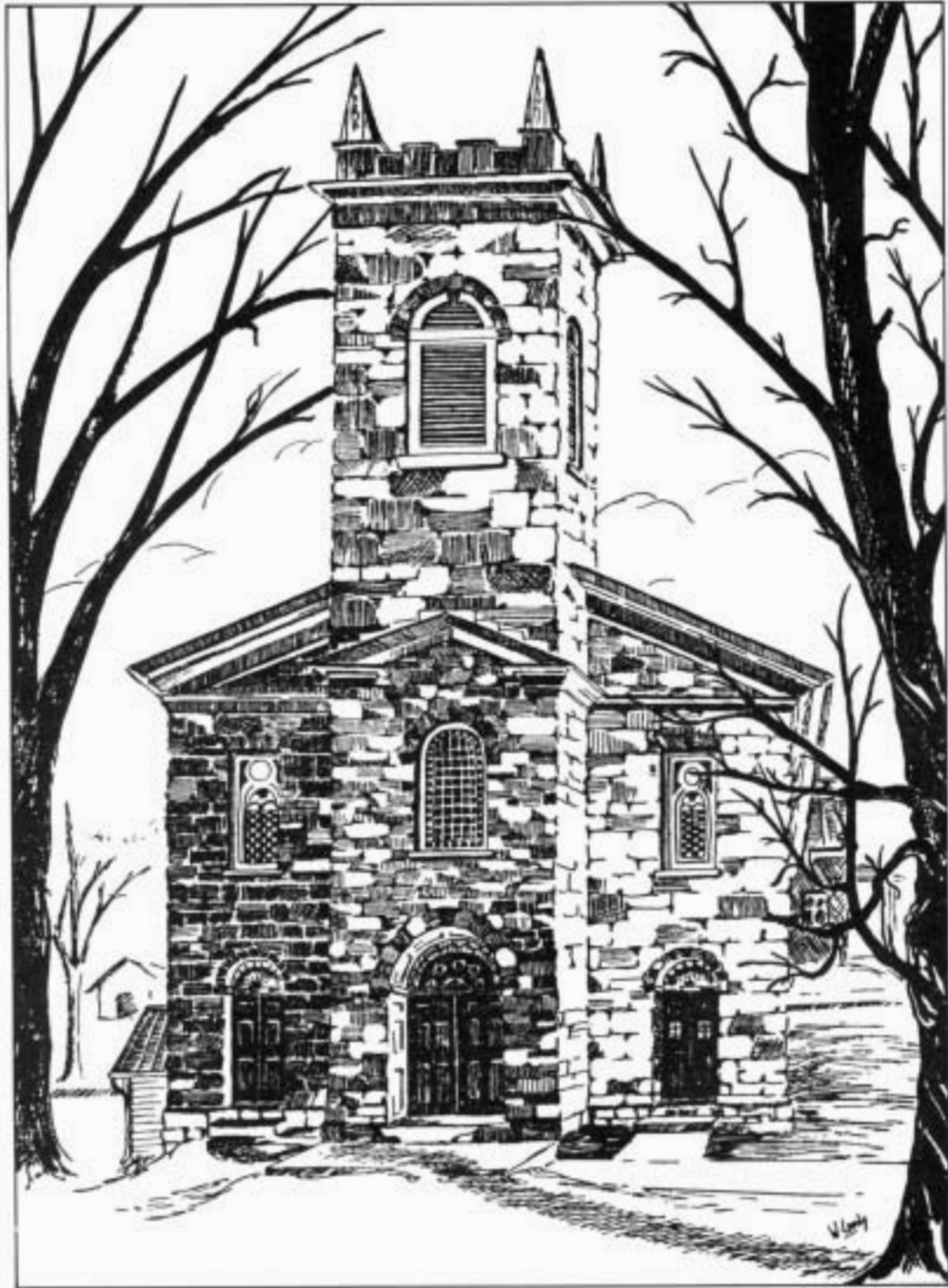


THE
QUARTERLY

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

April 1983



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

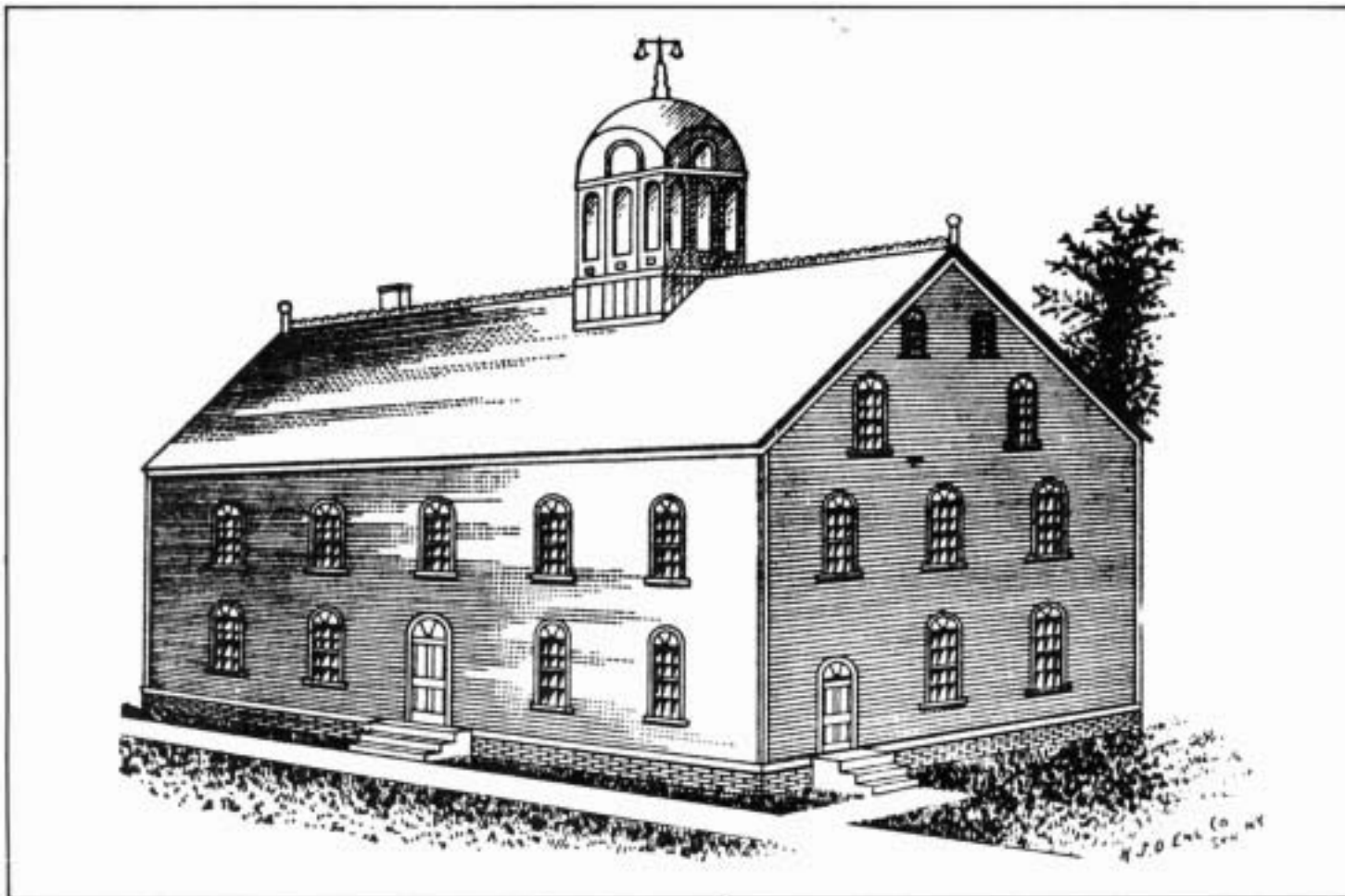
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Editor: Varick A. Chittenden

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Cover: A pen and ink sketch by Wayne Cardy of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Waddington from the Rectory Family's 1941 Christmas card. See story on early Waddington by Sara Shepherd, beginning on page 17. (Courtesy of Pauline Tedford, Town of Waddington Historian)



*Engraving of St. Lawrence County's first Court House, in Ogdensburg, by H.J.D. Engraving Co., Syracuse, New York. (From *The Supervisor Story, St. Lawrence County, New York, 1802-1973*)*

Temple of Justice, Seat of Government— An Abbreviated History of the St. Lawrence County Courthouse

by Wendell Perkins

In 180 years of county history, the buildings which have housed our government and our courts have experienced many changes—from disastrous fires to substantial architectural achievements. The author has traced their history through early newspaper and county records and here presents the first comprehensive documentary account of this interesting complex of buildings.

Until the year 1802, the land, today known as St. Lawrence County, was a part of Clinton County, with Plattsburgh sitting on the western banks of Lake Champlain, the county seat. For the people living on the western side of this vast county, a journey to Plattsburgh was long and often dangerous. This fact provoked action by the citizens in the west to petition to break with Plattsburgh and establish a county whose seat of government was closer to the people. Thus, a petition drawn in

1801 was presented to the state legislature on February 8, 1802. The bill was passed on the 18th, calling for the establishment of a new county to be known as St. Lawrence.

In 1802, the only village in the newly created county of St. Lawrence of any size and commercial importance was Ogdensburg, sitting on the St. Lawrence River. For this reason, the state legislature in Albany agreed to name Ogdensburg as the county seat. The small village gladly accepted the honor

and within months the first courthouse and jail was constructed. As the population of the county grew, the proprietors and settlers in the central and southern sections of the county became dissatisfied with the location of the county government. They complained of the long trip to Ogdensburg which became very hazardous during the winter months. Distance wasn't the only complaint many county residents had against the location of the seat of government. Many settlers feared their

neighbors to the north since they were under British rule. The belief was that the county seat should be moved to a point further within the county, making it less accessible to British attack and far from the areas of unrest that plagued the Ontario/Quebec region during the early 1800's.

The first attempt to relocate the county seat was in 1818. A proposal was submitted to the state legislature in Albany. Debate over the proposal continued for three weeks, but through the pressure of some influential citizens of Ogdensburg the proposal was defeated.

Some backers of the defeated proposal decided not to let the issue die. They then proposed a plan which would divide the county of St. Lawrence in half. They argued that the county, which is the largest in New York State, was too large and the poor roads made travel within the county difficult. Their proposal called for a division between the towns of Lisbon and Canton on the west and Madrid and Potsdam on the east with the split continuing

southwesterly. The county on the west would be called St. Lawrence; the county on the east would be known as Fayette. The authors of the proposal could never find sufficient support for its passage, bringing about its early retirement.

Over the next ten years, the movement to relocate became stronger. The proposal to divide the county was brought back with many in its favor. Both proposals were presented in early January before the state legislature at the beginning of the 1827 session. The division plan was rejected by the legislature soon after its presentation. The state felt that a division wasn't necessary. A solution could be found to the location problem.

On March 1, 1827, the state senate's committee of the whole introduced a bill which would appoint three commissioners to locate a site for the county buildings of St. Lawrence. The debate continued for two days, finally being decided on March 3. The bill was passed 23 to 2. The commissioners named were William H. Maynard and

George Brayton of Oneida County and William Kirkpatrick of Onondaga County. This was the furthest the legislature would deal with the matter. They adjourned the 1827 Annual Session on April 17 without a decision being made. The three commissioners were authorized, however, to travel to St. Lawrence County to obtain more distinct expressions of the people and report back in January of 1828.

The New York State Legislature convened on January 1, 1828. The three man committee reported what they had discovered during their stay in the county. They believed that the majority of people within the county wanted the change made. Several days discussion followed and on January 12, the state senate passed the bill calling for a relocation of the county buildings. The state assembly followed course and passed the bill on January 25. Governor DeWitt Clinton signed the bill, making it law on January 28, two weeks before his sudden death.

The small village of Canton with a population of around 900 was soon



Photograph of the Greek Revival courthouse completed in Canton in 1830 and utilized until 1893, when it was destroyed by fire. (Photo courtesy of the SLCHA Archives)

selected as the new county seat. The state felt its location was the most centralized of any other community. The county now had to buy land in Canton and construct a new courthouse, jail, and county clerk's office.

David Judson, a resident of Canton, donated some land he owned on the corner of Court and Judson Streets to the county if the county would build the new buildings there. The county

accepted the offer and the land. The county buildings of St. Lawrence have stood there since.

The sum of \$3100 was authorized for the construction of the courthouse, jail, and clerk's office by the county Board of Supervisors. This is the description of the new county buildings that were built in 1829-30:

Each building is of stone. The courthouse is two stories in height, 44 feet

by 40. The lower is divided into four rooms, besides passageways and stairways, viz., a grand jury room, a room for constables and witnesses attending the grand jury, and two rooms for petit jurors. The upper story is devoted entirely to a courtroom, 41 feet in length by 37 in breadth.

The clerk's office is of the same height and size of the private clerk's office, and differing in its construction only in making the front room smaller and the rear one larger.

The gaol (jail) is 36 by 40, with basement story rising about five feet out of the ground, and a story and a half above. About 12 feet of the easterly end of all the stories is appropriated to prison rooms, except a small room in the lower story for a sheriff's office, where the stove is placed, intended to give warmth to all the criminal rooms in the upper story, as well as the debtors' room immediately back on the same story.

The criminals' rooms are a block of cells five in number, constructed of wood and iron, placed in the second story, within and three feet distant from the outside walls.

The light is admitted into the cells through gratings in the upper part of the doors (which are to be wholly of iron), opening into the hall in the easterly end of the building, into which the light is admitted through four strong grated windows.¹

The total cost of the courthouse, jail, and clerk's office came to \$6800. The building officially opened on January 8, 1830.

With the exception of a small jail addition in 1836, the county buildings remained in their original construction for twenty years. Then, in 1850, a five person committee was chosen by the county Board of Supervisors for the purpose of expanding the courthouse. The committee was allotted \$2000 for an addition of 24 feet of the same materials as the present building, and of the same height, including the expense of remodelling the inside in a convenient and suitable manner, and to receive proposals for the erection and completion of the said addition.²

The addition was completed in late 1851.

Even with the expansion project of 1836, the county jail was becoming too small to handle the rising number of prisoners. The Board of Supervisors decided that another addition must be made or a new jail built. In 1858, the Board passed a resolution calling for the construction of a new jail at a cost of \$12,000. P.W. Rose, Benjamin Squires, and George Robinson were appointed commissioners in charge of the project: to dispose of the old jail



Postcard view of the Richardsonian Romanesque courthouse, completed in 1895, and still in use. (Photo by \$5 Photo Co., Canton, courtesy of the SLCHA Archives)

and fixtures and to build a new jail in its place. The jail was built of Potsdam sandstone with two floors and an attic, the ground floor being 44 by 72 feet. The building contained 24 cells, 4 debtors' rooms, and one parlor, chamber, and 2 sleeping rooms for the sheriff's family. Eighteen hundred square feet of ground, on the north side of the jail was enclosed for a yard by a picket fence of cedar posts. The posts were set close together with 16 feet standing and 5 feet in the ground. The entire jail complex was finished in 1860 at a cost of \$13,637.

Seventeen years later, an addition made of wood was built on the north side of the jail. The new addition, facing west 47 feet and running west 67 feet enclosing the prison yard, was two stories providing a residence for the sheriff and his family. The cost of the addition and other minor repairs to the jail amounted to \$6200.

During the 1870 Annual Session of the Board of Supervisors, the need of a new county clerk's office was recognized as the old office was becoming too small. The Board selected a committee consisting of E.W. Foster, S.H. Palmer, and H.W. Hale to look into the possibility of a new building and report back to the Board their findings. The committee reported:

That the building is entirely too small for its purpose. The books and papers are placed under the charge of the County Clerk are of the greatest value. That the loss or injury of them would seriously affect the interests of every citizen in the County. It seems necessary for the construction of a building, in which the business of the County Clerk and the Surrogate can be transacted and where the records and papers of both offices can be accommodated and protected.³

Although their report strongly urged the construction of a new building, the Board shelved further action until November of 1876.

On the 21st of November, 1876, a resolution was brought before the Board:

Resolved, that the time has come when it is necessary for the safe preservation of the County records, to build a new fire-proof Clerk's Office during the ensuing year.

Resolved, that a committee of five be appointed by the Chairman of the Board with power to sit in vacation, to report a working plan of Clerk's Office suited to the wants of the County, together with the estimates of the cost for building the same.⁴

The resolution was defeated 20 to 14.

The day before the Board of Supervisors were to adjourn their annual

session of 1876, the resolution concerning a new clerk's office was read again. Through persuasion from the backers of this resolution, the resolution passed by one vote. The Board called L.W. Russell, C.B. Harriman, T.M. Wells, E.W. Foster, and E.S. Crapser to report back to the committee their findings.

The committee gave their report to the Board of Supervisors at a special meeting in January of 1877. They presented plans and specifications of the building which were adopted. The Board selected a building committee to choose a firm to build the building at a cost of \$15,000. This new committee was composed of L.W. Russell, Robert Dalzell, and E.S. Crapser.

The building committee gave the contract to Moore & Fields of Canton for \$14,500, with Schellenger and Johnson of Ogdensburg selected as architects. The site chosen for the new building was on the corner of Court and Judson Streets next to the courthouse. The proposed building, which is still in use today, was a 48 by 30 feet structure with a 34 by 40 feet fire-proof annex for the storage of important papers and documents. The building was constructed of black limestone from Norwood and gray granite from Gouverneur. The construction of the building began in April of 1877 and was completed in late 1878.

At approximately 2 A.M. on February 21, 1893, the county courthouse burned, leaving only the bare walls which were too badly damaged to reuse. Upon announcement in the county of the fire, the citizens of Norwood, Potsdam, Gouverneur, and Ogdensburg took steps to have the county seat moved to their respective villages. The citizens of Ogdensburg, under the leadership of their mayor, were the most determined, hoping to regain the county seat they had lost 65 years before. Ogdensburg quickly prepared a petition signed by 99 freeholders which was presented to the Board of Supervisors on February 23.

This action infuriated the residents of Canton. An angry citizen wrote:

It would seem that there is but one fit and proper thing to do, now that the necessity for action has come, namely, rebuild the Court House—rebuild it at Canton where it has stood to the general acceptance to the people of the county for 63 years. But the ruins have not ceased to smoke before the Ogdensburg sends its staid citizens, its business men, its politicians, its moulders of public opinion, into every town and hamlet. Believers in Ogdensburg,—enthusiasts for everything that makes in her favor,—it is natural that her citizens should seek the location of the

Court House on the banks of the St. Lawrence.⁵

This proved to be only the beginning of a lengthy battle over the location of the county buildings.

The citizens of Potsdam filed their own petition similar to that of Ogdensburg's on March 4. Fearing further action, Canton acted quickly by calling for a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors on March 21.

During the meeting, held at the Canton town hall, G.W. Hurlbut, of Ogdensburg stated his city's views on the matter. Ogdensburg, he claimed, would furnish a site for the county buildings along the majestic St. Lawrence. They would take it upon themselves to build a clerk's office and jail, leaving the county with the construction of the courthouse and insurance covering all three buildings.

Although Ogdensburg's proposal was very tempting, the Board of Supervisors didn't decide in their favor. The following resolution was adopted:

Whereas, the destruction of the courthouse by fire necessitates the erection of a new one.

Resolved, that a committee of five of whom the chairman of the board with power to sit in vacation to procure plans and specifications for a new court house and to incur the necessary expense for said plans and estimates.

Resolved, that such committee, after obtaining plans and specifications report the same to the board at its next meeting for acceptance before proceeding further, and that we recommend that such meeting be held on May 17, at this place.⁶

While Canton felt sure that she would retain the county seat, the final decision was two months away.

During this period, Ogdensburg did everything it could in an effort to regain the county seat. On May 17, their efforts were to no avail for the Board of Supervisors voted in favor of Canton by one vote.

J.P. Johnson, of Ogdensburg, the architect of the county clerk's office building, the Congregational Church in Ogdensburg, and the old Ogdensburg Club House, now consumed by fire, was chosen as the architect for the new courthouse. He appeared at a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors on July 10 and presented his plans. At this meeting, a building committee, consisting of Newton Aldrich, G.W. Hurlbut, L.W. Russell, L.P. Hale, M.V.B. Ives, and M.H. Flaherty was selected. On the 11th, the committee gave the building contract to Evans & Ackerman of Binghamton for the sum of \$53,966.

The body of the building is built of gray Gouverneur ashlar and trimmed with red sandstone from Potsdam. The



St. Lawrence County Clerk's Office, now the Surrogate Court building.
(Photo by R.B. Dezell, Canton, courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

building, being of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, had a tower 120 feet high and two large arches at the entrance with "18—Court House—93" carved above. On the pinnacle stands a "Scales of Justice." This building was to be 121 by 70 feet facing Court Street.

Entering the main hall, the staircase to the second floor will be at the left. In the north end will be a surrogate's court room, with a room for the clerk, and a fire-proof vault 14 by 29 feet. The superintendent of the poor will also have a room in the same end. Directly across from the entrance will be a general waiting and consultation room for witnesses, parties, etc. In the south end, which is semicircular, is a supervisors' room, also intended for the grand jury. Connected with the latter room is another suitable room for committee use, and is the district attorney's office during terms of court. There is also a ladies' waiting room, toilet room, and janitor's room on the same floor.

On the second floor is the court room 50 by 65 feet and 23 feet high, two trial jury rooms for the use of counsel and witnesses, a judge's room, lawyers' room, and library. The latter are on the south end in the semi-circular part. The library being between the other two and accessible from each other.⁷

This building was started in April of 1894 and completed in time for a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors on May 6, 1895.

At the Board of Supervisors' 1897 Annual Session, many board members expressed concern about the condition of the county jail. Little work had been done on the jail since its construction 40 years before. The following resolution was made:

Whereas, it has been necessary to improve and repair the county jail by putting in new steel cells, a system of ventilation and other modern and sanitary conveniences,

Resolved, that the Chairman of the

Board be authorized to appoint a committee of six of this Board to visit any of the modern jails in the State, procure plans and estimates, and cause such repairs and new work to be done as shall in their judgement be for the best interest of the county, said improvements not to exceed in cost \$10,000.⁸

This resolution passed with M.H. Flaherty, E.S. Crapser, Newton Aldrich, Royal Newton, James Spears, and E.A. Merritt, Jr. being named to the committee.

A special meeting of the Board was called to meet on March 17, 1898. During this meeting, the special committee appointed in December, presented this resolution:

Whereas, investigation by the Committee on Repairing the Jail shows that the present condition of the jail is most unsatisfactory, for the reason the buildings are not fire-proof and cannot be properly ventilated or economically heated; and

Whereas, it appears that any proper plan of reconstruction should provide for a new house for the Sheriff; a plant for lighting and heating all the county buildings; removing the wooden structure now a part of the jail, occupied by the Sheriff, as they are fire traps; and the best steel cell construction for the interior of the jail.

Resolved, that it is the opinion of this Committee that the expenditure of the money heretofore appropriated for the jail cannot be economically made; and that the interest of the taxpayers will be best served by not making such expenditures, but that an appropriation should be made large enough to provide for all changes heretofore indicated; and

Whereas, it is estimated that a sum not to exceed \$30,000 will be sufficient,

Resolved, that a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors be called to consider the matter and to authorize whatever expenditure they may deem best.⁹

The resolution was passed which prompted quick action by the building committee.

Samuel D.P. Williams, of Ogdensburg, was chosen as the architect. On March 23, 1898, he presented his plans to the Board for consideration. The new jail would have the capacity for 14 to 16 cells on the first and second floors with rooms on the third floor for judgment debtors and persons detained as witnesses. The plan also called for two steel cells separate from the others for plain drunks, permitting them to be put in without entrance to the main halls. To the south of the jail, a two-story stone house 37 by 51 feet for the use of the Sheriff was built. It had 12 bedrooms for the accommodation of court officers and other guests, a sitting



St. Lawrence County Jail. (Photo by R.B. Dezell, Canton, courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

room, an office and large 20 by 31 feet kitchen. On the north side of the jail was the structure containing a corridor and bathrooms for the prisoners. North of this was a powerhouse for heating and lighting the jail, Sheriff's residence, clerk's office, and courthouse. The jail complex was completed in mid 1899 at a cost of \$24,500.

The county clerk's office building, built in 1877, which was supposed to have been able to hold the office for 75 years, became too small less than fifty years later. On November 19, 1920, the Board of Supervisors officially recognized the problem:

Whereas, the present quarters for the office of the county clerk, surrogate, and county treasurer are becoming congested due to constantly increasing volume of business imposed upon these officers, and it is apparent that the county clerk's office will be inadequate within a period of three to five years to properly transact the business of the office because of such congested office space and additional vault space is already needed in the office of the surrogate, and that some action should be taken at this time to meet this situation before such congestion becomes acute, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Chairman of the Board appoint a five member committee whose duty it shall be to consider the question of providing new or enlarged office quarters for these officers; to consult with an architect or architects; to ascertain the probable cost of such improvements, and this Board at the next annual session.¹⁰

The five members chosen to the committee were A.J. Hanmer, L.L. Gibson, N.E. Clark, Jr., C.G. Chaney, and M.G. Hall.

The committee selected Samuel D.P. Williams as the architect. A special meeting of the Board was called for June 1, 1923 to discuss the plans the committee and Mr. Williams had made. Their report follows:

The proposed building will be a two-story structure in front with a one-story record room in the rear, constructed of stone to match the material in the courthouse, and will be 77 feet wide on the street and 127 feet in depth. This building will be connected with the present courthouse by a passageway and the floor plan of the second story on the front will be such that additional space can be provided there is for an enlarged library room which is much needed at the present time, consultation rooms of which there are none at the present time and additional jury rooms, including suitable accommodations for women jurors, for your committee is of the opinion



At the opening of the new Court House May 6, 1895 the Board of Supervisors met with Porter Johnson, one of the architects and Ledyard P. Hale, the District Attorney and Edwin A. Merritt, one of the committee for its erection. Chairman of that sub-committee was Newton Aldrich, M.H. Flaherty of Massena, was then chairman of the Board. Shown also are the supervisors Levi Gedbau, Orlando F. Partridge, Enoch Young, Clarence S. Ferris, John Earl, Glendon S. Phillips, Charles Lantry, George W. Hatch, John Geer, James W. Marshall, Ira C. Miles, John V. Clark, Augustus E. McEwen, John B. Squire, Otis H. Wells, Fred J. Merriman, Newton Aldrich, William T. Clark, Myron T. Stocking, Ebenezer S. Crapser, Martin VanBuren Ives, William W. Matteson, John Bird, Charles G. Idler, George W. Hurlbut, rollin G. Smith, Worth Chamberlain, Oscar H. Hale, Arthur A. Atwood, as well as Robert D. Young, and clerk of the Board Charles M. Hale. Other supervisors were Royal Newton, Ara J. Moore, James L. Humes, Robert D. Orr. (Photo courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

that the time is not far distant when women of this county will be required to discharge jury duty, also the necessary rest rooms and accommodations for such women.¹¹

The Board approved these plans.

The estimated cost of the new clerk's office was \$170,000. Munn & Shea of Montreal, who also built Gunnison Chapel and Hepburn Hall at St. Lawrence University in Canton, were constructed for the job. Construction began during the summer of 1923.

The construction of the clerk's office was drawing to a close when, at 10:16 P.M. on February 19, 1925, the fire alarm within the courthouse sounded. The fire department responded quickly. Through the efforts of the fire department and a group of St. Lawrence University students, some books and important documents and papers from the law library, the district attorney's office, and the county treasurer's office were saved. Three daring students entered the building, after the fire department had evacuated the burning building, and managed to pull the World War I memorial plaque, in the main entrance, off the wall. The plaque can be found there today. Despite brave attempts from the fire department, the building was engulfed by flames in only thirty minutes after the alarm sounded. Although no one is sure of the cause of the blaze, it is believed that the fire started in the attic in old

electrical wiring. Fortunately, the new clerk's office which is connected to the courthouse only suffered minor smoke damage.

The county was shocked to hear of the fire. Many remembered the fire that destroyed the old courthouse in 1893, only 32 years earlier. The Canton residents readied themselves for a new fight over the location of the county buildings. Canton expected Ogdensburg to make another attempt to regain the seat. To the surprise of many across the county, the city of Ogdensburg made no such attempt. Ogdensburg, in an action to squelch any rumors, announced that it had no desire to reopen the century-old argument.

The Board of Supervisors immediately called a special meeting for February 24, 1925 to discuss their plan of action. A resolution concerning the reconstruction project was discussed and adopted:

Whereas, the court house in this county has recently been destroyed by fire making it necessary to rebuild the same, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Chairman of the Board shall appoint a committee of seven members, five of whom shall be members of the Board and shall include the present Chairman of the Board, the resident supreme court justice, and the county judge of the county for the purpose of reconstructing said court house, and be it further



Main corridor, St. Lawrence County Courthouse, early twentieth century. (Photo by R.B. Dezell, Canton, courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

Resolved, that said committee be and is hereby given full power and authority to procure said plans and specifications and to employ an architect and to execute, on behalf of the county, any and all contracts for the reconstruction of said building and any and all work incidental and necessary thereto and of any and all contracts for the purchase of furnishings and equipment for said building and to do each and everything in behalf of the County of St. Lawrence which may be necessary.¹²

The committee chosen consisted of A.J. Hanmer, F.B. Sanford, M.G. Hall, F.A. Rich, L.L. Gibson, Judge J.C. Crapser,

and Judge J.C. Dolan. The estimated cost of the reconstruction was set at \$150,000. Insurance on the courthouse was to pay \$110,000. Fortunately for the county, just three months before the fire, at the 1924 Annual Session of the Board of Supervisors, the Board had agreed to have the building's insurance raised from \$43,000 to \$225,000. The committee selected Samuel D.P. Williams as architect and Munn & Shea of Montreal as the contractors.

Structurally, the building was changed very little. The 120 feet tall tower was lowered 30 feet because the fire had weakened it to the point that a

collapse was feared. The only other change made was that the semi-circular end of the building, housing the supervisors' room and part of the courtroom, was enlarged. The main floor remained virtually unchanged. The floor still housed the supervisors' room, the district attorney's office, the county treasurer's office, and the motor vehicle department. The walls of the hallway and staircase leading upstairs were covered with a beautiful glazed tile of green and gold. The second floor underwent dramatic changes. The judge would now sit on the north end of the courtroom instead of on the other end. This was done because the judge's chambers are directly behind the north end wall of the courthouse. There are two entrances into the courtroom. The main entrance is on the west side of the building facing Court Street. Another entrance was built after the fire that runs into the corridor west of the judge's chambers. This corridor runs into the second floor of the county clerk's office providing passage to the law library, consultation rooms, and a few small offices. On the south side of the courtroom in the semi-circular part of the building, the rooms for the jurors to use during deliberation are locked.

The courtroom is decoratively beautiful. The railing separating the audience from the lawyers and officials is made of white Vermont marble with green veins. The wainscoting in the room is of the same type of marble. Ten feet above the wainscoting, the wall is faced with an Italian marble called travertine. Marble beams support the 23 feet high ceiling. Between the columns, the walls are covered with elaborate tile decorations designed by Architect Williams and placed by W.P. Nelson, Co., of New York. The color scheme throughout the courtroom is gold and blue.

The new building was dedicated on June 28, 1926. On December 15, 1927, the county clerk reported to the Board of Supervisors that the courthouse, clerk's office, and the old clerk's office which was renovated and turned into the surrogate building, were totally completed and furnished. The total cost of all three buildings came to \$501,260: \$226,360 for the courthouse, \$231,312 for the new clerk's office, and \$43,587 for the renovation of the surrogate building.

During this annual session, the Board of Supervisors agreed that the jail was in need of some major alterations. The Board decided to hire Samuel Williams as architect for the purpose of reconstructing, refurbishing, and re-equipping the jail. Sixty-two hundred dollars was appropriated for the building project. The work was finished in late 1928.

As the county and the needs of the



Unidentified group of St. Lawrence County Supervisors in Supervisors Chambers, sometime after the 1927 renovations. (Photo by Dwight P. Church, courtesy of SLCHA Archives)



Trial Room, St. Lawrence County Courthouse, early twentieth century. (Photo by R.B. Dezell, Canton, courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

county grew, the county buildings became cramped for office space. In 1956, it was decided that a new office building would have to be built. The newly created Building and Grounds Committee was authorized to look into the matter. On May 13, 1957, they made this report to the Board,

Whereas, the Building and Grounds Committee, upon instruction from the Board of Supervisors, have secured working plans and estimates from the architectural firm of Sargent-Webster-Crenshaw and Foley for a new office building and

Whereas, the working plans have been approved by the committee and the architects have estimated the cost of said building as \$330,000

Resolved, that bids be taken starting May 14, 1957.¹³ The building was started in the summer of 1957. The building is a modern structure three floors high. The building houses the district attorney's office, the family court, and other county offices.

Presently, the buildings stand as a monument to and for the people of St. Lawrence County. It's massive appearance is viewed in awe by all who pass.

The building's delicate decorative interior should, as well, be seen and appreciated. The buildings have had a long and difficult past, but the complex, no doubt with numerous changes, will survive for many more generations to serve as a center for justice and freedom. We, in St. Lawrence County, are proud of our heritage and it is reflected in the county buildings situated in the small picturesque county seat village of Canton.

NOTES

¹Samual Durant and Henry Pierce, *History of St. Lawrence Co., New York*, (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott & Co., 1878), p. 95.

²*Ibid.*

³*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1870-74.*

⁴*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1875-78.*

⁵*St. Lawrence Plaindealer*, 1 Mar. 1893, p. 2.

⁶*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1891-94.*

⁷*St. Lawrence Plaindealer*, 24 Mar. 1893, p. 1.

⁸*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1895-97.*

⁹*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1898-1902.*

¹⁰*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1917-20.*

¹¹*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1921-24.*

¹²*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1925-28.*

¹³*St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings 1955-57.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although the St. Lawrence County Courthouse Complex has stood in Canton since 1830, a brief thorough history has never been compiled. With the encouragement of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, such a history has been written. I would like to acknowledge a few major sources for this paper: Franklin Hough's *A History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties, New York*, Durant's *History of St. Lawrence Co., New York*, and the *St. Lawrence Plaindealer of Canton*.



About the Author

Wendell Perkins of Canton is in his second year at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. He has prepared this article for a winter term course at Colby.

Decoration Day at Beech Plains

by *Flora H. Garner*

There was a time when Memorial Day was more than the unofficial first day of summer for most Americans. Here the author reminisces about the elaborate preparation and the solemn events of "remembering" and "honoring" the dead at a little country church in her childhood. This essay was first published in the St. Lawrence Plaindealer on May 26, 1976.

Memorial Day began in 1868 at Arlington, Virginia, when General Logan proclaimed, "The 30th of May is designated for the purpose of strewing flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country."

I would like to relate the way I remember this special day when I was a child in the town of Pierrepont.

The site of this "Decoration Day" service (as we called it) was at the Beech Plains church. The date of the first observance I could not find, but it began before the turn of the century.

Neither could I learn who was the originator of this service, which continued and grew for many years. One elderly citizen seems quite sure that the one who started it was Moses Sellis.

For many years, my mother—Flora Coon Brewer—was in charge of the arrangements.

The preparation began weeks before as the teachers and students in the surrounding rural schools rehearsed poems, songs and flag drills for the "program."

As the day approached, the menfolk had a "bee" mowing the grass on the church lawn and in the cemetery. On May 29, the children picked bouquets of wild flowers, which were kept fresh in cool water, to be placed on the veterans' graves the next day.

This day was also a busy one for the ladies in the community as they prepared their best recipes for the picnic dinner the following day.

At last Decoration Day arrived—almost always a clear and sunny day.

As the crowd began to assemble at the church, groups gathered around outside for friendly chats. Even the men, who I know were uncomfortable in their ties and dress shoes, cheerfully entered into discussing the progress of "spring's work" and other timely topics.

Large picnic tables had been set up



Pen and ink sketch of the Beech Plains Church. (Courtesy of William Brewer Family)

outside, and, as the ladies arrived, they began to cover the tables with cloths of various sizes and colors. (60 years ago we did not have plastic table covers.)

After the picnic was over, the folks entered the church to await the afternoon's program.

I remember how beautiful our church looked to me. During the previous week the women and girls had spent many hours here. With loving hands they had washed and polished each window, bench and chair, and the floors had been scrubbed in readiness for this occasion. The flowers, which the children had gathered, had been made into small bouquets and lay across the front of the altar. Bouquets of lilacs lent their fragrance from various parts of the church.

Along with the other children I took my place **quietly** in the front seats reserved for us. We were not allowed to run in the aisles or even in the entry, but entered God's house in **reverence**.

I recall sitting by a window, opened to the soft spring breeze, and watching the happy chickadees flit in and out of

the nearby cedars.

Often, during these silent moments, the songs of robins and Baltimore orioles could be heard. I imagined that they too, were paying homage to our heroes in their own way.

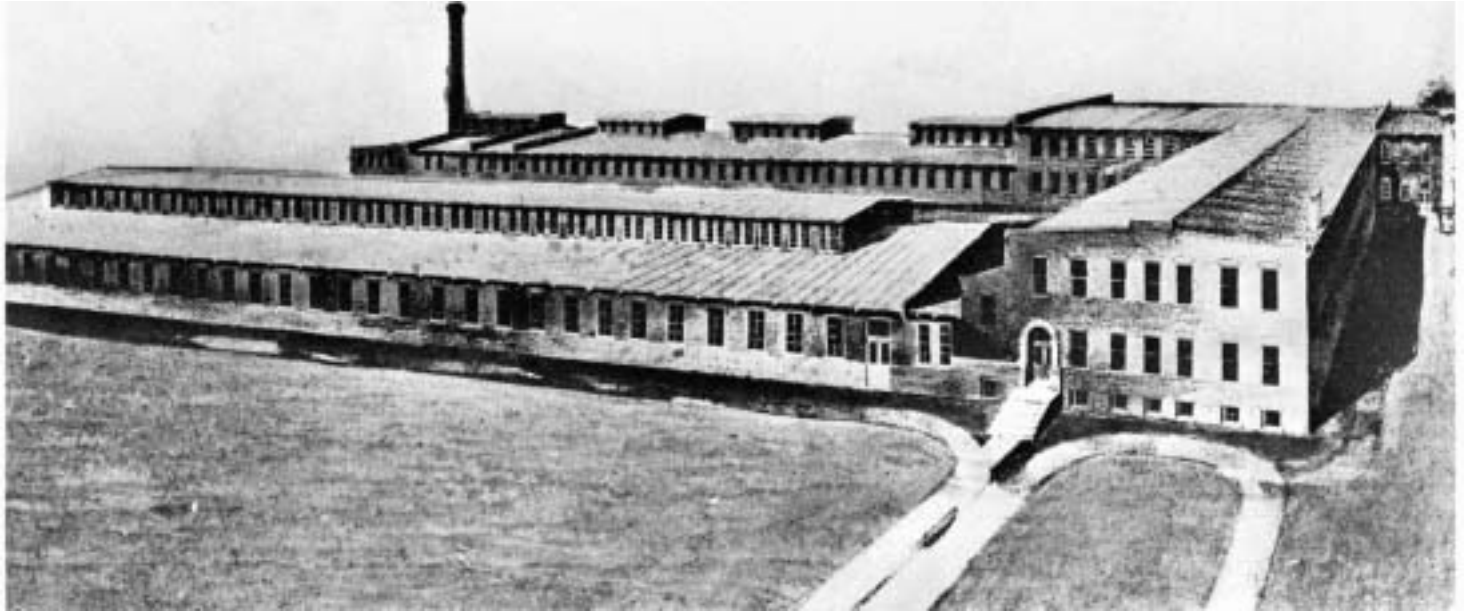
Suddenly I was brought back to reality as the organ began to play and everyone stood as our honored guests came down the aisle and were seated in the pews on the side of the altar.

These guests, many in uniform, were veterans of the Civil War, Spanish American War, and World War I.

Then came the time for which we had been rehearsing. The invocation was followed by one of our teachers welcoming everyone, and the afternoon program began!

We were taught to bow to the soldiers when we reached the altar, turn and bow to the audience and then recite our pieces.

I don't know which I enjoyed more—reciting "Barbara Frietchie" or showing off my new dress and shoes. To us in the "North Country" this was our
(continued on page 16)



Postcard view of International Lace Mill, Gouverneur, published by Draper Brothers, Gouverneur, around 1925. (Courtesy of SLCHA Archives)

Of Gouverneur and Old Lace: The International Lace Manufacturing Co., 1903-1944

by Nelson B. Winters

Far distant from the famed lacemakers of Belgium or Ireland, the International Lace Manufacturing Company was located in Gouverneur for over forty years. Here the author recounts the interesting history of one manufacturer, the first major employer of women in the county, and how it flourished and diminished in one of our small towns.

Eighty years ago, October 15, 1903, an industry new to Gouverneur made its first production run of lace curtains. It was to continue with various degrees of success until 1944. It brought diversification to the Gouverneur area already thriving industrially with its talc mines, paper mill, and marble quarries. It also required importation of skilled weavers, mostly from the state of Pennsylvania, and their families, and was the first major source of employment for women.

In 1900 the federal government imposed a seventy percent tariff on the importation of lace and lace products, most of which were coming into this country from Nottingham, England. The purpose of the tariff was to encourage domestic lace making. Instead of southern cotton being exported abroad and returning as a finished product, it could be consumed in the United States and sold at a lower cost.

Lesser Bros. of New York City were importers and sales agents for English lace. They decided to seek a domestic

source to produce their own lace. They canvassed their customers for suggestions for a mill location. A Gouverneur dry goods merchant, Anson A. Potter, replied with a recommendation that this community was just what Lesser Bros. would want.

According to the *Northern Tribune* of June 6, 1902, a Mr. Robert Irving representing Lesser Bros. came to Gouverneur to ascertain if there was enough interest here to establish a mill. Capitalization in the amount of \$500,000 was needed for the project. Half of this amount would be in preferred stock of which \$75,000 must be raised locally through sale of seven percent cumulative preferred stock at \$100 per share. The whole scheme envisioned a \$150,000 plant, with annual sales of one-half million dollars, employing 300-600, of whom the most would be women. Common labor would be paid \$8-15 per week with the skilled help drawing \$25-30 for a weekly payroll of \$5,000. There would be 50 skilled weavers and their families moved here.

A local committee was set up to see about meeting the financial requirements. In four days \$75,000 was pledged by the well known names of that period—Aldrich, Dean, McAllaster, Parker, Dodds, Corbin, Eaton, Loveland, Abbot, and others. In July one of the Lesser Brothers arrived in town to seek a site for the mill, check water supply for bleaching, establish cost of coal for steam plant, and find workers.

The *Northern Tribune* in its August 1st edition reported that Mr. Lesser was back in town with problems. Some New York stockholders were objecting to a mill in the backwoods, buried in snow for 6 months, with mail delivery once in a while and freight service now and then. It seems that another \$50,000 from our backwoodsmen would overcome all the objections of the city slickers. It was proposed to raise the sum mentioned, pay by installments, and deposit the money in a local bank at six percent, withdrawals to be made as construction proceeded. The terms of the original stock sale provided for

payment when the plant started up. This change required a new agreement. Mr. Barnard G. Parker, an astute local business man, was appointed to work something out. After a couple of trips to New York a new plan was adopted, one provision being that a local man disburse the money.

International Lace Manufacturing Co. was incorporated in Albany, August 11, 1902, with the plant now definitely set for Gouverneur. The site was to be the old Starbuck and McCarty Lumber yard on Prospect St. The following corporate officers were elected: President, J.S. Lesser; Vice Pres., Morris Lesser; Secretary, Howard Lesser; Treasurer, B.G. Parker. The directors were the Lessers, Daniel Cohn, B.G. Parker, and H.G. Aldrich. Messrs. Parker and Aldrich were the only local individuals.

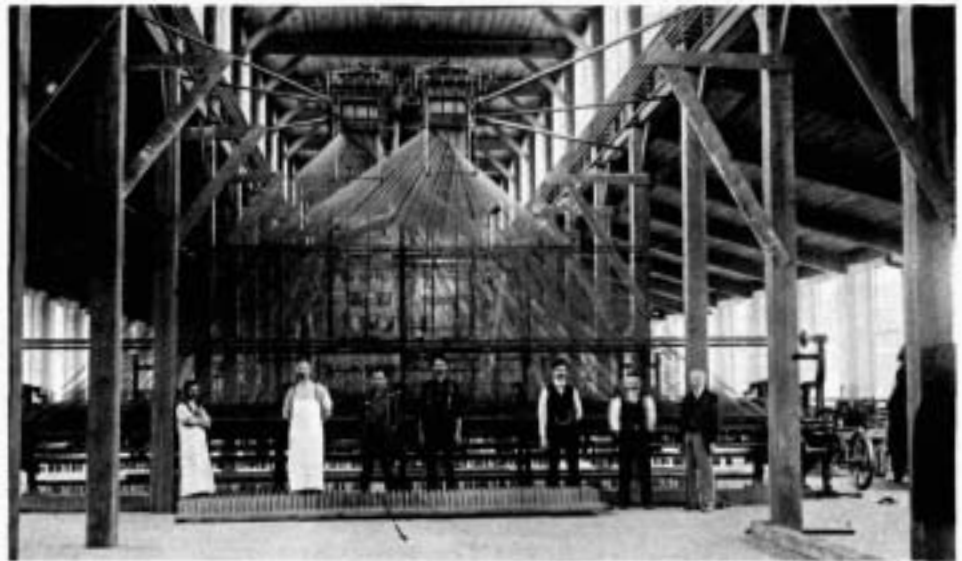
The mill was to be 80,000 square feet, one and two stories, of brick construction. There would be "acres" of hardwood floors. The fifteen looms would be imported from Nottingham, England. The construction bid was accepted from Cummings Co. of Ware, Massachusetts, called for completion by January 15, 1903. As a point of interest, the looms each weighed five tons and were composed of 30,000 parts and required graphite for lubrication. The end product would be lace curtains of various grades.

There were the usual construction delays, and the mill wasn't completed until late in the spring of 1903. It took more time for the machinery to be set and the local help to learn the art of lace making. Most of the weavers were natives of England and transplanted here from the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania lace making plants.

An account of the International Lace operation in the Gouverneur *Centennial History* of 1905 indicates ten looms and 250-300 employees, mostly women, entailed a payroll of \$2,500 weekly with the company's product marketed principally throughout the United States. Raw materials into the mill and finished curtains all moved by rail.

To add a sidelight, it might be noted that the English weavers organized cricket clubs and played exhibition games as well as participated in tournaments for the edification of the local sports enthusiasts. There is no record that tea-breaks were an employee fringe benefit.

In spite of the auspicious beginnings, an announcement in the May 29, 1907 issue of the *Northern Tribune* stated that the lace company had filed for bankruptcy and was placed in receivership blamed on the high price of cotton. It was speculated that holders of first mortgage bonds would be paid in full. Second mortgage bondholders and



View of weavers in the loom room at International Lace, Gouverneur, early twentieth century. (Photo courtesy of the author)

creditors might get twenty five cents on the dollar. There were no local creditors. Preferred and common stockholders would get nothing. Later events proved these figures accurate. About \$100,000 worth of preferred stock was in the hands of Gouverneur investors. Mr. B.G. Parker was one of the two receivers appointed by the court. Although hope was held out for an early reopening, many of the weavers left and returned to Pennsylvania.

Early in August, Clarence Whitman & Co., lace manufacturers of Scranton, Pennsylvania, started production on a small scale under a lease arrangement with the receivers. George Pike, brother-in-law of Mr. Parker, was appointed manager.

John J. McCloskey of Philadelphia bought the property for \$250,000 at the court-ordered auction in April 1908. Then the records show the Bromley

family of Philadelphia acquired the mill about three weeks later, but no price was mentioned. They put eight looms into production in August and did business under various labels—Quaker, Bromley, International Lace—until a general depression in the textile industries closed it again September 14, 1928, putting sixty employees out of work. The mill had existed on a part-time basis for the previous six years. Plant engineer, Henry J. Curtis, was appointed caretaker.

The Gouverneur Lace mill might have been down, but it wasn't out yet. Bold face type on the front page of the Jan. 15, 1936 *Tribune-Press* announced the opening of the mill by Bromley Lace Co. Mechanics were at work making repairs to the heating and plumbing systems. Only five of the eighteen looms were to be activated. Among the weavers returning were the Boulet,



Labeled on the reverse "Brown Room, 7/20/18," an early view of women working at sewing machines, International Lace, Gouverneur. (Photo courtesy of the author)

Higgins, and Towlson families. There would be no bleaching or finishing. Production of curtains, tablecloths, and bedspreads using both cotton and rayon was started May 18th.

On February 24, 1937, the mill was front page news again in the *Tribune-Press*. A hosiery operation sponsored by Bromley Lace Co. would start up in the unused part of the east wing of the lace mill. Four carloads of machinery had arrived in the name of Gouverneur Lace Mills, a hosiery division of North American Lace Co.

At a chamber of commerce meeting Durant Kriebel, president of the hosiery division, stated that if successful, there would eventually be 165 male and female employees manufacturing 210,000 dozen pairs yearly of full fashioned women's silk hose on 53 knitting machines. Only the weaving would be done here. At Mr. Kriebel's request the chamber agreed to reactivate its housing survey for accommodations for twenty families, many of whom were of Polish extraction, being imported from Philadelphia. He also pointed out that Gouverneur was chosen for the plant over 130 other sites.

The hosiery section got underway early in the summer of 1937 with 23 machines and 55 employees. Initial production was 70,000 dozen pairs per year. It is of interest to note that the silk had to be processed in a wet condition. Maximum employment reached 100 with a payroll of about \$2,700 per week.

According to the June 5, 1940 *Tribune-Press*, it became definitely known that the hosiery division would

close in a few weeks because the Bromley Co. was going out of the hosiery business and had already closed production units in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The chamber of commerce sent William Simons and Mason Smith to Philadelphia to try to persuade the owner to change his mind about the Gouverneur mill. The result was zero. Mr. Bromley suggested that the employees form a cooperative and purchase the mill. An expert in that field came here and explained to the employees what was required, but nothing further developed in that direction. Later events proved the wisdom of that decision when World War II came along and the supply of silk was cut off by Japan. Rayon, although never used here, became a priority material.

By July employment was down to four or five hands, and when the materials in stock were used up at the end of that month, the hosiery weaving became a thing of the past.

The chamber of commerce started to look for industry of another type, but was unable to come up with anything.

The lace mill division obtained a government contract in 1942 to produce camouflage netting for the armed forces. Superintendent Schuler and Foreman Frank Boprey designed the product and altered six looms to make it. After that contract was completed the company couldn't get priorities for more yarn, so the mill closed March 16, 1944, for the last time in its lace-making history. Only 37 employees remained to be laid off.

Expert mechanics from Philadelphia came here to tear down the machinery

for shipment to the company's Chester, Pennsylvania plant. Henry Ford wanted the last loom for an operating model for his then new Greenfield Village and museum at Dearborn, Michigan. Officials refused Mr. Ford's request because they feared competitors might copy their machine.

Although forty years have passed since lace making days became a memory, former employees are always ready to reminisce about that fine art as it was practiced in the mighty Prospect Street mill in Gouverneur. Although the building is used for another purpose now, it is usually referred to as the lace mill by all but the newest members of this community.

In July 1945 the Rushmore Paper Mills Co. purchased the building for use as a converting unit and offices for their mill at Natural Dam.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge the following as helpful in his research:

Free Press
Northern-Tribune
Tribune-Press
 Ward Grimshaw
 Mrs. Fred LaDuke
 Gouverneur Historical Museum
 Gouverneur Public Library
1905 Centennial History
1955 Sesqui-Centennial History
 Village Directories 1907-08, 1913-21.

About the Author

Nelson B. Winters is the Village Historian for Gouverneur and a familiar author of numerous intriguing accounts for readers of *The Quarterly*.



Exterior view of lace mill, Prospect Street, Gouverneur, around 1905. (Photo courtesy of the author)



Aerial view of former lace mill, taken in 1957 when it was owned by Rushmore Paper Mills, later Diamond International Co. (Photo by Henry DeWolf, Aerial Photographer, Rochester, courtesy of the author)

EMPLOYEES—INTERNATIONAL LACE MFG. CO.—1907-08

From Village Directory

Edward Mix, *Superintendent*
Peter Pearson, *Manager*
George Pike, *Manager (Whitman)*

Cecil Hewitt, *Foreman*
Jessie Patton, *Forewoman*
Samuel Mann, *Expert Machinist*

Harold Morris, *Pattern Maker*
Harold Starbuck, *Pattern Maker*
Lina Pierce, *Stenographer*

WEAVERS

Angus Cassidy
James Hadfield
Thomas Higgins, Sr.

C.E. Lount
O'Donnell
Enoch Pearson

Francis Potter
James Ross
Allen Straw

CUTTER

Florence Rathburn

OTHER HELP

Arthur Allen
Bertha Allen
Norma Ambler
Edward Anderson
Daisy Ashwood
Louis Blair
A. Blasdale
Leon Booth
Elizabeth Boscoe
Robert Boulet
Andrew Brisbane
Elizabeth Brisbane
Clara Brown
Frederick Brown
Alyce Burns
Nellie Burns
Carrie Castleman
Alma Coffin
Mrs. E. Coffin

James Cox
Ross Dillabaugh
Mary Driscoll
Theresa Driscoll
Milton Dusharm
Fred Easton
Edward Fortune
Aleda Gamble
Florence Gardner
Albert Graves
Mary Grimshaw
Jennie Healy
Thomas Higgins, Jr.
Earl Hunter
Harold Jordan
Grace LaMonda
Hiram Laplatney
Jessie Lewis
Maude Lewis

Lena Marsell
Mary Mason
Nina Matice
Robert McTurk
A. Mealy
Catherine Mearkley
Eva Meekins
Minnie Merritt
Mattie Murphy
George Nace
Mary O'Hara
Grover Petrie
Helen Petrie
Herbert Phelps
Olga Price
Milo Rising
Margaret Savage
Matilda Savage
Mrs. O. Sayer

Flora Smith
Frances Snell
Jennie Straw
Catherine Sullivan
Katherine Sullivan
Peter Sullivan
Mary Sweet
Joseph Taylor
Myrtle Taylor
Mrs. O. Taylor
Nellie Toomey
Gertrude Walsh
Mary Walsh
Leta Williams
Edward Wilson
Nellie Wilson
William Woodman
H. Young

DECORATION DAY AT BEECH PLAINS . . . continued

first opportunity to display summer finery. Our Easter was usually too cold or "hub-deep" in mud for spring frocks.

After the children's "program" was over, a speaker was introduced. I recall several who gave us inspirational and meaningful addresses such as Ledyard Hale, Horace Hale, the Rev. Charles MacVey, Emerson Lalone, Edson R. Miles and Van C. Whittemore.

At the close of the "program" our honored guests marched out of the church, usually led by the Commander of the American Legion. The school children followed, each carrying a bouquet of flowers, and finally the audience.

Inside the cemetery all stood quietly as the firing squad fired three volleys.

"Taps" sounded from a far corner, the Benediction was pronounced, and thus the day ended as the children placed bouquets beside the beautiful new flags waving on the veterans' graves.

In the 1920's, the cemetery at Beech Plains had more veterans (50) buried there than in any other cemetery in St. Lawrence County. I wonder if this is true today.

Our Decoration Day was a very special and beautiful experience for young and old, a meaningful day for all, one on which to **remember** those who had given their lives in the service of their country and to **honor** those veterans still living.

With the passing of the members of the Grand Army of the Republic and the closing of the rural schools (due to centralization), this special day of commemoration is no longer observed

at Beech Plains.

"Time changes everything"—so the old saying goes. Now even the **date** for this remembering has been changed and many people have forgotten the original intent.

But to me, Memorial Day is May 30.

I like to remember the way it was when I was a child—flowers, flags, friends, patriotic music, speeches and trumpets.

It was truly a day to remember!

About the Author

Flora Garner was born at Beech Plains in the Town of Pierrepont and, after many years away from the North Country, has recently returned to live here with her husband Al in retirement. She has been a frequent contributor to *The Quarterly*.

LOCAL HISTORIANS—1983

TOWN

BRASHER: Grace O'Brien, Box 15, Brasher Falls, N.Y. 13613

CANTON: Harriet Armstrong, Municipal Bldg., Canton, N.Y. 13617

CLARE: Claudia Giffin, RD #1, Russell, N.Y. 13684

CLIFTON: Jeanne Reynolds, Cranberry Lake, N.Y. 12927

COLTON: Lillian Cassel, Colton, N.Y. 13625

DEKALB: Virginia Fisher, Box 37, DeKalb Junction, N.Y. 13630

DEPEYSTER: Adelaide H. Steele, RD, Heuvelton, N.Y. 13654

EDWARDS: Edith Duffy, c/o Town Hall, Edwards, N.Y. 13635

FINE: Julia Giffin, Oswegatchie, N.Y. 13670

FOWLER: Connie Bishop, RD #3, Gouverneur, N.Y. 13642

GOVERNEUR: Eugenia Huntress, 26 John St., Gouverneur, N.Y. 13642

HAMMOND: Valera Bickelhaupt, RD #1, Hammond, N.Y. 13646

HERMON: Mary Smallman, Box 171-B, RD #1, Hermon, N.Y. 13652

HOPKINTON: Sarah Powers, Hopkinton, N.Y. 12940

LAWRENCE: Elizabeth Winn, No. Lawrence, N.Y. 12967

LISBON: Jennifer Bixby, RD #1, Heuvelton, N.Y. 13654

LOUISVILLE: Patricia Shirley, Star Route, Massena, N.Y. 13662

MACOMB: Julia Kittle, RD #1, Hammond, N.Y. 13646

MADRID: Lourene Pierce, RD, Chase Mills Rd., Madrid, N.Y. 13660

MASSENA: Eleanor Dumas, 200 E. Orvis St., Massena, N.Y. 13662

MORRISTOWN: Lorraine Bogardus, RD #2, Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669

NORFOLK: Leon Burnap, RD #1, Norfolk, N.Y. 13667

OSWEGATCHIE: Persis Boyesen, RD #3, Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669

PARISHVILLE: Emma Remington, Parishville, N.Y. 13672

PIERCEFIELD: William Wilkins, Childwold, N.Y. 12922

PIERREPONT: Betty Newton, RD #4, Potsdam, N.Y. 13676

PITCAIRN: Pamela Conlin, RD #2, Harrisville, N.Y. 13648

POTSDAM: Susan Lyman, 38 Prospect, Norwood, N.Y. 13668

ROSSIE: John Ashworth, Butler Road, Rossie, N.Y. 13646

RUSSELL: Betty Hull, RD #1, Russell, N.Y. 13684

STOCKHOLM: Mildred Jenkins, RD #2, Potsdam, N.Y. 13676

WADDINGTON: Pauline Tedford, Waddington, N.Y. 13694

VILLAGE

GOVERNEUR: Nelson B. Winters, Box 48, Gouverneur, N.Y. 13642

HEUVELTON: Persis Boyesen (see above)

NORWOOD: Susan Lyman (see above)

POTSDAM: Kay Wyant, Potsdam Public Museum, Potsdam, N.Y. 13676

RENSSELAER FALLS: Dorothy Crane, Box 102, Rensselaer Falls, N.Y. 13680

RICHVILLE: Helen Reed, Richville, N.Y. 13681

HERMON: C. Walter Smallman, RD 1, Box 171-B, Hermon, N.Y. 13652

MORRISTOWN: same as Town Historian (see above)

WADDINGTON: same as Town Historian (see above)

CITY

OGDENSBURG: Elizabeth Baxter, 814 Jay St., Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669. **DEPUTY:** Frederick Erwin, 732 Morris St., Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669

COUNTY: John A. Baule, Box 8, Canton, N.Y. 13617



*Village of Waddington about 1880, looking east from Ogden Island.
(Photo courtesy of Pauline Tedford, Town of Waddington Historian)*

The Good Life— Waddington from 1800 to 1850

by Sara Shepherd

Using numerous sources, especially the diaries of two early settling families of Waddington, the author has prepared this fascinating account of life in early Waddington, a kind of “inside story into the good life”—the daily activities and the attitudes of settler families in the first fifty years.

Waddington has two influences to thank for its birth: the St. Lawrence River and the Ogden family. In 1793 Abraham A. Ogden, patriarch of the wealthy English family, purchased with his sons David A. and Thomas L. the ten-square-mile township of Madrid. The northern boundary of Madrid was the St. Lawrence River. (The present village of Waddington, called Hamilton until 1818, is in the town of Wadding-

ton, which was formed in 1859 by dividing the town of Madrid in half. I will henceforth refer to the village and town of Waddington by their present name.)

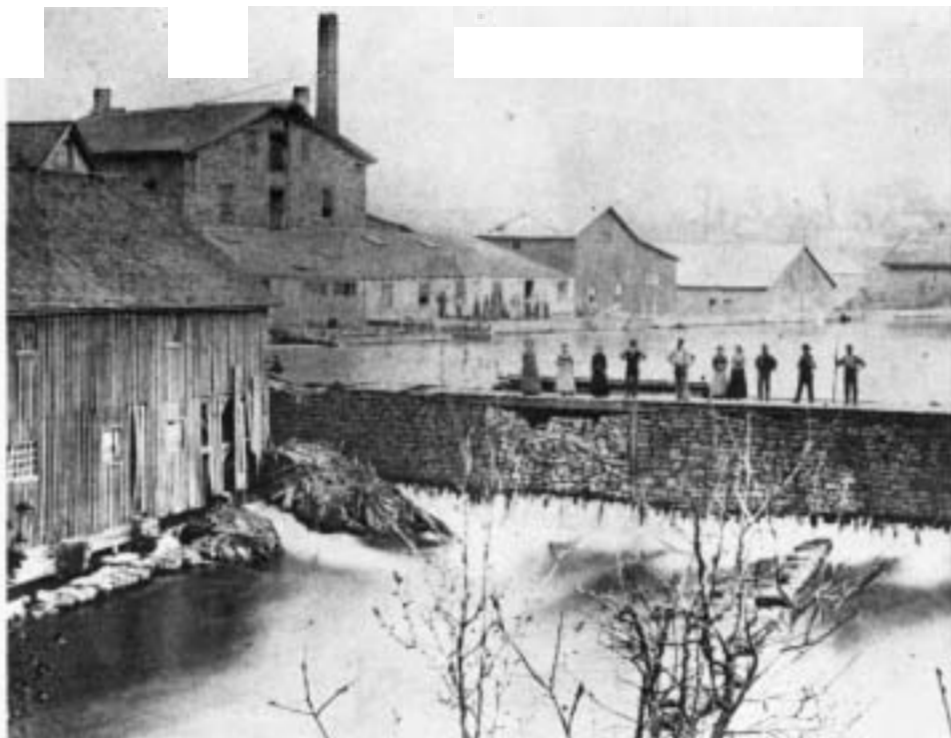
What was life like in Waddington in the first half of the nineteenth century? It was good. The community was growing from a tiny settlement to a thriving village. Optimism, foresight and plain hard work were transforming forest into homes, farms and industries. The future was bright, opportunity seemed unlimited; a cohesive mutually supportive community was being molded from diverse elements.

A large island about one quarter mile from shore divided the river into a large and a small channel; both were rapids. The small channel, later to be called the “little river”, had a fall of eleven feet in fifty rods. Early records

describe it as "wild and dangerous", with a principal waterfall falling eight feet.¹ The Ogdens recognized its potential for water power to support industries, and in 1803 began construction of a stone dam to control the water and a lock to make the channel navigable. This lock was fifty feet by ten, according to Hough's *A History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties*,² but was described in a letter written by David A. Ogden in 1825 as being one hundred feet by thirteen; the larger size seems more likely as the lock was used by the Durham boats, which were flat bottomed barges with a rounded bow, square stern and long rudder, with a length of eighty to ninety feet. These boats could carry thirty-five tons downstream, eight tons upstream, and were widely used until the advent of the steamboat.³

A grist mill was in operation on the dam by 1804, joining the pioneer industries of potash production (potash is made from hardwood ashes, making its production a natural companion to the clearing of land as it uses the trees felled and can be sold, bringing in precious cash), lime production (equipment needed is just limestone and a fire), and brickmaking (clay, a few boards and a fire set one up in the brickmaking business).⁴ In 1808 a toll rate of 25 cents a ton for large boats and 50 cents for boats under two tons was instituted for the locks.⁵ By 1813 Spafford's *Gazetter* describes Hamilton (Waddington) as having two saw mills, a grist mill, a fulling mill, trip hammer, and a site for an academy, which was probably never built.⁶

A new settlement needs settlers, and the Ogdens actively promoted Waddington. Members of the family met boatloads of European immigrants at New York City and Montreal and extolled the delights of northern New York. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century natives of Scotland, England and Ireland settled in the village of Waddington and cleared farms in the land surrounding it, perhaps lured by handbills such as "Land for Sale in St. Lawrence County", describing in flowery language the potential for agriculture.⁷ Handbills were also sent to the British Isles by Gouverneur Ogden, David's brother and land agent, praising the healthful climate, churches, industries, and schools in Waddington, and signed by settlers from England, Scotland and Ireland.⁸ Gouverneur's wife, Charlotte writes in her diary in 1818: "Thomas Purvice (sic) arrived with his wife and seven children; put them in the Brew House for the present."⁹ Thomas Purvis, according to Purvis family records, was a Scotsman who landed practically penniless in Montreal, made his way as far



Factory workers on dam that ran from village of Waddington to Ogden Island. (Photo courtesy of Pauline Tedford, Town of Waddington Historian)

as Ogdensburg in great distress over his future and was befriended by Gouverneur Ogden, who offered him lodgings and work if he would settle in Waddington.¹⁰ Another entry in Charlotte's diary, from 1820, tells of Mr. and Mrs. Short, who, with their ten children arrived from Prescott and presumably were helped by her husband. They may have come from Europe via Montreal and Prescott, or may have been Canadians, perhaps Loyalists who were returning to America after fleeing during the American Revolution.¹¹

The proximity of Canada provided much commerce, especially since the international border was not firmly established until 1815. Montreal was a ready market for agricultural products of northern New York, such as wheat, potatoes, beef and pork.¹² The Canadians used Waddington's industries; David A. Ogden states in 1825 that at certain periods of the year Canadians come from more than forty miles to get grist ground at the mill.¹³

During this time David A. and Gouverneur Ogden built homes in Wadding-



Bringing home the cows, with St. Lawrence River and Ogden Island in background. (Photo courtesy of Pauline Tedford, Town of Waddington Historian)

ton—David A. on the island (a stone mansion called the Island House) and Gouverneur on the shore (Ellerslie, named to reflect Charlotte's pride in her Scots heritage). As proprietors the Ogdens were "liberal, farsighted and humane"¹⁴; they lived in the town they were creating, sharing experiences with the other settlers. During the War of 1812, David A. persuaded the residents to remain in their homes when St. Lawrence County was astir with rumors of Canadian invasion. As George W. Dalzell, a later resident of Waddington, puts it, "the relations between the Ogdens and the townspeople were cordial. I never heard of anything resembling snobbery in Waddington. There was enough economic independence and interdependence to insure self-respect and respect for others."¹⁵

This interdependence is illustrated by Charlotte Ogden in her diary entry for April 14, 1822: "All the ice cleared out of the little river. Tremendous high wind; strong fears entertained of part of the new dam carried away. Villagers all out to work to throw stone in."¹⁶ At the same time farmers were clearing land and building houses, barns and roads on the land around the village. The Allison diary¹⁸ reveals the same community spirit found in the village. Every spring there were barn raisings and house raisings: "had a raising a barn 21 by 25 feet had thirty hands all went and raised Hiram Fullington's rafters."¹⁹ Husking bees to husk corn and firewood bees to cut firewood were also common.

Daily life in the 1830's and 1840's moved rhythmically with the seasons. April was the month for plowing and preparing gardens; May and June were planting months. On the farm the Allison diary records planting peas, oats, wheat, barley, sugar beets, carrots and potatoes. Charlotte Ogden's diary describes planting radishes, pepper grass, muskmelons, watermelons and cucumbers. Livestock was kept both in the village and on the farm. Charlotte Ogden's household kept cows, geese, chickens, and sheep. On January 20, 1823 she records: "Churned 385 lb. of butter from 7 of May till 31 of December, milking 4 cows for 4 months and 5 cows 3 months."²⁰ Sheep on farms were marked: "got our sheep mark recorded in the town clerks book the mark is 2 notches in the lower edge of the left ear."²¹

Weeding, hoeing and harvesting kept the farm family busy until the beginning of December; threshing the grain, which was done with flails, lasted all winter. In September they "fired log heaps."²² In October and November they "took 23 bushels of ashes to the village,"²³ presumably to the potash factory. Throughout the winter they



"Fishing Party," with Andrew H. Dalzell of Waddington standing, center, date unknown. (Photo courtesy of Pauline Tedford, Town of Waddington Historian)

felled trees and skidded them out of the woods on the snow; come spring, they had them milled to use for building. And of course, the early spring ritual of sugaring off—making maple syrup: "making sap troughs made 28", "36 troughs", "tap(p)ing sugar bush a good run."²⁴

Much of what was needed for life was made at home. The quilting frame was always in use: "Took one quilt out of the frame (finished in 4 days)."²⁵ The Allison diary records "F" weaving for most of the month of March 1837. F produced 48 yards of woolen cloth and 68 yards of linen. Twenty-six yards of the woolen cloth were taken to the village to be fulled.²⁶ An entry for December simply states: "T making a sleigh."

Simple garments were sewn at home, but often tailors stayed in customers' homes to make more elaborate clothing: "Robert Porteous comes to make clothes to Sat 1st of March Paid him 388 cents for 4½ days work."²⁷ And in the village: "Mrs. Crawford came to sew"²⁸ Shoes were custom made: "George Oliver 3 pr mens boots coarse 3 dollars, 2" fine half boots for women 2 dollars, 1" fine half boots for women 88¢."²⁹ Even in those days there were door-to-door salesmen: "Cunningham here pedling (sic) bought 3 dollars worth."³⁰ And "scissors grinder from Quebec stopt at the house; ground 5 pr scissors, 4 knives and 2 snuffers."³¹

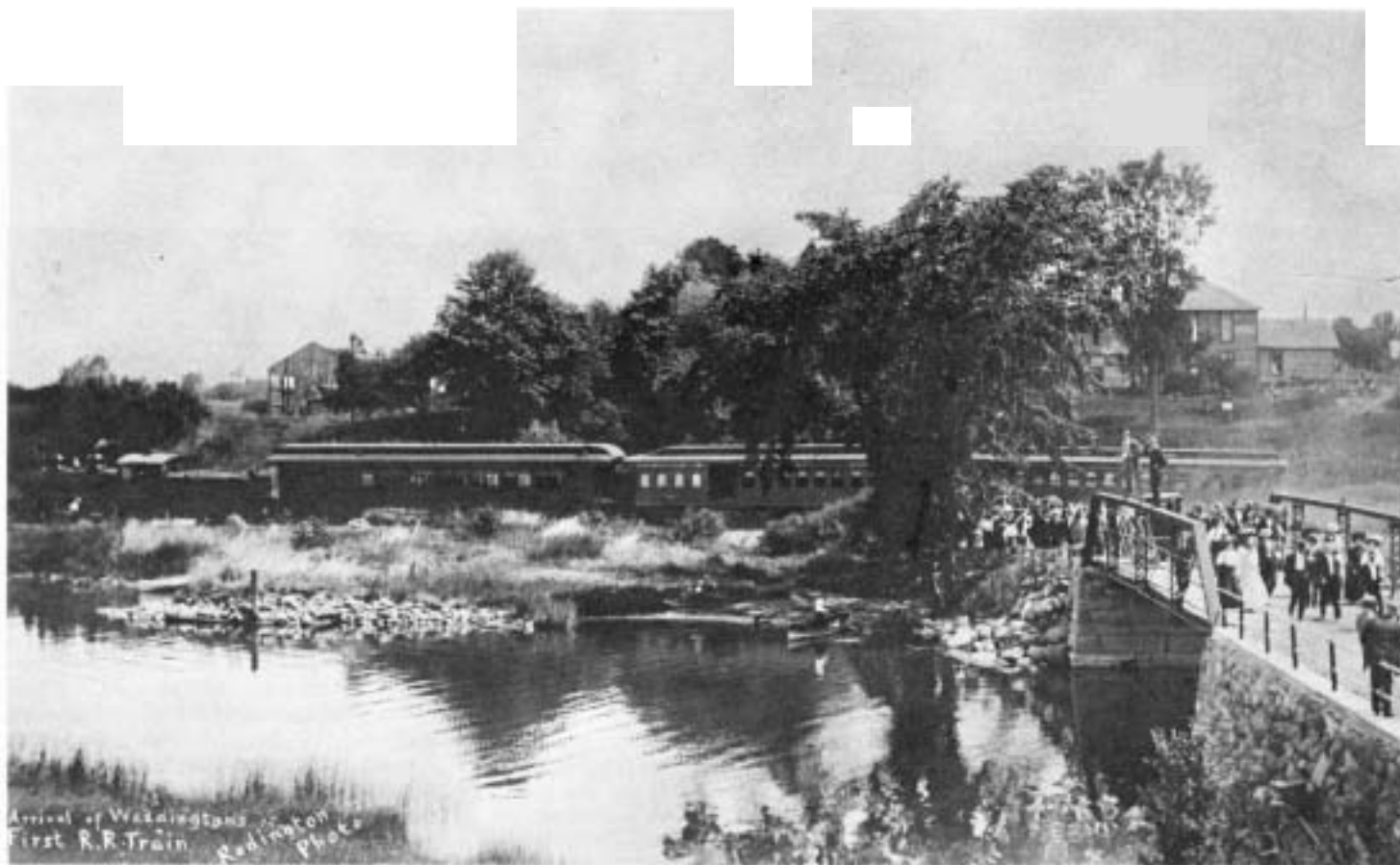
Charlotte Ogden employed servants; she had eight in her service in 1819. She also sent out much work, such as spinning yarn, to local housewives and had day workers come to her house to do her "white washing". However, she often refers to making candles and soap as if she herself did the work.

Perhaps she supervised her employees and actually worked alongside them. Her most frequent purchases recorded were tea—she seemed to drink it all day long—and loaf sugar. Fish caught in the St. Lawrence were a mainstay of the Ogdens' diet, including a forty-pound muskellunge caught in a fish trap.³²

Barter was commonplace; cash money, especially on the farm, was scarce. "Bought a pair of boots cost \$1.00 paid by a dressed calf skin at .60 lb."³³ "Mrs. Thompson cleaned the dairy, pd her one bushel of potatoes."³⁴ "Mrs. Halliday 8 lbs. cheese for 2 p of stockings to be knit. Done."³⁵ Even taxes could be bartered: "Working on roads tax 9½ days."³⁶ "Sent by John Haig a cord and a half of wood and 50 cents in money as my school tax to Michal Farrel Colector."³⁷

Life was not all work in Waddington. Both diaries record active social lives, with many visitors, especially in the winter months. The Ogden family had innumerable visits from relatives in New York City and Montreal and entertained prominent local citizens such as the Fords of Ogdensburg, the Leroy's and the Lawrence's from Potsdam and the then Episcopal rector of Waddington. The Allison diary records: "Margaret, Agnes and William at village to see a show of wild animals", "T at singing school at night", "Thos at Temperance meeting at village." Also in 1844, "J at meeting heard a lecture on abolition of slavery" and in 1845 "I at old meeting house hearing a lecture by a Mr Mitchell on abolition of slavery."³⁸

Charlotte Ogden writes in 1818: "The piano tuned to perfection by Col. Webb



Arrival of Waddington's first train.

(Photo by Redington, courtesy of Pauline Tedford, Town of Waddington Historian)

from Boston, an Amateur President of the Handel and Haydn Soc. at Boston", and the next day, "An oratorio at the island; village invited; first essay toward chanting; pretty well done."³⁹ Backgammon and whist were popular games, and books were available thanks to the library association formed in 1831.⁴⁰ In the Allison diary: "paid library dues \$1.00", "new supply of Books for library".⁴¹ And in May 1853: "25th Great Show of Wild Animals, Tom Thumb, a giant and a giantess".⁴²

Religion was taken seriously. In an economy where cash was scarce: "\$104 collected for Missionary Society \$19 collected for Bible Soc", "a sermon preached with a collection for the suffering Irish", "J going around collecting for the poor in Scotland in money \$11.12 in wheat 12 bushels 1 barrel of flour".⁴³ Both diaries record faithful church attendance (except when weather was bad) and the name of the preacher. Often Waddington had no regular clergymen; laymen would preach or the Episcopal Church might be ministered to by a Presbyterian. Charlotte Ogden mentions taking up a collection of \$400 for Mr. Baldwin, then rector of St. Paul's.⁴⁴ And the Allison diary records on July 4, 1853: "Social meeting at our house Old and Young 53 in number children said the

10 commandments".⁴⁵

Education was the one-room schoolhouse with itinerant teacher or the private writing school. Young men of promise went out of the town to further their education: "William went off to Potsdam Academy".⁴⁶ School revolved around the farmers' need for their children's labor. One term started at the beginning of December, another in early June when the crops had been planted.

Medicine was primitive by today's standards. Sick people were bled by leeches: October 5, 1838, "T taken sick at night with a pleurisy. F went for doctor got bled"; October 6, "Doctor here bled T"; October 7, Dr. Mott here T is getting better"⁴⁷ Later T took Dr. Mott a cord of wood, apparently in payment for his services. Medicines were available: "At Mr Brigham's afternoon, got vial of hot drops, a paper of composition and a paper of hot bitters, also a plaster and left two Dollars". Also, "Mr Brigham put them through a course of medicine", "Mr. Brigham here I puked and drank", "Taken worse gave me a puke and some medicine".⁴⁸ The diarist often "sat with" the sick; who often died. Each winter recorded its deaths and funerals. One death that touched the whole community was due not to illness but to accident—the death

of Robert McKean on January 20, 1840:

The large water wheel was clogged with Ice. He and another Man were sent in to cut it away, with a strong charge to be careful for security. They stopped the side of the wheel it would naturally turn on. He went behind and was cutting away th Ice, when he felt (as they suppose) the wheel move. He sprung to catch a tin gutter above his head. It gave way, and down he dropped on the wheel which was revolving the wrong way crushed him against the Ice, almost to atoms. Neck broke, thighs & arms also. It was so instantaneous, there was not a sound uttered. It was some time before they could get him out. They had to dig a hole through the wall, but he must have died in an instant of time. He was as black as a Negro. No one could recognize him. He was the sole stay of his mother and family. His father was drunk in the Village at the time it happened. She was a perfect Maniac last night. He was buried today. It has cast quite a gloom over the younger part of the community. How true it is in the midst of life we are in death.⁴⁹

Fire was a constant threat. Ellerslie, Charlotte Ogden's home, caught fire several times but the community rallied to save it in 1829: "house caught fire,



Sketch by unidentified artist of ruins of Ellerslie, the home of Gouverneur and Charlotte Ogden. (Photo courtesy of Pauline Tedford, Town of Waddington Historian)

sent men into village to fetch help. In 20 minutes, collected 120-130 men with pails and kettles. Mr Thayer threw out a new tin kettle from his shop to every man that ran by".⁵⁰ And again in 1830: "Just at dark my bedroom chimney took fire. It burned furiously, making such a tremendous light, the Church Bell rang and all the villagers ran up very quickly with pails and kettles in hand".⁵¹ Finally in 1845 Ellerslie burned to the ground.

On grand occasions the village turned out in all its finery. July 4, 1834: "Celebrated in grand style. 32 young ladies robed in white and adorned with roses and evergreens walked in the Procession. Oration delivered by James Redington E(sq) in a Bower erected for the occasion."⁵² To celebrate the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825: "Flag hoisted. Cannons fired and great rejoicing in the village in celebration of the Meeting of the Waters of Erie and the Atlantic. A Boat was passed through the locks,

handsomely decorated in honor of the day. God bless Dewitt".⁵³ And a political rally in 1840: "Today the village is almost deserted except by the *Staid Whigs*. They have a Tippecanoe procession to Canton. They built a "Log Cabin" that will hold 12 or 18 men, got it on wheels with a barrel of hard cider beside it . . . Every one takes his Grub and they intend to Pic nic in it by the way, drawn by three pr. horses. I expect there will be some broken noses by tomorrow."⁵⁴

Throughout the 1830's and 1840's industry continued to grow. The appearance of the steamship in 1833 caused great excitement and brought comfortable river travel to Waddington. A flour mill was built in 1833; it received wheat from Ohio and western New York and made flour for Montreal and New York City.⁵⁵ In 1834 the Ogdens built their long-planned blast furnace for iron, using local bog ore. Some of the iron was cast at the local

machine shop, some was sold as pig iron. This industry proved to be unprofitable and was closed in 1840, perhaps by the Panic of 1837.⁵⁶ In 1839 the village was incorporated and was at the height of its industrialization. Dalzell records flax mills, grist mills, woolen mills, tannery, paper mill, blast furnaces, distillery, carding mills, planing and woodworking shops, sash and blind factories, shingle mills, oatmeal mill, barrel butter tub factory, and asheries. "When the tannery needed bark there would be a procession of 40 or more teams lined up on Canal Street waiting for their loads of hemlock or oak bark."⁵⁷

These industries continued to function for the next forty years and life in Waddington, according to Dalzell, stayed much the same. However, by not moving forward Waddington was beginning to move backwards. Perhaps it is of some symbolic significance that Charlotte Ogden records a wagon accident in her diary: "I. Ogden and Mr Chipman were upset in a wagon on their way to Ogdensburg to attend a railroad meeting."⁵⁸ The railroad, bringing industrial and economic development to New York and indeed the United States, didn't come to Waddington. There was no direct rail service to the village until 1909. By then most of the mills had burned or fallen down. Waddington's economy was on the decline and has dwindled yet further. The St. Lawrence Seaway flooded much of the river shore; the Island House was demolished; the dam and power canal disappeared, along with several streets. The visitor of Waddington has not clue, except for a small sign in a parking lot, that once there was a prosperous community, full of hope and bright promise. Life in Waddington was good. People had problems, but they could count on each other for help when they needed it. That's what community means.

NOTES

¹Franklin B. Hough, *A History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties, N.Y.* (Baltimore, 1970; reprint, original Albany, 1853), p.342.

²Edwin C. Guillet, *Pioneer Travel in Upper Canada*, (Toronto, 1963, c.1933), p. 46.

³*Ibid.*, p.49

⁴Pauline Tedford and Tom Fife, *Waddington: A look at Our Past*, (Ogdensburg, 1976), p.63.

⁵Hough, *St. Lawrence*, p. 343.

⁶*Ibid.*, p.344

⁷Handbill, *Lands for Sale*, 1818.

⁸Tedford, *Waddington*, p.16.

⁹Charlotte Ogden, diary, 1818.

¹⁰Pauline Tedford, unpublished paper "Settlement of the Scotch and Irish in the town of Waddington, N.Y. during the years 1796-1855".

¹¹Handbill, "Lands for Sale in St. Lawrence County"



Postcard view of Island House, home of David A. Ogden, by \$5 Photo Co., Canton. (Courtesy of Pauline Tedford, Town of Waddington Historian)

The Money Comes, The Money Goes

A Report to the Membership Where the Financial Support Originates and How the Association's Income is Spent

by John A. Baule

The chart below (Income—1982) gives a simple breakdown of the sources from which the Association derives its operating revenue. As you can see, during 1982 local governmental sources contributed less than half of the total; 59% of the income is generated from individual contributions, highly competitive grants, and local fund-raising efforts. The last category, fund-raising efforts, includes the profits from publication sales, candlelight dinners, and summer bus tours.

The mix of private and public funds is a good one, for it clearly demonstrates that the burden of support is well-distributed. However, the chart also reveals a severe dependence on funds that must be generated on an annual basis; in other words, the organization in 1982, had virtually no endowment fund to generate basic income. Such a lack threatens the stability of the Association, and must be soundly and effectively addressed in the coming year.

The categories on the adjacent expense chart attempt to fairly summarize for what purposes the Association spends its operating revenue. A fuller explanation of what expenses the categories include is as follows:

1) **Collections and Exhibits**—All

costs for the permanent and temporary exhibitions and professional care of Association artifacts.

2) **Education**— Includes costs for producing *The Quarterly*, lecture programs, and school/community outreach initiatives.

3) **Management and General**—Management of membership records, office supplies, solicitation of grants, correspondence, personnel recruitment and supervision.

4) **Fund-Raising**—Overhead for the operation of the candlelight dinner series, publication sales, and organization of summer bus tours.

5) **Maintenance & Security**—Building repair and upkeep as well as property and liability insurance.

6) **Mortgage**— Payments on long-term Association debt. Since 1976, the mortgage principal on the Silas Wright property has dropped from \$29,000 to under \$19,000.

7) **Utilities**—Heat, lights, water, garbage removal, and telephone for both the Wright House and the archive/storage building.

8) **Miscellaneous**—Minor items defy categorization.

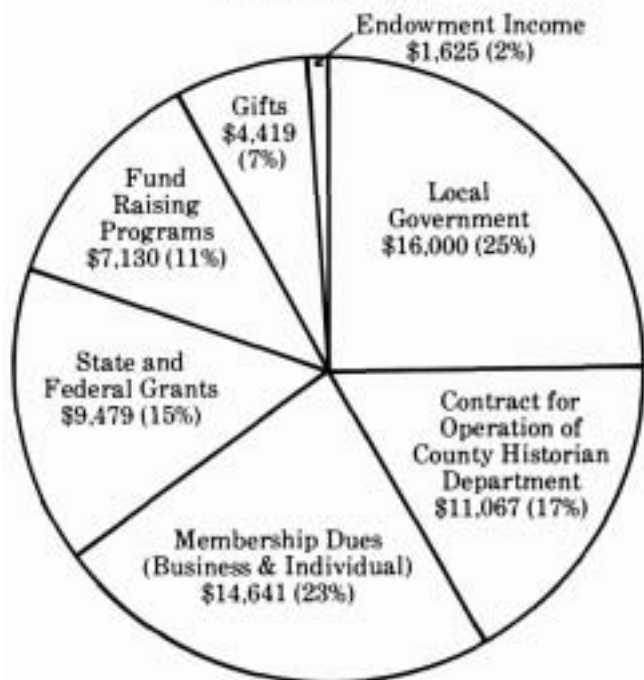
very much needs a source of operating revenue that reduces dependence on the inherent instability of public funding and private giving. In all thriving organizations—private schools, churches, hospitals, and libraries—this need is met through the creation and nurturing of an endowment fund. During 1982 the Association was able to make a modest beginning in this direction. Five bequests will shortly yield a nest egg of approximately \$20,000 that can be invested. Obviously, the income potential from this amount will not be sizeable at this time, and indeed such a fund is unlikely to ever pay all the bills. In fact, the need for annual solicitations is one of the primary ways charitable organizations thrive and stay in touch with their constituencies. Annual investment income, however, will give a stable cushion to ensure essential responsibilities for property and historical artifact maintenance are met in perpetuity.

It is hoped that over the next few years, others will wish to contribute to this fund so that the SLCHA can continue to preserve the possessions and knowledge of past generations for the enjoyment and education of future citizens of St. Lawrence County.

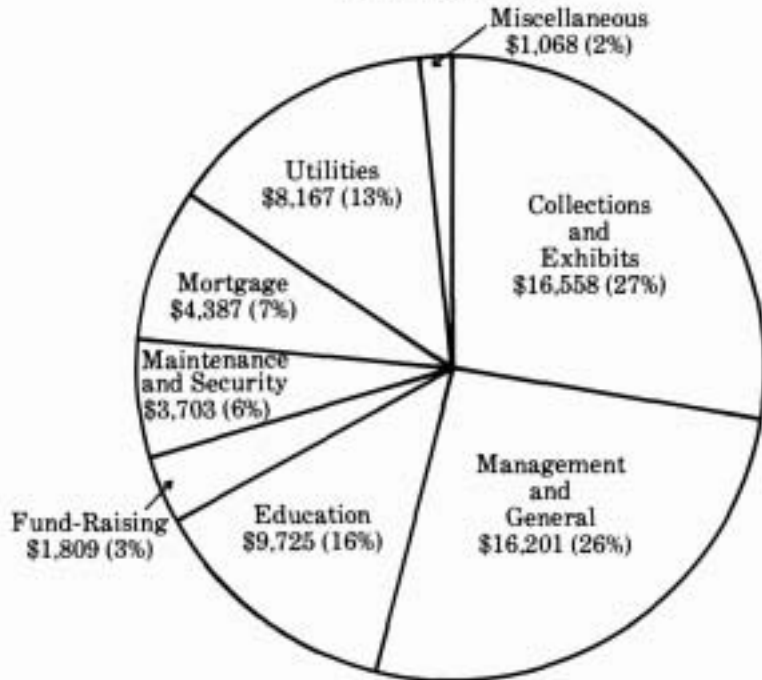
THE NEW ENDOWMENT

As mentioned above, the Association

INCOME—1982



EXPENSE—1982



To the Editor:

What a delightful surprise for me to find the memoirs of my great-grandfather Andrew Tuck in your summer 1982 issue.

Since the only picture you printed with the first section was a somewhat distant one, I am enclosing a picture of Andrew and Maria Tuck taken some time after their marriage in 1865. I obtained this picture from my Aunt Louise Lucey, a granddaughter of Mr. Tuck.

You may keep this copy for your files. In addition, I am enclosing a check for membership for \$25.00 and an additional \$5.00 for the Oct. '82 and Jan. '83 issues. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Robert E. Long, M.D.
Syracuse, N.Y.



WADDINGTON . . . continued

¹²David A. Ogden, letter, 1825.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Tedford, "Settlement"

¹⁵Tedford, *Waddington*, p.58.

¹⁶Charlotte Ogden, diary, April 14, 1822.

¹⁷The exact author is unknown; perhaps Thomas Common.

¹⁸Allison diary, April 11, 1838.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Charlotte Ogden, diary, January 20, 1823.

²¹Allison diary, February, 1842.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Charlotte Ogden, diary, April, 1818. *Ibid*

²⁶Allison diary, February 25, 1844. *Ibid*

²⁷*Ibid.*, March 1, 1844. *Ibid*

²⁸Charlotte Ogden, diary, March, 1815. *Ibid*

²⁹Allison diary, March 18, 1839. *Ibid*

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Charlotte Ogden, diary, October 11, 1830.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Allison diary, 1847.

³⁴Charlotte Ogden, diary, April 14, 1819.

³⁵*Ibid.*, February 4, 1819.

³⁶Allison diary.

³⁷*Ibid.*, February 7, 1844.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹Charlotte Ogden, diary.

⁴⁰Hough, *St. Lawrence*, p.345.

⁴¹Allison diary.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*, 1847.

⁴⁴Charlotte Ogden, diary.

⁴⁵Allison diary, July 4, 1853.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, March, 1848.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, October 5, 6, 7, 1838.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, June 14, 16, 22, 1841.

⁴⁹Charlotte Ogden, diary, January 20, 1840.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 1829.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, March 24, 1830.

⁵²*Ibid.*, July 4, 1834.

⁵³*Ibid.*, October 26, 1825.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, June 8, 1840.

⁵⁵Ogden papers, 1833.

⁵⁶Hough, *St. Lawrence*, p.344.

⁵⁷Tedford, *Waddington*, p.8.

⁵⁸Charlotte Ogden, diary, 1848.

Note: I am indebted to Pauline Tedford, Town Historian of Waddington, for her generous help in this paper. It is impossible for me to give complete credit in footnotes for all of what she contributed, as much of it was given in informal conversations. Wherever possible, I tried to give formal credit.



About the Author

Sara Shepherd is a resident of Waddington and a full-time student at SUC Potsdam, where she completed this paper for a course in New York State history.

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