulleys which

are shown in the original picture. Also, at that period of time, the lumber was drawn across the roads with carts.

A few years later, this mill had passed into the hands of Eyllis Wellington at the time it burned.

The mill was rebuilt to include two mills, a Saw Mill and a Shingle Mill, the latter owned by Ira Green, great-great-grandfather of the present owners.

About this time, a circular saw was installed in the Saw Mill which was owned by Walter Waite.

Following the death of Ira Green in 1898, his son, Elmer Green was sole owner of the Shingle Mill for a period of 10 years and Walter Waite (father of Reuben Waite, who resides in Sanfordville and who was employed for 24 years, from 1936-1960 in the shop, when he retired) continued to own the Saw Mill.

In 1908, Elmer Green, with his brother-in-law, Charles Robinson, bought out the Waite estate, and a year later, in 1909, Levi Hunt joined them in partnership. At about this time, the "English Gate Sawmill" was installed. This was an up and down saw in a big square frame, which was operated by water power, using two water wheels. The process with this equipment was so slow, that old-timers recall playing cards while the log was going through the carriage.

The mill continued to operate in this fashion until 1918, when Cecil Green bought a half interest, and with his father, Elmer Green, bought out the interest of the other two owners.

They ran it together as a Saw Mill until 1925, when illness forced Elmer Green's retirement from active business, and Cecil Green continued to manage the mill alone. At that time, butter boxes were made in the Shingle Mill and condensed milk boxes were made in the Box Shop.

On February 21, 1913, sparks from the furnace caused the Shingle Mill and its machinery to burn. Cecil Green immediately rebuilt the mill, after which cheese boxes were manufactured.

On November 16, 1934, the Saw Mill burned, destroying everything in this building, also. When rebuilding this mill, Cecil Green added a boiler room and another head mill to saw one-half inch boards; also, an 18 inch head for making cheese boxes.

He also installed a rotary veneering machine for making plywood boxes. A steam boiler and engine, two automatic nailing machines and a storage shed were other innovations included in this rebuilding project.

On top of that mill was a drum, which sat on a platform built into the peak, which was used in case of fire. Reuben Waite, Sanfordville, a former



Logs piled right up to the edge of Route 11 in January 1937. (Photo courtesy of the author)

employee, told me that there were two drums on this platform, which were kept filled with water and in case of fire, the men would go up on the roof to extinguish the fire, which would be caused from sparks from the burner. I asked Mr. Waite if this was done often, and he replied: "Three to four times a day."

These four or five mills, all hitched together, continued to run in that manner until the whole mill burned again, on October 8, 1943.

The origin of the 1943 fire has never been determined, as it was discovered in the night by a passing motorist. A strong wind added to the conflagration with the result that all buildings and machinery were lost. At that time, diesel motors were being used for power.

At the time of this latest fire, the mill was producing essential war

materials, paper skids, the chair-like wooden racks on which newsprint is stacked, cheese boxes, apple boxes and soft wood lumber.

Even this great misfortune did not discourage Cecil Green, who once more rebuilt his mill, except this time, he built it across the road from the original mill, where there was more room for expansion. This mill was just a saw mill, where they started again with skid manufacture, and various additions were made from time to time.

Cecil Green sold his saw mill business to his son-in-law and daughter, Ray and Melba (Green) Sullivan in 1957. In January 1961, this mill also burned. All the buildings, including the filing room, engine room, individual saw mill and box shop, diesel engines, all machinery and trucks were destroyed. The cheese box equipment has never been replaced by the saw mill



The rebuilt mill, from a 1934 fire, as it looked in 1937. (Photo courtesy of the author)



The Green Lumber Company's employer in 1940. L to R: Howard Oney, Wilfred Ober, Reuben Waite, Henry Cyrus, Clarence Hicks, Harold Flanagan, Harry Shampine, Ray Dove, Elisha Cameron, Orrie Eldridge, Ralph Ober, Cecil Green.

was rebuilt, with a temporary shop installed in the garage of the Cecil Green home for use during the building process.

Following the 1961 fire, electric operating equipment was installed and it supplied skids for various paper mills, and farmers used and still use, the shavings and sawdust for bedding for their cattle.

After the 1961 fire, when Ray Sullivan rebuilt the mill, he considered it to be fireproof as it was constructed with walls of cement block to a height of about eight feet and installed concrete floors, and along with the new buildings, came new equipment which improved and expanded the operation.

In the early 1960's, the Sanfordville Sawmill employed 17 men where in 1938-39, when cheese boxes were being made, there were some 45 men on the payroll.

The Sullivans expanded their business, between the years 1963-65 to include all building materials.

Mrs. Ray (Melba) Sullivan, Sanfordville, was secretary and treasurer of the business from 1938 until 1976, a period of 38 years, when she retired.

I interviewed Cecil Green for the

above information on the mill. Cecil Green died January 4, 1973.

The fifth fire occurred on November 24, 1975, with an estimated loss which exceeded \$100,000.00, which was believed to have been caused in one of the air compressors. The flames destroyed the entire area of the building and left standing only the walls of the building at the far ends of the T-shaped building. Included in the area left standing, but gutted, was the box shop where wooden boxes were made. Also destroyed was the new equipment for a semi-automatic sawmill operation that had just been installed a month before, in which Ray Sullivan said this new operation had cost him \$12,000.00. Also destroyed was the debarking machine, which he said, alone, was valued at \$30,000.00. This new equipment, for the semi-automatic sawmill operation, included a carriage for new equipment and for a live deck. A number of electric motors and other lumber-cutting machinery were destroyed.

Saved were a 40 x 60 wing, the garage which housed the company trucks, two warehouses and office quarters.

During this November 24, 1975 fire,

Ray Sullivan commented: "It's a hell of a mess, isn't it? and also, "I can tell you one thing, I don't have enough insurance to cover it." John Castle (Ray Sullivan's son-in-law), who at that time was vice-president, commented: "That's the danger in owning a sawmill."

In spite of this terrible loss, the Sullivans and Castles were determined to re-build their mill and carry on. Therefore, while it was being rebuilt, Baxter's Sawmill, Knapps Station; the Farney Lumber Company, Croghan; and the Draper Corporation, Tupper Lake; supplied the E.E. and C.C. Green Lumber Co. with lumber and materials for skids until they were in operation again around the end of December. Some of the machinery was repairable. A new quonset type 50 x 105 steel building was built during the winter, after the fire, and during the next summer and fall of 1976, they erected another steel building 48 feet long by 64 feet wide to link with the old wing, 40 x 60, which is the box shop. These buildings are two T-shaped lumber producing buildings.

There are now 20 men employed there, where they manufacture skids and pallets which are sold to the St. Regis Paper Co., Deferiet; to ship paper

products, which they have done business with for almost 40 years; and to Acco International Inc., Ogdensburg; and to Reynolds Metals Co., Massena; and to the Potsdam Paper Co.; and sell lumber to other companies.

They saw lumber, both rough and planed, from logs purchased within a 50 mile radius, from hardwoods: beech, soft maple, popple and basswood; and softwoods: hemlock, pine and spruce. Plus, a large share of the business is with private home owners, farmers who purchase sawdust and shavings for bedding for their cattle and other local persons.

All their machinery is totally electric operated and the lumber is moved by Pettibone and forklift. There are planers, cut off saws, table saws, air-guns to nail with, and gouges which puts notches in lumber.

John and Sondra (Sullivan) Castle, the 5th generation of the Green family, became the new owners of the mill in April, 1976. John Castle started working at the mill, as a laborer, in 1962 when he was a student at Canton ATC, where he graduated in 1963 majoring in Business Administration. He became a full time employee, as a laborer, in the summer of 1963. He is the son of Mrs. Melba Castle, Sanfordville, and the late Henry Castle. Following graduation from Potsdam Central High School, he served two years with the U.S. Army.

John Castle took me on a very interesting and informative tour of the whole operation, in this interview, with the beginning of the logs where they are unloaded upon the hill in the mill yard. They are brought into the mill in a forklift and rolled onto the debarker. From there, they go onto the saw where they are sawed and then they go through the edger to be trimmed. The lumber is either left rough or dressed (planed), and then is taken, by forklift, to the pallet shop where they are cut to size, and then are nailed together in the box shop where they are made into skids and pallets.

The sawdust is blown out through a large pipe, into another building.

There are two large garages, at the mill level, which are three stall, and two stall, to keep the trucks and pettibone in. A new warehouse and office was built in 1966, which now makes three warehouses, besides a large building that houses lumber. Prior to the new office being built, the office was located in the home of Ray and Melba Sullivan.

There are only four men living who were employed at the Green Sawmill, located across the road, which burned in 1943. They are: Clarence Hicks, Wilfred Ober, Harry Shampine and Reuben Waite. The late Howard Oney, who



Addition for new wood chipper completed in 1981. (Photo courtesy of the author)

was also employed in that sawmill, retired in 1967 and died January 8, 1975.

This business is now known as: "E.E. and C.C. Green Lumber Corporation." It was incorporated March 31, 1967, with Ray Sullivan as president of the corporation, until 1976. The new officers of the corporation, as of 1976, are: President, John Castle; vice-president, Ray Sullivan; treasurer, Sondra Castle; and secretary, Melba Sullivan.

The Castles' Irish Setter dog, Finnegan, is the mill's "mascot" and a friend to everyone!

The five generations of this Green family, to have owned this business are: Ira Green, great-great-grandfather; Elmer Green, great-grandfather; Cecil Green, grandfather; Melba (Green) Sullivan, mother; and now the

present owner, Sondra (Sullivan) Castle.

At the close of this interesting interview, John Castle, president of the corporation, said: "With all this inflation, the high cost of machinery, parts, and general overhead costs going up, but in spite of this, the mill has kept going and we hope it will continue for at least another 100 years."

This little hamlet of Sanfordville certainly hopes that this business does exist incessantly, for several generations to come.

About the Author

Mildred Jenkins is the Town of Stockholm Historian and an active member of SLCHA.



Green's employees in 1979. (Photo courtesy of the author)

Azro Giles' Account Book

by Neal S. Burdick

An overseer's account books reveal interesting facts and stimulate speculation about the daily activities of an Adirondack estate and an economy gone by.

Azro M. Giles of Dickinson Center, Franklin County, was the foreman on the estate of Orrando P. Dexter, which straddled the St. Lawrence-Franklin County line in the Towns of Hopkinton and Santa Clara, respectively, in the 1890's and first decade of 1900's. (Dexter was the victim of a famous—and still officially unsolved—murder in 1903; his story is told in the May/June, 1982 issue of *Adirondack Life* magazine.) One of Giles' account books, which survives in the collection of the Franklin County Historical Association, provides a fascinating look at the daily affairs of the overseer of a large northern Adirondack estate, as well as some revealing facts about the turn-of-the-century economy.

It should come as no surprise that food prices were substantially less in 1899 than they are today. During the first quarter of that year Giles bought 60 pounds of cracked corn for 60¢—a penny a pound—six pounds of crackers for 48¢, and two dozen eggs for 60¢. He paid \$1.62 for 25 pounds of sugar and \$7.00 for 35 pounds of butter that spring. In June he purchased 10½ pounds of pork for all of 75¢. Beef went for ten cents a pound, a price that remained constant through the eight years encompassed by the ledger. Ham was a little higher; Giles bought 33½ pounds for \$4.35, or 13¢ a pound, in March of 1901.

What can be considered a typical day in the life of a manager of a millionaire's estate was March 20, 1899, when Giles made these entries, given here verbatim:

- paid S.G. Eldridge—Keeping Horse from Jan 1st to March ?th, \$28
- paid J.B. Malett for sled + irons, \$21.60
- paid L.H. Boyington for 700 sap spouts, \$14
- paid Phil Winters, going after smoke pipe, \$1.00
- syrup cans \$3.13—sugar pails \$1.50

The horse mentioned in the first item was one of several Dexter owned. They were responsible for a number of entries in Giles' log, including frequent shoeings and harness repairs (typically 50¢ and 75¢ to \$1.50 respectively), feed for the winter (Giles bought 1,141 pounds from W.M. Downey for \$12.55 on January 11, 1899), and entry fees for one especially fine beast, "Forest Boy," at county fair races all over the North Country, including Canton, where "fair week" was in mid-September. After one especially active season on the cir-

cuit (at \$9 per race), Giles entered on September 26, 1900, the telling item "horse liniment, 35¢".

Another entry involving a horse has a tale to tell: on September 21, 1903, two days after Dexter's death, Giles wrote "paid Dr. Baker for extracting ball from O.P. Dexter's horse \$25." (Dexter had been shot through the back while riding in his wagon, the bullet passing through him and lodging in the horse's rump.) Giles didn't get Dexter's money's worth, though, for the doctor, high fee notwithstanding, managed to kill the horse during the procedure.

Miscellaneous supplies for maintenance and construction of Dexter' mansion and outbuildings (which were unfinished when he was killed) account for another large category in Giles' book. Following are several examples, again transcribed verbatim:

- March 1, 1899 5 gal Kerosene oil 45¢ [This price fluctuated between eight and twelve cents a gallon, suggesting that then as now there was some instability in fuel prices.]
- May 1, 1899 grindstone, and hangings \$1.25
- May 18, 1899 6½# blasting powder 78¢
- October 26, 1899 thimbols for chimney and furnace 25¢
- April 14, 1900 two brooms 70¢
- March 15, 1901 two vinegar barrells @75¢ ea.
- April 22, 1901 20# staples for wire fence 70¢
- July 7, 1901 screen door spring 10¢
- September 23, 1901 two faucets 40¢ [!]
- February 2, 1902 washboard 30¢
- May 15, 1902 1 doz knives and forks \$3.00
- November 7, 1902 two axes + helve \$1.80
- March 2, 1903 1½ yds flanel 57¢

Taxes are always on our minds, and they were something with which Dexter had to contend, although as a millionaire he probably didn't find the following typical bills too burdensome (keep in mind that he owned several thousand acres):

- June 21, 1899 Paid Road Tax, Dis No 3 \$2.88
- October 16, 1899 School Tax in Dis No 6 \$6.56

Many of the supplies for Dexter's estate were shipped via rail to Santa Clara, where Giles frequently paid freight charges. An interesting entry on June 14, 1899 states "Freight on tele-

phone instruments 65¢." The telephone must have been operational by August of 1902, for in that month Giles paid a whopping service bill: 15¢. Another unusual entry (there are several like it) is an April 7, 1903 payment for "express on cat, sent to Mrs. Sanford Dec 24-1902 \$1.00." Dexter raised angoras, and perhaps had told Giles to send one specimen to warmer climes for the winter.

Giles occasionally had to hire some work done; his entries for these expenses give some idea of wages at the turn of the century. In 1899 he paid a surveyor, S.P. Kimball, \$7. In November of 1901 it cost him a dollar for "man to help drive cows to Lake," for what reason is not offered. In October, 1906 he paid Hiram Clark \$10 for the strenuous chore of "watching pond," and later that month he gave Chester Root, in exchange for "½ day work," the grand sum of one dollar. In September of 1903, two weeks before Dexter was murdered, he paid an unnamed soul \$5 for unloading an entire railroad boxcar of bricks.

Giles himself, he reveals in a letter to Dexter's executor, J.P. Badger of Malone, was paid \$4 a day by Dexter. In a postscript he complains, "Now taking what I had to contend with after his death \$5 per day would be nearer right." After the killing, he makes clear, "There was two months + over that I was tied up there sundays the same as all other days." He attached a bill for his services, listing 31 days worked in October, 31 in November (quite a feat, since November has only 30 days), and 27 in December.

In the months following Dexter's death, Giles disposed of many of the estate's accessories; the amounts he received tell as much of the economic standards of the time as the prices he regularly paid. In October, 1903 he sold a cutter for \$20, a horse and saddle for \$60, blacksmith tools and forge for \$10, a box stove for the incredible sum of one dollar, a three-seat wagon for \$30, and a 30-30 rifle for \$20. Later he unloaded a substantial quantity of lumber for \$6.

These figures place in startling perspective the course of inflation since the first years of the century.

About the Author

Neal S. Burdick is editor of the *St. Lawrence Bulletin* and a public relations officer at St. Lawrence University.



A photo of Halfway House taken about 1920, soon after the front porch was added. The original chimney was in the center of the house and served as a flue for five fireplaces on three different floors. (Photo courtesy of the author)

The Legacy of Billius Stocking

by Jennifer Bixby

The lovely old farmhouse/tavern near Flackville (called the Halfway House by locals) has a fascinating history, here explained by its present local historian owner.

In the early 1800s there were a number of families located in the Town of Lisbon who made vital contributions to our cultural and historic heritage. They have too long gone unrecognized. There is no official mention of them in local history accounts, and, unlike the names of Stephen Van Rensselaer, Stillman Foote, Andrew O'Neill, Daniel Harrington, their names are not household words. In most cases weathered, broken and unassuming gravestones are their only memorial.

Among these early but seldom-mentioned settlers was a man named Billius Stocking, whose progeny have populated the North Country for more than 175 years.

It is possible that Billius emigrated here as early as 1802. He was born in Sandisfield, Mass. on August 7, 1779, at which time his father, Timothy, was serving as a corporal in the American Revolution. Billius married Patience Gray (born December 23, 1776) in Sandisfield, Mass. Isaac Gray, the father of Patience, was a captain in the Revolutionary War. Billius and Patience had ten children; the first, Timothy, was born in 1801, in Sandisfield, and the next nine, beginning in 1804, were all born in Lisbon. Six of these children, Timothy, Isaac, Mary M. (Armstrong), Daniel O., Martha S. (McFadden), and Harriet N. (McFadden), lived all of their lives in Lisbon, and

subsequently, many of their issue did, too.

In 1805 the name of Billius Stocking was officially recorded in the Lisbon Town minutes, when he held the office of juror, and a notation appears that his occupation was joiner, a carpenter who specializes in constructing doors, windows, and other fittings of houses, ships, etc. In 1807 Billius held the office of postmaster; in 1818 and 1819 he was a town assessor, and in 1819 he was also the commissioner of highways and inspector of schools. In 1820 he was assessor and inspector of schools. In 1821 this ambitious man held four offices; assessor, school commissioner, highway commissioner, and postmas-

ter. It is difficult to imagine a person in our time being willing, able, or even endorsed to hold four public trusts. In 1822 his name is recorded for the final time in a public office, of which he again held two, commissioner of highways and commissioner of schools.

From 1802-1805 Stillman Foote also held public offices in the Town of Lisbon. (In addition, Foote had the dubious honor of having his yard designated as a "pound," with his brother, George Foote, appointed as pound keeper.) In 1805 Stillman Foote and Billius Stocking served together as jurors for the Town of Lisbon. According to legend they were very good friends, and, in

1807, the same year Stillman Foote obtained the franchise to carry mail between Canton and Ogdensburg, the two reputedly built the Halfway House on the Canton-Ogdensburg Road as a business venture. The house was built as a stagecoach stop and tavern and was alternately known as the Foote-Legge-Stocking Tavern. The name was undoubtedly one of the most humorous in history, and perhaps even more so because it represented a true association of people, although it is not certain exactly which Legge was involved.

Billius bought the land from Stephen Van Rensselaer on July 7, 1806, 360 acres for 83 cents an acre. The 1806

Lisbon Assessment Rolls take us back to the days when the best farm land was worth only 50 cents an acre, and when a man who only had eight dollars as personal property was certain to appear on the assessment rolls for that amount. In 1806 Stephen Van Rensselaer's property was assessed for 56 cents an acre, making his total holdings in the Town of Lisbon alone worth \$11,595.25, a whopping sum. Stillman Foote was assessed in 1806 for \$5,946.00 and Billius Stocking, assessed for \$50.00, fell within the more common range of real estate.

It is unlikely that Stillman Foote or Billius Stocking ever lived in the Foote-Legge-Stocking Tavern. Foote was involved in many other business ventures at that time, and in 1806 Stocking was operating a saw mill on the road known as Stocking Mill Road, located across from the tavern. Several foundations on this dead end road testify to a once flourishing neighborhood, now the home of only one family. It is also apparent that Stocking's source of water power has been greatly transformed in the almost two centuries since he operated a saw mill there.

An 1858 map of St. Lawrence County confirms that Billius' daughter, Harriet Armstrong, and her husband, George, did live in the tavern at that time, even though the land had been sold to Henry Van Rensselaer, Stephen's son, in 1839. Henry was notorious for operating local taverns and there is evidence that the Halfway House was still in business in 1858, when Henry Van Rensselaer sold the property to Adam Cunningham. Henry (1845-1932) and Mason (1840-1929) Chambers, who for many years collected the road toll from their log cabin located near the Halfway House, remembered as small boys seeing the Foote-Legge-Stocking Tavern sign near the cellar entrance to the house and in later years attended dances held there.

The tombstone of Patience Stocking says she "closed her life on the 26 day of April 1850, in the latter part of which she was much afflicted." It further states she was "an aged member of the church" and that "her human eyes were blind." Eighteen months later Billius also died, October 11, 1851. The only inscription on his gravestone reads "Ruling Elder of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church."

Billius was one of the early members of this first permanent religious organization in the county. It is possible that church services were held at the Halfway House before this church erected its own building in 1852; a lectern used for some type of religious purpose is still located in the house. (Others speculate that the lectern was used to hold



Hobart E. Stocking, a great-great-grandson of Billius, standing at the entrance to his ancestral home in May 1979. With him is the author. After many years of correspondence between Mrs. Bixby and Mr. Stocking, Mr. Stocking made a pilgrimage to the North Country from his present home in Stillwater, Oklahoma. (Photo courtesy of the author)

'Five Wives Buried by One Husband'

by Nelson B. Winters

Curiosity, inspired by a newspaper headline, led a local historian into the intriguing "mystery" deaths of one doctor's five wives.

Many old burying grounds have unusual or off-beat material for the genealogist or casual visitor enjoying a seminar in history. Riverside Cemetery in Gouverneur, established in 1857, is no exception. Interest in one of this cemetery's attractions was recently revived by an article printed in the magazine section of a Syracuse, New York Sunday newspaper. The account therein had to do with unusual anonymous testamentary wills, one example of which was attributed to an early Gouverneur physician. The author also touched on the fact this same doctor was buried in a Gouverneur cemetery alongside his six wives, the last of whom was reported to have been interred crossways to the first five because of the width of the cemetery lot. (Not so, wife #6 is placed at the foot of the good doctor and on the opposite side of the plot.)

Local historians immediately identified the subject as Dr. Samuel C. Wait, whose medical practice was based in Gouverneur for 40 years in the middle of the nineteenth century and who died in 1875. The only obituaries available locally are those of Dr. Wait and his final spouse, Jane E., neither of which is very enlightening. They contain no mention of wives, children, or other possible survivors. The last sentence of Jane's death notice in the *Gouverneur Northern Tribune* merely states she was the sixth wife of Dr. Wait. She outlived him by 18 years, having passed away in July 1893 at 58 years of age. In spite of having on-the-spot health care, the average age of those wives who predeceased this dispenser of medicines was 37 years, that of the children was 14 months.

According to the *Gouverneur Times* of November 2, 1875, Samuel C. Wait was born in Mayfield, Fulton County, New York, June 1, 1807. He received his medical degree from Fairfield Medical School in 1833 and located in Somerville, New York that same year. In 1835 he moved to Gouverneur and practiced medicine there until his death October 30, 1875.

The 1905 *Gouverneur Centennial History* adds the information that he began his life work as a public school teacher, including music, an occupation not suited to his taste. Here he became the leading physician of the town with active interests in the schools and the Presbyterian church, of which he was a member. At his death he left a widow

and four daughters, three of whom were still living in 1905. They were Mary J. Oakes and Katherine A. Farnsworth both in Colorado, and Sarah E. Scott residing in Black River, New York.

Now we encounter some contradictions. The above history states that Mrs. Oakes was the daughter of Electa Keyes, the second wife of Dr. Wait. The cemetery headstone indicates Electa was the first wife. The history also includes the information that Mrs. Farnsworth and Sarah E. Scott were daughters of Polly Thrall, the doctor's third wife. Again, according to her headstone Mary was the third wife. Either Polly and Mary are the same person, or she lies in an unmarked grave on the Wait lot, or she was buried elsewhere. Were there seven instead of six wives? Local legend gives credence to that possibility.

Dr. Wait's office and residence, from 1841 to his death, was at 21 John Street, now owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William Richard. According to their abstract of title (more mystery) Katharine A. Cole, presumably Farnsworth later, Minerva Burnham, and Sarah E. Wait, legatees and heirs at law of Polly Wait, deceased, by warranty deed recorded November 13, 1875 turned over their shares of the real property to Jane, wife number six.

The above seems to indicate that Katharine (or Katherine), Sarah, Minerva and Mary were the original survivors. We don't know which wife was Mary's mother. Could she have been Jane's child in view of the fact she is not listed as a legatee and lawful heir of Polly on the abstract? It would further indicate there was a total of eight children born to Dr. Wait and his six (or seven) wives.

The doctor's will written in January 1875 stated that Mary Jane Oakes was a resident of Black River, Katharine A. Cole lived in New York City, while Minerva Burnham and Sarah Wait resided in Cape Vincent. As previously noted, Katharine became Mrs. Farnsworth and had moved to Colorado by 1905. Sarah married Byron Scott and lived in Black River by 1905.

Remains of the first two wives and all but one of the babies had to be transferred to Riverside from the old town cemetery, the land for which had been acquired from Gouverneur Morris. Some of that earlier site is now a part of the Gouverneur central business district.

This large Wait lot in Riverside, bought in 1859 for the sum of twenty-five dollars and without perpetual care had an obelisk monument about ten feet high, made of local marble. Except for those of the doctor and the surviving widow, the headstones are slab marble eroded to the point some of the engraving is not readable. Fungus growths and weather stains further impede legibility. Dr. Wait's name is on the front and that of wife number six on one side of the monument. Four slab markers for children are on the same side of the lot with the doctor's widow. The first five wives are numbered as such on their headstones.

The following information is taken from the cemetery gravestones. Both town and cemetery records for the period of this research were destroyed by fire many years ago.

Wives

#1—Electa S., died March 31, 1841, age 29 years; #2—Catherine Ann, died July 20, 1842, age 34 years; #3—Mary, died February 23, 1861, age 49 years; #4—Nancy, died May 5, 1863, age 30 years; #5—Patience M., died June 16, 1865, age 44 years; #6—Jane E., died July 9, 1893, age 58 years.

Children

Sarah R.—daughter of Electa S., died October 10, 1839, age 1 yr., 5 mos.; Electa K.—daughter of Electa S., died September 16, 1841, age 7 mos.; Philinda—daughter of Mary, died July 28, 1852, age 1 yr.; Samuel F.—son of Nancy, died March 25, 1864, age 11 mos.

By comparing dates of death it could be surmised that wives Electa S. and Nancy died from complications of childbirth.

The life expectancy of an adult in the era of Dr. Wait was probably considerably less than today, and infant mortality rate was higher. It does seem, however, that this doctor of medicine who most likely prolonged the lives of many, adults and children, was himself the victim of an unusual number of family deaths at early ages. Facts and figures at hand, it might be said, raise more questions than are answered.

About the Author

Nelson Winters is the Village of Gouverneur Historian, secretary of the Gouverneur Cemetery Association, and a frequent contributor to *The Quarterly*.



The round house of the Northern Railroad in Malone, built ca. 1852; in background is the car shop. When picture was taken, this was the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain branch of the Rutland Railroad. (Photo on glass plate negative by Guy Dewey, courtesy of Robideau Studies and Franklin County Historical and Museum Society)

Along the 'Lower Route':

A History of the Northern Railroad

PART TWO

by Robert B. Shaw and Stephen G. Walsh

This is the conclusion of the extensive report and analysis of the important early Northern Railroad. Part One is in the January 1982 issue of The Quarterly.

On June 3, 1850, the road was open for public service between Rouses Point and Chateaugay, 45 miles, and by virtue of a connecting stage it was now possible to travel between Lake Champlain and Ogdensburg within daylight of a single day—although only by dint of a painful 5 A.M. departure from Rouses Point. No one seems to have troubled to record the point at which the rail advancing from the east met that approaching from the west—apparently it was close to the Deer River,

in North Lawrence—but the first through train, carrying celebrants and officials, finally reached Ogdensburg on September 20, to be greeted by cheering crowds, the firing of cannon, and speech-making, ceremonial banqueting and almost endless toast-making, lasting long into the night. The locomotive of the first through train was operated by engineer John Scharier. With some mixture of metaphors, the Ogdensburg *Republican* now pontificated that:

“Justice has at last secured her ends, and the hydra-headed monster of local prejudice and jealousy, which has crushed us to the earth, has been overthrown . . . The pampered, bigoted and selfish localities of southern and western New York may fret and rage as much as they please, for they no longer have us in their power.”

Within a few days, effective as of October 1, the road was opened for regular service. The company had already obtained a contract from the post

office for the carriage of the mail over this route, at an annual fee of \$10,000. Stage routes 1053 and 1054 were simultaneously discontinued. Within less than one year the schedule was accelerated, so that one could leave Ogdensburg at 7:30 in the morning and arrive at Rouses Point at noon. Changes in organization and personnel were now made. Chandler moved back to Boston, which was the more important post now that financing and traffic solicitation succeeded construction as the most crucial tasks. Schlatter assumed the post of superintendent of the road (despite Walter Shanly's private opinion that he was "entirely unfit" for this position), with his headquarters in Malone. The Shanly brothers went on to other projects. The official office of the company, and the site of the stockholders' meetings, heretofore at Champlain (Rouses Point), was now also transferred back to Boston.

But, in an important sense, the railroad was not yet completed. It remained, at this time, an isolated segment, without direct track connection with any other road. Its connection with the Vermont & Canada, at Rouses Point, was accomplished only by ferry, or in winter across the ice. A real chance to compete for through traffic, always the chief motivation in building the road, depended upon the construction of a bridge across the outlet to Lake Champlain. This objective had undoubtedly been visualized ever since the designation of Rouses Point as the eastern terminus, and formal request made to the legislature as early as 1848. And the road already terminated upon a 600-foot pier extending into Lake Champlain, which was expected to be incorporated into an eventual bridge. As an engineering project alone the bridge would be difficult enough, but the more formidable obstacles were of a political nature. First of all, shipping interests were strongly opposed to a bridge of any kind over navigable waters at this point. Then, rival merchants and transportation interests, based in New York City and Albany, resented any effort on the part of Boston capitalists to compete with the Erie Canal or the new railroad system now being formed in the Mohawk Valley, by diverting any share of the western traffic through New England. Even the nearby cities of Plattsburgh and Burlington, still smarting over the diversion of the railroad around the north end of the lake and sensing a challenge to their own importance, were both up in arms against the bridge. It was tacitly accepted that the opposition on the part of lake captains and pilots, although more vociferous, was really a screen for the more formidable antagonism on the part of



NORTHERN (OGDENSBURGH) R. R., 118 Miles in Length.

Rouse's Point its Eastern, and Ogdensburg its Western Terminus.

Stations—Ogdensburg, Lisbon, Madrid, Potsdam, Knapps, Brasher Falls, Lawrence, Moira, Brush's Mills, Bangor, Malone, Burke, Chateaugay, Summit, Ellenburgh, Chazy or Altoua, Centerville, Mooers, Perry's Mills, Champlain, Rouse's Point

Trains on this Road connect at Ogdensburg with *Grand Trunk, Ottawa and Prescott R. Rs., Lake Ontario Steamers, Northern Transportation Co's. Propellers*; at Potsdam with *Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg R. R.*; at Mooers with *Plattsburgh and Montreal R. R.*, and at Rouse's Point with *Vermont Central, and Montreal & Champlain R. Rs. and Lake Champlain Steamers.*

Principal Office, Malone, N. Y. Capital paid in \$1,579,000; Funded debt, \$1,500,000; Total cost of Road, \$5,081,374. Gauge of Road, 4 feet 8½ inches.

President.....Hon. W. A. Wheeler, Malone, N. Y.

Treas. & Cashier...S. C. F. Thorndike, Malone, N. Y.

Superintendent....G. V. Hoyle, Malone, N. Y.

Gen. Freight Agent.George Parker, Ogdensburg, N. Y.

*Clerk & Ticket Agt.*Henry S. Brewster, Malone, N. Y.

Mast. of Mach......Abraham Klohs, Malone, N. Y.

Road Master.....Timothy B. Ladd, " "

Gen. Purch'g Agt....T. Hoyle, Champlain, N. Y.

Trustees of Second Mortgage Bondholders, in possession of the Road.—Hon. W. A. Wheeler, Chairman, John S. Eldridge, Anthony C. Brown.

Trustees of First Mortgage Bondholders.—George A. Kettle, Frs. B. Crowninshield, W. C. Brown.

Invaluable information to the historian which appeared in an advertisement in a Malone business directory for 1862-63 for the Northern Railroad. (Photo courtesy of the Franklin County Historical and Museum Society)

rival cities and transportation routes. The bridge bill was initially passed by the New York Assembly as early as March 16, 1849, but not by the Senate, after vigorous agitation and lobbying, until July 1, 1851. The act authorized the two connecting railroads to extend piers from either side to within 125 feet of the center of the channel, but to require an opening of at least 250 feet. Some of the opponents thought it would be impossible for the railroad to comply with this requirement but, in the event, Schlatter and his counterpart on the Vermont Central, Henry R. Campbell, speedily designed and installed a 300-foot floating barge, swung aside when necessary by a steam winch, as the center part of this mile-long bridge. The first train was able to operate over the structure in late December 1851.

With the opening of the bridge and the extension of a continuous line of rail from Ogdensburg to Boston, it could now be surmised that the old dream—the development of a heavy movement of traffic, passenger and freight, flowing between New England and the Middle West over a closely coordinated land and water route, free of interference on the part of rivals—had now been fulfilled. Unfortunately, the dream never came close to realization. This failure was not for want of trying. Strenuous efforts were made to develop traffic of all kinds. After the road was fully opened it was observed that three quarters of the earnings were derived from freight, of which about 80% was through or "long" traffic. While the development of local traffic, even before the road was com-

pleted or connection made with the Vermont roads, pleased the officers, this was much too small to affect the ultimate success or failure of the railroad. And for through traffic the company was dependent upon somewhat uncertain connections at both ends. Initially, the company attempted to make arrangements with several shipping lines for the exchange of through traffic at Ogdensburg; when this proved unsatisfactory the company made a \$100,000 investment, in return for a mortgage, in Crawford & Co.'s "line of propellers," in December 1851. This firm, subsequently reorganized as the Northern Transportation Co., operated a substantial fleet upon the Great Lakes, and already in 1852 brought down 30,000 tons of flour and other produce to Ogdensburg and carried 20,000 tons of merchandise westward.

A car ferry was also operated to Prescott, across the river from Ogdensburg, to establish connections with the Canadian roads there. At the eastern

end 14 barges were purchased to bring traffic through the canals and Lake Champlain to the railroad at Rouses Point. The Northern also hoped that, through its connection with the Champlain & St. Lawrence at Rouses Point, it would become the preferred method of travel, displacing river vessels, between Montreal and Upper Canada, but negotiations with steamship lines to effect an exchange of passengers at Ogdensburg produced scant results.

Efforts were also made to develop immigrant traffic, to utilize boxcars that would otherwise be returning empty from Boston. But it does not appear that any substantial immigrant traffic ever developed. Agencies established at New York City, Buffalo, Hamilton, Ontario, Chicago and other points to solicit both passenger and freight traffic produced only meager results. The route clearly did not possess the advantages that its promoters had imagined. Still another obstacle was the considerable difference in level between

Lake Ontario and upper lakes. To be sure, when the railroad was being organized, its promoters never failed to point to the enlargement of the Welland Canal, in 1842-45, as one of the strong advantages of the northern route. This probably did help temporarily, but over the longer run the nine-foot channel of the canal came to constitute somewhat of a bottleneck, preventing the larger and more economical vessels of the upper lakes from reaching Lake Ontario and Ogdensburg.

To be sure, a heavy traffic in certain commodities, especially wheat and flour (in barrels), was developed almost immediately. This was exchanged from ship to rail at Ogdensburg, and that part of it destined to New York City back on to barges at Rouses Point.⁵ All of this required extensive warehouse facilities at both points. At Ogdensburg a commodious warehouse and elevator, considered to comprise a very impressive structure in its era, were built to handle the transfer of grain from ves-



Freight Station of Northern Railroad ca. 1852 at Malone Depot. (Photo on glass plate negative by Guy Dewey, courtesy of Robideau Studios and the Franklin County Historical and Museum Society)

sels to rail. The elevators were driven by a steam engine, could lift from 16,000 to 18,000 bushels daily, had a total capacity of 170,000 bushels, and could load a ten-ton freight car—which was being weighed simultaneously on a track scale—in eight or ten minutes. But the efficiency of this operation failed to dispel numerous complaints about inefficient handling, long delays, excessive or inadequate (depending upon the point of view) storage charges, and even lack of sufficient cars to handle the traffic. Much of the flour traffic went on to Boston, over the lower roads. But the terminal roads in Boston were constantly complaining that rates on the flour traffic were so low as to be unremunerative, and therefore they would unload the Northern cars only when they had nothing else to do. This, of course, contributed to long delays in the return of the cars. On October 30, 1852, we find the president of the Boston & Maine writing a letter to point out “that all or nearly all of the business from the Northern consists of flour and grain,” and that the profit realized on this was quite inadequate. While an agreement for joint rates on through traffic had previously been negotiated voluntarily, this had been with the understanding that freight carrying higher rates would also be sent. Since this was not the case the Boston & Maine advised that it would be necessary to make new arrangements.

There was also heavy movement of lumber out of the North Country; on April 14, 1852, Schlatter wrote to Chandler that “Saw mills are springing up all around us like mushrooms.” Schlatter went on to say that it took about ten days, under most favorable circumstances, for a car to get to Boston and back. He suggested that, in handling traffic of this sort, the lower roads ought to provide two thirds of the platform cars and the Northern only one third. But this traffic, like flour, was distinctly one-way, and left the burden of returning the empty cars. In the same category, there was a heavy movement of building stone out of the Malone quarries, and the road even quoted a special rate on paving blocks destined for Havana, Cuba.

Another vexing problem was the involvement of no less than six separate roads in the through traffic between Ogdensburg and Boston. The Northern's first rough tariff, printed on August 1, 1850, in anticipation of its early opening, quoted wool at \$4 a ton, flour at 25¢ a barrel (in minimum quantities of 500 barrels) and pine boards at \$2.50 per 1000 board feet, over the Northern Road only. But it was soon realized that such local rates were a nuisance to large shippers, and

on September 11, 1850, we find E.H. Derby, one of the most prominent New England railroad statesmen, writing to Chandler to emphasize the necessity for a single joint tariff. About the same time George Seymour advised that “it is of no use to tell a merchant in Toronto, Cleveland or Chicago that the Ogdensburg Railroad will carry flour for 25¢ without other charges—the first question is, for what will you take flour from Ogdensburg to Boston, or New York?” A through rate of \$2 (to Boston) was suggested, although Governor Paine of the Vermont Central thought this was too high. Hoyle suggested that the price should be left open for lots above 500 or 1000 barrels, to be set by special contracts. In fact, through rates and other forms of coordination were soon introduced, but the separate railroads often had conflicting interests, the lower roads failed, in the opinion of the Northern, to supply a fair proportion of cars for the through traffic and, as we have seen, the Vermont Central was even seizing Northern cars in an effort to settle its claim arising out of the Belknap affair.

The development of through passenger service over the “Great Northern Route” was also a disappointment. Although single-day travel between northern New York and Boston was soon introduced—and this was within the lifetime of pioneers who had taken weeks to make the slow and difficult journey—few travelers cared to utilize this route in transits from Buffalo, Cleveland or other Great Lakes ports. This route was not merely circuitous, but more expensive. Schlatter pointed out, in 1852, that the railroad fare from Boston to Ogdensburg was \$8, to which \$4 had to be added for the American line boats to Lewiston or \$6 to Buffalo. This contrasted with an \$11 all-rail fare. He proposed to reduce the basic fare on the boats, but suggested that they make higher charges for berths and meals. However, the boat lines would not cooperate with the Northern Rail Road and even seemed to discourage passengers by this route.⁶ On June 20, 1852, Schlatter wrote to Chandler, “Our agent at Niagara came down in the Bay State yesterday with nine passengers for our route to Boston. By his persuasion the Bay State arrived *in time for our cars, for the second time this year.*” Schlatter suggested that the company would do better to make arrangements with “the English boats.” In Boston it was difficult to buy tickets or to obtain information about the Lake Ontario route; Schlatter asked despairingly, “Is there a director in our road residing in Boston who will undertake this business and try to wake up the Lowell, Fitchburg and Boston & Maine?” Besides the all-rail route

through Albany, the Northern had to compete with other combined rail-and-water routes, via Oswego and Cape Vincent. And, of course, the Ogdensburg route was seasonal, being blocked by ice accumulations in the winter.

The company was also forced to endure numerous minor exactions. It had barely been finished—when it discovered that it was now viewed as a happy target of opportunity by local tax collectors. Railroad property was immediately assessed at a value far above that of surrounding land. As one case in point, we find Russell writing to Chandler, on May 14, 1851, that School District No. 4 embracing Lawrence depot wanted the railroad to pay over two thirds of the total school tax—i.e., \$45 out of a total of \$65—for only 16 acres of land, but valued at \$15,000. The assessment was made by Justice John W. Bean, who owned 138 acres in the vicinity, valued at only \$280, upon which he would pay a school tax of 81¢. Many similar instances could be cited. Elsewhere, local town boards were prompt to suggest that the railroad should bear the cost of improving local streets leading to the stations. In July 1852 Horton wrote that “a new method of extorting money from the company” had been discovered. Many farmers who owned property on both sides of the railroad, where the railroad had purchased its right of way and built an embankment, were now demanding an underpass for the passage of farm animals. Horton was of the opinion that the railroad would be obliged to do this whenever feasible, at an average cost of \$500 per crossing, although in some cases the farmers might compromise at \$300 or \$400 in cash.

Many local histories of northern New York report that the refrigerator car was “invented,” or at least introduced, by the Northern Rail Road. The first trip was on July 1, 1851, when an insulated boxcar carried eight tons of butter from Ogdensburg to Boston. While this event certainly had some historical significance, it was not deemed important enough to be mentioned either in the contemporary correspondence among the officials or in the annual reports of the railroad. It is obvious that the dairy traffic quickly reached substantial proportions—and remained a highly visible component on the Northern and its successors for a full century—but in reality this small success was much more beneficial for the farmers and merchants than for the railroad itself. It certainly did not, in any material way, compensate for the many other disappointments and traffic shortfalls which the company encountered.

Under these conditions, with revenue falling far below expectations and with heavy continuing expenditures for roll-



Snow plow used on Ogdensburg and Champlain Valley branch of Rutland Railroad (formerly the Northern) at Malone. (Photo on glass plate negative by Guy Dewey, courtesy of Robideau Studios and the Franklin County Historical and Museum Society)

ing stock, stations, wharves and marine equipment and other improvements, it became necessary, during the summer of 1851, only a few months after the road had been opened, to arrange for a second debt financing. On August 5 Director Edmands had written to Chandler (then at the Astor House, in New York City) that "We ought I suppose to show about 45M per month in receipts. How this is to be done you are the best judge. If done it ought to be quietly, and the *purpose* to be kept to you and myself." Although gross revenue for 1851, as published, averaged a mere \$24,000 a month, the company was able to market the new issue, in the form of 10-year, 7% second mortgage bonds, at a 15% discount. It is true that, after 1851, revenue did increase sharply, finally approaching the \$45,000 monthly level that Edmands had specified, but the two large bond issues created a heavy burden of annual interest charges, far beyond the company's ability to service.

The total cost of the road, upon completion, was about \$4,350,000. This was evidenced in the balance sheet as of May 1, 1851, printed in the June 16 annual report:

Total Cost of Undertaking	
Construction	\$3,360,042
Engines and Cars	649,895
Buildings	339,397
Interest to stockholders & on debt	<u>672,787</u>
	\$5,022,121

Liabilities & Capital

Paid on Stock Subscriptions	\$1,551,312
First Mortgage Bonds	1,500,000
Second Mortgage Bonds	1,500,000
Floating debt	<u>470,809</u>
	\$5,022,121

The cost of the road was still to mount by roughly another million dollars, as further additions and improvements were found to be necessary and as rolling stock and equipment deteriorated more rapidly than had been expected.

Besides the perennial shortage of funds another difficult problem which distracted the company during 1852-53 was the removal of the shops from Rouses Point to Malone. For reasons not entirely clear this became a highly divisive issue, again—as in the original routing of the road—creating sharp dissensions among the stockholders. The relocation was logical; originally rolling stock had to be unloaded from lake vessels at Rouses Point and assembled there, but this was no longer necessary after completion of the Champlain bridge, and Malone had the merit of being approximately at the center of the road. But it is obvious that the outside interests of Chandler and of other directors provided an even stronger motivation for the change. Chandler owned the large quarry of high quality Potsdam sandstone at Malone, which he expected to be utilized in building the roundhouse and shops. And Russell and Horton, as sons-in-law and heirs of

the prominent S.C. Wead, also owned extensive property in Malone. Hiram Horton had been engaged by the company in 1847 to negotiate releases for the right-of-way in Franklin and Clinton counties; he had also transferred his own homestead to the company for terminal facilities in Malone—for a very modest consideration, he was careful to point out, lest the persons making right-of-way conveyances to the railroad for small sums could later charge that Horton had taken a very high price for his own land. But, aside from the land which he had conveyed to the railroad, Horton owned very extensive real estate in Malone, including many lots near the station, all of which were bound to appreciate substantially in value with the location of the shops at that point. Five directors, Chandler, Horton, Russell, Titus and Holbrook, voted in favor of the relocation; four others, Hoyle, Seymour, Spalding and Van Rensselaer, were against it, while another four were absent from the meeting. Four of the five voting in favor were personally interested; these included, besides Chandler, Horton and Russell, James Titus, who came on the board in 1851 and who, while nominally a resident of New York City, possessed extensive real estate and timber lands a few miles south of Malone. In any event, despite heated opposition on the part of many stockholders, the transfer was carried out in the summer of 1853 and very substantial shops and other facilities—still to be seen to this day—were erected at Malone, utilizing generous quantities of Chandler's sandstone. Curiously, no mention of this conflict was made in the annual report of June 1853, but the stockholders' election of June 7 represented a complete victory for the Chandler faction. Hoyle, Seymour, Van Rensselaer and Brown, the chief opponents of the Malone project, were all swept off of the board.

The relocation of the shops could hardly be expected, however, to constitute any antidote for the basic troubles of the railroad. To be sure, gross revenue at this time was regularly exceeding direct cash expenses by a comfortable margin, as the following schedule (amounts given in thousands) will show:

	Gross Earnings	Operating Expenses
1851	\$291	\$163
1852	436	260
1853	527	232
1854	594	416
		Excess of Earnings Over Expenses
1851		\$128
1852		176
1853		295
1854		178

But while the trend was favorable,

the apparent operating income fell far short of covering the onerous interest charges—7% on \$1.5 million of first mortgages and \$3.0 million of second mortgage bonds, or an annual total of \$315,000. Worse, the indicated income was misleading, because the expenses did not include the important element of depreciation, whereas deterioration of track and rolling stock was found to be unexpectedly rapid.

The result was a critical depletion in the cash position. On November 4, 1853, the company was unable to avoid default on one of its notes, for \$50,000. Other defaults on current debt followed. In this alarming situation a special stockholders' meeting was called in Boston, on February 25, 1854, when the Chandler group were deprived of office, to be succeeded by a new faction headed by W. Raymond Lee (first elected to the board only as recently as June 1853). Among the old directors only two, John Russell and Isaac Spalding, clung to their posts. One new member of the board at this time, representing the second mortgage bondholders, was William A. Wheeler⁷, of Malone, later vice-president of the United States. Lee, an early railroad surveyor and builder, an old associate of such figures as Whistler and McNeill, was also a director and later (but only briefly) president of the Vermont Central, where his major accomplishment during his short tenure was the adoption of a compact for the exclusive interchange of traffic among the Northern Rail Road, the Vermont Central and the Northern New Hampshire. This established a standard through line to Boston, consisting of:

The Northern—Ogdensburg to Rouses Point; Vermont Central—Rouses Point to White River Junction; Northern of New Hampshire—White River Junction to Concord; Concord—Concord to Nashua; Nashua & Lowell—Nashua to Lowell; Boston & Lowell—Lowell to Boston.

Schlatter now also resigned from the railroad, selling his house in Malone for \$5500, and also advising Chandler that his wife would gladly sell her stock if she could only get \$5 a share for it. Lee introduced some decisive measures, immediately discontinuing the New York City agency and adopting a policy of concentrating exclusively on the Boston traffic. He also attempted to smooth over the Malone affair, bringing back several officers and directors recently dismissed by Chandler. Hoyle was even named to succeed Schlatter as superintendent of the road.

Lee's compact with the lower roads had also provided that the Northern of New Hampshire would support the Northern of New York, by purchasing

\$180,000 of its second mortgage bonds, at par. But it was now too late to save the Northern. Creditors were descending upon it like vultures. On October 1, 1854, the company was obliged to default upon payment of interest on the second mortgage bonds, and at the same time it was surrendered for operation by trustees representing those creditors. Two years later, on October 21, 1856, the property was formally sold to the second mortgage bondholders, and was reincorporated by them as the Ogdensburgh Railroad. The stock of the Northern Rail Road, upon which no dividends had ever been paid, was thus wiped out and became totally worthless in the hands of anyone who held it to the bitter end.

These events brought an undignified end to the existence of the original Northern Rail Road. The successor road, the Ogdensburgh, was again reorganized, in 1865, as the Ogdensburg & Lake Champlain, the unpaid second mortgage bonds being converted into common stock. This road was operated independently for several years and was then, in 1870, leased for 20 years—later made perpetual—to the Vermont Central. In 1897, however, following bankruptcy by the Vermont Road, the lease was disaffirmed and the O&LC reverted to control of its own management, to be operated once again, for a brief two years, as an independent carrier. Finally, in 1899, the railroad was taken over by the Rutland and shared the fate of that system, until its final collapse and dismemberment, in 1963.

In retrospect, the reasons for the failure of the original Northern Rail Road are clear. As was almost inevitable, the total cost of construction—about \$3,400,000 greatly exceeded initial estimates of \$1,500,000. In turn, this overrun required a heavy debt, with burdensome interest payments. And the best efforts of the officers could not develop enough traffic to support these charges. It must be remembered that the whole theory under which the road had been built was its expected utilization as one link in a longer chain of through traffic. Hayward put this clearly as early as his 1847 report, when he advised:

"Though Ogdensburg is to be the western *terminus* of the railroad, it is not to be the termination of the great business which this road is destined to subserve. It may be regarded only as a *midway station* in a new and important thoroughfare of travel and business, of which this road is but a small part."

But it was soon discovered that this theory was faulty, and that the expected through traffic did not develop in sufficient volume. What traffic there was consisted chiefly of bulk items moving at very low rates. Shippers of

more remunerative freight did not find the "Great Northern Route" convenient. Further, competition developed more rapidly than had been visualized, and within a few years shippers had the choice of a number of combined rail-water routes, through Sackets Harbor, Oswego, Dunkirk and other points. And, finally, through rail connections were opened all the way to Chicago as early as 1852, relegating all water routes to a distinctly secondary status.

But if the Northern was an early failure in a financial sense, it nevertheless made a significant contribution to the prosperity and vitality of the North Country. It provided a strong stimulus to local agricultural and forest industries. It caused the doubling of land values within a few years. And it terminated the isolation and introduced the glamour of the locomotive whistle into an array of country villages and hamlets that would otherwise have had little contact with the outside world for another eighty years, or until the coming of the paved highway. For these reasons the Northern Rail Road deserves to be remembered.

FOOTNOTES

⁵At the eastern end much of the transshipment to barges, particularly of lumber, was carried out, not at Rouses Point, but at Hoyle's Landing, a location on the Champlain (Great Chazy) River, about a mile from Champlain village, and reached by a railroad spur off of the main line.

⁶It is puzzling that the American line—the Ontario & St. Lawrence Steam Boat Company—would not cooperate with the Northern Rail Road in handling through traffic. Two directors of the railroad, George Seymour and Henry Van Rensselaer, were likewise directors of the steamboat company.

⁷Wheeler, as a state senator, had previously been instrumental in clearing the way for the railroad bridge over Lake Champlain. He was to continue as chief operating trustee of the successor company, for a number of years after the Northern's failure.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The principal source of information for this article was Chandler's personal papers, in storage at the Harvard Business School, Boston, Mass. The letters of the Shanly brothers, preserved and published in 1957, comprised a major secondary source. Annual reports of the Northern Rail Road in the St. Lawrence University library were useful. Reliance was also placed upon standard histories of St. Lawrence, Franklin and Clinton counties and upon early railroad directories.

* * * * *

About the Authors

Stephen G. Walsh is a native of Malone and a graduate of Clarkson College of Technology where his study of the Northern Railroad began for a graduate research project as part of his M.B.A. degree requirements. Dr. Robert Shaw, Professor of Finance and History at Clarkson, has written frequently about local business histories, was Walsh's advisor on this project and counts himself among railroad buffs.

Of Bog Ore and Brasher Iron Works

by Richard S. Allen

When people in the Brasher area today speak of going "up to the Furnace", even many of them may little realize how extensive and significant the industry of extracting bog iron ore and making it into iron was in their locale in the nineteenth century. Here is an intriguing account of that long-forgotten business.

The Town of Brasher, in the north-east corner of St. Lawrence County, is unique in the history of the New York State iron industry. In this town the raw material was not magnetic iron from the rocks, or hematite from the softer hills, but bog iron from the swamps and river banks.

A century and a half ago, a visitor to this part of the St. Lawrence River basin would have curiously observed men in flat-bottomed scows, grappling with long tongs for lumpy globs of what, surprisingly, was a source of iron.

"Bog ore," a variety of limonite, was known and worked in Colonial times, particularly in eastern Massachusetts and Southern New Jersey.

This iron-making substance takes as much as twenty years or more to be deposited in any appreciable quantity. To form ore, water flows over and

oozes through deep underlying veins and deposits of iron, picking up iron "salts" enroute. With the iron-laden moisture constantly percolating the decayed vegetable matter in stream beds, a chemical action sets in. The iron, in solution, rises to the surface, oxidizes, and is then deposited. It adheres to the stream banks at bends and coves, and is particularly prevalent in the beds of long-existing swamps and backed-up semi-stagnant pools which once held river courses.

As the deposits accumulate, usually mixed with clay and mud, they are in lump form, and can be "mined" from a commodious boat or raft. In a drained area, the lumps of bog ore can be and were gathered with pick and shovel; a wet but profitable open-pit operation.

Northern New York State's bog iron district was concentrated in Brasher. The town received its name from Philip

Brasher of Brooklyn, who bought the low-lying lands of its western portion, bordering the St. Regis River as it flows northeastward to empty into the St. Lawrence.

Joseph Pitcairn purchased the middle portion of the town in 1818 and under his proprietorship the first settlements were made at what became Helena, named for his only daughter.

Land promoter Pitcairn was aware of the existence of bog ore along both the St. Regis and on the Deer River south of the village of Helena in Lot 62 of the Town of Brasher. He induced Stillman Fuller to come and examine the area and if practicable, erect a furnace.

Stillman Fuller was the second of four brothers (Sheldon, Stillman, Heman and Ashbell) from Ferrisburgh, Vermont. They had acquired some experience in iron-making at the Rossie



The old office building of the Skinner Iron Works at Brasher Iron Works, now demolished. (Photo gift of Harland Horton of Fort Covington, courtesy of History Center Archives)

Furnace over in the southwestern part of St. Lawrence County.

After eight years (1824-32) at Rossie, the Fullers erected a furnace of their own in the Town of Fowler. Located on the west bank of the Oswegatchie River, "Fullerville Furnace" was first blown in in 1833. It used red hematite from an ore bed near Little York, plus bog ores from the Fine Tract and the Towns of Edwards and Pitcairn.

The Fullers built their pyramidal stone stack well, but it was not a great success; only 600 tons in two blasts being made by the original "S. Fuller & Co." Brother Stillman left Fullerville after only two years, for the bog ore region of Brasher. His first contract with Mr. Pitcairn ran for ten years, giving Fuller sole right to dig bog ore on the proprietor's lands, paying a royalty of 25¢ a ton.

Stillman Fuller's blast furnace was begun on September 10, 1835. It was located on the left bank of the Deer River about 2½ miles south of Helena. As originally built it was 31' high with a 7' bosh. Lined with Potsdam sandstone, it was run with a water wheel and a single pipe of cold blast.

Known as the Brasher Iron Works, the Stillman Fuller furnace was put in operation October 29, 1836. It ran continuously from that time until January 31, 1837 in one long blast, producing about 250 tons of pig iron and castings.

At the end of the second blast, later in 1837, Fuller decided to sell out while he was ahead.

Buyer of the works was Isaac W. Skinner (9/20/1793-6/7/1874), of Buffalo, N.Y. A native of Cayuga County, Mr. Skinner had reportedly "assisted Jethro Wood in bringing his celebrated cast steel plow before the public," and appears to have been acquainted with the iron trade. Skinner's first partner in the Brasher Iron Works was R.W. Bush of Ogdensburgh, whose place was taken in 1840 by William H. Alexander of Syracuse. Both men brought all their energies to bear in making Brasher a well-paying iron works.

The Skinner-Alexander Furnace on the bank of the Deer was run exclusively on bog ore; mostly a version called "loam ore" which yielded about 20% iron. That meant a great deal of digging, drying, roasting and smelting to obtain the end product. After 1843 not much pig iron was made, and most of the output went into stoves and other castings. Later, a hot blast was introduced for greater productivity. For remelting iron, two cupola furnaces were built by Skinner and Alexander, and a machine shop erected. Charcoal was made in two "modern" brick kilns, but their use was soon discontinued when the quality was found to be inferior to that of pit-and-mound-produced char-



BRASHER IRON WORKS BUSINESS DIRECTORY.

G. W. Skinner & Co., Manufacturers and Dealers in all kinds of Castings, Horse Powers, Rakes, &c. Sales Rooms, on Water Street, Ogdensburgh.
R. W. Thickens, Machineist.
D. McDonald, Clerk.

Map of Brasher Iron Works from the 1865 Beers Atlas of St. Lawrence County. (Courtesy of the History Center Archives)

coal.

Isaac Skinner was always unlucky with fire, and it is recorded that establishments with which he was connected, beginning in 1821, were nine times consumed by flames. It is a tribute to the man that he rebuilt each time.

Brasher Iron Works was burned three times prior to 1853. The first two conflagrations took the entire premises, one apparently the result of a forest fire which swept across the region.

The third fire, in September, 1843, was the result of an accident peculiar to working bog iron in a blast furnace. In this case, the materials—ore, charcoal and limestone—did not settle beyond the upper portion of the stone stack, and became clogged up on the inside. Below, a cavern of intensely glowing heat finally pierced the jammed mass and it fell. On contact, the water in the damp loam ore instantly changed to steam and exploded with terrific violence. Brasher Furnace literally blew up, bursting its lower wall and spewing liquid iron and slag out of the bottom onto the casting floor, where one of the workmen was fatally burned. Flames quickly destroyed the wooden portions of the furnace in their entirety, leaving only a ruptured stone stack.

Brasher Iron Works post office was established July 14, 1849, with Isaac W. Skinner as the first postmaster. Hough's history of the county describes the great forest fire of that year, which spread from Norfolk to Fort Covington, but it is not clear as to whether or not this also destroyed the iron works. Apparently not, for during the census year of 1850, the "Brasher Iron Works

of Alexander and Skinner" was at its zenith.

As reported, the works had a \$30,000 capital investment, and were annually using 2500 tons of ore and 100,000 bushels of charcoal. Due to growing scarcity, the coal (\$4,000 worth) already exceeded the value of the bog iron ore (\$3,750). Eighty men were employed by Alexander & Skinner with a monthly payroll of \$2020.00. At mid-century, the annual output was "600 tons of stoves and other articles," valued at \$42,000. Certainly a big business for a small industrial town.

Isaac Skinner shortly moved to Ogdensburgh, but kept an eye on things at Brasher. His 26-year-old nephew, John F. Skinner, who had learned the molder's trade in Pennsylvania, came to Brasher as superintendent in 1852.

By 1855 Isaac Skinner assumed complete control of the property in the Town of Brasher. The following year the furnace again exploded due to the tricky work of handling bog ore, fortunately with no injuries. Another forest fire in May of 1857 destroyed all but one dwelling house and two other buildings at Brasher Iron Works, with a \$52,000 loss for "Burnt-out Isaac." After this, the furnace and iron-making were discontinued, but the machine shop and foundry were rebuilt. R.W. Thickens, Skinner's machineist, lived in the fire-spared, so-called "Raymond House" still standing at the old village site.

By 1865 the firm was "G.W. Skinner & Co." (possibly a typo of "G" for "I"?) They were "Manufacturers and Dealers in all Kinds of Castings, Horse Powers, Rakes, etc." The company maintained a salesroom on Water Street in Ogdensburgh, and some of its products may still be possible to find and identify in St. Lawrence County today.

For some reason, the Mohawk Indians on the reservation to the north had a name for Brasher Iron Works. To them it was, phonetically: "Tsit-karres-ton."

Operating out of Ogdensburgh, Isaac Skinner continued the iron casting business until his death in 1874. Three years later his nephew, John F. Skinner, bought the foundry and started up again, using iron bought and brought from other iron-makers, and scrap. This continued until 1887 when a final fire ended the iron industry at Brasher Iron Works.

* * * * *

About the Author

Richard S. Allen of Albany was the Program Director for the New York State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission and writes often about industrial and technological history.

Salute from the Editor . . .

From number 5 to number 3, thanks. If that sounds like a fielding play in baseball, it's not. It is, however, a genuine statement of gratitude and appreciation to Mary Smallman (*Quarterly* editor number 3) from me (*Quarterly* editor number 5) for the many years of hard work in the interest of local history for this and future generations of St. Lawrence County citizens.

To write this little piece, I did some simple research. I really wanted to see just what Mary has contributed. A review might even surprise her. For nearly 17 years she served as the county's official historian from May 1, 1965 until December 31, 1981; she has been a town historian longer than that. That in itself may be a record. Even if it's not, it is an undeniably major contribution, for she made the office into a reliable, identifiable central source of good information for local history research. We knew we could count on her to come up with something (or someone to go to) about almost any topic imaginable.

She also was a hard worker for the Association during some very difficult years. From 1963 through 1975, when we had very little space and very little money, Mary's office became the center for Association activities, as well as all the other work of the official historian of the county. From that little corner in the courthouse basement, she alternately served as secretary, committee member (publications, membership, exhibits, gifts), and trustee, sometimes doing all at once! Presidents and other officers counted on Mary and her office for many things. She always came through.

But as the present editor, I guess I am most impressed by Mary's work as the editor of *The Quarterly* for nine whole years—from October 1966 through July 1975. Only another editor could totally appreciate that. That means 36 whole issues, and 864 pages! Count them. That's a lot of articles . . . and photos . . . and maps . . . and poems . . . and "remarks" . . . and fillers. And not many of them came easily. They often meant much cajoling and convincing and urging and demanding—all things Mary does well. Her efforts produced results, positive results, measurable results. How many other counties have such a magazine of local history, full of the work of local writers, often inexperienced but well informed, enthusiastic, and anxious to share? She was especially good at giving these writers a chance and giving the readers their work.

Never one to let others do all the work, Mary has also frequently con-

tributed her own original research and writing to the pages of *The Quarterly*. Memorable articles of her authorship include such topics as county place-names (Podunk *et al.*), Oak Point as a summer resort, temperance and the WCTU, the Welsh Church Society of Richville, water dowsing, and Parishville School District 14. And she frequently contributed her own columns: Heritage Preserved by Mason Jahrs (Mary's always loved to make up titles!) and the Beeline from the Editor. In between times, Mary also managed to produce several useful books: her *Top of the State* tour guide of our county, her *Take the Gray Basin* family recipe book, and *The Supervisor's Story*, a remarkable collection of information about the old county boards of supervisors, published to mark the end of an era.

All in all, reviewing just these examples of Mary Smallman's contributions to the study and appreciation of our county's heritage has been an enlightening and humbling experience. She will be difficult to replace, impossible to duplicate. I join all the others in celebrating her accomplishments, in thanking her for everything, and in wishing Walt and her many happy years of retirement. Oh yes, and an occasional article for *The Quarterly*, too!

Varick A. Chittenden, *Editor*

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BILLIUS STOCKING . . . continued

services for runaway slaves during the days of the Underground Railroad.)

Adjectives like ambitious, aspiring, and enterprising could be used to describe this man whose energy in undertaking projects seemed to rise above our modern expectations. In turn his zeal and enthusiasm seemed to span the succeeding Stocking generations.

In the mid 1800s four of Stocking's children, Melissa, James, Billius Jr., and Daniel, all moved west. Daniel went to Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1837, when that locality was only an Indian village. He later returned to Lisbon, where he died in 1882. In 1846, a son, Myron, was born to Daniel Stocking and his wife, Mary Hanna. Myron, who served as Lisbon Town Supervisor from 1884-1898, preserved as a relic the hub of one of the wheels of the wagon in which the family emigrated to Michigan. It was during Myron's term as Town Supervisor that the Lisbon Town Hall, which is now a national historic landmark, was erected.

Isaac Stocking, another son of Billius and Patience, was a member of the first society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Lisbon, incorporated in 1822. In 1847 he served as trustee of this church, and gave the land for the present church building in Flackville which was completed in 1851.

Several grandsons of Billius served in the Civil War. Two died in action. His granddaughter, Mary F., was the first wife of Dr. H.F. Campfield, one of Lisbon's first doctors. (Unfortunately Mary died of "consumption" at the age of 23.)

Other descendants married into old Lisbon families whose names are still prolific in Lisbon—Armstrong, McFadden, Glass, Craig, Bailie, McCurdy, McDowell, Hanna, Thompson, and Heptonstall. Many Lisbon residents alive today received English instruction in school from the great-granddaughter of Billius Stocking, Venila Heptonstall, who died in 1951, and if they did, it's for certain they know their grammar, one of Mrs. Heptonstall's driving points. Curtis Stocking, a great-great grandson of Billius, still maintains a summer home in Morristown. A retired art professor from Purdue University, Curtis Stocking is an accomplished and active artist.

Undoubtedly, many Lisbon natives would be able to trace their roots to Billius Stocking and be proud of their pioneer pedigree.

About the Author

Jennifer Bixby is the Town Historian for Lisbon, as well as the proud owner, with her husband Joel, of the Stocking "Halfway" House.

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