

THE
QUARTERLY

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Editor: Varick A. Chittenden

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Cover: Silhouette of Silas Wright, Jr., by artist William H. Brown, 1845. Lithographed by E.B. and E.C. Kellogg, Hartford, Connecticut. See article on Silas Wright beginning on page 3. (Courtesy Collection of SLCHA)



The restored study of the Silas Wright House and Museum in Canton. Desk, law books, top hat and desk chair are all known to be Wright's. (Photo by Gary W. Graham, courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

Silas Wright of St. Lawrence County

by William D. Mallam

Few people were more famous or admired in the young American nation than Silas Wright, Jr., of St. Lawrence County. Yet over a century after his death he is little known except by students of the Jacksonian age. Here we present a short, comprehensive biography of Wright the man and Wright the political leader, using historical perspective and analysis, to help the modern reader to better appreciate and understand the Great Commoner of an earlier age.

Professor John A. Garraty opens his excellent biography of Silas Wright by quoting in its entirety an earlier biography written by a Canton school child:

"There was a man named Silas Wright, and he was a historic sight. He was a good man, and he had a Simitary and a Grange named after him, and when he was here he lived at the Tea Cozy." (The "Tea Cozy," as its name indicates, was a tea room earlier in this century. It became the restored Silas Wright house.)

Largely forgotten today, as are most of the issues in which he was involved, Silas Wright was one of the best known politicians on the national stage of his time. While men might ask "Who is

James K. Polk?" when that man was nominated for the Presidency in 1844, there could be no such question asked about Silas Wright, who probably could have had the nomination instead if he had wanted it. Polk spoke in his diary of Wright as a "great and good man." With Polk self-committed to a single presidential term, there was much speculation as to his successor. For northern Democrats, Silas Wright seemed to have the best credentials, and numerous newspaper editors adopted him early as their choice. He might indeed have become President instead of General Taylor in 1848 had the Democrats nominated him, since Northern Free Soilers might well have

supported him instead of launching their own party with VanBuren as their candidate. It is not even impossible that if not successful in the 1848 election, Wright could have later become President in 1856 rather than James Buchanan, Wright's senior by three years. But what might have happened can never be known of course, since Wright died suddenly of a heart attack in August 1847 at the age of fifty-two.

Born in Massachusetts, the son of a shoemaker and Revolutionary War veteran, Silas was still an infant when his family moved to Weybridge, Vermont. There Silas Wright, Senior, prospered. He turned to farming and

politics and sat in the state legislature from 1800 to 1812. He was able to send Silas, Jr., his eldest son, to Middlebury College. This was made easier because the college accepted payment in farm produce and arranged the schedules of their students so they could work on the farm when needed instead of being bound to study desks.

After his graduation, Silas moved across the border into New York to study law in Washington County where he soon became associated with Thomas Skinner. This proved to be a benchmark in Wright's career for Skinner was active and influential in Democratic Party circles as a state senator and later as a federal judge. It was through Skinner that Wright came to know Martin Van Buren who became Wright's closest friend and political mentor. In return, Wright became Van Buren's most trusted political lieutenant. Both men came from humble backgrounds and took naturally to the rising tide of democratic politics. As a boy, Martin had worked at his father's tavern in Kinderhook and never attended college. But his unflinching ambition and political talent, which gave him the sobriquet of "little magician", more than compensated for any lack of educational opportunity. Without Van Buren's friendship, Silas never would have risen to the heights that he did. On the other hand, it is possible that Van Buren's influence may have had the unintentional effect of stunting Silas's political growth. While he was developing into an excellent political lieutenant, Silas' self-confidence and personal ambition may have suffered to the point where he shrank from seeking leadership himself.

After his admission to the bar, Silas decided to investigate the possibilities of a career a little further west. He still regarded Weybridge as his home, but he probably saw more opportunity in New York than in Vermont, especially if he was already considering involvement in politics. In 1819, then, the young lawyer journeyed westward, taking the route that so many other Vermonters did. This brought him to the St. Lawrence County village of Canton, founded by another Vermonter, Stillman Foote, in 1802. Situated on the Grass River which flowed into the St. Lawrence, and eighteen miles from the Canadian border, Canton proved instantly attractive to Silas. There was no other lawyer in the village, and upon his arrival, he quickly made the acquaintance of Medad Moody and his family, including Captain Moody's fifteen year old daughter, Clarissa. They, like Silas, were from Vermont, and they welcomed him cordially. After hesitating briefly between Ogdenburg, then the county seat, and



Engraving of Silas Wright in the United States Senate, ca. 1833-1844, by H.B. Derby, artist, and H. Ferguson, Albany, lithographer. (From Life and Times of Silas Wright, SLCHA Archives)

Canton, which would later become so, Silas decided to make his home in Canton. The generous offer of Moody to build Silas a house may have been decisive—or it may have been that he was already half in love with the captain's shy young daughter. In any case, Wright settled down in his two room combination home and office and soon established himself as the treasured friend of many of his Canton neighbors. His popularity, aided by his political connection with Skinner and

Van Buren, brought the young attorney a thriving law business and a deluge of local offices including that of village postmaster.

It was politics rather than the law for which Wright showed his keenest aptitude. His personality and character served him well from the first. He made friends easily, and as they came to know him better, people warmed to him for his modesty, integrity and loyalty. Silas remained a bachelor until he was well established in state politics.

Then at the age of 37, he was accepted, after a lengthy courtship, by Clarissa Moody who was now 29. Whatever the reason for its lateness, the marriage proved to be a very happy one. Clarissa's only complaint was that the exigencies of politics deprived her too often of her husband's presence. When she accompanied him to Albany or Washington, she suffered agonies of shyness during the social obligations that increased for her with Silas's increasing political prominence.

Clarissa's timidity strengthened her husband's distaste for public life, and this created an enduring inward struggle. A sense of duty and patriotism pulled him toward the political spotlight while his genuine personal desire for a quiet life as a farmer with Clarissa in Canton pulled him in the opposite direction. The couple had no children, but Silas was memorably fond of children, those of his neighbors as well as his nieces and nephews.

The Silas Wright papers housed in the St. Lawrence County museum and archives at Canton give us a portrait of the family man rather than of the politician. The two were not unconnected, for family considerations acted as a significant brake upon his political career.

Wright's surviving letters in Canton are nearly all addressed to various

members of the family. The collection also contains quite a number of letters he received from his father. Even in the heat of political combat, Silas tried to write his parents every week. Aside from an occasional lament at a political defeat of his party and a dire prediction as to its effects, Silas seldom referred to politics in these family letters. Until her death, less than a year before his own, he wrote frequently to his elder sister, Eleanor Wright "Biglow." Her husband died young, and Silas brought his widowed sister and her three children to Canton to live on a farm, the purchase of which he negotiated. Silas also wrote to his brothers—Daniel, Samuel and Pliny—on family business, the weather, the crops and most fully of all on the conditions of everyone's health.

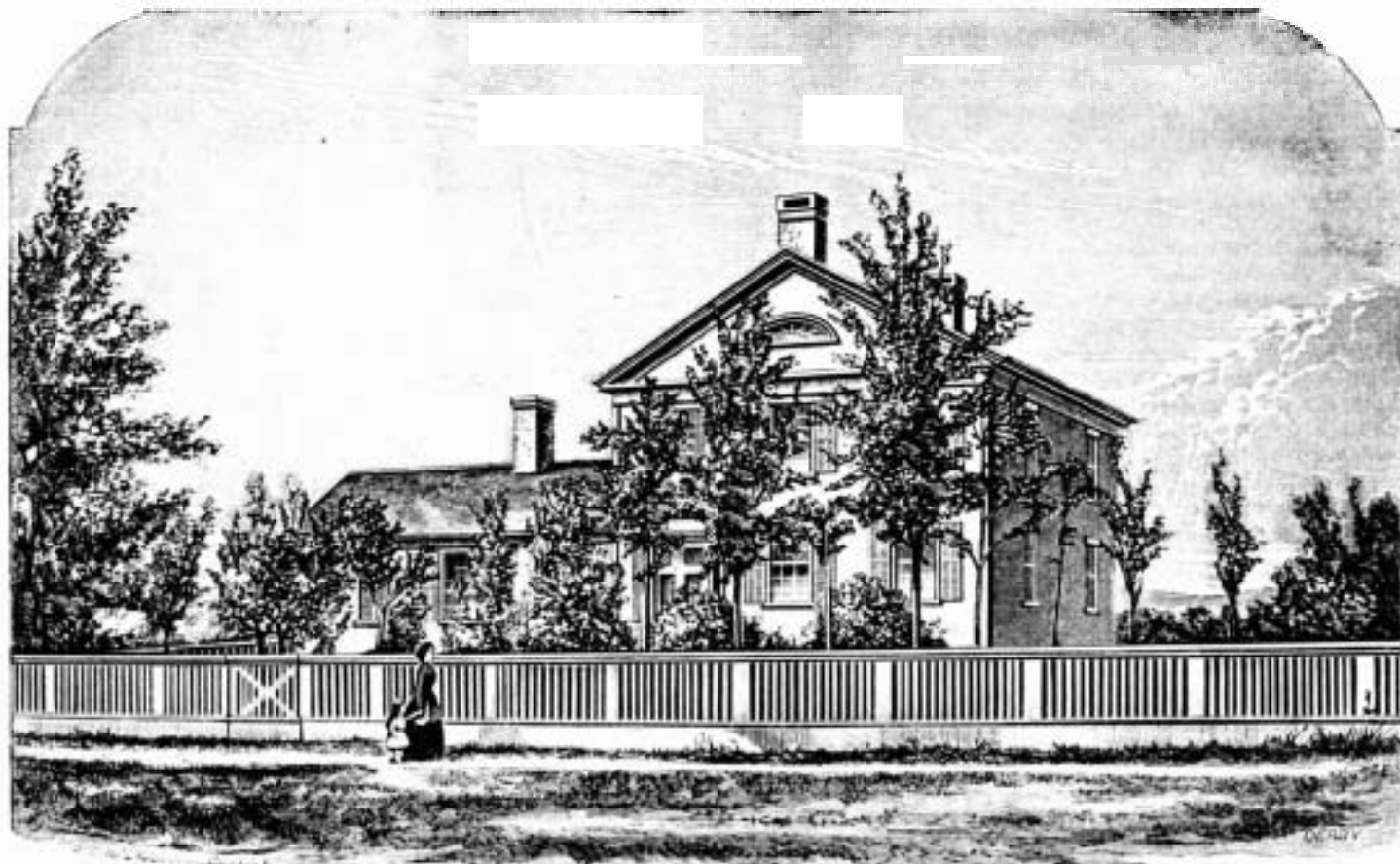
Somewhat strangely, it is his wife's health that tends to disappear from her husband's family correspondence. In the early years of their marriage she is mentioned as ailing or recovering from an ailment. By 1842 the best her husband can say is that "her general health is pretty good for her." Nevertheless, she outlived her husband by nearly a quarter of a century, dying in 1870 at the age of 66.

Silas had politics in common with his father, and it was natural that the son should visit his father in Weybridge

and discuss politics occasionally in letters to him in the early years of Silas's political career. But by 1838, Silas Sr., his son sadly noted, was becoming senile, and five years later he died.

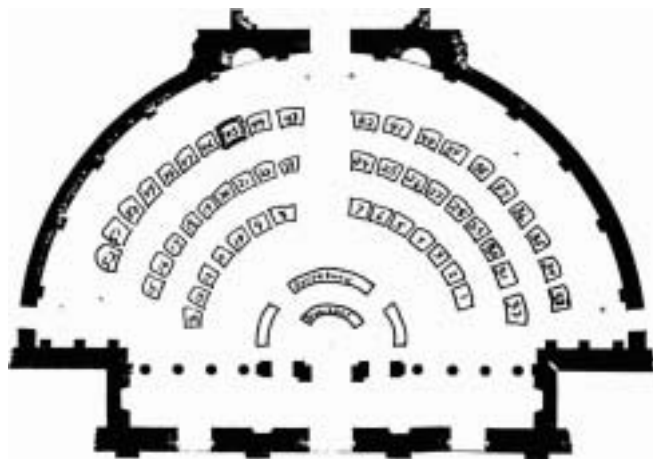
Even to his father, and certainly to all of the other members of the family, Silas wrote with concern for the health of his brother Pliny who was ten years his junior. At first it appeared that the boy, who admired his brother and wanted to follow in his footsteps through Middlebury and into the practice of law, would be able to do so. But Pliny found college difficult. He worried, grew ill, and withdrew to study law in Albany where his brother was then living. At first Silas believed that Pliny would fully recover his health and be able to continue his career, but this hope gradually dwindled as it became clear that the trouble was a deep seated mental disturbance. In the thick of the tariff fight of 1833, Silas wrote, almost as in warning, to Van Buren that the situation "and interests of Pliny bear most sensibly upon my mind and I design to devote all the time to that duty which can be useful to him."

In the years that followed, Pliny was in and out of an "asylum" in Utica with Silas nearly always optimistic that eventually his brother would recover.



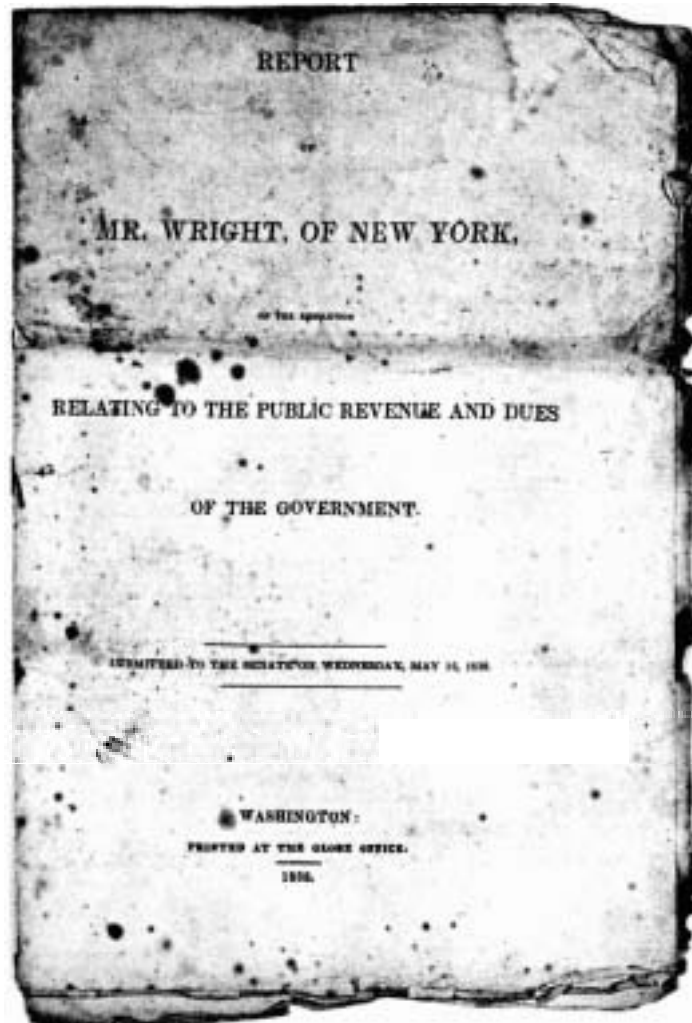
Governor Wright's residence in Canton, ca. 1850. (From *Life and Times of Silas Wright*, SLCHA Archives)

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|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----|
| 1. | 2. John C. Calhoun | 12. T. Belts | 22. J. J. Crittenden | 32. Jno Norvell | 42. |
| 3. Hugh L. White | 13. J. S. Spence | 23. Wm D. Merrick | 33. Perry Smith | 43. | |
| 4. Franklin Pierce | 14. | 24. Jno M. Robinson | 34. Wm Allen | 44. Wm S. Fulton | |
| 5. Ruel Williams | 15. | 25. Alex Mouton | 35. Benj. Tappan | 45. <u>Silas Wright</u> | |
| 6. R. C. Nicholas | 16. S. L. Southard | 26. Rollins Brown | 36. Thos. H. Benton | 46. Garrett D. Wall. | |
| 7. Wm H. Roane | 17. Daniel Webster | 27. Clement C. Clay | 37. H. Hubbard | 47. James Buchanan | |
| 8. N. R. Knight | 18. Samuel P. Kent | 28. A. H. Sevier | 38. Felix Grundy | 48. Lewis F. Linn | |
| 9. R. M. Young | 19. Thomas Clayton | 29. Robt. Strange | 39. Robt. J. Walker | 49. Jno. Davis | |
| 10. O. H. Smith | 20. A. S. Waite | 30. Wm R. King | 40. Jno. Ruggles | 50. Wm C. Preston | |
| 11. N. F. Dixon | 21. S. L. Phelps | 31. W. Lumpkin | 41. A. Cuthbert | 51. Henry Clay | |
| | | | | 52. | |



PLAN OF THE SENATE CHAMBER.
1ST SESSION - XXVIITH CONGRESS.
1840.

The United States Senate Chamber in 1840. Note the famous names of the day. (Courtesy of the SLCHA Archives)



Cover of an 1838 report to the Senate by Wright on government revenues. (Courtesy of the SLCHA Archives)

When not in Utica or Albany Pliny made his home in Canton with his sister Eleanor and her children. Two of these, Silas and Paul, were twins, and shortly before Wright's death we hear the depressing news that they, as well as Pliny, are undergoing treatment in the asylum. Silas, ever hopeful, wrote his sister that one of the twins was really well enough to go home, but would stay awhile longer because the separation might be too hard on the brother (Silas) who remained. As for Pliny, he was better and was quite pleased to have been given a job at the asylum that paid \$12 per month.

Pliny lived with his brother in Albany part of the time Silas was governor and took an intelligent interest in the course of the Mexican war and Silas's political prospects. He read, walked, attended legislative sessions and dressed with meticulous care, wrote Silas. But when Wright left office Pliny returned to Canton too, as the twins had a little earlier. The twin who was Silas Wright's namesake married

and when he died, his uncle Pliny, then 65, married his widow. Pliny lived on in Canton until he died in 1890, regarded tolerantly by his neighbors as an eccentric but good-hearted and contented old man.

Turning now to his political career, Silas Wright first won an important public office in 1823. It was the beginning of an immersion in politics that would last the rest of his life without interruption. His initial plunge was spectacularly successful, for he was overwhelmingly elected to the state senate, gaining all but 20 of the 1439 votes cast in St. Lawrence County. In the town of Canton, the vote was 199 to 1. This loyalty of his constituency, repeatedly displayed, established him as a vote getter to be cherished and shown the utmost consideration in Albany.

During the brief so-called "Era of Good Feeling," following the break-up of the Federalist party at the national level, the "Bucktails" emerged in New York State as the strongest faction of

the party that would soon usher in a new era by electing Andrew Jackson to the Presidency. The political finesse of the Bucktails' leader, Martin Van Buren, had much to do with their rise, and when the State legislature sent him to the United States Senate in 1821, he left the "Albany Regency" in charge in the state capital. The Regency consisted of a small group of professional politicians devoted to their departed leader, to Andrew Jackson, and to the spoils system, not only as a means of staying in power, but also because they believed in its essentially democratic character.

The chief political rivals of the Bucktails in the 1820's were the Clintonians who were somewhat conservative in their views, but who held together chiefly by their loyalty to Dewitt Clinton, whose great Erie Canal project would be completed in 1825. It was a grave mistake for the frisky Bucktails, after sweeping the election of 1823, to remove Clinton from the Canal Commission of which he had been president.

This petty show of malice served to martyr Clinton and arouse such public indignation as to assure his election as Governor in 1824. Wright's term in the state senate had not expired, but in general the election's results were thoroughly sobering for the Bucktails. Clinton remained as Governor until his death in 1828, but well before that the Bucktails had managed to regain their political domination. In consequence, Wright was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1827. He resigned this post two years later, however, when the opportunity arose for him to increase his income by

returning to Albany as Comptroller at a salary of \$2500 per year. The move also served to reunite him with his Regency friends who were still a closely-knit group socially as well as politically. It appeared that Van Buren might also return to Albany, since with Clinton dead, he was easily elected Governor. But no sooner was the election over than Van Buren was called to Washington to become Andrew Jackson's Secretary of State.

Wright was to enjoy his new position only until 1833, for at the insistence of his friends he agreed then to accept election to the United States Senate.

He had gained experience in matters of finance as Comptroller, and now it was deemed desirable that he put it to use in the financial issues that had taken center stage at the beginning of Jackson's second administration. The "Tariff of Abominations" which Wright had helped to frame in 1828 while a member of the House, now had to be revised (more than it had been in 1832) as part of the compromise to appease an outraged South Carolina which had nullified the tariff. Jackson's clash with Henry Clay and Nicholas Biddle on the recharter of the National Bank was also in full swing. It is not surprising that Wright was quickly appointed to the Senate finance committee and soon became its chairman.

On this, his second arrival in Congress, Silas brought a bride with him to Washington since Clarissa had finally agreed to marry him. How may we describe Silas Wright and his prospects as he stood upon the threshold of his major involvement in the affairs of the nation?

He was 37 years old, of medium height and stocky build. He was remembered for his gentle blue eyes, florid complexion and kindly, modest, but forthright manner. He made no pretense at being an orator with the elaborate eloquence of a Clay or Webster. At first he was so shy that Van Buren had to write his maiden address to the Senate for him before he could summon up the courage to speak. Once having taken the plunge, however, he spoke frequently yet sparingly. He spoke lucidly but briefly—and then resumed his seat. He was at his best in small groups and as a member of a committee. It was no secret that he was a heavy drinker, but there is no report of his being unable to keep his drinking well within bounds. Perhaps alcohol was a crutch for his over-developed modesty about his own attainments. When he retired from public life he became a total abstainer. If he needed liquor to help him cope, he was even more dependent upon his friends for advice and encouragement. Clarissa was no help to him here, for she always shrank from public life, and according to her husband at least, frequently hoped that he would be defeated in an election by his Whig opponent. Wright relied implicitly and admired extravagantly Martin Van Buren, thirteen years his senior. But that is not to say that Wright did not arrive at his political credo independently. He would gradually move from favoring a protective tariff to supporting wholeheartedly a tariff for revenue only. He had no trouble in regarding the National Bank as a monster and Nicholas Biddle as a cynic who did not hesitate to imperil the nation by using the bank's

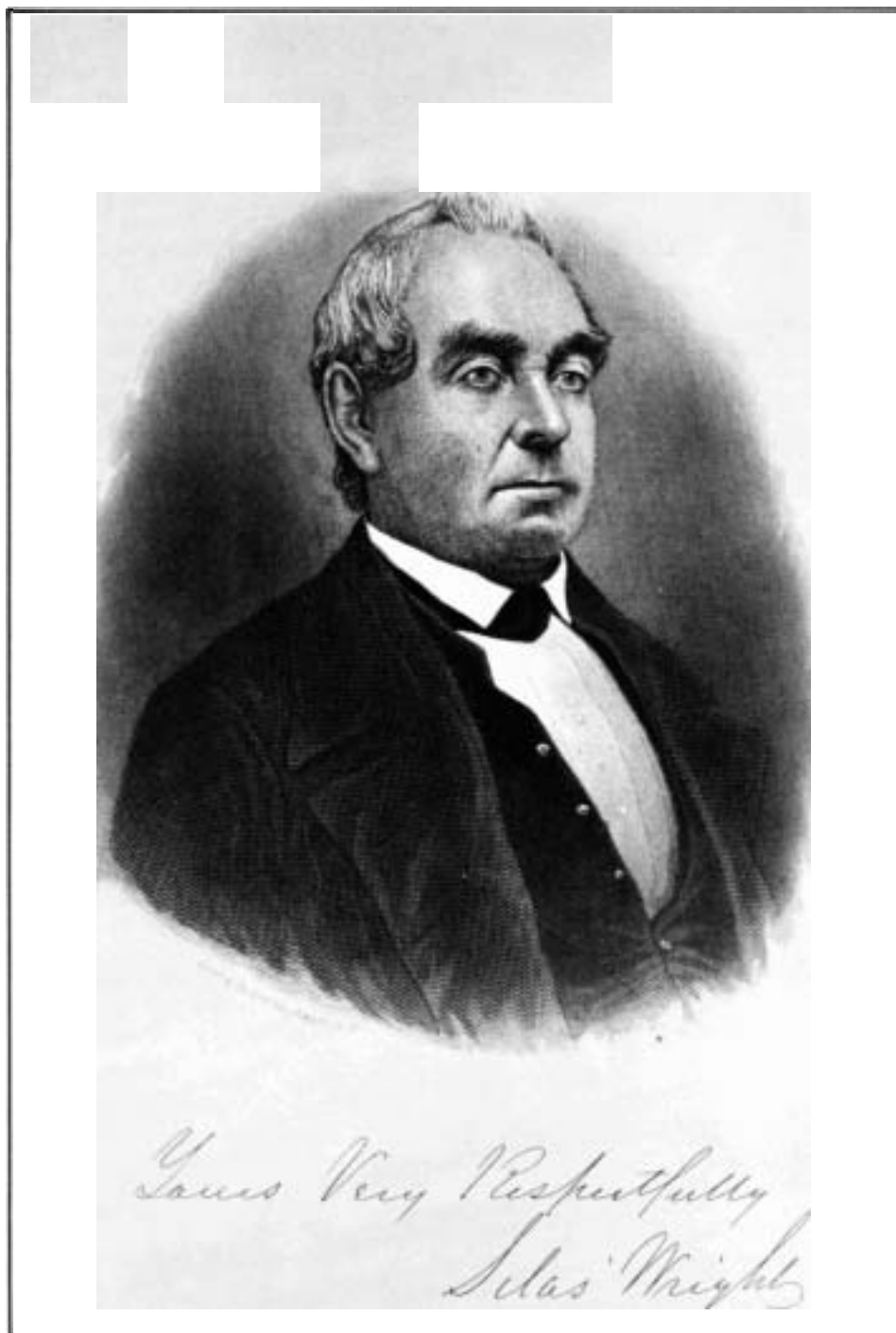


One side of locally embroidered parade banner for the 1844 campaign of Wright for Governor. Reverse shows an American eagle with motto "Peace We Love Best/War if Oppressed". (Courtesy of Special Collections, Owen D. Young Library, St. Lawrence University)

financial power for political ends. He applauded the war on the bank from Jackson's veto of its recharter to his removal of federal deposits from the bank's custody. Wright's role in establishing the independent treasury system as a substitute for the bank was one of his greatest achievements, according to one of his most recent biographers. He detested speculation and favored a hard money currency insofar as practicable. In short, he was a thoroughgoing Jacksonian Democrat. In Van Buren, Silas saw the man most capable of carrying these policies into effect once Jackson had retired.

On slavery, the other great issue rising to prominence during the 1830's and continuing during the 1840's, Wright was at first in agreement with the orthodox Jacksonian position, but before he died he had progressed considerably beyond it. With increasingly more northerners, including Abraham Lincoln, Silas took the position that, morally repugnant though the institution of slavery was, the South had the constitutional right to maintain it in the states where it already had roots. Abolitionists were nothing better than troublemakers, and their activities should be curbed by the Federal government, if necessary. On the other hand, slavery should not be permitted to expand with the country. When the war with Mexico made this issue urgent, Wright did not hesitate to back the Wilmot Proviso by which Congress would have prohibited slavery in any territory acquired as a result of the war. Having failed in the Senate in 1846, it was introduced in the House the next year by Preston King, Wright's political protege from Ogdensburg who owed his start in politics partly to Wright's backing him for the State legislature as early as 1834. It was widely recognized by 1847 that Silas had moved ahead of the rank and file of his party on the slavery problem, and consequently now many believed that King was speaking for Wright despite the latter's denials.

After winning election to the Presidency as Jackson's successor in 1836, Van Buren had no abler or more consistent a supporter in the Senate than Silas Wright. Even though depression spread gloom and pointed the finger of blame at the Democrats, Wright's loyalty never wavered, and when the time came in 1840 to elect a President, Silas felt sure that the fate of the nation could safely be entrusted only to the "little magician." Indeed, despite his four dismal years in office, the President was strong enough to win renomination. As is well known, however, the Whigs turned the campaign into a circus as they fought it on the slogan of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too"



Portrait of Silas Wright as Governor of New York State by Gavit and Co. Engravers, Albany, ca. 1844-1846. (From Life and Times of Silas Wright, SLCHA Archives)

instead of upon legitimate issues.

Pressure was put upon Silas to strengthen the national ticket in New York State by running for Governor, but he was adamant for once in his refusal. He could not afford the expense the office would involve; his wife was repelled by the social activity that would be forced upon her as wife to the governor; he would be more useful to the party in Washington. These arguments would be respected in 1840 and 1842, but by 1844 Silas would no longer

be able to resist the importunities of his friends, much to his later regret.

As though to make up for refusing to run, Silas threw himself into the campaign of 1840 with especial ardor. He dared to follow Daniel Webster throughout the state, listening to his orotund speeches in support of General Harrison and answering lucidly and briefly. This tour helped his own reputation even though he failed to turn the tide for Van Buren.

In his own North Country, Wright

found himself at odds with a public opinion on which he could usually count. This was largely due to the President's attitude and behavior during a revolt in the province of Ontario against the central Canadian government in 1838. Many New Yorkers sympathized with the rebels and even aided them in a way that was a breach of American neutrality. This the President could not countenance, but though these events seemed a dead issue by 1840, Wright could not get his constituents to forgive the President. In any case, St. Lawrence County was still cabin country. Harrison, allegedly born in a log cabin, swept to victory in the state and in the nation. Although the Democrats salvaged the governor's mansion by electing William Bouck, Silas Wright for once, could not even carry his own county for the national candidate.

When John Tyler, a state rights Democrat at heart, became President when Harrison died after a month in office, the Whig victory soured quickly. Tyler intended to be President in fact as well as in name, Henry Clay notwithstanding. Democrats watched with glee as the Whig party tore itself to pieces.

At one point Tyler offered Silas Wright a seat on the Supreme Court after an approach to Van Buren had foundered. Silas hesitated. He would have liked to wind up his career as a member of the court, and he was certain of Senate confirmation. But in the end he declined the offer—mainly, perhaps, because he still hoped to lead the fight in 1844 that would bring Van Buren back to the White House. Wright's self sacrifice only enhanced his popularity in the party instead (as he perhaps hoped) of removing him further from consideration for public office. As Van Buren's star waned, Wright's seemed on the rise in spite of all he could do to prevent it.

The demise of the Clintonians with their leader's death had seemed to mean clear sailing for the Bucktails, but it was not long before a dangerous split began to appear in the state Democratic ranks. To the former Clintonians were added an increasingly large defection from the Bucktails. Together the new wing of the party came to be known as "Hunkers" to describe their immovable conservatism on both state and national issues. The defectors left their former allegiance gradually in many cases, making the result all the

worse. The Bucktails could ill afford, for example, the loss of either Edwin Crosswell, their leading newspaper spokesman as editor of the *Albany Argus*, or of William Marcy, Wright's friend of longstanding who became Polk's Secretary of War. The Hunkers moved toward a closer relationship with the Southern Democrats, while the Bucktails (becoming "Barn Burners") leaned toward the northern free soil movement. For awhile it was hard to say which group represented the majority of Democrats in the state, and this more than once led to puzzlement and confusion of the leaders of the national party, especially when the problem arose of which side to favor in matters of patronage.

As the election of 1844 approached, the Regency again rushed to support Van Buren as its candidate for the presidency. His reputation was tarnished by his having been President during four years of depression, and by his defeat by Harrison four years earlier. His views on the annexation of Texas and the extension of slavery were as yet obscure. While the Hunkers were not yet out in the open against the Little Magician, much less Silas Wright, they were happy to see the former defeated in the Democratic national convention.

At this point there developed in the party, with Van Buren's concurrence, a scheme to turn to Silas Wright. Only his most uncompromising refusal stifled the movement. When James K. Polk was fixed upon as a satisfactory nominee, the convention, practically without contest, went ahead to finish its business by naming Wright as Polk's running mate. Silas had not attended the convention but had left word with some of his friends not to let his name be put forward for any office. They remained silent. He, however, flatly refused to accept what appeared to be a *fait accompli*. Instead, he quickly wired his refusal. About to adjourn, the convention could not believe its ears, and mistrusting the newly invented telegraph, sent a special messenger to Wright to tell him of his good fortune. Again, Silas shot back his positive refusal, and this time a rather bemused party hastily withdrew his nomination, gave it to George M. Dallas of Pennsylvania, and adjourned.

But if Silas had thought to be left in peace, he soon discovered his mistake. He owed it to the party, he was told, to resign his Senate seat and his chairmanship of the Senate finance committee to run for Governor. Silas wisely thought of himself as a better legislator than an executive, but the outcome of the election in New York was recognized as being of the utmost importance since the candidate of the Liberty, or



The only known likeness of Clarissa Wright, date unknown. (Courtesy of the SLCHA Archives)

Abolitionist, party might well poll enough votes to defeat the Democrats and give the national election to the Whigs. Clearly it was necessary to strengthen Polk's chances by uniting the Democrats behind the strongest possible candidate for Governor—Silas Wright. Although William Bouck wanted a third term, his popularity had eroded severely. As for Wright, having twice squirmed out of the nomination for Governor in the past, this time he bowed to the insistence of his friends. Easily defeating Bouck in the state convention, he undoubtedly helped Polk carry New York and the country in the election in November. Wright, however reluctantly, was installed as Governor at last.

This was a sad milestone in Silas's career. The obligations in Albany raised all the unpleasant personal consequences that he and Clarissa had anticipated. Politically the new Governor felt compelled to veto a generally popular canal appropriation bill and to call out the militia to suppress the violence caused by the "Anti-Renters," a group of dissidents in the Hudson Valley bound by an almost feudal obligation to continue to pay rent on land which their families might have occupied for generations. Wright showed himself indecisive as an executive. Actually he sympathized with the Anti-Renters cause, but felt he had no choice but to uphold lawful procedures.

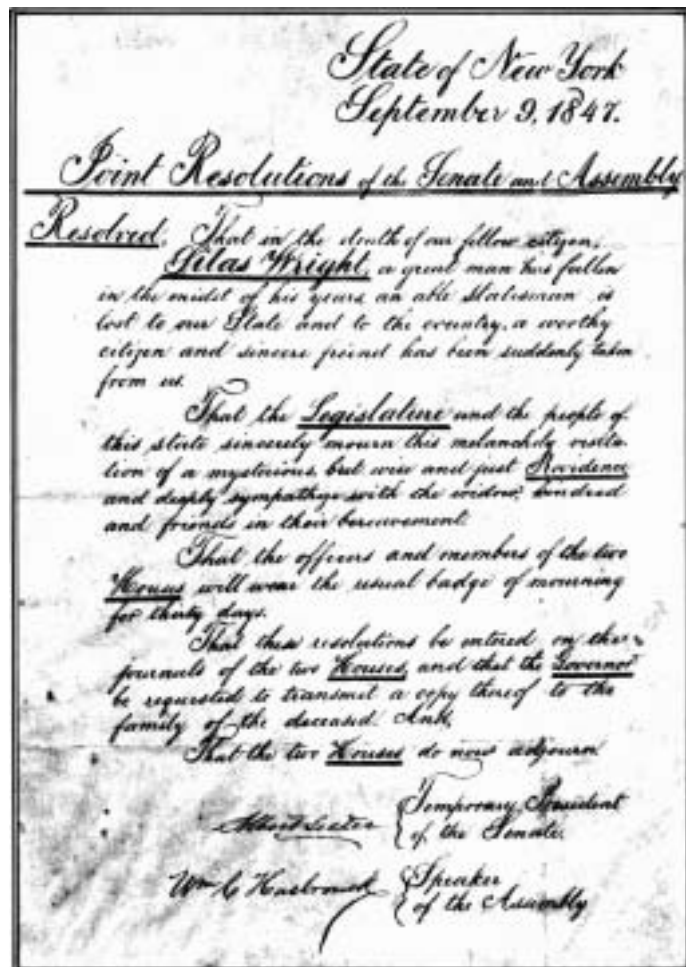
Although he and the new President had been friendly when both had served in Congress and Polk much appreciated Wright's cordial support during the campaign, the President had little understanding of the fluid and complex political factionalism in New York State. Polk tried in his patronage appointments, in the absence of positive requests by Wright, to please both Hunkers and Bucktails. When it was too late, he realized that he had been misled by the Hunkers (by William Marcy in particular) and admitted in his diary that he had made a mistake.

Silas weathered his two years as Governor, but when, still reluctantly, he ran for a second term in 1846, he went down to defeat. Considerably relieved, he could at last look forward to retirement in Canton and packed up his belongings in February 1847 for the arduous winter trip homeward, part of the way by sleigh.

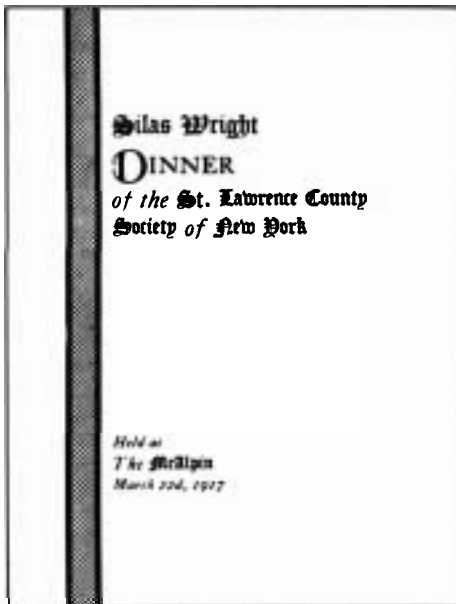
Silas and Clarissa had little time to enjoy the rustic retirement to which they had so long looked forward. In the spring, Silas strove long and hard to get his farm into good operating condition. But he chopped wood and worked his fields too long and vigorously and frequently came home exhausted after the long stints of physical labor. One



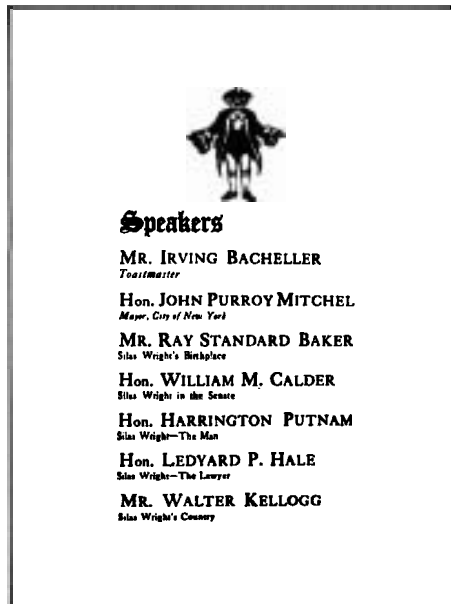
The old schoolhouse, Congregational Church and Silas Wright monument in Weybridge, Vermont, by Gavit and Co., Engravers, Albany. (From Life and Times of Silas Wright, SLCHA Archives)



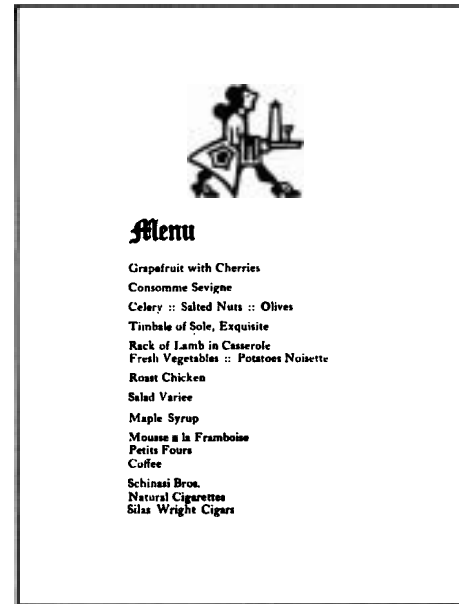
Proclamation of mourning for the death of Silas Wright by the New York State Legislature. (Courtesy of the SLCHA Archives)



Program booklet for 1917 dinner honoring Silas Wright in New York City.



List of speakers at Silas Wright program.



Menu of dinner. (Courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

day in the heat of August, he walked into the Canton post office and began to exchange pleasantries with his friends. Suddenly he complained of a pain, became very pale, and found himself a chair. His concerned friends called a doctor who eased the pain with drugs sufficiently for Silas to walk home and go to bed. The next day his heart failed completely.

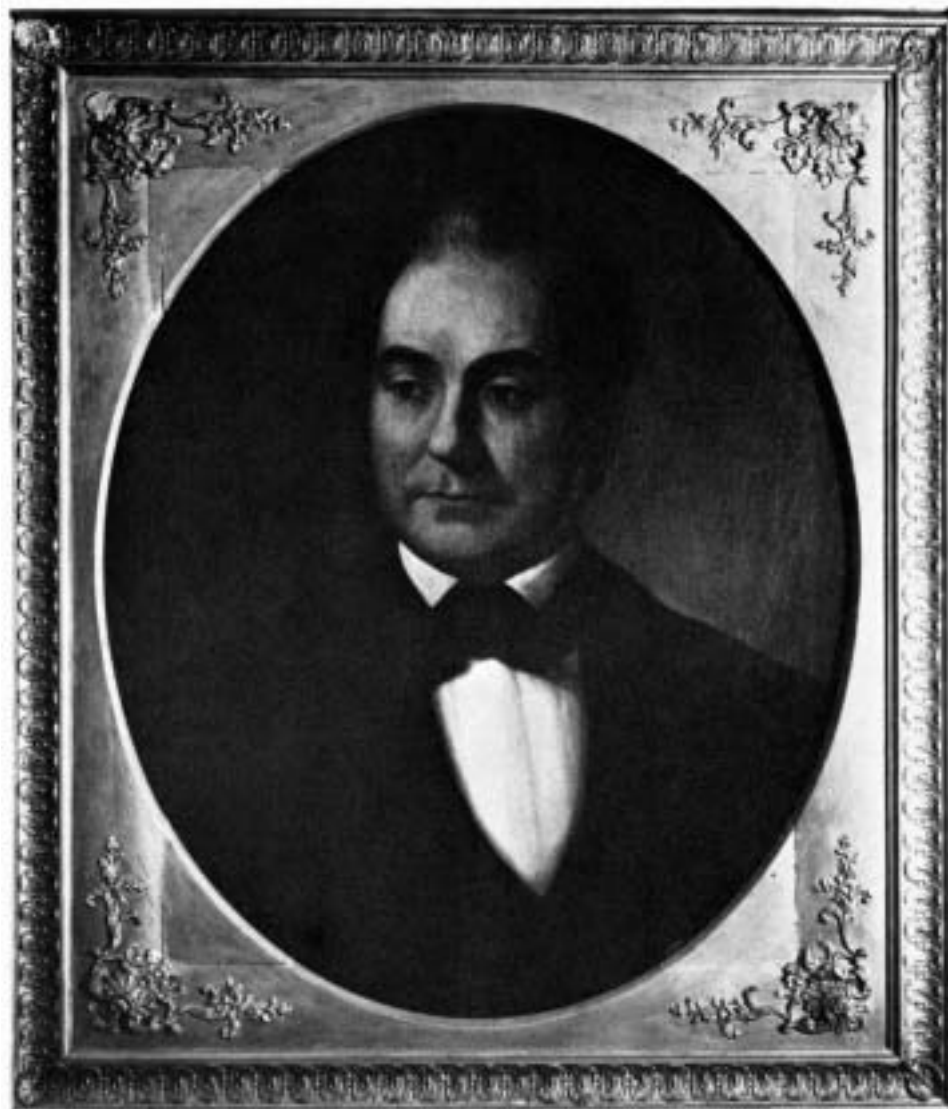
The suddenness of Wright's death, his relative youth, and his untarnished reputation brought forth lamentations throughout the nation. Walt Whitman mourned his passing in the *Brooklyn Eagle* when he wrote he was "accustomed to look upon [Wright] as a tower of strength, and as a shield for righteous principle . . ." John C. Calhoun, not without satisfaction, said when he heard the news, "Burnt out at last." In the opposite camp the Abolitionist poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, wrote:

"Man of the millions thou art lost too soon. Who now shall rally Freedom's scattering host. Who wear the mantle of the leader lost? Who stay the march of slavery?"

The poet's query would be answered by Abraham Lincoln who is many ways bore a strong resemblance to Silas Wright. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has pointed out that each was

". . . a man of the people, humble in origin, modest in circumstance, plain in manner, given to hard physical labor himself, digging on a farm in New York (or splitting rails in . . . Illinois) . . ."

In their personal integrity, political moderation, yet patriotic devotion to the Union, the two men were also alike. As Schlesinger says, Wright "was a preliminary sketch for Abraham Lincoln."



Oil portrait of Silas Wright, "Citizen of Canton, Farmer, Lawyer, Statesman". Date and artist unidentified. (Courtesy of Collection of SLCHA)

By his friends in St. Lawrence County, Silas was remembered for his generous and gusty good humor. He was to be the inspiration for a novel, *The Light in the Clearing*, by another distinguished North Countryman, Irving Bacheller.

In Weybridge, Vermont, Silas was eulogized and a monument raised in his memory. In St. Lawrence County contributions for a similar project were limited to two dollars a person to emphasize the wide and democratic nature of Wright's following. This money would pay for the headstone in the "Simitary" on West Street in Canton to which Silas would give his name and where Clarissa would be buried beside him when she died in 1870.

If indeed Silas Wright is forgotten today as a national leader of an earlier generation, his memory is well preserved in the simple farmhouse in Canton that (in recent years) has been restored and made into the St. Lawrence County museum. It is a fitting

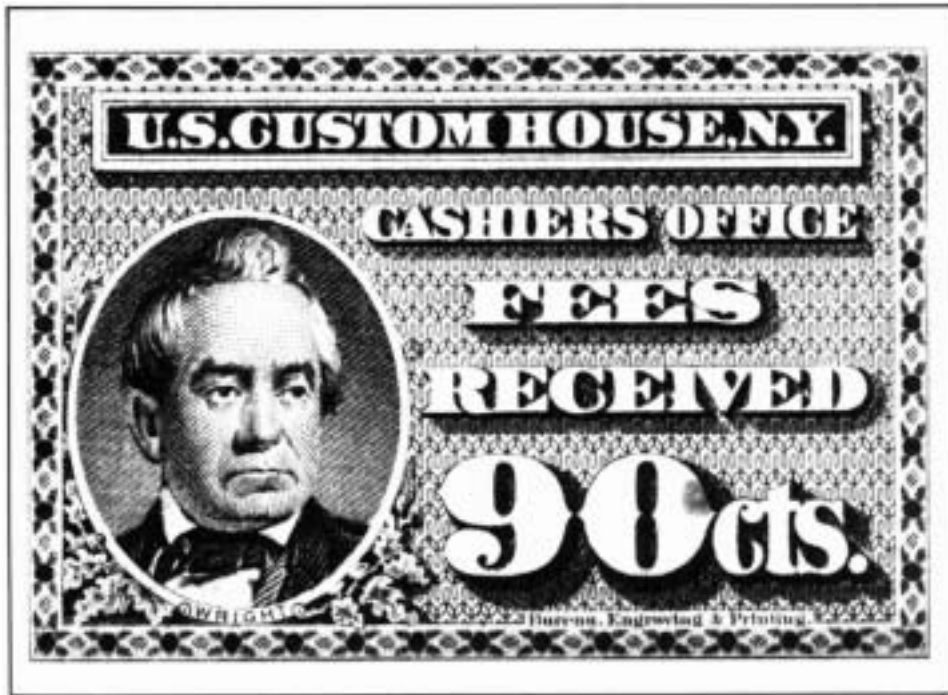
tribute to this man of the people, the Farmer Statesman and Great Commoner, and to the way that he and his wife lived in the place they loved best.

About the Author

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For Further Reading:

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One of a set of eight Customs Fee stamps used from 1887 until 1918. Only Washington and Franklin have also been honored by a complete issue of United States government stamps. (Courtesy of the Collection of SLCHA)



Monument to Silas Wright in Canton, erected with donations of money by citizens of St. Lawrence County. (Photo courtesy of SLCHA Archives)



Parlors of the Silas Wright House and Museum, restored to period of 1830 to 1850. (Photo by Gary W. Graham, courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

Memoirs of Andrew Tuck—Part II

The middle years of the life of Andrew Tuck of Lisbon include his many wise land investments and a growing confidence and political wisdom. Local politics would indeed become the springboard for the satisfying and successful last years to be described in the January 1983 issue.

The house was getting cold notwithstanding the quantity of good wood that could be placed in that fireplace, with first putting a large log sometimes twenty-four inches in diameter drawn in by a horse. The door was sufficiently wide, and the log was placed in the rear of the fireplace and next the wall, and in front of this was piled small wood on two andirons. John had cast these on purpose—very large and heavy—and we are still using them in a small fireplace in our present home, somewhat of a curiosity. When this pile of wood became well going, it made great light and warmth in that small room. There was a large hearth made of flat stones in front of this fire and it was on one of those flat stones I found a lot of figures one morning which Mother said I got out of bed in the night and made on that stone—with the great light of the fireplace she could plainly see. I recognized the figures as the solution of an example on which I was working the afternoon and evening before. I had a weakness of getting up in my sleep and repeating the work which annoyed me the preceding day. The example was properly worked out, whoever did it.

In 1852 John and Mother resolved to build a house. My brother had planted trees on the top of the hill on the side of the road where sometime he would build a house. Mr. Bates, a civil engineer, said this hill and its surroundings was the highest land in Lisbon, so here one morning John took the team, plow and scraper, and of course I went with him. This was in 1852 (you see I was about nineteen), and went to the top of the hill, now called "Spruce Hill" because of those spruce trees planted there years ago in advance of the new house.

We began plowing and scraping on this hill for the cellar for the new house, and of course the highway was on a level with this location, for the latter was over the top of the hill also. Some time in the day an old man by the name of James Duffey—a very intelligent and well read old man, never was married, had some money, a relative of the Duffeys and O'Hagans who lived near, and we were always glad to see him—came to where we were at work and we sat down for a while (here is a turn of good luck). After a little talk, and he did it nicely. "Well now, John," said the old man, "you are going to build your new house

on the top of this hill from which you will have a fine view of the surroundings. But there will be days in summer and winter in which you will dearly pay for it, in storms, snow and ice," and thus on the old man talked. John listened, and among the last things he said, and it is an old saying, that "good luck rolls to the bottom of the hills." We plowed and scraped no more, either that day or the next. John and Mother were thinking. We began at the bottom of the hill where the house is now and in a couple of days had done all that could be done with the team and scraper, with but little plowing. We were all thankful that the old man came at the right time. My son John Bennet came very near purchasing a lot in Syracuse on which to build his home and at a high price because of the elevation of the lot—about seventeen steps to enter the house—a great mistake for any young person—for old people will not make this mistake. We ought to have given that old man a small pension, his tobacco and pipes each year. Along about this time John bought the Driscoll place of eighteen acres and that was deeded to himself. The other two lots of fifty acres each were deeded to Mother, John and myself, and those three lots stand as deeded when paid for. No will by any one, no settlement, no anything, the first as Father left it. All the papers of those days are in a large tin round can so that the papers may be rolled up, therefore not liable to cut, and I have just thought why not roll all our valuable papers and deposit them in this round tin can, so they will not cut.

As I have previously stated I was very well satisfied that continuously inside of closed doors would not be a good instrument for me, and that judgment has been confirmed in my eighty-first uncelebrated anniversary, with just sufficient rheumatism in my knees to compel me to go slower.

Here I was, Mother, John and myself. Of course, for some years past we kept a hired girl, which was quite easily secured then. I think I was working with some ambition to have something (the leaven of which was fed me when I boarded with that man Lawler), to set up that mark way ahead of you, to have something to go by that other fellow, to save. I recall him lying on the lounge and saying many things in this strain which impressed me much, for John in my day was not ambitious. If it

looked like rain and there was a lot of hay or grain which was fit to come to the barn, and to get it wet would do some injury, I would crowd the work, and he would say, "Well, let it rain," that was all. I recall an incident which I often narrate, and like to do it. We were drawing fall rye from the Ginning place very near where a log barn once stood on the top of the hill near the John Glass line. It looked very much like rain; the rye was in bundles, very dry, and we were a good ways from home. John was building and I was throwing on, and I suppose began to increase as the clouds blackened. "Not quite so fast, bad stuff to build," said he. I slowed up; soon again, "Slower." I suppose I minded, and not long again "too d—m fast." I intended to go slower, but the rye as you all know was in bundles and put up in what we called stooks (some call them shocks). When I had thrown on the stook I would pass on to the next on the same side of the load, when he very kindly, considerably called my attention that we were not taking the field clean as there were several on the other side which would not be in condition to shed rain. I went to the other side and found many bundles on the ground. When the bundles came faster than he could build, he just pitched them to the ground—not a word said—no argument—no changed face or feelings with him—he just pitched them out of his way, that was all, and went slower, I assure you, and it did not rain. In after years I could see this was good judgment on his part. Why tire himself entirely out, why worry? He had done nobly for me, brought no woman into the new house to encroach on Mother's ways, whether they were right or wrong. If a sacrifice was to be made in her interests and comforts during the remainder of her life, it would not come from him.

During those years following my "school master" days, I did some good hard work. We worked up to eleven cows, well fed and cared for so that we were prepared for war prices. About this time a man from Ogdensburg, said to be wealthy, Mr. Morgan, who dealt in wholesaling liquor, purchased a large farm on both sides of the Canton road (Mr. L.K. Martin owns the easterly side at this date), and stocked with thoroughbred cattle, Ayrshires. He paid enormous prices, imported from Scotland full bred Ayrshire bulls and

cows. This stirred up Dr. Bridges who was buying farms and stocking with cattle, and because the doctor might be a competitor of his would not sell a heifer calf from "Sony." So the doctor sent me to offer him \$100 for the calf, but no.

About this time I began to try and better our stock and went to Montreal to a breeding firm of Ayrshires, the Messrs. Daws, and bought a fine yearling Ayrshire bull. The price was \$50. This was during the first years of our Civil War, and it took \$80 in greenbacks to even up with the \$50 in gold. The gold dollar was worth \$1.60. There was a time during the war when it took \$2.38 to buy a gold dollar. A greenback dollar was worth 42 cents in gold. When I came to Ogdensburg all pronounced him (the bull) perfect but Mr. Morgan; the papers had many references to him. Shortly after this I went to a noted Ayrshire breeder near Montreal by the name of Logan and bought an Ayrshire calf for sixty dollars. At two years old I took those to the State Fair at Utica and got first prize on the bull, thirty dollars, and had free transportation both ways. I think I ought to follow this stock matter back right here. I was devoting some time to this stock problem just now in the sixties and had later on some good milking Ayrshire heifers, but nervous, and many with short teats, so that I changed to a good milking class of the Durham and later to our present grade of Holsteins. Both the latter had good teats and quiet dispositions.

I charged three dollars for service of the bull, and when he was about five years old, I advertised him for sale in the *Country Gentleman* and sold him to Miss Hayes, of Summitt, N. Y., for three hundred dollars, and paid expenses, sixty dollars, to her farm, to bring him myself. She came to the yard and looked him over and let out her bull to compare them. She was a small plain little woman, very rich, and carried on her father's farm. She wrote me afterwards that the building took fire and was entirely destroyed, including the bull, and other stock, most of which being her father's and prized very much by her. This was my first sight of New York City, and Oh! Broadway, that first time!

I ought to say something about my politics along here, 1852 to 1856.

The slavery question was the paramount problem at that time. The great statesman Wm. H. Seward called it the "Irrepressible Conflict" in one of his greatest efforts in the Senate, and it was heralded over and over throughout the country until slavery was no more.

In 1852 the Missouri Compromise was repealed and the vast western

domain and territories were opening for settlers, and whether those should be free or slave states was the great problem. The Dred Scott Decision by Judge Tawny, Chief Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, was made, viz., that the master had a right to take his slave with him as property when traveling through free states and hold him there as property. We were compelled to protect him (the master) in his rights—and if necessary capture the slave if escaping from his master.

This excitement continued through the years '53, '54 and '55. The Republican party was organized and John C. Fremont was nominated as its candidate for president and Wm. L. Dayton for vice president. The Democrat party nominated James Buchanan for president, and the latter was elected. Slavery was the principal issue while the tariff was much of a factor also, the Republicans claiming a duty on imports to give labor better wages than the man who made the imported article. To illustrate, if the labor on an axe cost 50 cents in Wales, the tariff on the axe at our port should be sufficiently high so that the labor here would cost \$1.00.

In those days the Irish Catholics were Democrats generally, so that the three Catholics in this great county of St. Lawrence—Michael Motton of Ogdensburg, my brother and myself—who were Republicans were somewhat of a curiosity. This was my first vote, 1856.

Father Mackey was an active Democrat with whom I often had a tussle, but he would always fire the first gun. I well remember at one time when I told him I was willing to be instructed in anything pertaining to our church, as I ought, and needed a lot of it, but would plant my potatoes where I thought best, subject to my brother's judgment always, or I should have my pants out with flaps, the old way, or opened in front, the new way. I think this time I saw a smile or at least a symptom of one. Yet I always had very much respect for him. He came here at a time when things were rough and coarse, the Northern Railroad was being built, and in those days it took the Irish to do it. Not many Americans, Englishmen, Italians or Jews were ever found under a caved in bank. There were some Irishmen then, true, who were not a credit to any country, but the Yankee found that he made the mistake of his life if he used the same measures on every man who came here from that little Island, so that Father Mackey had a very large class of persons who were not so easily advised as those of the present. The seminaries are finishing young men under different training for the clergy. The cathedral

here today with its noble organ, its beautifully sounding bell and accompanying chimes all stand together as a noble monument to Father Mackey's perseverance.

We were well along in our disputes in politics when one day he called me into the vestry, gave me the Bible, and was very nice with your mother and myself when we were married, and were called a good while ahead: "The bands of matrimony are being published for the first time between Maria Lynch and Andrew Tuck. If any one knows any impediment to this marriage they are bound to inform me of it immediately on pain of ex-communication." And we had this notice heralded from the altar and not from the pulpit on three succeeding Sundays, and everybody kept quiet. Your mother and I didn't look up and all the rest looked towards us.

When Bishop Wadhams came to Ogdensburg he said to me he was glad the congregation was not all Democrats and I was delighted, but later on he qualified by saying it could not be said we were "clanish" or the priest's influence was the reason they were conscientiously divided, but I thought even that was a gain. But in those years up to the election of Lincoln and for some years after I was something of a political curiosity—an Irishman, a Republican.

In those days bees (a lot of men together) in the fall were quite common with farmers, and husking corn bees were prolific. Our section of the country was Democratic, and of course my brother and myself were "turn coats," and in the opinion of some could not be very good Catholics. Leaving the Democratic party was nearly equivalent to leaving the church, so that in almost all of those gatherings we were more or less targets for the gibe or the joke which, of course, nearly all the company present enjoyed. I am sure now that at my age then, as I compare the good old men, I must have said many things which were not in my place to say, and now as I look back at those days, those good men must have tolerated many things I said, but with John it seemed he could not offend them for he was severe in criticism. Thus coming out from under bondage, from under despotism, where you were oppressed and risked your lives for sixty days on a sea vessel that you might have a home of your own and enough to eat, you were not content with your own liberty without you could deprive the other fellow who was just a little darker than many of yourselves of his liberty. "I never knew an Irishman for a boss but was a tyrant with his employees," said my brother, John, and they would not become mad at him. They would just

laugh, but if I said half as much as that they would become terribly vexed. I often said to him, "You are too severe for you know that is not true." His reply would be, "I don't want office, I am not afraid to tell the truth. You seem to be taking good care of yourself early."

In 1860 our two votes were counted in the Lincoln column, of which I am proud, in looking back over fifty-four years. It required courage, confidence and firmness in those four years. A draft came in 1862. I was drawn and notified that I had been doing something in politics, was talking in school houses and was sent with Col. James (Ed James) to speak at Colton. I suppose this was done by Ed's father, Judge James, as there were many Catholic Irishmen there who had bought land from the Judge, and it was reported ahead of us that Judge James' son and a Catholic priest were going to speak in the village of Colton on a night named. So when we entered the hall, one could readily hear "Which is the priest, must be the hind one, that is a h-ll of a priest." Anyway, we had a good Republican meeting. I remember well Ed saying to me, "You speak first for they may go out if you speak last." He changed his mind later. Now about my draft. I went to headquarters for examination, where I showed my notice, was called into a room with Dr. Cole whom I knew pretty well. He asked me to strip and stand on a nice carpeted stand. When he asked where he would look and save time, I said, "I don't know, I think I am sound and hope you will not be able to find a scratch." He did not look much. We visited a little and I remained over Sunday there. Gen. Thorndike was the man in charge of the whole military matter. Hon. Wm. A. Wheeler, President of the Malone National Bank, was on the Board of Enrollment and was afterwards Vice President of the United States. Anyway, I was fairly well entertained those two nights and Sunday without being put into camp. I left \$300 with Mr. Wheeler with which to secure a substitute for me as they seemed to be willing to do it. I gave him \$12 more as "pin money" for the man. There seemed to be a question whether the men drafted would not be liable to a subsequent draft, but by commuting \$300 as the law directed, if they sent a substitute they were clean of subsequent draft. I told Mr. Wheeler that I would rather send a man if he could find one and gave him the \$312 and asked that he send me the man's name and for the man to write me. I received the substitute's address from the Board, John Blanchard, but never heard a word afterwards.

The people of our town were much

excited over a coming subsequent draft, as they were having riots in enforcing drafts in New York City, so that the Government made many changes in the law to secure soldiers. If a locality would furnish its quota of men by enlistment or an equivalent in money of a certain amount per man, it would be relieved of draft. One of the first schemes for the two to raise its quota of money was by a tax, but there was no law for such a course. Mr. Alexander A. Martin was Supervisor, and I said to him, "Raise the money on your note as Supervisor and by the time the Supervisors meet there will be a law permitting the board to put it into the assessment roll" but he had his fears of the people repudiating the debt. I said it was for their safety to prevent a draft and they surely would not be so ungrateful as to strengthen the proposition. I said, "I will give you \$500 to be used as you think best with other funds for the use of this town in avoiding a draft, or as you may see fit; of course, I will expect interest." He took it, and I afterwards got my money back. If the war had closed before a law was enacted, I am not sure that those people would have been willing to pay me. I am knowing humanity a lot better in the last fifty-two years. It has taken a lot of time, pencil and paper to get this point brought out; *don't do it—he may tell you that he has a family he must take care of—take care of yourself and family first.*

In a preceding chapter I gave what I regarded as reasons why my brother never married, in substance because of the danger of in any way making the remainder of Mother's old age unhappy.

Now about myself, not far from thirty-two years of age. Mother was suffering with rheumatism, very old, had had a cancer removed from her breast long ago and had symptoms of the same trouble in her right arm, the same side from which the cancer had been removed. Relying on hired help—what was I going to do, marry or not marry? I had been debating it with myself for a few years back, and, looking at it from all sides, I could find in the problem but the two principal ones: bring a wife in here (just the thing my brother would not do) or leave them and let them live alone? What ought I to do? Very soon one old man and one not very young, not a very inviting situation ahead? But there is one who is no relation of ours whom I must not deceive. I wish I could put it stronger. To the little girl who acquitted herself so nicely in her geography class at the meeting of the school district at Flackville seven years ago, to whom I have already referred, I had been saying pleasant and nice things for a good while. I resolved not to deceive

the best girl I ever knew, Maria Lynch. While these crude and detached sentences are intended for my own family, and I am aware only those will be interested in what I am recording, "I am satisfied that any father or mother may turn these pages over and read what I say about the mother of my family. It may be said by some that it is either soft or vain, and perhaps both, but I only regret that in my busy life I had not taken more time in acts of vanity and foolishness. I wish I could say more and better, that my family might profit by my mistakes. Let not the foolishness of youth follow you into old age.

It was the 30th day of December, 1865, at 11 o'clock A.M. that we were married at the church in Ogdensburg by Rev. Father Mackey, in the presence of Capt. John Delaney and Margaret Lynch. We had our dinner at a hotel. Our itinerary consisted in crossing the river at Prescott (the very place I crossed it thirty-two years before in a canoe), thence to Ottawa, and took a week to view the Parliament building, then in construction, and from there over the same route home.

I once heard the Rev. Wm. Gorden say—a Presbyterian minister who lived in this neighborhood and who preached at Flackville, a very able man—"when a man married he raised or lowered himself a step," he did not remain as when single. This was long before I was married. I often thought of it, an absolute truth. The wife either raised or lowered the husband. Marriage is not an exception to the laws of nature. Nothing stands still; it's either receding or progressing. I am sure in my case your mother broke many habits which I had formed that I was not aware of.

If I was writing a letter that I was particular with, I would almost always read it to her before it was mailed.

I am sure that when you all went out in the world, as you are now, you appreciated your mother's good judgment and criticism more and more. Ours was the case of the unknown wife of the fairly well known husband, and when the latter left home he often left more brains at home than he took with him, where often most needed, and with better results. I can take a lot of this to myself, if not all.

Your mother and I took that little bedroom upstairs in the southeastern corner of the house. Mother and John seemed to be contented thus far.

Mary Agnes was born the 19th of November, 1866, John Bennet the 5th of April, 1868. This young family seemed to make it interesting for Mother and John, so that about this time we were beginning to lose sight of the trouble in which John would take no risk but in which I did—his mother's

comforts. So I think all around we were feeling better; all this, because of your mother's good judgment, patience and more or less self sacrifices. And I want to say here, it is universally better not to load the young mother with too great a trial; avoid it if you can. I have just used the words "young mother," your mother said she liked to be called "mother" not "ma." She didn't like ma and pa or papa—"father" and "mother" are what she liked. In my opinion the latter is the greatest prefix that can be given with a name. No wonder that all men should bare their heads for women and that the United States Government sets apart one day in the year as "Mothers Day" (the Saturday preceding the second Sunday in May).

William Francis was born August 4th, 1869. (Will graduated from the Ogdensburg Academy in 1890 at the age of twenty-one. He came home with typhoid fever, had three relapses and died the 4th of September, 1890.) May 11, 1874, Andrew Edward was born and graduated from the Ogdensburg Academy in 1894. Charles Henry was born April 21, 1881; he graduated from the Ogdensburg Academy in 1899.

Mother's right arm began to pain her along in the summer of 1868. Doctors thought it was the effect of cancer growth, as I before referred to a cancer being removed from her breast on that side. She died Jan. 8, 1869, at the age of eighty-one, and is buried by the side of my father. John remained close to Mother for a long while before she died. One of the last things she did was to reach the left hand, the good one (she was lying on her right side) and fix a pin in John's shirt collar, and said to me "Be good to each other—you have somebody" (here is their whole lives summed up) "John has nobody." That pin John preserved. He got a little gold chain and cross attached to it. I think your sister, Mary, has preserved it. Thus ends the life of my father and mother.

Because of what I had heard my mother say in reference to the places where she had lived in Ireland, and a brother of Father's who remained in Ireland, Edward Tuck (who had what was called good learning in the family—was a surveyor—we call it here civil engineer—and who seems to be the one in my father's family who received the learning, as I have always heard that was the limit to learning in most families in that part of Ireland), it was my wish when my son, Charles, made his trip around the world in the interest of the Agricultural Department of Cornell University, and his own, in 1913, that he would endeavor to find some evidences of our family in the places heretofore named, and particularly about Edward Tuck, the brother of my father

who remained in Ireland. Time had defaced the little hamlets, as well as the church yard tomb stone marks, many of which had fallen in the many years gone by (no one to care for the marks, what with relatives beyond the sea in the Western world, the land of liberty—"America"), but he did find a small monument with inscriptions relating to the death of Edward Tuck.

I want to say here that none of our people from Ireland could talk Irish—there was no Irish spoken in Queens County. I heard Mother say my father went out of their county on business and he could scarcely get lodging. People had fears of him because of his language. They could not understand him.

It took some strategy to get Mother to sit for her picture. A daguerreotype (*not with manuscript—Ed.*)—you will find it in an enclosed dark case, was taken about fifty-five years ago. It is beginning, as you will see, to show some spots. I will take it to the city the next time I go and see if it can be copied. Mother was afraid to ascend those high places, so we brought a large arm chair down to the street, got her to sit in it and carried her upstairs. Dow says he can make a picture from it; those dark spots better be left alone.

And now came the next crucial test. Your mother stood by with the family in a home not hers (and neither is it with Mother's passing away) it is still my brother's home. Your mother never could feel it as hers; we discussed it much. To buy some distance away would mean to leave John alone. Your mother did not favor that plan. She did not want to be the cause of leaving him alone and was very much in earnest in this. James F. Craig, father of J. Leslie Craig, lived where we are living at present. He had about 76 acres of land and thought he would rather live nearer to his brother, John, and sister, Mary Eliza, who lived where Leslie lives at this date, 1915. Thomas Craig, uncle of the above James F. Craig, owned quite a large farm adjoining the latter's brother which was for sale, and the more James F. thought about it the more anxious he became to buy. Here your mother's good judgment was shown when she conceived the thought of buying this farm on which we are living now. She said it would locate our home between our two lots and would keep us all together. John would have his own home to go to when he felt like it and still all work together. Now if we could agree on the price. The land was high and was made higher from the fact that Craig realized that two parties wanted the farm: the Dunn family, as they wanted more land, and Andrew Tuck and his wife. We bought the farm in the spring of 1872 on a contract, as

your mother said she wanted to help pay for some land (76 acres for \$5350—\$70.39 per acre). We paid some down, not much. I think I had the money I earned teaching school intact. Things were high through the war. We got 50¢ a pound for our butter, had from 11 to 13 cows. Potatoes and oats were high. We got \$1.00 in the spring for them and 90¢ for turnips. We saved all and bought nearly nothing. Goods were very high, your mother paid 60¢ a yard for sufficient goods to make cotton aprons, and I am sure we did not buy much and saved all we sold till the war was over, 1865.

During all those years up to 1879 species payments were suspended. Money in one's pockets didn't make any noise, no silver. Localities issued paper currency called "shinplasters." Gold was at a premium, 80, 70, 60, 40, 20. I stated in pages gone by how low a greenback became. The great problem of finance was how this country was going to be able to meet its obligations. Laws were passed making greenbacks legal tender. It was, I think, in General Grant's administration, 1879, when the Government resumed and when many brokers were ruined. Many became crazy, lost their minds, and many taken to the asylum. It was "Black Friday." In July, 1873, your mother began to talk of moving up to the new place—and again, what will John do? Will he come to his meals with us? He did, but it was a trial for him. Of course, we expected he would go to his own house nights, and all that summer John Bennet went home with him nights, mostly on his Uncle John's back. John liked this. We were always contented when the children were with him as we knew they were absolutely safe. He was very kind to them.

In 1872 we added Widow Moore's lot (house burned). There were fifty acres of land in that lot, still known as the Moore lot, immediately opposite "Spruce Hill" where we were digging the cellar when the old man came along and changed our plans, under the belief of "good luck rolls down hill and gathers at its base." This purchase was brought about by Timothy Egan who wanted one-half of it if I would take the other half. I did at \$32 per acre—no buildings. This made 101 acres of land, new purchases. Samuel Young, a near neighbor, owned 75 acres immediately in the rear of the Ginning place. He wanted to sell it to me and wished to give one-half of it to his son—or the half of what it would sell for. I gave him \$40 an acre for the lot if he would credit me with one-half the lot by giving it to his son who was willing to take it. The father wanted to give the son about that much. So I gave the father \$1500 and took a deed for

37½ acres and let the father and son settle with each other. 138½ acres of land added so soon—just think, where did the money come from?

In 1873 we built the new barn and repaired and changed the other stock buildings on the farm. It was during these inflated times that so many failed (bought land at swollen prices) when specie payments resumed in 1879 and prices of land and other things became normal—with so many in debt—it was a terrible strain on business, so that many failed. The fellow who was clear of debts could rest. Many said that our country was worth less following the war than prior to it. We were lucky. While I am on this land problem again I will give the dates of purchase and amounts paid and number of acres.

Soon after we were married we wished to own the South farm or the James F. Craig place as it was so near and would keep us all together, but Mr. Craig did not wish to sell at that time. We all thought that was an ideal lot of 65 acres and I sent Capt. John Delaney to him and offered him \$80 an acre for the lot and he refused; he would not sell. He died very suddenly, his son Gifford died, and the son's wife died. The place was rented some few years. The executor brought a partition sale and the place was sold in Mr. Spratt's office. I bid \$40 and quit. Henry Craig thought the place ought to bring \$50. It was struck off to him at \$46 per acre, \$2999.02 for 65.20 acres. He regretted his purchase. He thought he could hire the money at 4 per cent. I said to him, when he came to see me about hiring, that I could not let him have it at that rate, but would let him have it for a while so as to give him time to look around. He must have the money immediately, but he wanted to get it off his hands and offered it to me at his bid. My son Charles will recall how his mother, himself and his father discussed this purchase. Mother was friendly to the purchase; it gave us the fields from our house to the Craig road, about 210 rods. We had sold a 50 acre lot in De Peyster for \$4000. It was a long ways away (more about this hereafter). We were renting it and preferred to have it near home. Anyway there seemed to be a consensus of judgment to take the place at Henry Craig's bid, \$46 per acre, 65.20 acres, \$2999.20. I have not yet regretted this purchase. During the summer of 1873 Leslie W. Craig was making an effort to sell his father's place which had come into his possession, and could make a deal with Edgar Scott if the place could be made smaller. Leslie could see that if he could sell me that part of the farm immediately in the rear of the James Craig lot (which we owned), consisting of 41.34 acres and the same width as

ours (which would give us about 106 acres), this would make a more desirable farm to rent. I bought it for \$1575, \$38.08 per acre. I think I had better finish the land problem while on it.

The 80 acre lot we owned in De Peyster came about through a second loan. The preceding one was for \$500. Perry C. Nelson ran away, was badly involved, and Mr. Magone found where he was—some place in Oneida County and planned with some one out there and got him to execute a deed. This is the lot I sold Hollis McCurdy for \$4000. We built a nice little house on it. Your mother got the picture of a house in an agricultural paper and said it would be just the convenient house for that place. Mr. McCurdy had only \$200 to pay when he bought it. I sold it at 4 per cent per annum for five years, just about what he would have to pay as yearly rent. He is now paying 5 per cent. He bought on a ten year's contract, which expired two years ago.

For some years I was wondering if some of the boys might think well of going onto that farm, as it was a fine lot of 80 acres. There was a nice sugar bush on it, very good barn with basement stable, good building place from which one could see all over the farm, but you know all the rest better than I can tell it. Of course, I wanted to sell it badly or I would not have given it on a contract with so simple a payment of \$200, which he could not pay for some time after we moved. But I put the interest so low, 4 per cent, that if he paid the interest I was realizing as well as if rented directly, so I did not worry much. Here near this farm I saw much of the Fish Creek Flats, where with a favorable season and not too much water, great crops of marsh hay could be secured. It was uncertain, and before I sold the most of the owners were becoming dissatisfied with the flats.

I want to say here up to about this time—'70, '71, '72 and '73—not much actual study of the soil was made. Much of the land was quite new. We had taken out a lot of stones, big and little, let men have jobs in removing the pine stumps on the home place as well as our new home, and this was something in which your mother was much interested. There were a lot of large pine stumps on our new home. They looked bad from the house so we put a few folks working at them and made huge piles and burned them at night when your mother would come with me and push the pieces together. John seemed to be as much interested as your mother, and I feel it took good hard work to make those smooth fields.

From '70 to '73 our town taxes were beginning to be discussed and I was putting some thought in what our town

was doing. It was evident that Lisbon's valuation was increasing very rapidly under the Equalization Board of Supervisors. The increase of valuation of Lisbon exceeded any town in the county.

Two men in town were constant aspirants for the office, each having strong friends, but it seemed to be a personal struggle, losing sight entirely of the tax payers.

A third party sprung up and proposed to drop both men, agree on a new man, and have peace for one year at least. Alexander A. Martin and Samuel Wells were, and for some time had been, the contestants. Mr. Martin immediately consented, which he knew would strengthen his candidacy if Mr. Wells refused, but the latter reluctantly yielded, and I was unanimously nominated, with the "back ground feeling," "Would you nominate him for member of Congress, for member of Assembly or Senator?" "No. But I will trust him with our taxes." "Let us try him."

Some of my Irish friends would not vote for me for office for they regarded me as a "turn coat." If a good Catholic I ought to be a Democrat, I could not be much of a Catholic and be a Republican. In fact, the Catholics and those who were called Orange men were not far apart in granting me the liberty of selecting my politics—the latter my religious belief and the former my political belief.

I found by close association with the latter when we came to know each other better that I had good close friends, but the crucial test was just a little way ahead in my administration—the license problem. In those days the four Justices of the Peace and Supervisor as a Board granted or refused a license to sell liquor. Such board consisted of D.G. Lytle and Augustus Moncrief.

James K. Fulton, son-in-law of Nathan Wallace, had just bought the hotel. The Wallaces, Lytles, Flacks, Lawrences and many other leading men in town—all business men—were in sympathy with Fulton. Many men came here in the interest of a license. Many letters also were sent on the side of the latter. I can recall an instance when Mother was much alarmed by two strangers who came to see me, but I was to be gone all that night. They left a very threatening letter, so much so that Mother became alarmed and slept but little that night. She would be ready to meet them and take care of herself if necessary. Of course, I deemed it my duty not to argue this question with our townspeople. I listened to what they had to say on both sides. James F. Craig, Leslie Craig's father, was one of the strongest advocates of no

Caviar? From the St. Lawrence?

An Oral History of Sturgeon Fishing

by Thomas Vielhauer

Before the St. Lawrence Seaway and certain fishing restrictions, a small but profitable business thrived along the banks of the river, when men fished for sturgeon and for their great treasure, caviar. The grandson of an ex-sturgeon fisherman here explains the small industry based on interviews, some borrowed family photographs, and some sketches of his own.

My grandfather, William H. Vielhauer of Ogdensburg, began commercial sturgeon fishing in 1946. A man by the name of Mike LeMay taught him everything one would need to know about this occupation. Mr. LeMay personally took him out fishing on the St. Lawrence River several times to show him the "tricks of the trade".

My grandfather turned to sturgeon fishing for a living for many reasons. First of all there was a lack of available jobs. Second, the money was very good, and last, he had a great love of the outdoors.

Sturgeon fishing is a very complex process. Setting up a sturgeon fishing line requires many different kinds of materials. These include a main line approximately 600 feet long, made of $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " sisal rope. Sisal rope was used until nylon rope came into existence in the mid-1960's. This replacement was made because nylon proved to be much more durable, lasting far beyond the usual lifetime of 3-6 weeks for sisal rope. The underwater floats used by Vielhauer were old glass Clorox bottles which he found at the city dump. He also would search the shores of the river to collect different sized rocks for weights—1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. rocks for the weights on each section of the line, with 150-200 lb. rocks for weights on the ends of the main line. To attach the rope to rocks he would wrap wire around the rocks, creating a metal ring to which this rope was tied.

The drag used to retrieve the main line (which is underwater) consisted of a 4" by 4" piece of wood approximately 20 inches long, with two steel rods



William H. Vielhauer with one of his biggest catches. (Photo courtesy of the author)

placed through the wood at perpendicular angles. Each rod end was bent upward to form a hook. The inner core of the drag was filled with lead which added weight and also held the steel rods in place.

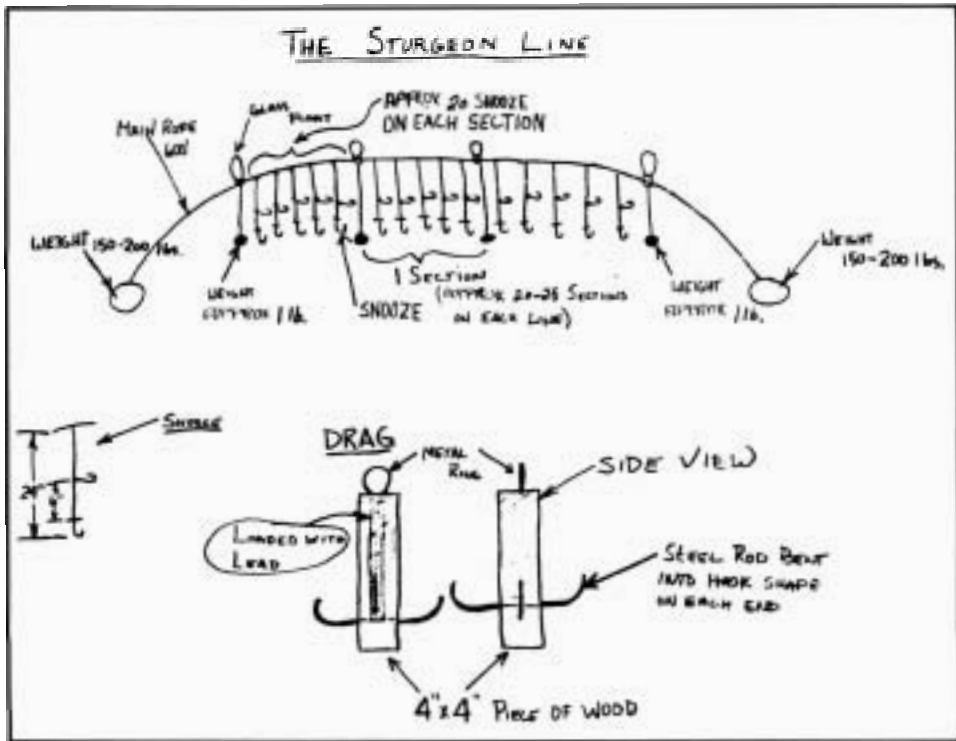
To find an adequate fishing ground, the rods on the drag were smeared with grease and then dragged along the bottom of the river bed. After bringing the drag to the surface, he would look for small clams on the steel rods, said to be indications of an area for good sturgeon fishing. This was called sounding out the bottom.

My grandfather would begin sturgeon fishing as soon as all floating ice was out of the river although there was

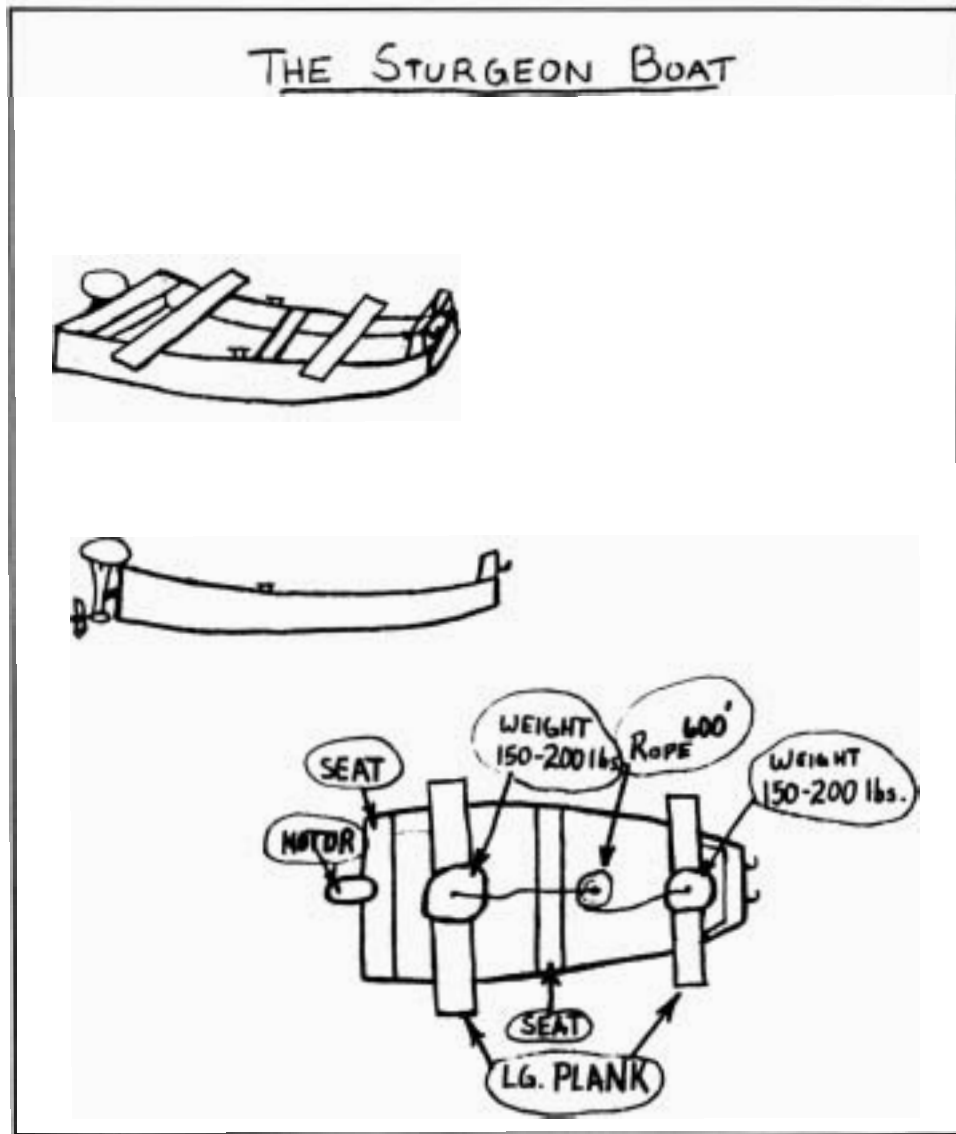
no special legal season. Lines were checked once a day in accordance with the weather conditions. Normally, they were left in the same area until they started to gather drifting weeds, around the first week of June. Fall fishing wasn't worth the time because of lack of fish.

The boat used for sturgeon fishing was very sturdy. The 150-200 lb. rocks were placed on two planks that lay across the width of the boat—one across the stern and one across the bow. The 600 foot main rope was coiled into a ball around my grandfather's fist and then placed in the middle of the boat. The inside of the coil was attached to the rock at the stern; the

THE STURGEON LINE



THE STURGEON BOAT



outside of the coil was attached to the rock at the bow. The stern plank was lifted first, allowing the rock to roll into the water. Then he would go out alone, motoring the boat upstream to drop the other weight at the bow. When the line was put in place, a "land mark" had to be taken so he would know where the line lay. The snoozes were made up and the drag was used to bring up the line from the river. Then the snoozes, floats and 1 to 1½ lb. weights were attached to each section. And now the line was ready to be dropped down to the river's bottom.

As he explained before, the lines were checked every day. All legal sturgeon were unhooked at the snooze and transported home to be put in a tank until enough fish were caught to make a shipment.

The eggs of the sturgeon were where all the good money was. The fish were taken from the tank and cut open to remove the sac with the eggs in it. To prepare the eggs, my grandfather would roll them on a ¼" high box screen made on a frame about one foot square. This was done to break up the egg sacs. The loose eggs would fall through the screen into a pan. To every five pounds of eggs he would mix in 2½ lbs. of salt. With his hands he would mix the salt in thoroughly. This would harden the eggs. When this process hardened the eggs enough, he would spread the eggs out on another frame made from a window screen approximately one-half inch deep. He would leave them overnight so the salt solution would drain off the eggs. After this step he'd take a spatula and put the eggs into a container. The next step was to put this container into a larger container and pack ice around the smaller container. When all the eggs were packed and sealed, they were shipped to Hanson Cavier in New York City. The prices fluctuated from \$2.00 per pound to \$8.00 per pound, depending on the demand. The quality of the cavier was determined by the age of the eggs. Black colored eggs meant that the eggs were mature and ripe, ready for eating. Light green eggs were immature and not ready for consumption.

The cavier wasn't the only part of a sturgeon that was profitable. Once the eggs were removed, all the fins, tails and the heads on the sturgeon were cut off. With the skin left on, the fish were packed in wooden barrels and ice was thrown on the top of the fish and the barrels were covered with bran sacks. Then they were shipped to New York City, Brooklyn or Boston. The place that he sent it depended on the market price. Whoever had the best price was given the business.

My grandfather told me that he had



The sturgeon fishery at Long Sault Island near Massena, late nineteenth century. (Photo courtesy of the SLCHA Archives)

caught many sturgeon in his days but two that he recalls the best were quite uncommon. One of the fish was one that had been tagged and released in Valleyfield, Quebec, by the University of Montreal. The sturgeon was released in the fall of 1947; in the spring of 1949 my grandfather caught it. When the fish was let free it weighed 2 pounds, 9 ounces and two years later it weighed 3 pounds, 5 ounces. My grandfather noti-

fied the university and they sent a professor of marine biology to examine the fish. The professor told my grandfather the whole history of the fish. The other sturgeon that he recalls well was the biggest one he ever caught. The sturgeon weighed a massive 187 lbs. and was around 7 feet long. The large fish harvested 39 lbs. of cavier.

There are still ex-sturgeon fishermen alive today, but not active in the trade

because of various restrictions. One ex-fisherman who is still alive is Al Bogardus, to whom my grandfather taught the rewarding trade. My grandfather finally quit sturgeon fishing in 1968 because of the Seaway. The Seaway set up locks along the river so the ocean ships could get out and in to deliver and transport goods. These locks didn't allow the sturgeon to run up river to feed and, therefore, the fishing was ruined. Finally in 1979, the Conservation Department closed down all trap line fishing.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

About the Author

Thomas Vielhauer of Ogdensburg is a senior in Mechanical Engineering Technology at Canton ATC. This paper was prepared for the course in American folklore at ATC.



William H. Vielhauer with four typical sturgeons out of the St. Lawrence. (Photo courtesy of the author)

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*The residence of Henry Potter in Colton. Mr. and Mrs. Potter are seated; Nathan Jefferson is standing.
(Photo courtesy of the author)*

Henry Potter's Big House

by Lillian Cassel

Small towns have their prominent men and women who work hard and do well for their own and the common good. Such a man was Henry Potter of Colton, whose big house and business ventures made him an imposing figure in the history of that small town.

The Henry Potter house, one of the oldest and most interesting houses in Colton, has changed hands again. While there are still people here who knew and lived with the Potters, I wish to chronicle the times, activities and interests which the builder and owners experienced.

Henry Potter (around whom this story is centered mostly) was the second son of Philip Potter of Poultney, Vermont, and Miranda Squires Polter of Berry Mills, Essex County, New York.

Their first, son, Edson, who will be featured in this record from time to time, was a local musician. He became quite famous in surrounding communities as a fine fiddler and caller for

square dances, one of the common pleasures in the early days.

Their father acquired farming land which extended from present Route 56 south, encompassing the land on which Rexford Construction offices are now located on the West Higley Road (also known as Gulf Road). There was no Route 68 then. The tract extended to the back of the former Stroebeck house on the top of the hill—called the Hump-Bump—on Main Street. This land was used for hay and crops. He kept three cows, a span of driving horses, and a pig or two.

Phillip Potter built the house in 1851. It is still the same style, a wing on either side of a central building with a porch between the wings. Steps

run from the street to the level above the highway.

Henry was born on July 13, 1847, in Essex County. In his childhood, he was considered rather delicate. A story recalls that he didn't like to eat breakfast, so his mother gave him something to take to school to eat when he became hungry. One day he took a doughnut to eat in school. He laid down in his double seat to eat it so the teacher wouldn't see him. The teacher caught him however, and punished him. When Henry arrived home from the schoolhouse, where the Armand Alford's live now, he told his mother he would never go to that teacher again and he didn't. He was twelve years old at the time. Times have changed.

From then on Henry helped on the farm where there were other hired workers. At the time, his father was involved in the lumber business, an important industry in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains.

Henry's further education was practical, gleaned from working on the family farm and in the woods.

He married Harriet Sanborn, July 2, 1884, in the Sanborn house, the third house to the north of the Potter house. She was the daughter of Edmund and Harriet White Sanborn. Her brother was a Civil War veteran and later ran the Empire Exchange Hotel on the present site of the Colton Hepburn Library.

The young Henry Potters moved into the big house during his father's later years. Phillip Potter died September 2, 1887, and Miranda, Henry's mother, occupied the two wings of the house until her death on June 26, 1907.

In the late 1800's, the house was wired for electricity, a rare event in the North Country at that time, and often considered a sign of prosperity or status. It was furnished by a dynamo run by Richard Brown and used to light the streets and some homes. It was quite an operation to wire a house for electricity then.

Since the Potters had no children, they opened their home to young women, making it possible for them to live near enough to attend the high school and training class. Some of these girls were Hillie Douglas, Jennie Frank, Maude Frank, Bernice Leonard and

Elda Fisk.

The logging business had its "ups and downs". Henry had followed in his father's footsteps as he grew older. He had a valued helper in Elbridge Young who became Henry's dear friend. They had a sort of partnership in the beginning, taking jobs for supplying logs to lumber companies and paper mills along the Raquette River. This river was the route where the logs were floated when the ice went out in the spring.

A pulp mill located in Colton on the east side of the river near the site of the Tire Station now, known as High Falls, was and is one of the thrilling sites along the river in the spring. It was owned by Henry Potter, Fred Hale and Bert Snell.

In this mill the logs were processed, chipped and chewed into a cottony mixture from which the water was squeezed, leaving a solid pulp. It was then carted by team to the paper mill in Potsdam and made into paper.

There were several paper mills on the Raquette River, both north and south of Colton. The International Paper Co. at Piercefield was the farthest south. This pulp mill employed quite a number of local residents. Some were the ancestors of current local residents. The mill burned in 1904. That was the end of pulping in Colton.

Henry Potter was being conditioned by life in Colton to ventures farther a field. About this time he and Mr. James Spears became interested in oil wells in California, making numerous

trips there during the period of drilling. Mrs. Potter sometimes accompanied him. Their last trip was in the winter of 1913. Mrs. Henry Potter died on July 17, 1917. Shortly after, Mr. Potter lost interest in the oil venture and sold his shares to Mr. Spears.

One of Henry's interests was race horses. He and Home McGary owned Red Princess, a standard bred pacer who was so good she made the Grand Circuit in Kentucky, Saratoga and other well known tracks.

Mr. Potter was in his seventies at the time of Mrs. Potter's death. Miss Bernice Leonard was asked to give up her teaching job to keep house for him. This she did.

He remained in comparatively good health, taking his daily walk to the Spears' drug store, now the post office. His old friends congregated there to discuss politics and various other concerns of the day.

Henry was full of anecdotes and relished one on himself. One time some of his cronies took a large lard tub and tied it to the elm tree in his yard during maple sugar season. As he came and went on his daily walks, he was supposed to see this, but the joke backfired and his friends had to confess. Henry had never see it (or if he did, he had not let on!).

Henry enjoyed music. His brother Edson lived across the river in the house near the Clark Gun Shop. He was a great host, and friends like Henry loved to gather there.

In the winter of 1919 Henry went to Florida with some friends and cousins. Mr. and Mrs. William Eacutt, who ran the hardware store where the gun shop is now, and Miss Ellen Potter travelled with him; Miss Bernice Leonard went along to look after him.

During his stay there Mr. Potter suffered a stroke from which he never fully recovered. A private railroad car was chartered to bring the sick man and his household home in April. He died on May 15, 1922.

Relatives who are still living include Mrs. Procter Pratt, Mrs. Robert Williams, Mr. John Potter, Mr. Lionel Hepburn and Children, Mrs. Elise Cook and others.

Gratitude for the information of this historical record is due to Mrs. Bernice Enslow, Mrs. Procter Pratt, Mr. John Potter and Mr. Lionel Hepburn.



Henry Potter (and unidentified man) visiting oil fields in California in which he had invested. (Photo courtesy of the author)

About the Author

Lillian Cassel is the Town Historian for Colton and a long time resident of that community.

Letters to the Editor . . .

You will find enclosed my check for two dollars (\$2.00) to cover postage of the new (republished) copy of the *Evert's History of St. Lawrence County* for which I sent you a check on August 13, 1982 as stipulated in your advertisement.

Since then in your last *Quarterly*, which a neighbor shares with me, I have been amazed that your association, for which I have the deepest respect, would, while trying to sell the *Evert's History*, stoop to publish the article "Like Cheap John's Razors". I am interested in knowing the source or newspaper, obviously Democrat, where it originated.

My Grandfather's copy of *Everts* is in bad condition now but, in the beginning, it was far from appearing like a "Cheap Family Bible". Within it is the receipt for \$80.00 paid in meat produce for it and a number of the "sneered at"

pictures.

Since I am the last remaining granddaughter of Adam and Jeanette Moore Scott, I am naturally interested in the Scott genealogy. For that reason I am very disgusted at anyone cheap enough to dare to say such nasty things about my grandfather who, through his labor and good management, built up a large farm from the first few acres purchased from Van Rensselaer. As for the authenticity of the coat of arms, I do not know but it is there and must have started somewhere, and for this writer to poke fun at it certainly was none of his business.

I have cousins from County Antrim who visit us every few years and are always interested in my grandfather's home which a great grandson has restored to its original condition.

Adam Scott was a weaver just as my Grandfather Todd was a tanner of leather. Grandfather Scott built and taught my mother to weave on a loom.

She wove carpeting and today I have a lovely blanket she wove from wool raised on his farm.

Today, according to a Christmas 1981 letter, the Scott family is scattered from Somerset, England to Melbourne, Australia and New Zealand. Yet the old home where Adam was from is still standing and kept in good condition though built in the 18th century. I have a picture of it and also of the new house beside it, both in Ballyclare.

Thank you for bearing with me but you can understand how the article "Cheap John's Razors" is a bit antagonizing. I do hope it will not hurt the sale of the *Everts St. Lawrence County History*, which I am looking forward to enjoying, for at eighty I am quite familiar with so many families listed in it.

Respectfully yours,
Mrs. Jeanette T. Jenkins
Ogdensburg

TUCK continued . . .

license in Lisbon. Your mother thought I ought to state my position on license. I thought I should listen to their argument. "I will tell you how I am going to vote if you don't tell another woman and tell her not to tell the next woman," thereby increasing the circulation by the reason of its being a secret. Everybody seemed to be interested. If it were to be decided by a vote of the people, the day the Board met there would have been license at Lisbon for many years afterwards. The town hall was full—two justices for license and two against—the supervisor against. "Tuck, you have just put the nail in your coffin." I found many good friends in our town afterwards who were for license and who thought it would be against the interests of the town and who have said to me since, it was a good move for the people and should be continued. A small place like Lisbon where there are so few places for young people to meet is much more dangerous to create bad habits in the young than where there are a greater diversity of sports. I had much sympathy for Mrs. Fulton and her husband. They had just purchased the hotel—were in debt—and since liquor was the principal prop of support and it was gone, Fulton closed his house to the public as well as his barn and yard.

I tried during that coming year to be friendly with Fulton. I knew at the present at least I had injured Fulton, but I realized that a license at Lisbon contained more danger than at the city of Ogdensburg. Inside of five years Mr. Fulton moved away from the hotel and he and his wife came here to see Mother and very shortly afterwards we went to see them.

It was very easy to realize now that the length of my career as supervisor would depend very much, if not wholly, on the tax roll which I brought away from the Board of Supervisors at Canton. Every man on the Board knew the fight that was being waged between Martin and Wells and public opinion was now centered on one man and his efforts to place Lisbon where she belonged on the tax roll. I was aware that I could not force my claim no matter how well presented without good friends. Early in the fall I talked with Senator Lynd(e) from Hermon, M.D. Packard of Canton, Mr. Palmer from Ogdensburg, Mr. Aldrich from Gouverneur. Those men all aided me, but the first little bit of sunshine that crept through the slats was when I was at my supper, and alone, that Mr. Aldrich of Gouverneur, leaned over my shoulder and said, "We have quite a little surplus"—he was chairman of the Equalization Committee—"and I will try and help." He did. He reduced our valuation \$40,000 which saved me the next year and defeated license. From then on men who opposed me were strong friends. Joseph Northrup said, "Tuck, I was against you. I have paid for my little home in the last few years."

It was at this last town meeting of 1915, under a different law that a license problem came up by a Mr. Samuel Graham who owned the hotel, a man well liked and very accommodating. Many of the towns people were alarmed as very strong efforts were made against license. This time it was submitted to a vote of the town and lost by a vote of 173 for and 487 against license.

While the above question will not be

of much interest to my family perhaps, the liquor problem has been gaining ground in all the states and it looks very much as if it will have a place in the National Convention of 1916. I confess I am sufficiently vain that I desire my family should know that it was in 1872—forty-two years ago—that their father had the honor of casting the ballot on a board of five which made the town of Lisbon run "dry" for those many years, "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion" to the contrary notwithstanding. You can do as you think best. About the latter I am not sure.

(To be concluded, January 1983)

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